

COUNSELLING AT AFC

England & Wales · Charity number 1198533

Details

Status Registered

Legal form CIO

Registered 2022-04-06

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

Address Adeyfield Free Church Centre
Maylands Avenue
Hemel Hempstead
HP2 4GZ

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Activities

Objects: TO RELIEVE THE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL SICKNESS OF RESIDENTS OR EMPLOYEES AGED 18 YEARS OR OLDER IN THE CONSTITUENCY OF HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, HERTFORDSHIRE, SUFFERING FROM COMMON MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES. THIS WILL BE VIA THE PROVISION OF:1. COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT FOR SUCH PERSONS2. PROMOTION OF AWARENESS OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN THE COMMUNITY AND WORKPLACE 3. PROVIDING LOW COST AND AFFORDABLE COUNSELLING SERVICES TO MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN HEMEL HEMPSTEAD4. PROVIDING AFFORDABLE COUNSELLING AND WORKSHOP SERVICES TO BUSINESSES IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

Activities: We provide low cost and affordable counselling services to members of the local community in Hemel Hempstead to relieve the mental and physical sickness of persons resident in Hemel Hempstead suffering from common mental health issues by the provision of counselling and support for such persons, and promote awareness of mental health and wellbeing in the community and workplace in Hemel Hempstead

Classification

- **How:** Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** The Advancement Of Health Or Saving Of Lives
- **Who:** Elderly/old People, People With Disabilities, The General Public/mankind

Geography

- Hertfordshire

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£5,081	£4,324	-	-
2024-03-31	£5,257	£5,621	-	-
2023-03-31	£2,495	£1,439	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Susan Jane Grimsdale	Chair	2022-03-01
David James Wilson		2026-05-09
Denise Muriel Wade		2022-03-01
Jane Jones		2022-03-01
Michelle Wood		2026-05-09
Toby Charles Payne		2022-06-06

COUNSELLING AT AFC

England & Wales - Charity number 1198533

Accounts



COUNSELLING



Affordable counselling for all the community

ANNUAL REPORT

April 2024 – March 2025

Presented to the Board of Trustees at the AGM 26th April 2025

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Counselling at AFC
Annual Report for the AGM
26th April 2025

Introduction from the Chair

Counselling at AFC has now been up and running for over 3 years and the credit goes to such a dedicated and amazing team of Trustees and counsellors.

The highlights of the year for me are:

- Cliniko, set up and maintained by our awesome Trustee and counsellor, Toby. This has made a tremendous difference in the day to day running of the charity and has allowed counsellors to check if online paying clients are up to date with payments.
- A £500 generous donation from Mrs. Payne in June which came at an opportune time.
- Our successful Marketing campaign to raise awareness in our catchment area which was headed and run by Toby and Pat (Trustee and Community Outreach Officer). Thanks to all the trustees who spent time delivering postcards.
- The new charity postcards which were organised by Gill (Trustee and Safeguarding Officer) and Toby and funded from an anonymous generous giver.

We had a quiet spell in the summer which instigated the successful marketing campaign which is ongoing, client enquiries have increased, and we are almost full to capacity.

The following, extensive report written by Toby, shows how successful our charity is at changing people's lives for the better. My favourite quote is "The counsellors work beautifully as a team having regular meetings and in between meetings as necessary"; the support for each other shows in the fantastic work they do.

Jo, our CBT counsellor, took some needed time out over the summer, it was a relief to see her back and well rested in September. We are now set up to take on a placement counsellor, thanks to our trustee's input, preparing for interviews and setting up a system for line management and supervision. We need to wait for enough client enquiries to make this viable.

We interviewed a counsellor after they enquired about joining our team, this was a great learning process for us that ended with Jane (Trustee), taking on an extra morning, which gives us more time to offer for clients.

Group sessions were offered last summer with little interest, next time we will have a better marketing campaign to raise awareness.

The following report was achieved by Toby's hard work and dedication to the charity, amalgamating the year's statistics and feedback. Thankyou Toby.

Sadly one of our Trustees, Gill has given notice of a year (thankyou Gill, for the long notice) and our grateful thanks for all that you have done and do towards the charity.

I have retired as a counsellor which gives me more time to dedicate to my other roles for the charity. I pray the next year will see us grow and flourish. Thankyou team for your continued dedication.

Financial Report

The income and expenditure have stayed fairly consistent, with a fall of clients over the summer, income in April 24 was £400.67 with £468.80 expenses compared to March 25; income £672.33, expenses £531.01. The main income is client donations and expenditure is mainly counsellor invoices and annual membership fees. We had a very generous donation in June 2024 of £500 from Mrs Payne which was very timely and gratefully received. The balance was £2005.15 in April24 and £2830.98 at the end of March25. The balance has increased which allows us to support low-cost clients.

We do not yet have the client numbers to take on a student placement

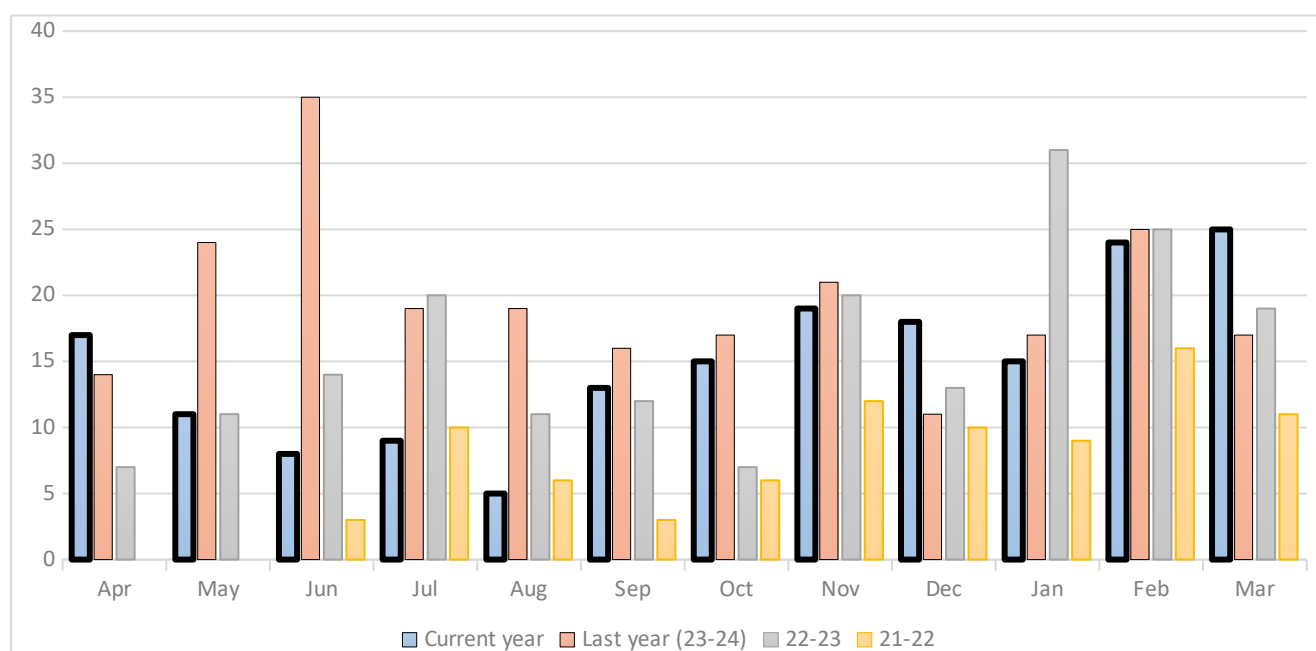
Summary Apr24-Mar25				
Summary			Bank balance	
Income	£5,081.36		Balance b/f	£2,073.28
			Surplus	£757.70
Expenditure	£4323.66			
Surplus	£757.70		Balance c/f	£2,830.98

Data Review

Data covers the Period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

	Current Year (Apr 24-25)	Apr 23-24	Apr 22-23	Apr 21-22
Number of individual clients seen	24	24	21	9
Number of new clients (including returning)	16	19	18	9
Number of scheduled sessions	204	270	217	96
Number of delivered sessions	179	234	190	86
Number of cancellations	24	28	20	9
Number of DNAs (Did Not Attend)	11	8	6	1
Average Sessions Attended (for completed clients)	10.4	10.8	11.5	9.7

Figure 1: Number of session per month



General findings

- The number of sessions delivered to clients has decreased compared to last year by 55. The number of clients seen in this year has remained the same. The number of new clients starting this year is down from last year and also includes some clients returning to the service.
- Despite the decrease in sessions delivered, there has also been an increase in the number of cancellations and DNAs, which represent 17.2% of sessions (last year 13.3%). This is a large increase and perhaps reflects the increased complexity of client presenting issues. Most cancellations were in April, October and November, and most DNAs were in May.
- The average number of sessions completed by clients has fallen again compared to the previous year, but by a smaller amount. A few clients completed only a few sessions (between 2 and 4) and this has affected the average. Only one client this year had an extended number of sessions. 71% of clients completed at least 12 sessions, which is an increase from last year.
- For 8 months the number of sessions were lower this year compared to the previous year. The biggest drop was seen in the period of May to August with 64 fewer sessions being delivered. This period reflects a time when one of the counsellors was on a break, as well as the summer holiday. This year, at least two clients chose to delay starting their sessions until after the summer break due to childcare issues. After this period, session numbers rose steadily until November. There was a drop in December, but this was not as big as last year's. The start of 2025 also saw a rise in

the number of sessions delivered to levels equal to or exceeding those of previous years by March. This perhaps reflects the success of the marketing push at the end of January which resulted in several new clients starting.

