

SOUTH BUCKS COUNSELLING

Registered charity number 1095554

Registered company number 4491415

**Report and financial statements.
for the year ended 31 December 2023**

Directors' Report for the year ended 31 December 2023

The Directors present their report together with the accounts of the Company for the year ended, 31 December 2023. The accounts comply with current statutory requirements.

Registered Charity Number 1095554

Registered Company Number 4491415

Registered Charity Address: The Cottage behind The Hub, 7 Easton Street, High Wycombe, Bucks,
HP11 1NJ

Directors:

Clare Wyatt

Chris Bushnell

David Farmer – resigned 31 July 2023

Penelope Holmes

Scott Walkinshaw

Secretary & Treasurer Chris Bushnell

Bankers NatWest Bank, 22 Market Square, Aylesbury, Bucks HP20 1TR

Governing Document Memorandum & Articles of Association (22 July 2002)

Independent Examiner P I Brogden

Public Benefit

Having regard to the Charity Commission's guidance, the Trustees consider that the charity provides a public benefit through the provision of a counselling service to the public by professionally trained and supervised counsellors.

Objectives

The charity's objectives are:

(a) To provide a professional, confidential, and affordable counselling service to persons seeking help for emotional and psychological difficulties, in order to help them to cope with and work through problems and issues and to make positive changes in their life.

(b) To offer training and development opportunities to qualified and trainee counsellors and to provide forums for those wishing to explore an interest in counselling.

Review of Activities

Our work in 2023 has focused on the following key areas:

We aim to respond to our clients' requests, promptly, personally, and generally within 24 hours. Benefiting from the extensive work undertaken since 2021 to improve our systems and processes, the ongoing use of a Practice Management System, as well as other internal systems, has enabled the agency to effectively manage its existing clients and new applications. In general, the agency has operated without a waiting list.

We continue to:

- Fully track and manage the client's experience from the moment a client contacts the agency to the completion of counselling.
- Improve and optimise our internal processes.
- Ensure secure GDPR compliance.
- Improve the financial information, including rolling 12-month forecasts provided to the Management and Trustees

We continue to find that more clients present themselves with complex psychological needs. This may be because of the local NHS provision, where it can be difficult to access robust psychological help and long waiting lists exist. Following the resignation of our Clinical Director in May 2023, the Trustees have moved quickly to strengthen our management team to ensure that we have sufficient skills and resources to manage the increased complexity of the issues we are presented with. To that end we have appointed:

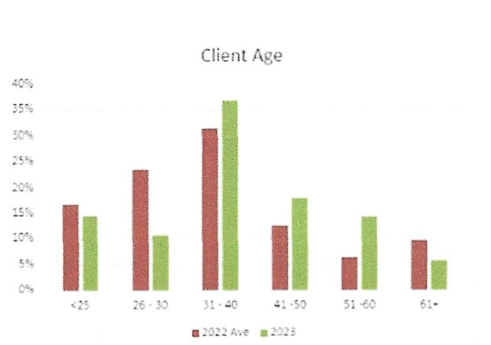
Clinical Director:	Julia Appleton - Integrative Counsellor
Clinical Lead:	Cath Muston - Psychodynamic Counsellor & Clinical Supervisor
Intake & Allocations Co-Ordinator:	Jo Inskip - Psychodynamic Counsellor
Lead for Clinical Risk:	Toni Harvey - Psychoanalytic Counsellor & Clinical Supervisor
Psychiatry Advisor:	Dr John Baruch - Retired Consultant Psychiatrist
Safeguarding Advisor:	Andrew Broome - Social Worker & Family Group Conference Manager

A Platform for developing careers: A key part of the agency's work is to provide a supportive environment to further the education and growth of its counselling team. We continue to maintain

strong connections to training organisations, ensuring we work collaboratively to meet placement training requirements and attract a high standard of trainees. Our new management framework, commitment to delivery of high quality Continuing Professional Development and expanding assessment team, fully supports the growth and development of all our team members. It is important to the agency that we continue to offer opportunities for all to gain valuable knowledge and experience of the multiple aspects of the client’s journey. All of this whilst providing the highest level of care to our clients in a safe and stable environment.

