

AI Statement

I have used AI to assist me in this assignment under the criteria that allows it to support me.

I have used it for adding more structure to my essay and helping with grammar and spelling, with flow of my essay and rephrasing my drafts.

I have used services such as ChatGBT and Grammarly to assess my work, asking prompts to refine my work.

Wellbeing officers in further education colleges undertake various responsibilities, including supporting students with moderate difficulties such as low mood and anxiety, and promoting positive mental health among staff. Their role involves working closely with students, primarily on a one-to-one basis, providing opportunities to discuss concerns and offering appropriate signposting or follow-up support.

Obtaining the CPCAB Level 3 Certificate in Counselling Studies enables wellbeing officers to enhance their competence in roles that frequently involve vulnerability. This training facilitates a deeper understanding of addressing diverse service users' difficulties. (Level 3 Certificate in Counselling Studies (CST-L3), n.d.) This essay examines the competencies required for applying counselling skills within the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) framework, referencing E's role as a wellbeing officer at a further education college. The discussion explores competencies related to developing an ethical therapeutic relationship, as well as the skills, education, values, and practical application of counselling skills within E's role.

It is important to recognise that E is not working in the role of a counsellor, but rather as a helper. Within this role, counselling skills are used primarily in a listening capacity, enabling students to express their situation and explore appropriate avenues of support where needed. Interactions with E are typically informal and time-limited, with clear boundaries established. (Ballantine Dykes et al., 2024)

Support sessions are often one-off or brief check-ins, in contrast to counselling sessions, which are usually pre-arranged, take place on a regular basis, and last for a set period of time. Within these shorter timeframes, E uses counselling skills to build trust and rapport with students, creating a supportive space that allows for effective signposting to internal or external support services through trust. It is nevertheless important to recognise that a 10 minute conversation can make a difference (McLeod and McLeod, 2011).

To achieve this, E draws on core counselling skills such as active listening, empathy, and the use of open questions. Active listening allows students to feel heard and understood within a limited time, while empathic responses help validate students' experiences without offering advice or solutions. Open questioning supports students to explore their concerns further and consider appropriate sources of support (Nelson-Jones, R. 2008). The use of skills and values like radical acceptance and paraphrasing ensures the best chance for the student to explore their difficulties more effectively with E in confidence.

One of the most important personal values and morals, empathy allows E to momentarily hold the emotional weight of a student's difficulties. This can help students feel understood and accepted, enabling them to speak more openly without fear of judgment. Such an empathic approach is supported by key values outlined in the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy ethical framework, including sincerity, care, courage, and diligence. These values inform how helpers conduct themselves both in their interactions with students and in their internal self-awareness. (Ballantine Dykes et al., 2024)

Rogers' person-centred approach highlights the importance of empathy and unconditional positive regard in developing a supportive relationship (Rogers, C. R. 1986), which aligns with E's use of counselling skills within time-limited wellbeing sessions.

Demonstrating these values in practice requires confidence. For example, maintaining appropriate eye contact and allowing silence to support emotional processing are skills that rely on the helper's ability to tolerate discomfort and remain present. Similarly, resilience is required to recognise the importance of not giving advice, even when students are distressed. By resisting the urge to offer solutions, E supports students in exploring their own experiences and identifying appropriate sources of support, while maintaining clear professional boundaries. A way to show care and diligence is about being clear what you can and can't offer. (Ballantine Dykes et al., 2024)

Ethical boundaries are important when working with minors and young people, as well-being work often involves sensitive disclosures. As previously discussed, E is not working as a counsellor but in a wellbeing role that makes use of counselling skills to support and signpost students. Maintaining this distinction is essential to safe and ethical practice.

As a result, E must remain aware of the limits of their competence and avoid engaging in issues that require in-depth therapeutic intervention. When students present concerns that fall outside E's role, appropriate referral or signposting to specialist services, such as counselling, is required. This approach aligns with ethical principles outlined by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, ensuring that students are supported safely while professional boundaries are maintained (Ballantine Dykes et al., 2024).