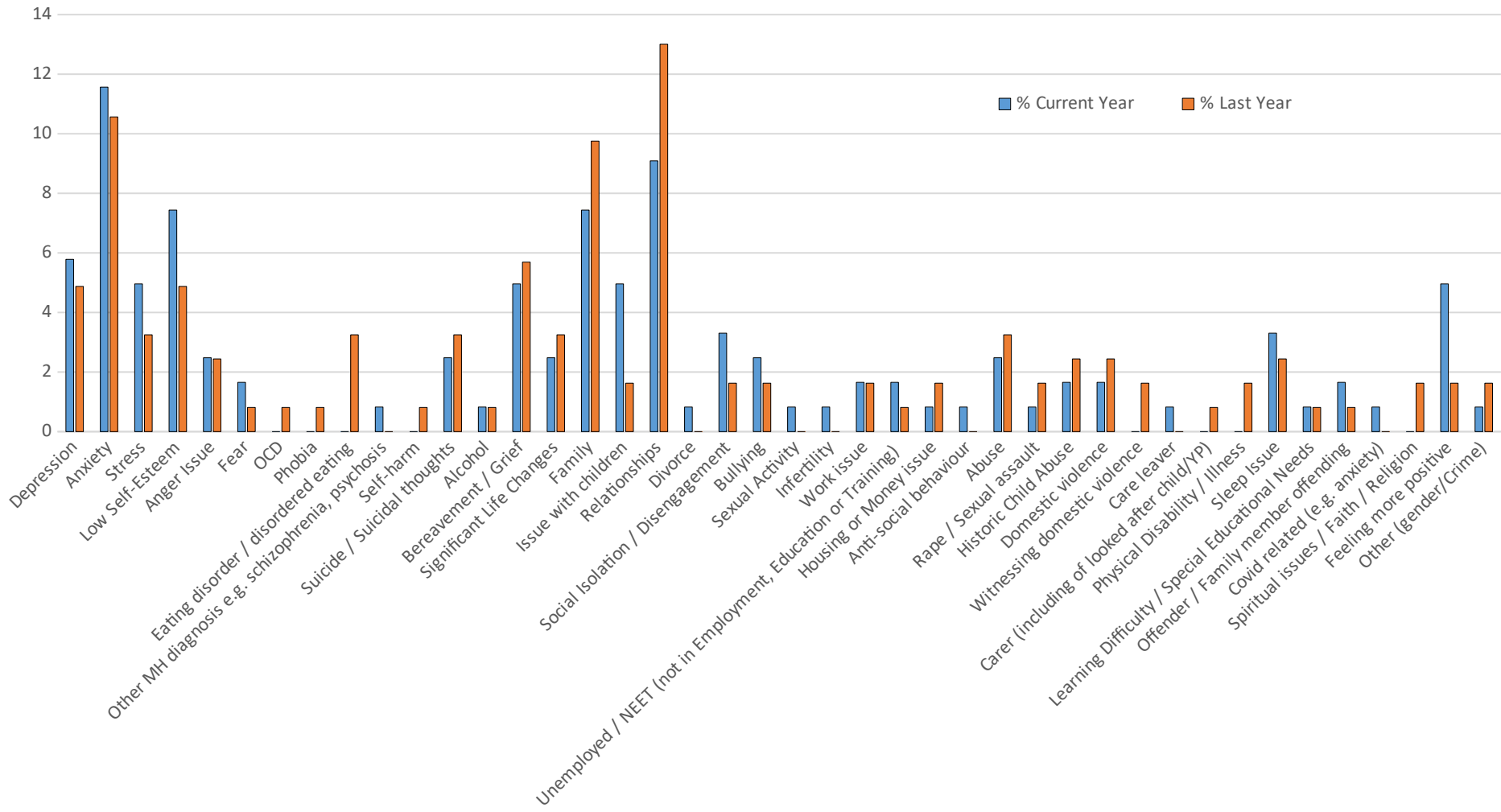
- No couples were seen this year. There were several enquiries by couples, but the limited counsellor availability did not match theirs. The group sessions were advertised but there was no interest and so it did not run. Hopefully, the group may go ahead this year with improved advertising.

The issues being brought by clients (Figure 2), show similar trends to the previous year. The range of issues is roughly the same. These are the top 7 issues presented, this year taking into account joint frequency of presentation (those in brackets are from last year):

1. Anxiety (Relationship issues)
2. Relationship issues (Anxiety)
3. Low self-esteem / Family (Family)
4. Depression (Bereavement)
5. Stress/Bereavement/Children/More positive (Depression / Low self-esteem)
6. Social Isolation /Sleep issue (Stress/ ED/ Suicide/Abuse/Life changes)
7. Anger / Suicide / Life changes / Bullying / Abuse (Anger/ Historic CA/ DA/ Sleep...)

The issues raised by clients are similar to the previous two years. "Family" and "anxiety, and "relationship issues" remain high. "Depression" and "stress" have risen. There have been suicidal clients in the service this year, but as an issue, it has not been as prevalent. Some other notable rises include "sleep issues", "children" and social isolation. "Feeling more positive" has also reappeared on list which is encouraging and perhaps reflects that clients are completing sufficient sessions to experience the benefits of counselling. A review of the issue codes was carried out to see if any could be removed. It was decided that some might need rewording (which will be discussed in a counsellor meeting), but almost all of them have been covered by at least one client over the past three years. Interestingly some issues which went, like "covid" and "infertility", have returned. Others like "phobias", "spiritual issues and "disordered eating" have not appeared. I think that recording a wide range of presenting issues reflects the diverse client population that we provide the service to in a community setting, which is different from more focussed or specialised services.

Figure 2: Client Issues



Outcome Measures

At the beginning, middle and end of the set of sessions, clients complete a range of outcome measure forms. Sometimes the scores will increase in the middle sessions, but this often reflects the fact that issues are being processed. The following measures are completed:

CORE 10 – measuring general wellbeing, functioning, problems and risk. A score of 10/40 is the clinical cut off for the general population. Scores between 5 and 10 are considered “low” level issues and below 5 is “healthy”.

PHQ9 – Used to measure depression symptomology

GAD7 – Used to look at anxiety symptomology

The data in the following table is based on 13 clients who completed a start and end set of forms. Two clients were excluded from the analysis as they only completed forms at the start or start and middle.

	RANGE AT START	RANGE AT END	MEAN START	MEAN END	MEAN CHANGE
CORE (/40)	13-37	0-22	20.7 (Moderate)	7.5 (Low)	- 13.2
PHQ9 (/27)	4-22	0-18	12.8 (Moderate)	5.2 (Mild)	- 7.7
GAD7 (/21)	1-19	0-15	12.2 (Moderate)	4.7 (Just Mild)	- 7.5

	MEDIAN START	MEDIAN END	MEDIAN CHANGE
CORE (/40)	21 (Mod/Severe)	6 (Low)	- 14
PHQ9 (/27)	13 (Moderate)	4 (Mild)	- 8
GAD7 (/21)	14 (Moderate)	3 (None)	- 7

	CURRENT MEAN CHANGE (23-24)	PREVIOUS MEAN CHANGE (22/23)	CURRENT MEDIAN CHANGE (23-24)	PREVIOUS MEDIAN CHANGE (22-23)
CORE (/40)	-13.2	-10.8	- 14	-14
PHQ9 (/27)	-7.7	-7.3	- 8	-4.5
GAD7 (/21)	-7.5	-8.2	- 7	-7.5

- It can be seen from the data that for all measures the counselling reduces the scores. For the CORE forms a change of 5 points is considered clinically significant.
- The changes in the CORE and PHQ9 values are higher this year than last year. Changes, although significant, are slightly lower for the GAD7 scores. The reason for this is unclear.
- Clients are coming in on average with Moderate difficulties and symptomology and mostly leaving with, on average, no issues beyond those of the general population.

- It should be noted that the ranges of scores reaches 'Severe' levels on all scores, as in the previous year. Upper scores are again slightly higher this year compared to last year. The range for CORE scores is lowered to moderate levels, while for PHQ9 and GAD7 they are lowered to moderate/severe. This might reflect that clients are coming in with more severe issues and so despite reductions in scores they are still experiencing moderate symptomology. This is to be expected with the short term work offered by the service.

Counsellor Reviews

The summary includes the views of all three of the contracted counsellors in the service.

All tasks have been completed by the counsellors, except for one needing to check that their DBS is up to date, and two needing to update their safeguarding training. These actions should be completed by the end of April. Counsellors saw a reduced number of clients this year, decreasing from 7 to 9 last year to 5 to 7 this year. This means that on average counsellors saw between 1 and 3 clients a week.

All the counsellors are enjoying the work. It is hard at times, but with support and team work it's very rewarding. There was disappointment that the client numbers have dropped this year but with a hope that we can renew the push to raise our visibility in the community.

Achievements

All three counsellors felt they had done well in areas of their work this year including; finding ways to work with more complex clients in a boundaried way that allowed focus on certain aspects of presentation, and signposting and referring clients to appropriate support. They benefited from an improved telephone assessment, allowing easy allocation and greater clarity in first sessions. There was also increased confidence in recognising client's needs around returning to sessions after a break, acknowledgement of self-care needs when taking a break as a counsellor, good use of the sub-committee when querying low cost and/or returnees, and learning to use Cliniko effectively.

Issues

Counsellors mentioned the drop in client numbers this year, making it challenging to maintain motivation as this leaves them with some big gaps in their diaries. This has improved in the second half of the year. There have been challenges in holding boundaries with clients not following cancellation and booking procedures. Issues arose with fees, and the increase in baseline seems to have resolved most of these. Counsellors are finding it hard to get clients to return feedback forms and would like trustees to consider ideas on this.

Parking has again improved with only a couple of incidences when it was challenging. There have been some issues with the card reader which may be down to Wi-Fi, so one way round this has been to take payment first, thereby not making the next client late.

Support

The counselling team all feel well supported in their roles this year, from each other, the trustees, sub-committees and from the Church staff – many of whom now have a greater understanding of what the counsellors do and what they need in order to fulfil their roles. Everyone's care was very much appreciated when counsellors took a break but were kept in the loop and still supported. Trustees work on marketing to up the client numbers was much appreciated. It's clear the counsellors work beautifully as a team, both in regular meetings and between meetings if necessary.

Goals

The objectives mentioned this year included; delivery of group sessions and workshops, exploring further use of Cliniko, maintaining current roles effectively, and taking on fuller client loads if demand improves.

Training

Counsellors are all happy to source their own training and are aware of their obligation to do so. There was nothing specific that counsellors felt they all required as a group.

Improvements

With regards to trustees, counsellors would generally like them to continue to do what they are doing, with a focus on increasing client numbers. Specifically, to arrange meetings to monitor efficient and effective use of finances, continue to help marketing and advertising our counselling provision to the community and to find local resources who can refer to us, and who we can refer and signpost clients to.

Counsellors identified the following ways that service could be enhanced:

- Utilising marketing to follow up on contact from colleges to provide a placement to students, when client numbers increase.
- Approaching businesses to increase client footfall.
- Utilising the new link with Community Action Dacorum to get additional support and raise awareness.
- Links to schools might also increase our community presence.
- There may need to be more clarity around us not being a Christian counselling service as this could be off-putting to some potential clients.

Trustee Reviews

All trustees took part in the review process. All actions were up to date, except for one trustee who had ongoing actions to be resolved by the AGM.

The board has functioned well as a team, sharing tasks and making active contributions. As a result, there have been no major issues to address. Trustees felt supported by the regular team meetings that keep all involved and up to date. The team is felt to be easily accessible. The board works in a collaborative way which feels supportive. Sadly, a trustee has identified that they intend to step down from their role at next year's AGM. Until then, the board continues to be productive, effective and supportive in its current form.

