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1. Executive Committee, 2019/20

- **Prof M Fowler**
  VC’s Deputy; Master of Darwin
- **Dr M Gross**
  Bursar, Emmanuel College
- **Dr J Bunbury**
  Senior Tutor, St Edmund’s College
- **Ms F Patrick**
  Counsellor, UCS
- **Prof L R Gelsthorpe**
  Council Representative, Pembroke College
- **Mr R Partington**
  Senior Tutor, Churchill College
- **Ms G Dufour**
  Head of Service
- **Dr M Sewell (until Dec 19)**
  Senior Tutor, Selwyn College
- **Dr D Woodward (From Feb 2020)**
  Senior Tutor, Robinson College
- **Dr C Lea-Cox (until Dec 19)**
  General Practitioner, Trumpington St Medical Practice
- **Dr M Luna (from Feb 2020)**
  General Practitioner, Trumpington St Medical Practice
- **Dr A Devine**
  General Practitioner, Bridge Street Medical Centre
- **Mr A Powell**
  Bursar, Fitzwilliam College
- **Ms H Foord**
  Bursar, Magdalene College
- **Ms J O’Brien**
  CUSU Disability Officer
- **Ms S Swain**
  CUSU Welfare and Rights Officer
- **Mrs C Badu Amoah**
  Acting Secretary
- **Ms K Springthorpe**
  Acting Secretary
- **Ms A Bawden**
  Finance Division (in attendance)
- **Mr M Millard**
  Finance Division (in attendance)

2. Staff in the University Counselling Service

**Head of Service**

- Géraldine Dufour
  Registered member BACP Senior Accredited

**Senior Counsellors**

- Hanya Czepkowski
  Registered member BACP Accredited
- Sally Swain
  Registered member BACP Senior Accredited
- Polly Brown
  Registered member BACP Accredited

**Counsellors & CBT Therapists**

- Jackie Alden (part-time)
  Registered member BACP Accredited
- Margaret Bailey
  Registered member BACP Senior Accredited
- Robert Evans (from Jan 20)
  Registered member BACP Accredited
- Michele Fitzsimmons (part-time)
  BABCP Accred. CBT Psychotherapist
- Gudrun Haraldsdottir (part-time)
  Registered member BACP Accredited
- Katie Holland (part-time)
  BABCP Accred. CBT Psychotherapist
- Angela Ike
  Registered member BACP Accredited
- Emma Lockhart (part-time)
  UKCP Reg Psychotherapist, Registered Member BACP Accredited
- Panayota Manias (part-time)
  Registered member BACP Accredited, C.Psychol British Psychological Society, HCPC registered Counselling Psychologist
- Frances Patrick (part-time)
  Registered member BACP Accredited
- Diana Ong (part-time)
  HCPC registered Clinical and Counselling Psychologist
- Deborah Powter
  Registered member BACP Accredited
- Farasat Sadia (part-time)
  HCPC Counselling Psychologist
- Vanessa Skinner (part-time)
  BABCP Accred. CBT Psychotherapist
Anna Zaboronski (part-time) Registered member BACP Accredited

**Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisor**

Amy O’Leary Qualified independent sexual violence advocate

**Mental Health Advisors**

Debbie Ellis (from Dec 19) RMN Nurse registered with the NMC
Matthew Harding RMN Nurse registered with the NMC
Ashleigh St Louis RMN Nurse registered with the NMC

**Locums**

Claire Addison Registered member BACP
Debbie Beckett Registered member BACP Accredited
Kirsty Clarken Registered member BACP Accredited
Carmel Egan (from Oct 19) Registered member BACP Accredited
Robert Evans (until Dec 19) Registered member BACP Accredited
Esther McNeill (until Dec 19) Registered member BACP
Ian Molyneux Registered member BACP Accredited

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

Second year:
Rachel Morgan (until April 20)
Dana Chortiros (until April 20)
Gili Sterzer (until April 20)

**Psychiatric consultations**

Dr Damaris Koch Consultant Psychiatrist

**Support Staff**

Sue Geeson Office Manager
Zoe Wells (until Feb 20) (part-time) Executive Assistant
Hazel Sanderson (part-time) Administrator/Receptionist
Becky Wright (part-time) Administrator/Receptionist
Alberto Garcia Jr (from Nov 19) (part-time) Administrator/Receptionist

**Temporary Staff**

Alberto Garcia Jr (until Nov 19) Temporary Administrator/Receptionist

**Researcher**

Dr Guiseppina LoMoro (Jan to June 19)
The past academic year has been a challenge for many of us and students were particularly grateful of the support in difficult circumstances:

“Thank you so much for all your hard work, and everything you do for the students. Cambridge is definitely a better place with you! I hope more and more students will be able to access and benefit from the service.”

“Keep it up and continue being there for students who need professional help.”

(Reproduced with permission)
3. Executive Summary

Key numbers

The UCS sees more than 1 in 10 students (12% of the student body)

47% of the students we see have suicidal thoughts – we have a rigourous intake system to prioritise the most urgent cases.

95% of students said that counselling had helped them

65% of students said that counselling has helped them to stay at university

85% of students said counselling has helped them to do better in their academic work

95% of students said that counselling has improved their overall experience of university

94% of students said that counselling has helped them develop skills that might be useful in obtaining future employment

46% of our service users are post-graduate students but they use 51% of our sessions

27% of the students we see are from minority ethnic groups.

