



PRESS RELEASE

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New Counsellors for schools

The Government has today announced that it will be engaging four qualified Counsellors to work full time in the schools, as part of its initiative to improve the way it supports the provision of mental health support in young people.

The need for counsellors to assist teachers in themselves supporting children with mental health issues has long been called for by the profession and mental health community groups and is a Government Manifesto Commitment.

The announcement was made this morning by Minister for Education John Cortes as he opened a training seminar on *Mental Health, Social and Emotional Wellbeing in Special and Additional Needs* at the University.

While the operational details are still under discussion with teaching and mental health professionals, it is envisaged that the team of four will divide its work to cover both Secondary and Primary (First and Middle) schools.

It is part of a wide-ranging initiative to respond to the growing needs of society in mental health, recognising the importance of the education sector in the process. Training sessions for teachers and the setting up of Core groups for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education are some of the steps already being taken, with the engaging of Counsellors being an important practical step.

The Minister for Education, Heritage, Environment, Energy and Climate Change, the Honourable Dr. John Cortes MP commented: "This is a tremendous step forward in responding to the needs of teachers and in particular for our young people who will soon have the counsellors available to support them from an early age and through their school years. The benefits to young people as they develop, and the long-term benefits to our community of being able to assist children with mental health issues will be tremendous."

The Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP said: "I wholeheartedly welcome my colleague's very important announcement of engaging qualified counsellors to work full-time at our schools. I have no doubt that that this much-needed service will prove extremely beneficial in providing structured communication between Education and the GHA's Mental Health Services in order to identify, as soon as possible, pupils that may benefit from therapeutic, psychological or psychiatric services. This deeper collaboration reflects our strongly held view that preventative medicine is best."



Note: The Seminar is being delivered by child mental health expert Dr Pooky Knightsmith – full details were published in a press release last week.