



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

University Counselling Service

Student Counselling Service
Annual Report 2010 - 2011

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Executive Committee, 2010/11

Prof R Mair (Chairman)	Master, Jesus College
Mr PJ Brindle	Bursar, Darwin College
Dr M Dourish	General Practitioner
Mrs M Gardiner	Bursar, St Edmund's College
Mr M Gross	Bursar, Newnham College
Mr A Jefferies	Senior Tutor, Girton College
Ms P Brown	Counsellor, UCS
Dr P Linehan	General Practitioner
Mr M Phippen	Head of Service
Ms A Rai	Graduate Union President
Dr R Wallach	Council Representative
Dr R Wells	Senior Tutor, Clare Hall
Mr M Wild	CUSU Welfare Officer
Mr A Bennett	Secretary to Committee (in attendance)
Mr R Smith	UCS Financial Administrator (in attendance)

Staff in the Student Counselling Service

Head of Service

Mark Phippen	BACP Senior Reg. Practitioner
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Senior Counsellors

Lisa Halpern	BACP Senior Reg. Practitioner
Christopher Jackson	BABCP Accred. Cog. Beh. Psychotherapist
Jane Cooper	BACP Senior Reg. Practitioner

Counsellors/ CBT Therapists

Fiona Allen (part-time)	BABCP Accred. Cog. Beh. Psychotherapist
Polly Brown	BACP Reg. Practitioner
Anna Churcher (part-time)	UKCP Reg Psychotherapist
Tim Ellis	UKCP Reg applic in process
Jill Shields (part-time)	UKCP Reg. Psychotherapist
Vanessa Skinner (part-time)	BABCP Accred. Cog. Beh. Psychotherapist
Nicola Smith (part-time)	BABCP Accred. Cog. Beh. Psychotherapist
Charlotte Snoxall (part-time)	BACP Reg. Practitioner
Maya Zvigi Cohen (part-time)	Accred. application in process

Mental Health Advisor

Juliet Bristow	Reg. GSCC Social Worker
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Associate Counsellors (training placements: half- to one day per week)

1st year: Kate Daniels, Claire Warburton and Emmajane Williamson
 2nd year: Gudrun Haraldsdottir, Louise Martin, Susan Norman and Sally Jane Williams

Psychiatric consultations

Dr Alison Jenaway	Consultant Psychiatrist in Psychotherapy
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Support Staff (shared with Staff 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

Overview of 2010/11

The number of students approaching the Student Counselling Service for counselling increased markedly this year, rising 10% over the previous year. Despite static staffing and the increased demand we reduced waiting times for counselling, partly through working more briefly and partly through increasing the volume of group work undertaken. Although we never put people into groups against their wish or where there isn't a therapeutic benefit from doing so, we have sometimes had to offer people fewer individual sessions than we would have wished.

The appointment of a Mental Health Advisor in February 2010 to work with the growing minority of students who have quite serious mental health problems has proved very beneficial and the need for such a role is very clear.

The Service has continued to offer consultancy to those in the front line of student support, provide self-help materials and resources to students and staff, and offered a wide range of workshops and training sessions.

Here are few facts from 2010/11:

- The Service offered counselling to nearly 1,500 students, who were seen an average of 5.1 times
- Between 30 - 70 students sought counselling for the first time each week during term
- In addition to individual counselling, the Service offered up to 15 workshops or counselling groups per week during term
- Around 180 - 210 individual counselling sessions were offered each week, with a further 25 - 50 group attendances per week
- In addition to direct work with students, we responded to numerous requests for support and guidance from tutors and others in colleges or departments, as well as from GPs and others in the mental health field.

University Staff Counselling Service

The University Staff Counselling Service is housed in the same premises and available to all staff with a University contract.

The Staff Service is also overseen by the Head of Service, but is separated administratively and financially from our work with students. The work of the Staff Counselling Service is reported in its own Annual Report; the work and figures mentioned in this Report therefore relate solely to our work with undergraduate and graduate students, and staff of the Colleges.