38% students we see are non-British

21% of the students we see have been referred by medical staff and 14% by academic staff

We offer 14 days of College-Based Counselling across 11 colleges

Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisor (SAHA):

56% of students seen are cases of serious sexual misconducts – only 6% are assaulted by strangers

51% have not reported to the university

Mental Health Advisors (MHAs):

268 Students were seen by the MHAs last year

68% were seen for 5 sessions or less
3.1 Service Evaluation

We conduct a follow-up survey of all users of the Service following the end of their counselling. This year our participation rate was 10%. The comments are mostly very encouraging, and reveal high levels of satisfaction with students’ experiences of the Service. The main results are shown below:

1. Overall, 95% of respondents said that counselling had helped them to deal with their difficulties, with 88% saying counselling helped ‘some’ or ‘a great deal’.

2. To what extent would you say that counselling has helped you to stay at university? 69% indicated that this was an issue for them, 4% increase this year. 31% said counselling was ‘an important factor’ or ‘the most significant factor’.

3. To what extent would you say that counselling has helped you to do better in your academic work? 90% indicated that this was a factor for them, 8% increase this year. 67% said counselling was ‘an important factor’ or ‘the most significant factor’. 26% increase this year

4. To what extent would you say that counselling has improved your overall experience of university? 95% said that counselling had helped with this to some extent. 59% saying counselling was ‘an important factor’ or ‘the most significant factor’. 11% increase this year

5. To what extent would you say counselling has helped you develop skills that might be useful in obtaining future employment (e.g. self-understanding, understanding of others, managing difficult feelings, increased self-confidence, assertiveness)? 95% said that counselling had helped with this to some extent. 50% saying counselling was ‘an important factor’ or ‘the most significant factor’. 10% increase this year

When asked to describe, in more detail, the ways in which counselling helped them, recurring themes (shared with permission) mentioned by students include:

**Accessible**: “I liked how accessible it was, and free for us to use. I also am very grateful at how it helped me cope with my studies. It gave a structural way to handle emotions and problems especially when you are adjusting in a new environment.”

**A valued space**: “It helped me to explore many old traumas which were resurfacing and impacting my motivation and enjoyment of life”.

**Skills and techniques**: “Very useful to talk through difficulties and reframe them in my mind with tips to better tackle similar situations in the future.”

**Developing understanding**: “I discovered ways of thinking about encountering problems that weren't available to me before.”

**Feeling supported**: “Helped me to feel supported during a difficult time when I didn’t have support from my family. Made me feel less alone and of course talking about things is incredibly helpful”.

Most of the complaints received about the counselling service relate to students having to wait for their appointments (9), or the limited number of sessions available (11), or the spacing between sessions (11):
“The gaps between appointments could sometimes end up being too long due to high demand. It can be hard to deal with weeks of waiting especially when Cambridge terms are themselves so short.”

Information about the nature of counselling and current waiting times for counselling can be found on our website: [https://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/studentcouns/waiting](https://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/studentcouns/waiting)

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

Our administrative team is dedicated to the students we support, and goes the extra mile to help them and be welcoming, as is reflected in our survey where all but one student who answered were happy about the way in which they were dealt with by our receptionists. As this student states:

“The counselling staff including reception were all so helpful and welcoming, the environment including waiting area and counselling rooms is very nice and relaxing.”

### 3.2 UCS in NUMBERS

For the clinical service as a whole (counselling at the UCS, College-Based Counselling, SAHA and MHAs, this includes all the services on offer):

- 2310 students accessed the service
- 12% of the student population accessed the UCS, a high proportion of the student body.

**Registrations for the service as a whole: UPDATE numbers and chart**

In the past six years, the service has experienced a 137% increase in the number of students applying to access the service up from 1565 in 2013/2014 to 3711 in 2019/2019, and a 24% increase in the last academic year.
For counselling:
- 1859 students accessed individual counselling, for an average of 4.5 sessions.
- Attendance to counselling was up by 5% at the end of Michaelmas, it then dipped at the start of the lockdown and resumed afterwards.
- It is worth noting that once the service provision is saturated, no appointments are available to offer, so demand for counselling becomes capped. Between the Christmas and Easter break 220 students remained on the waiting list, with students having to wait up to 5 weeks for an appointment (with the most urgent cases prioritised).
- 10% of the student population accessed individual counselling at the UCS, a high proportion of the student body.
- 50 - 90 new referrals were received per week during term time.
- 5 - 10 counselling workshops and groups were offered per week during the first two terms.
- 170 - 350 individual counselling sessions were offered each week and there were a further 30 - 60 group attendances per week during the first two terms. When moving to work remotely, the service was not available to offer its usual group and workshops offer. This provision has now resumed for Michaelmas 2020.

For Mental Health Advisors (MHAs):
- 268 students accessed individual sessions with the MHAs (27 more than last year).
- 262 mental health assessments and a further 645 ongoing sessions were offered throughout the year.

For University Sexual Harassment and Assault Advisor (SAHA):
- 128 referrals last academic year, an increase of 43% on the previous year

WHO USES THE SERVICE?

For the service as a whole:
We have information about 2218 students who accessed the service, including groups and workshops last year. University figures are included for information, in brackets.

Of those who replied to these questions:
- 52% were undergraduates, +2% compared to last year (UoC 59%) and 46% were post-graduates (UoC 41%), 2% Other/not applicable
- 38% were final year students (including 1 year courses)
- 40% were first year students (UoC 36%). (including 1 year courses)
- 64% had not used the service before and 33% had returned to see us, a 4% increase since last year. This percentage of returning users demonstrates a confidence in the service delivered, and a good previous experience. 3% chose not to answer.
- Though post-graduates make up 46% of the service users, they used 51% of the sessions offered.

