ALTON COUNSELLING SERVICE

counselling for the community

ALTON COUNSELLING SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT
and
ACCOUNTS

2025-2026

Charity Commission registered number: 279857

Alton Counselling Service
For the financial year ended 31 March 2026

1. Trustees and their Advisers

Board of Trustees
Anne Bothwell (Chair)
Paul Warren
Graham Hill
Fiona Lapraik

Counsellors' Representative
Alyson Curry

Consultant Psychiatrist & Clinical Adviser
Dr Paul Warren, BM, MRCPsych

Independent Examiner
E.M.Mackeggie Gurney, ACA

Management Board

Head of Counselling	Karen Allington
Treasurer	Andrew Croom-Johnson
Service Manager	Lissa Morris

Bankers
HSBC Bank,
Lansdowne House, 74 High Street,
Alton,
GU34 1EZ

Premises
Quaker Meeting House,
Church Street,
Alton
GU34 2DA

Tel: 01420 89207

Web: www.altoncounselling.org.uk

2. Structure, Governance and Management

Alton Counselling Service (ACS) was established in 1974 as charity number 279857. The governing trust deed of 6 February 1980 was subsequently amended by a deed of variation dated 7 December 2010.

The Trustees are responsible for the governance of ACS. They are initially elected and thereafter confirmed in post annually. The Trustees are unpaid volunteers who may claim reasonable out-of-pocket expenses. The Trustees help to reconcile competing demands faced by the charity. They work with the Management Board to set the strategic direction and major areas of work. The day-to-day management is delegated to the Management Board comprising the Head of Counselling, the Treasurer and the Service Manager. The Trustees meet at least four times a year and the Management Board meets at least ten times a year. Both Trustees and the Management Board may meet more often if circumstances require. The Trustees have put in place a reserves policy and financial systems to reduce as far as possible financial risk and work closely with the Management Board to preserve and promote ACS. Professional indemnity and public liability insurances are maintained. The service operates to BACP guidelines to minimise clinical risk.

ACS provides high-quality affordable counselling for the local community and to the highest ethical and professional standards. Clients are expected to make a contribution to cover the cost of their counselling, but no one is refused counselling for financial reasons. The service ensures confidentiality and a safe environment that give clients the opportunity to talk through the difficulties they are encountering. These might include:

- feeling unhappy, lonely, anxious or depressed
- being in need of understanding or support
- finding it difficult to relate to others
- lacking self-confidence
- facing a personal crisis, such as bereavement or relationship break-down
- undergoing major changes, such as redundancy or retirement

Each counsellor is part of a supervision group meeting weekly to review client work. Any unresolved or difficult issues are referred to the Head of Counselling and, where appropriate, the Consultant Psychiatrist & Clinical Adviser.

The Service relies on volunteers in all areas of work. Counsellors work on a voluntary basis, though experienced counsellors receive a modest payment in lieu of expenses. The Treasurer, Receptionists and others work without payment. Everyone who works in ACS has a meeting at least once a year with the person to whom they are responsible, with the opportunity to express their views on the operation of ACS. There was a Christmas social event.

3. Objectives

The charity's objectives as stated in the trust deed, as amended, are:

- To provide counselling to those seeking help for emotional and psychological difficulties in accordance with current best practice
- To research the theory and practice of counselling and to publish the result of this research where appropriate
- To offer training and development opportunities in counselling to qualified and trainee counsellors.

4. Review of Clinical Practice

We continue to provide affordable counselling to the local community. All enquiries for counselling are dealt with by our Head of Counselling. If deemed appropriate for our service, they are then offered an initial consultation with a qualified member of the service. Depending on their need they are then allocated a counsellor for once weekly counselling. If it is felt that a different source of help is required, we do our best to signpost.
Our work is made possible by our committed team of supervisors and counsellors - both qualified and in training. We are also reliant on fund raising, which is helped in great part by our Trustees and our Office Manager.
In the past year there have been some significant changes. Most notably, we said goodbye to Dorothy Harte, who had been our Head of Counselling for the past 12 years. We are grateful for Dorothy's commitment and overall interest during her tenure in helping the service to continue under some difficult circumstances (including the Covid 19 Lockdown). Dorothy is replaced by Karen Allington, an experienced Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist from the local area.
In addition, two of our supervisors ended - Stan Roman, who had been with the service for 20 years and Sophia Armstrong. We are grateful for the efforts of Stan and Sophia. Although losing staff inevitably affects the service and the supervision groups, we have been fortunate to recruit two supervisors to replace them – Alison Lee and Jeremy Hughes, both of whom have worked for the service in the past, enabling a seamless transition for the work of the service.
A few of the counsellors have left, due to ending their trainings or devoting their time to building a private practice, and we wish them well. But we have been fortunate to fill their vacancies by some new counsellors in training, bringing fresh enthusiasm into the service. We are glad to be able to continue our mission to help in the development of counsellors.

