

ANNUAL REPORT



CONNECT CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING SERVICE

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Charity No. : NIC108290

Connect Christian Counselling Service

8 Moat Street, Donaghadee, BT21 0DA Annual Report for the 2023 -24 Year

The past year has once again seen Connect Christian Counselling Service achieve our purpose to provide a safe, free of charge, professional counselling service for the community. This service has been provided by our very dedicated team of volunteers. We currently have 9 counsellors and 4 administration staff. The team are supported by our Management Board, drawn from the local community, who oversee the practice and diligently guide our work.

All the Connect volunteers are totally committed to this service and to their clients. Since opening in 2003 we have had 1036 requests for our services. Since our last report there have been 79 clients seen, although 11 have not been allocated for counselling as of this date. Some clients are still being seen from the previous year, as we do not limit the number of sessions, but tailor the therapy for the individual's needs. Counsellors have 2 to 6 clients allocated to them at any one time.

The need for our service continues to be very great, and we still receive many referrals from the NHS via GP's, Community Mental Health teams and the McQueen House Assessment Centre in Newtownards hospital, as well as self-referrals.

We operate on 2 evenings and 1 morning each week, giving a maximum of 9 sessions, as we are limited by the size of our premises, and volunteer availability. Unfortunately, this often means that we have a waiting list for our service, and some clients have to wait for an appointment. Our waiting times are comparable to other small agencies.

The counselling team appreciate the hard work of our management board members, for their diligent oversight of the service. We had a very successful fundraising event arranged by Donaghadee Primary School this year. This was a very enjoyable evening which, while beneficial to our funds, also highlighted the work of Connect in the community.

In order to comply with our professional body's practice standards, all the counsellors must complete 30 hours of CPD (continuous professional development). Connect kindly provided the team with a training event last November on Addiction, presented by Pamela Brown, from Stauros, and in the Spring of this year we had training on Solution Focused Brief Therapy, presented by Dr Karen Doherty.

We have continued to help young clients, since lowering our age threshold to 16year-olds the year before last. Another of our dedicated counselling volunteers is currently training for young people's work and this will be a great asset. We appreciate the continued support of our external supervisors. All of the counsellors are required to have 1½ hours of supervision each month, to maintain their professional registration. This remains the organisations biggest overhead.

Two of our accredited counsellors are also qualified supervisors which allows us to supervise some of our counsellors inhouse. The most experienced counsellors are supervised externally, to separate line management roles from supervision, which

is best practice, although not mandatory. We also have to maintain our client caseload along with the supervision.

Our goal for the coming year is to continue to provide the high professional standards of practice which we have achieved over the last 21 years and help as many people with mental health issues as we possibly can. I am sorry to say our waiting list is not reducing as quickly as we would wish but we continue to work towards that goal.

The volunteers are serving in this ministry by giving of their valuable skills and time, week after week, but this service also only continues because of community support and through all our prayers.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'C. Thompson', written in black ink.

Signed by :

Position : Director of Counselling

10th December 2024

Charity No NIC 108290