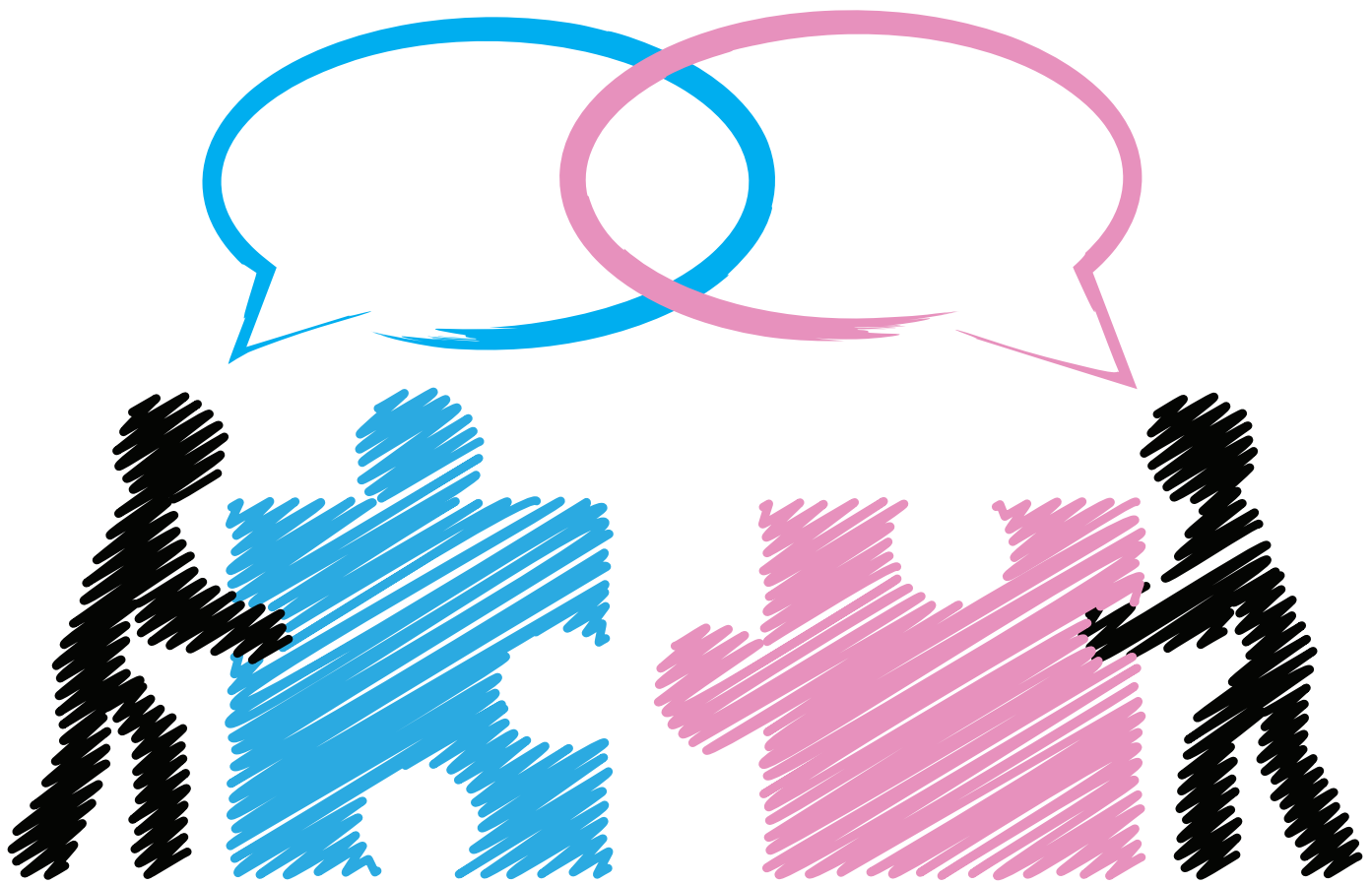


# Counselling

A vital treatment tool  
for GPs - Fund it!



Equip GPs with  
Mental Health Expertise!  
**#123GP**



**#123GP** campaign is a region-wide network of mental health rights activists who have personal or family experience of mental health problems and/or suicide and who are campaigning to ensure that all GP practices provide timely access to quality counselling services.

## What's the problem?

We are in the middle of a mental health crisis.

The number of people suffering with mental ill-health is increasing.

Sadly 305 people lost their lives to suicide in 2017 alone.

