

ASHFORD COUNSELLING SERVICE LIMITED

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR FROM 01/01/24 TO 31/12/2024

INTRODUCTION

In review, 2024 has been a year of expansion & investment for ACS. The continual increase in demand for In-person counselling has ensured a busy centre, with referrals yet again increasing on the previous year. We have increased the number of counsellors & expanded the supervision groups. In person supervision has recommenced at the Paul Bower centre, although on-line supervision remains the most favoured format. The clinical team has expanded to four supervisors who provide strong & supportive leadership to our counsellors.

We have made substantial investment to the fabric of the centre this year. A disabled toilet has been installed. In addition, the old metal barred windows have been replaced with UPVC double glazed units and a secure UPVC rear door installed. This has made a marked impact on both the accessibility and ascetics of the centre and additionally reduced heat loss. The heating controllers in each room have been replaced and a regular maintenance contract agreed. We will continue to make improvements to the centre, as funds allow.

SECTION A - REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

Charity registration number: 1169322

Company number:10231859

Registered charity: Ashford Counselling Service (CIO)

Principal Address: The Paul Bower Centre, 123 Church Road, Ashford TN24 0JQ

TRUSTEES WHO MANAGE THE CHARITY (Executive Committee)

Hugh Cooper	Joint Chair resigned Dec 2024	Elected at AGM 2021
John Rampton	Hon. Treasurer	Elected at AGM 2021
Susan Smith	Joint Chair to Dec 2024 /Chair Jan 24 to present	Elected at AGM 2021
Darren Sharpe		Elected at AGM 2022
Michelle Hamer		Elected at AGM 2023

ADVISERS AND AGENTS

Sealey & Johnson Ltd	Accountant and Independent Examiner
Lloyds Bank, Ashford	Bankers

SENIOR STAFF During this period

Femmie Bonsier January 23 to present	Manager
Brigitte McAndrew	Clinical Lead
Michelle Cage to July 24/ Heather Dehara Aug 24 to present.	Administrator

SECTION B - STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The organisation was established in 1987 and is governed by its constitution. Since July 2021 the service is a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) managed by its Trustee Body. The Trustee Body consists of volunteers selected for the skills they can bring to the organisation as well as their interest and commitment to our work. They meet at least quarterly (January, April, July and October); in 2024 they met formally eight times.

Trustees are voted in each year at the Annual General Meeting by members of Ashford Counselling Service plus attendees from local organisations who have an interest in our work.

The Trustee Body delegates responsibility for the day to day running of the organisation to the Manager who is supported by a Clinical Lead and an Administrator; all staff are employed part-time.

ADDITIONAL GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Ashford Counselling Service is an organisational member of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy. It adheres to its ethical framework.

The agency has a comprehensive Handbook of policies and procedures which is under rolling review. The Handbook includes all aspects of Health & Safety, Risk Assessment, Troubleshooting and problem resolution. An appendix includes the new constitution.

The organisation does not receive any year-on-year grant from statutory funders and as a result we have to elicit contributions from our clients. We also attempt to obtain grant-funding from appropriate bodies by submitting bids. This enables us to provide the clinical support and to continue to provide a high standard of service to our clients.

SECTION C - OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The objectives as set out in the current constitution are as follows:

The objects of the CIO are:

- (1) To provide high quality, low-cost counselling to persons in Ashford and the surrounding area suffering from mental or emotional difficulties.
- (2) To provide continuous professional development to counsellors, counsellors-in-training and others.

CONTRIBUTION MADE BY VOLUNTEERS

It cannot be over-emphasised that the contribution made by our counsellors is the bedrock of the service and they are the means by which we deliver Objective 1 above. They deploy their skills and experience without remuneration beyond minimal expenses, and many of them waive even that. This is what enables ACS to offer a genuinely affordable service to our clients, many of whom may be considered to be 'less well-off'. There is no compromising of standards: volunteer counsellors have an intensive interview to ensure that they meet the criteria which the organisation sets, are DBS checked and are expected to give three counselling sessions per week. All counsellors have group supervision every two weeks with an experienced supervisor.