Staffing during the year

Tim Ellis joined the Service at the start of the year, after having worked as a Counsellor at another university for some years and is a welcome addition to the team. At the end of the year Jill Shields retired and Chris Jackson left the Service. They are a considerable loss to the counselling team, but we are glad to have been able to recruit to fill the resulting vacancies and also to add one additional full-time term-time counselling position for 2011/12, due to an increase in funding from the Colleges.

On the administrative side, Sue Egerton, Senior Secretary, and Alison Hargreaves, part-time Receptionist, left the Service at the end of the year. We are grateful to them for their service. We have subsequently restructured our administration, and appointed Sue Geeson to the revised position to Office Manager. We will be filling the remaining reception vacancies as soon as possible.

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, psychotherapy or cognitive behavioural therapy training. Their work is carefully supervised 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.

Kate Daniels, Claire Warburton and Emmajane Williamson joined the team at the start of the year, and Gudrun Haraldsdottir, Louise Martin, Susan Norman and Sally Jane Williams continued for a second year in the Service. Most did half a day per week but some were able to work for one day per week. 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. Between them they undertook nearly 9% of the counselling sessions offered in the Service during the year.

Counselling Work

Individual counselling

The marked rise in the number of students seeking counselling was particularly concentrated in the first half of the academic year, with numbers in the latter half being more akin to the previous year.

In order to cope with the rapid rise in the number of students seeking help from the Service without increasing waiting times for counselling, we have:

- Tightened up our triage systems to ensure we work with those most likely to benefit
- Further expanded our group programme
- Piloted offering single 'consult a counsellor' sessions for those who don't require ongoing counselling
- And are intending to expand the guided self-help work we already do on a small scale.

Graduate (MA and PhD) students made up 44% of those being seen, compared to 32% of the student population. However, this discrepancy is not new or unusual.

There was also little change in the incidence of problems about which students came to seek help. Anxiety, relationships, academic-related problems and depression remained the most common reasons for coming to counselling. There was a particular rise in the numbers presenting with issues related to self-esteem and concerns physical health or abuse. Meanwhile there was a small but welcome decrease in the numbers presenting with eating problems.

There are comments from clients later in this report under 'Service evaluation'.

Counselling Groups and Workshops

We expanded our group work markedly during the year, increasing the number of group sessions we run by 20% to 342, and the number of students attending by 40% to 291. In the main this increase was accomplished by offering existing group programmes more frequently rather than by expanding the range of groups we run.

The groups we offer for undergraduates who are returning from a period of de-grading have become better known and better used, and are a useful way of helping such students to settle back into Cambridge after a time away.

The short-term workshops we offer, including topics such as 'Disordered Eating', 'Can't Work', 'Writing up your PhD', 'Sleep Problems', 'Learning to be more Assertive' and 'Overcoming Worry' have all proved popular. We also increased the number of ongoing longer-term counselling groups for students who needed longer term support than could be provided in individual counselling.

As for individual counselling, we ask for feedback from those who attend our groups. Here are a few such responses:

- I initially told the UCS that I had no interest in group sessions and really thought they weren't for me. I didn't think personal feelings could be shared in a group. However, the relaxed and supportive environment was ideal and it has been the most valuable part of my visits to the UCS.
- It was a fantastic support that I'm very glad was available to me. It helped me in many ways and I feel like a stronger person because of it.
- I was quite unsure at first, and it took me a few sessions to settle in, but I found the experience very valuable by the end. It is good to see your situation from another point of view, as well as hearing about the problems and strategies of others.
- It was great because seeing that I'm not alone with my 'weird' thoughts was the first step in my progress.
- It's been much better than the private counselling I had where I always felt like a victim and abnormal.

Mental Health and Psychiatric Support

The Mental Health Advisor has established excellent liaison and two-way referral systems with the relevant parts of the NHS mental health services: the Home Treatment Teams, Intake & Assessment Teams, Gateway Workers, the Liaison Psychiatry Service and the psychiatrist who covers all the central Cambridge GP surgeries). All central GP practices were contacted to inform them of the MHA post and offering an introductory meeting.

