

DAPL@School

2021/22 EDITION

DAPL

Fife's School Counselling Service

Meeting the Needs of our Community

DAPL was conceived and born of a time when issues and problems were seen in very stark terms. Services and supports were devised to target specific presenting issues. In some ways this was really useful. It ensured that focus and funding was put on areas of most concern. In other ways seeing people and their problems in such linear and crude ways allowed some of those who were most in need to slip through the cracks. Organisationally it created division where the third sector, charity organisations, had to compete for funding but mostly it over simplified the individual's experience. We are more than one thing. Often our problems are multiple. We need to work more holistically and in partnership.

Working in partnership has come to be an integral part of DAPL's way of working. We are only part of the team around the child and ensuring that we make the most of the resources available will increase the positive outcomes for our clients.

Now, in addition to drugs and alcohol, we receive referrals for those affected by anxiety, low mood, self-harm, suicidal ideation, bullying, sexual assault and numerous other issues. In reality the wider funding gate that allows people to access our service is a far more realistic and informed one. What we actually work with is never far from the roots of our organisation. Families who are suffering from experience of trauma, poverty, stigma, isolation, abuse and every other social ill that can befall a community.

DAPL came in to being as a response to community demands. They wanted a service that met their needs. Families wanted to have access to qualified counsellors that could take time to understand, support and inform in a different way to the statutory bodies.

Over the last 21 years we have developed a service for Children, Young People & Families that is dedicated to meeting the changing needs of the community. As well as letting you know what we do and how we're doing, we want to involve you in shaping DAPL as we develop. Both here and on our website we are seeking your thoughts, opinions and experiences. Please get involved, even if it's just to tell us what you thought of this year's DAPL@SCHOOL.

We've come a long way in understanding what has a negative impact on children and young people. We have also built a depth of knowledge and experience in providing what can help them overcome these experiences. Read on to find out more about what we do, what's happening in our communities and what we can do together to shape more resilient and happy children, young people and families in Fife's communities.



What we do

DAPL is a charity created by local Fife people and managed by a voluntary board. Our main aim is to provide counselling support to young people and the wider community of Fife.

Our service is available in all of Fife's local authority schools as part of the Our Minds Matter Framework and we continue to support any young people affected by their own or another's substance use.

Most of our time is spent in Fife's secondary schools with an ever growing demand for services in the primary schools as well.

All of our counsellors are qualified to a minimum of Diploma standard with additional post qualifying certificates in counselling children and young people, and work in line with the British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP). Our art psychotherapists are qualified to MA standard and are, as required, registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

We work closely with our colleagues in education, social work and health to ensure that the service we offer is the best fit for the needs of the community.

Our work is firmly rooted in a counselling approach and all of our services for young people are aimed at the additional and intensive level of need:

1. Our work is mainly 1:1 counselling and art psychotherapy, where children and young people are referred to our service by parents or professionals.
2. We have also developed a 3 session Digital Drop-in service to ensure that young people in the high schools can have direct access to the counselling service without having to come through a guidance teacher, social worker or parent.
3. Groupwork sessions will also roll out in a more sustained and regular basis over the coming year. Each school will have a weekly 1-hour session available via referral.
4. One off 1:1 Parent/Carer consultation sessions are available to discuss possible referrals and to offer speedy access to professional support.
5. Consultation, training and information sessions for teachers and other professionals are available on request.

As you might expect, it can be a challenge to maintain this level of service across the whole of Fife with a relatively small team. There are times of exceptionally high demand but our service continues year round with no break across the summer, Easter or October holidays.



You can now access your school counselling service directly without going through the guidance team or GP.

Connect with a counsellor via the QR Code. You will be able to access up to **3** sessions with a qualified counsellor.

Alternatively Text "DAPL" 62277 or Email digitaldrop-in@dapl.net and we will get back to you



Your Confidential Counselling Service

The main counselling service is still running as normal.

Talk to your guidance teacher to make a referral.



Parents, Families & Carers



Supporting our children and young people can be both exceptionally rewarding and extremely challenging. At times we don't know what to do and sometimes we don't even know what is really happening for them.

There are so many competing views on how to be a parent - what we should allow and what we shouldn't. What makes a good parent/carer? At times it's just that we can hang on in

there and keep finding ways to encourage, support, repair damage or just tolerate the intolerable.

