

STARF School Counselling Service — Every Child Deserves Hope



This academic year, STARF expanded our school-based counselling service from three to seven schools across Ringwood and Fordingbridge.

- ☑ **59 children** received dedicated one-to-one counselling
- ☑ **8 children** attended therapeutic group sessions
- ☑ **650 hours** of face-to-face, professional mental health support delivered

79% of children who completed counselling showed measurable improvement in their emotional and mental wellbeing. **For those who need more time, STARF continues to provide extra sessions** — because no child's progress should be cut short for lack of help. Only 1 child did not engage with the sessions.

💖 What's Getting Better?

Children, families and schools tell us they see real, positive change:

- ✓ Higher confidence and self-esteem
- ✓ Better emotional resilience and coping skills
- ✓ Calmer communication at home and in school
- ✓ Fewer behavioural challenges and less anxiety
- ✓ Better focus and engagement in the classroom
- ✓ Teachers feeling more equipped to help children in need

💬 Real Voices

- I can't thank you enough, my child is happy and content again, they are back into the lovely child they used to be, really helpful and loving, now they can hug me. They have become a free bird at school, able to go and play again.
- Their confidence has grown massively at home and school. He can now verbalise his feelings and is able to say when he is not happy with something, which means we can help him.
- He was worrying about everything, he was getting things off his chest through anger, smashing things and fighting. Now it's getting better, he is starting to talk to me and isn't as angry as often.

🔔 But Too Many Are Still Waiting

In June 2025, STARF asked local schools: what happens when children can't get help? The reality is deeply worrying.

Across our seven schools:

- There are **3,108** children and young people.
- **83 (that's 3%)** of children and young people are in crisis, needing urgent help.
- **544 (17.5%)** of children and young people need counselling but aren't 'in crisis' yet.
- Of those, **32** children and young people are already on the CAMHS waiting list — and are waiting on average between **18–36 months** for treatment. These are our most vulnerable children and young people.

Hampshire & the Isle of Wight has the longest waiting times for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) in England . (Source: Children's Mental Health Services Annual Briefing, Children's Commissioner for England, 2025)

At present, STARF can only offer **19 counselling places per term** — just **57 children a year** — leaving hundreds waiting, struggling alone and at risk of deteriorating.

The Hidden Cost of Waiting

When help doesn't come in time, our schools report heartbreaking consequences:

- 92% show significant anxiety
 - 88% struggle to regulate emotions
 - 80% have low self-esteem
 - 17% miss school
 - 13% self-harm
 - 11% experience suicidal thoughts
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Real Children, Real Impact

These are the stories our schools have reported where children are unable to get the help they need:

Case 1: A young person's severe anxiety escalated to panic attacks and restricted eating. With no support, they stopped attending school altogether within three months.

Case 2: A student's behaviour deteriorated so badly while waiting for help that they are now at risk of being removed from their family.

Case 3: An elective mute child is isolated and anxious, falling behind daily without counselling to help them find their voice.

Case 4: An unstable home life and no counselling led to aggression, repeated sanctions and lost learning — when what the child needed was care and understanding.

The Cost of Hope

Each individual counselling place costs **£720–£850 per child** — for skilled, professional, life-changing help.

Right now, just in these seven schools, **544 children** need this support. Every pound you give directly funds real hours of professional care that *change* — *and save* — *young lives*. Your donation helps cut waiting lists, bring children back into the classroom, restore hope to families and give young people the futures they deserve.

Supporting children's mental health, one conversation at a time www.starf.uk help@starf.uk