



Annual Report 2005-06

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Head of Service Report

Introduction

Student services are an integral part of the life and work of a university, and the student experience which these services underpin is of central importance in the environment of the University of Nottingham. The University Counselling Service (UCS) is a specialist provision within this range of services and is a vital component, enabling students and staff to fulfil the primary tasks of learning, teaching and research. The University is engaged in facilitating the maturation of each individual, involving a rich academic and emotional balance, and our Service has an important role to play in relation to this.

"The University Counselling Service has been a lifeline for me and without them I may not have continued at Nottingham. They are excellent." Economics (Student Satisfaction Survey 2005/06)

Mental Health

Mental health reports over the last few years have highlighted a growing awareness of the way in which the pressures on young people can affect their mental health and well being. University students encounter high levels of stress and change, and can be particularly vulnerable to developing psychological or psychiatric difficulties. The importance of effective provision of counselling and psychotherapy in a University setting is increasingly

apparent. A recently published document 'The Depression Report' (*London School of Economics Mental Health Policy Group, June 2006*) details clinical trials demonstrating that for mild and moderate depression 'therapy is as effective as drugs in the short run', and 'in the longer run therapy has more lasting effects than drugs'. Similar results were found with those suffering from anxiety. Our experience is that students want to benefit from the service that we offer, and since they are at period of change in their lives they often respond well when offered appropriate help.

The consistency and quality of our service is central to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students at the University of Nottingham, however good communication with the other University services involved in mental health work is important. Our links with Cripps Health Centre continue to be strong, and a collaborative project has developed during this year involving the health centre, Student Services and the University Counselling Service in working towards establishing a new post of Mental Health Worker. The aim of this post is to provide complementary provision to the services already offered by UCS, Cripps and Academic Support.

For the last twenty six years the University has benefited from the professional expertise of Dr Richard Turner, Consultant Psychiatrist. Richard retired in April 2006, and

this report is a good opportunity to thank him for his years of service to the University, and for his professional support to the University Counselling Service. Richard has been replaced by Dr Fiona Logan, and we look forward to working with her.

Men's Project

We were very pleased to appoint a new counsellor to the team at the start of the academic year. Rob Sharp joined the team as a part time counsellor in October 2005. Rob's joining the service has coincided with the development of a project to increased male student's awareness of mental health issues, and he started work on this project in February 2006 as an addition to his counselling work within the Service. The project was established through funding secured from the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust and its aim is to establish men-only workshops and groups focussing on men's emotional health and wellbeing. Male students often find it hard to ask for help and support in managing their personal, emotional and mental health problems. However young men are at risk of depression and mental illness, and current statistics show that the highest cause of death in young men under 35 in England is suicide. (*Safety first: national confidential inquiry into suicide and homicide by people with mental illness, Appleby et al 2001*).

The project is still in its early stages. Following Rob's appointment as facilitator for this work he researched the views of appropriate staff of the University

and Students' Union to establish a sound foundation for this work. A successful application was made to HEFCE to provide matched funding to allow the project to continue into the academic year 2006/7. In relation to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001 the aim of the project is to reduce the risk of depression and suicide among male students within the University. The University Counselling Service already offers individual counselling to male students. The project aims to offer additional provision in the form of workshops and groups which will hopefully make it easier for male students to access help, receive some structured input and discover that they are not alone in their problems.

Groups and workshops

During the last few years the provision of workshops and groups within the UCS has increased. This work has developed from our belief that joining a group or participating in a workshop is the best form of help for many students. Groups offer an excellent environment in which students can learn about themselves, how they relate to others, and the assumptions that they make about themselves and the world. We all exist in the context of groups, both small and large, and our thoughts, feelings and behaviours are influenced by group dynamics often in ways that we are unaware of.

In the workshops there is structured input from the leaders about particular problems and difficulties. In recognition of the increasing importance of this area

of work within the Service a report on groups and workshops has been included here for the first time. This report has been written by Marion Dillon, the co-ordinator for groups and workshops in the Service, who has specialised training in this area of work.