We may also expect support to be on hand when we need it. Until you actually seek support for real, you don't really know what's actually useful - or just simply a glossy leaflet or website. Sometimes we face people and agencies that seem determined to place as many blocks in our path as possible. Sometimes people just don't turn up.

How often are you told that you are good at giving support or getting support for those that need it, but that you're not really looking after yourself?

We learn so much from what we see around us and from what we experience. We also learn how to "do life" from the adults around us. If the people around us are consistently positive, resilient, loving and caring and can bounce back from life's challenges then we will learn these behaviours. If the people around us collapse, cry and run away from challenges, we may never learn how to become independent and resilient.

As parents and carers we need to model the behaviour that we want our children to adopt. It really isn't effective or fair to behave in ways that we then tell our children are not acceptable. It's also doubly hard if we didn't grow up with positive adults around us.

We are under no illusion how hard the job of parenting is. Whether you are a birth parent, step parent, granny, grandad, aunty or uncle, a foster carer, kinship carer or just the only adult in a young person's life, we want to offer a space to you. A 1:1 counselling session to offer information, support, insight, suggestions or just a space to be heard. If you are in some way responsible for a child of school age and live in Fife, access DAPL's Parent & Carers service via this link:

<https://forms.gle/dsJFUVvfxi61TuGk8>



Teachers & School Staff



Living and working through a global pandemic has put school staff under more pressure than ever before to respond to the needs of pupils and their families. On top of all of this, there is the day job, teaching and preparing young people for exams. For many of the guidance teachers and support staff, young people are presenting with more complex and acute issues in ever growing numbers.

If we don't respond effectively the consequences can be catastrophic. Occasionally young people die or become more unwell. For many more, day to day living is very challenging and brings few rewards. Some young people disconnect from education and don't develop the skills to survive positively within the world.



One key reason that DAPL and education fit so well together is that we have shared goals. We want young people to make the most of the opportunities they have and to live happy and fulfilling lives.

Regardless of what the referral is for, drugs, alcohol, anxiety, low mood, self-harm or non-attendance, we offer the same service. Counselling provides a space for the individual to explore what's going on for them and how they can potentially make a change. As with any traumatic experience or negative event, the course of our life can be changed for both the positive or the negative.

How we respond to what young people are going through can have a long term impact on both their school experience and life beyond school. For some young people the outcome of exams is not of primary importance. Being in a safe and nurturing learning environment has a far greater impact.



Developing and protecting the nurture spaces within your school has to be a priority as we move forward. These rooms are set aside for the most vulnerable and traumatised within our society to access the support that can make significant improvements in their life. Cancelling, interrupting or swapping rooms clearly communicates something to young people which is at odds with what we really want.

Drugs & Alcohol

The illicit drug industry in Scotland is much like any other business. Although illegal it follows the same business plan as any other successful multi-billion-pound global franchise. Clever marketing coupled with effective social and cultural influencing, supply chains and a ready market of consumers who are looking out for the next must have thing.

Government initiatives are often too slow and out of step. Local and national organisations are underfunded and are so busy focussing on survival that they struggle to innovate. The resources directed at enforcement, treatment and rehabilitation cannot compare with the money generated by this illegal industry. All of this provides the perfect stand-off. Everyone expects or hopes that someone else will be able to do something about it.

Desperate parents look to the NHS to provide support and answers that are just not there. The police don't have the resources or the political backing to tackle the growing drug cartels. Schools face a growing population of active drug users and the ever constant risk of recruitment of young people in to the drug business.



The outlook can appear to be bleak. For some families, drug and alcohol use does bring about their worst nightmares of: loss, homelessness, family breakdown and grinding poverty.

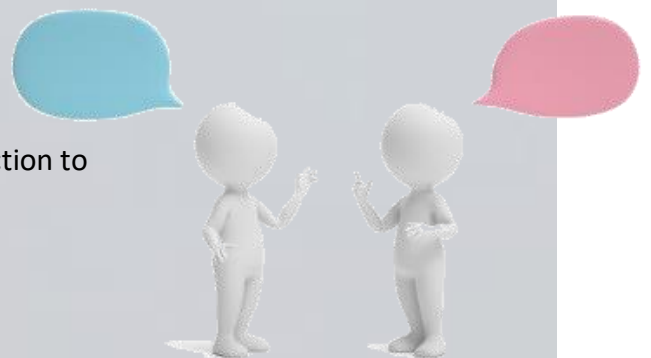
In Fife we are incredibly lucky in many ways. Those who have gone before us have conceived services that are working hard to prevent people developing problematic substance use issues and to support those who do develop problems with alcohol and drugs.

