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Chairperson's Report - July 2020 to July 2021

The Women's Centre is an independent, mainly voluntary organisation. We employ 3 counsellors and a centre manager, as well as trained volunteers and the centre is managed by a committee. The aim of the Women's Centre is to help women to help themselves in areas affecting their physical health, mental health and their well-being.

The last 16 months have been a testing time for us due to the situation with Covid 19 restrictions and we have continued to face many challenges in order to continue to offer a high level of support to our service users. We have faced unique challenges in response to the global pandemic which has affected the lives of not only service users, but also our staff and volunteers. Using telephone and video calls, our centre manager has been able to continue to support our clients and carefully identifying their needs has been essential to providing effective support and information. Zoom meetings have proved very effective for the centre management committee to 'meet' regularly to talk about providing zoom counselling and slowly and safely reopening on Tuesdays for clients to book into an appointment slot at the centre. A huge thank you to all our volunteers and committee members for their support and ideas.

There are a wide range of services that can be accessed through the Women's Centre which include a free counselling service offered by our fully qualified Counsellor at the Centre, Paula, the demand for which increases year by year. During the lockdown and restrictions, our related 'drop in' service of listening and support had to be suspended and clients were encouraged to telephone the centre and arrange an appointment time with our Centre Manager in order to offer extra support whilst awaiting counselling. These services have proved particularly valuable to women experiencing stress and anxiety in their lives. Our continued partnership with Release, which offers specialised counselling and support for women who have been raped and sexually abused has proved to be a very positive and invaluable service that can be accessed through the women's Centre. The women who have used these services have provided tremendous positive feedback. And thanks also to Paula and Lydia for jointly taking up the post of Coordinator for this service following the departure of our Release counsellor earlier last year. A newly created role of coordinator for Release and General Service is to be carried out by Emma Fisher, and she will also take on the role of group supervisor to the Circle volunteers. Welcome back Emma and thank you for your continued support.

In addition, I would like to thank Circle's counselling coordinator, Lydia Keighley, as well as Circle's own volunteers for their continuing hard work and dedication in helping and supporting women who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse to make informed decisions about their future.

A huge and thank you to Jackie Moss, our centre manager, who has worked tirelessly and with great enthusiasm and dedication throughout the last year in getting the centre opened again on Tuesdays safely. She has not only been managing from home and from the Women's Centre but has continued to support service users via telephone and zoom app. She has also continued to support our volunteers. Many thanks are also due to all our volunteers for ensuring a warm welcome to all which puts women visiting the Centre at their ease. Their dedication and generosity in giving their free time to the Centre knows no bounds! It is good to have you.

Thanks also to the members of the management committee who, like our volunteers, have given their time freely and generously throughout the past year. Special thanks to our treasurer, Anne Stafford, for her considerable input and dedication to the centre and for securing the funding we so desperately need.

We say goodbye and thank you to Janet M for her role as secretary to the management committee and for her hard work and support of the women's centre in so many ways. You are much appreciated and we wish you well for your future ventures.

Don't forget to check out our Facebook page for information of forthcoming events and what we do. We are also in the process of launching a new web page, which should be ready to access very soon.

As a registered charity, the Women's Centre does rely on donations and I would therefore like to thank everyone for their generous donations.

I would like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation once again to Chorley Borough Council and the Chorley and South Ribble Clinical Commissioning Group for their continuing support and funding for our Centre Manager and counsellor posts, and for enabling us to also secure funding for Circle, especially in this financially difficult climate. The extra funding that has been made available to us to help women coping with domestic abuse has been invaluable to the centre and the ladies who have been able to access the service. Without your continuing support and funding we would not be able to provide such a comprehensive and valuable service to the women of Chorley.

I have thoroughly enjoyed another year as Chairperson and feel very privileged to be part of such a dedicated and selfless team. Each one of us brings different skills to the centre and together we make an incredible team.

Sue Collins, Chair
July 2021

Centre Managers Report

This report covers the period End of April 2020 until End of April 2021.

Coronavirus

This year has been a very trying one in many respects. Following the government advice in March 2020, the centre had to close its doors due to the Coronavirus pandemic. All groups and courses were suspended, and services were moved to online and telephone support.

This was to ensure the safety of staff and clients alike, until the risk decreased significantly. This did have an impact on the amount of ladies we were able to support during our lockdown period, however, we were actively providing support when required.

From August 18th, 2020, we began our staggered return to provide support. We began to offer 1-2-1's and walk and talk by appointment only. This was due to coronavirus cases still being a cause for concern and I was unable to pass the recommended risk assessment provided by the government to be able to reopen.

The Centre continues to be open 2 days a week, Tuesday 10-3, Friday 10-3. however services have been limited to telephone and online support until such time the Centre fully reopens. We are no longer open on a Saturday between 10-1 due to a change in circumstances.

Staff Changes.

Lydia Keighley of Circle Counselling Service temporarily took over the running and management of our Release Counselling service following the departure of Sue Anten. This was then passed over to our General Counsellor Paula Cook. A huge thank you to both Lydia and Paula for taking this role on, whilst also completing work with Circle and General counselling, respectively.

