COUNSELLING at afc

Affordable counselling for all the community

ANNUAL REPORT

April 2025 – March 2026

Presented to the Board of Trustees at the AGM 9th May 2026

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Counselling at AFC

Annual Report for the AGM

9th May 2026

Introduction from the Chair

Counselling at AFC has now been up and running for over 4 years and the credit, as always, goes to such a dedicated and amazing team of Trustees and counsellors.

The highlights of the year for me are:

- Client numbers have almost doubled in the past year and now we have a waiting list. We thank Jane for taking on an extra morning. Thanks again to Toby for being an expert collector of data, which involves hours & hours of dedicated, behind the scenes work.
- The generosity of client donations, paying what they can afford, rather than the minimum suggested donation, means we have been able to offer those that need it a low-cost rate. We haven't turned anyone away because of financial difficulty.
- Our healthy bank balance enabled us to make a substantial increase to our annual AFCC donation for the beautiful, calm, relaxing counselling rooms we use.

Thanks to Toby for the following report. I now consider us a well-established charity serving the local community, being well known and seeing more complex issues coming through the doors. This gives us ability to not only support the client but also to signpost on to specialised services when needed.

The outcome measures always amaze; seeing the evidence that counselling changes lives for the better with clients saying they "see things about themselves they hadn't seen before" and "accept themselves more". Client comments include feeling 'supported', 'not judged' 'accepted' and 'saving me from myself' all achieved at an affordable rate.

The following year sees us having to say goodbye to two founding trustees, Gill & Pat. They have brought so much to the charity and have both been committed to helping the charity grow. You will both be sorely missed. Thank you for all your time and dedication over the past 4 years.

We welcome two new trustees, Michelle & Dave, who will bring new skillsets to our charity. It will be exciting to see how this will bring change.

Going forward we are tentatively looking at increasing our team of counsellors, veering away from last year's thoughts of a student placement and looking instead to a fully qualified counsellor. We are also looking at running a subsidised group rate to increase recruitment at a lower cost to the individual.

My prayer last year was to see growth and flourish which has been answered. This year I pray help with growing our counselling team and continuing to work together with respect and commitment.

Financial Report

The income and expenditure have increased, with a steady increase of clients over the year, income at the end of March25 was £672.33 with £531.01 expenses compared to March 2026: income £1,528.83, expenses £757.60. The main income is client donations, although March 2026 income saw 2 lump sums totalling £440 for 6 & 10 sessions paid in advance. and expenditure is mainly counsellor invoices and monthly expenses. The balance was £2,830.98 at the end of March25 and £5,691.14 at the end of March26. The balance has increased significantly which allows us to support low-cost clients, make a larger donation to AFCC for room usage and consider subsidising group placements in the future.

Summary Apr25-Mar26				
Summary			**Bank balance**	
Income	**£10,305.68**		**Balance b/f**	**£2,830.98**
			Surplus	**£2,860.16**
Expenditure	**£7,445.52**			
Surplus	**£2,860.16**		**Balance c/f**	**£5,691.14**

Table 1: Financial overview

Data Review

Data covers the Period from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026. This year it has been possible to use Cliniko to help collect the data. Due to some teething problems, other sources of information have also been used. Conservative figures have been given where there were discrepancies.

	Current Year (Apr 25-26)	Apr 24-25	Apr 23-24	Apr 22- 23	Apr 21-22
Number of individual/couples clients seen	37	24	24	21	9
Number of new clients (including returning)	31 (7 returning)	16	19	18	9
Number of scheduled sessions	406	204	270	217	96
Number of delivered sessions	359	179	234	190	86
Number of cancellations	35	24	28	20	9
Number of DNAs (Did Not Attend)	12	11	8	6	1
Average Sessions Attended (for completed clients)	11.32	10.4	10.8	11.5	9.7