You can see more about other services here at the Fife Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP): <https://www.fifeadp.org.uk/>

If you are a parent of a school aged child that is experimenting with drugs or alcohol, or are developing issues with them, **DAPL** has a direct access service designed for you.

Follow the link below and you will be able to arrange a 1:1 counselling session with a qualified counsellor. They will be able to offer a space to hear and discuss your issues. They will also be able to offer information, advice and direction to other services if needed.

<https://forms.gle/xWokD9NPwuiJ1iLo7>





Cannabis Culture

Putting the pieces together

The growing acceptability of cannabis across the world has a multitude of effects on day to day life in Fife. All of the medical benefits that are being discovered or rediscovered are offering potential life changing opportunities for the good.

It would be a mistake to get this or recreational cannabis use confused with problematic or dependent cannabis use.

If a young person is using cannabis before or during school, we need to look at this as a communication that something is going wrong, in the same way we would address them turning up under the influence of alcohol or any other intoxicating substance.

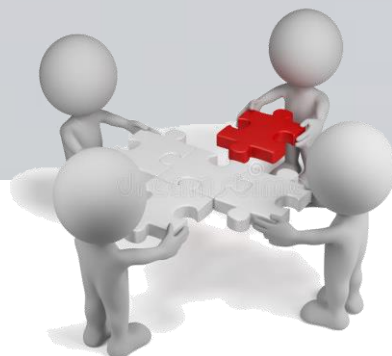
Teachers and the senior leadership teams are in an impossible situation. Faced with young people who are displaying a range of cannabis related signs and symptoms staff need to make decisions that can have far reaching consequences. The disruption to the teaching environment from both taking action and not taking action: the impact on the relationship with the pupil; the pressure on the school to accommodate students out with their assigned class; missing time in education; possible increases in exclusion rates; the impact of criminal proceedings on some of our most vulnerable young people.



Cannabis is not going away. It will continue to be readily available in a range of forms. The adults in a young person's life potentially range from those who are pro-cannabis to those who are vehemently anti-cannabis. Some have out of date or incorrect information, whilst others are able to offer insight and clarity.

Fundamentally, we need to ensure that the political arguments about cannabis and the relentless media driven opinions don't cloud our judgment. Children and young people that use cannabis or any other substance, are communicating something to us. They are telling us that something is happening for them -something that may need our intervention.

Let's ensure that our interventions help them grow and mature and don't hinder and further alienate them.



Harm Reduction

Harm reduction refers to policies, programmes and practices that aim to minimise negative health, social and legal impacts associated with drug use, drug policies and drug laws



Giving someone a leaflet or a link to a website can be harm reduction, but it's not great harm reduction. Just offering information or guidance is only part of the jigsaw. To really make a meaningful impact, we need to develop far more innovative and responsive offers.

Reducing the harm in every aspect of our lives has become a common sense and expected approach to almost everything. It becomes more difficult when "belief", "moral judgement" and "political posturing" are at odds with evidence.

We doubt anyone welcomes the thought of a child, young person or adult being sucked in to a life of alcoholism or drug addiction. To this end, we should always consider our response to people through the harm reduction lens:

- Are we missing the prompts to make an early intervention?
- Will our actions or responses increase the risk to that person or reduce it?
- Are we simply punishing people with no consideration of the repercussions of our decisions?
- Are we basing our actions on what we think society, the law or our employers want, or is it based on evidence?

Fife has exceptional resources woven within its school support systems. Barnardos Drug Education service is second to none. The 1:1 support and group work offered by Clued Up is an example of exceptional youth and community work. Add to this, DAPL's counselling service, and you can see why we are ahead of most other local authorities.

Unquestionably Covid has made it even more difficult to see the way in which children and young people are engaging with drugs, alcohol and solvents.

We need to apply a clear and consistent process to identifying young people who are most at risk. Use of cigarettes, alcohol and cannabis are all indicators that something in this young person's life is not right.

We've already started the discussion with some schools. How do we make appropriate, effective and efficient early interventions as a team around the child. Please feel free to get in touch with johnkennedy@dapl.net to explore how we can support your school.



Partnerships

Although counselling is predominantly a 1:1 confidential process, it takes a vast amount of collaborative working to make it happen. To be able to do any work at all, we need to have partnership and collaboration at the heart of everything we do.

