

Annual Report January to December 2019

Background Information

LIFE-FORCE was founded in 1990 and the Centre was established in 1994. The Centre runs a therapeutic Counselling Service, which originally gained British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) accreditation in March 2007 and reaccreditation in 2012 and more recently in 2017.

LIFE-FORCE School of Counselling was founded in 1995 and the Course Programme first gained BACP accreditation in 2005 and re-accreditation to Gold Book Standards originally in 2010 and also in 2015.

Professional Body

LIFE-FORCE is an organisational member of BACP, and as such is bound by the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions. All Team Counsellors here after referred to as Members, are individual members of BACP and therefore also adhere to the Ethical Framework. Please see this link for further information.

<https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/ethics-and-standards/ethical-framework-for-the-counselling-professions>

Summary of Activities

As the Centre approached the end of 2019, the Counselling Service incorporated 28 Team Counsellors and approximately 8 Student Counsellors on Placement, some of whom were undertaking their counselling training with the LIFE-FORCE School of Counselling. This year 3 Team Counsellors gained individual BACP accreditation and these included Donna Pagano, Paula Appleton, and Martin Chester. Congratulations to each of them for all their hard work that went towards making this achievement possible.

During this year Denise King sadly left the Counselling Team members after many years of outstanding service. We wish her well in all her future professional and personnel endeavours. However the Service did recruit several new members this year Laura Hedges, Helen Boud, Cherie Hipkins and Diane Arnold, who are willing to provide therapeutic counselling at reduced fees whilst gaining qualified clinical experience. This ensured the Service could continue to offer a wide range of fees and appointment times to all clients who contacted the Office wishing to see a qualified counsellor.

The Service continued to be run by Alison Scrutton our Counselling Service Manager in a caring and organised manner. Alison has worked for LIFE-FORCE for over 20 years and she continued to embrace and implement all the changes in a receptive, enthusiastic and professional way. In July our Counselling Service Assistant Beccy Manford left to pursue other career opportunities but the Centre was fortunate to recruit Angie Crowley who fitted this role perfectly and proved to be a tremendous asset to the client referral team. Angie works 3 afternoons per week on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Our Office Administrator Rosie Elgar continued to work 3 afternoons per week and Friday mornings and she managed all room hire registrations in a professional way. The Office continued to be open every weekday morning and 5 afternoons each week, which meant staff were able to take new client referrals in person and deal with general enquiries.

Louise Newland our Clerical Administrator who joined the office team February last year continued to provide a high standard of work and was pivotal in the ongoing development of the Centre's and School's policy documents and hand books.

One of our main changes this year was the introduction of an electronic diary room booking system that was developed by our web designer Juergen Neuhoff who created a bespoke database that specifically met the needs of our already well established paper diary. The new diary has proved to be extremely successful and means therapist can book room 24/7 whenever is convenient for them. This new system also enabled the office to stream line some of our administration procedures thus making for a more efficient approach. This new system also included the migration of our website to a different and more user friendly operating system. Development of our web site pages is ongoing and will continue into next year.

The main changes that were made last year in order to meet the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR requirements that came into effect on 25th May 2018 have continued throughout this year. This included the signing of consent statements where relevant by office staff, team counsellors, students on placement, counselling clients and students, as well as gaining opt in consent from individuals who wished to be added to our marketing mail out address book lists. Also storage, retention and destruction policies were adhered to and carried out. Our Data Protection Policy can be viewed on our website along with our Privacy Policy.

Each year, during the spring, all Team Counsellors are required to attend an annual Team Counsellor Meeting during which they share an interesting CPD activity they have undertaken during the last year. The aim of the meetings is also to keep all Team Counsellors up to date with any development of the Service's policies and procedures. This year's presentation was on Risk Management, which is a 3 year BACP requirement, was provided by Martin Chester the Centre's Health & Safety Officer. The presentation was well received by all Team Counsellors. Martin also reviews the team and students' Risk Assessment Form as these arise and provides knowledgeable support and feedback on an ongoing basis.

Due to the Service having such a diverse counselling team, along with our long opening hours, the Centre is pleased to say that most clients were offered an appointment with a qualified counsellor within a week of having contacted the Service. However due to the popularity of the low cost counselling service with students on placement, there was at certain times of the year a 1-2 month waiting list. The low cost fee of £8.50/session continues to be negotiable for genuine circumstances.

Throughout the year the Organisation continued to liaise with other local statutory and voluntary organisations plus many GP practices in the area, who were all pleased to refer or recommend clients to the Service for counselling and from whom we can seek specialist help for clients if required.

The second main change this year was the sale of the Life-Force School of Counselling to Katrina Fassnidge which went through at the end of a February. The School's course training programme is still held at LIFE-FORCE Centre and Katrina is a highly knowledgeable, conscientious and responsible new Course Director. Nicole Joyce continues to be involved as Course Consultant and is pleased to be able to support the School and Katrina in her new venture.

Each year in January, May and September the School holds Open Days so that individuals who are interested in training to become a counsellor can visit the Centre, meet the tutors, read the course handbooks and ask questions relating to the three year training programme. This year these events proved to be as popular as ever.

The Stage 2 and Stage 3 Course Leader Colin Jones and Co-Tutor Pam Evans continued to support students through the foundation stages of the course programme in a professional and enabling manner. The School recruited two new Stage 4 course tutors Nileema Conlon Vaswani as Course Leader and Tobie Glennly as Co-Tutor who took over the delivery of the Diploma from Easter.

The School continued to provide students with an onsite library, plus they also had access to all of the documents and course handouts required to complete the course on a secure student log-in area on the Life-Force School website.

The School's Stage 4 Diploma course students are required to complete 100 hours of client work as part of their training requirement and a quite a few undertook their clinical placement at the Centre. This enabled the Counselling Service to continue to provide low cost counselling to clients who would otherwise not have been able to access therapeutic counselling.

In addition to the two main aforementioned areas of the Organisation, during the year the Centre also provided various short CPD courses, including the following:

- Couple Counselling Training Course – delivered by Paula Isgrove and Ian Rattray
- Working with Sexual Abuse Course – delivered by Lisa Britton and assisted by Angela Brooke
- Gestalt in Action 3 day training – delivered by Ari Badaines Ph.D.

The Centre is also pleased to have hosted other CPD courses provided by Martin Chester of Therapeutic Creative Solutions, along with Lisa Britton, and other training providers.

These included the following:

- Working Therapeutically with Children on the Autism Spectrum - Martin Chester
- Supporting Clients Therapeutically who Present with BPD - Martin Chester
- Clinical Supervision Training Course – a professional training for qualified counsellors – Martin Chester
- Suicide Prevention – Martin Chester & Lisa Britton
- Creative Art - Julie Tappenden
- Certificate in Creative Therapies & Therapeutic Play – Lisa Britton & Martin Chester
- A Bridge too Far – Richard Miller

The following independent group has also continued to run at the Centre:

- Steiner Study Group – facilitated by Julia Kubler and Spencer Christy

During this year the Centre's premises did not have any major repair work done but did have ongoing general redecoration to both the interior and exterior of the building. All work was well managed by Martin Chester who ensured the standard of the premises was well maintained on a regular basis. This also included the sourcing of new comfortable chairs for the Sapphire, Emerald and Topaz therapy rooms. Towards the end of the year we also had a new boiler fitted to the Topaz Room.

Summary

The Centre Director, Nicole Joyce, is grateful to all staff members for all their dedication and for providing a high standard of work and commitment at all times to the LIFE-FORCE Organisation as a whole.