Table 2: Year on year client attendance data

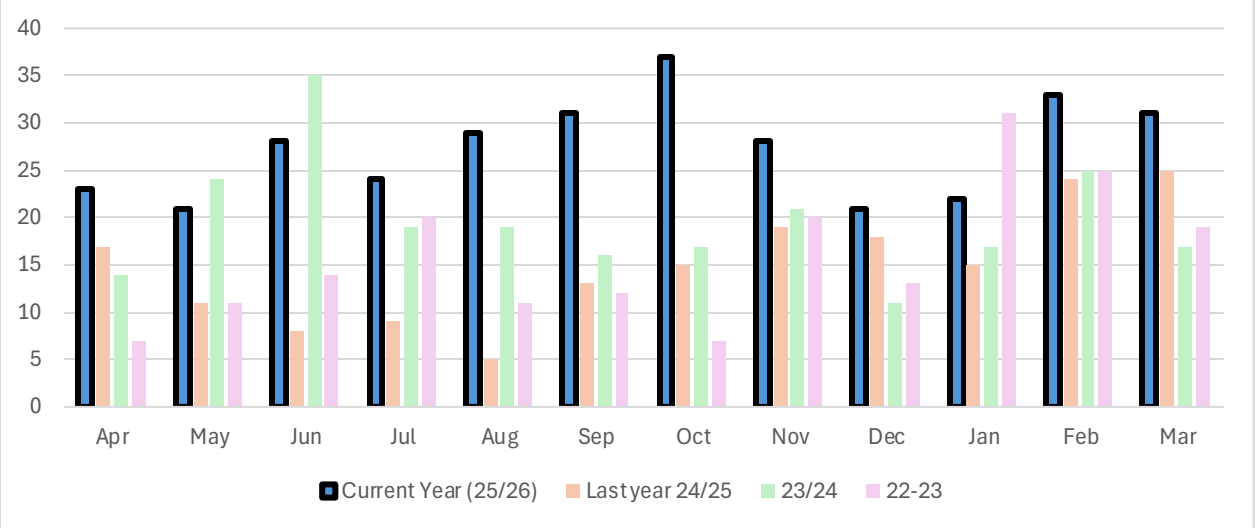


Figure 1: Number of sessions per month

General findings

- The number of sessions delivered to clients has doubled from last year. This reflects the nearly doubled number of new clients and those returning to the service. This is good evidence that the marketing push at the end of last year was successful in making the service better known to those in the community.
- Cancellations have increased, however, not to double the number of last year. There is a slight increase in DNAs. DNAs and cancellations represent 11.6% of scheduled appointments (last year 17.2%) which is in line with previous years. There were a few cancellations in April to September (5), but from then they were consistent between 3 and 5 per month. Most DNAs were in January and March.
- The average number of sessions completed by clients has risen reflecting the fact that most clients complete the 12 sessions offered (75%). fallen again compared to the previous year, but by a smaller amount. Only 5 clients completed fewer than 10 sessions. A few clients had additional sessions this year reflecting some complex presentations requiring additional work.
- Every month year we saw more clients than in the previous year. Only May and June had higher numbers in 24/25. The high numbers in April continue the upward trend from last year which followed the marketing drive in February. Unlike previous years, numbers reached a peak in October. There was then a dip in December and January matching the Christmas break. Since then, numbers have been high. On average we have seen 27 clients a month which shows our growth compared to 15/month last year and 19.5/month in 2023/24. This is more evidence of the success of the marketing push as well as the fact that we now have more clients returning to the service.
- Two couples were seen this year. One completed 12 sessions and the other has just started sessions. There have been enquiries through the year, but they have either decided not to come for personal reasons or they have not been able to make the one day when sessions are offered. Group sessions were not offered this year due to

time constraints. It is hoped that they can be offered next year, perhaps at a subsidised rate to increase recruitment.

This year, there was a change made in the coding of issues being brought by clients. This was to reduce the number of separate issues by removing those that had not been used much in the past and to change the language to make the list more useful to practitioners. For this reason, not all clients were used in the analysis because some were potentially coded using the old list. Only 14 clients out of 37 seen were looked at. Most of these clients had completed their counselling.

The main issue once again is anxiety. Relationships, depression and low self-esteem remain high as well. Stress and bereavement are also in the top issues but not as prevalent as before. It should be noted that new issues are quite high (3 clients) this year compared to last year include rape/sexual assault, historic child abuse, having a criminally offending family member, sexual activity and gambling. This shows the shifting and extremely broad nature of our client group. The issues being brought also come with complex trauma, often better suited to long term therapy. It is important that the service is present to provide support for these clients and also as a potential route to more specialised services.

