

AURORA COUNSELLING SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT

AGM 2022

Chairperson Report 2022

Joan Collumb

The year 21/22 was really the year we began to see normality return to service delivery.

A welcome return to face to face meetings and training after a sense of zoom fatigue

Within Aurora it was clear clients wanted a return to face to face delivery and ,bar a few exceptions ,zoom and phone based counselling has once again gone quiet

There has been a slow , steady increase in service uptake and it is heartening to see increased demand for wellbeing services

As mentioned within the report we are progressing through a period of change and transition within the Victims and Survivors sector . The Trauma Recovery Network will offer a new and welcome dimension to the services available for Victims and Survivors as they seek to address their trauma and hurts from the past. The new Victims and Survivors strategy will ,when complete ,outline new targets and goals for the sector in line with changing needs and social conditions. As a VSS funded organisation it is essential we are responsive to these

As we end this year and move into a new financial year the "burn out" of professionals in the sector is also evident . The covid era has created change for everyone. For many professionals carrying the heavy work load for a sustained period of time the toll is now too heavy and many are deciding to hang up the boots

It is likely this trend will impact upon Aurora. Indeed it feels , as we begin a new year, that we are once again in transition as members leave the team and the opportunity for new faces emerge

Perhaps it is timely that as we acknowledge the changing needs of the public, particularly victims and survivors we undergo a process of change and transition also. Bringing in new energy and skills to help us continue to deliver meaningful and impactful services next year and beyond

Victims and Survivors Funding

The Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) continues to be Aurora's core funder contributing £125000 towards programme, salaries and running costs over 2021to 2022 facilitating the support of over 85 persons throughout the year . These individuals availed of a mix of talking therapies, wellbeing services and social support such as groupwrok to children , teenagers and adults

VSS continue to be a very supportive and progressive funder.

In recent weeks they have agreed to fund additional pilot services such as 1-1 stress management to be offered alongside our complementary therapy service. We will also be offering systemic family practice therapeutic sessions .

In 2019 VSS funded two therapists from the Aurora team - Sydella Gallick and Catherine Quinn to undertake the Diploma in Systemic Family Practice through Queens University . Both therapists graduated in June 2022. Catherine has now progressed onwards to the Masters Degree in Family Therapy. Through the invaluable VSS funding we are now in a position to offer therapeutic family services and are excited to observe how the service develops over the coming year

Aurora has also been partaking in workshops throughout the year with the Commission for Victims and Survivors to offer grassroot feedback on the development and content of the new Victims Strategy. The Trauma Recovery Network will be operational over the forthcoming year .

VSS groups will a play a role in navigating referrals into the TRN. We await the detail on how this will be facilitated throughout the next year

The implementation of the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme (TPDPS) and the upcoming Legacy Bill have not been without controversy and have provoked emotional reactions and painful memories for many victims and survivors and indeed individuals who did not previously identify as a victim and survivor we therefore are expecting increased demand for VSS services over the next year

The above highlights the changing nature of delivery of Victims and Survivors Services and indeed the changing needs of Victims and Survivors themselves



CFNI - Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

In 2020 Aurora took part in the Techies in Residence programme facilitated through CFNI. The goal was to increase awareness of digital tools and to partner community groups with tech experts to create a product or service which could address a particular issue the organisation or their target groups were experiencing. Aurora identified the lengthy waiting lists for children's counselling and the lack of communication or help for parents/children during that time.

Aurora was partnered with Kippie CIC to create an app that could be utilised by parents to source information and offer useful tools to help support their child at home. The app could also be used to stay in touch with an organisation during the waiting list period. In May 2021 Aurora took part in a live pitch to potentially win a further 10k to further develop their product. Aurora was successful and the 10k was to be utilised towards the development of the interactive game section. This section would focus on offering interactive activities to kids to help develop their emotional literacy skills. This was a great experience for Aurora and as a team we learnt a lot of new skills.

. We are hopeful, that with additional investment the app will be completed in 2023



Children's Emotional Wellbeing and Play

Our presence within local schools and delivery of our play therapy service has shown clearly the benefits and power of play to help nurture and grow children's emotional, social, physical and cognitive growth. Through this year we have been keen to increase opportunity for quality play experiences between kids and their peers and with their caregivers

Our wonderful children's play centre premises in Bishop Street provide an ideal base from which to do this . Therefore a key goal over 2022 was to maximise its usage by parents and children - not only for therapeutic activity but for groupwork, training and interactive play experiences

To this end we have been started delivering a Little Toots play and Stay 4 week programme and have begun to identify and apply for additional funding to grow this area of work



CLEAR PHA Small Grants

In October 2022 we were advised that our application to the short term funding programme for delivery of our Power of Play Programme was successful . This project will offer a mix of play experiences to children aged 3 /4 and also to children aged 5- 7 years alongside workshops to parents themselves . We are very much looking forward to the continued delivery of this programme



External Contracts

Throughout 21/22 we continued to deliver therapeutic services on a contractual basis to :
10 schools across the City

Western Trust Talking Therapy Hub

Claudy Health Centre

These contracts facilitated the delivery of talking /creative therapies to 45 individuals living across the City

Thanks to all our Staff and Therapists throughout the year for all their hard work and dedication

Dawn Kelly

Francesca Kelly

Sarah Rutherford

Natalie Kelly

Catherine Quinn

Joan Ohagan

Sinead Logue

Bridgeen McCann

Dale Mitchell

Shauna Gallagher

Anne Meehan

Majella Coyle

Also Thank you to our funders who made this all possible we are all very grateful

Financial Report