

### Relationship Education and Counselling Team-REACT

72 Waterloo St, Glasgow G2 7DA Tel: 0141 222 2166 info@scottishmarriagecare.org www.scottishmarriagecare.org



REACT is a community project based in Greater Easterhouse, Glasgow. REACT offers relationship services to young people and adults without judgement or discrimination on any grounds.

- 87% of young people in Greater Easterhouse experience problems with relationships. This could be anything from parents getting divorced to arguments with siblings and friends.
- REACT offers relationship workshops and issue-based sessions to young people in schools and youth groups. The workshops enhance awareness of different types of relationships and aid the formation of positive healthy relationships with family and friends.
- We currently work in partnership with several schools, delivering relationship workshops as part of Personal and Social Education (PSE) groups.
- REACT provides a 'drop-in' youth counselling service in local schools where young people can work through any issue that is troubling them.
- REACT's innovative relationship skills training programme is offered to young parents in the community. The course is delivered by peer-educators and focuses on building confidence and self-esteem and raising awareness of important relationship skills such as communication and listening.
- REACT offers young people and young parents the opportunity to train as peer educators and gain key skills which enable them to help others.

### Youth Counselling

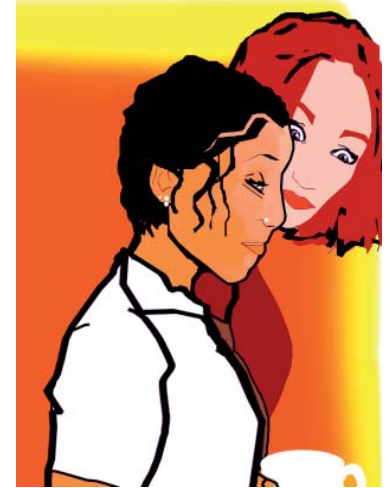
We offer a one-to-one youth counselling service where young people can talk about any issue that is troubling them.

- The opportunity to be listened to
- Confidential service
- Make sense of your feelings
- No issue is too big or too small
- Counselling can help you if you feel worried, uncertain, trapped, confused, angry or unhappy.
- One fundamental outcome of counselling is that it reduces stress (McKeown et al, 2002) and enables people to manage their situation much more effectively.



## Evidence of Need

REACT has had requests from several local schools to establish a youth counselling 'drop in' service during break times and after school. This pilot has been an overwhelming success and has produced startling results in young people. Guidance teachers report that REACT's work has had an overwhelming impact on pupils. Young people targeted by the service included those with behavioural problems, who were disruptive in class, had difficulty concentrating, and had been excluded from school.



Staff indicated that these children seemed more stable as a result of the work undertaken by REACT and were better able to become involved in schoolwork and classroom activities. Moreover, REACT has been invited to provide sessions as a permanent feature of PSE courses, which conclusively demonstrates the success of the counselling in schools pilot.

Following these achievements, we now plan to roll out across Scotland, and aim to have youth counsellors available in each of our centres. We have had several requests from adults and young people across the country for youth counselling services and we are currently unable to meet this need.

## Youth Counselling-Research

A study of youth counselling showed that family relationship difficulties, parenting problems and parental separation were the problems presented by almost half (48%) of the young people who sought youth counselling. (Lalor et al, 2006) This is also the case in SMC's REACT pilot project where young people's presenting issues were overwhelmingly around relationships.

Young people attending youth counselling report that the counselling experience gave them skills and confidence to deal with the issues in their lives:



'Made me feel good about myself'

'Realised I wasn't the only one to feel this way'

'Helped me to look at things differently'

'Helped me to develop a positive attitude'

Many young people value the opportunity to talk to somebody about their problems and find comfort in the fact that somebody was taking their problem seriously:

'It has given me somebody I can talk to, confidentially.'

## CASE STUDY

When 12 year old Kieran first came to counselling he was unsure what exactly would be involved, but understood it would be 'a chance to talk about things and get stuff of my chest.' He was willing to give it a try as there were a number of issues troubling him. Kieran had been raised by his gran from a young age. He had never known his father and had been told by his gran that his mother had deserted him when he was a baby. However, at the age of 8, Kieran's mother made contact and he discovered that she was suffering from a heroin addiction and that his gran had asked her to leave. He was then asked to choose where he wanted to live and decided he would live with his mother and grandad (who was separated from his gran.) However, Kieran's grandad was frequently away from home, and Kieran was required to take on a number of caring responsibilities for his mother during her rehabilitation. He would ensure she remembered to take her methadone prescription and attended scheduled medical appointments, as well as carrying out the bulk of domestic duties.

When Kieran first came to counselling the major issue causing him concern was the problem he was having with his grandad's partner, Dorothy. Kieran explained that since she had moved into the house his life was a 'living hell.' His loathing for Dorothy was apparent, describing her as 'evil.' The conflict between Kieran and Dorothy was occurring on a day to day basis and it was at a stage where he would rather stay out late than go home in the evenings. He acknowledged that it was affecting his performance at school since he would 'try to do nothing all day to make the day last longer.' While he was desperate to improve the situation he felt helpless as the only solution he could envisage was that Dorothy would leave and this was beyond his control

Initially Kieran contracted with his counsellor for a total of six sessions. A number of issues arose when Kieran began to tell his story and through counselling he was able to select a number of short-term goals. Managing his aggression was important, as it was being manifested in other contexts and he was able to see that it was affecting his relationship with his friends. There were issues present regarding his feelings of guilt over choosing to leave his gran for his mother and living with Dorothy heightened his sense of loss. However, the dominant issue for Kieran was how he could live with Dorothy.

Kieran wanted the focus of the counselling to be on how he could maintain his self-control and take ownership of his feelings of anger. It was agreed that it would be necessary to re-contract for a further four sessions to allow Kieran to work on his remaining issues. The counselling therefore lasted a total of ten sessions, by which time Kieran was feeling more in control of his home situation and better equipped to deal with the choice he had made about where to live.



### References:

- McKeown et al (2002) *Unhappy Marriages: Does Counselling Help?* (Maynooth: Accord)  
Lalor, K, O'Dwyer, S, McCrann, D (2006) *Review of a community-based youth counselling service in Ireland* (Child Youth Serv Rev 28 (3): 325-345)