Time Limited Counselling The move to Time Limited Counselling began in 2020 and is now a well-established way of working within the agency. We have continued to apply the overall objective of offering time-limited counselling of up to 24 weeks (6 months) to individual clients in the community. In some circumstances, it is possible to extend this time, following discussion, if it is felt to be clinically indicated. Continuing to work within this new, time-limited frame means that we can ensure a regular flow of clients being able to access our counselling services. Simply put, we can reach more people struggling with mental health difficulties in our community.

In 2023 a total of 155 (2022: 153) clients attended counselling either at our dedicated counselling rooms in the Cottage in High Wycombe or online, depending upon individual requirements. Contrary to the trend noticed in 2022, in 2023 the age of our clients has generally increased with the number of clients under 30 years of age reducing from 41% in 2022 to 25% in 2023 and the number of clients over 40 increasing from 28% in 2022 to 38% in 2023.



The Gender of our clients has remained roughly the same with the following split.

2022		
Female	94	68%
Male	36	22%
Other	1	2%
Prefer Not to Say	8	8%
2023		
Female	100	61%
Male	52	38%
Non-binary	1	0%
Other	1	0%
Prefer Not to Say	1	0%
Grand Total	251	100%

As a natural result of counsellors and supervisors moving on, the number of active counsellors was reduced slightly during the year under review. We still have a steady flow of trainee counsellors applying

for placement positions at our agency from well-recognised and robust training colleges. In addition, we have made progress in connecting with additional training institutions, to further strengthen our links in the educational sector and support future recruitment of trainees. Our plan for the coming year is to recruit an additional supervisor, re-establish a full complement of 5 supervision groups and 20 counsellors, so increasing our capacity to offer counselling services to more people in the local community. As of February 2024, we have made adjustments to our trainee counsellor contracts so that the expectation is for all trainees to eventually hold a caseload of 4 clients instead of 3. It is expected that these increases will enable the agency to return to offering more sessions to more clients going forward. In 2023 the agency was able to help 155 clients (2022: 153) delivering a total of 1,562 sessions (2022: 1,536).

Affordable Counselling remains a key objective of the agency. As previously reported in 2022, we increased our standard fee to £50 per session however it became clear that this was beyond too many of our clients in the current economic environment and the standard fee was returned to the previous level of £45 per session with effect from 1st September 2023.

An Important part of the Client Assessment process is to assess and agree an individual client rate with a view to ensuring the Counselling services are made available at affordable rates. Whilst we do not perform formal means testing an attempt is made with the client to understand the ability of clients to afford the services provided. As a direct result of this assessment, the average fee charged changed during the year to £31.06 per session in 2023 compared to £32.84 and £30.33 per session in 2022 and 2021 respectively.

In July 2023 the Agency received the second installment of a three-year commitment to donate £10,000 per year for a period of three years from the Rothschild Foundation designed specifically to fund the provision of low-cost counselling. This July 2023 donation funded the difference between the fee paid and standard for 623 sessions through to December 2023. The remaining donation is scheduled to be received in July 2024.

The Trustees and Management have taken active steps to minimize the impact of the increased inflation. By carefully managing agreements and renegotiating with key suppliers, important savings have been achieved in many expense categories.

The assessment fee was increased from £15 per assessment to £30 with effect from 1 February 2023 and will increase again to £40 from 1 March 2024. The work involved in offering assessment sessions, writing up a clinical report and allocating a client to a counsellor for ongoing sessions is a skilled and time-consuming process for those counsellors on our designated assessment team.

Outlook

As noted above, the Trustees are very pleased to have appointed our new Clinical Director as well as strengthening the team to now include an experienced Clinical Lead, a Lead for Clinical Risk, an Intake and Allocations Co-Ordinator and a specialist, External Advisory Panel. As well as retaining our highly experienced team of supervisors, our extended professional framework will continue to build on the progress we have made during the last few years to further develop the organization.

