

Annual Report January to December 2020

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 and 2020. The School was taken over in 2019 by Katrina Fassnidge who is the Course Director and Placement Co-ordinator. Nicole Joyce continues to provide consultancy support and a policy development service for the School.

Professional Body

LIFE-FORCE Centre 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

It is also important to start this summary by including a brief review regarding the Covid-19 situation. The Centre originally did have to close 24th March which resulted in the start of providing a remote counselling service, either by telephone or video, to those clients who wanted counselling support via these media. However, the Centre then developed a Covid-19 Policy according to government guidelines and this document can be viewed on our website. The implementation of this policy along with the fact we provide an essential mental health and emotional support service to vulnerable adults meant we were able to reopen towards the end of May. We are still providing remote counselling to those clients who need this way of working but we have found the majority of clients prefer to come into the Centre for face-to-face sessions. Whilst like all businesses the pandemic has had a big impact on our productivity and continues to do so, we have found a gradual recovery started to take place from May onwards once the Centre reopened.

During this period the office was closed to visitors and the office staff ran the Service from home for the remainder of the year. This quieter period gave the office to update our systems and review various policies and procedures. We aimed to make the best use of a quieter time and feel we did the best we could during what continues to be a difficult situation for everyone.

As the Centre approached the end of 2020, the Counselling Service incorporated 25 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 no Team Counsellors gained individual BACP accreditation.

This unprecedented situation did cause some Team Counsellors to review their counselling practises which resulted in Caroline Benham, Julie Bloom, Lisa Britton, Angela Brooke, Paula Pickford, Richard Miller and Mel Skeet sadly leaving the team after many years of dedicated service. We wish them well in all their future professional and personnel endeavours. However, the Service did recruit one new member this year Leonie Holmes, who is willing to provide therapeutic counselling at reduced fees whilst gaining qualified clinical experience. This helped to ensure 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 February our Counselling Service Assistant Angie Crowley left to peruse other career opportunities but the Centre was fortunate to recruit Sarah Paul who fitted this role perfectly and is an asset to the client referral team. Unfortunately due to the Covid-19 situation Rosie Elgar left the company and Sarah's role, which would of normally involved her working 3 afternoons per week on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, had to be put on hold. While the office was closed to visitors we continued to run the Service from home which meant staff were able to take new client referrals in over the phone and deal with general enquiries.

Louise Newland our Clerical Administrator who joined the office team February 2018 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 handbooks.

The Service commissioned a new bespoke electronic Appointment Register that was developed specifically to meet the requirements of our previous paper system. This new system was launched during the Summer and has enabled a more efficient record keeping process.

One of our main changes this year in March was the launch of an electronic Counselling Enquiry Form that was developed by our web designer Juergen Neuhoff who created a bespoke form to specifically meet the needs of the Service. This new way of being able to access the Service, online via our website, has proved to be extremely successful with the majority of new clients now using this electronic form. This new system also enabled the office to provide a more efficient referral process. Our web developer also created an online Client Feedback Form for the Service which was launched in October and now means clients can now provide feedback on the Service electronically via the website or can continue to do this in hard copy as before if they prefer.

The School developed its own website which was launched in September which meant the Centre was then able to develop and reorganise our own website. This included the creation of a dedicated Client Area wherein the new Counselling Enquiry Form and Client Feedback Form are now located adjacent can be accessed by Service Users. Also, additional policies and information has been added including the development of the links page which enables signposting to other local organisations that provide mental health and community support. Development of our web site pages is ongoing and will continue into next year.

Previously each year during the spring, all Team Counsellors were required to attend an annual Team Counsellor Meeting during which they share an interesting CPD activity they have undertaken during the last year. However, unfortunately due to the pandemic these meetings have been permanently suspended but the Service will be developing alternative online training in due course. The aim of the training will be to keep all Team Counsellors up to date with any development of the Service's policies and procedures. This will cover important topics including Health & Safety, Risk Management, Equal Opportunities and Data Protection which are all a BACP Accredited Service requirement.

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 or a student counsellor within a week of having contacted the Service. 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 Life-Force School of Counselling continued to be run by Katrina Fassnidge. The School's course training programme is still held at LIFE-FORCE Centre however due to the pandemic the training had to be delivered online. We hope the tutors and students will be able to resume face-to-face training in due course. Nicole Joyce continued to be involved as Course Consultant and was pleased to be able to support the School and Katrina in the second year of 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 and to be facilitated online.

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 Stage 4 Saturday cohort was delivered by Nileema Conlon Vaswani and Tobie Glenny. The School recruited two new Stage 4 course tutors Sarah Swinn as Course Leader and Heather Lewis as Co-Tutor who took over the delivery of the Sunday Diploma cohort.

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, this course was cancelled due to the pandemic.
- Gestalt in Action 3 day training – delivered by Ari Badaines Ph.D., this course was cancelled due to the pandemic.

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 - cancelled
- Clinical Supervision Training Course – a professional training for qualified counsellors – Martin Chester
- Suicide Prevention – Martin Chester
- Certificate in Creative Therapies & Therapeutic Play – Lisa Britton & Martin Chester – cancelled
- A Bridge too Far – Richard Miller & Martin Chester

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

- Steiner Study Group – facilitated by Julia Kubler and Spencer Christy, some of these meetings took place but mostly had to be cancelled.

During the 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. The management used the time to carry out some essential building maintenance and repairs during lock down. All the 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 reupholstering of the Amber, Coral and Amethyst Room chairs and decorating the Topaz Room and Office plus the refurbishment of the downstairs toilet and foyer.

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.