For Equality and Diversity monitoring questions:
We have information about 2150 students. Of those who replied to these questions:
- 63% describe themselves as women (UoC 47%), 29% as male (UoC 53%), 1.5% as non-binary, and 0.5% Other, 1% prefer not to answer, and 5% did not respond.
- 1.9% of students describe their gender identity as different than the gender they were assigned at birth. 11.1% did not answer.
- 14% describe themselves as bisexual, 4% as gay man, 2.5% gay woman/lesbian, 56% heterosexual/straight, 3% Other, 21% did not to answer.
Disability
- 396 students told us that they had a disability, 9.4% of students attending the Service stated they had mental health difficulties (UoC 2.8%), 5% a specific learning difficulty (3.3% UoC), 1% a social/communication impairment such as Asperger’s syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder (0.5% UoC), 1% a long standing illness or health condition (0.9% UoC), 0.3% a physical impairment or mobility issues (0.3% UoC), 0.1% deaf or a serious hearing impairment (0.2%), 0.1% blind/serious visual impairment (UoC 0.1%), 0.9% other disability, (1% UoC) 2% two or more impairments and/or disability (UoC 0.5%)
- Adding up to a total of 21% disabled students (UoC 10%), an increase of 4%, 79% did not to answer.

Ethnicity
- 67% described themselves as White (UoC 67%),
- 3% as Black (UoC 2%)
- 9.5 % a as Asian (UoC 10%)
- 7% as Chinese (UoC 12%),
- 7.5% were from other ethnic backgrounds (UoC 6.7%) 6% chose not to answer.
- In total, 27% of the students attending the service described themselves as being from minority ethnic groups.
- 61.6% came from the UK (UoC 58%), 15.8% from other EU countries (UoC 17%) and 22.6 % were international students (UoC 24%).
These figures include information on counselling at the UCS as well as College-Based Counselling, SAHA & MHAs and attendance at groups and workshops.

WHO SIGNPOSTS STUDENTS TOWARDS COUNSELLING AT THE UCS?

Although all students self-refer to counselling, we ask students if anyone suggested that they attend the counselling service. In 2019/20, 29% self-referred, 21% were advised to come by a medical practitioner and 14% via their personal tutor, director of studies, or other academic, and 18% by their family, partner or friends, 7% by others and 11% did not respond to the question. Students have the option to select more than one referral type when answering.
NB: Students are not able to refer themselves to the Mental Health Advisors. Referrals may be made by College tutors and nurses, University staff, GPs or mental health services.

Alerts – last year we received just over 115 (previous year 89) alerts from staff concerned about students and we arranged for quicker appointments for those students whose situation was urgent.

3.3 Key achievements for the UCS team in 2019/2020

COVID-19 pandemic response

- In March 20, the UCS moved all its provision from face-to-face to online support.
- At a time that was personally challenging for many, UCS team members worked incredibly hard to ensure a smooth transition to working remotely with practically no interruption to appointments. For example, changing confidentiality agreements, considering the challenges of working ethically with students abroad, planning support within the team to share best practice for providing counselling remotely etc.
- We were delighted when the Vice-Chancellor recognised this achievement in his annual address.
- We compiled a number of videos, along with information about the service, for all prospective students.
- Festival of Wellbeing: we delivered a Managing Anxiety Vodcast (Fran Patrick and Jacque Alden), a video about Self-care (Amy Thompson and Asheleigh Saint-Louis).
- We wrote an article for the Cambridge Admissions Office (overview of service and self-care guidance for prospective students, Jacque Alden)
- New COVID-19 Guidance for the UCS Website, as well as contributions to the university wellbeing website (Frances Patrick).
- Video clips for Mental Health Awareness week, which were used on the university social media channels (Matt Harding, Amy Thompson, Jacque Alden, Geraldine Dufour).
- Video clips for overview of service – Disabled-students’ induction, in collaboration to the Disability Resources Centre (DRC) and an introduction to the UCS for our website (Jacquie Alden).
- New COVID-19 bereavement leaflet (Jacquie Alden)
- Increased social media-presence with new postings for example, on Procrastination
- Video on self-care (Debbie Ellis, retweeted by the BBC).
- COVID-19: Providing Safe Support to Students, one-hour workshop delivered with DRC via Microsoft TEAMS x 4 in Lent term 2020 (Margaret Bailey)

In addition, all the service’s were updated and redesigned with new layouts and cover pictures, while still keeping in line with the British Dyslexia Association’s Dyslexia style guide.

New online registration forms for groups and workshops were set up for students to register online via the website, streamlining the process and making it less time consuming and more user friendly for the students.

The service’s database, Titanium, is now linked with Camsis to allow downloading of student’s details directly into Titanium, ensuring we have accurate details regarding courses/faculties etc.

The service took part in the University Open Days for the first time this year, in July and in September, and recorded a video informing students of the support available at the UCS with a virtual tour of the service.
During the academic year, members of staff at the UCS contributed not only to the good work of the service, but also to that of the collegiate university as a whole, as well as developments in the field of counselling, mental health and mindfulness.