We are committed to enhancing our visibility in the local community via the helpful contribution of our Trustees and are working on a range of CPD events, not only for the benefit of our counsellors, but we hope our offerings will attract attendees from the wider counselling community.

5. Treasurer's report

Financial review

The end of year accounts shows a net loss for the year of £9,839.
Our main source of income is from counselling session fees. Over the last financial year we have continued to see many of our clients, both current and new, suffering financial difficulties and unable to pay the standard session costs. This continues to have an ongoing impact on our income. We would normally be able to offset this from grants, but unfortunately for the last financial year we were unsuccessful in obtaining any grants towards this. However, we have recently received (May 2026) a grant from the National Lottery Community Fund of £20,000 which will be shown in the 2026/7 accounts. This should cover our income shortfall for the next two financial years.
Our bursary scheme, as shown in the accounts, only relates to those clients paying less than £30 a session (normal cost £50) and we have a reducing number of these clients. We have approximately 50% of our clients paying less than the normal cost for their sessions.

Our Operating Expenses continue to be carefully monitored and managed, with most of our Operating Expenses being fixed costs.

HMRC/PAYE

We have continued to use the HMRC supplied RTI software to manage our payroll and NIC payments. This continues to be trouble free and has ensured that we meet our obligations to HMRC in a timely manner.

Credit card system

The Worldpay (formally Cardsave) virtual terminal credit card system continues to meet our credit card processing needs. In September 2025 we renewed compliance to the Payment Card Industries Digital Security Standards as required by Worldpay.

Employee Pensions

We are registered with The Pensions Regulator regarding workplace pension law (Pensions Act 2008) for our only employee. We have a Workplace Pension Scheme with NEST.

Reserve account

Reserve funds continue to be held in a Charity Deposit account with Virgin Money.

6. Overview from the Chair of Trustees

Over the past twelve months, we have continued to provide qualified and affordable counselling, despite economic pressures and staff changes. Our dedicated administration staff, counsellors and volunteers have continued to deliver exceptional results.

In September the Trustees welcomed Karen Allington as our Head of counselling after Dorothy stepped down. We acknowledge and are grateful to Dorothy for her many years of leadership to the Service and wish her well in her future enterprises. Karen comes to us with a wealth of experience and exciting ideas for the future and the board of Trustees look forward to working with her in the future.

At the beginning of the year we welcomed Paul Warren as a Trustee, he has also said that he would be willing to run training courses as before. We also welcomed Alison Lee who joins us as a Supervisor and Jeremy who returns to the counselling team.

Despite a challenging economic landscape, we remain financially stable. We continue to see a steady percentage of clients unable to pay full fees. The Bursary scheme, as shown in the accounts, has always related to those clients who are paying less than £30 per session. We have had an increase in clients unable to pay the full fee but able to pay more than £30 and the majority of our clients are now in this position. We continue to provide high quality, professional counselling at affordable prices in accordance with our aims. Grants are investigated and applied for when we can, a major problem being that many funders prefer to fund discrete projects with a clear end date. We continue to prioritize sustainable funding, and we are exploring new income streams to support our bursary scheme. Our counsellors are also asked to regularly review the amount their clients are paying.

In conjunction with the Management Board, the trustees are grateful for the following donations; Alton Lions for their grants from the Santa Run, Alton Town Council for their Community Grant, the EHDC Councillor Grant scheme, Binstead Fete and Flower show, a donation from CIPCA and other donations through Just Giving as well as funds received through Easy Funding. Thanks must go to Lissa, Karen, Fiona and Andrew for their work on identifying projects and information for applications.

Our training programme continues to be successful and well attended, taking place on zoom so that there is a wide catchment area of attendees. Thanks go to Paul for his training on ‘Symptoms and Diagnoses/Medication and Treatment’ and to Dr Ann Guy for her training on ‘Navigating Deprescribing’.

The service continues to strengthen its links with local groups, including social prescribers, and services and responding to their needs. We are a member of the National Counselling Network (NCN).

Alton Counselling Service

For the financial year ended 31 March 2026

We recognize that the environment in which we operate is evolving and looking forward we continue to investigate the possibilities for more trustees to join the team. The trustees meet with each other and with the management team on various occasions.