Accessibility

The University Counselling Service is available to all undergraduate and postgraduate students and to all academic and non-academic staff, and as such complies with equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice. Ruth Kneale, the Service Administrator, and Margaret Tindall, the Receptionist/Secretary, both play a vital role in providing the first point of contact. Clients access the Service either by presenting in person, by phone or email, and during this year our literature and leaflets have been updated to include large font and Braille format. Both Ruth and Margaret are very skilled in responding to students and staff who may be in distress. Together they are crucial to the continuity and smooth running of the Service, providing a very efficient and sensitive presence immediately putting at ease those who contact the UCS.

We continue to offer a consultation service for academic and support staff, particularly those with pastoral responsibilities, and offer advice to schools and departments. Parents often contact us, especially at the start of the academic year, with queries or concerns which we can respond to without breaking confidentiality. We have recently produced a leaflet 'Starting

University: Information for parents of new students' which we send out where appropriate, and this is also available on our website.

Contribution to University life

Although the provision of a specialist counselling service to the whole University community remains our primary function, we contribute to the work of the University in a number of other ways. We are represented on several committees, offer a consultancy service to staff with pastoral responsibilities, contribute to policy development and provide training opportunities for staff. We offer input to institutional policy and procedures to do with mental health and well-being, and contribute specialist knowledge in relation to critical incidents and confidentiality.

Our position within the Registrar's Department allows us to maintain regular contact with colleagues and keep in touch with University developments on a regular basis. I would like to extend my thanks the Head of Student Services, Robin Dollery and to the Academic Secretary, Alan Hart, for their ongoing support for our work. Keith Jones, the Registrar is retiring at the end of 2006. I would like to thank Keith for his interest in and support for the University Counselling Service, which during his years as Registrar has grown into the strong service which it is today. We wish him well in his retirement.

Off-site provision

The work of the Counselling Co-ordinator, Heather Nelson, in offering a service to the School of Nursing has continued to develop during this past year. The provision of a counselling service at the School of Nursing was reviewed during this year as had been planned when Heather was appointed to the newly created post in 2003. The outcome of the review was very positive, and Janet Barker representing the School of Nursing was especially pleased with the support for students who come from widening participation backgrounds.

The provision of counselling at the Sutton Bonington campus has been particularly challenging during the academic year 2005/6 as the accommodation changed, and the whole campus was in transition prior to the opening of the new Veterinary School in September 2006. Anita Bartys played an important role in co-ordinating all the student service provision at Sutton Bonington.

Evaluation

As in previous years a feedback survey was conducted during this last year to help us evaluate our Service. This is an important area of our work enabling us to examine the extent to which we are providing a high quality service that is responsive to the needs of the University community. The primary aim of this exercise is to obtain feedback from clients to help members of the team to reflect on their individual practice and the quality of the Service overall. The

outcome is documented in the client feedback report, prepared as in the last few years by Mel Wraight.

Conclusion

In a report produced by the Royal College of Psychiatrists (*The mental health of students in higher education, 2003*), the authors state 'Higher Education institutions already make considerable provision for the well-being of their students. Almost all have in place sophisticated pastoral and counselling provisions, and there are numerous examples of good practice in identifying and supporting students with mental health problems.'

There is no doubt that over the past few years there have been increasing numbers of students at the University of Nottingham seeking help with mental health problems. We are encouraged that there is a willingness on the part of both students and staff to identify, disclose and seek help for a range of emotional and mental health problems, and we are confident that we provide a sophisticated and appropriate response.

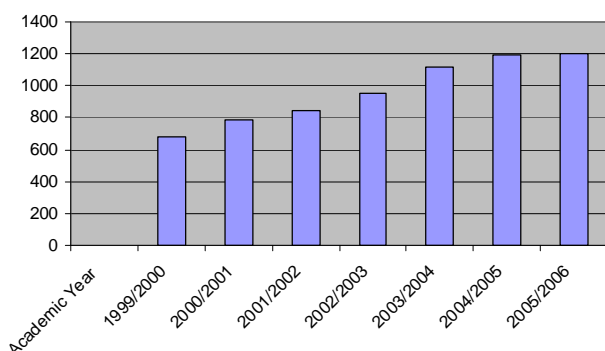
It has been a busy, demanding and challenging year. My thanks are owed to all the team for their hard work, professionalism and skill, and also for their support for me in my role.