Issue	Number of clients (out of 14)	Last year's highest issues in order
Anxiety	10	Anxiety
Low self-esteem	9	Relationship issues
Depression	8	Low self-esteem / Family
Relationships/Family/ Friendships	7	Depression/Stress/Bereavement/Children/ More positive
Stress	6	Social isolation/Sleep issues
Bereavement/Grief	6	Anger / Suicide / Life changes / Bullying / Abuse

Table 3: Client presenting issues

Outcome Measures

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

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

PHQ9 – Used to measure depression symptomology

GAD7 – Used to look at anxiety symptomology

The data in the following table is based on 24 clients who completed a start and end set of forms. Two clients were excluded from the analysis as they only completed forms at the start or start and middle.

	RANGE AT START	RANGE AT END	MEAN START	MEAN END	MEAN CHANGE (Previous 24/25)
CORE (/40)	7-34	0-23	17.6 (Moderate)	7.6 (Low)	- 10.0 (-13.2)
PHQ9 (/27)	4-22.5	0-23	12.4 (Moderate)	5.7 (Mild)	- 6.8 (-7.7)
GAD7 (/21)	2-21	0-14	10.9 (Moderate)	5.3 (Mild)	- 5.5 (-7.5)

	MEDIAN START	MEDIAN END	MEDIAN CHANGE (Previous 24/25)
CORE (/40)	16 (Moderate)	8 (Low)	- 14 (-14)
PHQ9 (/27)	12 (Moderate)	4 (None)	- 8 (-4.5)
GAD7 (/21)	11 (Moderate)	5 (Mild)	- 7 (-7.5)

Tables 4 & 5: Outcome measure scores

- It can be seen from the data that for all measures the scores decrease at the end of counselling. For the CORE forms a change of 5 points is considered clinically significant.
- The changes in all measures are lower this year compared to last year. This may reflect the fact that more data has been analysed and the is a broad range in scores due to the different nature of individual clients.
- Clients are coming in on average with Moderate difficulties and symptomology and mostly leaving with, on average, no issues beyond those of the general population.
- It should be noted that the ranges of scores reaches 'Severe' levels on all scores, as in the previous year. Upper scores are again slightly higher this year compared to last year. Compared to the previous year, the end scores for the PHQ9 and GAD7 still show as mild and this may be influenced by a few complex clients who showed little change in terms of symptomology over the short counselling offered, however, they did report in feedback finding sessions helpful.

Counsellor Reviews

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

All tasks have been completed by the counsellors, except for one counsellor who will use a break in seeing clients to update CORE form scores. Counsellors have generally seen an increased number of clients this year, averaging 3 to 5 each week.

All the counsellors continue to enjoy the rewarding work they do. They felt buoyed up by the increase in numbers and rose to the challenge of more complex clients.

Achievements

Counsellors highlighted that they have been able to work with more complex cased in an effective wat in short term counselling. This has involved focussing the work and utilising supervision. Counsellors have also become more familiar with the use of Cliniko to manage data. The couples counsellor is also gaining confidence in this area. The increased number of clients ahs involved more management day to day, and being aware of and operating a waiting list. Counsellors have also become more comfortable asking for help when needed.

Issues

Counsellors mentioned the following areas in regard to things that could have gone better. There was some self-doubt due to initial difficulties with complex clients. There was also a need for more regular peer group meetings. Clients missing sessions led to time management issues and a need to clarify the policy of DNAs. Silent clients who disappear without communication was also a more frequent issue this year. The impact of Monday working on and school holidays on attendance was also highlighted. Some client shave asked to change their fees once sessions have been contracted. This can be handled by the sub-committee; however, it raises the question around clients providing evidence for lower-cost counselling. A further marketing drive might keep momentum going, however, the inherent challenge of undertaking one was acknowledged. Counsellor have also asked for further clarification to clients that we are not a Christian counselling service, as this is a question which comes up and requires addressing by counsellors.

Parking has been an issue for some. Not as regularly, however to the extent that one counsellor has had to use the disabled space (with permission). There are some concerns about greater use of rooms as office space and the impact on parking.

