Online support in a stepped care model

Orla McLoughlin
TCD Student Counselling Service

Our setting in TCD

- Student Population of 18,000
- 11% of students use SCS

Our history with online support

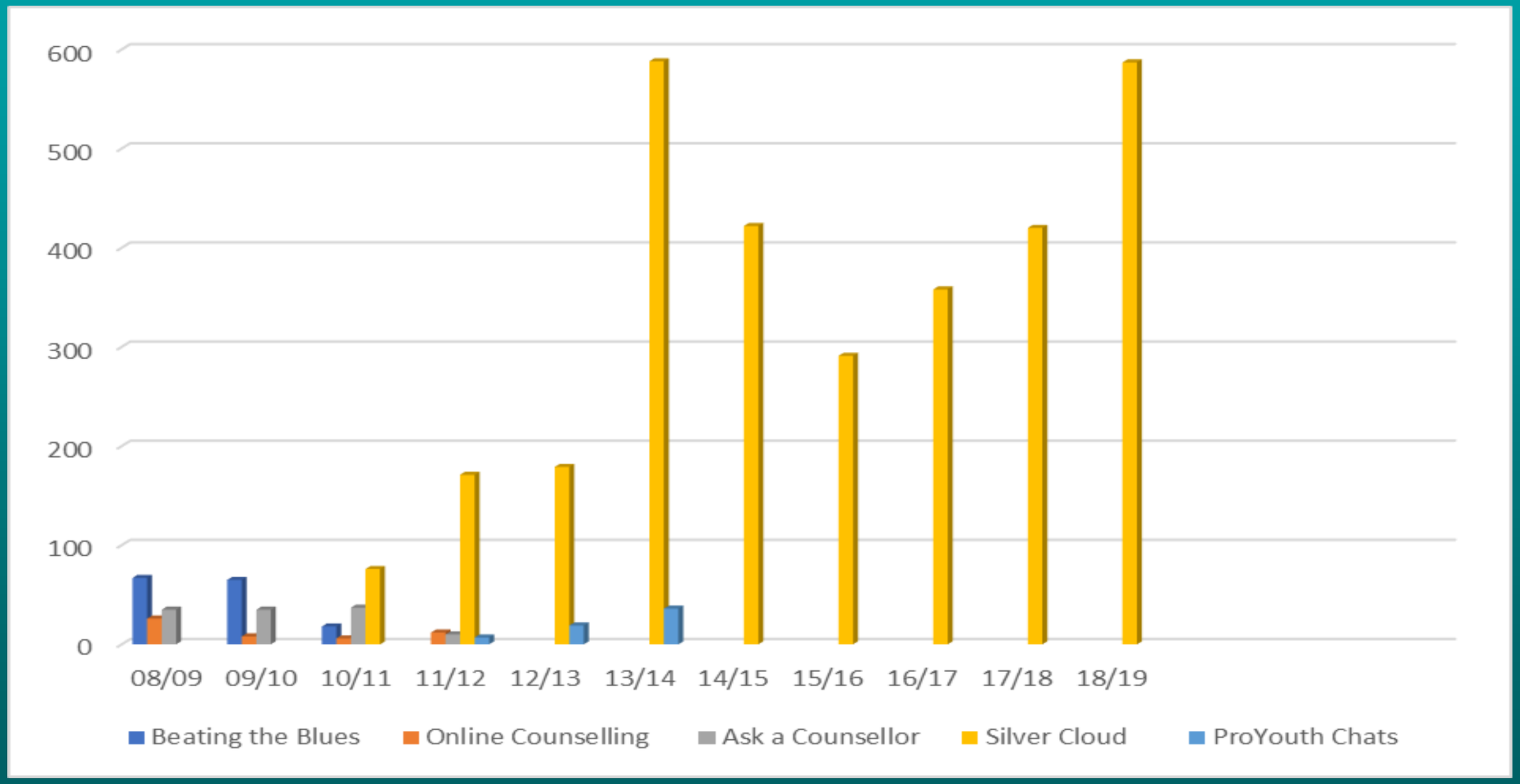
beating the blues®
cognitive behavioural therapy