Pat Hunt
Head of the University
Counselling Service

Statistics for the academic year 2005 – 2006

The statistics recorded in this section of the Annual Report are drawn from comprehensive documentation of data recorded for each person who contacts the University Counselling Service. The data enables us to reflect on our clinical practice, to report to the University, and to contribute to a national database of statistics of the work of counselling services in HE institutions. Two members of the team have been responsible for processing the statistics this year, Anita Bartys and Alison Hammond.

Total Number of Staff and Students Seen By The University Counselling service

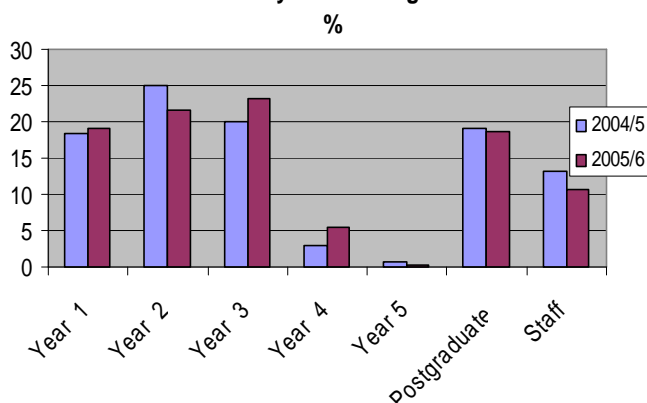


The total number of staff and students seen for individual counselling in 2005/6 was 1201. This is a small increase of 1.7% from the previous academic year when the total was 1180. As the graph demonstrates there was a marked increase in the number of members of the University community being seen in the Service over a six year period between 1999 and 2005.

Of the 1164 staff and students included in the analysis 71% were women and 29% were men. These figures are to be understood within the context of the gender balance within the whole University population. In 2005/6 the student population was 56.6% women and 43.4% men, and in the staff community there were 51.6% women and 48.4% men. The gender imbalance among those who use the Service has remained remarkably constant over the years, and this pattern is consistent with counselling services in other universities and also in the wider community. As described elsewhere in the report we are currently actively exploring ways in which we can make UCS more accessible to male students when they have emotional and psychological difficulties.

As can be seen from the graph below, all sectors of the University make use of the Service, and the different groupings recorded use it roughly in proportion with their numbers within the whole University community. There was a small decrease in the number of staff who approached us last year, 123 in 2005/6 compared with 154 in 2004/5. In the nine years in which the Service has been available to staff as well as students, both academic and non academic staff have used UCS well, and this is a very important area of our work.

Status of University Counselling Service Clients

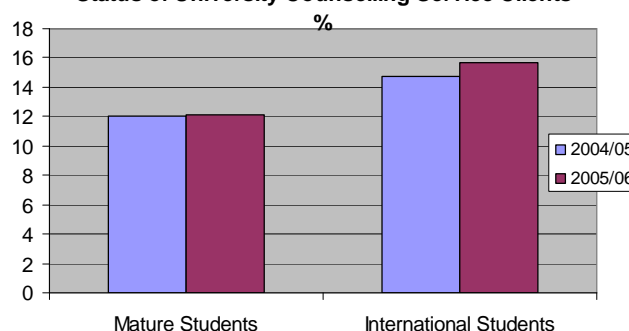


There was a small increase in the proportion of international students using the service from 14.5% in 2004/5 to 15.7% in 2005/6. International students have particular needs, and support for them is a vital component of their education in the UK being successful. Many students come from countries which do not have a well established tradition of counselling and psychotherapy, and the presentations given by the University Counselling Service in the Welcome Week for international students are an important opportunity to inform the students of our presence and what we offer.

Mature students (12.1% in 2005/6) continue to use the service well. We record the School and Department that undergraduate and postgraduate students come from, and the data collected confirms that all Schools and Departments use the Service.

77.7% of the students and staff were seen for the first time, 7.4% were continuing counselling from the previous year and 14.9% had been seen previously in the Service and were returning for further help.

Status of University Counselling Service Clients



Peak periods

The graph below records the month of first contact with the Service. In 2005/6 the overall pattern of contact during the year reflected trends from earlier academic years with the peak periods being in October, November, January and February. However last year there was a significant increase in the number of clients who contacted us in October – 121 in October 2004 and 183 in October 2005 – a 51% increase.