During 2024 we have had the support of four clinical supervisors, Brigitte McAndrew, Barbara Akers, Natalie Elliott and Sharon Mason who, in addition to their support for counsellors, have continued to be pivotal in the development of the service. Their remuneration is significantly below the market rate, and they are crucial to the delivery of Objective 2 above. In 2024 Supervision groups were increased to nine and in 2025 we are looking to expand on this further, as we increase the number of counsellors at ACS. We have re-established one in-person supervision group back in the centre & hope to establish a second during 2025. Thus, ensuring a hybrid system that gives counsellors the choice. During the year there were 27 counsellors.

Brigitte McAndrew is our Clinical Lead and continues to ensure the quality and safety of counsellors and the clinical work in conjunction with Barbara, Natalie and Sharon. They have developed a strong and supportive team who in conjunction with the Administrator and Manager provide comprehensive support to the counsellors.

There is a well-regarded programme of Continuous Professional Development to ensure that our volunteers continue to develop their skills. As well as trained counsellors we recruit and develop trainee counsellors who are undertaking their Diploma in Counselling at local colleges, training establishments and universities.

We continue to review our administrative systems and implement changes that support best practise. There has been some turnover of volunteers throughout the year, and we continue to look at increasing retention of volunteer counsellors, including trials to afford them some remuneration. It is our intention to continue exploring ways that we might be able to do this, while ensuring the viability and survival of the service. We continue to welcome new volunteer counsellors from a diverse range of backgrounds, and we hope their time here will be rewarding.

All members of the Trustee Body are also volunteer's and put in many hours of work to ensure the smooth-running of the service; their role is not only strategic: each trustee makes a real 'hands-on' contribution to the organisation as well.

SECTION D - ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

1. HOPES AS EXPRESSED IN PREVIOUS TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

a. Re-establish a centre-based team, which creates a well-used Hub

The Paul Bower centre is now a very well utilised centre. The Manager or Administrator are in attendance daily during core hours and provide comprehensive support for the counsellors and their clients. Heather Dehara joined us as Administrator in August 2024. Her excellent administrative skills & supportive input have made a very noticeable impact on our procedures and systems. Heather has created and implemented a number of changes such as the introduction of templates and updating of counsellor forms that have made a tangible difference to the administrative support that our counsellors receive. The Administrator hours were increased to facilitate the continuing increase in workload.

A co-operative and collaborative relationship has been established between the Clinical & Business team with regular quarterly meetings and the introduction of Supervision of Supervision meetings.

b. Develop services and attract funding, in order to reduce waiting times for clients.

The NHS have rented a room on three days a week between 8.30 to 16.30. Unfortunately, following a consultation and restructuring of their services, they have terminated this arrangement. This will have a major impact on our financial situation for 2025, resulting in a loss to our income of approx. £12,000 per annum. It is also a loss to us of colleagues that had become part of the ACS extended team. We will be advertising our rooms more widely to increase revenue.

We have increased our volunteer counsellor numbers to assist us in reducing the waiting list. Our increased counsellor sessions have resulted in much higher client contributions again in 2024 but sourcing extra funding will now need to be more of a priority to offset the loss of rental income. We have been lucky to have been successful in a couple of small bids for refurbishment, but larger funding bids must now be targeted.

It costs the service approximately £35 to run a counselling session and ACS relies on client contributions to enable it to function.

c. Free/heavily subsidised CPD provision

Much of the CPD provision for this year has been heavily subsidised & a reasonable attendance achieved for some events. For example, 'Counselling and the Law' However, it has proved generally difficult to encourage counsellors back to in person training. On occasion, targeted training has been offered and subsidised to individuals rather than offering full courses. We continue to try & improve our CPD offering and hope to become a service where all counsellors are 'Trauma informed'

Counsellors connect which is a networking event run by Darren Sharpe has proved to be of great value. This event runs quarterly and is open to both ACS and external counsellors and has provided a number of valuable training topics for counsellors to attend in a relaxed and sociable environment.

d. Strengthen counsellor retention through e.g. improved communication, greater involvement in cross-service activities, more team-building, improved attendance at CPD events.