Trustees felt they have been able to conduct their roles well, especially in the following ways:

- Checking policies and providing feedback
- Jointly organising and distributing the new publicity postcards
- Attending and contributing in meetings
- Providing support to counsellors with safeguarding issues
- Setting up the Cliniko service management software
- Researching NCPS membership and maintaining readiness to join
- Researching fundraising opportunities
- Paying invoices promptly
- Attending safeguarding training
- Keeping client payments updated on Cliniko
- Effectively using the sub-committee for low cost clients, which has been very useful

Some areas were identified as potentially being improved:

- Establishing effective links with the Safeguarding Officer at ACF (role is currently not filled)
- Having the team respond to emails more quickly
- Having a meeting of the fundraising sub-committee to decide on a direction of action
- Consider how we might use the businesses around us for clients, advertising. Services or workshops
- Attend more meetings face to face
- Complete counsellor reviews earlier
- Continue work towards taking on a placement counsellor

In respect to goals for the team in the next year several were identified, including:

- Keeping up to date with safeguarding training and issues
- Establishing a link with the Safeguarding Officer of AFC when appointed and continue to work effectively with the deputy in the meantime
- Ensure the continued smooth running of Cliniko
- Secure additional funding
- Provide accurate and timely information, as needed
- Continue the marketing campaign in the local community and use contacts within AFC to do this

- Explore new areas of marketing and promoting the service

The situation with the current lack of a permanent Safeguarding Lead at AFC means that the Chair of Trustees, who is also the deputy Safeguarding Lead for AFC is completing intermediate and advanced training this year as is appropriate for working with children and vulnerable adults at AFC.

Trustees identified there was a need for safeguarding training and a link has now been provided to a suitable course. There is also a potential need for training for some trustees on marketing and fundraising to make the most of the successful marketing drive.

In terms of further training for trustees, several areas were mentioned including, Linking Lives, safeguarding, marketing and fundraising. A few trustees have also completed training which might be beneficial. A meeting with an outside person who can provide assistance with aspects of accounting within the service will also be of use, and this is in the process of being arranged. A request has also been made for more referral pathways for clients so that a “database” can be collected based on trustee local knowledge.

There have been few issues this year. Lack of time was highlighted as an understandable obstacle. A minor issue with the Charity Commission registration was resolved, but has highlighted the need for backups of files and documents to be available for trustees. It was acknowledged that despite a readiness in the service to expand and grow there was a drop-off in client enquiries. The marketing effort undertaken has delivered an increased number of enquiries. It is hoped that with maintaining focus on this the credibility and reputation of the service will grow to allow us to reach local businesses to expand the provision. It might be possible to assign small projects to trustees with regards to marketing, referrals, businesses, fundraising and other areas to allow for more growth.

Actions Taken Since the Reviews

Following previous reviews and this one, the following actions have been taken which address some of the issues raised:

- The major piece of work which was done was marketing drive at the end of January. This has been successful, as at least two clients have come into the service based on the new marketing materials.
- A large stock of new, high quality postcards have been designed and produced for use in a variety of different settings.
- Postcards have been placed across the catchment area in locations including GP surgeries, libraries, shops, cafes, community centres, schools, the hospital and churches. This was possible through the hard work and energy of the whole trustee team.
- The service has now joined Community Action Dacorum which will provide opportunities to market the service to their team of volunteers, as well as potentially use their premises to distribute materials and advertise their different media outlets (e.g. radio and social media).

- Conversations were also had with the local homeless charity DENS and the Liberty Tea Room about how they could support the service in the future.
- The team visited a local school to discuss and market the service. Hopefully, further school links can be formed in the future to provide counselling for staff and parents.
- The new role of Community Outreach Officer on the trustee team has been useful in allowing the person in the role to use their talents and knowledge to be a cornerstone of the marketing effort.
- Members of the team were present at an Open House event at the newly constructed Hightown Housing flats behind AFC. This allowed us to be seen and have material distributed to members of the local community. A conversation was had with staff from Hightown and this needs to be followed up in the near future as this might represent a fruitful partnership.
- The group sessions were advertised, however, there was no uptake. This was potentially due to late marketing. There was a lot learnt from this experience which informed the later, whole service marketing drive. The group sessions are now written and can be delivered when the counsellors have the time.
- The service was contacted by a counsellor to join the team. This allowed us to formulate an interview structure. It was decided that due to low client numbers it was not appropriate to take on a new counsellor at this time
- Although the service did not join the NCPS this year, the materials needed are ready for when this would benefit the service.
- A student counsellor was not taken on this year, however, a full interview process has now been discussed and established. Colleges have expressed an interest in us running a placement. Things would be able to be put in place quickly when client numbers reach an appropriate level.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is at the core of the work undertaken by the team of Counsellors, and Safeguarding is a standing item at all Trustee meetings. The counsellors are individually responsible for attending Safeguarding training and this is recorded on their annual reviews. They are appropriately trained to maintain the safety of their clients, themselves and others using the building.

The counsellors are all aware of the Safeguarding Policy and procedures at Adeyfield Free Church and how to report any observed Safeguarding concerns. It is of concern that at the present time Safeguarding is being overseen by the Deputy Safeguarding Officer as the Lead Safeguarding Officer has left the church. Hopefully there will be another volunteer from within the church to take over the lead role. The only Synod Safeguarding Training on offer is in central London in early March. It is hoped that online training will be offered soon and that will be available for the new volunteer. The church has agreed that anyone volunteering to work with children has to have evidence of advanced safeguarding training.

The Safeguarding Trustee has completed level 2 and level 3 Safeguarding training and additional training in the issue of modern slavery and the role of the Designated Lead Person for Safeguarding.

Community Outreach

In terms of marketing, a very comprehensive post code list was produced for each trustee, which we were asked to start covering in January. I believe Gill has completed all her list. The other trustees still have some left to be completed.

There are very smart new Counselling at AFC postcards. In general they were well received in most locations, apart from doctor's surgeries. They sparked several interesting conversations in some areas e.g. dentists, funeral directors and schools.

The Chair made a particularly good link with Andrew Masters (a member of the local church community), visiting a couple of schools.

Of course, this work is ongoing; always looking for new opportunities to post and give the cards away.

Client Feedback

We received only 4 feedback forms this year, which is a decrease from the 7 last year. All have provided consent for use of comments in reports.

For the first section of the form all clients agree with the following statements:

- I got the information I needed
- I got the support I needed
- I felt my concerns were understood
- I felt comfortable with the way in which the counselling was provided
- The environment was safe and welcoming
- I valued the centre's service
- The support was sensitive to my needs and situation

All bar one client rated the venue and location as Excellent. The other client rated it Good. The room was described as quiet, private, comfortable and with minimal noise and distraction most of the time. The building was described as accessible, spacious and tidy. The provision of parking was a positive attribute. The staff and people using the building were mentioned as being respectful and polite. The café for meeting people and the "great" children's facilities were also mentioned.

All clients agreed with the following statements:

- I have a better understanding of my situation and I know what I can do about it
- I understand more about how my circumstances have affected me
- I have been able to make decisions about my future
- I have been able to access any other support I need (one client this was not applicable)

Figure 3 shows that all clients agreed that positive qualities developed after counselling. The majority agree that things are better for them. The fact that there was no disagreements amongst those responding is a positive result showing the benefits of counselling. This is however a small sample size.

Other reported benefits included:

- Being more in control of emotions and how to deal with them
- Feeling more confident and having some self-belief and self-worth
- Understanding why they feel the way they do about themselves
- Extending self-care, holistic health and emotional process; in and out of session
- Allowing different thoughts and behaviours in different situations
- Not beating themselves about their choices
- Making decisions about their life

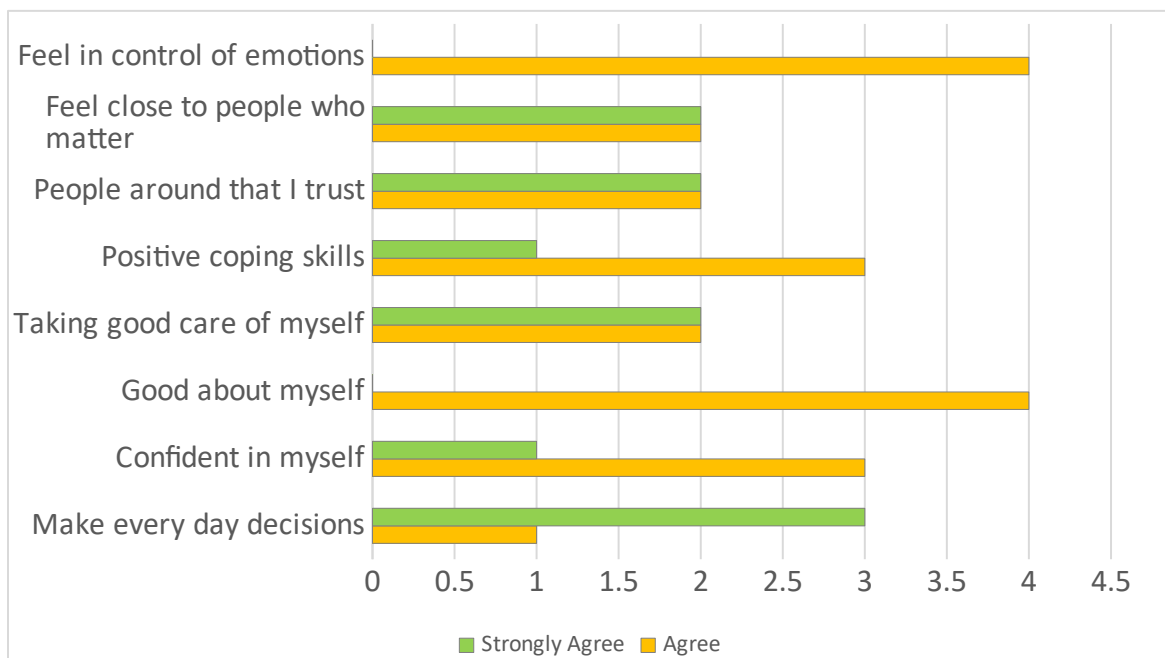


Figure 3: Changes to qualities after therapy

Selected positive comments

“My counsellor was comforting, supportive and very understanding.”

“(My counsellor) being so kind and helpful. This allowed me to feel comfortable. Which helped me to speak honestly and openly about what was troubling me”

“The counsellor, was able to offer support by providing a person-centred service which felt founded on genuine empathy, warmth and care. This as a foundation and starting point allowed us to work together with rapport and collaboration”

“It's been hugely beneficial having these sessions. I feel like I've made progress from how I was feeling to how I feel today.”

“(My counsellor) was happy to listen to my troubles and provide helpful guidance which in result has allowed me to feel more like myself. I know that I still have a long journey ahead of me, but (they) have helped get me onto a more stable path”

“Was very nervous when I first met (my counsellor), but they made me very relaxed and able to talk openly about myself. I do find this very difficult. My partner has said that I have changed and appear more confident in myself.”

