

Provision of counselling and psychotherapy (CAP) for boarders and ex-boarders from UK independent schools: a scoping review

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Background

Little academic research has explored the provision of interventions for supporting current and ex-boarders.

Objectives

To identify studies investigating the provision and effectiveness of therapeutic interventions for this population.

Methods

Included items:

- peer-reviewed journal articles in English
- any date
- empirical studies in context of UK independent boarding schools.
- qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods and structured case studies.
- focus on provision/experience of delivering/receiving counselling or psychotherapy for current/ex-boarders.

Searches of ProQuest, PsycINFO & EBSCO databases on 25/10/2024. Reflexive thematic analysis used for data synthesis.

Results

- Most excluded items concerned non-UK contexts. Two considered special schools. Eight were not peer-reviewed empirical studies. One did not focus on counselling and psychotherapy.
- The **two** articles eligible for inclusion concerned the experience of providing psychoanalytic interventions.
- Three themes were developed: '**Feeling safer inside**'; '**Power and position**'; and '**Time: suddenness and continuity**'. These highlighted how some issues for current and ex-boarders may present strong challenges for therapists; awareness is essential for providing continuity within a robust therapeutic relationship.



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"At the end of each session, he appeared to abandon the child/self, regaining the defensive, protective ego position, and I would feel abandoned too."

Schaverien J. (2004)

"We may be seduced by a young client into some form of 'secret complicity' with them, such that we may lose our position as part of the authority link within school, unconsciously taking sides with a young person in a dangerous dynamic of rivalry with the institution or other members of staff." *Lloyd, L.-J (2016)*

Limitations

- Only articles written in English were included.
- Author was not psychoanalytically trained.
- Solo researcher carried out review but insider/outsider status plus research experience helped provide rigour.

Conclusions

- Future research is recommended into how/by whom CAP are provided to children, young people and staff in UK independent boarding schools.
- To inform best practice, research is needed into the efficacy and accessibility of different interventions for adult ex-boarders.
- Regarding EDI, individuals from different groups of ex-boarders (e.g., women, gay men, Black men) deserve research-informed therapeutic support.
- Ex-boarders exert societal and political power greatly out of proportion to their numbers. Their perceived privilege may explain the lack of academic research interest, an epistemic injustice.

