



## Advice for Parent/Guardians when your child is accessing mental health and wellbeing support

When a young person is accessing mental health and wellbeing support at Streetwise this can be a challenging time for the parents / guardians. Below we have provided some advice and answers to questions we often receive

### **What to expect**

Firstly, either you or the young person will receive a text offering an initial assessment. This appointment will last 45 minutes to an hour. It's important that you respond to confirm you can attend. The initial assessment gives an opportunity for the young person to voice in their words what support they need.

Sometimes we find the young person might not be ready to engage with mental health and wellbeing support however we can only work with your young people if they consent and agree to work with us. We appreciate and understand this can be particularly frustrating for parents / guardians. We will always encourage your young person to seek support in the future should they require it.

Part of the assessment will measure risk in the young person's life. Your young person will be asked questions around suicidal ideation and self-harm. Depending on how high the risk presents we may do a wellbeing check-in call once a week via the phone. If your young person is below 13 or has particular support needs, a trusted adult will need to be present in the home when the call takes place. Once your young person enters counselling it is likely that the need for wellbeing calls will reduce, unless your young person does not attend a session for any reason.

### **Do I need to / Can I come with them?**

You are welcome to bring your young person to the appointments, however you will be asked to leave the building whilst the appointment takes place. This is to protect the confidentiality and comfort of other young people who use the service. We always take a phone number to contact you in case of emergency.

We understand that some young people are nervous to attend the assessment on their own so would not want to put anyone off attending because of this. If you could contact us before the assessment date we are happy to make arrangements for specific cases.

### **Communicating with your child's Streetwise worker**

You are able to speak to your child's counsellor/ Mental Health and Wellbeing Worker while they are having sessions but the worker has to respect your child's confidentiality so may be

tied in how much they can say. It would not be usual for us to answer questions about the content of a session for example.

When we work with a young person their wishes come first. This may mean that at times decisions are made in the counselling room / with a Mental Health and Wellbeing Worker without a carer's involvement. For example, if a young person decides they no longer want to attend we will honour that decision. We may advise them to inform you but do not have to let you know.

If the young person is not able to attend a session or wants to rearrange you can contact us on their behalf. This can be done by:

**Phone: 0191 230 5533,**

**Email: [admin@streetwisenorth.org.uk](mailto:admin@streetwisenorth.org.uk)**

**Text: 07520 666138 .**

### **Attendance Expectations**

It is really important that your young person attends the sessions and that you support/ facilitate their attendance. If you experience any difficulties in transporting your young person to their session it is really important that you speak to the worker supporting your young person as soon as possible. In the event of two cancelled/ unattended appointments we may need to close the therapy sessions and be unable to continue to support your young person. **If you are going on holiday or your young person has any medical appointments to attend, it's really important that you provide as much notice as possible.** Medical Appointments/ holidays will not count as cancellations, provided at least one week's notice is provided to enable us to re-arrange the session.

### **What to expect after a session**

Some young people want to talk after a counselling session but many do not. It is helpful for them if you can be around for them afterwards giving them space to talk if they need to. Many young people tell us they feel pressured to share if they are asked directly. You could simply as '*do you need any support?*' and encourage your young person to connect with you if they need / want to.

Sometimes people are more easily upset or angry after their sessions. The subjects we cover in counselling may bring out things they couldn't deal with previously so for some people it is like reliving the stressful events that brought them here. This is a normal part of counselling / Support sessions and does not mean they are necessarily getting worse. If you have any concerns about your young person, do please reach out to their counsellor/

mental health and wellbeing worker. You can either call our offices or simply text. We will contact you as soon as we can to arrange a time for a call back. Be mindful that due to confidentiality, they will be unable to disclose the content of the sessions.

### **When a young person is self harming or taking other risks**

Young people are safe to discuss many risk taking behaviours in their counselling. They may talk about sex and relationships, drugs or alcohol use, self-harm behaviours or suicidal thoughts. We will encourage the young person to be open with you so that they can seek support but they can choose not to.

We will look at strategies to support new safer behaviours of self-care and connecting with others. It is not always safe for a person to stop what they are doing outright away as it may be helping them cope at the moment. We will help them to find alternatives to help them stop when it is right for them.

If their life or long-term health seems to be at risk by theirs or somebody else's actions we will discuss with the young person how to keep them safe. At this point we may be able to talk to you directly. Some consent forms might have to be completed before this can take place. You may not always be updated about referrals to other services if the young person (aged 16 or over) can consent to this or does not want us to disclose this.

If we feel there is significant risk we would aim to inform you straight away if you are picking up the young person. Sometimes we may not let them leave the service if we are concerned about what they could do on the way home. We would aim to contact you immediately or another agency to collect that person.

Some young people tell us they are not safe to return home. We are not obliged to inform you if we act on this information, you would be contacted by another agency.

**Take care of yourself-** Parents, carers and wider family members may need support too while a person they love is going through counselling. It can raise questions you did not have before. We do not usually support carers but can offer joint meetings to discuss support strategies or signpost you to adult support agencies.

### **Things to think about**

Expect slips- change is not easy. What are their triggers?- how can these be worked around.

Support your child even when you don't like/ understand their behaviour

Stay positive

Think about what has worked before and keep doing it

We encourage all young people to make goals at their assessment stage in earlier sessions (ie, identify what they want to get out of the sessions). *The things that they want from*

*counselling may not be the same as what you want for them.* How they act after or during counselling may not meet your expectations either.

We aim to support, facilitate with kindness care, understanding within a confidential space, so the Young person can make a better sense of their life, and that they can reach their own goals and positive future aspirations.