DAPL's counselling team have been working in close partnership with education and social work colleagues for over 20 years now. This working relationship has changed and developed over this time and will continue to do so.

Our aim is to integrate the counselling team within each secondary school, primary school cluster and in the wider community to ensure a seamless connection between the guidance team and support staff, and the DAPL counsellors.

Having a well-established counselling team within the statutory settings allows those responsible for child protection and wellbeing to develop and implement the most efficient and effective plans to support those who need our support.



Working in partnership also facilitates cost effective CPD and support across Fife based agencies. We are also happy to design and deliver sessions to support a better understanding of the services we provide, the impact of substance use, and the connection to trauma and ACE's.

We also try to get alongside the parents, carers and families of our client. We often work with the family to ensure that our work fits with the wider support that the child or young person is receiving. With our 1:1 counselling consultation sessions, parents and carers have a space to explore what's happening for them and the young person.

Where possible we do get involved in work as a part of a multi-disciplinary team, however we need to ensure that we are providing the services that we have been commissioned to provide.

Developing new partnerships is also very much part of our plan. If you feel we could be doing more together or if there is an organisation that we should be connecting with, let us know.



the promise

“The Promise Scotland is responsible for driving the work of change demanded by the findings of the Independent Care Review.

It works with all kinds of organisations to support shifts in policy, practice and culture so Scotland can #KeepThePromise it made to care experienced infants, children, young people, adults and their families - that every child grows up loved, safe and respected, able to realise their full potential.”

DAPL have always been acutely aware of the impact of being care experienced. Many of those who have accessed our counselling service as adults have had some experience of being looked after either by the wider family in Kinship Care or in some form of Local Authority care. The link between adverse childhood experiences and substance use is well documented, widely understood and acknowledged.

A number of the young people and children that access our counselling service now are facing similar experiences. In many ways the landscape has changed and more focus is being placed on the impact of having been “looked after” in childhood.

Counselling and art therapy can provide a much needed psychological support to anyone that has experienced disruption in their life. As we always suggest, please consider including a therapeutic element in any planning that you design for care experienced young people.



We are fully committed to The Promise and welcome this collective approach to supporting our young people. At last we have the potential to help people put all of the pieces together.

The DAPL Feedback Loop

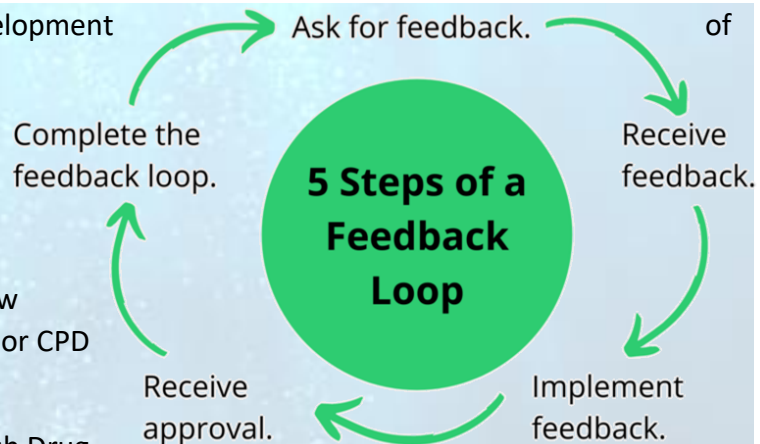
This year will see our ongoing development the consultation, feedback and development process. We routinely ask clients for feedback on the service they have received.

We always ask groups to tell us how their experience of group sessions or CPD was.

We have commissioned the Scottish Drug Forum twice to evaluate our service and we routinely open ourselves up to the scrutiny of the British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy to renew our service accreditation.

We regularly share feedback from clients via Twitter when they give us permission to.

In keeping with our ethos, it would be good to get feedback on our DAPL@SCHOOL Newsletter. Follow the link or scan the QR code.



Head office: 1-2 Parkdale Avenue, Leven, Fife KY8 5AQ

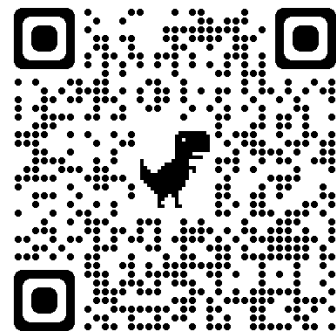
Telephone: 01333 422277

Email: enquiries@dapl.net

Website: www.dapl.net

Patrons: Clive Russell and Eleanor Bowman MBE

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