We were delighted when members of our team completed training courses and accreditations:

- Farasat Sadia completed her Doctorate in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy (DcPsych). Registered as a Counselling Psychologist with HCPC and as Chartered Psychologist with BPS, while continuing to be an accredited member of the UKCP.
- Rachel Morgan, one of our associates, who has come back as a locum for the academic year 2019/2020, completed the foundation in group work at The Turvey Centre for Group Therapy.
- Jacquie Alden, studied for the IGA Diploma in Groupwork
- Sally Swain gained Senior Counsellor status with BACP
- Polly Brown was singled out for her innovative work for the service and received a UAS Professional Recognition Awards, for being open, responsive and innovative.

Online provision

The UCS took the lead on launching an online emotional wellbeing platform available to all students and staff with an @cam email address - Together All (formerly known as the Big White Wall).

https://togetherall.com/en-gb/

In addition to the provision offered by the University Counselling Service, Cambridge students can now access free online support with Together All. This provides access to a 24/7 online global community, a chatroom, where student can ‘chat’ to each other online, themed around various mental health-related topics, with some moderation from trained professionals. Together All provides a safe space online to share thoughts, get creative, and to access resources and courses to help manage mental health and wellbeing.

Counsellors prepared a pack for the Colleges (Deb Powter).

Presentations

Counselling team members delivered many presentations across the university, at departmental and college inductions and meetings, such as the talk to freshers in the engineering department on “Balancing priorities in Cambridge” by Jacquie Alden, or “Resilience and Wellbeing whilst Carrying Out PHD Fieldwork”, one-hour workshop at the Geography Department, January 2020 (Margaret Bailey and Angela Ike). Workshop on Managing Stress and Anxiety for Psychology Department (Diana Ong and Angela Ike), Workshop Managing Life at Cambridge for Computing Post Graduates Induction (Gudrun Haraldsdottir and Angela Ike).
The UCS also facilitated a number of group sessions in faculties and college for bereaved students, following the tragic deaths of some students.

Géraldine Dufour delivered a presentation on “Providing culturally competent support services” at the Westminster in Higher Education Forum. She gave talks on “Models and experiences of psychological crisis prevention and intervention in British Universities at Conferences at Tongji, Xian, and Jilin Universities and at the Chinese Association for Mental Health (Beijing). With Rotimi Akinsete, she gave a talk on “Working with Young Adults in a University Setting” for the Universities Psychotherapy and Counselling Association and UKCP Universities Training College Conference 2019. With Afra Turner, she presented a talk at the Society for Psychotherapy Research (SPR) SPR European/UK Krakow Conference on “Counselling in UK universities and colleges: Gathering outcome measures for the sector: a feasibility study”.

Representing the University Counselling Service and the University:

Géraldine Dufour stepped down as chair of the BACP Universities and Colleges division, after serving 10 years as a national executive committee member. She continues to represent the service and the university on different committees and working groups, and was nominated Vice-Chair of the The Mental Wellbeing in Higher Education Expert Group (MWBHE) https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/guidance/teaching-and-learning/mental-wellbeing-higher-education/mental-wellbeing-higher-education-expert-group-mwbhe.

Géraldine was also involved in wellbeing initiatives at the wider collegiate University level, advising and contributing to the development of the mental health strategy and contributing to the development of interventions and policies to address sexual harassment and assault, as was Amy Thompson (SAHA).

Environmental impact

The Counselling Service has continued its successful initiative to create a recycling scheme within the University for used pens. In the past academic year the service has looked to involve as many Colleges and departments as possible, as well as engaging local primary schools to join the project. There are currently over 43 departments and 9 Colleges involved across the University as well as 2 local primary schools. The pens continue to be sent to Terracycle for recycling and, as a result, raise money for our chosen charity ‘Centre 33’. Since moving in to the Student Services Centre in 2019 the project has been extended to include the recycling of crisp packets (within the building only). However, due to the pandemic both these projects have temporarily been put on hold since March 2020.

In the next academic year, once the pandemic eases, the service aims to continue expanding the pen recycling scheme throughout the University and wider community and to continue expanding the recycling of crisp packets within the Student Services Centre.

In October 2019 several members of the UCS Green Impact Team initiated, and subsequently joined, the Student Services Centre Green Impact Team. They also played an instrumental role in helping the Centre to achieve a Bronze Green Impact Award in July 2020.

The Cambridge University Sustainability Hero Award 2019-2020

In July 2020 one of the founder members of the UCS Green Impact Team, Vanessa Skinner retired. During Vanessa’s time with the UCS she was instrumental in inspiring the team to integrate an awareness of green issues into all aspects of its working environment and was the creative force behind the two innovative recycling projects highlighted above. Vanessa also took the lead in transforming an outdoor space at the old UCS building to create a Mindfulness garden, for staff to use during their breaks. With Vanessa’s pioneering energy, the UCS Green Impact Team was awarded 1 bronze, 2 silver, 1 gold and 3 excellence awards over the last 7 years. In recognition of all her hard work Vanessa was awarded one of the Cambridge University Sustainability Hero Award’s for 2019-2020. We wish Vanessa every happiness in her retirement, she will be missed!
4. Staffing during the year

There were a number of staffing changes last academic year. We were delighted to appoint Robert Evans (counsellor) and Debbie Ellis (mental health advisor). Vanessa Skinner retired after working for the UCS for 13.5 years. Vanessa is continuing to work for the service as a locum.

4.1 Placements for Associate Counsellors

Each year we offer placements to a number of Associate Counsellors, who are in the late stages of their professional training. Their work is carefully supervised and undertaken within the guidelines recommended for professional counselling placements. Clients allocated to Associates are carefully selected and they can request not to be seen by an Associate if they prefer. Last year all the Associates were second years, as the UCS decided not to recruit any new Associates for the last academic year.