We still have 5 volunteers who have been absolutely incredible throughout the pandemic. Although we have not been able to operate as usual, they all continue to give their time freely so we can continue to slowly reopen and provide support to the women of Chorley, South Ribble and surrounding areas. It is not an over-statement to say that the centre would not be able to operate without them.

I would also like to thank all individuals who have suggested funding pots which have been available. We have applied for a number of these, and we have been successful. These funds are extremely valuable to the centre and will go towards improvements/stationary and many other things. We are very appreciative of all suggestions so again thank you!

Despite the pandemic, the centre has continued to support women (and indirectly their families) from Chorley and surrounding areas, including some of the most vulnerable. From 1/4/2020- 30/4/2021 we have supported 156 women through various means. This overall figure is inclusive of returning and new clients. 86% have been new clients to the centre. Approximately 14% of clients have returned to the centre to access further services.

The Centre continued and still continues to operate 2 days a week, Tuesday 10-3, and Friday 10-3, offering the following services:

- Drop-in and one-to-one support.

The volunteers are all trained in supportive listening skills and are encouraged to utilise these when women drop in needing a listening supportive ear. Since the End of April 2020, we have seen 61 women for one-to-one sessions. During one-to-ones, the women receive not only emotional support but also, general and health related information, signposting to an appropriate statutory, local, and voluntary service, if required. We also provide referrals into these services.

- Legal advice

At the centre, we are in contact with two local solicitors who specialise in family law. This information is available upon request, by those in need. Ladies who contact them gain a 30-minute free consultation and can also gain access to useful knowledge from an experienced professional. We have provided these details for 8 ladies accessing the centre.

- Weekly relaxation sessions continued Tuesdays and Fridays at 11am.

The women utilising this service all say they find it immensely beneficial. This service has not been available throughout the pandemic; however, we look forward to when this can restart as it is extremely popular.

We continue to offer free General Counselling to women. This has been taking place via telephone and zoom due to the pandemic. We continue to have a steady stream of women who are referred into the centre to access this service. Paula, our general counsellor has been working extremely

hard throughout the pandemic and we are very appreciative of all her hard work.

Release counselling also continues to see clients who have experienced rape/sexual abuse. This service has also been offered via telephone and zoom sessions throughout the pandemic. Thanks, and appreciation go out to Lydia and Paula respectively for their continued hard work and dedication to the centre.

Up until the closure of the centre Linda and Jackie kindly offered their time and expertise to enable us to offer free complementary therapies to the women. This service is still on hold due to the ongoing pandemic.

Issues women are presenting with include;

Stress, depression, and anxiety

Complex mental health problems e.g. bi-polar, personality disorder, suicidal thoughts

High level depression

Relationship breakdown

Emotional crisis and Self-esteem related issues

Self-Injury/suicidal ideation

Isolation and loneliness

Bereavement, redundancy, and loss

Domestic abuse

Poverty, homelessness, and food parcels

Transgender support

Drugs and Alcohol related issues

Rape and sexual abuse (often historic)

Loss of confidence

Apart from our part time manager we rely on volunteers to provide a supportive welcoming and friendly setting. The volunteer's gain quality training and life and work skills which promote their own self development and confidence, and we are extremely grateful for the hard work and dedication that every single volunteer brings to the centre. It is fair to say that without them the centre would not be able to continue providing help and support to those in need and continue the legacy and ethos of the Women's centre in a positive way.

Once the centre fully reopens, all volunteers will have an appraisal with myself - identifying their strengths, areas for improvement, training, and suggestions for future training/improvements. Training will be ongoing with sessions schedules approximately every 6 weeks or so. Due to COVID-19 lockdown, training for the volunteers has been put on hold, however they have been actively encouraged to complete online training courses. More training is scheduled throughout the year including;

Domestic violence, FGM, Honour based violence.
Anxiety
An annual training update (safeguarding, MCA etc.)
Bereavement support

Mental health issues
Drug and alcohol issues
Trauma
Suicide First Aid

We have had an increase in contact via email and Facebook Messenger following the closure of the centre. Facebook has been our main source of communication with our client's, and I have been supporting ladies via Facebook/email and telephone during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The website for the centre, is a work in progress and is due to be completed in the coming months. We have had to redesign due to some unforeseen circumstances with our previous one.

Since August 2020, we have been offering a walk and talk sessions on a Tuesday, as well as one-to-ones. This has been well received by service users new and previous. We are only offering services on a Tuesday at the moment; however, this is a temporary measure as we work to re-open the centre safely.

Prior to the pandemic walk and talk was not up and running due to lack of interest, however we had ladies enquire about restarting it and offered it as an additional service alongside our one-to-one's.