Qualified counsellor retention has continued to be a priority, and we ran a pilot scheme to offer payment of £20 for 4th & 5th clients. Unfortunately, there was limited uptake & we only had a couple of counsellors who participated in the scheme. It is still our intention to continue to investigate affording some remuneration to our qualified counsellors and other pilot schemes will be considered throughout 2025.

Communication and support provided to counsellors and clients alike is much improved, with the office being manned Mon-Fri during core daytime hours between the Manager and Administrator. Inductions are run for all new counsellors in training where they receive a comprehensive overview of all systems and documentation.

e. Enhance the premises.

The Centre has had major investment during 2024 with the installation of a disabled toilet & the replacement of windows & a rear door in the office. The refurbishment will continue, as funding allows & we have recently received an allocation of funds to provide the counselling rooms with new chairs.

f. Increase the size of the trustee body.

Michelle Hamer has been a very welcome & proactive addition to the Trustee body and has offered to complete some of our funding applications.

After many years of unstinting service and support, Hugh Cooper stood down as Chair of ACS. We thank him for his years of service and hope that he will remain connected to the service.

We hope to recruit Additional Trustees with specific skills (IT, Media, Fundraising) are still very much needed. Despite some local advertising this continues to be an issue.

2. DETAILS OF COUNSELLING WORK UNDERTAKEN IN 2024

Numbers of clients

This year has seen a further increase in enquiries and referrals into the service. ACS has continued to offer counselling that met client need for short, medium and long-term work.

Client profiles

We experienced a large increase this year in the number of enquiries for the service, 321 people contacted us during 2024 up from 298 in 2023 an increase of 8%.

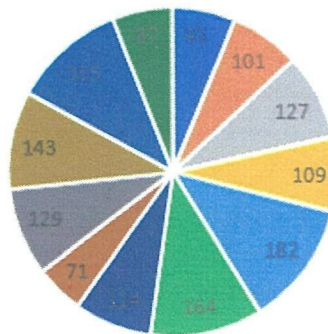
Client Referrals 2024 (up to 29/12/2024)

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
104	115	104	189	244	298	321

Counselling Hours 2021 - 2024

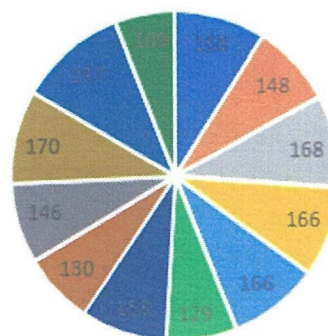
2021	2022	2023	2024
COVID / no record	1102	1485	1855

1485 Counselling Sessions in 2023



■ Jan ■ Feb ■ Mar ■ Apr ■ May ■ Jun ■ Jul ■ Aug ■ Sep ■ Oct ■ Nov ■ Dec

1855 Counselling Sessions in 2024

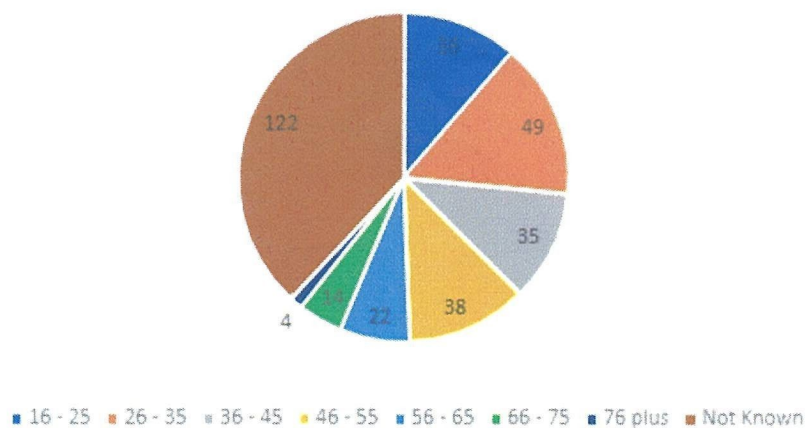


■ Jan ■ Feb ■ Mar ■ Apr ■ May ■ Jun ■ Jul ■ Aug ■ Sep ■ Oct ■ Nov ■ Dec

Age Profile 2024

Age of clients is not always recorded, but the majority fall into the 19-39 age bracket.

