

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BURSARY**

### SECTION 1

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY UNDERTAKEN, INCLUDING HOW THE NEED WAS IDENTIFIED.

The NEELB Counselling Service provided a limited number of hours per week to the students in the local area and a waiting list was in place due to the high demand. In order to enhance this service and make it more accessible to students, as well as to further my own personal development I commenced a Three Year Diploma in Counselling validated by the University of Ulster. By January of this year I had successfully completed my Diploma in Counselling Studies and I began a module in counselling practice. This involved the counselling of students not only in my own school, St. Comgall's College but also in Larne High School and St. Mac Nissi's College.

### SECTION 2

THE OUTCOMES IN TERMS OF IMPROVED PRACTICE BY THE TEACHER

I feel that this course has been a very enriching experience and that it has had a significant impact on my practice. In particular my listening skills have improved immensely and I believe I am more sensitive to what I call the 'background noise' going on with each student. At a time in education when we are inundated with targets and jargon it is easy to forget that young people are much more than statistics. We should not underestimate the benefits of simply 'being there' for our students, however few of us have the luxury of having time for this one to one work. When we look back on our own school days we seldom remember the facts and the figures but we do remember the relationships, the people who took time to get to know us. Today the classroom teacher has less and less time to 'care' for the students so I believe this increases the need for an effective counselling service freely available in all of our schools.

### SECTION 3

THE OUTCOMES OR BENEFITS OF THE ACTIVITY IN TERMS OF IMPROVEMENTS IN PUPILS' LEARNING EXPERIENCES.

By undertaking this demanding course I believe I have been able to provide a safe and professional counselling service to students who otherwise would not have been seen so promptly. We do not educate children in isolation and we are all well aware that students cannot learn effectively if they are experiencing emotional problems or trauma. Hopefully the counselling service enables these young people to deal with their issues and therefore assist them in making full use of their educational opportunities. In addition I have been able to apply much of my learning not only in the counselling room but in my relationships within the classroom and among colleagues.

### SECTION 4

HOW THE SUCCESS OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY HAS BEEN/WILL BE EVALUATED.

My examination results provide evidence of the quality of my work but more significantly each student evaluates the service they have received and this data is kept by the NEELB. My mentor Mrs. Shaw monitored my work and in addition my clinical supervisor Mr. C. Murray ensures the quality of the service. Copies of their reports are attached.

#### SECTION 5

##### HOW THE EXPERIENCES, SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE GAINED HAVE BEEN/ WILL BE SHARED WITH OTHER TEACHERS.

In my role as Pastoral Care Co-ordinator I have shared what expertise I have with other members of staff particularly those with a pastoral role. My work in other schools, not only provides support for students but also for staff in suggesting ways of dealing with difficulties.

#### SECTION 6

##### REFLECTION BY THE TEACHER ON THE VALUE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ACTIVITY

I hope that the students I have been working with have benefited as much from the experience as I have. It has been a privilege to be allowed to share their stories and to see them grow in self-awareness and confidence. It is particularly gratifying to come to a stage with a student when we both realise that my services are no longer required. The person-centred approach (which is used by the NEELB) is a very simple and yet very powerful way of enabling people to experience the core-conditions (congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathy), which are so essential for our emotional well-being.

I am especially proud that my work has encompassed both the controlled and maintained sectors. The excellent working relationships which already existed between St. Comgall's College and Larne High School in particular, have been enhanced by this project. I would like to pay tribute to my Principal Mr. Paul Barry for his encouragement, and flexibility in giving me time to attend lectures and also to see clients, and to the other Principals for welcoming me so whole-heartedly into their Schools.

#### SECTION 7

##### FUTURE PLANS/ SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT.

The NEELB Counselling Service has again been affected by budget cuts and as a result the retiring counsellor for the East Antrim Area is not being replaced. This means that the young people of this area will have reduced access to this service. On the 31<sup>st</sup>. August this year I will be accepting a voluntary redundancy from my school but I intend to continue my work as a student counsellor and have set aside Monday and Tuesday of each week for this purpose. This will mean that I will be working in a voluntary capacity in Larne High School on Monday and Tuesday mornings from 9.00 a.m. until 12.00 noon, and in St. Comgall's College during those two afternoons. In addition I have been asked to take on a small number of clients from St. MacNissi's College and St. Aloysius' Cushendall. I intend to continue my studies until June 2007 when I hope to obtain my Diploma in HE in Counselling Practice

Name Frances Hamilton

Date 24th. July, 2006.