We have not been able to gain feedback from service users recently due to the closure of the centre, however feedback that was received both verbally and on our feedback forms, is that clients find the centre extremely helpful and supportive. One service user said:

'In the 6 months I have been accessing the women's centre, I have always been welcomed as soon as I walked through the door. The support has been 110% and I have recommended the centre to other women. Without the centre I don't think I would be where I am emotionally & mentally. They have helped save me'.

Everyone asked said they would recommend the centre to others and that their experience of the centre was exceptional.

Prior to the COVID-19 lockdown, we continued to provide services/venue to Lancashire Women's Centre, who offer the Vision/LWSAR Program, on a Wednesday between 10 - 4pm. This is a 10-week group program. The women are referred into the program either by court as a Specified Activity Requirement or voluntarily by their Offender Managers at Probation. The program aims to address issues surrounding offending behaviour, help the service users understand the impact of their offending on their victims and the community and enable them to effectively manage problems in the future that could potentially lead to offending. We also assess the women's needs and identify whether they need additional support and referring to other parts of the Women's Centre such as

Counselling, Courses, other projects such as Achieve – where we help get the women back in to Employment, Training or Volunteering.

We also continued to provide management and rooms for the Circle domestic violence counselling service which is going from strength to strength under the co-ordination of Lydia. This was prior to the COVID-19 Lockdown.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for the continued help and support I have received throughout the pandemic. It has certainly not been the smoothest first year in post, however the support shown and received by all has been very welcoming and appreciated. I look forward to the reopening and moving the centre forward in a positive way.

Jackie Moss
Centre Manager



GENERAL COUNSELLING Report 2021

Client Numbers

During the period end April 2020 to end April 2021, a total number of 289 counselling sessions took place with 33 clients seen.

Coronavirus

Due to the ongoing Coronavirus and the continued shut down of the Centre, all sessions took place remotely either by telephone or online via Zoom.

When the Centre first closed in March 2020, it was apparent that there was a need for ongoing support from service users who were not necessarily in need of counselling but who were feeling frightened, anxious, isolated or alone and so during the period April 2020 to August 2020, a total of 60 support sessions took place, again by telephone or via Zoom. Each session lasting 30-minutes and very much welcomed and appreciated by the people accessing them.

Waiting List

There are currently two waiting lists in operation:

Face-to-Face Counselling

There are currently 10 continuing to wait for Face-to-Face counselling. Everyone on this list has been contacted several times throughout the year, updated on the Centre's current situation and offered the opportunity to access remote counselling.

Remote Counselling

There are currently 14 on this waiting list with a current wait time of around four months.

Training

Training this year has included:

Domestic Abuse Awareness Training

Advanced Certificate in Online and Telephone Counselling

A series of webinars on Trauma

Further trauma training to be undertaken this year include Trauma and the Body and one organised by new the new Release Co-ordinator, Emma Fisher, Trauma Informed Strengths Based Practice for Professionals.

Client Feedback

"I was told about the Chorley Women's centre from a psychiatrist. I contacted them via Facebook messenger. They were prompt and informative. Before long, I was added to the waiting list and the rest was all handled by them. The whole process was easy and it was quicker than I had anticipated given that it's all free and that there are so many people wanting counselling. I am very pleased with the experience. The counselling itself has done me the world of good, I'm really glad to have been given this opportunity and am recommending it to everyone!"

Client Feedback

"I wanted to submit my views on finding such meaningful support available with individual counselling provided by Paula at the Centre.

Firstly, it has been delivered in the best safest way possible online in these unprecedented Covid times that have enabled me to access support, despite shielding as I am clinically vulnerable due to complex health conditions & disabilities.

Not only has this service provided the valuable support for my mental and emotional well-being but also in a way that keeps us all safe.

It has been much less stressful and I hope in the future offered to new potential patients who perhaps, like me, struggle getting out to appointments, travelling, parking etc. causing increased stress & pain & fatigue on top of the obvious extra emotional demand working through such a worthwhile counselling process.

It also enables me to focus on the conversation & experiences & explore concepts with less physical demands or exhaustion especially trying to drive home often still emotional afterwards, which can hinder the internal processing of what was discussed etc.

I must also specifically mention the wonderful, warm, caring, supportive style with which Paula handles our sessions. She is adept at putting me at ease, calming me, reassuring me to feel I can finally voice my realisations or perspectives, as we talk through memories & experiences in my life that are tough but important in my developing awareness of the impact in my life. She gives me time to think, drawing out observations, using my senses, clarifying my own thoughts, processing & drawing out conclusions & encouraging self-evaluation as we talk things through. She makes me feel safe & comfortable in opening up with her gentle concern & encouraging me to voice in a way I have never been able to before.

She also makes me feel confident that she is truly listening, "gets me" and intent on helping me move forward with different tools in my renewing efforts at coping

despite challenges. I am amazed at how much her compassionate way of counselling, giving insight & vital input to lead me to realisations & awareness of so much I never considered before or didn't have the safe feeling she provides to give me a "voice" and linking to my life situation, faith, family dynamics, personal values & being so considerate to what matters to me. She has enabled me to see ahead with a more hopeful future, something I could not imagine possible.

