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Staff in the Staff Counselling Service

Head of University Counselling Service

Mark Phippen          BACP Senior Reg. Practitioner

Senior Counsellors

Jill Collins          BACP Senior Reg. Practitioner
                      Accredited Cognitive Analytic Practitioner

Counsellors

Alison Gibson (part-time .5)  BACP Reg. Practitioner
Sarah Parkin (part-time .5)  BACP Reg. Practitioner
Rosemary Parkinson (part-time .5)  BACP Reg. Practitioner
                      Accredited Cognitive Analytic Practitioner
Jane Qualtrough (locum 5 hrs a week)  BACP Senior Reg. Practitioner

Associate Counsellors (training placements: half- to one day per week)

1st year: Jasna Levinger-Goy
2nd year: Diana Shave

Support Staff (shared with Student Counselling Service)

Marcus Young (part-time)          Computing Officer
Robert Smith (part-time)          Financial Administrator
Sue Egerton                    Senior Secretary
Sue Geeson (part-time)           Administrator / Receptionist
Alison Hargreaves (part-time)    Administrator / Receptionist
Chrissy Spriggs (part-time)      Administrator / Receptionist
Introduction: 2010/11

The Staff Counselling Service offers a broad range of support and therapy to staff of the University across the spectrum of prevention, support, counselling and personal development. As well as the core work of individual and couples counselling, this has included consultancy to managers, Human Resources and Occupational Health staff, and through collaboration with the Centre for Personal and Professional Development, workshops and training sessions.

In 2010/11:
- The Service offered counselling to over 325 staff, who were seen an average of 5.9 times
- The Service saw nearly 4% of the University staff
- In addition to individual counselling, the Service offered 10 Well-being at Work workshops, 7 courses with CPPD, and 45 Reflective Practice sessions
- Approximately 50 individual counselling sessions were offered each week
- A research project on the effectiveness of workplace counselling was completed and a paper accepted for publication.

Accountability

Clinical Responsibility

The service works within the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy’s ‘Ethical Framework’. This provides professional guidance on ethical clinical practice.

Counselling is an emotionally demanding job. Therefore it is a professional requirement for accredited / registered counsellors to have professional clinical supervision of their practice. We are fortunate to have the continuing services of a number of highly experienced clinical supervisors. Mabel Martinelli, Kathy Mitchell and Michelle Reynolds provided clinical supervision to the employed Staff Counsellors. Between them they provided professional support and consultation to the staff counsellors.

Human Resources Division

The Staff Counselling Service sits within two different management areas. It is part of the University Counselling Service where its work is overseen by Mark Phippen, Head of Counselling, and managed by Jill Collins, the Senior Staff Counsellor. Jill Collins is a member of the UCS Senior Management Team, working with the Student Service Senior Counsellors under Mark Phippen’s lead. However, the two services are funded differently; the Staff Service is Chest funded, whereas the Student Service is mainly financed by the Colleges.

In the 2008 reorganisation of the Human Resources Division, the Staff Counselling Service was placed within the formal structure of the Human Resources Division. Jill Collins is part of the HR Senior Management Team, and attends monthly meetings with Indi Seehra, Director of HR, to discuss the work of the Staff Counselling Service. An Annual Report is prepared for the November meeting of the HR Committee each year.

University Student Counselling Service

The University Student Counselling Service is housed in the same premises and is available to all students of the University.
This Service is also overseen by the Head of Service, Mark Phippen, but is separated administratively and financially from our work with staff. The work of the Student Counselling Service is reported in its own Annual Report to its Executive Committee; the work and figures mentioned in this Report therefore relate solely to our work with staff who hold a University contract of employment.

Health & Safety

During the year the Service’s Health & Safety Committee has continued to oversee risk assessments with the Service, with particular emphasis on preventing physical attacks or other threats to Service staff, especially our reception staff.

Counselling Work

Individual counselling

Staff clients present to the Counselling Service with a wide range of concerns. Usually there is an immediate concern which brings them, but underlying this usually are other issues, and these are very likely to affect both the client’s work and personal life; a client’s work is nearly always affected by their problem even if this is described as being centred on their personal life. Mental health difficulties are a continuum with the overwhelming majority of people at the less severe end in terms of psychiatric diagnosis, but at this point someone will be struggling with many aspects of their daily life, including work, and this is often the point at which they seek or are referred for counselling. Specific reasons which bring clients to the Service involve concerns more directly connected to work such as bullying or harassment, difficulty with a colleague, loss of motivation/confidence or settling into a new job, and also personal issues such as relationship difficulties or bereavement.

