



REPORT FOR THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

6TH April 2017

Riverside Counselling Service has had another very busy year, with the number of counselling hours increasing from 80 to over 100 a week. We have taken on 4 new counsellors to bring our total to 29, but are currently having to recruit still more owing to the ever-increasing number of requests we receive for counselling. This brings its own problems in terms of premises – without a building of our own, we are constantly looking for appropriate, affordable counselling rooms.

As a charity, we offer an affordable service and all clients pay something towards the cost of their counselling. Our counsellors give nearly all of their time unpaid, but we still need to rely on grants, trusts and support from local organisations and businesses to meet our costs. This past year we have been very fortunate to receive money from Henley Town Council, Thamesfield Youth Association, Stuart Turner and the John Hodges Trust in Harpsden. In addition, we have just learned that Riverside has been awarded a grant from the South Oxfordshire District Council to consolidate and expand our work in the county. We were also very pleased to be chosen as one of the Mayor's charities this year.

The Space – our counselling service for young people – is growing in both size and reputation. This year we offered a 9-week mindfulness course at Gillott's School for Year 9's, which was so well received that we have been asked to run the course again. The teachers have also requested mindfulness training so that they can adopt a whole-school approach. Becky Saunders, our Clinical Lead for The Space, has been talking to local schools and organisations to explore further possibilities for working together. In addition, we attend community events such as the Music on the Meadows festival, which gives us the opportunity to talk to young people about our counselling service. Riverside also took part in the Henley Christmas Festival and the Living Advent Calendar this past year.

We value the good relationships we have established in the community, working with local schools, charities, organisations and government to provide a service tailored to local needs. We also work hard to raise awareness about the importance of mental health and to try to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness. For the third year in a row we have offered our very popular 10-week Introduction to Counselling course.

Our fundraisers were hard at work as usual, organising the Annual Tennis Day last June and a wonderfully glamorous and successful Glitter Ball in November. They are planning an even more spectacular ball this year with a Great Gatsby theme.

We are grateful for the strong support we receive from our local community, which enables us to offer a high quality, affordable counselling service that can make such a difference to people's lives.

Hilary Arthur
Director and Clinical Lead

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