The Centre has really been vital for me in providing such individualised support during the most scary, stressful times without adding to my emotional & physical demands.

I honestly would have had nowhere to turn as nothing was available & long waiting lists just getting assessed before placing on a waiting list even after multiple previous requests for support in the last few years even from the Crisis Team & Start Team & MindsMatters & GP & Wellbeing teams & Social Prescribers especially in this horrendous pandemic. I have felt so let down and abandoned as I was told I wasn't severe enough until I had tried to commit suicide! I was actually summoning up so much courage in actually asking for help BEFORE that happens! That dread of jumping through hoops to get to an assessment, yet then being left without anything made me so apprehensive & nervous.

So, I am deeply grateful for the services the Centre offer, in addition to the way Paula has drawn out of me strengthening confidence, increasing self-esteem, growing a deeper awareness & ability to focus or hone in on beneficial details in such a safe warm atmosphere.

Paula is a great asset for the Centre for those of us that need this vital help. I don't think I would still be here without her and this vital counselling service, so I pray it will have enough future funding to enable such worthwhile support to continue for others in need.

Thanks hardly expresses the true long-term impact this will absolutely continue to have.



RELEASE COUNSELLING SERVICE Report 2021

Client Numbers

Sue Anten, the former Release Counsellor, left her position just before lockdown. Lydia Keighley looked after this service for 6 months and I took over this role in October 2020. Since October 2020 to the end of April 2021, 56 counselling sessions took place with 4 clients seen. As with general counselling, all sessions took place remotely. 2 telephone clients and 2 clients seen via Zoom.

Waiting List

There are currently two waiting lists in operation:

Face-to-Face Counselling

There are currently 2 continuing to wait for Face-to-Face counselling. Everyone on this list has been contacted several times throughout the year, updated on the Centre's current situation and offered the opportunity to access remote counselling.

Remote Counselling

There are currently 2 on this waiting list with a current wait time of around 4 weeks.

Testimonials

We haven't set up feed back as yet for our Release clients.

Changes in the Counselling Service

Emma Fisher has recently joined the Centre as Counselling Coordinator and I am really happy to welcome her on to the team and look forward to working with her. As mentioned in the Circle counselling report, there are several changes

happening within the counselling service, all of which will lead to reduced waiting times and a continuity of support across all 3 counselling services.

Update from Emma:

Since receiving funding from the Ministry of Justice for Release in April we have hit the ground running! The service has been relaunched and revamped. We are now able to offer the skills of our Circle Counsellors across the services and have dramatically cut waiting times.

I am continuing to raise the profile of all the services by linking in with Citizen's Advice, Victim Services, Refuges and the Lancashire SAFE Centre. I am also hopeful we will be featuring an awareness piece in the NHS GP Newsletter of all of our services in the coming months.

Myself and Lydia are continuing to merge the three services by updating the contracts, risk assessments and policies.



Circle Counselling report for Chorley Women's Centre AGM July 2021

Introduction

Over the last 12 months we have continued what we started during the first lockdown -to offer sessions remotely via telephone or Zoom. The Covid situation remains very uncertain and I am extremely proud that Circle has been able to continue to support our clients through this most challenging of times. Remote working means that we have been accessible to many more clients including those who may have been unable to access us previously due to health issues, work commitments or childcare commitments. Prior to Covid we offered sessions one day a week, now we are able to offer sessions on any day Monday- Friday and even evening sessions. For those who have been home schooling children, we have taken a flexible approach by offering fortnightly sessions or changing days and times to fit around their caring commitments. We have done everything we can to facilitate as many people as possible to access our sessions. We have proved our capacity to change and adapt and welcome more changes ahead with the move towards a more joined up counselling provision across the three existing services.

We have offered counselling to 65 clients in the last 12 months and have offered an amazing 415 hours of counselling. This is a huge increase on last years figures (which were greatly impacted by Covid) of 45 clients and 175 hours offered. The additional CCG funding which in turn facilitated more counsellors joining our team supported us in this achievement. I feel that it also demonstrates how we have really settled into remote working and utilised the funding given in order to reach as many clients and offer as many sessions as possible.

Circle and the other counselling Services (Release and General)

Our three counselling services have historically worked quite independently under the broader 'umbrella' of Chorley women's centre. A number of things have caused us to consider whether this is the most effective way of working and using our resources going forward, As we emerge from pandemic and all the changes this has brought about, we have decided with the support of the committee that all services would benefit to a more consistent and joined up approach. We have a wealth of experience in our team of counsellors at the centre and feel that there is a benefit to Circle counsellors also working across the Release and General services if the need arises. The role of Circle coordinator will be complimented by newly created role of coordinator for Release and General service to be carried out by Emma Fisher. This will mean all services will have cover in cases of sickness and absence and myself, Emma, Jackie and Paula are working together to ensure all services are working similarly in terms of:

- Referral process
- Safeguarding and risk assessment/management
- Waiting list management
- Policies and procedures
- Peer supervision
- Coordination

These changes are a work in progress and will hopefully benefit the centre going forward. We are also excited to have started to offer counselling in Urdu- a need identified by our local refugees and delivered by Sobia Asghar. We have just started this but initial feedback from clients has been very positive with one client saying 'for the first time I feel I am listened to and understood'.