Support

Support has been received from fellow counsellors, the counselling co-ordinator and the assessment process. The sub-group of trustees has been useful when considering low-cost requests. Trustees, and our charity policies have been a real asset ensuring everyone is on the same page and on track. Counsellors identified that peer support was very beneficial when used alongside but not as an alternative to personal supervision – it was acknowledged that there are inherent challenges in identifying the difference between the two which may require further clarification.

Goals

Counsellors are still keen to run group counselling, training or workshops; however, this is challenging due to uncertain availability of rooms in the current building. As a team we would need to be proactive to recruit attendees.

Training

Counsellors are all still happy to source their own and are aware of their obligation to do so. Community Action Dacorum may be able to provide some training which needs to be explored.

Improvements

Counsellors mentioned how beneficial and supportive it would be if everyone on the board kept up to date with our policies so that each trustee could be available and consistent when answering queries. This is something to bear in mind when the two new trustees join the board this May.

Counsellors identified the following ways that service could be enhanced:

- Enquire about a reserved parking space for Counselling at AFC to alleviate parking issues.
- Potentially asking for evidence when clients claim to be on specific benefits.
- We can consider another qualified counsellor in the future now that the service has started to operate with a waiting list.
- Considering not offering sessions on a Monday to avoid disruptions due to bank holidays.
- Consider using funds to provide sponsored places for clients to other organisations/charities to provide group work.
- Continue to iron out issues with the use of Cliniko.
- Some counsellors felt that with increased hours comes increased supervision, which is an added cost, which might be covered by the service with board approval.

Trustee Reviews

All trustees took part in the review process. All actions were up to date with a few ongoing ones linked to outside agencies.

Trustees feel they have been able to attend all meetings and make contributions of ideas and support to the activities of the service. Trustees who are also counsellors have been able to balance the two roles. The sub-committee for low-cost counselling have been able to provide valuable support to counsellors. As a group, the trustees feel that they support each other well and are all easy to access when needed. They are kept up to date on policies and meetings

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

- Updating policies and procedures
- Updating Cliniko and analysing data
- Completing tasks regarding payments and banking
- Seeking out new trustees
- Taking part in marketing activities
- Taking a role in sub-committees
- Attending and contributing to meetings

Some areas were identified as potentially being improved:

- Make some adjustments to ensure data collection on Cliniko is consistent to enable more up to date and usable figures
- Another marketing drive to consolidate the gains in clients from the last one
- Maintaining effective links with the Safeguarding Officer at ACF
- Trustees engage with specific trustee training – potentially through CAD or NCVO
- Get support with more complex banking and accounting issues
- Get more support on reviewing and utilising the policies and procedures in decision making
- Ensuring trustee skills are being used in the most effective ways

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

- Continue with growing the service through more marketing to gain clients or taking on an additional counsellor on additional days
- Integrate new trustees into the service and utilising their new skills and ideas
- Reaching out to local businesses
- Running subsidised counselling groups or offering training workshops

The situation with the AFC building has been noted as creating some uncertainty which has been a distraction for the trustees this year. It is hoped that this issue will resolve itself, as closure would have a major impact on the service. In the meantime, trustees have identified alternative opportunities in preparation for different outcomes.

The major change this yar is the loss of two founding trustees. They have commented on their enjoyment of the experience and their wishes for future success. The other trustees express their sadness at seeing them go but also acknowledge their gratitude for their support and invaluable contributions to the charity in both establishing and growing it over the last four years.

The board is excited for the arrival of the new trustees and is excited for the new skills and ideas that they will bring to their roles.

Actions Taken Since the Reviews

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

- Ongoing marketing from last January which has led to an almost doubling in client sessions.
- Two trustees met with a local Social Prescriber. It is hoped that a link can be formed with this service for mutual client referral in the future.
- The charity gained membership of Community Action Dacorum (CAD) and it hoped that this may provide training opportunities of other means of support for the service going forwards.
- The board has discussed options in preparedness for any potential changes in the AFC building over the coming year.