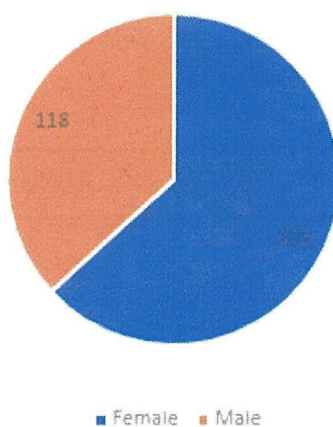
Age Profile of ACS Clients



Gender 2024

Historically about 75% of our clients have been female. However more recently the split has moved to 63% female & 37% male.

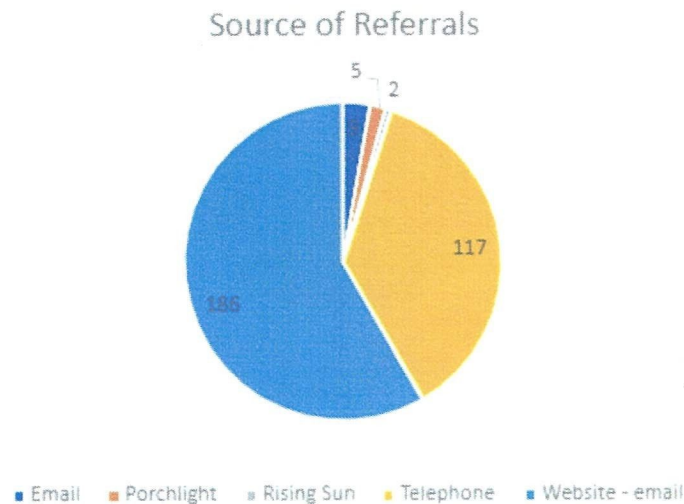
Referrals by Gender



Source of Referrals 2024

All our clients are treated as self-referrals; none were funded by outside agencies. The majority come after a recommendation from their GP or are returning, but we also see a significant number who have been signposted by other Mental Health services.

Clients access us by telephone or by electronic contact, there has been a noticeable increase in electronic contact.



Presenting Issues 2024

Stress, anxiety, depression, trauma and bereavement were issues for 50% of our clients. These were often presenting along with other difficulties and/or diagnoses. The increase in complexity of issues presented to us and the loss of some of our more experienced counsellors meant that often people had a longer wait for allocation to an appropriate counsellor.

We have continued to work with clients suffering from financial hardship this year and have been able to offer 'affordable counselling' to those who need it.

SECTION E - FINANCIAL REVIEW, INCLUDING POLICY ON RESERVES

Income for the year 1st January to 31st December 2024 was £60,956 and expenditure was £61,935. Thus the service made an operating deficit of £979. Our bank accounts remained in a very positive situation at the end of the year.

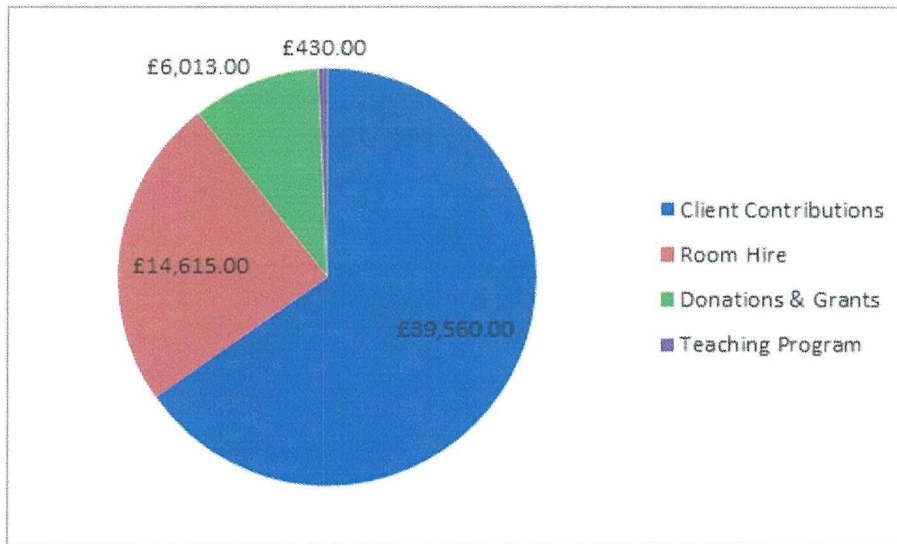
Fixed assets (the property, furniture, fittings) were valued at £80,290. Full details are in the pages following Section G (Declaration).