Staff

In the last twelve months we have used a budget surplus to pay our counsellors on a temporary self employed basis. Our staff situation has remained stable. Our counsellors Wendy Mathers and Sobia Asghar remain with us. Julie Rowe who joined us a student counsellor has now completed her training and has remained with us as a qualified counsellor. Julie completed her training under the most trying circumstances due to Covid

and I wish to congratulate her and wish her every success in her career as a qualified counsellor. Louise Walmsley who also completed the later stages of her training with Circle in 2019, returned to us in October as a qualified counsellor. I wish to extend our thanks to all of our counsellors who continue to demonstrate such passion and dedication to their work.

With regards to our supervision – Peer group supervision has continued throughout the last year and has been especially valuable in giving us a sense of connection and togetherness as an organisation when unable to meet in person. We have warmly welcomed back Emma Fisher as group supervisor following a period of maternity leave. Many thanks to Nina Crook who did a fantastic job of covering as supervisor in Emma's absence. Nina has been a counsellor for Circle previously and will be returning to us in a counselling role shortly, working across all three services as needed. We are excited to open up the opportunity of peer group supervision to all three counselling services to assist us in our aim of a more consistent and joined up approach across the three services.

We are unable to offer student placements at present due to restrictions examining boards are placing on students working remotely but we will continue to monitor this situation and hope to offer placement opportunities again in the future.

Funding

In October we received temporary additional funding from the CCG to assist us in supporting clients through the pandemic. This allowed us to continue to pay our counsellors and to expand our team and offer more sessions. This funding ended in April.

We have secured funding from CBC for the next two years, this funding is partly for Circle and partly for general running costs of the centre. The funding covers some counsellor expenses and the role of coordinator but does not pay counsellors for the delivery of the session. When Circle used volunteer counsellors, volunteer turnover was high. This led in turn to long waiting lists due to volunteer shortages. It was very time consuming to recruit and retain reliable student and volunteer counsellors. Paying our counsellors has brought much needed stability to the team and also recognises and values the specialist work our counsellors do. While we foresee students and possibly even volunteer counsellors being part of Circle going forward, it is felt that relying solely on volunteers presents some real challenges. The combined impact of having a more stable staff situation and offering more flexible appointments has reduced our waiting

time from at its highest 5 months to approximately 3-4 weeks. The impact on clients is that they get help at the point of need.

For this reason it is my aim with the support of the committee to continue to pay our counsellors for as long as possible and as such I am in the process of seeking out and applying for other funding opportunities. I have made an application to Solace for women and applications to Jigsaw housing and the lottery fund are being put together. Emma Fisher has also identified other potential funding sources.

Training

All of our counsellors are fully qualified and maintain their BACP membership. They have also completed at minimum, a BACP recognised certificate in remote counselling which is tailored to the BACP core competencies. I was funded to complete an enhanced 80 hour training course in online working which I have successfully completed.

During the last year, our team have completed Webinars about working with trauma during the pandemic. They have also completed Domestic Abuse awareness training to refresh and update our skills in risk assessment and multi- agency working in Domestic Abuse. We are about to embark upon training in working using a trauma informed approach in our practice which has been arranged by Emma Fisher.

Conclusion

Another challenging but exciting year for Circle where we have expanded our skills and our availability to work remotely. A big thank you to the Circle family including our clients, staff and volunteers at Circle and the Women's centre as well as the Management committee and referring agencies. Thanks also to those who support us with funding including Chorley Borough Council and Chorley and South Ribble CCG and those who have kindly donated to support our work.

Lydia Keighley

Client feedback

We have been using survey monkey to encourage feedback from our clients. Here are some of the comments we have received:

'Domestic abuse counselling has benefited me very much: I no longer feel broken. I no longer feel sad. I no longer have the constant crushing pain in my chest'

‘This has been the most helpful counselling/form of mental health help I have ever received after accessing different forms of support over the past 5/6 years.’

‘The best counselling I have had, the most significant for my life.....I feel empowered, I feel confident, I feel at peace with what happened and how to not accept less for myself again. I have tools to lean on for life - thank you doesn't scratch the surface of my gratitude.’

‘It's definitely changed my mindset and my opinion on counselling. My sessions have helped me to explore my thoughts and feelings in my own life not just during the sessions.’

‘I felt at ease instantly. I struggle opening up but with Circle I felt I could be really honest about everything and never felt under pressure to discuss anything in particular.’

For the purpose of reviewing the CCG funding, I prepared 3 case studies based on interviews with our clients. I am sharing these on the following pages with their permission and wish to extend my sincerest thanks to them for taking part.