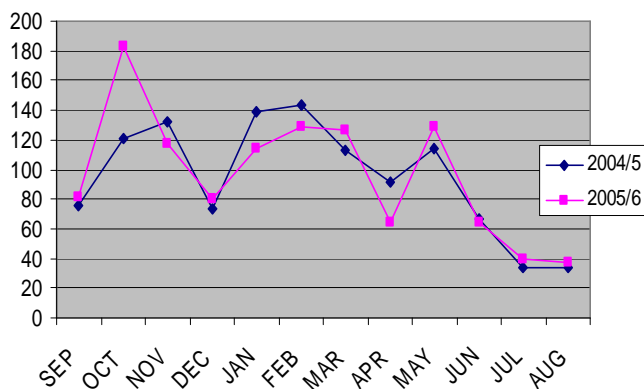
The fact that the University Counselling Service remains open throughout both term time and vacations is reflected in these figures, and significant numbers of staff and students make their initial contact with us during the vacations.

Waiting times

The mean wait between the first contact with the Service and the initial appointment was 3.7 working days. Our aim is to offer an appointment within one week, and therefore in 2005/6 we comfortably met this target overall.

An average figure does not reflect every individual's experience of making contact with us. There were

Month of First Appointment



a number of staff and students who were not offered an appointment within one week because at busy times in the year the pressure on available initial appointments increases. This occurred in October 2005 due to the level of demand on the Service. The availability of students and staff to attend for the appointments offered is quite variable, and students with particularly full timetables may wait longer for an appointment. We are aware that a wait for an initial appointment may provoke anxiety and we do everything that we can to minimise the waiting time.

The average figure of 3.7 days wait also includes the staff and students who were offered an initial appointment in less than 3 working days, and sometimes it was possible to offer an appointment on the same day or following day. We continue to offer emergency appointments where the need is more immediate, and refer to specialist services when this is appropriate.

Our aim is to offer ongoing appointments within twelve weeks and we comfortably met this target last year. Over the course of the whole year the 50 percentile figure for the length of time spent on the

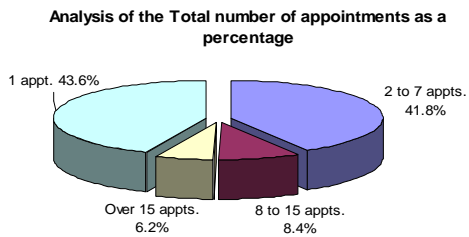
waiting list was 3.8 weeks. This is a slight increase on the previous year when the figure was 3.5 weeks. It is pleasing that in the feedback questionnaires there were fewer criticisms of the length of wait for an appointment than in previous years.

With the level of demand which the University Counselling Service experiences it is a considerable challenge to keep the waiting times for ongoing appointments short. We recognise that any length of wait can be difficult; however a balancing factor is that a period of time between the initial appointment and the ongoing appointments can be a valuable reflective space.

The number of people on the waiting list at the end of the year was 37, compared to 34 in the academic year 2004/5. Of these 37, 22 were students who had been offered a choice whether to begin a series of weekly appointments towards the end of the academic year 2005/6 or to wait until September, and all 22 had elected to begin in September. The remaining 15 were available to come for appointments during the summer vacation and were offered appointments as soon as they became available.

Number of appointments offered

The percentage figures for the total number of appointments offered to each client has remained remarkably consistent from one academic year to the next. The most common number of appointments is one (in 2005/6 the



percentage figure was just over 43.6%). Many of these people receive the help that they need to resolve their situation within one session; others may be appropriately referred on or may be offered regular counselling within the Service but not take this offer up.

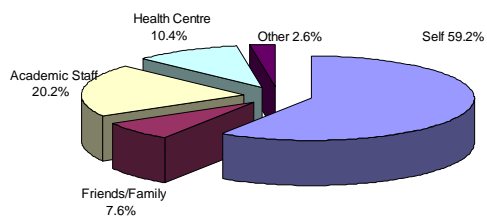
41.8% came for between two and seven sessions. The University Counselling Service initially offers up to six ongoing weekly sessions where this is appropriate following the initial appointment, and it does seem that this focussed short term work gives a substantial proportion of those whom we see sufficient opportunity to work through their conflicts and difficulties. We are able to offer a long term therapeutic approach where this is needed and appropriate (14.6% in total), and as our aim is to meet the diverse needs of the whole University community this represents an important component of the work of the Service.