Second year Associates: Rachel Morgan, Dana Chortiros and Gili Sterzer
All Associates worked between a half and a full day per week.

We recognise that this programme benefits both the Service and its clients by bringing in fresh ideas and energy, and gives the trainees experience of working in a highly professional service. Quite a number of trainees have returned to work for the service after gaining accreditation.

This academic year, the UCS recommenced recruitment of a new cohort of Associate Counsellors.

4.2 UCS referral process

This chart outlines the referral process at the UCS and the collaboration between the different teams.
**University Counselling Service Referral Process**

1. **Student completes Pre-Counselling form on the website**
   - Pre-Counselling forms downloaded and added to the appropriate waiting list on a daily basis using Titanium database.

2. **University Counselling Service**
   - Student has requested
   - Refer student to Mental Health Advisor or GP if significant risk identified
   - Manage alerts from college staff concerned about students who have contacted the University Counselling Service
   - CBT/Counselling/ Dual (i.e. suitable for either)

3. **College Based Counselling**
   - Student has requested counselling at their college (specific colleges who are signed up to CBC scheme)
   - College Based Counselling Senior Counselor undertakes initial triage, intake team supports and offers appointments
   - Intake team comprising of 2 senior counselors meets for 1.5-2hrs daily during term time to triage + allocate appointments

4. **Both**
   - Student is willing to accept the 1st appointment available at either University Counselling Service or college
   - Signpost: NHS, Disability Resource Centre
   - Prioritise: Priority, High, Medium
   - Offer group if appropriate

5. **Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisor**
   - Student has specifically requested an appointment with Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisor
   - Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisor prioritises and offers appointments on a daily basis
   - Offer appointments via Admin Team
5. Counselling Work

5.1 Individual counselling at the University Counselling Service

Although the Service offers a wide range of ways to support students, individual counselling remains the core of its work. Issues that students present to counselling are fairly static. Last year, the main problems that were brought to counselling related to anxiety/panic, relationships, depression and academic related issues.

While much of the work is fairly brief, the Service continues to offer some ongoing support to students. Care is taken to work efficiently and keep waiting times for counselling as low as possible, and judgements are made in the case of each client about how long to continue counselling. A total of 8276 individual counselling sessions were offered last year, an increase of 332 sessions, with no increase in resources.

All counselling forms receive a preliminary assessment and students are prioritised according to their need and sign-posted to self-help resources and workshops whenever appropriate. All pre-counselling self-referrals are read within 1 working day of receipt and students get an email confirmation with a letter attached. In urgent cases, we may direct students to the MHAs.

Demand for the service was consistently high and between Christmas and the Easter break in 2020 the waiting list remained constantly over 200. Due to the high numbers of students who had referred themselves to counselling, the wait for individual counselling was approximately 5 weeks during Lent term. All pre-counselling forms were read within a working day, with urgent cases being prioritised and seen more quickly.

Until the end of March, the number of students seen (1522) was similar to last year (1512), with an 8% increase in the number of individual sessions offered (from 4990 to 5381).

5.2 Counselling Groups and Workshops

We were again able to offer an extensive group and workshop programme in the first two terms of the academic year. As there are various common issues that are experienced by students e.g. low mood, anxiety, self-esteem issues, etc. – we aim to provide most of our groups and workshops every term, arranging them on different days and times to maximise the possibility of student attendance.

In addition to the workshops that we usually offer, a new addition to the programme was “Imposter Syndrome Workshop” introduced last year.

In recent years, we have been able to involve more staff in developing and delivering the groupwork programme. While this makes use of the skills and expertise within the staff body, it also enables less experienced staff to develop their skills. We were pleased to be able to support one of our counsellors in undertaking specialist group analytic training, at diploma level.

Though students can initially feel unsure about attending group events, we know that they benefit a great deal from them as illustrated by the comments from these students:

“*It is different from individual counselling, but it is consoling to see that you are not the only one having a difficult time, something that can often be forgotten in day to day life.*”

“Really well led, very helpful, safe space, super happy with my experience. Thank you! “
5.3 College-Based Counselling (CBC)

Eleven Colleges are now a part of the scheme with twelve counsellors undertaking CBC work over 14 days. Last year, Clare Hall, Robinson and Sidney Sussex joined Darwin, Girton, Magdalene, Peterhouse and St Edmund’s in receiving one day of counselling provision. Downing, Lucy Cavendish and Wolfson have continued to receive two days of provision. We continued to offer drop-in appointments for students wanting more general advice about emotional wellbeing who do not require counselling or are not yet ready to engage with counselling.

The table below shows the number of colleges taking part in the scheme in the past four years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating Colleges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yr 1 2016/17</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Colleges: 4 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy Cavendish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peterhouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolfson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downing</td>
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<td>Magdalene</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darwin</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Edmund’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yr 2 2017/18</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Colleges: 6 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy Cavendish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peterhouse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wolfson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Downing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magdalene</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darwin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Edmund’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yr 3 2018/19</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Colleges: 11 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy Cavendish (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peterhouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolfson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magdalene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Edmund’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yr 4 2019/20</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Colleges: 14 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downing (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy Cavendish (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magdalene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peterhouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Edmund’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney Sussex (1yr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Edmund’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolfson (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. From Michaelmas 2020 - Sidney Sussex is leaving the scheme and Newnham joining

2019/2020

From **55** returned CBC student evaluations (**19%** return rate):