The Staff Counsellors are experienced in offering time-limited work, and offer flexibility in the timing and frequency of sessions and appropriate therapy for a particular client’s needs, ever mindful of the tension between resources and offering professional ethical work which is effective. Our approach is supported by the results of our research project that demonstrated that with an average of 7.5 sessions, clients improved to ‘normal’ levels of well-being, and this was still maintained 6 months after the last session.

Last year waiting times averaged 11 working days to a first session. Many people waited less time than this, but longer waits were often because a particular appointment time was requested, so availability was restricted. We were fortunate to be able to have Jane Qualtrough working with us again as a locum counsellor for 5 sessions each week for 6 months but this will not be possible in the coming year, and we have some anxiety about waiting times in the period ahead.

There was also little change in the incidence of problems about which staff came to seek help. Work problems, relationship issues, anxiety and depression all remain the most common reasons for coming to counselling. With work issues, we have noticed an increase in staff who feel under immense pressure from their workload, possibly because of reduced staffing in their department due to budget cuts and staff loss through the VSS scheme. One client described this as being ‘expected to work like a machine.’

Placements for Associate Counsellors

Each year we offer placements to a number of Associate counsellors, who are trainees in the late stages of their professional counselling or psychotherapy training. Their work is carefully supervised.
by the Senior Counsellor and undertaken within professional guidelines on the use of trainee staff; clients can request not to be seen by an Associate if they would prefer.

Jasna Levinger-Goy joined the team at the start of the year, and Diana Shave continued for a second year in the Service, also contributing much to the final stages of the research project. We believe that this programme benefits both the Service, by bringing in fresh ideas and energy, and the trainees, who experience working in a highly professional service.

**Well-Being at Work Workshops**

We introduced these 1.5-hour workshops in 2008, which are held at the Counselling Service, at 5.30pm, and have reviewed and developed them each year. They cover topics such as Coping with Panic, Mindfulness, How to Sleep Better, Relaxation for Daily Life, and Laughter for Well-being, all taught by a different member of the team. This year we appreciated being able to offer these sessions through the new CPPD online booking system, which enabled more staff to be aware of them.

The workshops have been extremely popular and have been fully booked very quickly, but we have had a continual difficulty with on-the-day and literally last minute cancellations, without enough notice to offer places to staff on a waiting list. Feedback from the participants has been extremely positive so we have been encouraged to continue with the provision, but change the programme and method of delivery in the coming year. Instead, we will offer a half-day Working on Well-being session at the UCS, and 2 half-day linked Mindfulness sessions, to be held at the Merton Hall Farmhouse, and a half-hour lunchtime drop-in Laughter Club to be held at the University Social Club in Mill Lane. Again, these sessions will be bookable through CPPD.

**Reflective Practice**

Reflective Practice groups offer a group of staff in a similar role an opportunity to reflect on their role and their work in a safe and facilitating environment, by sharing problematic issues and how these affect them personally. This work began in 2002 and has developed in subsequent years. We now offer monthly sessions for 3 groups of Departmental Administrators, for the [Dignity@Work](#) Contacts, the University Mediators, and the Human Resource Advisors, and 2 groups are run for College Nurses on a fee income basis. A new group for the HR Business Managers met in Dec 2010 to support them in their demanding roles, but work pressures on them meant it was unable to continue as planned.

**Staff Development**

We have continued to offer courses for CPPD. The previous 2 day ‘Stress, Relaxation and Coping’ course was evaluated and revised to a new 1 day format, now taught by 2 tutors and able to offer 20 places. This was very successful and was run 3 times, fully booked each time with a waiting list.

The ‘Key Listening Skills’ course was offered twice with sessions over a 4-week period, taught by Sarah Parkin. We co-facilitated ‘Stress: a Manager’s Responsibility’ with Occupational Health and the Safety Office on two occasions. We also staffed information stalls at the new Welcome to the University event, and the new Research Staff induction.

Staff Counselling also contributed to the People Matter Day with a staffed display-stand, and two relaxation sessions were offered.
Preventative & Outreach Work

Most of this report focuses on the face-to-face work we undertake with staff, whether individually, or in groups or training. The Staff Counselling Service is part of a complementary network of staff support systems that include the Occupational Health and Safety Division, the Human Resources Division, Equality and Diversity, and the University Chaplain. These people are all in the front line of staff support, and we work in a collaborative way with them, aware of our different but mutually supportive roles. We meet termly in the Staff Support Services meeting where common themes and issues arising with staff can be shared and possible joint responses developed. In the past year a common system of collecting data on Staff Stress was begun. This collaboration is important to us and helps to ensure that coherent and ‘joined-up’ support is offered to staff. This year we initiated a direct referral system with Occupational Health and Human Resources, which has worked well, and enabled the 3 services to directly refer a member of staff, with their signed permission, to one of the teams.

