

AGM Chairman's Report FY 24/25

This year has seen a significant degree of consolidation as we continue to put LCC on a more sustainable footing in the post-covid era. This will also be my second AGM as Chairman and I would like to thank the work and effort provided by the management team to support the operation.

During the last financial year we started providing three services, our core service, supported by our team of 24 volunteer counsellors, the grant funded paid counsellor project (PCP), employing 8 counsellors that qualified and migrated from the core service, and lastly, the ESP Network project. The ESPN service subsequently ended in November as the GP funds were no longer available. Whilst the PCP project continued beyond the financial year this has now also completed.

In the period April'24 to March'25, 2,124 counselling sessions were attended, 87.4% of which have been face to face, and as such, a tribute to the hard work of our volunteers, and particularly the commitment of Liz Rose, our head coordinator, and her deputy coordinator, Amy Thomas.

Throughout the last year we have worked very hard to keep the waiting list at historically low levels, indeed there have been times when the waiting list has been down to single figures. Consequently, our wait times have generally been significantly less than our target of 6 weeks - a huge achievement compared with waiting times of a year or more in the NHS.

This is a terrific achievement for an organization like ours, led by a team of volunteer trustees and a small, dedicated staff.

Sadly, during the FY the ESP Network project, came to an end as the funding stream is no longer available. This is particularly disappointing, particularly given the brilliant work undertaken by Imelda Byrne and Steven Maidment in getting this service up and running and the hugely positive endorsement of the service by the ESP Network GP's. The small surplus made on this contract has, however, helped to subsidise the losses made in the core service.

In August we completed the final year of our paid counsellor project (PCP). Despite its success and the positive feedback from our sponsors they were not in a position to extend or offer us another grant. This was an important change for the charity in that it not only retained the expertise of our counsellors but provided them with a paid stepping-stone into

their subsequent careers. It had been hoped that at the end of the grant we would have commercial projects to financially underpin the continuation of this work, but, whilst this is tantalizingly close, we are not there yet. An important task for the immediate future is to obtain further grants to restart the PCP until the commercial projects are once more in place. Our thanks go to our alumni counsellors who have stayed on with us despite us not being able to pay them for their work. Many thanks to Liz Rose for driving this project.

We are, with the help of Philip, Peter and Dale, developing other opportunities through our CARE Project with the aim of mirroring the ESPN model but for other organisations. We are currently developing a pilot project with the University of Southampton based on this model.

Over the last year we have held 3 recruitment events, and we have another in the near future. We seem to have no shortage of applications and Anne Hall has been very helpful in identifying and interviewing potential candidates with Liz Rose and Amy Thomas.

As reported last year, central to our ethos is our determination that the Core service must stand on its own two feet and be viable so that we can survive even if our more ambitious projects should fail to get funding. As you are aware we met with all staff in March to raise our concerns over the poor numbers of clients seen, on average, by our counsellors. Based on the actual achievements we reran the business model again and as a consequence we have raised our fee from £25 to £35 per session in order to cover our running costs. To put this into context other counselling organisations charge £50+ a session and the NHS costs considerably more.

Following these meetings we did see an improvement in sessions and income, and in May and June the core service broke even for the first time in a while. However, over the summer sessions and income dropped off again and we were well behind in July, August and September.

Looking to the future the Board of Trustees believe that in order to provide a sustainable organisation with a lowest possible fee level we need to focus on some aspects of operations. As a consequence of our meeting in March we have agreed the following operational changes and priorities:-

- We now ask clients, that we have screened and allocated to counsellors, to pay for their counselling sessions up-front and, on their first session, to agree a program of sessions with clients.
- Improving the utilisation of the services; reducing no shows; ensuring donations are made by clients upfront; counsellors proactively asking Liz for new clients when clients are ending, and ensuring that our counsellors aim to see 3 clients per week.

- We have asked the Counsellors to be more flexible in how and when they see clients so that they can achieve the targets above.
- Applying for new grants to support and subsidise clients that are short of funds and can't afford to meet our donation criteria. We also want to apply for grants to extend our paid counsellor projects.
- Develop the CARE project to seek out and develop new opportunities for providing counselling services to organisations, utilising our trained and experienced counsellors.

Weekly meetings, with the coordinator team, are now well established, to monitor the parameters above. This team reviews aspects such as counsellor utilisation, grant spent, our new spreadsheet development, recruitment, Score 10 outturns and grant applications.

Whilst we remain in a tight financial position, it is stable with adequate reserves and we hope that through the improvements above, and new grant funding we can compensate for the loss of the ESP network contract which has been so useful in bolstering our financial position.

On the Trustee front sadly Cathy Jones who has been with us for some time has resigned and we thank her for all the work she has done for us.

I'm pleased to report however, that during the last year Dr Hilary Boddington (a retired GP), Steve Maidment, Dale Fewings and Peter Heath, (All Counsellors from our Alumni) have agreed to join the Board of Trustees.

Many thanks to all within the organisation for their hard work to achieve what we have last year.

Meanwhile the Trustees confirm that they have followed the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit and that they have conducted the affairs of Life Changes in accordance with its aim to benefit the public.

Life Changes Counselling					
Limited By Guarnatee: 05750613 Registered Charity: 1114553					
Accounts for the year 31st March 2025					
Income and Expenditure Account		2024/25		2023/24	
Income		£	£	£	£
Unrestricted donations	HEMC Counselling	0.00		1,000.00	
	Client donations from HiWCF	11,890.00		8,830.00	
	Client donations	20,002.32	31,892.32	21,350.56	31,180.56
Restricted donations	PCP/HiWCF	13,950.00		13,225.00	
	ESPN	53,232.00	67,182.00	77,532.00	90,757.00
Individual donations	Amazon Smile	0.00		5.00	
	Lottery Community Grant	19,999.00			
	Freightliner	0.00		1,000.00	
	ER Fundraising	0.00		378.00	
	Savings Account Interest	224.40		21.76	
	Paypal Giving Fund	0.00	20,223.40	0.00	1,404.76
Total			119,297.72		123,342.32
Expenditure	Rates		579.23		1,197.32
	Supervision		7,937.50		9,925.00
	Premises for Core Services		4,200.00		4,500.00
	HEMC Counselling		0.00		640.00
	Sundries		145.95		127.46
	Co-ordinator		23,187.50		20,440.00
	Insurance (PI)		2,360.23		1,743.64
	DBS		0.00		90.00
	Website/IT		319.06		856.95
	Telephone		179.28		123.56
	Advertising		0.00		0.00
	Training		0.00		75.00
	Subscriptions/Registrations		307.00		285.00
	PCP/HiWCF		24,785.00		18,770.58
	Accountant Fee		425.00		
	ESPN		41,214.75		63,139.00
Total			105,640.50		121,913.51
Surplus/Defit for the year			13,657.22		1,428.81
Balance Sheet			31/3/25		31/3/24
			£		£
Assets	Cash at Lloyds Bank		38,707.74		25,050.52
Liabilities	Deferred Revenue HiWCF		-4,650.00		-4,600.00
	Deferred Revenue Lottery		-11,667.00		0.00
			22,390.74		20,450.52
Reserves					
Balance at 1 April 2024			25,050.52		23,621.71
Surplus/Deficit for the year			13,657.22		1,428.81
			38,707.74		25,050.52
Agreed C Orton and C Jones 5/9/25					

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