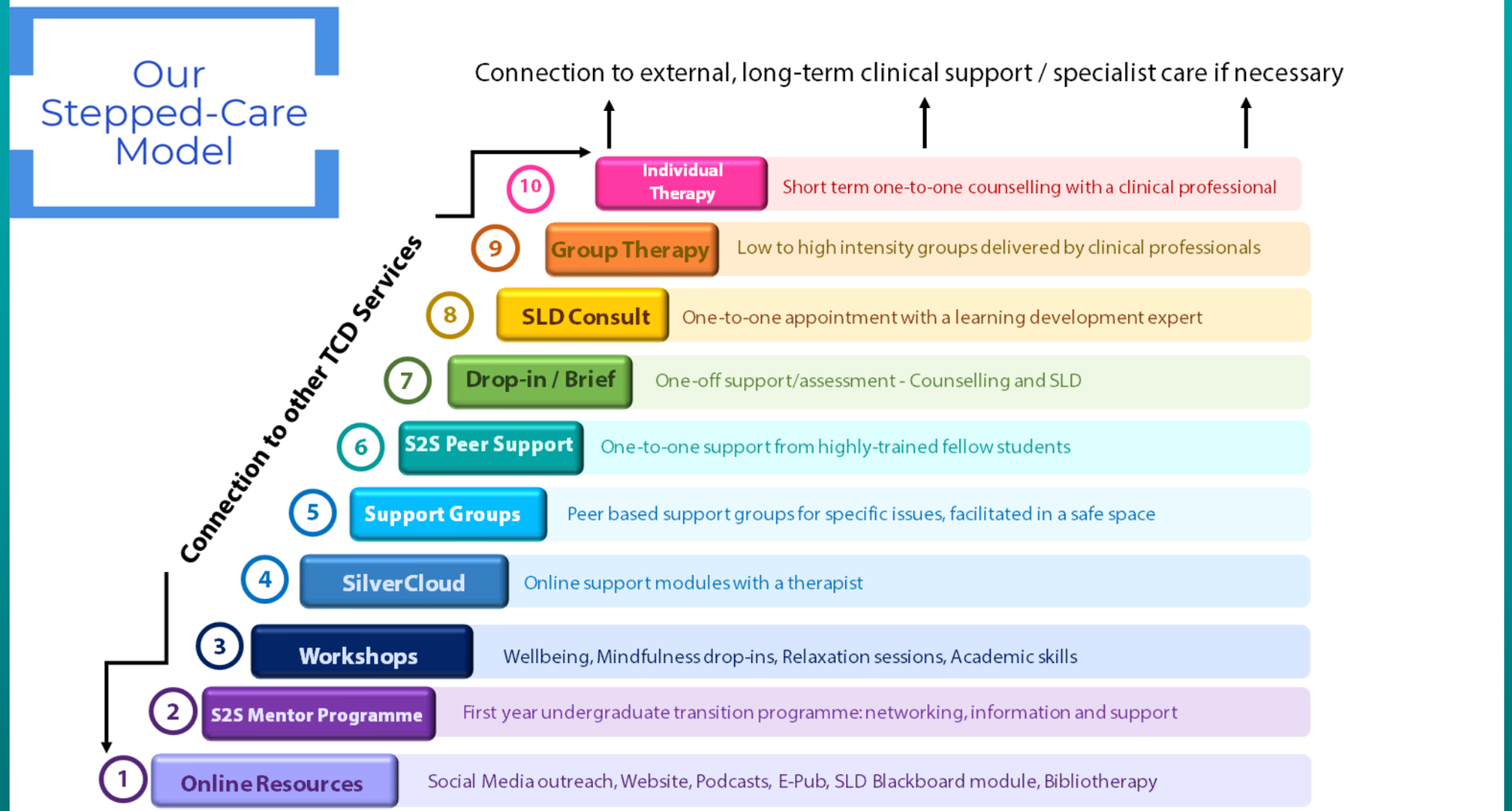
MY MIND MATTERS.IE
SUPPORTING STUDENT WELLBEING

ProYouth
Health Programme 2008-2013
Together for Health

SilverCloud

Our history with online support





Stepped Care Model

The role of online support

- Stand-alone, low-intensity intervention
- A support for students on a waiting list
- An adjunct to counselling

Self-referred (from website or social media)

From initial assessment appointment

Suggested by counsellor

Excluded and invited in for F2F screening

Online support only

Online support while waiting for F2F support

Online support and F2F together

Who are the online supporters?

- All core staff (psychologists and psychotherapists) expected to participate
- Assistant psychologists

Role of the online supporter

- Providing a warm, supportive, motivating presence and escalating any issues of concern
- Knowledge of the content of the programme is important
- AP's are not trained clinicians and must be discouraged from using diagnostic or pathologising language
- Can be unfulfilling

What about the RELATIONSHIP?

The Clients

I felt really at ease with my supporter, and felt I could ask or say anything to her.

Sometimes I found it hard to find time for the program, but with encouragement from my supporter it became less of a chore

I felt safe and reassured to know there was always someone to talk to

Absolutely amazing. it felt like someone always cared and there was always someone there to talk to. I felt I built a better relationship with her than my one on one counsellor.

General feedback from clients

- Helped them make sense of things
- Hard to find the time
- Importance of the supporter
- Specific components of the programme
- Recommend it to everyone

What we've learned in 10 years

- Systems systems systems!
- Training and support
- Reaching a different cohort
- Online as a gateway to F2F services
- Human contact **is important**
- Not for everyone

So who is it for?

- Those who are computer literate with good reading and writing skills
- Those who directly request to work online, or who would be more comfortable working online
- People whose understanding of their own issues fits with the CBT model
- People who are motivated and can work alone
- People who are interested in a new perspective or a new way to make sense of their distress

A word of caution

- Online work does not suit everyone
- Should not be used as a mandatory access route, nor drop-out be used as evidence against client readiness
- Risk of increasing distress if student not appropriately referred or adequately supported, and they feel they have 'failed' because this 'cure' didn't work for them
- Assessment and risk management systems are important

New developments

- Stress and Resilience programmes
- Unsupported options rolling out to whole college in 2019/2020

Thank you!

- mclougor@tcd.ie