- **98%** of students said that counselling had helped them deal with their difficulties, with **91%** saying counselling helped ‘some’ or ‘a great deal’.
- **60%** found the referral process for CBC ‘Easy’, **25%** ‘Thought provoking’
- **71%** said that the presence of a CBC Counsellor was ‘an important factor’ or the ‘most significant factor’ in accessing counselling
- **61%** cited ‘proximity to college’ as a factor in accessing counselling, **65%** cited ‘the speed of appointment’, **51%** ‘familiar environment’ and **47%** ‘ease of referral’ (when given the option to select more than one factor).
- **100%** said that counselling had improved their overall experience of university with **65%** saying counselling was ‘an important factor’ or ‘the most significant factor’.
- **93%** said that counselling had helped them to do better in their academic work
- **95%** said that counselling had helped them to develop skills that might benefit them in obtaining future employment, with **45%** saying that this was ‘an important factor’ or the most significant factor'.

College-based counsellors run bespoke training or workshop sessions in their colleges, for instance at Wolfson:

- Introducing College Counselling at ‘Welcome to Wolfson Session’
- Stress Management workshop at Wolfson.
CBC ethnicity with UCS comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016/17 CBC</th>
<th>2017/18 CBC</th>
<th>2018/19 CBC</th>
<th>2019/20 CBC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*MEG</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>22.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>24.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>29.3%</strong></td>
<td><strong>31.3%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note all above compared to UCS – counselling statistics, not the whole service.

Feedback from students seen in Colleges (shared with permission)

“I found it extremely useful to have someone to talk to during a very isolating period with COVID.”

“A listening ear to hear about issues that I feel I cannot bring up with anyone else.”

“Counselling allowed me to process my feelings and emotions that I had blocked for many months and in some cases many years.”

“I would like to thank my counsellor for her fantastic advice and support - without her time and compassion I would have really struggled during lockdown and wouldn’t be in such a positive mental place as I am now.”

“Thank-you so much to the service and to my counsellor. It's scary to think where I'd be were it not for the College counselling support I received. I'm incredibly grateful and using the advice and skills you gave me each day to help myself continue to get better. Thank-you.”

“I had an extremely positive experience with college counselling and would struggle to find anything negative about it. Perhaps more funding/ more appointments available would mean there could be a shorter waiting time between appointments “

“The switch to online counselling also was very smooth and worked really well via zoom.”
5.4 Mental Health and Psychiatric Support

Mental Health Advisor (MHA) work

Last year was busy again for the MHAs, with a high number of students (268) to whom they were able to offer appointments (237 the previous year), a 13% increase, and the number of sessions that they were able to offer - 907 (655 the previous year), a 38% increase, as we had 3 MHAs for the whole academic year.

MHAs carry a caseload of students who are seen for ongoing appointments: 55% of students were seen for 1-3 sessions, 28% for 4-8 sessions, and 19% were seen for over 9 sessions.

The MHAs were in frequent contact with pastoral staff in Colleges and the University. They worked particularly closely with tutorial staff and college nurses. The MHAs offered consultations to welfare and academic staff working across the collegiate university and were in frequent contact with staff in the colleges, offering support and guidance over the phone and by email.

Students were also seen for individual mental health assessments and fitness to study assessments.

COVID-19 pandemic response

MHAs offer support to students who experience crisis or who present serious concerns to staff or others. Emotional and practical interventions are delivered through audio or video sessions on Zoom.

MHA support includes:

• Mental health assessment of immediate needs
• Flexible support: the length of time and frequency they engage with a student depends on need and appropriateness.
• Crisis intervention and management
• Risk assessment
• Practical support, such as safety/management planning and relapse prevention
• Preventative work and support developing coping strategies and self-management skills
• Medication/treatment guidance, signposting and psychoeducation
• Duty service: 9am-5pm Monday to Friday (all year, including out of term)
• Liaison with Colleges/University Departments
• Liaison with GPs and external mental health services
• College/University staff guidance and support (with regards to supporting a student, including a debriefing after a referral)
• Fitness To Study and application to intermit assessments
• Supporting letters and evidence requests.

Psychiatric Support

Dr Damaris Koch, an adult psychiatrist and consultant psychotherapist, continues to work for the service. She was available to the service for half a day per week during term-time, to offer consultations to students whose mental health was a concern. This was delivered remotely through Zoom after March 2020.

The Service once again expresses its appreciation to the Distributors of Cranes’ Benefaction and to the Colleges, for supporting the mental health and psychiatric support work of the Service.
6. Preventive & Outreach Work

We work closely with colleagues across the University, individual Colleges, local GP practices and the Student Union. We recognise that welfare staff in Colleges, as well as specialist student support staff are in the front line of supporting students. Consequently we work closely with these groups to ensure that co-ordinated support is available. In addition, counsellors attend individual colleges for college liaison work and attend tutorial meetings and trainings.

Counsellors and the head of service delivered and contributed to many training and wellbeing events across the University: new tutors training, start of the year briefings about the service, and talks to students and colleagues working in the Collegiate University. Counsellors working in collaboration with the colleges delivered well-received outreach sessions in colleges to both students and staff as outlined in section 3.3.

Sessions were also delivered centrally through PPD: ‘Boundaries and Boomerangs’ and ‘Supporting Postgraduate Students with Mental Health Difficulties’, which were co-facilitated with Kirsty Wayland from the Disability Resource Centre.

To offer co-ordinated support to students with mental health issues, we work closely with colleagues at the DRC and attend a joint case conference group twice a term.