Good links also exist with the Disability Resources Centre, as mental health often comes within disability legislation. There have been referrals in both directions, and a number of students who have enduring mental health problems now have mentors arranged by the DRC.

In the first year of operation the Mental Health Advisor had contact with or about 184 students; of these 127 were seen in person. The other 57 involved advice about the care of these students to tutors or other staff. There were visits to 9 Colleges for face-to-face discussions giving advice on the care of students who were of particular concern. This also often involved liaison with the mental health services in order to provide a co-ordinated approach.

Students have been seen from all but one Cambridge Colleges, with the maximum number of students from any college being 15, and 10 or more students being seen from 7 Colleges.

A major objective of the role has worked very well – being able to provide College tutors and others with prompt advice and support regarding student mental health. The MHA has also provided rapid mental health assessments for students in crisis including suicide risk assessments, triaging and prioritising cases, and mediating with the mental health services where appropriate.

Dr. Alison Jenaway, an adult psychiatrist and Consultant Psychotherapist, continued to be available to the service for half a day a week during term-time to offer consultations to students about whose mental health we were concerned.

We remain grateful to the Distributors of Cranes' Benefaction for supporting the mental health and psychiatric support work of the Service.

Preventative & Outreach Work

Most of this report focuses on the face-to-face work we undertake with students, whether individually, or in groups within the UCS. However, this represents contact with only about 8% of the student population in any year, and face-to-face work is not what everyone wants or needs. Consequently, we put considerable effort into providing resources that students can access themselves, which offer self-help support, or quite specifically aids students in the successful completion of their academic studies. After all, our evaluations revealed that 58% of respondents said that their problems interfered with their capacity to study 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal'. 42% said that their problems threatened their ability to continue on their course, but of these 60% said that counselling helped them to stay.

The Counselling Service is just one corner is a comprehensive network of support systems that include the College Tutors, Nurses, Chaplains and student welfare officers in Colleges, as well as the CUSU and the Graduate Union. These people are in the front line of student support, and we receive a steady stream of enquiries and referrals. This collaboration is important to us and helps to ensure that coherent and 'joined-up' support is offered to students.

We are also pleased that several staff in the Service are active members of national committees relating to student and staff counselling, including on the Executive and sub-committees of the UK Association for University and College Counselling (a Division of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy). Through these routes we are able to both stay in touch with what is happening elsewhere as well as have a voice at a national level.

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. We believe it is the leading student counselling website in the UK and receives about 1,000 page-views per day.

The Peer Support Project

After six years of successful operation by the Counselling Service, the Peer Support project transitioned to become a student-led scheme from the Lent Term, under the new name of 'Peer2Peer'. The Counselling Service was involved in overseeing the transition and we will retain some arm's-length oversight through a Steering Group, which also comprises Senior Tutors, CUSU and LinkLine representatives.

The new student Peer2Peer committee has done a superb task of taking over the project and we are very confident about its future.

Accountability

Clinical Responsibility

The service works within the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's 'Ethical Framework'. This covers issues such as codes of ethics and confidentiality, and the levels of clinical supervision necessary for the counselling work undertaken.

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. Paul Atkinson, Wendy Bratherton, Jenny Corrigan, Mabel Martinelli, Kathy Mitchell and Michelle Reynolds provided clinical supervision to the employed student counsellors. Between them they ensure the staff continue to work to the highest professional standards.

Service Evaluation

We conduct a follow-up survey of all users of the Service following the end of their counselling; we received a 30% response rate. The comments were mostly very encouraging, and revealed high levels of satisfaction with students' experience of the Service.

58% of respondents said that their problems interfered with their capacity to study 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal'. 42% said that their problems threatened their ability to continue on their course, but of these 60% said that counselling helped them to stay.

Overall, 92% said that counselling had helped them deal with their difficulties. Below are a few of the many positive comments that clients left in their follow-up survey.