“However, from the get-go (my counsellor) and the agency have brought peace of mind and ease to the process. The communication, care and organisation scaffolding the process has been to a high and consistent standard.”

“...I feel my own personal growth and experience of the service has been positive, overall. And I would have no reservations recommending (my counsellor) and Counselling at AFC to people ... in the community. Thank You!”

“(My counsellor) was welcoming and friendly. They really listened to what was being said and provided a much healthier way to view myself and how to cope with the past.”

“The support was very good. Understanding thoughtful and very helpful.”

“(Admin) was helpful and friendly in assisting the early assessment and organisation. The counsellor I worked with..., has been a pleasure to work with and consistently friendly, kind and well-organised in the process. The location, fee and having... a regular counsellor has all helped make it an all-round easier and positive experience.”

Suggested improvements

There were no specific improvements suggested by any of the clients. A couple of the clients felt that they needed more than 12 sessions, but understood that they could return to the service after a break.

Future Endeavours

With a view to further growing and improving the service offered by Counselling at AFC, the trustees will be looking at the following areas in the next 12 months:

Counselling at AFC is always looking forward to develop the service and so the following are projects and initiatives which the trustees are keen to explore over the next 12 months:

- Approaching local businesses for support with clients, marketing, fundraising and offering courses or workshops.
- Building on the successful marketing exercise by restocking postcards in the currently covered areas, as well as seeking out new areas to advertise.
- Capitalising on the new links formed with Community Action Dacorum, as well as other Hemel based organisations to raise our profile in the local community.
- Use the subcommittee to begin exploring possible funding or grant opportunities in earnest.

- Continue to develop resources to signpost clients for additional or specialised support
- Advertise the service to more parts of the community
- Continue considering a student placement for when client numbers increase to an appropriate level.
- Look again at advertising and running counselling groups later in the year.

COUNSELLING AT AFC

England & Wales - Charity number 1198533

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COUNSELLING



Affordable counselling for all the community

ANNUAL REPORT

April 2023 – March 2024

Presented to the Board of Trustees at the AGM 27th April 2024

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Counselling at AFC
Annual Report for the AGM
27nd April 2024

Introduction from the Chair

We are seeing a steady growth in client numbers; 28 this year as opposed to 21 last year. Advertising is mainly through Google and a contact link through our website. We hope to increase our advertising by dropping cards at GP surgeries and relevant notice boards.

The website is well established, thanks to Toby for his brilliance. Jane & Toby are working on starting group work and we hope to take on a placement counsellor later in the year. This will be a team effort with Toby offering supervision and Jane as line manager.

The accounts continue to be healthy with a usual balance around £2000 which enables us to offer low cost counselling to those who can't access our affordable rates.

A new program called Cliniko is almost ready for counsellors to use. Thanks to Toby for setting it up and trialling. This software should make for less paperwork and simplify data collection, banking and client allocation.

The bond between counsellors and trustees is a blessing. I am very grateful and thankful for everybody's part. We are a good team and offer a very good service.

Sue

Financial Report

The income and expenditure have steadily grown over the past year as expected alongside client numbers. Income in April 23 was £420 with £446.20 expenses compared to Feb 24; income £653.12, expenses £248.80. The main income is client donations and expenditure is mainly counsellor invoices. The balance was £2,410.99 in April23 and £2,073.28 at the end of March24. The balance has decreased and our sub-committee for fundraising will be actively seeking grants to allow the agency to keep supporting low-cost clients.

Looking ahead we hope to offer group courses and take on a placement counsellor in the coming year.

Summary Apr23-Mar24				
Summary			Bank balance	
Income	£5,257.08		Balance b/f	£2,437.19
			Deficit	£363.91
Expenditure	£5,620.99			
Deficit	£363.91		Balance c/f	£2,073.28

Data Review

Data covers the Period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

	Current Year (Apr 23-24)	Apr 22-23	Apr 21-22
Number of individual clients seen	24	21	9
Number of new clients	19	18	9
Number of scheduled sessions	270	217	96
Number of delivered sessions	234	190	86
Number of cancellations	28	20	9
Number of DNAs (Did Not Attend)	8	6	1
Average Sessions Attended (for completed clients)	10.8	11.5	9.7

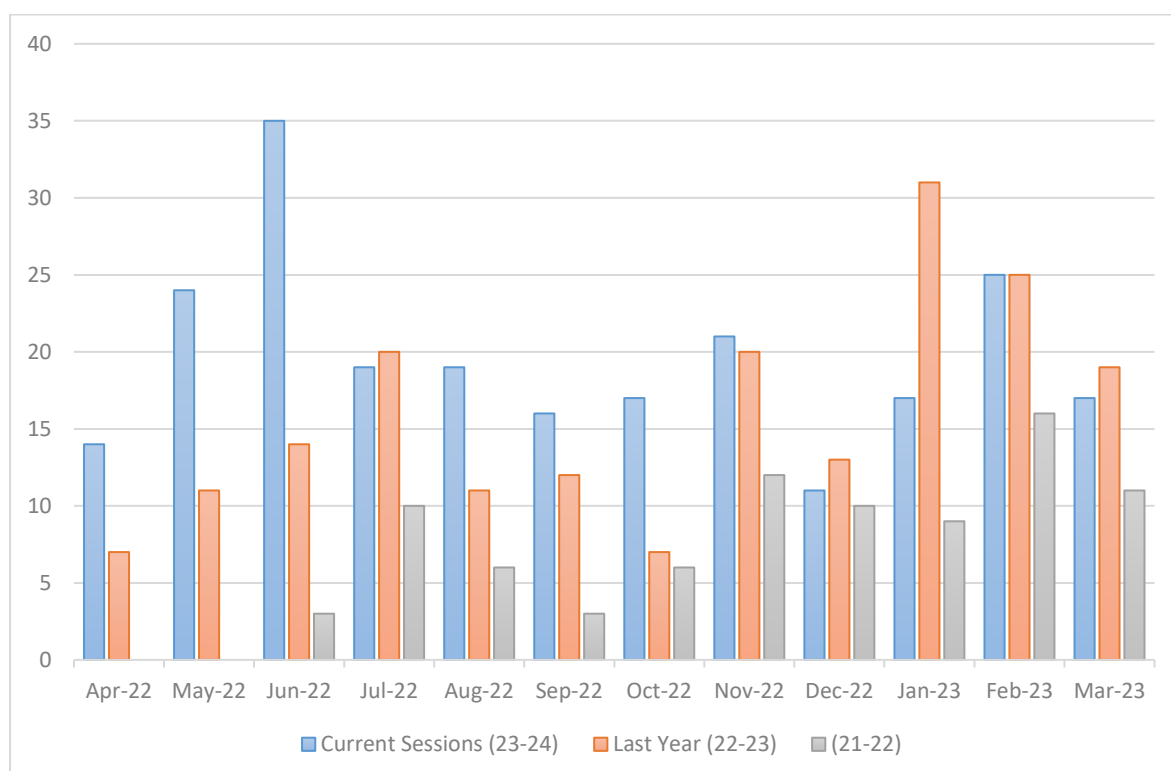


Figure 1: Number of session per month

General findings

- The number of sessions delivered to clients has increased this year by 44. The number of new clients seen has increased slightly, but does not reflect a few clients returning to the service.
- With the increase in sessions and clients, there has been a corresponding increase in cancellations and DNAs, which represent 13.3% of scheduled sessions. This is an increase from 10.4% and 11.9% in the previous years. Most cancellations were in September and March, and most DNAs were in January.

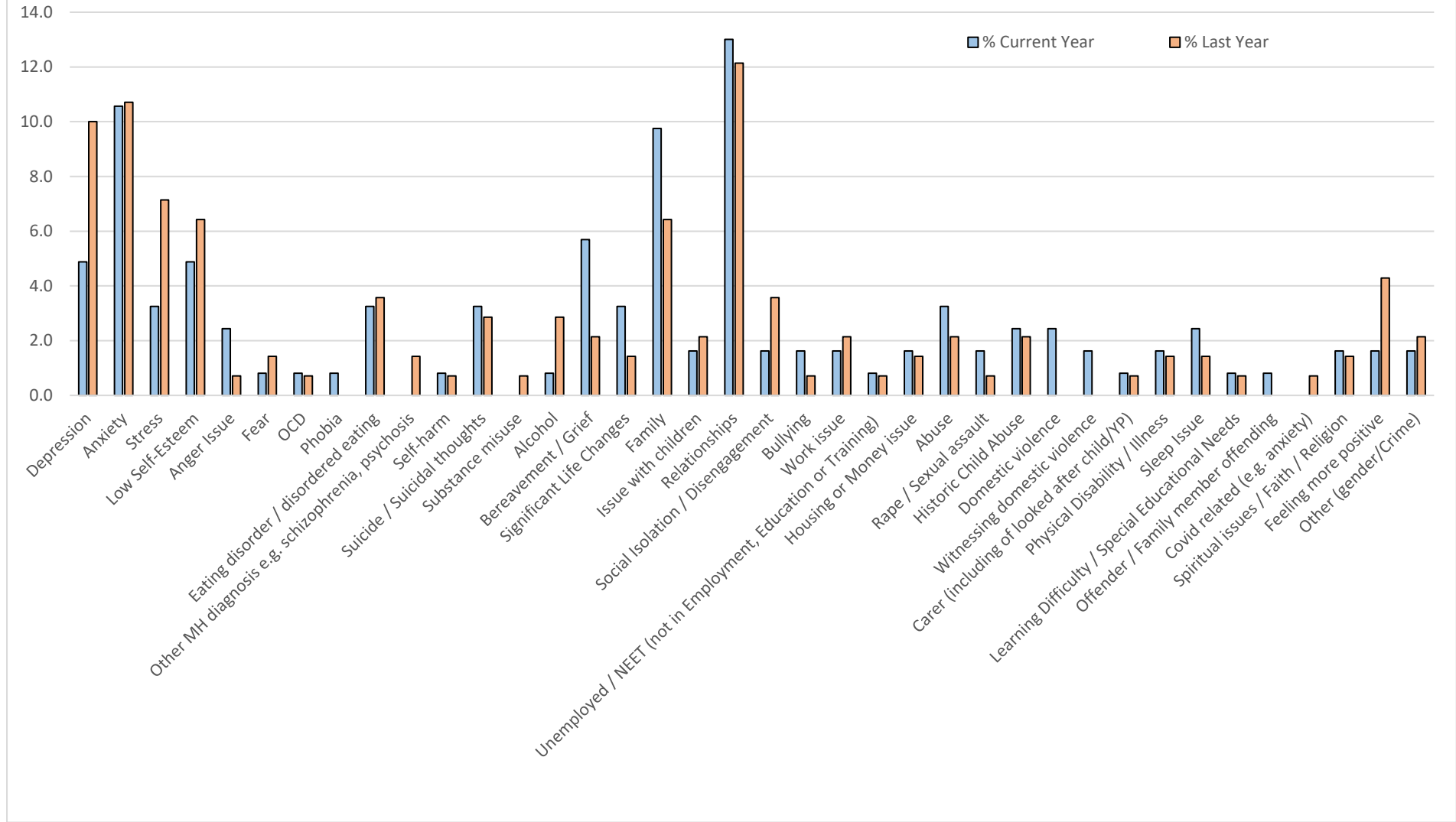
- The average number of sessions completed by clients has fallen compared to last year. This reflects that many clients are feeling they do not require the full 12, with some only missing the final session. There were only two clients in the analysis who had an extensions. 57% of clients complete at least 12 sessions.
- The trends in sessions per month shows that for 8 months at the start of the year (except July) there were more sessions than for the same month the previous year. However, from December there were similar or fewer sessions delivered compared to the previous year. The reason for this is unclear, however, some clients did take extended holidays in this time and there may have been effects from Christmas and the New Year.
- One new couple was seen this year. There were several enquiries by couples but the limited counsellor availability did not match theirs.