Two of the staff in the Service are active members of national committees. Jill Collins is a member of the Executive Committee of BACP Workplace, a division of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) relating to staff counselling. Rosemary Parkinson was a member of the organising committee for the 2011 Conference of the Association for Cognitive Analytic Therapy (ACAT). Through this work we are able to both stay in touch with what is happening elsewhere as well as have a voice at a national level. Jill Collins published an article in Reformulation, the journal of ACAT, and in Counselling@Work, the journal of BACP Workplace, on adapting the usual 16 session form of a Cognitive Analytic Therapy to 12 sessions for use in a workplace setting, and this was followed by Rosemary Parkinson publishing a case study describing such a piece of therapy.

The Service website (www.counselling.cam.ac.uk) contains information and booklists on everything from reducing levels of anxiety or dealing with procrastination, to strategies for departments in supporting staff following a traumatic incident. It receives about 1,000 page-views per day.

Employee Support Helpline

As part of the extension of personal support to its staff, in 2008 the University contracted from an external provider, AXA-ICAS, a 24-hour telephone helpline with access to Life Management Issues, offering advice and information on financial, legal, and other practical issues. Although the service is provided 24 hours and is available to family members, it was used by staff primarily within normal working hours.

This was the third year that this telephone helpline was provided for staff. Despite being more widely known, use of it was disappointingly low, with only 49 people calling over the year, making it an overly expensive way of providing this type of information and advice to staff and their families. Following a review, a decision was taken to not renew the contract for 2011-2.

Research Project

Our subjective assessment as counsellors, and our clients’ comments to us and in our ongoing evaluation of client views on their counselling, tells us that clients benefit from the counselling they receive: they resolve their difficulties; they are helped to process challenging emotional experiences; they work more effectively. The data we already collect on the severity of distress at the start and end of counselling shows that the level of distress improves noticeably, and in our client satisfaction evaluation, completed after the end of counselling, the majority of clients report that their ability to deal with their problem, and to work more effectively, has improved. We were interested to know whether this lessening of distress is maintained over time.
We decided we would like to research this and a project to produce practice-based evidence was begun on 1 August 2009 and ran for a year until 31 July 2010 when the last data subjects were enrolled. We used the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) suggested to us by Dr. Felicity Huppert of the University Well-being Institute. We invited all clients during the year to complete a questionnaire at the beginning and end of counselling, and at a 3 and 6 months following and we recruited a control group from the staff body to provide a point of comparison. Data from enrolled subjects was completed in Dec 2010.

We were successful in our bid for a BACP Seed Corn Research Grant, which was supported by BACP Workplace. This enabled us to engage the help of an experienced statistician in psychological research to analyse the data. The team worked together to produce a research paper which was submitted to the *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research* journal, and, following Peer Review, was accepted for publication in Autumn 2011. An article was written on the project which will be published in the Autumn editions of *Counselling@Work* and *Therapy Today*, the journal of BACP.

Our research shows clearly that counselling can enable distressed clients to acquire an increased sense of well-being in that there was:

- Significant statistical difference between pre- and post-counselling treatment group scores on the WEMWBS with consistently higher scores found at post-counselling and maintained at 3 and 6 month follow up.
- An effect size of 1.3, above the recognised threshold for significant change in counselling-related measures (McLeod, 2001).
- A magnitude of change above a statistically significant threshold in almost 70% of clients in the treatment group.

A comparison of the client group’s WEMWBS scores with those of the small un-counselled group also shows the former group to be much less ‘well’ than the latter before counselling occurs, but that once counselling sessions have ended the difference between them has virtually disappeared. The benefits of counselling appear to be maintained for at least the six months after counselling ends.

This piece of research has raised considerable interest and several Staff Counsellors in other HE institutions are now beginning very similar projects based on our own.

Moreover, we were delighted that this piece of research work was awarded a BACP Excellence Award in Research in the autumn of 2011.