	1st January 2024	31 st December 2024
ACS Current Account & Petty Cash	£23,572	£22,502
ACS Reserve Account	£5,016	£5,076

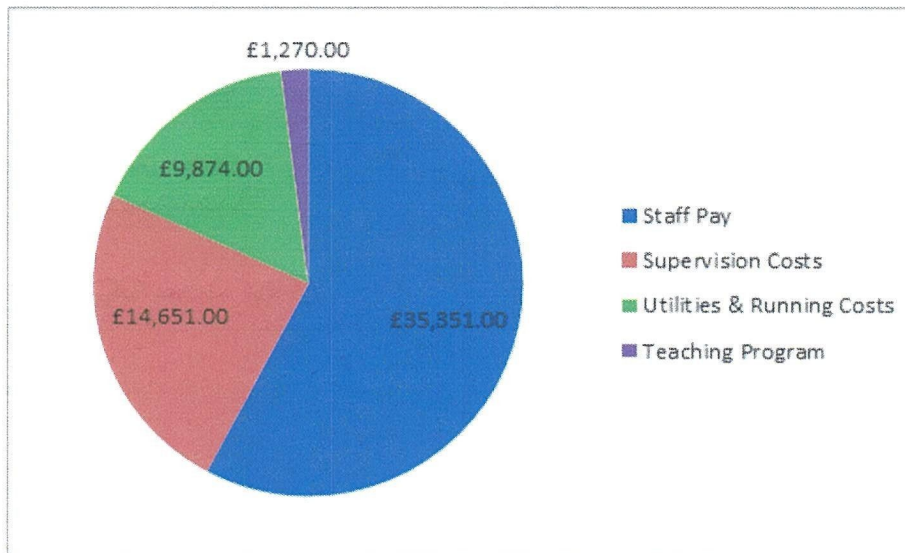
Income. Our income for the last two years has been significantly higher than in past years, again due to three factors: a high level of client contributions, high income from room hire (primarily by the Kent Community Trust), and the second of three yearly £5,000 grants from the Colyer-Fergusson Trust. We also received small grants from local councillors.

Expenditure. During the year we again increased the rates of pay for our staff, increased the hours of the administrator, and continued paying overtime. Utility costs also increased. Due to the continuing income from room hire we were able to refurbish the toilet and pay the deposit for replacement of the rear windows and door.

Income for 2024 - £61,000



Expenditure for 2024 - £62,000



POLICY ON RESERVES

The trustees have decided that the Reserve Account (currently just over £5,000) is for emergency, unpredicted expenditure.

SECTION F - OTHER OPTIONAL INFORMATION



HOPES FOR 2025

- a. Develop services and attract funding, to reduce waiting times for clients.
- b. BACP accreditation of ACS
- c. Strengthen counsellor retention through e.g. improved communication, greater involvement in cross-service activities, more team-building, improved attendance at CPD events, more incentives.
- d. Increase the size of the trustee body.

SECTION G - DECLARATION

The trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees Annual Report (TAR) above.