Case Studies

These case studies use an assumed name and any details that would easily identify the participant have been removed. The case studies are being shared with the permission of the clients involved and participants are aware that they can withdraw their consent at any time. Permission was given to share these case studies with Chorley Women's Centre and Circle staff, volunteers and Committee and also with those responsible for overseeing and reviewing the use of funding awarded by the NHS Chorley and South Ribble CCG in October 2020 to support victims of Domestic Abuse in Chorley and South Ribble. Chorley Women's Centre and Circle Counselling wish to extend our sincere thanks to those that have participated by bravely sharing their experiences in order to demonstrate how the funding has helped them personally.

The nature of the work that we do is highly sensitive. To ensure the safety, wellbeing and confidentiality of those involved, these case studies are not be shared with any other party or used for any other purpose without the express permission of Circle Counselling Service who would if appropriate seek permission from the participant of the case study. Sharing without permission and careful consideration could risk the safety, privacy and mental health of the participants.

All clients received Person Centred Counselling. This approach allows the client to take the lead during sessions and provides a supportive, non-judgemental environment in which the client can reconnect with themselves, their inner values and sense of self-worth, enabling them to find their own way forward. All of Circle's counsellors are qualified in working in a Person Centred way and have specialist training and experience in working with Domestic Abuse and trauma. Our trauma informed approach means that we can use our specialist knowledge to support our clients in their recovery, whatever stage they may be at.

All clients received their counselling during the funding period and described during the case study interview how being able to access sessions remotely during periods of lockdown and restrictions due to covid was invaluable. Covid restrictions left people unable to access many of their usual coping strategies which has been very detrimental for those recovering from Domestic Abuse. Part of the process of counselling is to support people in identifying and using coping strategies that fit with their own circumstances and this has been crucial to clients during this most challenging time.

Case study 1 - Lynn

Lynn is a woman in her 30s who entered into a new relationship a few weeks prior to the first lockdown in March 2020. Shortly before lockdown was imposed, she moved in with her partner. During the weeks that followed she noticed concerning behaviours in her partner such as greatly increased alcohol use which seemed to be exacerbating his existing mental health issues. When Lynn spoke to her partner about her concerns, she was made to feel it was her fault, there were arguments and Lynn began to question herself. Looking back, she feels that her partner was aware of some of her vulnerabilities and was tapping into them to manipulate her.

After a while Lynn's partner confessed to having long standing drug misuse issues which Lynn was not previously aware of. This led to a temporary breakdown of the relationship but it resumed as Lynn felt that she wanted to try to help and support him in recovery. Lynn soon became aware that her partner was not changing his behaviour. She suspected he was lying or withholding information from her, she felt that she never got the 'full story'. Lynn noticed her partner would often use his own emotional and mental health issues to manipulate her, he would become distressed and she would feel sorry for him. On reflection Lynn feels that a sense of feeling sorry for her partner clouded her judgement and made her more tolerant of unpleasant behaviour. There was no physical abuse in the relationship but Lynn describes feeling afraid of her partner, there were times when his physical presence was imposing and her partner made reference to concerning behaviours in their past relationships. Lynn began to refer to the Women's Aid Website, she suspected at this point that her partner's behaviour was emotionally and psychologically abusive. After seeking support via forums and information on the Women's Aid website, a series of events led to Lynn deciding to end the relationship. Over previous weeks she had already gradually begun to return some of her belongings to her own home and eventually moved back there.

Lynn describes feeling that in the four months she had been in this relationship, her life had changed dramatically and beyond recognition in some respects. She describes how going through this during a lockdown situation intensified the experience. While she was relieved and felt lucky to have been able to leave the relationship, she found herself 'struggling'. Lynn found herself questioning 'how did I end up in an abusive relationship?', she had times where she felt foolish and blamed herself for the choices she had made. She also wondered if she would ever be able to trust another partner in the future or whether she could trust herself to recognise the signs should she be in a similar situation again. Lynn describes herself as a strong person but felt her sense of self-worth and self-belief had been very much diminished. Her mood at this point was very low and she describes 'negative' thinking patterns and feelings of anxiety. This led to her contacting Chorley Women's Centre for support who referred her to Circle.

Lynn was offered up to 8 counselling sessions with Circle, after 7 sessions Lynn felt she had achieved what she needed and her sessions came to a close. Lynn describes her counselling sessions with Circle as a completely safe space where

she felt able to be fully open. In her sessions she developed a trusting relationship with her counsellor and was able to reflect on everything that happened. She describes feeling empowered when as she recounted events, she was reminded of her own strength and abilities to trust her instincts. She feels she learned things that she will carry forward with her, such as being patient in relationships and trusting herself to make good decisions. The sessions helped to rebuild some of the confidence that she had lost and she feels what she learned in her sessions is continuing to benefit her. Lynn states:

‘ I started to process the thinking and realising I was worrying about the future that I couldn’t control but I could control my everyday wellness. Learning to be confident in my abilities again, trusting myself which meant I felt at peace and present. I definitely felt calmer after the counselling and happier that I had processed what I needed to at the time to move forward with my life’

Lynn says it was a big relief to know that there was a specialist service that could help her and finds a sense of reassurance in knowing that the service is there to support should she find herself struggling in her recovery going forward.