**Client Satisfaction Survey**

We are interested to find out how clients view their experience of counselling, and how effective they feel it has been in helping them resolve their difficulties. We use an online service hosted by ‘SurveyMonkey’, which processes the responses and configures the data for us. An email invitation is sent to clients when counselling is completed, giving a web link to the evaluation questionnaire and we received a 42.5% response rate.

Many clients take this opportunity to comment on their personal experience of counselling. They commented on the Service's professionalism and welcoming approach. The comments were mostly very encouraging, and revealed high levels of satisfaction with staff clients' experience of the Service, for example:

- 34% found filling in the Pre-counselling form 'thought provoking', and 46% found it easy to complete; 10% found it difficult
- 99% were satisfied with the Reception area and staff
100% found the waiting room private and comfortable
47% were offered an appointment within a week, and 35% waited 2-3 weeks. 94% were ‘fine’ about this; 6% were upset about the time they had to wait
61% said that their work was adversely affected by their difficulties
75% said counselling had enabled them to stay at work
84% said counselling helped them work better
15.5% felt that they had had too few sessions

Many write of the ‘tremendous difference’ their counselling made to them, one saying it ‘saved their life’, how helpful it was, and of their appreciation of the University as their employer in providing it. They felt valued and respected during the counselling process, and appreciated the provision of a confidential space in which to address their difficulties. A significant number of respondents commented that they wished that their counselling could have been for longer than the average 6 sessions offered, and whilst some understood that resources mean that our work has to be time-limited, others felt strongly that they had needed more time to really overcome their difficulties.

Priorities for 2011/12

1 Consider the most effective and efficient means for delivering counselling support to staff at a time of budget reductions.
2 Monitor and evaluate the use of the service and knowledge of it amongst the whole staff body.
3 Promote the Research project

Jill Collins
Senior Staff Counsellor          October 2011
Statistics for 2010 - 11

NB The percentage figures shown for the staff population are based on the most recent available University data, which is for the academic year 2009.

Individual Counselling and Group-work

Over the year 325 people were seen for individual and couples counselling sessions, and group sessions, a small decrease of 5% over the previous year. This represents nearly 4% of the staff population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>10/11</th>
<th>09/10</th>
<th>08/09</th>
<th>07/08</th>
<th>06/07</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clients</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sessions</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>1823</td>
<td>2120</td>
<td>1702</td>
<td>1430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Indiv Ints per Client</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Client numbers

The staff grades of clients using the service are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client Group</th>
<th>No. seen</th>
<th>% of clients</th>
<th>% in Univ staff</th>
<th>% of staff group seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic-related</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other / n/k</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We continue to see more Assistant staff, perhaps because of the greater number of female staff in this group.

Gender of clients seen

In common with the great majority of counselling services in the UK, more women than men are seen in the Service, as is shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>% of clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers of times staff clients are seen

The average number of times staff were seen individually over the year was 5.9 sessions per client, with the distribution being shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselling Sessions per Client</th>
<th>% of clients 010/11</th>
<th>% of clients 09/10</th>
<th>% of clients 08/09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>once</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 4 sessions</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 8 sessions</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - 12 sessions</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 - 16 sessions</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17+ sessions</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Waiting times for counselling

The table below gives the time clients waited from first contacting the Service to being offered their first ongoing counselling session. The average waiting period was 11 working days (down from 12.6 days in 09/10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time from first contact to ongoing counselling (work-days)</th>
<th>% of clients 10/11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 2 days</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 5 days</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10 days</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 15 days</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 + days</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We reply to clients as soon as they contact the Service to inform them how long they are likely to have to wait, or, if possible, to offer an ongoing counselling session. There may then be a delay in the client attending if they do not accept this offer, before another is available at a time they prefer. The longer waiting times are usually because someone is restricted in when they can attend. The appointments most in demand are those after 5pm, or at lunchtimes.
23% of our appointments are offered 5-7.15pm; all the counsellors work one evening per week.

The table shows that 10% of clients waited longer than three weeks, a reduction from the figure of 17% the previous year.

**Problem areas**

The service has data for the problems clients talked about in the years shown. The table below shows both the general problem areas that staff brought to counselling, as well as figures for certain specific problems. The figures include both presenting problems and those which emerged later in counselling.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems - General Headings</th>
<th>No. of clients 10/11 (n=325)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss / bereavement</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety / Panic</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Esteem / Identity</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related to physical health</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating disorders</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Stress</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with colleague</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying / harassment at work</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment issues</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lower part of the table lists just some of the specific issues that bring staff to therapy; numbers included in the general headings above.