A great deal of the work of the service goes on behind closed doors, from our Service Manager, Head of Counselling, Treasurer and Supervisors all of whom make essential and valuable contributions to making the service work efficiently, successfully and above all, viably and my thanks go to all of them.

Finally, my sincere thanks go to our counsellors, without whose work and dedication we would be unable to function.

7. Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees are required to prepare an annual report and financial statements for each financial year. These statements should give a true and fair view of the charity's financial activities during the year and its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing these financial statements the Trustees have:

- selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently
- made judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- taken responsibility for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Signed: AJ Bothwell

Anne Bothwell, Chair of Trustees **Date: 8/06/2026**



Alton Counselling Service
For the financial year ended 31 March 2026

Clinical Organization

Head of Counselling

Karen Allington

Clinical Supervisors

Alyson Curry
Alison Lee

Consultant Psychiatrist & Clinical Adviser

Dr Paul Warren, BM, MRCPsych

Counsellors

The following counsellors have made themselves available to ACS during the year:

Alyson Curry
Liz Drew
Kevin Gallagher
Dorothy Harte
Kate Burrows
Philip Mabe
Michelle Macey
Victoria Miller
Jaqueline Sands
Pete Smith
Szabina Wagner

Kate Fox (student)
Andy Hiscock (student)
Hayley Allan (student)
Amanda McGill (student)
Samantha Bunting (student)
Caroline Matthews (student)
Julia Reynolds (student)
Clair Smith (student)
Gemma Steer (student)

Volunteers

Tracey Major

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Accounts for the year ended

31 March 2026

Charity Commission registered number: 279857

Alton Counselling Service

For the financial year ended 31 March 2026

Receipts and Payment Accounts

		Total Funds		Notes
		This Year	Last Year	
		£	£	
Receipts				
Counselling Sessions and Initial Consultations		41,622	44,914	
Training Courses		260	700	
Grants and Donations		5,014	11,929	(2)
Bank Interest		186	160	
Fund-raising events		0	113	(3)
Friends of ACS subscriptions		235	232	
Gift Aid		0	3,355	
Sundry income		0	100	
	Total Receipts	**47,317**	**61,505**	
Payments				
Counselling and Training		(13,998)	(15,260)	
Training Courses		(100)	(3,000)	
Bursary Payments		(2,277)	(2,943)	
Administration		(35,527)	(29,787)	
Premises Costs		(4,352)	(6,402)	
Insurance and Affiliation Fees		(902)	(837)	
Fund-raising events		0	(0)	
Bad debt written off		(0)	(330)	
	Total Payments	**(57,156)**	**(58,559)**	
Net of Receipts/(Payments)		(9,839)	2,946	
Cash Funds last year end		23,619	20,672	
Adjustment (roundings)		0	1	
Cash Funds this year end		**13,779**	**23,619**	

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at Year End

		Unrestricted Funds	
		£	
Cash Funds			
Petty Cash		0	
Current Account (HSBC bank)		2,880	
Monies due from Streamline		147	(4)
Savings Account (Virgin Money)		10,752	
	Total Cash Funds	**13,779**	

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Alton Counselling Service
For the financial year ended 31 March 2026

Notes to the accounts

1. Restricted Funds (Grants)

	Credit	Debit	Balance
	£	£	£
Alton Town Council – Community Grant	1,000	1,000	0
East Hants D C – Counsellor Grant	1,000	1,000	0
East Hants D C – Counsellor Grant	911	911	0

2. Grants and Donations

During the year, Grants and Donations were received from the following:

	£
Alton Town Council	1,000
Alton Lions	1,000
Binsted Fete	250
Easy Fundraising	121
EHDC	1,911
Just Giving	732
Total	**£5,014**

3. Fund-raising events

During the year, there were no receipts from Fund-raising events

Total	**£0**

4. Monies due from Streamline

This figure relates to Client Credit Card payments processed and entered into the Accounts before 31st March with payment received into the bank account after 31st March. Payments are not normally received into the bank account for 3 to 4 working days after processing. £146.75 was received on 7th April 2026.

Alton Counselling Service

For the financial year ended 31 March 2026

Independent Examiner's Report on the Accounts

I report on the accounts of Alton Counselling Service for the year ended 31st March 2026

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:
   - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and
   - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act

   have not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

E Mackeggie Gurney

Elspeth Mackeggie Gurney
45 Lenten Street
Alton
Hampshire
GU34 1HE

Date: 19.08.2026

Charity Commission registered number: 279857