- Consideration for taking on an additional counsellor has been discussed, and this will be actioned in the coming months.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is at the core of the work undertaken by the team of Counsellors. Each counsellor is accountable for participating in Safeguarding training, which is documented during their annual reviews. All current counsellors have completed online Safeguarding training, supporting the safety of their clients and promoting safe practices for themselves and others within the building. Safeguarding is a standing item at all Trustee meetings.

The counsellors are all aware of the Safeguarding Policy and procedures at Adeyfield Free Church and how to report any observed Safeguarding concerns. The Safeguarding Lead at the church is also a Trustee/Elder. She ensures that the Synod Safeguarding Training is attended by all those at the church working with children and/or vulnerable adults. The training is now offered in person and online and is available to the counselling team

The new lead Counselling Trustee for Safeguarding has achieved Level 3 training. I know that I leave the provision is safe and capable hands and I wish the provision every success in the future.

Community Outreach

Last year's marketing push appears to have yielded good results with an increase in client numbers. It is hoped that a similar exercise can be repeated this year. Meeting shave been held with staff at a local school. There is also the potential of gaining referrals from the Social Prescribing team following a meeting with a local social prescriber.

Contact has yet to be made with Community Action Dacorum since joining last year. It is hoped that this link will also lead to new referral pathways and opportunities for advertising our service. Trustees have also discussed the possibility of offering a group activity, either training or counselling to local organisations at a subsidised cost e.g. housing association. This idea is still at the early stages.

Client Feedback

We received 14 feedback forms which is the most ever and a massive increase on the 4 from last year. This is potentially down to a redesign of the form which cut the length down from four sides of paper to two. Four of the forms analysed were from the old format. Only questions which were the same as on the reviewed form were included in the numerical analysis. The reduction in the number of questions does not appear to have affected the quality of data and has removed some of the repetitiveness of clients' general responses.

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

- I got the support I needed
- I felt my concerns were understood
- I felt comfortable with the way in which the counselling was provided
- The environment was safe and welcoming

- The support was sensitive to my needs and situation

All bar two clients rated the venue and location as Excellent. The other two client rated it Good. Words to describe the counselling room included, bright, welcoming, warm, airy, clean, private, confidential, comfortable and calm. The blankets were described as "lovely" by one client. The building was described as safe and open, with a friendly atmosphere and café. It was said to not be clinical and closed but flooded with light. The quiet nature of the venue with its parking and accessibility were highlighted.

Figure 2 shows that most clients agreed that positive qualities developed after counselling, however, at least one client, but never more than two disagreed. It should be noted that this was not the same client. A couple of clients gave a score between Agree and Disagree which was interpreted as neutral. Having a larger data set shows more variation in the data but it is positive that most people agree that the positive changes have occurred. The fact that the agreement is not strong in all cases perhaps reflects the complex nature of the issues brought by some clients. These issues may be better addressed through long term counselling, or by clients returning to the service, which is now happening.

Other reported benefits included:

- Seeing things about themselves that they had not before.
- Not feeling so alone.
- Leaving the past behind and finding relief.
- Take a more positive and realistic view of the past.
- Given skills to be able to move forward with life.
- Accept and value themselves more.
- Feel more at ease with themselves and have some hope.