Our Intake Assessment team is an integral part of maintaining the rhythm and flow of clients accessing our service. Giving our counsellors the opportunity to train in and develop these skills is viewed as an important part of supporting their training. Since October 2023, our intake assessment team has doubled in size to 10 members, the largest group SBC has ever had. Being in this position means that we can ensure sustainability of workload in this demanding area of our work. The quality of our support and training through every aspect of the assessment process means that we can retain counsellor's expertise once they naturally move on from the agency. Counsellors wish to remain connected to our organization, and we can facilitate this by offering formal Independent Contractor Agreements. They continue to attend monthly Intake Assessment Group meetings and training, as well as being able to access any Continuing Professional Development we offer.

Continuing Professional Development is an important part of ensuring we continue to maintain high clinical standards and our aim is to grow this aspect of our service and offer regular training. In February 2024, we were able to offer mandatory Safeguarding training to all our team members with our External Advisor, Andrew Broome. In May, we have scheduled further in-house training with our External Psychiatric Advisor, Dr John Baruch. Dr Baruch will run an interactive workshop related to Mental Health Issues in Counselling as part of our response to clients presenting with increasingly complex psychological needs. Further training is planned throughout the year.

Due to the very successful fundraising activities in 2021 and 2023 together with the committed funding from the Rothschild foundation, the Agency was well funded for the year under review. However, the Trustees have historically considered that the Agency should always carry reserves sufficient to cover operating expenses for 6 months. Our forecasts suggest that whilst we have sufficient funds and committed donations to cover activities for the whole of 2024, we do need to raise additional funds to maintain the 6-month funding requirement. To that end, fundraising remains critical to the agency, and we continue to seek support from both local and national grant and fund awarding bodies; the pressures on funding providers and the numbers seeking fundraising remains a challenge within a difficult environment.

The provision of our counselling services would not be possible without the great efforts of all our staff, most of whom are volunteers. Although we offer training placements for students to gain their clinical experience, we have some counsellors who continue to work with us long after they have gained their professional qualifications and give their time freely. Others such as the Trustees all work without payment. Also, we recognize that members of staff work considerably more than their paid hours on a regular basis, due to their dedication to the Agency, and our intake team and supervisors play a critical role in ensuring the quality of our clinical services. We are indebted to them all for providing a first-class service to our clients. The work of the Management Team has been critical to the ongoing growth of the Agency. The increasing complexity of the cases presented to us together with the pressures to maintain funding will continue to place significant demands on our whole Team. The Trustees are grateful for their ongoing dedication and support.

Reserves Policy and Risk Management

The trustees are currently reviewing their strategic risk register and are actively managing all clinical, operational and financial risks facing the service.

The Trustees have noted the increased complexity of client cases presented to the agency. To mitigate this risk, the agency has put in place the extended management structure and specialist Advisory panel,

described in this report. The Trustees believe that this new structure enables the agency to carefully consider the levels of client risk presentation and the appropriateness of onward referrals to other services e.g. NHS Complex Needs/Addiction services. This has resulted in an increase in costs; however, the Trustees believe the increase in costs are necessary to protect both our clients and our counselors and supervisors.

The Trustees consider that, for the Agency to meet its long-term objectives and be able to undertake specific projects and take advantage of other opportunities as they arise, unrestricted reserves should be sufficient to cover six months' total expenditure. With the charitable donations received during the year and the income received from our clients, this level of reserves was maintained again at the end of 2023.

The Trustees consider that current reserves are sufficient in the short to medium term but continue to focus on the initiatives outlined in the review of activities, which it is hoped will contribute to an increased level of reserves in future years.

Fundraising remains a key risk to the Agency and the Trustees and other senior members of the team are fully engaged in fundraising activities to actively generate funds to mitigate this risk and to ensure the Agency is adequately funded into future years.

Trustees Responsibility in Relation to the Financial Statements

The law applicable to charitable companies in England and Wales requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the Company's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing those financial statements the Trustees are required to:

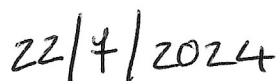
- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently.
- Make judgements that are reasonable and prudent.
- State whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and for taking reasonable steps for the prevention of fraud and other irregularities. The report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by Clare Wyatt, Chair.



CM Wyatt



Date

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of South Bucks Counselling

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the company for the year ended 31 December 2023, which are set out on pages 5 to 8.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees of the Company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').


Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5) (b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's report

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Company as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn to this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Peter Brogden

Date

19/03/2024

South Bucks Counselling
Statement of Financial Activities
For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Unrestricted funds 2022 £
Income and endowments from:			
Donations		12,071	31,785
Charitable activities			
Counselling		43,705	50,478
Assessment Fees		2,790	15
Conference and training courses		-	-
Total for charitable activities		46,495	50,493
Income from investments:			
Bank interest		430	103
Total income and endowments:		58,996	82,381
Expenditure on:			
Charitable activities:			
Counselling	3	74,713	84,606
Conference and training courses		-	-
Governance costs		350	350
Total expenditure on charitable activities		75,063	84,956
Net income (expenditure) for the year		(16,067)	(2,575)
Total surplus brought forward		50,007	52,582
Total surplus carried forward		33,940	50,007

South Bucks Counselling
Balance Sheet at 31 December 2023

	Notes	2023 £	2022 £
Fixed assets			
Net book value at 31 December 2023	4	-	-
Current assets			
Debtors	5	220	-
Prepayments	6	884	738
Cash at Bank and in Hand		36,248	55,349
		37,352	56,087
Current liabilities			
Creditors falling due within one year	7	3,412	6,080
Net current assets		33,940	50,007
Total net assets		33,940	50,007
Unrestricted Funds b/fwd		50,007	52,582
Surplus/(Deficit) for year		(16,067)	(2,575)
Unrestricted Funds		33,940	50,007

Audit exemptions

For the year ended 31 December 2022 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of the accounts.

The Accounts were approved by the Board of Directors and signed on its behalf on the 31-Jul-24




By: C Wyatt

C Bushnell

South Bucks Counselling
Notes to the accounts
For the year ended 31 December 2023

1 Company Status

South Bucks Counselling is a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. The members have each undertaken to contribute such a sum as may be required, not exceeding £1, in the event of the company being wound up. South Bucks Counselling is also a registered charity (No. 1095554) and as such is exempt from all forms of direct taxation.

2 Accounting Policies

(a) Accounting Period

The 2022 accounts cover the 12 months to 31 December 2022

(b) Basis of accounting

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant notes(s) to these accounts.

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued on 16 July 2014 and with the Charities Act 2011.

(c) Donations

Donations comprise grants which have been credited to income in the year in which they are received.

(d) Charitable activities

Income from charitable activities is credited in the year in which it arises.

(e) Expenditure

Expenditure is included in the Statement of Financial Activities on an accruals basis.

(f) Depreciation

Depreciation of assets which comprise office equipment was provided at 25%.

South Bucks Counselling
Notes to the accounts
For the year ended 31 December 2023

3 Expenditure on charitable activities

	Counselling activities 2023 £	Counselling activities 2022 £
Counsellors' costs (including travel)	2,755	1,800
Supervision and assessment	11,110	13,470
Office management	27,800	30,821
Premises	15,463	14,831
Marketing	3,692	4,154
Insurance	870	834
Telephone	1,014	863
Professional affiliations	241	319
Bank charges	773	220
Audit & Accounting	2,094	2,150
IT Software & Consumables	7,125	13,194
Miscellaneous	1,776	1,950
	<u>74,713</u>	<u>84,606</u>

South Bucks Counselling
Notes to the accounts
For the year ended 31 December 2023

	2023 £	2022 £
4 Fixed Assets		
Office Equipment at cost		
Balance at 1 January 2021	1,561	1,561
Additions during the year	-	-
At 31 December 2021	<u>1,561</u>	<u>1,561</u>
Depreciation		
Balance at 1 January 2021	1,561	1,561
Charge during the year	-	-
At 31 December 2021	<u>1,561</u>	<u>1,561</u>
Net book value at 31 December 2021	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
5 Debtors		
Donations	-	-
Other Debtors	220	-
	<u>220</u>	<u>-</u>
6 Prepayments		
Insurance prepaid	884	738
	<u>884</u>	<u>738</u>
7 Creditors		
Independent Examiner's fee		350
Income in Advance	353	2,150
Miscellaneous	3,059	3,580
	<u>3,412</u>	<u>6,080</u>
8 The average number of employees during the year		
All part time	-	1