Considering the issues being brought by clients (Figure 2), it can be seen that the trends are again similar to the previous year. The range of issues is roughly the same, but some have gone e.g. Covid related issues and some are new e.g. domestic violence. These are the top 10 issues presented (those in brackets are from last year):

1. Relationship issues	(Relationship issues)
2. Anxiety	(Anxiety)
3. Family	(Depression)
4. Bereavement	(Stress)
5. Depression	(Low self-esteem)
6. Low self-esteem	(Family)
7. Stress	(Feeling more positive)
8. Eating disorders/Disordered eating	(Eating disorders/Disordered eating)
9. Suicide/Suicidal ideation	(Social isolation)
10. Significant Life Changes	(Suicide/Suicidal ideation)

The issues are similar for the two years. However, “Family” has risen higher, with falls in “Depression”, “Low Self-esteem” and “Stress”. “Bereavement” is a new issue to the top 10 which is interesting to note. Suicidality has also risen up the list perhaps reflecting the trend seen last year in increasing complexity of clients seen. “Feeling more positive” is no longer in the top 10 which is disappointing, but might reflect that some clients are not completing 12 sessions and so not reaching a point at which improvements are addressed directly in sessions and so recorded by counsellors.

Figure 2: Client Issues



Outcome Measures

At the beginning, middle and end of the set of sessions, clients complete a range of outcome measure forms. Sometimes the scores will increase in the middle sessions, but this often reflects the fact that issues are being processed. The following measures are completed:

CORE 10 – measuring general wellbeing, functioning, problems and risk. A score of 10/40 is the clinical cut off for the general population.

PHQ9 – Used to measure depression symptomology

GAD7 – Used to look at anxiety symptomology

The data in the following table is based on 16 clients who completed a start and end set of forms. 5 clients were excluded from the analysis as they only completed forms at the start or start and middle.

	RANGE AT START	RANGE AT END	MEAN START	MEAN END	MEAN CHANGE
CORE (/40)	6-34	0-19	18.7 (Moderate)	8.6 (None)	- 10.8
PHQ9 (/27)	3-21	0-14	12.7 (Moderate)	4.5 (Just Mild)	- 7.3
GAD7 (/21)	4-20	0-11.5	12.5 (Moderate)	4.3 (Just Mild)	- 8.2

	MEDIAN START	MEDIAN END	MEDIAN CHANGE
CORE (/40)	21.5 (Mod/Severe)	7.5 (None)	- 14
PHQ9 (/27)	12 (Moderate)	4.5 (Just mild)	- 4.5
GAD7 (/21)	12 (Moderate)	4 (None)	- 7.5

	CURRENT MEAN CHANGE (23-24)	PREVIOUS MEAN CHANGE (22/23)	CURRENT MEDIAN CHANGE (23-24)	PREVIOUS MEDIAN CHANGE (22-23)
CORE (/40)	-10.8	-8.4	- 14	-8
PHQ9 (/27)	-7.3	-8.5	- 4.5	-10
GAD7 (/21)	-8.2	-6.7	- 7.5	-5

- It can be seen from the data that for all measures the counselling reduces the scores. For the CORE forms a change of 5 points is considered clinically significant.
- The changes in the CORE and GAD7 values are higher this year than last year. Changes, although significant, are lower for the PHQ9 scores. The reason for this is unclear.

- Clients are coming in on average with Moderate difficulties and symptomology and mostly leaving with, on average, no issues beyond those of the general population.
- It should be noted that the ranges of scores reaches 'Severe' levels on all scores, as in the previous year. Upper scores are slightly higher this year compared to last year. The range for all scores is lowered to moderate levels.

Counsellor Reviews

The summary includes the views of two of the three counsellors, as due to personal reasons the third has been delayed.

All tasks have been completed by the counsellors, but they may need to check that their DBSs are up to date. Counsellors have seen an increased number of clients this year; between 7 and 9 clients. Usually between 3 and 4 clients are seen a week by each counsellor. Counsellors have recognised that it is hard work, but still find it enjoyable and rewarding.

Achievements

All counsellors felt they had achieved a number of goals in this period, including adapting to short term work, greater confidence working with policies and procedures, diversifying their client base, setting up and using new tech (website and practice management software), and continuing to be in a supportive role for other members of the team. Counsellors felt that they had made improvements on their personal objectives, such as getting to grips with short term work, better record keeping, and data entry. The issues with the building, parking and its staff have also improved greatly.

Issues

There have been some data analysis and tech issues, which are now improving. Management of DNAs and cancellation have been ever present, however, the creation of the sub-committee as a sounding board has been effective. There have been some difficulties finding who to refer clients to in the area, so this is an action point to be discussed with the board. Everything appears to be more stable than last year. Parking has improved, and although there have been a few issues with card reader these have been manageable.

Support

There is a recognition that outside "life" factors can be a distraction. However, the support from supervision and peers not only ensured that clients were not impacted, but also helped with decision making in the long run on how to resolve issues. The team has been very supportive of one another, and this has come from fellow counsellors as well as board members, both in and out of monthly meetings. As mentioned, sub-committees have been effective sounding boards, alongside supervisors. Church staff are now in their roles more and this has allowed relationships to develop, meaning they can be approached more easily for support where appropriate.

Goals

Counsellors are happy to consider a number of development areas such as managing a student placement when the time comes, delivering and supporting the development of group work, seeing more couples, and offering workshops in the community.

Training

No specific areas were mentioned in the review, but counsellors were happy to source their own, and are aware of their obligation to do so.

Improvements

Counsellors would value the continued support of the trustees in tracking finances, which will get easier with the practice management software and the development of specific tools. Help with marketing and advertising workshops and group work to the community would also be appreciated. Trustees' knowledge and expertise will also be useful in gathering referral pathways in the community as well as in other areas of the service.

Counsellors identified the following ways that service could be enhanced:

- Reaching out to businesses to offer services, for fundraising, and to raise awareness.
- Taking a student counsellor on board.
- Taking on another qualified counsellor, preferably able to do couples.
- Take on more clients as a whole – which would require careful room management

Trustee Reviews

All trustees took part in the review process. All actions were up to date, except for one trustee who had ongoing actions to be resolved by the AGM.

Trustees feel that they can always turn to fellow trustees for help or opinions. The WhatsApp groups have worked well to facilitate this. Emails are responded to quickly and regular meetings allow members to be updated. The collaborative nature of the board means that members feel valued and supported and that we are a strong team together. It is hoped that the service will grow to perhaps include a trainee counsellor and an increased presence in the community.

Trustees felt they have been able to conduct their roles well, especially in the following ways:

- Attending meetings and contribute in constructive ways
- Supporting counsellors
- Being an active part of a sub-committee
- Reviewing and updating policies
- Improving trustee paperwork and agenda preparation
- Supporting other trustees
- Expressing views and ideas
- Attending safeguarding training

- Allocating new clients to counsellors
- Completing individual roles well
- Responding quickly to emails
- Setting up new software, and researching areas like NCPS membership and fundraising opportunities

Some areas were identified as potentially being improved:

- Some responsibilities could be addressed earlier or more thoroughly
- The fundraising sub-committee need to engage in more investigations
- Workshops might be offered
- Getting links with local businesses
- Linking more effectively with the AFC Safeguarding Co-ordinator

Trustees felt that there should be more involvement in the process of taking on a trainee counsellor. There are also potential opportunities for trustees to market the service at different events and perhaps support the upcoming group work. This might require collaboration to utilise any local knowledge that trustees have in terms of referral pathways. It may be useful to assign small projects to individual trustees. With the new practice management software in place, trustees wish to help in keeping this operating smoothly to help with treasury tasks and client allocation. The need to perhaps gain some additional funding in the next 12 months was also acknowledged. Trustees are keen to continue supporting one another, as well as counsellors, with any personal issues which arise.

In terms of further training for trustees, several areas were mentioned including, Linking Lives, safeguarding, marketing and fundraising. A few trustees have also completed training which might be beneficial.

Banking and treasury issues related to IT have been present, but this will hopefully be rectified with the new practice management software. There was also an issue with completing the annual Charity Commission return, but this was solved through a collective effort. A review of how files and information is backed up, especially with regards to reviews will be done so this is handled more smoothly. Trustees also hope to keep connected whilst acknowledging life changes that might occur.

Actions Taken Since the Reviews

Following previous reviews and this one, the following actions have been taken which address some of the issues raised:

- The card machine which was purchased is now in use and is now the method by which most payment are made
- A free contract with Cliniko (practice management software) has been set up. This means that counsellors have a shared diary in which to schedule appointments, record assessment and session notes and note down payments. This system will aid in the collection of service data, allow easier checking of payments and reduce the

amount of paper in the service. Counsellors were trained on the system in late March for use with new clients from the start of April

- A subcommittee for fundraising has been set up. This has yet to meet to discuss options. However, options involving a large supermarket have been presented to the board for discussion
- Discussions have taken place around taking on a possible new contracted counsellor and systems are now nearly in place to take on a student for placement if required
- Everything is now in place to join the National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society. Trustees are currently deciding on which membership level to pursue
- Group sessions have been written and hopefully these will start in the next few months

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a standing item at all our meetings, and it is at the centre of the work of the team of counsellors. They are appropriately trained to maintain the safety of their clients, themselves and others using the building.

The counsellors are all aware of the Safeguarding Policy and procedures at Adeyfield Free Church and how to report any observed Safeguarding concerns.

