**Ballina Youthreach Counselling Policy**
Reviewed: Wednesday 13 August 2025
Next Review: August 2026

1. **Purpose of Counselling**
Counselling is a supportive and confidential process between the counsellor and the student. It addresses personal, educational, and vocational issues in a holistic way. The service can assist students in both classroom and non-classroom contexts and can support the pastoral and disciplinary structures of the centre.

Counselling may help with challenges such as:

* Bullying, social exclusion, peer pressure
* Family crisis, abuse, homophobia, racism
* Substance misuse
* Scholastic underachievement
* Competitiveness and interpersonal conflict

The aim is to facilitate self-understanding, improve wellbeing, and clarify goals and values for future decision-making.

1. **Confidentiality**
Counselling sessions are private. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in certain circumstances where there is:
* A risk to the student’s own safety
* A risk to the safety of another person
* Disclosure of abuse or suspected abuse

In these cases, information will be referred to the Co-ordinator or the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for Child Protection. Students will be informed of these limits to confidentiality at the outset.

1. **Ethical Standards**
The counsellor is ethically bound to act in the best interests of the student, within the law, and in line with professional ethical guidelines. This includes maintaining competence, acting with integrity, and respecting student rights at all times.
2. Referrals
* Students may self-refer at any time to the counselling service
* Staff may suggest counselling following incidents inside or outside the centre that indicate short-term intervention could help.
* In some cases, continued attendance at the centre may require participation in counselling.
1. Record Keeping
The counsellor may use one-to-one informal sessions and keeps hand-written notes documenting relevant content of each session.
All records are stored securely by the counsellor in line with data protection requirements.