Case Study 2 - Jackie

Jackie is a woman in her 50s who was referred to Circle by Victim Support. Jackie was with her husband for nearly 30 years having met him when she was 21. She describes how she now recognises that it was a coercively controlling relationship whereby her behaviour was closely controlled by her husband who would regularly make ominous threats about harming or even killing her and their children. She was 'not allowed' to socialise or make any decisions regarding finances or the spending of money. Her husband had access to firearms and she describes feeling certain that he would one day use them to harm her. At the time, Jackie felt unable to report his behaviour as she didn't feel she would be believed due to there being no physical element to the abuse.

Women's Aid state that '*Coercive control is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. This controlling behaviour is designed to make a person dependent by isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence and regulating their everyday behaviour.*' When Jackie had threatened to leave, her husband had made threats which made her fearful to do so. She describes feeling trapped.

Jackie describes how towards the end of her marriage she started to wonder why she was in a relationship with someone who she was afraid of, she wanted to leave and had made a tentative plan to do so when their youngest child, now a teenager, was a little older. She had started to save some of her earnings which she describes as her 'escape pot'. However, events took place that caused Jackie to leave sooner than anticipated. After she requested that she be allowed to visit a family member for a week, serious threats were made by her husband that led to her calling the police. Jackie left and made the decision to end the marriage. Many phone calls followed where her husband threatened to kill her. A short while after leaving she was attacked by him while collecting her child from a visit and sustained extremely serious life-threatening injuries which resulted in her being treated in intensive care. Later, Jackie's husband committed suicide.

Following the attack and subsequent events Jackie was diagnosed with PTSD. She experienced flash backs, panic attacks, nightmares and many other associated symptoms that were massively disruptive in her day-to-day life, she describes feeling that she had lost her confidence. She experienced feelings of being stigmatised and low self-worth. She left her job, something that had always been very precious to her as she didn't feel she was capable of doing it anymore. This was, despite all reports from her colleagues and employer

suggesting she was extremely competent in her work. Jackie accessed EMDR therapy for trauma privately after being advised there was an 8 month wait for NHS treatment. She found this very helpful in managing the physical and psychological symptoms of PTSD. She had EMDR weekly for 12 months, however, after around 12 months she found that she was low in mood and crying every day; she felt a strong need to talk openly about her experiences and to try to make sense of what had happened. By this time, she was not working and unable to afford access to private treatment. She contacted victim support who referred her into our service. The Covid situation further exacerbated her difficulties as it meant she was removed from accessing many of her usual coping strategies and support.

Jackie says that she immediately felt safe within her online counselling sessions. She felt that her counsellor really understood how she was feeling. She describes being able to speak freely, without any sense of judgment and that she was accepted. Jackie says that through the process she learned that given what she had gone through 'it was ok to think and feel the way that I did.' During the course of her sessions, she describes realising for the first time in her life that she is a person in her own right, she realised that previously she had always put others first. Jackie says that through counselling she began to consider the future and what she wants for her life going forward. Although she is still uncertain about what she would like, she now feels that she is entitled to make decisions and choices that acknowledge her needs.

Jackie says she has started to feel confident again and she has decided to enter into voluntary work to build her confidence in the hope that she can return to paid work in the future. She feels that accessing a specialist service was extremely important in her recovery, she believes that Circle's specialist knowledge and experience meant that she felt immediately understood and her experience accepted, this gave her confidence to speak about things that she had been unable to talk about with anyone else.

Case study 3 - Lindsay

Lindsay is a woman in her mid-20s who approached Circle for counselling after struggling with her mental health for a number of years following an abusive relationship in her late teens which lasted just over three years. This relationship became increasingly emotionally and mentally abusive and controlling. While there was never physical violence in the relationship, Lindsay witnessed her partner being aggressive to others and describes feeling in fear of him. The impact of this sustained abuse on Lindsay was such that she attempted suicide. She had never suffered from depression or anxiety prior to this relationship but feels that after the relationship ended 'it never left' her. She was able to leave the relationship with support from Women's Aid and eventually the Police were involved due to continued harassment from her ex-partner involving constant phone calls and setting up of fake social media profiles used to harass and intimidate her.

Over the following years Lindsay was diagnosed with depression and anxiety. She has experienced panic attacks (sometimes repeated panic attacks one after the other) and was prescribed medication which helped for a while. A common source of anxiety was a fear that she would bump into her ex-partner or his family as they lived in the same area. She found that she would worry persistently about things and felt in a heightened state of anxiety much of the time.

During her recovery from this relationship, she was victim of a sexual assault which also impacted very seriously upon her mental health. Lindsay describes carrying feelings of guilt and self-blame. She tried to seek help at this point but the service she approached were unable to accommodate her working pattern so were unable to continue offering her sessions. After just one session they told her that they could no longer work with her. After this experience of reaching out for help, she felt downhearted and didn't seek help again for a long time. Lindsay describes times when her mental health was more stable and she came off

medication but ultimately feels that the issues didn't go away and she would again be prescribed medication for her anxiety.