The Safeguarding Officer of the church will consider running safeguarding training in the year ahead to raise awareness generally of this important issue. This training will be offered to the counselling team.

Client Feedback

We received 7 feedback forms this year, which is an increase from the 5 last year. All have provided consent for use of comments in reports. Online forms were made available but these were difficult to manage and no replies were received.

For the first section of the form all clients agree with the following statements:

- I got the information I needed
- I got the support I needed
- I felt my concerns were understood
- I felt comfortable with the way in which the counselling was provided
- The environment was safe and welcoming
- I valued the centre's service
- The support was sensitive to my needs and situation

All but one client rated the venue and location as Excellent. The other client rated it Good. The provision of parking was a positive attribute. The venue was described as calming, peaceful and safe, and the rooms as comfortable and welcoming.

All clients agreed with the following statements:

- I have a better understanding of my situation and I know what I can do about it

- I understand more about how my circumstances have affected me
- I have been able to make decisions about my future (One client did not)

Not all clients required access to other support services and so this was not applicable.

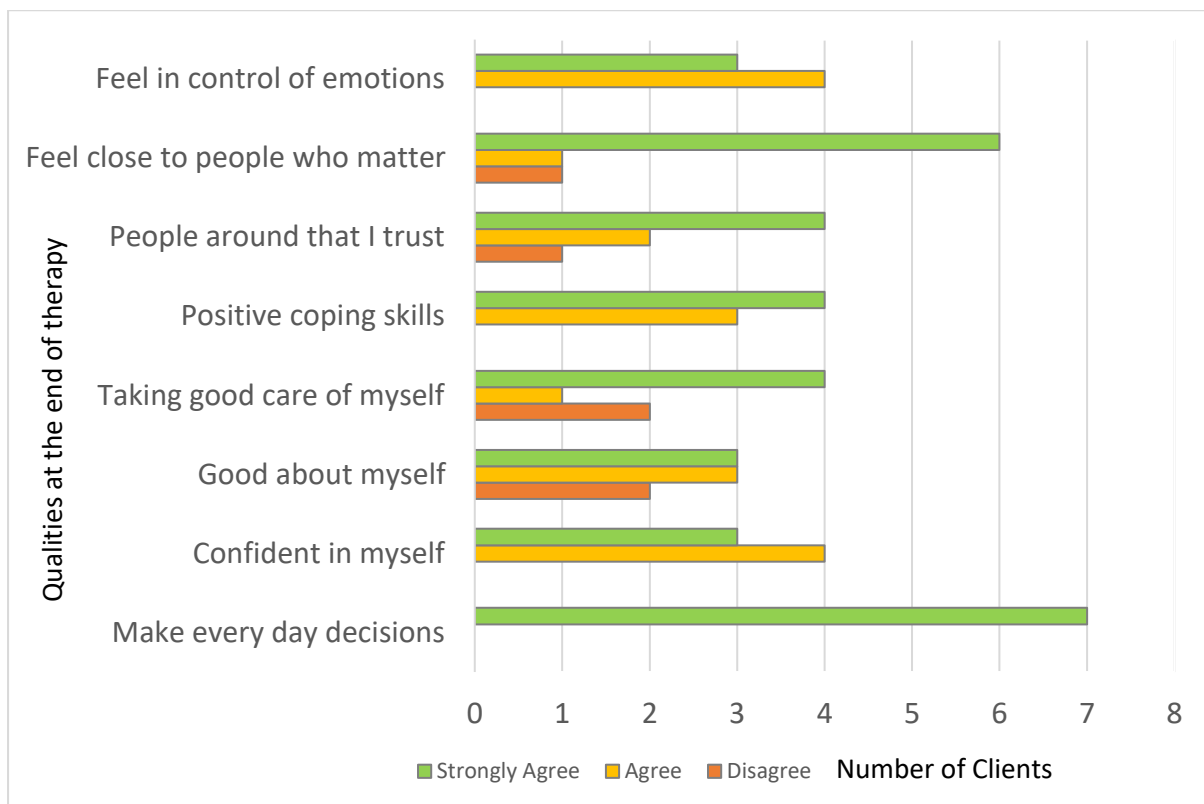


Figure 3: Changes to qualities after therapy

Figure 3 shows that clients agree that positive qualities developed after counselling. The majority agree that things are better for them. Some clients still did not feel they were close to people or had people they could trust. This might be a reflection on the greater number of clients coming with specific relationship and family issues this year. Some clients also did not feel good about themselves or were not taking care of themselves. This might be another reflection of the complex nature of the clients and the severity of symptoms. The fact that there are improvements in other areas for these clients is a positive.

Other reported benefits included:

- Better sleep
- Making better decisions
- Putting boundaries in place
- Better understanding of themselves and their situation
- Realising not everything is their fault

Selected positive comments

"This service provides a lifeline to people in this community who have limited financial means - thank you."

"I've never had counselling before but I'm so grateful to have had this service. I felt listened to and understood. A welcoming, relaxed atmosphere."

"The service has impacted my life in a very positive way. I am much calmer and able to deal with difficult and stressful situations."

"I was assisted through a very difficult life transition and given the tools to be the best version of myself"

"My counsellor was my safe haven where I could unload and process (my) burden each week"

"It has helped me look at the situation from a different perspective and tackle any negativity about the way I've handled it in the past"

"The service was excellent. I felt listened to."

"I left every session feeling like I had been listened to."

"I came for support for a childhood trauma but feel I have a much better understanding of how this has affected my adult relationships."

"A safe place where I could talk through worries and difficult situations"

"...my counsellor helped me to understand how we relate to others. This has really helped me to see how our actions (mine as well as others) can trigger insecurities based on past experiences."

"The counsellor was easy to talk to. Her knowledge in understanding and zeroing in on the most important points helped me to view it another way. I couldn't have asked for better support."

"Being able to talk to someone about the deep pain and hurt that has kept my heart in bondage all my life"

"I couldn't have asked for better services."

"I felt I could be real and honest, and the support I received was non-judgemental."

"I now sleep better."

Suggested improvements

"Better reception at the church. Sometimes it was difficult to be let in."

"Can be a little challenging to gain entry when no-one is on reception (only happened a few times though)"

This feedback from two separate clients was shared with the trustees. The employment of a building manager and a more consistent reception rota have improved access to the building. With the opening of the “Meet and Eat” area, access may be further improved on some days.

Future Endeavours

Counselling at AFC is always looking forward to develop the service and so the following are projects and initiatives which the trustees are keen to explore over the next 12 months:

- Consider approaching businesses to offer EAP or other support work to employees and increase revenue to offer more low cost sessions
- Subcommittee to continue to explore possible funding or grant opportunities
- Explore other signposting opportunities to clients for additional or specialised support
- Advertise the service to more parts of the community
- A new contracted counsellor or student on placement may be taken on in the coming months
- Depending on the success of any groups which are run, more can be offered throughout the year. There is also the possibility of running educational workshops on a range of topics which could be explored further.

COUNSELLING AT AFC

England & Wales - Charity number 1198533

Accounts

COUNSELLING



Affordable counselling for all the community

ANNUAL REPORT

April 2022 – March 2023

Presented to the Board of Trustees at the AGM 24th
April 2023

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Counselling at AFC
Annual Report for the AGM
22nd April 2023

Introduction from the Chair

The past year has seen a good growth within the agency; 21 clients as opposed to 9 clients the previous year. This has been through advertising with a free subscription at The Counselling Directory and through AFCC tv screens. There was also some clients from word of mouth from clients to family and friends.

The new website is almost ready to launch which, hopefully will bring in more clients. This is mainly down to Toby's hard work. Toby has also spent hours working on new policy and procedure documents. Many thanks Toby for this and so much more that you do for the agency. These documents and new policies future proof the service for taking on trainees or new counsellors and address the more complex clients we are seeing.

I have stepped back from client work which enables a focus on finances, committee and communication, assessments and allocation of new clients. Many thanks to Jane for being my partner in all that I do.

Thanks again to Toby for stepping up to be a Trustee and joining Pat, Gill, Denise, Jane and myself.

After Jane and I met with Penny, church elder and Shirley, church treasurer, it was agreed for a voluntary donation of £245 to be paid from us as a contribution for the year room hire. This is roughly 10% of our balance at the end of the financial year. We are also in the process of completing room hire forms.

A card reader has recently been set up to help prompt immediate client payment. A new App is being trialled by the counsellors for tracking this and room bookings.

AFCC had an open day in which the service was advertised and promoted by all counsellors, including Toby offering free group mindfulness sessions, which was well used.

It is exciting to see how we have grown and continue to support each other very well. We are a good team! Thanks to you all for your continued time, effort and enthusiasm to our agency.

I am optimistic we will continue to bond and grow together creating greater outreach for the community.

I am very grateful

Sue

Financial Report

The income and expenditure have steadily grown over the past year, income in April 22 was £245 with £249.50 expenses compared to Feb 23; income £806.96, expenses £661.20. The main income is client donations and expenditure is mainly counsellor invoices. The balance increased from £1,055.96 in April22 to £2,437.19 at the end of the March23.

This has enabled us to take on low-cost clients, donate to AFCC for room hire and buy insurance protection amongst other things.

Looking ahead we hope to expand into businesses, offer group courses and expand the number of counsellors.