As usual, we reviewed our group programme to make sure that all the groups we run for students are well-attended, relevant, and available to as many students as possible. The first Imposter Syndrom workshop was successfully piloted in Michaelmas term of 2019.

Counsellors delivered some well-received reflective practice sessions for staff such as the Disability Resource Advisors, the College Nurses and other welfare staff.

Mindfulness

As the University is building its provision for student wellbeing, Mindfulness at Cambridge, an innovation started and established by the UCS, was transferred to Sports, as part of the University’s new wellbeing initiative. Mindfulness will join other new activities being developed by the Sports Service as a first step towards the development of a wellbeing hub under the collegiate University’s student mental health and wellbeing strategy. The move will help to differentiate wellbeing activities from therapy provided by the UCS, and will allow the UCS to refocus on its clinical work with students.

Outreach

The UCS prioritized students accessing the service because they were affected by the London Bridge terrorist attacks.

Drop-in: 6 drop-in sessions were offered in December to affected students.

Pre-counselling forms: We received 5 which directly mention the London Bridge attacks – 3 Michaelmas and two Lent term.

Counselling: We saw a number of students who were directly affected by the attack.

At the UCS:
7 returning clients
4 new clients
7 ongoing clients also reported being affected by the attacks

College-Based Counselling: 4 clients

Outreach: Polly Brown went to the Criminology Department 3 times for 2hrs each time to talk to students/staff affected by the attacks.
7. University Sexual Harassment and Assault Advisor

Overall, the SAHA has continued to raise awareness of the service and this has paid off with 128 referrals last academic year, an increase of 43% on the previous year. Despite this, most students were seen within 10 working days.

The SAHA has continued investing time across the Collegiate University, to ensure awareness of the role is raised, visiting 7 new colleges this year. The SAHA completed training programmes for staff at 2 different colleges through the year, along with training sessions for the College Nurses, the University Discipline Committee and to new Tutors across the Collegiate University. The SAHA continues to provide yearly training and input to the College Discrimination and Harassment Contacts (CDHC). In addition to this, the SAHA, in partnership with the Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals (OSCCA), has continued to offer termly training to staff across the Collegiate University on responding to disclosures of sexual violence. In recognition that a good number of staff will have now attended this training, and to ensure the training remains helpful and relevant, the SAHA and OSCCA have now created a more advanced version so that staff can continue to develop their knowledge in this area. The feedback from these sessions is very positive with 100% of attendees saying they were likely or very likely to recommend the training to other relevant staff. Below is some further feedback from the sessions:

“Really useful, as always. Keep up the great work dispelling myths, spreading awareness, supporting staff, explaining procedures, etc.!”

“The trainers were very knowledgeable and managed to maintain their composure remarkably well when others seemed to be going down the line of victim shaming. The content was useful and I will definitely be recommending this to others in our team.”

In Lent term, the SAHA launched the first ‘Hold the Hope’ support group. This is a 6 week support group for victims/survivors of sexual violence/misconduct. The aim of the group is to provide a safe space for up to 10 students where they can explore the emotional impact of what has happened. The group focuses on peer support, psychoeducation and coping skills. This first group was well attended and even had a waiting list for the following term. We had great feedback from the group, with a few examples below:

“I have never felt so in solidarity. For once, I felt normal in my experiences and not attention-seeking or pathetic.”

“One of the most validating experiences I have ever had.”

“It is a really safe and secure place to tackle difficult issues.”
The SAHA has continued to maintain connections with external agencies such as the Sexual Assault Referral Centre, Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre, the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor team and Cambridgeshire Constabulary. The SAHA has also attended meetings and conferences on dealing with sexual misconduct across the University and Higher Education sector more generally, building a network with other university support services across the UK. The SAHA is also creating a formal network of SAHAs (and SAHA equivalents) across the country and beyond so they can network and share good practice.

SAHA statistics

- **84%** of the cases detailed to the SAHA have been of serious sexual misconduct.
- **52%** of cases had not been reported to the University or College upon referral to the SAHA service, of that **52%**, **18%** went onto report to the University or College with SAHA support.
- The SAHA supported 1 student at Crown Court to give their evidence, 4 students to report their experience formally to the Police, and supported 3 students to report anonymously to the Police.
- **120** referrals identified as female, **6** as male, and **2** as non-binary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship to Perpetrator</th>
<th>No. of clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquaintance¹</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner/ex-partner</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer²</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional in a position of responsibility³</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger 1⁴</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger 2⁵</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undisclosed</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Acquaintance: Known to the client
2. Peer: In their year/subject, someone they study alongside.
3. Professional in a position of responsibility: This could be a staff member of the University/College or any other person in a position of responsibility.
4. Stranger 1 (perpetrator makes sudden attack without any prior contact)
5. Stranger 2 (perpetrator makes contact before the assault e.g. buys a drink, starts a conversation etc, but is not otherwise known to the survivor)

Service evaluation

We conduct a follow-up survey of all users of the SAHA Service following the end of their use of the service. We have information from **12** students who accessed the service and their feedback is very positive.

When asked to describe the ways in which the SAHA service helped them, recurring themes mentioned by students include:

**Being listened to**: “Amy was awesome - super great listener and gave me lots of helpful and practical support.”

**A valued space**: “It gave me a space to talk about how I was feeling, and advice and support on how to make things better, so I felt less alone and more able to cope with Cambridge. I was able to build up trust so I felt able to share difficult feelings. The service also helped me to sort out more long term help from college, and made that process as easy as possible for me”
Skills and techniques: “Helped me to discuss my feelings and review my options. Helped me to think about ways of managing my stress.”