Many people struggle to get the help they need when they need it.

Over 90% of people with mental health problems will be seen first by their GP.

GPs NEED to be equipped with mental health expertise - this includes access to counselling.

Counselling is a low-cost, effective treatment option for many people, with or without medication. Counselling can and does save lives.

People have a right to mental health services, including counselling.

Yet still too many people who need it can't get access to counselling through their GP practice.

## Reasons for this\*

- Only two thirds of GP practices have an in-house counsellor.
- In-house counsellors in GP practices can only see handful of patients, nowhere near the number who want to or need to be seen.
- People can wait 7 months or more to be seen.
- In some Trusts waiting time are not monitored at all.
- No waiting time targets exist.
- People are only offered a maximum of 6 sessions.
- Funding provided by the Health and Social Care Board works out at an average of £2.29 per patient - the price of an ice-cream.
- The allocated budget has barely increased in 4 years, even though it is over-spent each year.

\*This information is based on data provided to #123GP by the Health and Social Care Board

Sadly, in the face of this evidence the official response has been one of, 'Problem, what problem?' They are refusing to recognise that a major problem exists with getting access to counselling but that it is a problem they could easily solve.

## What can be done?

The **Health and Social Care Board** and the **Department for Health** have the power and the money to make sure that the provision of counselling through GP practices is properly resourced.

Here's what they need to do:

1. Immediately double the current funding for GP practice based counselling to tackle the waiting lists;
2. Undertake a review of the existing funding model so that funding is allocated on the basis of need, in a transparent manner and on a recurrent basis;
3. Undertake a review of the Mental Health Hubs to address the issues of lengthy waiting lists and the inadequate number of sessions being provided;
4. Introduce a waiting time target for counselling of 28 days from GP referral to first counselling appointment.

#123GP is using **2 measures to monitor change:**

1. The number of GP practices with an in-house counsellor; and
2. Waiting times for an initial appointment with a counsellor.



Funding provided by the HSC works out at an average of £2.29 per patient - the price of an ice-cream

# 1 2 3 #123GP

## Support for #123GP

Making sure that all GP practices provide timely access to counselling not only benefits patients in need of it, it also helps GPs by equipping them with an effective alternative to prescribing medication and improves patient outcomes.

*"There has never been a greater need for counselling. GPs are at the front line and adequate counselling resources embedded in General Practice is not just sensible- it is becoming essential. Current provision is woefully inadequate."*

Dr. John Kyle, retired GP East Belfast

*"The Local Enhanced Service for counselling is a fantastic service because it is located within GP surgeries but still provides anonymity for our clients. This is a vital service which should be expanded as a model of best practice."*

Mr. Bobby Carlin, Counselling Services Manager

*"Well if your GP can't help you first what chance have you of getting help? I know that if my GP didn't help me I wouldn't be here today."*

#123GP survey participant

*"This is a very valuable service that helps GPs to provide better services locally. It not only reduces referrals to secondary care but improves patient outcomes."*

Dr. David Johnston FRCGP

*"At a time when rates of mental ill health and suicide in Northern Ireland are rising all GP practices must be able to provide equal access to talking therapies."*

BACP Chief Executive Officer,  
Dr Hadyn Williams

You can help #123GP ensure that people who need counselling can access it through their GP practice in a timely manner.

## 3 simple steps you can take

1. Follow us on social media:  
**Twitter** - @123GPCampaign @PPR\_Project  
**Facebook** Mental Health Rights Campaign.  
View and share our videos:  
<https://vimeo.com/315931736>  
<https://youtu.be/nVjz2c80wa4>  
<https://youtu.be/MLcrEaFI3f>
2. Get involved in our campaign. For more info contact Sara Boyce [sara@pprproject.org](mailto:sara@pprproject.org) or phone 028 90 313315 [www.pprproject.org/right-to-health](http://www.pprproject.org/right-to-health)
3. Email Richard Pengelly Permanent Secretary Department of Health on [richard.pengelly@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:richard.pengelly@health-ni.gov.uk) calling on him to take urgent action on this issue. Use this link to access a template letter. <https://bit.ly/2JEKR5I>

Contact details are detailed overleaf.  
[www.pprproject.org/right-to-health](http://www.pprproject.org/right-to-health)



#123GP has the support of the following **political parties**  
DUP, SF, SDLP, UUP, Alliance, People Before Profit, Green Party, Workers Party





### Contact Details

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