

Trustees Annual Report
1st May 2019 - 31st October 2020

Impact of Covid-19

a) Financial

1. The trustees had decided in 2019 to make plans to convert from a Charitable Trust to a CIO and the new charity was finally approved by the Charity Commissioners in November 2019, (CC Number 1186644) leaving ample time to complete the transition by 1st May 2020. However our bankers were slow to make arrangements for new bank accounts by this date, partly due to the banking changes brought about by the Covid-19 issue. Later in the year they offered us a Novation Agreement by which our bank accounts could be re-named as Cedar House Preston CIO, and so allowed us to make the transition on 1st November 2020. Hence at the time of impact of the Covid situation, we experienced a period of additional uncertainty as we waited for the bank's decision.
2. Our income comes predominantly from two sources. Firstly, a number of long-term supporters donate either by monthly SO or by large one-off donations (Most of these donations are Gift Aided) During our periods of reduced or zero counselling activity, these donations not only remained at the previous level, but in some cases actually increased. A second source of income is from clients who are invited to donate, if able, to the general running costs of Cedar House, although all counselling is free at the point of delivery. Clearly when we closed on 23.03.20 this income stream stopped abruptly, but our costs also fell, particularly our support for the supervision costs of the counsellors.
3. As we began to offer remote counselling (for details see under b) Practical), this income stream has built up in proportion to the counselling sessions offered, and so this income is currently running at about 50% of pre-covid levels. While these client donations used to be predominantly cash based on a weekly counselling session basis, they are now predominantly made by bank transfer, some on a regular session basis, but some on a once only, but larger donation basis. Clearly, we will need to monitor this income stream as we (hopefully) return to face to face counselling later this year.
4. As mentioned under Recent Events we have just received NHS funding to provide Time Limited Counselling (usually just 6 sessions) for about 50 NHS patients who have been adversely affected by Covid 19 and referred to us by their GP. This income is probably a one off, so in the remainder of this financial year the trustees will be looking to strengthen both the income streams referred to in section 2.

b) Practical

1. Initially we hoped to carry on some face-to-face counselling and measures were put in place to ensure we were Covid-secure. This fulfilled all the requirements of a Health and Safety inspection. However, it soon became clear this was not a safe option and client work was suspended. A secure entry system was also installed.
2. From 22-2-20 to 4-5-20 trustees were meeting weekly on Zoom, since then 2-weekly. This also involved our manager after her return from a period of furlough.
3. During this time the decision was made to move towards remote counselling by phone or zoom. The steps required to make that happen were planned out.

4. This has involved constructing new policies, protocols and procedures, which has made a lot of extra work for both managers and trustees.
5. Many of our counsellors were willing to move to working remotely either by phone or Zoom and training for remote counselling was put in place. We very much appreciate the can-do attitude which they showed, being willing to tackle something which was new to most and to put in the time to learn how best to work in this way.
6. Even so, the number of appointments we could offer was drastically reduced. This has been gradually increasing and is now about 50% of our previous capacity as some counsellors and also clients are not comfortable with remote counselling.
7. We officially closed 23.03.2020 for National Lockdown. At that time there was no counselling being undertaken other than one counsellor offering Telephone counselling to her clients. We reopened to offer Remote counselling 07.07.2020 and opened for F2F counselling 23.09.2020. Because of the worsening Covid-19 situation we closed again for F2F counselling 16.10.2020 and continued offering remote counselling.

c) Ongoing effects and plans

1. Careful plans will have to be put in place to gradually reopen when the time is right. Safety measures will need to be kept in place for some while and guidelines monitored.
2. While the numbers of appointments which can be carried out at Cedar House may have to remain lower for some time, we now have the extra facility to carry out remote counselling alongside face-2-face work. This will be a great advantage, especially for those with disabilities or other issues which make access to our property difficult. This will, in time, give us extra capacity, enabling us to work with more clients.
3. Other ways of making donations from clients who are working remotely have been put in place. This can make life more complicated for our treasurer. These donations tend to arrive in blocks which skews financial records.

Update for achievements and performance

1. We are very pleased with the way we have adapted to the problems posed by C-19 and are very grateful to our managers for all the extra work they have put in to make our remote counselling possible. Thanks, too, to our amazing team of volunteers for all their hard work and cooperation, without which we could not have achieved what we have, especially during recent unprecedented conditions.
2. We regularly get positive feedback from clients and from counselling students on placement.
3. The majority of our team of volunteers are still with us and many have attended our regular training sessions.

4. We have recruited two new Trustees.

Recent events

1. We were approached in December by the local Clinical Commissioning Board to be a provider of counselling to patients who have been psychologically affected by Covid-19.
2. Owing to their specific requirements, new systems and training have been put in place and NHS clients are now successfully in counselling.
3. We had planned to reopen at the end of June 2021, but have now delayed the opening in line with Government guidelines.

Future plans

1. We will be seeking additional new Trustees.
2. We will seek to maintain our high standard of client and volunteer satisfaction.
3. We will seek to increase our income levels back to pre-covid levels.