

# Understanding and defining your role

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**ConnectEd**

COUNSELLING AND CONSULTANCY

# Welcome!

- A bit about me...
- I will use school psychology, school counselling, counsellors, psychologists interchangeably throughout!

A caveat for today:

There is no right way to do school psychology – it HAS to be **contextually appropriate**



# What is the context of school counselling?

- Continued **high rates of mental ill-health** in young people
- **Increased funding** for school counsellors across the country
- **Increased expectation** on schools to have some kind of school-based counselling service
- Greater **demand from parents** for a focus on pastoral care and wellbeing
- **Decreased availability** from external providers
- Wildly **variable expectations** for the role, **employment conditions** and **systems** for school counsellors



# What are we capable of?

A Lot.

But

Our role/we can get in our own way

- We often under-sell ourselves and/or guard our “turf” too jealously
- We typically hit the ‘big’ activities really well – counselling, liaising, assessing, reporting
- We probably don’t use our ‘soft skills’ as much/as well as we could (e.g. writing, educating, presenting, advising)
- We often don’t have shared understanding of our role and its scope



# Who cares about role definition?

*This all seems technical and fiddly and can't I just get on with doing my job?!*

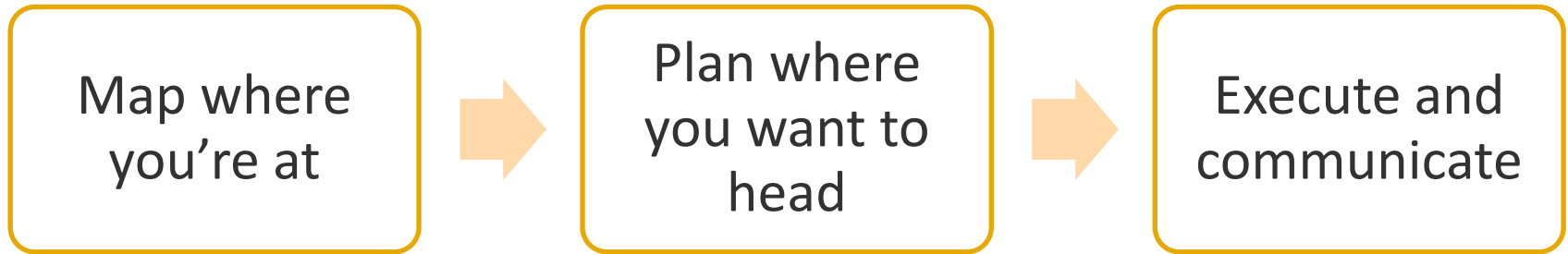
Lack of role definition is usually the starting for most our day-to-day challenges. Those problems massively impact on our wellbeing

- **Clarity** – knowing what you do and don't do (big picture and specifics/day-to-day)
- **Consistency** – what you do is (generally) the same/similar and replicable
- **Communication** – other people get what you do (and don't do)

Making any “big” changes is hard work. But it is hard work now for big benefit later



# How do you start to (re)define your role?



# Map where you're at...

Ask yourself the following:

- What do I do in a typical week?
- What do I NOT do?

Ask other people:

- What do you think I do?
- What do you think I should NOT do?

Get your role description:

- What do you do that is NOT on there?
- What DON'T you do that IS on there?
- What is the balance of what you do/don't do and is that balance right?



# A few extra considerations for those questions

- What are the discrepancies between:
  - What you do/don't do
  - What others think you do/don't do
  - What you are meant to do (according to your role description) and what you actually do?
- What is the cost/impact of these discrepancies on you?
- We should play to our strengths, but that doesn't mean we should neglect activities that are valuable
- A well-defined and executed role should be replicable – it should not rely on you being a total legend and irreplaceable



# Plan where you want to head

Some questions to help define what the role SHOULD be:

Caveat: try to think bigger than yourself/what you like

- What is the best support that a school counsellor can provide?
- What is your service uniquely able to do (compared to other services at school or outside of school)?
- What takes up the most time but is worth it?
- What really annoys you in your work?
- Why do you roll your eyes or huff with certain referrals or requests?
- Where are you doing work that is better done by others?
- Where should you have better boundaries?



