



## REPORT FOR HENLEY TOWN MEETING

9<sup>th</sup> April 2015

The past year has been increasingly busy for Riverside, with the number of counsellors rising from 18 to 21. They now see more than 60 clients a week, working from rooms at the Friends' Meeting House, CAB and HVB in Henley. Last year we also started seeing clients in Wallingford to meet the needs of clients living further away.

In September, Riverside launched a new branch of our service called "The Space", aimed specifically at young people aged from 12 – 20+. This is run by a highly trained Child & Adolescent Psychotherapist who has a wealth of experience in both the NHS and the voluntary sector. There is a particularly urgent need for child and adolescent counselling in our area due to the underfunding of the NHS and cuts affecting the provision of mental health care.

We are committed to providing affordable counselling, but everyone pays something toward their sessions because it has been proved time and again that people value and gain more benefit from a service that they have paid for, however small that amount. Even though our counsellors donate their time, it is still expensive to run a charity and we rely on fundraising to ensure that our service remains viable and that we can continue to offer subsidised places.

Riverside was very pleased to be chosen as one of the Living Advent Calendar's charities last year and we enjoyed taking part in the events throughout Henley in December. Our fundraisers organised a very successful fashion show at the Quince Tree in November and a Spring Lunch at The French Horn last month. In addition, we held a 10-week Introduction to Counselling course, led by Teresa Johnstone, who is our Chair of Trustees and also a university lecturer. This proved so popular that we are planning to run it again in September. We also offer training sessions and workshops, which are open to other professional counsellors in the community.

All these activities not only raise much needed funds, but also help to increase our profile in the community and raise awareness of mental health problems. Most families are touched by mental illness in some way, but not all have access to the help they need. Riverside has been meeting that need in our community for over 25 years.

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Director and Clinical Lead

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