Summary Apr22-Mar23			
Summary		Bank balance	
Income	£5,524.45	Balance b/f	£1,055.96
		Surplus	£1,381.23
Expenditure	£4143.22		
Surplus	£1,381.23	Balance c/f	£2,437.19

Data Review

Data covers the Period from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

	Current Year (Apr 22-23)	Previous year
Number of individual clients seen	21	9
Number of new clients	18	9
Number of scheduled sessions	217	96
Number of delivered sessions	190	86
Number of cancellations	20	9
Number of DNAs (Did Not Attend)	6	1
Average Sessions Attended (for completed clients)	11.5	9.7

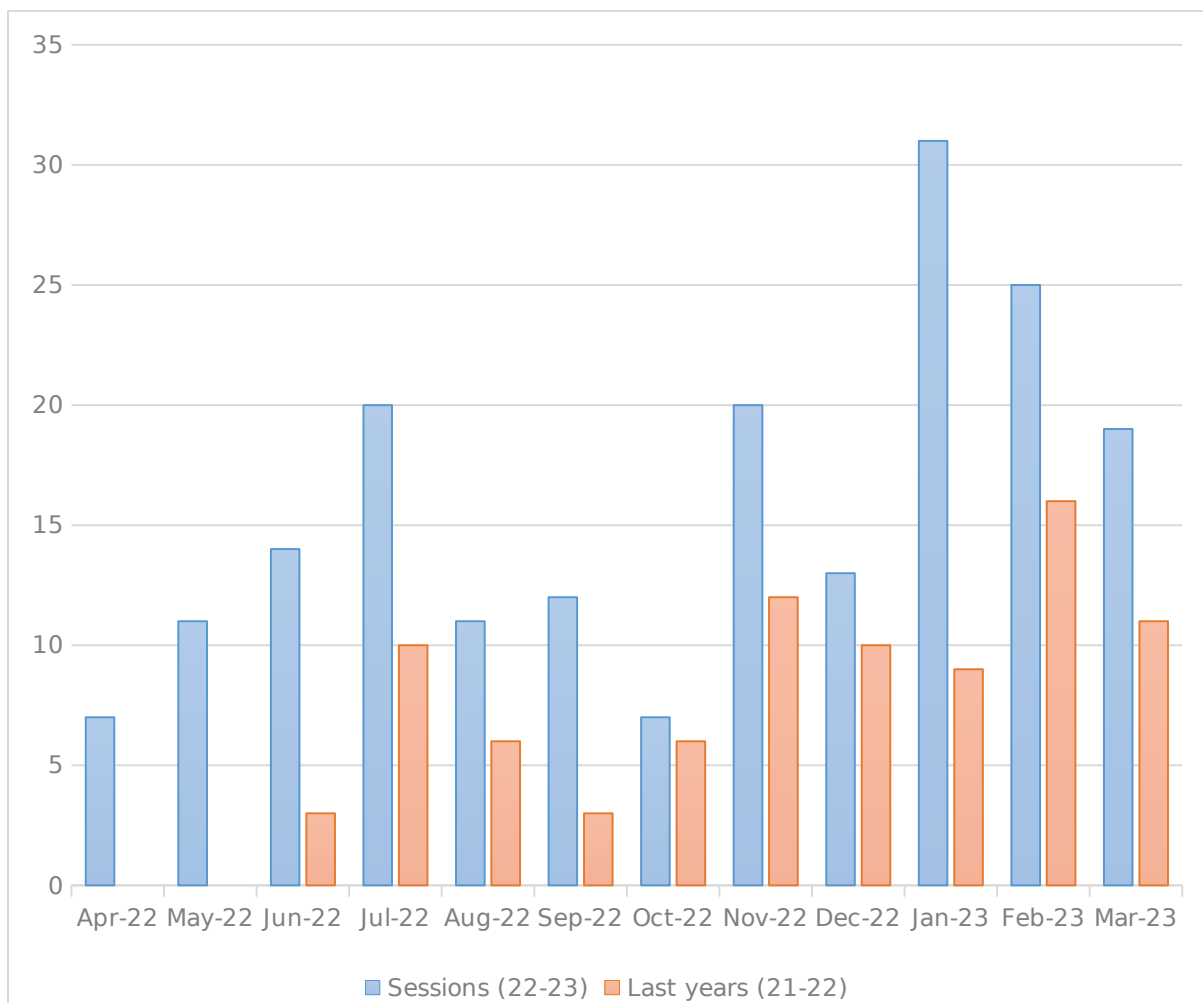
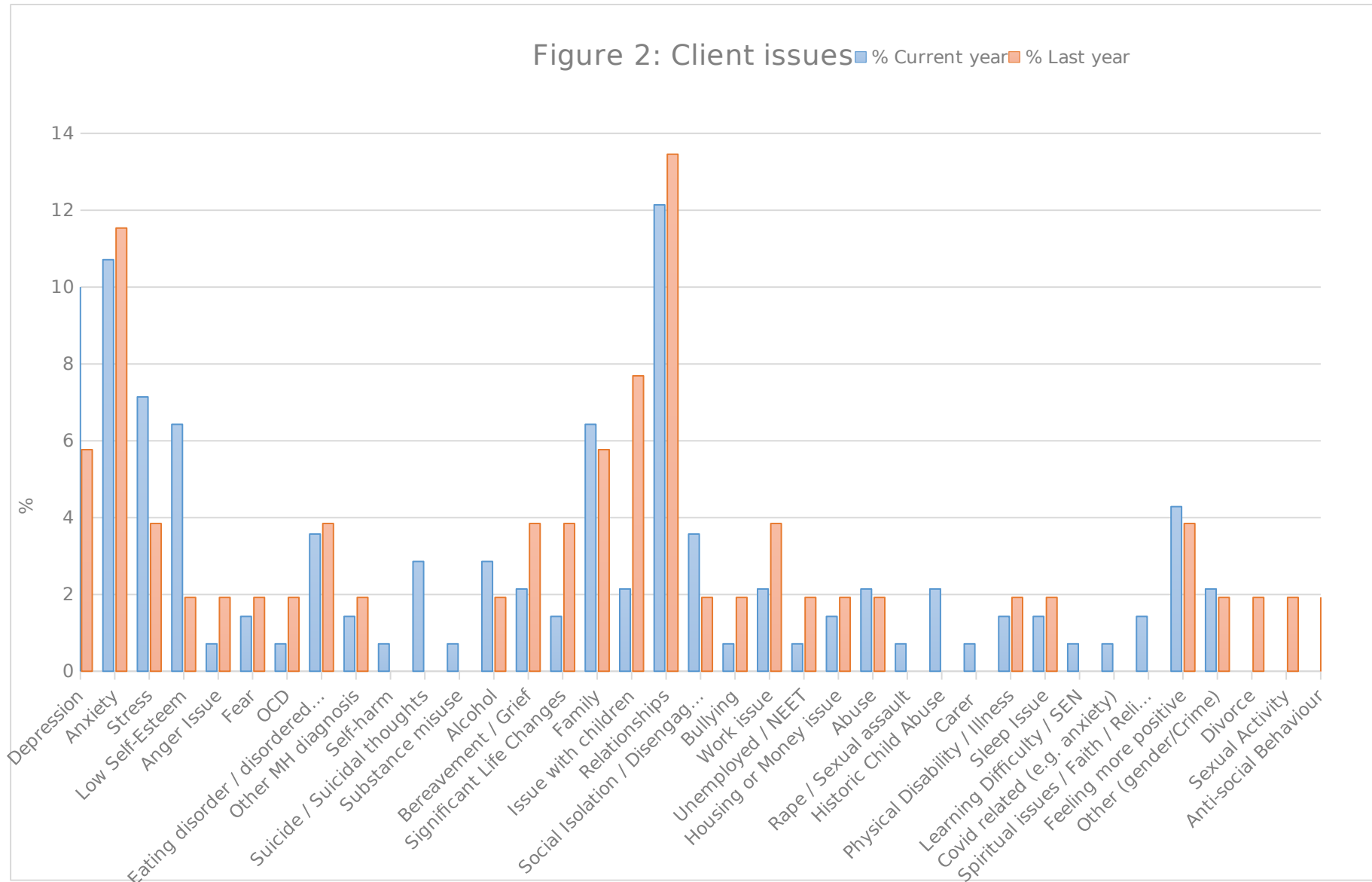


Figure 1: Number of session per month

General findings

- The number of sessions and new clients seen has more than doubled this year, reflecting the growth of the service
- There has been a corresponding increase in cancellations and DNAs, which represent 4.6% of scheduled sessions. This is down from 10.4% the previous year. Most cancellations were in December.
- Most clients complete the full 12 sessions offered. It should be noted that the average reflects a few clients finishing fewer than half of the session and some being offered extensions.
- The trends in sessions per month roughly match the previous year. It is notable that there is peak in sessions in January this year, perhaps linked to financial pressures caused by the economy. A peak in July was followed by a drop possibly due to not taking on new clients due to the church closure for maintenance work.
- No new couples were seen this year, but this is mostly due to restricted counsellor availability.

Figure 2: Client issues ■ % Current year ■ % Last year



Considering the issues being brought by clients (Figure 2), it can be seen that the trends are again similar to the previous year. There is a wider range of issues, reflecting the greater number of clients. These are the top 10 issues presented (those in brackets are from last year):

1. Relationship issues (Relationship issues)
2. Anxiety (Anxiety)
3. Depression (Issues with children)
4. Stress (Depression)
5. Low self-esteem (Family)
6. Family (Stress)
7. Feeling more positive (Eating issues)
8. Eating disorders/Disordered eating (Bereavement)
9. Social isolation (Significant life changes)
10. Suicide/Suicidal ideation (Work issues)

The issues are fairly similar for the two years. However, it should be noted that suicidal thoughts are far higher reflecting the increased complexity and risks associated with newer clients. Social isolation is also new on the list, which is perhaps surprising given that society has mostly moved on from Covid. It is encouraging that “Feeling more positive” is so high on the list this year, as this reflects the excellent work being done with clients.

Outcome Measures

At the beginning, middle and end of the set of sessions, clients complete a range of outcome measure forms. Sometimes the scores will increase in the middle sessions, but this often reflects the fact that issues are being processed. The following measures are completed:

CORE 10 - measuring general wellbeing, functioning, problems and risk. A score of 10/40 is the clinical cut off for the general population.

PHQ9 - Used to measure depression symptomology

GAD7 - Used to look at anxiety symptomology

The data in the following table is based on 14 clients who completed a start and end set of forms.

	RANGE AT START	RANGE AT END	MEAN START	MEAN END	MEAN CHANGE
CORE (/40)	3-25	0-20	16.1 (Moderate)	8.0 (None)	- 8.4
PHQ9 (/27)	1-20	0-16	12.6 (Moderate)	4.6 (Just Mild)	- 8.5
GAD7 (/21)	1-19	0-12	11.2 (Moderate)	4.8 (Just Mild)	- 6.7

	MEDIAN START	MEDIAN END	MEDIAN CHANGE
CORE (/40)	17 (Moderate)	5.25 (None)	- 8
PHQ9 (/27)	13 (Moderate)	3 (None)	- 10
GAD7 (/21)	10 (Moderate)	3.5 (None)	- 5

- It can be seen from the data that for all measures the counselling

reduces the scores. For the CORE forms a change of 5 points is considered clinically significant.

- Clients are coming in on average with Moderate difficulties and symptomology and leaving with, on average, no issues beyond those of the general population.
- It should be noted that the ranges of scores reaches 'Severe' levels on all scores, but the range for each is also lowered to moderate levels for the CORE and GAD7, and 'Moderate/Severe' for the PHQ9.

Counsellor Reviews

Counsellors were positive about the review process, as it gave them an opportunity to reflect on the past year, offered them a reminder of why they do this role and how much they enjoy it. Their responses really showed how supportive everyone is and it's also a good way to re-connect with the trustees.

Counsellors have seen between 2 and 8 clients each this year. Usually between 1 and 4 clients are seen a week by each counsellor.

Achievements

All the counsellors recognised their significant achievements over the last year, both professionally and personally. All found they did well to take on the new challenges in their roles as the charity was setting up and starting to receive clients; including administration, assessing new clients, managing time effectively, using new skills from recent training, seeking the support of the team and the trustees, responding to their team's needs and getting used to a brand new set of policies and procedures.