Signed on behalf of the trustees:

Signature/s		
Full Name/s	SUSAN MARIE LOUISE SMITH	ANTHONY JOHN RAMPTON
Position	Chair of Trustees	Trustee and Treasurer
Date	5 - 06 - 2025	5th June 2025

Company Registered number
10231859

Ashford Counselling Service Limited

Report and accounts

31 December 2024

Registered Charity No
1169322

Ashford Counselling Service Limited
Report and accounts
Contents

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Independent Examiner's Report on the Accounts	3-4

Ashford Counselling Service Limited

Registered Charity No 1169322 Companies House No 10231859

Income and Expenditure Accounts for the Year ending 31st December 2024

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
	£	£
<u>Income</u>		
Client Contributions	39,559.50	36,874.40
Room Hire	14,615.00	17,550.00
Fund Raising	339.30	397.14
Donations	6,012.69	5,804.52
Teaching Program Income/Study Days	430.00	350.00
Miscellaneous:		
Gift Aid	-	296.88
Refund National lottery		
Bank Account Interest	59.74	43.76
TOTAL	<u>61,016.23</u>	<u>61,316.70</u>
<u>LESS: Expenditure</u>		
Staff & Counsellor Pay & Expenses	50,790.47	36,334.23
Utilities & Running Costs	9,873.69	7,428.20
Teaching Program Costs	1,270.00	37.50
BLF Contractors & Staff	-	-
Depreciation	1,322.41	2,066.26
Accrued Expenses	-	(755.30)
TOTAL	<u>63,256.57</u>	<u>45,110.89</u>
Excess (Expenditure)/Surplus over Income	<u><u>(2,240.34)</u></u>	<u><u>16,205.81</u></u>

The Trustees have prepared, the above statement of Income and expenditure from their records which have been examined by Sealy & Johnson Accountants Ltd.

We have no concerns and have come across no matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to better understand the report.

The report is made solely to the Trustees. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's Trustees, those matters we are required to state to them in an Independent examiner's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and its Trustees as a body, for our work on this report.


Sharon Edwards
Accountant
Sealy & Johnson Accountants Ltd
22 Evegate Business Park
Smeeth
Ashford
Kent TN25 6SX

02/04/2025

Ashford Counselling Service Limited

Registered Charity No 1169322 Companies House No 10231859

Balance Sheet at 31st December 2024

	Notes	2024 £	£	2023 £	£
Fixed Assets					
Property at 123, Church Road		75,000.00		75,000.00	
Furniture, fixtures, fittings		5,289.63		6,612.03	
			80,289.63		81,612.03
Current Assets					
Bank Accounts:					
petty cash		10.58		-	
6862		22,491.46		24,469.63	
5163		5,075.80		5,016.06	
		27,577.84		29,485.69	
Current Liabilities					
Unpaid Expenses - Accruals		(332.28)		657.63	
Net Current Assets			27,910.12		28,828.06
Net Assets			108,199.75		110,440.09
Capital Account					
Balance at start of period		74,550.09		58,344.28	
Revaluation Surplus		35,890.00		35,890.00	
Surplus/(Deficit)		(2,240.34)		16,205.81	
Charity funds			108,199.75		110,440.09

For the financial year in question the company was entitled to exemption under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

No members have required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question 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 accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.



John Rampton
Director - Treasurer & Trustee
Approved by the board on



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Ashford Counselling Service

On accounts for the year
ended

31 December 2024

Charity no
(if any)

1169322

Set out on pages

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31 December 2024

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination (~~other than that disclosed below *~~) which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 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.

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

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:

Date:

02/04/2025

Name:

Valerie Moon

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

ACCA

Address:

Sealy & Johnson Accountants Ltd

22 The Barn, Evegate Business Park

Ashford, Kent, TN25 6SX

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

I have satisfied myself that the accounts of the company are not required to be audited for this year under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination.

In 2018 the property at 123 Church Road was revalued to £75,000 which created a revaluation surplus of £35,890. The property has not been depreciated.

Company Registered number
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Ashford Counselling Service Limited

Report and accounts

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02/04/2025

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John Rampton
Director - Treasurer & Trustee
Approved by the board on



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

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ended

31 December 2024

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(if any)

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Signed:

Date:

02/04/2025

Name:

Valerie Moon

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

ACCA

Address:

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