Developing understanding: “Just having someone to talk to and having reassurance that my reactions were normal and that what had happened was not my fault was pretty substantial help. Knowing the break-down of different processes for reporting assault was also really helpful.”

Feeling supported: “They got me in contact with the police, talked me through my options and were with me when filling out my anonymous form, which made the process easier.”

8. Research

The Mindful Student Study


Another article was published in December 2019: Bóo SJM, Childs-Fegredo J, Cooney S, et al. A follow-up study to a randomised control trial to investigate the perceived impact of mindfulness on academic performance in university students. Counselling Psychotherapy Research 2019;00:1–16. https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12282

Dr Julieta Galante and Géraldine Dufour were invited to present at the BACP research conference in May 2020, which was postponed due to the pandemic.

Head of Service

An article on the contributions that Heads of Counselling services can make to research was published in April 2020 by Geraldine Dufour, highlighting the Mindful Student Study collaboration in the Perspective section of Counselling Psychotherapy Research.


SCORE Consortium

The service continues its involvement as a founding member of the Score Consortium, contributing to the collection of outcome measures for University Counselling Services. SCORE, which means Student Counselling Research Outcomes and Evaluation (SCORE), aims to establish a shared routine outcomes database for University and College Counselling Services. Cambridge is part of six founding universities: Birkbeck University of London, Keele University, King’s College London, University of Sheffield and University of Oxford. The project partnership also involves consultancy expertise from Professor Michael Barkham & Dr Emma Broglia (University of Sheffield). SCORE receives support from the BACP research team and is a collaborative project between BACP and UKCP, two of the main professional bodies for counsellors and psychotherapists.
UCS data analysis research project

Dr Giuseppina LoMoro, an MD Resident in Public Health at the University of Turin, started at the UCS in January 2020. The data analysis project, undertaken under the supervision of Professor Peter Jones, Dr Julieta Galante and Géraldine Dufour, consists of the analysis of 5 years of data available in the Titanium service database. The period of observation is from the academic year 2014-2015 to the academic year 2018-2019. A total of 7600 unique clients have been identified during this time frame. Among those, 236 clients did not show up to any appointment and were excluded from the main analyses (final sample = 7364 unique clients). Collaborations with the Cambridge Admissions Office and the Business Information Team were developed in order to gather the overall numbers of the University of Cambridge (UoC) students for certain variables (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, nationality) and data about the economic background of the UCS clients (e.g. Index of Multiple Deprivation IMD, Participation Of Local Areas POLAR4, Output Area Classification OAC11).

The Project has several aims, comparing the UCS population to the overall UoC population to assess if there are any differences between the overall student body and the representation of certain categories (e.g. defined by gender, age, ethnicity, nationality) to the UCS. Another purpose is evaluating if there are trends in the UCS clients across the 5 years (e.g. trends for nationality, ethnicity, severity before the beginning of counselling). Then, it aims to focus on specific subgroups (e.g. defined by gender, ethnicity, disability) to understand if there are differences in socio-demographic characteristics and severity before the beginning of counselling. Finally, it aims to evaluate psychological improvement through the CCAPS questionnaire (Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms), devised to measure psychological experiences and symptoms in the student population.

9. Accountability

9.1 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.

All permanent counselling staff are qualified and professionally accredited counsellors or therapists, working to the highest professional standards, registered with their professional bodies, and undertaking professional development and engaging in regular supervision of their practice.

MHAs are RMN Nurses registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council

9.2 Executive Committee

The service is accountable to an Executive Committee, chaired by Professor Mary Fowler, Master of Darwin and the Vice Chancellor’s representative. 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, Frances Patrick, and the Head of Service. In turn, the Executive reports through the University Health and Wellbeing Committee to the General Board. The full membership of the Committee is shown at the start of this report.
9.3 How the work is financed

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. The sum quoted also includes amounts from Crane’s Benefaction for a Mental Health Advisor and psychiatrist consultations.

Under these arrangements each College paid a *per capita* sum of **£29.52** to the Service for each registered student in residence. This amount was proposed by the University Counselling Service Executive Committee and approved by the Bursars’ Committee.

Those Colleges whose student bodies have been higher users of the Service over a five-year period paid an additional ‘user-related charge’ in accordance with a formula agreed by the University Counselling Service Executive Committee and the Bursars’ Committee and at a level proposed by the former and approved by the latter.

**Crane’s Benefaction**

The Benefaction of John Crane has supported the Counselling Service for many years in its work with students who have mental health problems. We are grateful to the Distributors of the Benefaction for their continued funding of psychiatric consultations within the Service, conducted by Dr Damaris Koch, and also for continuing to fund an MHA position in the Service.

**The Madeleine Davis Fund**

The Madeleine Davis Fund is a bequest enabling the Service to see students, already engaged with the service, who have 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 continuing support.

9.4 Development for 2020/2021

The Service started work on BACP service accreditation during the Summer of 2019. This has been paused during the COVID-19 pandemic. Work has continued on a suicide strategy for the Collegiate University.

The service continues its involvement in research as outlined in section 8.

The demands placed upon the service and its staff on responding to the changing needs of the student body and the Collegiate University as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to take precedence over any other projects during the coming academic year.

Géraldine Dufour
Head of Service
October 2020

*With thanks to the members of staff who contributed to this report.*