

**AURORA COUNSELLING SERVICES**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**AGM 2023**

## **Chairperson Report**

**Joan Collumb**

This year has been a challenging year for Aurora Counselling. The lack of a Stormont Executive , the cost of living crisis and a real lack of money and decision making within all systems and structures has resulted in the implementation of brutal and sudden cuts to much of the public purse.

These cuts had a direct impact on both the delivery of our schools counselling service and the outreach counselling service. Although, at the moment there are reasons to be hopeful that the schools budgets will now remain as they were the future of the GP based counselling service is much more uncertain.

We remain very appreciative of our close relationship with the Victims and Survivors service whose yearly grant and day to day support offers Aurora the stable foundation it needs to be able to offer services to those most in need. The transformation within the VSS sector and learning provided continues to make Aurora a much better and safer service for all.

We look forward to the continued expansion of the Trauma Recovery Network and the impact it has within the sector

Internally ,within Aurora ,there has been lots of change this year both in terms of the team and in terms of piloting new ways of working. We are committed to moving towards a more family focused service model to offer more choice and support beyond the individual . These pilot projects are helping us do that

I would like to thank and the staff and other board members for their support, assistance and hard work throughout the year. I look forward to working together in the coming years

Joan



## **Funded Projects 2023**

### **Victims and Survivors Service ( VSS)**

The Victims and Survivors Service continues to be Aurora's main funder providing an annual grant valued at £ 124,569. The grant contributes to both core costs and programme costs. Through the funding received Aurora provided talking therapies to 74 adults and 24 children and young people living across the North West. Through additional funding secured later in the year Aurora also piloted a family therapy support project with 6 families helping provide a more wraparound therapeutic service to individuals accessing our service. Feedback and outcomes were very positive and signalled the need to continue to develop this aspect of our service delivery and to secure additional funding moving forward.

### **CLEAR ( PHA small grants)**

Aurora was awarded small grant funding towards the delivery of the Power of Play project. Through this grant Aurora delivered Play and Presence classes to 31 children and their parents. These classes focused on highlighting the different forms of play and how they can be utilised to aid the emotional, social and cognitive development of young children. Aurora also ran a series of master classes covering topics such as building self esteem in children and dealing with big emotions. All sessions took place in the Bishop Street premise. Parents and children really enjoyed the session and found the venue to be excellent. Many of the children demonstrated a marked growth in confidence during the 4 week programme and the development of improved social skills was evident. Aurora very much enjoyed delivering this project and we are keen to develop this area of work moving forwards.





## **Partnership Working 2023**

### **Schools**

We continue to work in partnership with 10 schools across the City to provide in house counselling to their pupils. This year initially started off very bleak with the news that the extended schools budget for 2023 would face cuts of up to 90 % . At a time when children were still recovering from the impact of the pandemic the news sent shockwaves throughout both schools and the community sector. Thankfully the intended cuts did not happen and our counselling budgets remained at the same level as previous years. Through our work in the schools we supported an additional 26 children during the year

### **Claudy HC**

Schools were not the only partnership to face challenges this year. Our work in Claudy, whilst initially getting off to a strong start also faced a setback in September when funding for the GP based counselling was stopped by the Department of Health. Nevertheless this year we provided CBT to 26 patients through our outreach service. Presently no funding is available to continue the service however we remain hopeful of a change in circumstance as we move into 2024

### **New Therapists**

During the year we also tendered for new therapists to join our talking therapy team.

We are delighted to welcome Michaela Mc Laughlin and Donat Desmond to Aurora.

We also said goodbye to our very valued therapist Dawn Kelly whom worked at the centre for 12 years and will be very missed

Thank you to all our Staff and Therapists for their continued hard work and commitment to Aurora throughout the year

Francesca Kelly

Sinead Logue

Natalie Kelly

Joan O Hagan

Majella Coyle

Dawn Kelly

Shauna Gallagher

Sarah Rutherford

Dale Mitchell

Bridgeen Mc Cann

Eilish Nicholas

Anne Meehan

Michaela Mc Laughlin

Donat Desmond

And a very big thank you to our funders and all those who donated to Aurora throughout the year

## Financial Report