# Two general models of school counselling

## Clinical service

You provide a clinical service (**depth** – private practice model) – intensive individual therapy, targeted group programs, educational assessments

## Generalist service

You provide a generalist service (**breadth** – GP + systems/population health model) – triage/brief therapy, presentations, whole cohort programs, training for other staff

# Putting the pieces together

- Create a (replicable) decision-making process for what you will do/won't do:
  - Use your understanding of what your role should/should not include
  - Make decisions given your current context (did it before, not doing it now)
  - If you work in a team, consider how workload is distributed and who makes these calls
- Do you have any data you can draw on to measure what is important to you?
- Consider setting goals/KPI's for what you want to do each term/across the year



# Goals/KPI's

	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Small/targeted</b>	<b>Year level</b>	<b>Whole school</b>
<b>Students</b>	30	1	3	1
<b>Parents</b>	0	1	1	1
<b>Staff</b>	0	1	N/A	1



# Putting the pieces together

- Create a decision-making process for what you will do/won't do:
  - Use your understanding of what your role should/should not include
  - Use past good and bad experiences to establish some kind of yes/no criteria
  - Make decisions given your current context (did it before, not doing it now)
  - If you work in a team, consider how workload is distributed and who makes these calls
- Do you have any data you can draw on to measure what is important to you?
- Consider setting goals/KPI's for what you want to do each term/across the year
- Work out a communication strategy for getting this information to stakeholders

# Communicating with others

Create a schedule for regularly communicating with others about what you do and how you do it. This might include:

- Update your website/where people access information about you and your role
- Students and parents - emailing them once a semester with information about who you are, what you can offer and how they can refer/be referred
- Staff – emailing them once a semester with information about referrals, what you **might** be able to offer (e.g. presentations, PD's)

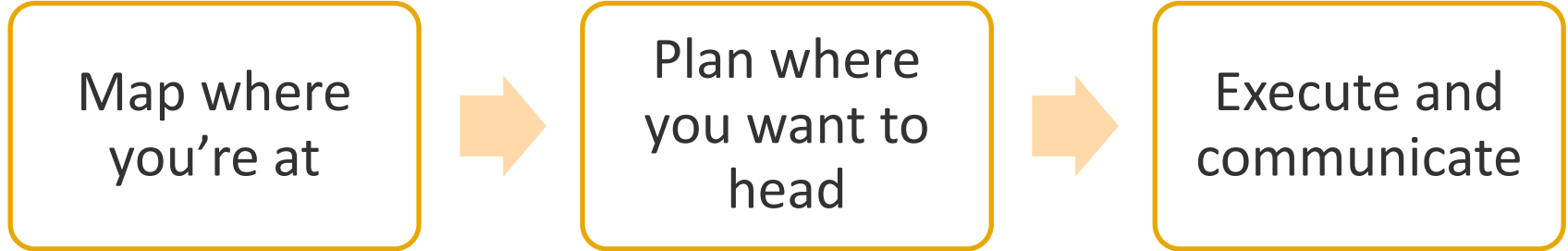
If you notice there are issues with how people understand your role, consider whether you need to be clearer or refine a process?

# Communicating with others

- The big:
  - Communication with senior leadership and pastoral care staff
  - Policy/procedural documents
  - 'Promo' material outlining the service
- The small:
  - Keeping firm with boundaries
  - Being clear when you are talking with people about what you do/don't do
  - Managing expectations

Just because you can, doesn't mean you should

## In summary...





# Future webinars...

9<sup>th</sup> March – Using data to define and improve your work

11<sup>th</sup> May – Supporting students at risk of significant self-harm and suicide

8<sup>th</sup> June – Using digital systems (to make your life easier!)

27<sup>th</sup> June – Presentation and groups at school made easy

24<sup>th</sup> August – Boundaries, burnout and being well

Please share the info about future webinars and remind colleagues they can sign up at any point and they will get access to the recordings for past events and links to join future ones

Bought a ticket to one webinar and want to upgrade to include all of them? Email me and I can arrange this for you



# Get in touch

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