Issues

Issues which could have gone better consisted of mainly administrative and practical issues which have arisen as a result of this being a new experience for everyone e.g., data handling, feedback forms, handling last minute cancellations and requests for low cost counselling were mentioned. It was also challenging at first when counsellors were adjusting their working style to accommodate 12 weeks of sessions as opposed to working with an open ended number of sessions.

Some difficulties have arisen this year including:

- Minor payment issues, hopefully resolved by offering a payment facility
- Minor attendance issues of clients
- Communications with Church staff have had a few hiccups e.g., signing in and out/being locked in/parking difficulties which affect both counsellors and clients.
- When necessary, stepping back from client work and looking after oneself, although difficult, was made easier with the support of the whole team and knowing their clients were looked after and treated professionally.
- General practical issues have been challenging at times, but again support from others and clarification from the board has been valuable.

Support

Every counsellor mentioned the support they get from each other as being invaluable. It was clear that their monthly meetings have been productive and very much appreciated by all. Counsellors have also been there for each other between these meetings. Counsellors also mentioned that the trustees, their supervisors and the Church have been accessible and helpful.

Goals

Counsellors identified the following personal goals for next year:

- Setting up group sessions
- Co-delivering workshops to groups and businesses
- Marketing to businesses
- Increase the number of clients, both for individual and couples work
- Broaden the types of clients they work with
- Continue with professional development training to enhance client work
- Improve the system for last minute cancellations via emails and telephone calls

Training

With regards to CPD and training, the following issues were raised:

- Safeguarding training would be welcomed
- All counsellors felt they are choosing appropriate training themselves, however this can be expensive
- Some have found free learning due to being in a voluntary position
- The counsellor's group does a good job of recommending courses and sharing knowledge gained

Improvements

All counsellors felt the trustees are supportive and accessible and are fully behind the growth of the charity. They identified the following ways that support could be enhanced:

- A couple of sub committees to work on specific areas. E.g., marketing to target businesses and set up workshops; and one for practical decisions regarding counsellor's requests for things like low cost counselling, student counsellors, number of sessions etc.
- Annual meal to touch base with the board and connect us all

The following ways to improve the service have been suggested:

- Find a better way for clients to communicate with counsellors about bookings, in particular last minute cancellations. Messages and emails aren't always accessible when this happens so it can leave both parties in the dark.
- Get businesses on board so we can start offering workshops, bring in paying clients, EAP work etc.
- Consider offering placements for trainee counsellors
- Possibly take on another qualified counsellor
- Use of a team diary which everyone can access
- Offer group work
- Find ways (and time to) share resources, CPD training with other counsellors where appropriate
- Continue to grow, and market ourselves in the area

Trustee Reviews

All trustees took part in the review except for Toby Payne, who had not been in post for a long enough period of time to warrant giving feedback. All actions were up to date, except for one involving the complaints procedure to be resolved by the AGM.

Trustees feel that communication in the group is good and that they act as a collaborative team who have regular meetings. There is always someone to ask for help and answer questions. There has been a lot of hard work put into establishing this worthwhile and functioning charity which reaches local people to provide low cost counselling. The future looks exciting and bright as the service continues to develop.

Trustees felt they have been able to conduct their roles well, especially in the following ways:

- Attending meetings
- Supporting counsellors
- Expressing views and ideas
- Joining subcommittees
- Supporting other trustees

- Keeping banking up to date
- Preparing paperwork and agendas

Some areas were identified as potentially being improved:

- Following action points up earlier
- Being aware of an upcoming meeting to prepare in good time
- Not leaving organising paperwork for meetings to the last minute
- Making sure emails are responded to promptly
- Some members are unable to attend online meetings due to IT issues
- Going forward a WhatsApp group would be useful

In order to enhance things in the organisation trustees feel it would be useful to explore general training opportunities with the National Council of Volunteer Organisation and also 31:8 for safeguarding training.

Banking and treasury issues have been challenging at the start, but this procedure has been simplified in line with changes made to overall data collection.

Trustees would like to expand the service into businesses, explore fundraising activities and possibly offer a placement to trainee counsellors.

Actions Taken Since the Reviews

Following this review, the following actions have been taken which address some of the issues raised:

- A card reading machine has been purchased and is available to take in-session payments
- An online diary system has been set up to book sessions and monitor when clients have attended
- Session notes forms have been amended to eliminate the need for monthly data sheets to be filled out. This has greatly streamlined the process. Issues codes are now also in the rooms which helps with data collection
- Subcommittees have been set up. One is to manage decisions around low cost counselling and offering additional sessions, and the other is to look at fundraising opportunities.
- There has been an offer from a trustee to offer safeguarding training to counsellors and trustees
- A trustee WhatsApp group has now been set up

Safeguarding

The team of counsellors work within safeguarding guidelines and are appropriately trained in maintaining the safety of their

clients and others using the building. Safeguarding is a standing item at committee meetings.

The safeguarding trustee has met with the counselling team to discuss the Church's policy document and where it is displayed, and the system in use at Adeyfield Free Church to report any observed Safeguarding concerns. This is supplementary to the organisation's own safeguarding policies for Adults and Young People which were updated in November 2022.

It was agreed that any future Safeguarding training offered by the church would be offered to members of the counselling team.

Client Feedback

We received 5 feedback forms this year. All have provided consent for use of comments in reports. In order to gain more responses there are now online versions of the forms available to send to clients at the end of the therapy.

For the first section of the form all clients agree with the following statements:

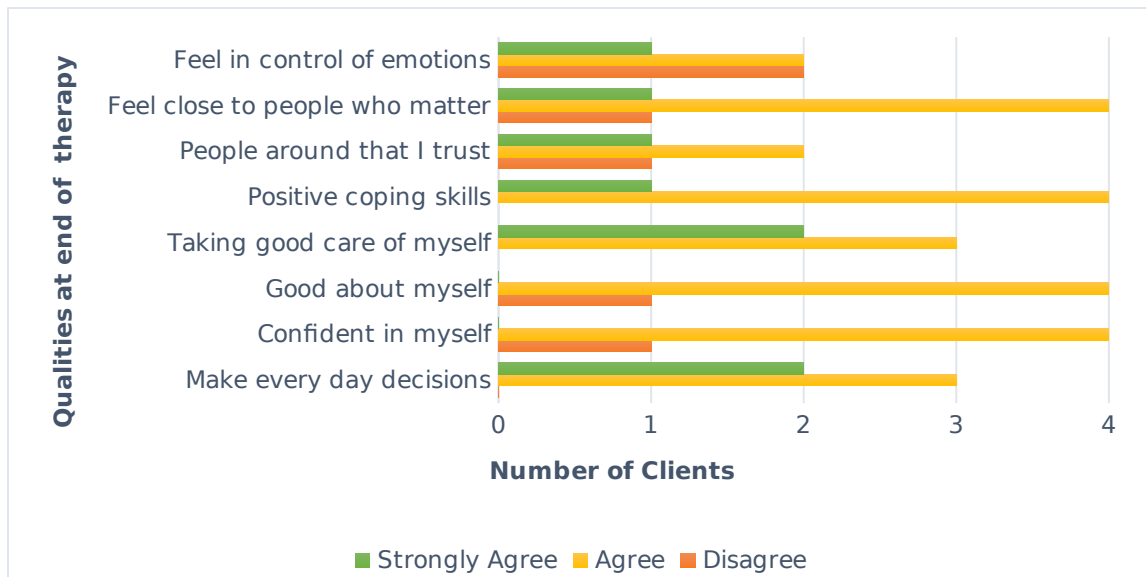
- I got the information I needed
- I got the support I needed
- I felt my concerns were understood
- I felt comfortable with the way in which the counselling was provided
- The environment was safe and welcoming
- I valued the centre's service
- The support was sensitive to my needs and situation

All clients rated the venue and location as Excellent. Having parking was valued.

All clients agreed with the following statements:

- I have a better understanding of my situation and I know what I can do about it
- I understand more about how my circumstances have affected me
- I have been able to make decisions about my future.

Not all clients required access to other support services and so this was not applicable.



The graph shows that clients agree that they developed the displayed qualities after the counselling. Most clients agree with the feelings that things are better for them. Some clients still did not feel good about themselves or in control, but many clients have come with complex issues and so the presence of agreement in the other areas is a positive sign.

Other reported benefits included:

- Putting boundaries in place
- Less procrastination
- Better focus
- More positive outlook
- Feeling happier
- Take time for themselves
- Learnt to say how they feel
- Listen more to others

Selected positive comments

“My counsellor was wonderful”

“We worked very well together and connected which is very important and advised me and went through strategies too”

“It got me through a very difficult time in my life”

“I felt that it addressed my specific issues and re-established my faith in the process of counselling”

“I had an excellent therapist who understood my situation and how to help me”

“The appointment was given very quickly and I received a very good sensitive support”

“I now understand why my depression led to certain behaviours. Helped my relationship with my child and others”

“At a crossroads in my life... I had exhausted the counselling available through my GP. With limited income I felt stuck with nowhere to turn until I heard about AFC counselling. This has been the most helpful counselling I've ever had and really enabled me to make the changes my life needed. Thank you”

“Fantastic support and understanding...My personal wellbeing has improved to a remarkable degree”

“I did not know how much I needed the sessions until after the 12 sessions. I can now look back and see what a difference it has made to me and my family. Thank you”

“At the start of this process I was feeling very low but wanted to engage so that I could feel better. I now feel much more like me before some of the traumas. Life feels easier and I understand that some of my experiences have been out of my control”

“The experience...very warm. I felt I was taken seriously and also listened to.... I felt I could be myself. The counsellor kept her professionalism throughout and also saw when I needed empathy... We went through some strategies to help me”

“Thank you for working with me in such an effective and compassionate way”

“I would definitely come back again and would recommend it to other people”

Suggested improvements

“Remove the 12 session rule”

“I feel there should be more sessions available instead of just 12 for the people that feel they need more sessions to talk about any issues that have not been discussed or solved”

It is clear that some clients feel that there are not enough sessions. This number has been chosen as it represents 3 months of working together and is twice as many sessions as other similar services. Clients have the option to return after three months and extensions are possible if there is a significant clinical need.

Future Endeavours

Counselling at AFC is always looking forward to develop the service and so the following are projects and initiatives which the trustees are keen to explore over the next 12 months:

- Approach businesses to offer EAP or other support work to employees and increase revenue to offer more low cost sessions
- Subcommittee to explore possible funding or grant opportunities
- Look at the possibility of offering group sessions
- Consider taking on a new contracted counsellor to offer more sessions
- Consider offering a student placement to offer more sessions
- Explore membership of the National Counselling Society further