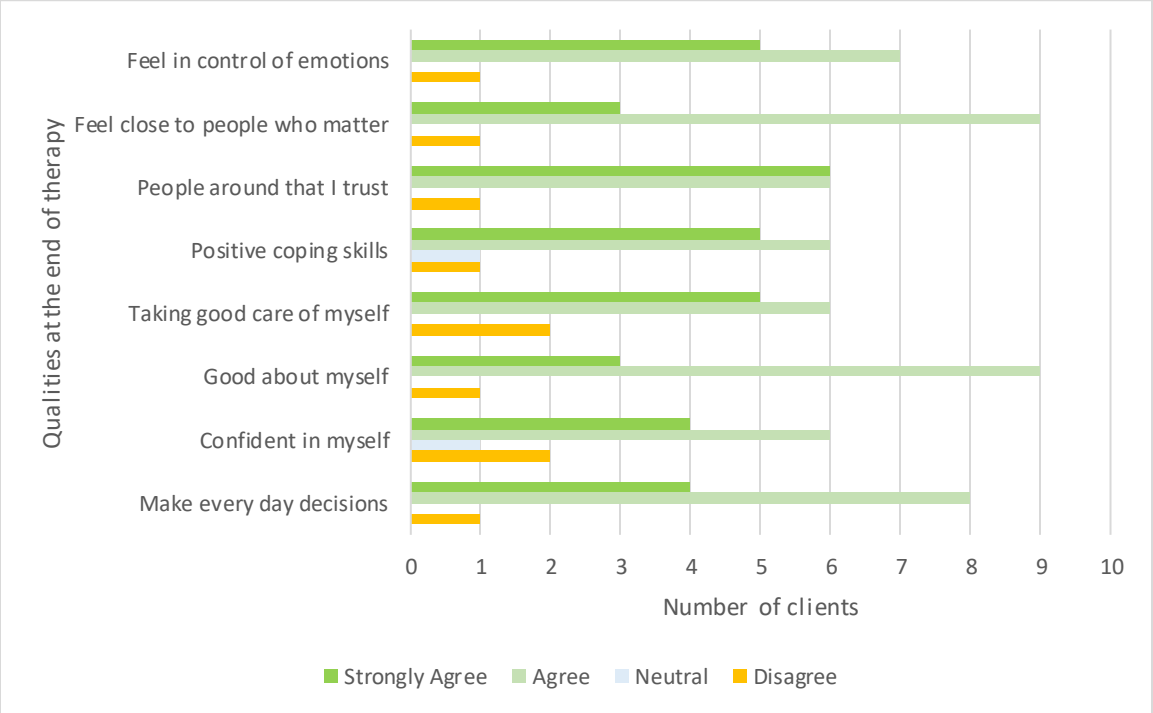


Figure 2: Changes to qualities after therapy

Selected positive comments

"Not at all what I was expecting but right from the initial phone call from me I felt supported and I am so glad I took that first step."

"I needed a space to process what I was feeling, and I was provided a safe, warm environment to do so, where I didn't feel judged… I was made to feel so comfortable and accepted."

"Excellent support from my therapist who understood my situation and how to help me."

"Great to be able to access excellent counselling at an affordable rate."

"I have found myself again and found the help/experience contributed vastly to me finding a relief which I would not have done without being shown how to do this…I can't thank [my counsellor] enough for saving me (from myself)."

"Leaving the past behind and understanding why I was keeping it within myself, which I now know was holding me back from living."

"I am so grateful for the support and structure I have received …They have provided me with the opportunity to share and explore situations in an open and safe environment…. [with] a very experienced and sensitive/supportive counsellor. I will highly recommend this service."

"I feel that I can now deal with situations and personal issues that before I found very difficult."

"I did not know what to expect. I am pleasantly surprised by how far we have come over the last 12 sessions... Thank you [to my counsellor] for your patience, for being supportive and kind. You fostered/created an environment and safe space for us to be vulnerable. Your expertise and genuine care to see us revive our relationship means everything. You were invested in seeing us win."

"I arrived at my first counselling session with a list of issues that needed addressing. [My counsellor] took it all in her stride and helped me to feel more able to cope."

"I am very grateful to [my counsellor] for enabling me to be able to help myself. It has made a big difference to my life."

Suggested improvements

There were only a couple of improvements suggested. One was for more sessions to allow for continuity, but this was made with the understanding that having a break was useful and that clients can return to the service. It was also suggested that there could be more liaison with other services offering specialised or specific support. The number of different referral and signposting options has been growing, and lists are being produced to enable counsellors to help clients find more specialised support if needed.

Future Endeavours

In order to continue delivering and effective service by Counselling at AFC, the trustees will be looking at the following areas in the next 12 months:

- Taking time to carry out another marketing drive to maintain the momentum of increased client numbers.
- Seek to improve links with outside organisations and entities including social prescribers, local charities and businesses.
- Explore other options for rooms to deliver the service from whilst there still exists some uncertainty around the AFC building.
- Consider offering sponsored places for group work to other entities in the local area.
- Develop potential workshops to deliver to specific groups.
- Start to consider funding or grant opportunities with the view to using these to sustain specific projects, for example groups or workshops.
- Consider expanding the service by taking on another qualified counsellor, or in the future a student placement.