



The IGC is delighted to release the findings of the Institute's 2020 survey of guidance counselling practice in second level schools and colleges of further education (CFEs). This survey is based on analyses of actual data returned for the 2019/20 academic year by two hundred and one Second Level schools and Colleges of Further Education (CFEs), representing 30.5% of the 650 targeted.

Overall Findings

Overall, guidance counsellors report having 21.49 practice hours weekly, a figure 16 % below the ex-quota allocated hours reported in 2011/12, whilst catering for significantly increased school numbers. Non-DEIS schools reported 21.44 hours, while DEIS schools, 21.64 hours. Given that 25.4% of schools report DEIS status, the enhanced provision, promised to DEIS schools, is not evident.

How Overall Guidance Practice Hours of 21.49 Are Spent

- 5.07 hours are spent on classroom guidance;
- 12.64 hours on one-to-one student work with students (personal, career and educational);
- 1.16 hours on group work; and
- 2.28 hours on other guidance counsellor activities, including administration. This figure equates to approximately 5 hours, or 68.1 %, less than that spent in 2011/12.

An additional 5.54 hours a week are spent on academic subject teaching, on Wellbeing, SPHE and other classroom teaching/activity. In total, guidance counsellors are spending 10.61 hours weekly in the classroom.

Providers of Guidance Counselling in Schools & CFEs

In the 2019/20 academic year, of the **313 qualified guidance counsellors** employed in the 201 schools, there are **only 283 practicing guidance counselling**. 30 guidance counsellors or 10.6% are not practicing. 45 of the surveyed schools report using **unqualified staff** to deliver guidance counselling, with only 28 being able to quantify the number of hours being allocated, which equated to 6.40 hours per week. In addition, a further twelve schools reported using **external providers** for guidance (6.56 hours weekly); while fifty-three use them for counselling (7.40 hours weekly).

Beatrice Dooley, President of the IGC noted that "The ad-hoc nature, where schools are placed in the position that they must recruit paid and voluntary providers, wherever they can be sourced, is of concern. It ignores the holistic approach of the trained guidance counsellor. These findings suggest that the delivery of guidance in some of our schools is now occurring without the presence of an overarching quality system to determine the providers' qualifications, service standards, and Garda Clearance levels."

The IGC's objective is full restoration of pre-Budget 2012 ex-quota hours, ring-fenced for guidance counselling service delivery, and delivered by qualified guidance counsellors. We need to ensure a dedicated fit-for-purpose service is available in all second level schools, colleges of further education and adult education throughout the country.

Beatrice Dooley, President of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors