



University of
Nottingham

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Annual Report 2018-19

University Counselling Service



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Executive Summary

- 2348 clients (students and staff) seen, an increase of 10% on 2017/18.
- Over 8400 appointments were offered and attended during the academic year
- 6% of total student population accessed counselling, up 0.5% on 2017/18.
- 3% of University staff accessed the service; a slight decrease on 2017/18.

Of the 2348 individual clients:

- 39.7% attended for 1 appointment only
- 21.1% attended 2 appointments
- 35.3% attended for between 3-8 appointments

Groups and workshops programme

70 workshops were offered on University Park and Sutton Bonington campuses. 365 students attended the workshops. Tailored workshops were offered on the Derby campus for Health Sciences students.

Therapy groups

4 short term (8 weeks), and 4 long term (year-long) therapeutic counselling groups were provided at University Park.

Pilot groups and workshops offered:

- Film as Therapy
- Writing as therapy
- Dance for health and wellbeing
- Living with dyslexia
- Creative stress management

Support groups

The University Counselling Service provided consultation support and guidance to individual Schools and Departments following critical incidents and events affecting staff groups and individuals in staff teams.



Head of Service report

The University Counselling Service has had another very busy year which saw an overall increase in the number of clients using the service and a growth in our involvement in a wide range of psychological support and institution-wide health and wellbeing activities of benefit to the university community as a whole. This has included workshops for students and staff on use of the outdoors as a resource for maintaining good health, seminars and presentations to faculty staff and students, weekly mindfulness workshops throughout the year and involvement in the development of the University's Health and Wellbeing strategy.

The completion of construction work on the Teaching and Learning building has meant that there has been no disruption to scheduled activity in and around The Orchards.

The University Counselling Service (UCS) team has:

- provided a safe, secure confidential space on all campuses. This has involved re-location to a new space on Jubilee campus. We also used a short-term additional space on University Park for Open Desk appointments;
- offered in excess of 8400 appointments in this academic year;
- devised and offered an extensive groups and workshops programme informed by student demand;
- reduced the average waiting time for first appointments since last year by one day to 7.2 working days;
- shown an average increase in satisfaction ratings
- developed stronger links with the Students' Union and the Careers and Employability Service
- liaised with and contributed to staff health and wellbeing initiatives and events

Response to demand

Since 2015, UoN has seen a year on year increase in demand for counselling support and has endeavoured to meet this demand with the resources available, seeing on average 5% more clients each year, with an overall increase of 9.05% of clients using the service.

Between the academic years 2010-2018, an average of 21.7% of students and 36.2% of staff accessing the service had been seen before. Data for this year shows that 23% of clients seen this year had used the service in previous years.

Factors contributing to the increase in numbers:

- the de-stigmatisation of access to psychological support
- the perception of the service as a trustworthy reliable and integrated provision within the University
- the continuing increase in sector demand nationally.

The overall averages could also have arisen due to the impact of institutional changes and other socio-political factors.

Review

On reviewing our plans for 2018-2019, detailed in the 2017-18 annual report, I can report that we have been successful in completing or substantially meeting all of our targets. This is due to the hard work, commitment and dedication of all in the Service team.

- We were successful in recruiting a small bank of sessional counsellors; this additional resource enabled us to manage the peak period of demand more effectively and it is our intention to repeat this strategy.
- We hosted an externally facilitated CPD workshop with delegates attending from De Montfort and Newman Universities.
- Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) focus has been on improving our understanding and awareness through Service enquiry and professional development training. This will continue into the next academic year. Our prioritisation of this issue has been strengthened by the content of the recently published institutional EDI strategy document alongside our EDI committee meeting with the PVC Sarah Sharples on 14 March 2019.
- We have experimented with a termly UCS blog, hosted on our website, which we hope to improve on over the next academic year

Open Desk

- We successfully piloted 'Open Desk' appointments to students during February - April 2019, a predictable period of high demand. Open Desk appointments were designed to meet the self-assessed needs of students requiring some brief face to face psychological support, guidance and signposting to accessible resources that would help to address their problems.
- These appointments were welcomed by students who were, for the most part, in their first or final year with a clear grasp of their specific and short-term problems and needs. It is intended to repeat this provision during 2019/2020.

Student counselling

- Some students seeking counselling help for the first time express surprise and frustration with themselves on discovering that their usual coping mechanisms are working less well or not at all when faced with managing difficulties they may be experiencing in the University environment. An environment which has its own set of additional academic, interpersonal and social demands.
- Our data shows that, the top presenting problems which usually lead a person to seek help are connected to anxiety, low mood, family relationship problems, the full list is shown on page 14. The presenting problems we record are rarely single issues for clients and usually occur in combination.

Groups and workshops

Over the past fifteen years we have provided workshops to address these problems. We encourage students to attend these workshops at an early stage as this may help to prevent difficulties arising, when the problems may be less severe.

- The consistent testimony and positive feedback from those who attend the workshops and groups shows they are helpful. Students regularly say how useful it has been to hear and learn from their peers who are experiencing similar struggles, dilemmas and difficulties to realise it is not just them. Having an opportunity to hear from others and contribute in some way to their learning and support is a powerful experience.
- We aim to enhance this message and knowledge about our programme through our links with colleagues in Student Service Centres, Academic Support teams and the Students' Union and where possible to work with them in the delivery of the workshop materials.

Staff counselling

The provision of an on-site counselling service for staff is important, particularly as it enables staff to attend during working hours. For some, this is the only way that they can access much needed support because of their personal circumstances and caring roles.

- This year there has been a slight decrease in the number of staff attending for counselling. Staff tend to use the service on an intermittent basis over the period of time of their employment.

Bereavement groups

- We have offered and held a number of support and reflection groups for the university community as the need has arisen and on request. We recognise the importance of this provision as one which enables students and staff to access support together and receive information and signposting about other services that are available locally and nationally.

Internal liaison

- Staff of the Counselling Service continue to attend termly meetings with Cripps medical health professionals and the Mental Health Advisory Team.
- Team members delivered training and reflection sessions for student support staff as well as providing a termly Staff Supporting Students Forum.
- The Head of Service attends Senior Tutor Network meetings and the Administration Coordinator attends Student Welfare Network meetings to provide updates on counselling provision as well as receiving and disseminating information for circulation to UCS team members
- The Service has contributed to the development of the University Health and Wellbeing strategy. The Head of Service has attended the development meetings throughout.
- The Head of Service presented to the Education & Student Experience committee meeting and participated in the development of the strategy.

Changes and developments

■ International Students' Support Group

Since January 2019 we have seen the successful establishment of a group for International students led by Jane Titterton, which has been an important source of support for International students in unsettled times.

■ Managing depression group

This group continues into its second year meeting monthly, it is successful and is well used by students.

■ Being Outdoors workshops

These began in 2017 and were originally offered separately to students and staff, both showing increased take-up. A growing interest in the positive effects of being outdoors as a way of maintaining and restoring health has played a part in the increase in attendance.

Staffing

Mel Wright left the Counselling Service after 17 years. Mel decided to pursue work as an independent practitioner with a specialism in Mindfulness practice teaching, an interest which stemmed from her work in the service.

- We have been successful in appointing three new counsellors bringing our FTE to 10.61. The newly appointed staff were all in post by December 2018 adding much needed additional resources to the team as well as new areas of knowledge and experience.

Training and work experience

- We have provided a substantial advanced training placement to two counsellors with successful outcomes for both in terms of their progress towards application for professional accreditation. We have also provided clinical supervision for one advanced practitioner towards their post-qualification doctoral studies.
- These activities facilitate important links with training organisations and mutual information exchange about current developments in counselling and psychotherapy. A further advantage is that the placements offer additional counselling hours to the Service.

Ningbo China campus links

- Regular communication between the Heads of Service in Nottingham and China continues. This link is particularly useful in sharing good practice and learning about national developments relevant to counselling. Rob Sharp, one of our counsellors, provides monthly clinical supervision to a UNNC counsellor. We were visited by Patti Wallace, Head of University Counselling Service UNNC, in July 2019 as part of her professional contacts with other colleagues on the Nottingham campus.

Higher Education links and visits

- Deputy VC Professor Andy Long – September 2018
- Head of Service was part of an interview panel at Trinity College Dublin in October 2018.

- Visit from Dominic Kingaby from the Department for Education's Widening Participation and Student Experience whose special interests are in wellbeing, diversity, inclusion and counselling. – November 2018
- Head of Service attended a Careers and Employability Forum - November 2018

Contributions to research and academic scholarship

Morris-Roberts, K., 2019. *Being Outdoors at University*. September 2019 Edition: BACP UC Journal

Continuing professional development

The following training qualifications have been successfully completed by members of our team:

Daniel Pitt –Diploma in Therapeutic group work facilitation

Jane Hoddinott and Val Watson – Mental Health First Aid training course

Maya Gagni – Online Skills Counselling Diploma

Head of Service conference presentations and activities

- Val Watson - **Policy Foresight- Student Safeguarding and Wellbeing: Transforming Mental Health Provision in Universities and Colleges** 'Embedding a holistic and joined up approach to mental health provision. 27 March 2019
- **Oxford Prospects and Global Development Centre- 1st China-UK University Student Support and Counselling Service Conference.** 'Specific Psychological Challenges of Chinese and International Students.' 7 June 2019.

University of Nottingham activities

- November 2018 Midlands3Cities Doctoral Partnership Post-Graduate Mental Health Conference: Perfectionism 'How trying to be perfect may damage your health'
- May 2019 'Minding the mind' –Supporting your mental health at work
- Head of Service observed a Special Considerations panel in the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences

Plans for the academic year 2019-20

- Encouraging greater use of digital technologies and continuing to work on the possibilities for further developments in this area with regard to the development of UCS produced online resources supporting our workshops.
- We have applied for BACP service accreditation and await the outcome.
- Trialling an outcomes measurement tool (OpenFIT) which has an emphasis on monitoring and responding directly and promptly to clients' feedback on their functioning and their experience of counselling sessions.
- The Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences (FMHS) are providing funding for two years for 1.0 FTE counsellor(s) based at FMHS placement locations specifically for their students. This is to be jointly recruited and managed by the FMHS and UCS.
- Appointment of equivalent of 1.0 FTE permanent counsellor(s)

- Co-ordinating a clear programme of outreach work within the university
- Developing and maximising use of digital resources within the Counselling Service including the potential for online counselling
- Giving attention to professional development and welfare of team members
- Aligning the Service with university EDI policies and plans whilst continuing work on EDI training and delivery within the UCS team and developing initiatives as they emerge.
- To consider possibilities for recruiting student ambassadors for counselling.

Service challenges for 2019-20

- To continue to be a consistent and responsive service in the face of increasing demand.
- To continue to be observant of and sensitive to the needs of the university community
- To make efficient use of all of our resources
- To make effective use of the quantitative and qualitative data obtained to improve service delivery
- Find further ways of encouraging initiatives to help prevent problems developing e.g. workshops, staff training input
- To further develop effective internal and external support partnerships
- To contribute to the University's Suicide Prevention policy
- To monitor and seek to decrease the number of late cancellations and no shows

Our goal as a Service is to deliver the best possible counselling service to the University community making full use of the resources available. The increase in staffing this year and the provision for next year will enable the Service to continue to meet this objective.

My thanks to all our hard working colleagues in the Service for their energy commitment, innovation and willingness so often to go the extra mile to provide timely therapeutic support to our students and staff.

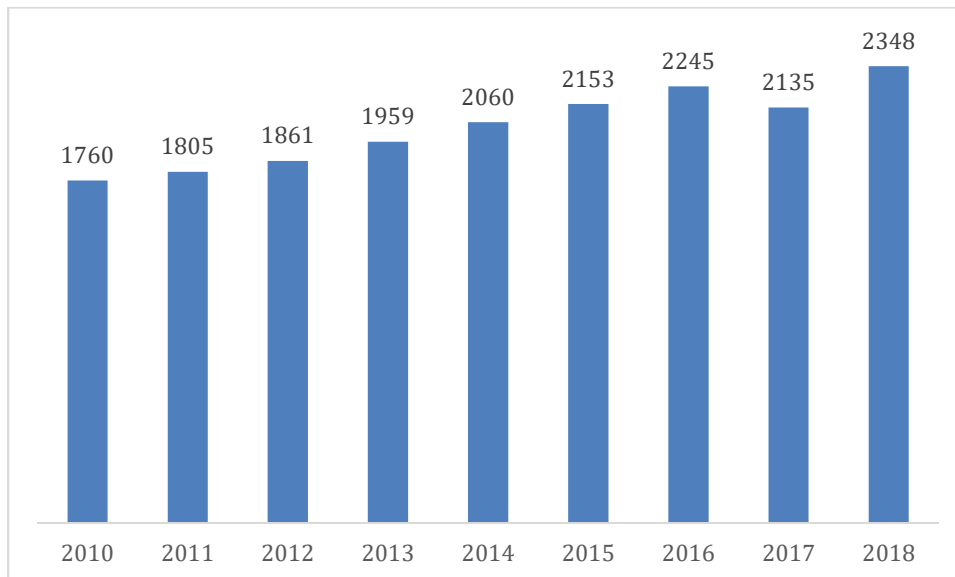
Thanks also to our support partner colleagues in all areas of the University and in our other professional external relationships who form part of the integrated system that facilitates the growth and health of the University community and the continuing progress of the University Counselling Service.

Val Watson
 Head of University Counselling Service
 October 2019

Statistics

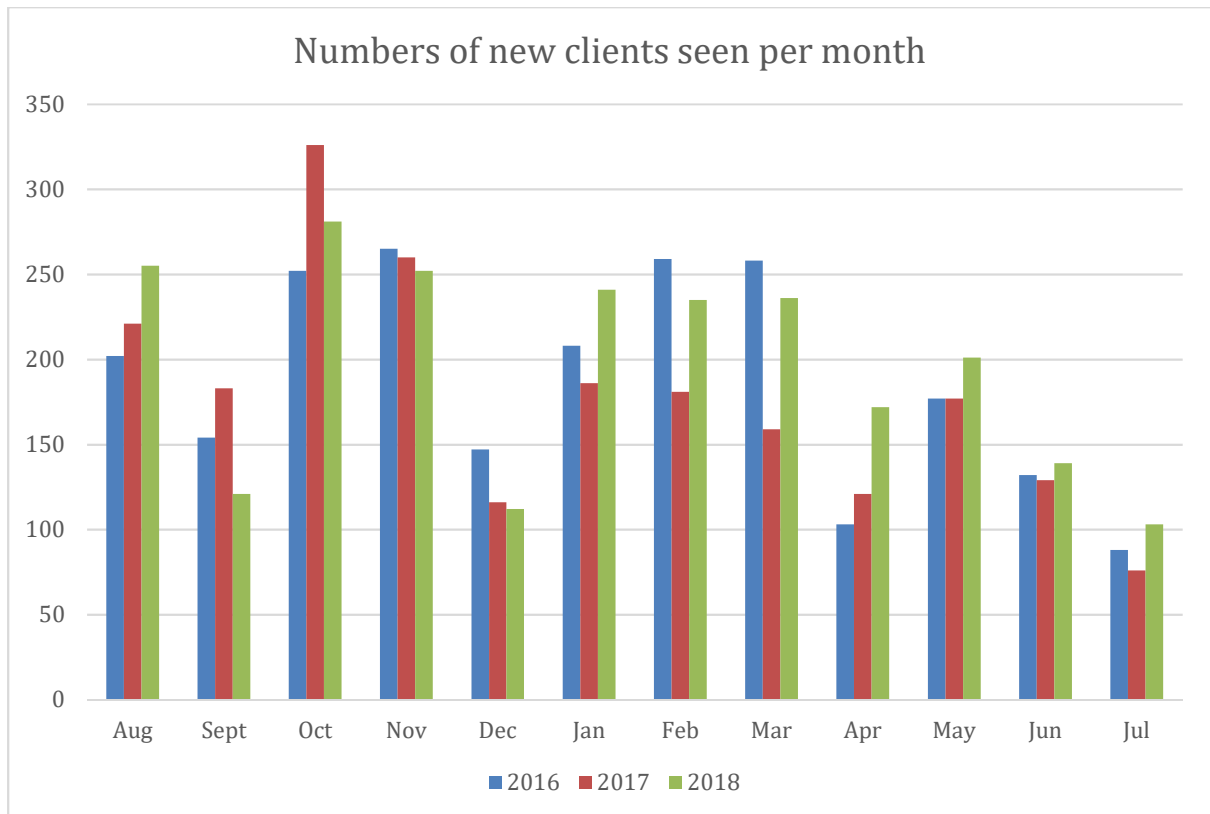
The statistics reported in this section are drawn from comprehensive data recorded for each student and member of staff who contacted the University Counselling Service (UCS) and attended at least one appointment. We also collect parallel data for students who attend our therapeutic groups and workshops, and these statistics are included in the groups and workshops section of the Annual Report.

Numbers of clients registered

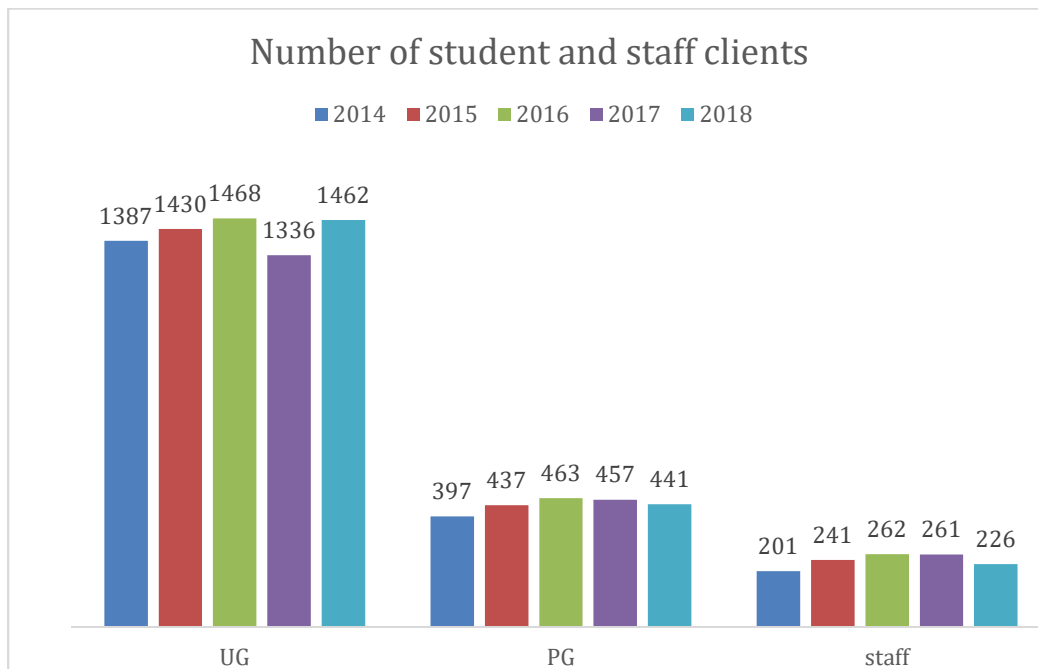


UCS registered 10% more clients than last year, and 5% more than 2016. Registrations were down in 2017, due to several operational reasons, but UCS was back at full capacity by the beginning of the 2018 academic year.

UCS registers new and returning clients throughout the academic year.



We recorded demographic and presenting issues information from 2132 of our clients, 90% of the total registered.



As in previous years, the data collected confirms that students from all Schools and Departments use the Service, and the proportions of mature, international and postgraduate students seen were similar to previous years and representative of these groups in the University of Nottingham general student population.

University staff members account for 11% of UCS clients (226 people in total, approx. 3% of the staff population, based on the 2017 staff head count). It is important and encouraging that staff from all areas of the University use the Service.

Male clients continue to be under-represented in our client population. Just under a third of UCS clients were male, whereas male students and staff comprise approximately 47% of the University population.

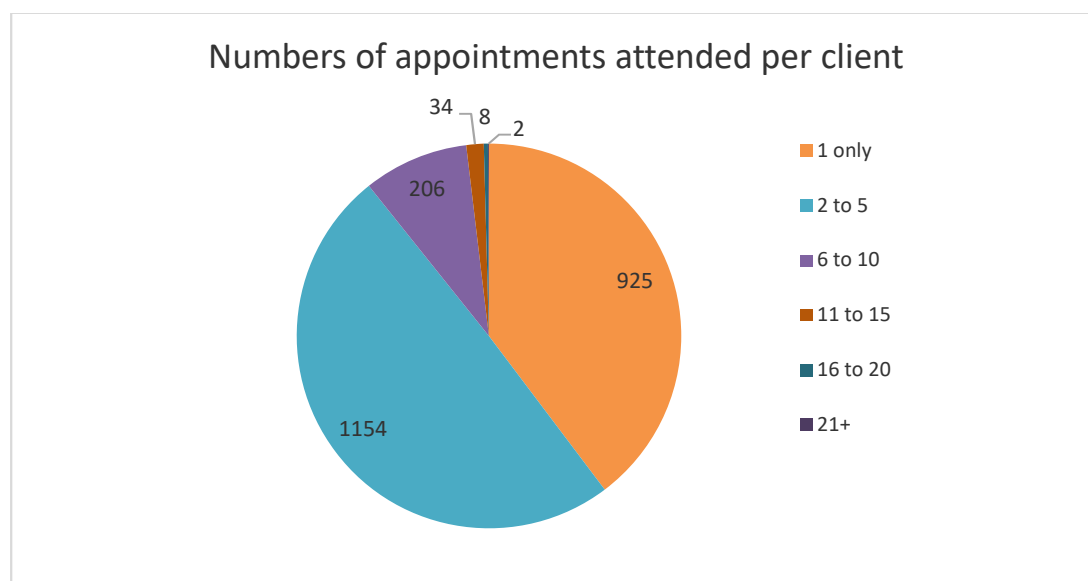
Waiting times

The average waiting time between scheduling an appointment and the date the appointment was offered/accepted was 7.2 working days for a total of 2206 initial appointments, a day less than last year.

UCS continues to offer a variety of ongoing contracts following assessment. These include follow-up appointments and regular weekly or fortnightly appointment counselling sessions. The median waiting time for 1287 client contracts was the same as last year at 3 weeks. Some clients are offered intermittent appointments; these are not included in waiting time calculations.

Number of appointments offered

UCS offered a total of 8455 individual appointments, 6452 (77%) of which were attended. 845 (11%) of these appointments were offered at our satellite sites, with similar attendance rates.



40% of clients attended for one appointment only. This group represents those for whom a single session was sufficient to help them resolve or manage their situation, those who were referred to another appropriate source of help, either within UCS (a group or workshop) or external to the University, and those who were offered additional appointments but only attended for one. There is always a proportion of students who attend UCS for one appointment only to request extenuating circumstance evidence.

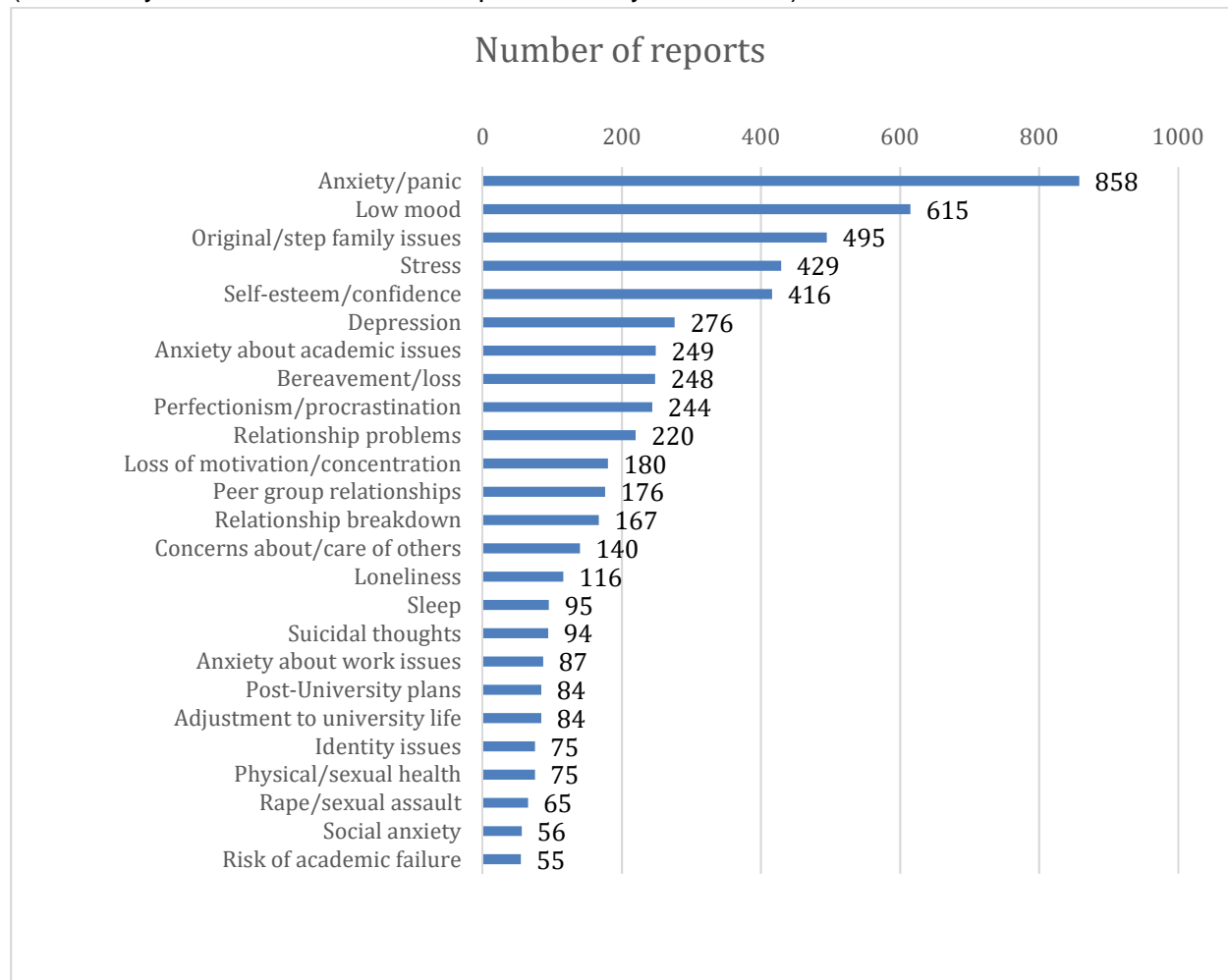
50% of clients came for between two and five sessions. This is a combination of those who came for short term therapeutic work which provides an opportunity to work through moderate emotional and psychological problems and those, mostly students, who attend for intermittent appointments spaced out during the academic year with the aim of maximising the effect of counselling in support of their academic study.

2% of clients (44 individuals) were seen for more than 11 sessions. The pressure of demand means that this extended work is only offered to those with more serious concerns. We believe that it is important to continue to offer this where needed.

UCS also offered 7 different counselling groups this year. In total 1012 group appointments were offered, with an attendance rate of 67%.

Presenting problems – a summary

(There may be more than 1 concern presented by each client).



Anxiety/panic continues to be the most recorded presenting problems by UCS clients, and this year there were notable increases in clients reporting problems with sleep and with post-university plans.

The numbers of clients reporting rape/sexual assault is similar to last year at 65.

We added a new category this year, Affected by suicide and this was reported as a problem 30 times.

Alison Hammond
Statistics Lead

Client feedback

Highlights

- 85% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the counselling they received, up from 82% last year and an increase of 11% since 2016-17.
- 86% were satisfied or very satisfied with the administrative aspects of the service, which is the same as last year.
- 72% of staff and 67% of student respondents said that counselling had improved their overall well-being significantly or very significantly compared to 78% and 60% respectively in 2017-18.
- 58% of staff respondents said the counselling was “an important factor” or “the most significant factor” in helping them stay at work or get back to work. This is a 10% increase compared to 2017-18.
- 52% of student respondents said that counselling was “an important factor” or “the most significant factor” in improving their overall experience of university compared to 53% last year.

How are we doing?

All students and members of staff who attend at least one appointment at the University Counselling Service are asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire via SurveyMonkey© within a month of their counselling ending. In 2018/19, 2894 requests to provide feedback were sent out and 374 responses were received, giving a response rate of 13%. This confirms the year-on-year trend of a fall in the percentage of clients willing to respond to each request for feedback (down 1% compared to 2017-18 and 5% compared to 2016-17).

Overall, however, the number of individual clients providing feedback at least once in the academic year has increased. We saw a total of 2348 clients during 2018/19, which means that 16% of our clients gave us feedback, compared with 11% in 2017-18. It is likely that the fall in the overall response rate in contrast with the rise in the number of clients completing the survey at least once is largely attributable to the growth in intermittent counselling contracts this year. This has meant that more clients have been asked to provide feedback on more than one occasion over the past year.

Client satisfaction rates have risen significantly over the last two years, showing an 11% increase in 2018-19 compared to 2016-17. We review all SurveyMonkey© feedback on a regular basis so that we can manage requests for a response and react to any emerging trends.

This year we added a question to help us identify how clients first become aware of the University Counselling Service. The responses highlighted that more clients hear about us via our website than through any other means. The second most common route is through GP referral, closely followed by friend or tutor recommendation.

Here is a small selection of the feedback we have received:

My counsellor was just wonderful. Completely understood me and helped enormously.

The counsellor was very helpful and insightful. She helped me think of solutions and actions to take which were extremely effective.

Service is easy to access, flexible and responsive to individual needs. The counsellor was open approachable and understanding. I certainly did not feel judged as a member of staff. I have shared my experience with close colleagues and spoken extremely positively about the experience. Some time away from the pressures of home and work to think things through has been invaluable and I suspect I would have had time off sick without this support

The [counsellor] I spoke to was very friendly and approachable, and I felt like she really listened to what I was saying, without any judgement..... this was a major factor for me that made me feel very comfortable in my sessions.

Especially satisfied, it has enabled me to feel more optimistic about my future and has improved my self-esteem. In addition, counselling has also made me aware of additional routes out of my issues and problems that I'm dealing with.

My counsellor has been an incredible support in helping me get through a hugely difficult situation. I can't say how thankful I am for his support. This service has been absolutely critical for me.

It has been extremely helpful.....to have someone to validate, rationalise and explain your thoughts and feelings, with such compassion and thoughtfulness.

The Service's communication and administrative aspects seem well organised, thorough and respectful of privacy. Staff were always accommodating and helpful.

I'm so grateful for the patience, compassion and sensitivity shown by my counsellor and the other staff too in my time at the University Counselling Service. The counselling I received truly helped me through a really tough year and started me off on the journey of self-healing. I could not have asked for a better mentor/guide or counselling experience.

Sarah Olds
Feedback Coordinator

Counselling provision at other campuses

In addition to the service based at 'The Orchards', the University Counselling Service provides individual counselling (and occasional workshops) to students and staff at Jubilee Campus, Sutton Bonington Campus and the School of Medicine and Health Science at Derby Royal Hospital.

These services mainly serve the student / staff community on site, but the option of counselling at the satellite sites is also available to staff and students who are on placement, who live nearby, or who wish to access counselling away from their place of work on fixed days of the week.

Four of our counsellors from the team at UCS provide regular counselling support to students who are studying and living on or near these campuses.

Each of these counsellors uses their specialist knowledge, links with the Schools and faculties, and also with student support staff, to ensure that students studying there can access support with counsellors who understand some of the issues that typically occur on their courses and the challenges that they face whilst at University.

Counsellors from the team at UCS who work on other campuses have termly support meetings with the Deputy Head of Service to discuss issues specific to working away from University Park.

Last year we delivered a programme of workshops at Sutton Bonington, delivered at times identified by students as being the most accessible, on subjects such as healthy sleep routines, perfectionism and mindfulness.

We provided workshops for PGCE students based at Jubilee in December 2018 on Perfectionism and Creative Stress Management.

Our International Students' Support Group also took place on Jubilee campus for the first two months of its launch.

We hope to extend our workshop provision to Derby Royal Education Centre in the coming year.

There were two months of disruption to our Jubilee campus provision when our room was converted into an Athena SWAN Parenting Room. Fortunately we could see Jubilee clients on University Park until new accommodation was made available.

Going forward

UCS has also been working with the University of Nottingham Medical School to appoint two counsellors to work at placement locations where medical students are based. These posts are designed to ensure equitable provision of support to medical students who might otherwise not be able to access counselling or counselling workshops whilst they are on placement.

Lucy Halberstam
Deputy Head of Service

Therapeutic Groups

Group work forms a significant part of the therapeutic intervention we offer in the Service and is accessed primarily by internal referral from counsellors. Groups provide support for students who would benefit from regular meetings and the support of other group members, who offer understanding, support and different perspectives.

In addition to these scheduled groups, the Service also offers one-off groups to sections of the University which experience a critical incident, such as a sudden bereavement.

This year has seen a consolidation of the existing groups' programme, with some new initiatives also being piloted.

A number of different types of therapeutic groups are offered, which vary in their themes, regularity and the demographic of attendees. The groups that currently run regularly are: -

- Managing Relationships Group: twice yearly for a term
- Managing Depression: monthly group evolving from the workshops run on the same theme
- Open Groups: two groups running throughout the year, weekly during term time and intermittently in the vacations
- Men's Group: once a year in the summer term
- International Students' Support Group: a new group trialled this year, which started as an eight week programme and evolved into a monthly workshop.

"Initially I was very dubious about attending a group of this kind, but after the first couple of sessions I looked forward to them more and more. I enjoyed going to a place where people listened intently to one another, and all tried to grow together over the six weeks, by offering genuine and honest advice and feedback, never with any judgement. The whole process was extremely cathartic and although after the sessions I was sometimes left feeling weighed down and a bit deflated, throughout the rest of the week I felt a sense of relief having discussed some of the things on my mind".

Men's group participant

Future plans

To accommodate the possibility of further new group pilots and maintain space for one-to-one counselling provision, the Service has agreed to reduce the number of open groups to one for 2019/20.

Dan Pitt
Groups Coordinator

International Students' Support Group pilot

The International Student Support Group ran its pilot series of groups this year facilitated by Jane Titterton with administrative support from Jane Hoddinott. Two sessions took place before the Christmas break (3rd December and 10th December 2018) and two further sessions took place in January (21st January and 28th January 2019). The pilot sessions ran at Jubilee Campus from 2pm-3.30pm. These initial groups were attended by between 2 - 4 international students. Feedback from the initial sessions was positive and members wanted the group to continue if it was possible to do so.

Following the pilot, monthly sessions were agreed and took place from February 2019 – July 2019. There were 27 referrals to the group this academic year, offers made to 17 students and uptake of these offers by 11 students. Currently we have approximately 6 members attending regularly. Referrals remain open.

Themes explored and discussed have included family relationships, maintaining friendships (both here and at home), grief and loss, social language differences, social and cultural differences and divides in the UK, self-esteem and confidence and the impact of Brexit on relating to home students.

The group will continue for 2019/2020 with monthly meetings on a Monday afternoon. Co-facilitation of the group is being considered.

Jane Titterton
International Students Support Group Facilitator

Workshops

The University Counselling Service offers a comprehensive workshops programme providing students with a range of practical and supportive therapeutic interventions to help them get the most out of their university experience. This year we have increased the number of workshops open to staff in parallel with the growth in university-wide wellbeing initiatives.

Numbers

A total of 365 students and staff have attended our workshops over the past year.

Overview

This year's programme has continued to reflect the fundamental principles of fostering self-care and resilience that underpin all our psychoeducational work with students. With this in mind, we have continued to update the resources we offer to workshop participants, with an increasing focus on student-friendly online content and interactive tools such as apps.

Following the appointment of Lucy Rowley as Deputy Head of Service, Dan Pitt has stepped into the role of groups coordinator alongside Sarah Olds as workshop coordinator. The team has expanded further with Jane Titterton taking on a new role to publicise the groups and workshops to increase awareness and keep pace with the growth of digital communication methods.

Programme developments

2018/19 saw the successful development of several new workshop themes across a range of different venues to increase accessibility and student awareness of our programme. We also introduced a new style of facilitation for our single-session workshops. At the start of each workshop, facilitators asked participants what they would like to get from the session and then, where possible, adapted information, exercises and discussions around these aims to provide a more customised experience. This was generally well-received, with participants commenting that they liked this style of facilitation.

This year we piloted several new workshops:

Film as Therapy and Writing as Therapy

Following the successful introduction of the Being Outdoors workshop, which encourages participants to use nature as a therapeutic resource and has now become an integral part of our programme, this year saw the piloting of these two new workshops aimed at increasing students' awareness of how they can draw on everyday resources to support and enhance their wellbeing. These workshops were well attended, and participant feedback was very positive

Dance for Health and Wellbeing

This was a new initiative for university staff trialled in June, consisting of an hour-long structured movement session taking participants through a 5 rhythms wave, beginning with connecting to the ground, their feet, walking and then dancing. They were then encouraged to move freely to express flow, staccato, chaos and stillness. Feedback showed that the

workshop was very well received. The staff enjoyed the music, the simple unstructured movements and the fact that they could just 'let go' and express themselves.

Drumming

In July we trialled a therapeutic drumming workshop for staff which brought together front-line staff and managers, musicians and beginners, all playing a mixture of drums (Djembes and Congas) and percussions. Each participant explored drumming as a form of communication in their own unique way, finding moments of harmony and moments of dissonance, whilst working together as a team to create a beautiful ensemble of rhythms."

Living with Dyslexia

This was a small-scale pilot aimed at helping participants to look at how their dyslexia affects them in their everyday activities and relationships and to identify their dyslexic strengths. Participants found this experience empowering and a further pilot of this workshop is planned for the next academic year.

Everyday Mindfulness

This was a new six-week programme for 2018-19 scheduled for early evening to improve accessibility and provide consistency for participants wishing to make a regular commitment. Feedback was very positive and this has now become part of the regular programme.

The following workshops introduced in recent years are now firmly embedded within our programme:

Building resilience

This is a popular workshop that has evolved over the last three years from an initial trial. It draws together many of the core themes running across the programme, encouraging participants to prioritise self-care and to reflect on practical changes they can make to improve their overall wellbeing and ability to cope with adversity.

Sleep Better

This year we increased the number of Sleep Better workshops due to the popularity of the format which was first introduced two years ago. The workshop involves a brief analysis of participants' individual difficulties with sleep and looks at a range of practical, research-based strategies and interactive resources for improving sleep patterns.

Breathe Here Now

These drop-in lunchtime meditation sessions workshops open to staff and students became a regular fixture on this year's programme following their popular launch last year. This year also saw the successful pairing of this workshop series with the quarterly Breathe Here Now Outdoors workshops (previously known as Being Outdoors) which are timed to coincide with the change in seasons.

Customised workshops

The number of requests we receive from different university departments for tailor-made workshops has been steadily increasing over the last few years, and now represents a significant proportion of our overall programme. Providing ad-hoc workshops to coincide with specific events and awareness campaigns enables us to reach students who might otherwise find it difficult to attend due to timetable or geographical constraints (such as PGCE, medical and nursing students).

In response to these requests, we have offered a range of additional workshops including creative stress management for PGCE students and interactive question and answer sessions around a range of common mental health difficulties for students in specific faculties. We also facilitated a number of Mindfulness sessions to coincide with University wellbeing initiatives.

Looking ahead

To ensure that we continue to offer relevant workshops at times which are feasible for as many students as possible, we have recently consulted welfare staff and senior tutors as part of our annual workshop review. This has led to several changes for the coming year, including a further increase in the number of evening and lunchtime sessions, and the introduction of a new series of workshops aimed at helping students cope with changes and challenges. Following the successful trialling of several new workshop themes this year, we will be launching a series of workshops offering creative therapeutic experiences and strategies, in addition to a range of workshops designed to support students in the run-up to exams.

Sarah Olds
Workshops Coordinator

Workshops feedback

Highlights

- 82% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the workshop they attended (94% in 2017/18)
- 89% of students said they would recommend the workshop to another student (97% in 2017/18)

Where did respondents hear about the workshop?

UCS Website	33%
University communication	31%
Counsellor recommendation	15%
Other	13%
School or department	11%
Leaflet	8%

There is a slight decrease (down 4%) in the number of students who first become aware of our workshops through our website, in contrast with the data from our individual counselling feedback which highlights the website as the main source of client referrals. The proportion of participants coming to workshops following recommendation from their counsellor has also fallen (down 16% compared to 2017-18) whilst there has been a 16% increase in the referral rate via University communication channels in the same period. It is likely that this reflects our recent drive to promote awareness of our workshops programme through University staff networks, the plasma screens on campus and social media platforms such as Twitter.

Feedback trends

We received feedback from 114 of the 365 participants who attended our workshops. This equals a response rate of 31% (up from 23% in 2017-18) which is significantly higher than the proportion of clients who provided feedback on individual counselling sessions (13%).

An overarching aim for this year's programme was to improve accessibility. We did this by increasing the number of early evening and lunchtime workshops and by reducing the length of most workshops so that they could fit more easily into student timetables. We also expanded the range of workshop venues in order to increase our reach within the student community, and changed our approach to planning workshop content so that we could be more responsive to participant requirements. Overall the feedback we received about these changes was very positive, with many participants keen for us to continue to make the programme more accessible by increasing the number of early evening and Wednesday afternoon workshops.

As in previous years, most students who provided feedback particularly valued the interactive nature of our workshops and the opportunity to share their experiences with others in the group. We have taken into account all the comments received when planning next year's programme.

Selected comments illustrating what participants found helpful:

Breathe Here Now:

I have never tried meditation before and I am pleasantly surprised at how beneficial it was

Taking the time out of a busy day to be able to practice mindfulness

A very helpful and effective relaxation strategy, I am genuinely grateful that the university has organised this event.

I found it particularly helpful talking to other people in a similar situation as me and to see that I wasn't alone in feeling the way I was.

Breathe Here Now Outdoors:

The prompt to stillness and quietness gave time to reflect and did feel very calming.

I thoroughly enjoyed the workshop and found the concept of taking an hour out at the end of a busy term fantastic. The use of the knoll area was great, a perfect sanctuary. Being encouraged to wander off and find something to look at that interested just me was very fulfilling. And I benefited from not being tethered to others.

The chance to get away from my desk for an hour and appreciate the outdoors: the smells, sounds and quietness.

The way I felt afterwards and the rest of the day. Got lots of sleep!

Building Resilience

Talking to a partner about different aspects of resilience and sharing with the workshop leader who provided feedback.

Learning about different negative and positive mindsets

The counsellor made us think more in depth about what resilience actually was

Dance for Health and Wellbeing

Dance and music transcends many barriers and brings people together in a positive way. I liked the unstructured freedom just to dance to music with other people. The chance to do your own thing and not worry about learning a routine and performing was so liberating..... This activity is very inclusive for everyone on lots of different levels. I came away feeling very relaxed and positive.

I liked the music and that everyone went a bit "crazy", so I felt comfortable letting go as well.

Connecting with my body and my emotions through the music. I found it very releasing.

Everyday Mindfulness:

The breath exercise at the beginning and the discussion of feelings when doing activities

I liked the topic about assumptions that we covered I found it particularly helpful and relevant to certain issues I'm having at the moment. The counsellor who runs the session is very friendly and accessible.

Making me feel peaceful

Film as therapy

I loved how intimate and open the session was and how the leader did not pressure us to say anything we weren't comfortable with but was able to encourage conversation openly.

Improve Self-Esteem

Being around other people with similar struggles, feeling like I'm not alone in this regard

The tutors running the session were extremely knowledgeable and encouraging and made it feel like a safe environment to open up.

I really enjoyed all the tricks [the facilitators] taught us about visualising thoughts, fears, feelings, etc. It made me see it in a new perspective.

Managing Anxiety & Stress

The questionnaire to identify the potential source of stress. It was a very relaxing session. It actually calmed me down for the rest of the day. Kudos to the counsellor.

Making mental health a normal topic.

Sharing strategies. Reassuring all have the same thoughts and feelings. Good to hear different coping strategies

Managing Depression:

Amazing counsellor, very good structure to the workshop, the 1.5 hours flew by.

Perfectionism

The instructor was very empathetic and had good advice and tips.

I enjoyed being able to speak and listen to others who struggled managing with their perfectionist traits. It made me feel comfortable knowing I could relate. I also liked the concept of an intention, very useful and I plan to implement it.

It was really helpful to understand the re-enforcing feedback loop between avoidance and anxiety that defines perfectionism. Although I will have to work at it, this knowledge will help me focus my efforts more effectively.

Procrastination

Being able to share and being given strategies to help with my own procrastination issues, identifying feelings surrounding procrastination and causes of it.

Having leaflets with useful information to take home; identifying patterns of thought

Listening to other's people's opinions- sticky notes on the board

Sleep Better

Different things to try out that I didn't know would help

The workshop was very informative, and I particularly like how it was tailored to the specific issues and needs of the people attending.

Writing as therapy

The atmosphere was very soothing and inviting. Being able to discuss what we had written and how we felt about it freely was wonderful. I also loved all of the different writing utensils.

Different writing exercises - meant I could try them out and find what did and didn't work

Sarah Olds
Workshops Coordinator

Staff Supporting Students Forum (SSSF)

This year we had a name change to better reflect what we do. The function of the Forum remains the same: to provide a space where staff in student-facing roles can come together and discuss their work with students experiencing personal and psychological difficulties.

The Forum meets four times a year, usually around the end of each term and at the start of the autumn term. The primary focus is on difficulties brought by students which arouse strong feelings of concern, anxiety or, sometimes, frustration.

Those who attend come from welfare and academic departments of the University. Average attendance is about 14, which allows for safe exploration of the issues and for everyone to have a chance to speak. This year we asked for volunteers to present a “case study” each time and this proved an excellent stimulus to discussion.

Lucy Halberstam and Myra Woolfson
Co-facilitators

Continuing professional development

All counsellors participate in CPD in accordance with the guidelines set out by their relevant accrediting bodies such as UKCP and BACP.

Team members have attended training around a variety of subjects and information is often cascaded to other members of the Service. Themes covered include:

- Post-slavery syndrome
- Intergenerational trauma
- Work with students on the autistic spectrum
- Working with survivors of sexual abuse when there are pending legal proceedings

Three members of the team will be undertaking the University's Sexual Violence Liaison Officer (SVLO) training to become part of the wider University team supporting students who have experienced sexual violence.

In addition to the CPD undertaken by individual counsellors we hold several in-house events each year. We aim to provide training that meets the needs of the Service and offers practitioners the opportunity to explore and reflect on their practice in a supportive and collaborative environment. We try to hold a focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and in particular to recognise the psychological impact prejudice about individual difference can have on a student's life, both academically and personally. One example this year was an event focussed on working with people with non-binary identities.

Another team training event was Assessment for short-term counselling in higher education, led by Terry Patterson, a former head of counselling at Queen Mary, University of London. Staff from other local University Counselling Services were invited to participate.

Staff have also explored working with difficult situations, for example where a client might appear angry or emotionally volatile.

Adrian Langham
CPD Lead

Appendix 1 – Our staff

Current staff – Counsellors

Liz Cowley, BACP Senior Accredited Counsellor
Maya Gagni, BACP Accredited Counsellor, HCPC
Lucy Halberstam, BACP – Senior Accredited, BACP-UC. Deputy Head of Service
Alison Hammond, BACP, UKCP, UKAPI, BACP-UC
Sarah Hinds, BA (Hons), PGDip Counselling, Cert Ed (PCE), BACP
Ira Karakatsani, BA, Cert in Person-centred Counselling, MA in Counselling, Cert Focusing and Psychotherapy, Cert Play Therapy, BACP Accredited counsellor.
Adrian Langham, BACP
Kathryn Morris-Roberts, UKCP
Sarah Olds, BACP-UC, UKCP
Daniel Pitt, UKCP Registered Psychotherapist
Rob Sharp, UKCP, Survivors UK, PTUK
Jane Titterton, HCPC, BPS, AHPRA
Susie Ward, BACP Accredited Counsellor, Occupational Psychologist, HCPC
Val Watson, BACP – Senior Accredited, UKCP, HEA Fellow, RPiO Head of Service
Affiliations: BACP-UC, BAPCA, BACP (Workplace), C&YP, HUCS
Myra Woolfson, UKCP

Current Staff – Reception

Jane Hoddinott
Davina Malcolm
Nicolette Poyzer

Trainee / Placement counsellors

Helen Elliott

Leavers

- Joshua Chandler, Sessional Counsellor
- Rob Manners, Associate Counsellor
- Paloma McMullan, Sessional Counsellor
- Jackie Philippides, Sessional Counsellor
- Mel Wraight, Counsellor

We wish them all the best with their futures.

External activities

Maya Gagni	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equine Facilitated Psychotherapist• EMDR Practitioner
Lucy Halberstam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supervisor for Metanoia trainee
Sarah Hinds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expressive Dance facilitator• Red School Menstruality Mentor
Kathryn Morris-Roberts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• External Examiner to Gestalt Centre London• Equine Assisted Psychotherapist

Sarah Olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nottingham Counsellors Group Training coordinator and committee member and Treasurer
Val Watson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith in Families Social Work Team Consultant-voluntary • Contacts Counselling – supervisor – voluntary • Voluntary external consultant
Myra Woolfson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair of East Midlands University Jewish Chaplaincy Board

Internal roles and activities

Lucy Halberstam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Head of Service • Clinical lead • BACP Accreditation team • Groups and Workshops Coordinator • Staff Support Students Support Forum Co-facilitator • Supervisor for trainees/placement and associate counsellors • Trainee Placement Co-ordinator • Outreach stalls for UCS at Sherwood Institute of Psychotherapy Training (SPTI) and Metanoia Institute. • Outreach stalls at University Park and Sutton Bonington • Open Group Co-facilitator • Outreach workshop / seminar co-facilitator • Co-facilitator of Welfare Officer / MHA supervision sessions
Alison Hammond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Green Button Coordinator • Statistics Lead • Titanium Implementation Team • Team meeting Chair • Outcomes Measures Group
Sarah Hinds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counsellor at Derby Medical School • Outcome measures group • Workshop facilitator • Managing relationships co-facilitator
Jane Hoddinott	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Titanium Implementation Team • Outreach stall at Medical School
Adrian Langham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPD Lead

Davina Malcolm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Safety Officer • DSE Assessor • First aider • Titanium Implementation Team • BACP Accreditation Team
Kathryn Morris-Roberts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead for Breathe Here Now drop in sessions and Being Outdoors • Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee • Stalls: International and UG fresher's fairs
Sarah Olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback Coordinator • UCS Social Committee • Workshops Co-Coordinator • Self-help apps list researcher and updater • Liaison with SB welfare officers • Outreach: SB welcome week, Mental health awareness week, Vet school wellbeing week • Sutton Bonington campus counsellor
Daniel Pitt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Titanium Implementation Team • Groups & Workshops planning meeting chair • Groups & workshops program co-coordinator • Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee • Groups and workshops facilitator • Facilitator: Men's Group
Nicolette Poyzer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Media and Publicity Administrator
Rob Sharp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee Chair • Open Group Co-facilitator • Trainee Placement Co-ordinator • Trainee supervisor • Students' Union Liaison • Hall Tutor training • Supervisor for trainees/placement and associate counsellors • EDISS Committee Meeting • Nightline Staff supervision and training
Jane Titterton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sutton Bonington campus counsellor • Derby campus counsellor • International Student Support Group facilitator • Groups & workshops marketing and social media coordinator • Research (student and academic) network responder

Val Watson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Service • Senior Tutor network • Widening Participation - • BME staff Network Chair • SEDC Committee member • Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee • University Mentor • History of slavery committee member
Myra Woolfson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Support Students Support Forum Co-facilitator • UCS Publications editor

Appendix 2 – Client survey results

The results are from the anonymous hard copy questionnaire

Bookings

How did you find out about the service?

Website	Tutor	Welfare	GP	Other	Other included: MHFA, SSC, staff induction
36%	4%	7%	11%	43%	

“Other” is three-fold increase on last year (13%), with a wider range of sources for both staff and students.

Is this your first appointment at the University Counselling Service

Yes	No
21%	79%

How satisfied were you with your experience of making an appointment for your counselling consultation (CC)?

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Last year all respondents were satisfied or very satisfied.
61%	29%	7%	4%	

We have implemented a new telephone system advising callers where they are in the queue to assist with this.

Environment

Was the waiting area suitable?

Yes	No
93%	7%

How important is it for you to have the Counselling Service located in its own building, away from other Student Services?

Very important	Important	Not very important	Of no importance
73%	19%	4%	4%

Website

Did you use the Counselling Service website?

Yes	No
59%	41%

How helpful did you find the information on the website?

Very helpful	Helpful	Not very helpful	Very unhelpful
24%	70%	6%	

Social Media

Are you aware the Counselling Service uses social media to share information

Yes	No
	100.0%

Workshops and groups

Are you aware that we offer a programme of groups and workshops for students?

Yes	No
73%	27%

Are you aware that any UoN student can attend the workshops whether or not you have had counselling

Yes	No
60%	40%

We provided some free text spaces and some selected responses are provided below.

Booking your counselling consultation

What would make it better?

- Offering an emergency service or on-call service
- If initial appointments could be made online, as telephoning can be daunting
- Faster appointments
- Hiring more counsellors

Environment

What would make the waiting area better?

- Scrap / note paper to organise thoughts
- No paper cups – get plastic ones
- More plants

Website

What would make the website better?

- Specific information for those who have used the service
- More information of what help and support systems are available across the UoN
- Bit clunky to navigate

Groups and workshops

The majority of respondents were aware of our Groups and Workshops programme. There were also suggestions for future topics which will be reviewed as part of the next programme and also highlighted areas to provide additional resources.

Davina Malcolm
Administration Coordinator

Appendix 3 – Abbreviations & acronyms

Appt(s)	Appointment(s)
AHPRA	Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
BACP	British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
BACP-UC	British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (Universities and Colleges)
BAPCA	British Association for the Person-Centred Approach
BPS	British Psychological Society
C&YP	Children and Young People (BACP Division)
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
EDISS	Eating Disorders in Students Services
EMDR	Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing
FTE	Full Time equivalent (36.25 hours)
GP	General Practitioner
GPTI	Gestalt Psychotherapy Training Institute
HCPC	Health and Care Professions Council
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEI	Higher Education Institute
HUCS	Heads of University Counselling Services
IAPT	Improving Access to Psychological Therapies
IGA	Institute of Group Analysis
IPPR	Institute for Public Policy Research
MHAS	Mental Health Advisory Service
NCG	Nottingham Counsellors Group
PTUK	Play Therapy UK
RPiO	Reflective Practice in Organisations
SB	Sutton Bonington campus
SEDC	Staff Equality and Diversity Committee
SU	Students' Union
UCS	University Counselling Service
UEB	University Executive Board
UKAPI	United Kingdom Association for Psychotherapy Integration
UKCP	United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy
UKRC	United Kingdom Register of Counsellors
UNMC	University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus
UNNC	University of Nottingham Ningbo Campus (China)