

THE BRIDGE COUNSELLING SERVICE, WORCESTER

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Reference and Administrative Details

Charity Name: The Bridge Counselling Service – Worcester
Charity Number: 1079216
Address: The Angel Centre, Angel Place, Worcester, WR1 3QN

Trustees

Linda Watson (Chair)
Sarah Stansfield (Treasurer)
Wendy Platt (Resigned 31/12/23)
Stuart Currie
Neil Carey
Anthony Russell-Pattison
Rhiannon Lewis (Appointed 24/4/23)
Kirstie Valentine (Appointed 19/6/23)

Structure, Governance and Management

The Bridge is governed by a Declaration of Trust dated 1 October 1999 as amended by deed of amendment dated 20 December 1999. Under this document the Trustees have power to appoint new Trustees as required. A deed of rectification dated 24 May 2019 has corrected the original trust and deed of amendment to correct some anomalies which had been identified.

Financial Review

Total income for the year amounted to £36,520 and total expenditure was £30,556 giving rise to a surplus of £5,964. There was some very generous funding from some local churches and the year was aided by receiving grants of £5,000 from Laslett's Charities towards the cost of the Clinical Lead and £7,605 from Eveson Trust towards the cost of the Administrator. The largest expenses were payments to the Clinical Lead and Administrator, which in total amounted to £14,495. The rent for the office and counselling rooms was £5,165 this year, which remains a very competitive rent for these facilities in the city centre. This is higher than previous years due to taking on an extra room to provide a larger office space and a downstairs counselling room to cater for those who cannot manage the stairs or feel more comfortable in a downstairs room. Supervision costs were £6,727 of which £5,720 was refunded by trainee counsellors. It remains the trustees' view that supervision is an essential investment to enable The Bridge to provide a fully professional service and support the work of the counsellors. The income from client donations increased by £5,046 to £7,229, as more face-to-face counselling could take place and also clients are using the alternative methods of making a donation now offered by the Bridge. Other Donations were £22,196 including grants of £12,605. The Gift Aid of £1,219 was for the 12 months to 31 December 2022. A further claim to 31 December 2023 which was submitted in January 2023 is shown in debtors.

The Trustees maintained the policy of holding approximately 3 months operating costs in reserve. Based on budgeted costs for 2023 this would require a reserve of £8,800. Reserves are currently

higher than this, which is helpful as a deficit is currently budgeted for 2024 which could reduce reserves significantly. However, it is hoped some successful grant applications can be made again during 2024.

Objectives and Activities

The Charitable Objects are: *a] the relief of people within the city of Worcester who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress in particular by the provision of advice and counselling, and b] the advancement of education within the said city by the provision of counselling training.*

The trustees have considered the Commission's guidance on public benefit.

During 2023 the Bridge continued to provide counselling sessions for people with a wide range of emotional, relational and personal difficulties. Following the successful introduction of telephone counselling and online counselling during the height of the pandemic, the decision was taken to move to a Blended Service for the future, offering counselling via telephone, online or in-person. To facilitate this, internet speed and connectivity were improved to allow online counselling from the counselling rooms at the Angel Centre.


The service depends on the support of a committed team of professionally-trained counsellors who give their time voluntarily to the Bridge and other volunteers who assist as receptionists and provide administrative support. The day-to-day running of the service is led by an Administrator, who is employed for 9 hours per week. A Clinical Lead, who is self-employed and works for up to 3 hours per week, oversees the clinical aspects of the work. All clients self-refer, usually following recommendation from a wide range of sources, including GPs, statutory and voluntary bodies in Worcestershire, and churches, but there are also many self-referrals as a result of advertising and word of mouth. The Bridge is particularly committed to making counselling available to people from lower socio-economic groups through its 'pay what you can' policy. All such payments are entirely voluntary.

Achievements and Performance

The number of counsellors working at the Bridge fluctuated slightly during the year, but replacement counsellors continue to volunteer. We decided to offer placements to an increased number of student counsellors in their second year of training, which not only supports the student counsellors but also serves to increase our counselling capacity. During 2023, 991 counselling sessions were attended and 146 counselling assessments were provided. The fact that we decided to rent a larger room for our office and convert the previous office to a downstairs counselling room gives greater capacity for counselling.

To mark the leaving of a long-standing trustee and enable trustees, counsellors and other volunteers to spend some time together, we funded a social evening with refreshments, held at a local church hall.

This report was approved by the Trustees on 29/02/2024 and signed on its behalf by



LINDA WATSON Chair of Trustees

Independent Examiner's Report on the Accounts
to the Trustees of
The Bridge Counselling Service - Worcester
for the year ended 31 December 2023
set out on pages 1 to 4

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiners

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act), and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act;
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act have not been met, or
- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Douglas Dale

Date **29th February 2024**

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