Boundaries are essential to maintaining student safety, particularly in relation to confidentiality and the circumstances in which it may need to be broken. Confidentiality allows students to speak openly and honestly without fear of their personal information being shared unnecessarily. This sense of trust is fundamental to effective wellbeing support.

When a student discloses thoughts of harming themselves or others, E has a duty of care to act in order to safeguard the student and those around them. Given the nature of a further

education setting, this may include involving staff and, where appropriate, parents or carers. For this reason, the limits of confidentiality are typically explained and agreed at the beginning of any interaction between a wellbeing officer and a student.

There are occasions when it is appropriate for a student's information to be shared with a third party, with the student's consent, in order to provide accurate support and signposting. For example, if a student is experiencing symptoms of depression, this falls outside E's area of competency. In such cases, the most appropriate course of action is to refer the student to a general practitioner while contributing relevant information to the referral or advise guardians of options. This ensures the student receives the specialist support they require, while E maintains their role within safe and ethical boundaries. This would also avoid dependency and expectations of the role on the student of E, maintaining an appropriate relationship.

Information may also be shared with teaching staff when a student requires additional support within lessons, for example, regarding assignments, coursework, or social challenges. Sharing relevant information in these cases helps ensure that the student is supported by the college as a whole, rather than relying solely on one individual. In addition, involving staff in a supportive way can help to normalise discussions about mental health across the college, promoting understanding and reducing stigma. This collaborative approach contributes to a safe and nurturing educational environment.

Throughout their work at the college, it is important for E to be aware of their own personal beliefs, experiences, and emotional responses within their role. This includes engaging in self-reflection, maintaining self-awareness, practising self-care, and using tools such as reflective journals. Understanding oneself and recognising emotional triggers can improve

the way E conducts meetings with students, helping them remain present, empathetic, and professional. Additionally, being in tune with their own feelings allows E to respond appropriately to students' needs and ensure that their own well-being is protected.

When E engages with their own experiences, such as documenting in a reflective journal with an example like that they felt uncomfortable when a student expressed anger because it reminded them of a personal experience, they are able to process these feelings more consciously. This allows E to understand why the reaction occurred, how it affects their practice, and how to approach future interactions more effectively. Similarly, if E's personal values are challenged by professional frameworks, reflecting on these experiences helps maintain a balance between personal beliefs and professional responsibility. The CPCAB Level 3 supports this process by providing structured opportunities for self-reflection and developing self-awareness, enabling E to blend personal understanding with professional practice in a way that enhances student support while maintaining ethical boundaries. This also supports that E takes responsibility for their own learning within the role.

Another way E can develop their effectiveness in the role is through supervision. Meetings with a supervisor provide an opportunity to reflect on personal responses and professional development, rather than discussing individual students. This allows E to gain guidance from a more experienced perspective and explore strategies for managing their own growth and wellbeing within the role.

In addition to counselling-related skills, E also requires a range of organisational and practical skills. Time management, scheduling appointments, and coordinating referrals are essential to ensure students receive consistent support. Being reliable and efficient helps

build trust with students, as disruptions such as lateness or last-minute cancellations can undermine the relationship and reduce confidence in the support provided.

In conclusion, E holds a range of responsibilities to themselves, to the students, and to the wider college community. As a wellbeing officer, E has a duty of care to manage confidentiality appropriately, maintain professional boundaries, organise caseloads effectively, and engage with students in an empathic and ethical manner. The application of skills developed through the CPCAB Level 3 supports E in responding to students safely while remaining within the limits of their role.

By actively engaging with their training and reflecting on their own behaviours and emotional responses, E can enhance their self-awareness and professional judgement. This ongoing process of reflection strengthens ethical decision-making and supports personal development within the role. Maintaining accurate records and structured organisation further promotes reliability and consistency, reducing strain and ensuring students receive appropriate and timely support.

Overall, competence in a wellbeing role extends beyond the use of counselling skills alone. It involves ethical awareness, clear boundaries, reflective practice, and professional responsibility. Through continued development and adherence to these principles, E can provide effective, safe, and supportive care within the further education setting.

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