When she entered into a new relationship, she found it difficult to be open with her new partner and experienced worry and fear that she 'couldn't speak' about her feelings, a fear that she feels resulted from her previous abusive relationship. When she became pregnant her anxiety worsened and she was diagnosed with post-natal depression after the birth of her child.

Around 12 months ago Lindsay returned to university and decided to access support for her mental health available through the university. She was assessed as eligible for this by her GP who felt that her anxiety was serious and long term enough to warrant support. The Covid situation and associated restrictions, together with the change of circumstances due to returning to Education, left her feeling especially in need of support. She was offered a mental health mentor who she sees weekly and during the course of these sessions she decided with their support to try again to access specialist help. She self-referred into our service and had 8 sessions of counselling via zoom.

Lindsay says that her sessions helped her to recognise and explore her feelings of guilt and self-blame, through this process she realised she had done nothing wrong. She feels that she worries much less and that the anxiety she carried with her about seeing her ex-partner has gone. She has now been off medication for around 12 months and can't remember the last time she had a panic attack. Lindsay says that she has developed coping strategies that help her in day-to-day life and that her current relationship has improved as she feels she can communicate her feelings better and be more open with her husband. Lindsay describes how specialist counselling, along with the ongoing support from her mental health mentor has really helped her to start to move forward from the abuse she has suffered in the past and helped her to cope during the pandemic situation.

Wome's Centre Treasurer's Annual Report 2020-2021						
Opening balances as at May 1st 2020						
	Es					
Current Acc.	574.26					
Deposit Acc	13579.37					
Circle Acc.	5595.9					
Liaison Acc.	7757.04 *					
Counsellor A	2994.07					
Petty Cash	69.25					
Total			30569.89			
Total Income 2020-2021	**				64304.05	
Total Expend 2020-2021					43889.1	
Surplus			20404.95		20404.95	
Total			50974.84			
Closing balances as at April 30th 2021						
Current Acc.	581.17					
Deposit Acc.	31772.4 ***					
Circle Acc.	6310.38					
Liasion Acc.	8225.56 ****					
Counsellor A	3935.92					
Petty Cash	149.41					
Total			50974.84			
Unrestrictre funds		Income	Expenditure	Balance	IncomeTotal	Exp. Total
Current Deposit and Petty cash						
Chorley Co.		4584				
Mol		17500				
Dons		1775.44				
Interest		3.61				
Total					23863.05	
Expenditure						
Utilities			1744.45			*
Rates			225.28			
Office, inc PPE			711.88			
Vol Exp. Inc Vols Ins			683			
Repairs, renewals			401.15			
Liability Insurance etc			1817.19			
Total						5582.95
Balance				18280.1		

Anne Stafford

L. Gallagher

R. Hutchinson

Restricted Funds		Income	Expenditure	Balance	IncomeTotal	Exp. Total
Circle						
Chorley Co.		9166				
CCG		7488				
Total					16654	
Expenditure						
Coordinator			6146.02			
Counsellors pay and exp.			8453.5			
Training			1340			
Total			15939.52			15939.52
Balance				714.48		
Liason, Cen Manager						
CCG		9828.52				
Total					9828.52	
Expenditure						
Centre Manager salary		9360				
Total						9360
Balance				468.52		
Counsellors						
CCG		13958.48				
Total					13958.48	
Expenditure						
Counsellor Exp			12507.21			
Release Phone			509.42			
Total						13016.63
Balance				941.85		
GRAND TOTAL INCOME					64304.05	
GRANDTOTAL EXPENDITURE						43899.1
GRAND BALANCE				20404.95		

Signed
LYNDA GALLAGHER PIMM
TREASURER

L Gallagher

ANNE STAFFORD
VICE TREASURER

Anne Stafford

PAT WHITTINGTON
INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Pat Whittington

DATE 9/6/2021

Comments

*Includes £5946.75 of this year's CCG grant

**Includes next year's CCG £5946.75 and MoJ £17500

***Includes next year £17500 MoJ grant

****Includes next year's CCG £5946.75 grant

If we take out the £17500 MoJ grant for next year our income for this year is £46804.05

Our expenditure was £43899.10

Our surplus would be £2904.95

As the centre was used less due to Covid and lockdowns our running costs were less, but we managed to maintain a service and our online and telephone counselling

We received extra funding this year, £7488 from the CCG for Circle our DV Counselling service

As Lancashire Women have not used the centre this past year, we have not had their donation, but they hope to return in July 2021

Tesco donated £1000 and we also thank our other smaller but appreciated donations.

Next year our CCG grant of £23785.99 is confirmed for Counselling and Centre, Manager costs.

Chorley Council Grant for Centre running costs and Circle, (our DV counselling) to be confirmed

MoJ Sexual abuse counselling £17500 is new money for Release.