- "My counsellor essentially kept me alive this year."
- "On the whole the experience was absolutely essential for me and I don't know how I could have coped without it."
- "I am very grateful for the support I received during a difficult time. I really valued the time to talk to someone confidentially about the issues I was dealing with on a weekly basis. This minimised the impact of my concerns on my life during the rest of the week."
- "I cannot express how beneficial I found this service."
- "I found the service to be very helpful, intelligent and sympathetic to my needs."
- "Thanks for the wonderful help!"
- "I found it helpful to have someone who knew the university system but was also trained in CBT to talk to."
- "The counselling service helped me realise that the best thing for my own mental health was to take some time out from my studies. In this sense, the service has not helped my studies in the short term, but I hope that it will in the long term. The benefit of the service to myself as a whole person has been huge, and I am extremely grateful"
- "I would recommend the counselling service to anyone I know who's having difficulties here. It's a great service, and I really appreciated the confidential and professional approach."

All the responses we receive, including the relatively few negative comments, are reviewed by one of our senior team and, unless the response is anonymous, also given to the counsellor concerned. In this way these comments inform and modify our practice.

Executive Committee

The service is accountable to an Executive Committee, which has been chaired by Prof. Robert Mair, Master of Jesus College. This committee contains representatives of the University Council, Senior Tutors' Committee, Bursars' Committee, Students Unions and two GPs, as well as a counsellor from the Student Counselling Service and the Head of Service. In turn the Executive reports through the University Health Services Management Committee to the Council.

The full membership of the Committee is shown at the start of this report. We are very grateful for their continuing support, particularly so to Prof. Mair who left the Executive Committee when he retired as Master of Jesus College, having safely seen the Service through recent years.

How our work is financed

The total cost of the Student Counselling Service in 2010-11 was nearly £630,000. Because responsibility for student welfare is vested in the Colleges, funding arrangements exist whereby they finance the direct costs of counselling, with the balance paid by the University Chest for service administration and facilities.

Under these arrangements each college paid a *per capita* sum of £20.20 to the Service for each registered student in residence; this was a reduction from £20.60 the previous year. This amount was proposed by the University Counselling Service Executive Committee and approved by the College Bursars' Committee.

Those Colleges whose student bodies were higher users of the Service paid an additional 'use-related charge' in accordance with a formula agreed by the University Counselling Service Executive Committee and the College Bursars' Committee and at a level proposed by the former and approved by the latter.

The administration and accommodation costs of the Service continued to be met by the University.

Crane's Benefaction

The Benefaction of John Crane has supported the Counselling Service for many years in our work with students who have mental health problems. We are grateful to the Benefaction for their continued funding of psychiatric consultations within the Service conducted by Dr. Alison Jenaway, and also for funding the Mental Health Advisor position for an initial period of three years. Residual funds from an earlier research project funded by three Cambridge Colleges have also been applied to this position.

The Madeleine Davis Fund

The Madeleine Davis Fund is a bequest enabling the Service to see students who have de-graded or intermitted their course, and who would otherwise have been ineligible to use the Service when they are not in residence. Such students are thereby enabled to have access to counselling at the very time that problems cause them to degrade or intermit. We are very appreciative of this ongoing support.

Health & Safety

During the year the Service's Health & Safety Committee has continued to oversee risk assessments with the Service, including a review of building safety and having staff trained in safe lifting.

Priorities for 2011/12

The development of the Service is managed within both a 5-year Strategic Plan agreed with the Colleges and the University's 5-year Planning Round. During the coming period we intend to:

- 1 Continue seeking the most effective and efficient means for delivering support to students at a time of budget reductions
- 2 Continue offering '1-off' sessions for those who want some guidance but don't need ongoing counselling
- 3 Seek to develop the small amount of 'guided self-help' we already offer to those students who need no more than pointing to appropriate self-help resources – typically books or websites
- 4 Complete the restructuring of the Service's administration

We are determined that the Counselling Service will continue to offer a high quality service.