Sources of referral and contact with other agencies

The majority of students and staff (59.2%) referred themselves to the Service. Of the other sources of referral the percentage from the Health Centre has increased slightly from 9.0% in the academic year 2004/5 to 10.4% in 2005/6.

Liaison with and referral to other support services in the University and to services beyond the University is an important element in our work. Our relationship with Cripps Health Centre remains strong, and we meet each term to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern. Although the work of the Service extends beyond the remit of the Student Services team (due to our work with staff) we particularly value our position within the Students Services management structure.

Sources of referral



Presenting Problems

Students and staff come to the Service with a wide range of problems. We identify four main categories of difficulties – academic, personal and emotional, relationships and specific concerns – with each category containing ten or more identified problems.

In 2005/6 19.7% of the concerns presented were academic or work related problems (21.6% in 2004/5). This includes anxiety about academic issues and exams, considering leaving or transferring course, and requests for a letter of extenuating circumstances. Our work in this area contributes to retention levels in the University, and many students stated that the help they received from our Service

helped them to continue with their academic work and studies.

38.6% of the concerns were personal and emotional including anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts (39.1% in 2004/5). From our feedback survey 80% of respondents reported an improvement in their effectiveness in dealing with emotional issues. Whilst academic development remains the primary focus of university life, each individual's emotional development is important and has both direct and indirect influence on the attainment of full academic potential.

28.1% of concerns were about relationships, and this includes relationships with peers, family, colleagues and also bereavement

and loss of relationship (27.9% in 2004/5). During the year 2005/6 13.6% brought specific issues which include eating difficulties, and alcohol and drug use (11.4% in 2004/5). From the feedback survey 88% of respondents reported an improvement in their general sense of well being.

Conclusions

It is very striking that overall the statistics which we record remain remarkably constant from year to year, and this reflects a Service well attuned to the needs of the staff and students of the University.

Pat Hunt
Head of the University
Counselling Service

Counselling Co-ordinator's Report

The University Counselling Service offers an outreach service to students and staff based at the Sutton Bonington campus and at hospital sites in Mansfield, Derby, Lincoln and Boston, serving the School of Nursing, the Academic Division of Midwifery and Derby Graduate Entry Medical School.

It can be extremely difficult for nursing, midwifery and medical students to attend counselling appointments as they spend much of their course on placement. These students have to arrange their lives around shift patterns and they do not have extended vacations, so it is essential to respond quickly and with some degree of flexibility to enable them to access the service. Counselling is offered at different sites on a regular day each week. The extent to which the UCS has succeeded in offering an acceptable and accessible service may be indicated by the rise in appointments taken up by students and staff at Boston, Derby, Lincoln and Mansfield which continues to rise year on year and increased from 500 in 2004/2005 to 631 in 2005/2006. There is a consistent take up of appointments at these sites all year round.

Providing an appropriate service requires an understanding of the particular needs of the students and staff. Nursing, midwifery and the Graduate Entry Medical School attract a high proportion of mature students, including single parents, who are often juggling study and work with the demands of family life and child care issues. Those

who choose to enter professions where they care for others often find it difficult to ask for help and support for themselves. Hence, this group of students is at particular risk of presenting in crisis or dropping out. At the University of Nottingham, 17-20% of nursing diploma students (who started their course between March 2000 and March 2002) dropped out from their course, compared with only 2% of all students at the University. This is not a local problem and some nursing courses in other regions report a drop out rate of nearly 40%. (Audit Commission Report, 2001)

A survey by the Royal College of Nursing (2006) identified financial problems, lack of childcare support, poor experiences in clinical settings and increasingly, failure to cope with the academic demands of the course, as causes of drop out from nursing courses. Redundancies, financial crises and restructuring in the NHS have created further anxiety for the nursing students this year. Students have discussed their concerns about the low morale and negative attitudes they are encountering on placements. The situation is now having a direct impact on those nursing and midwifery students who qualified in March, and those about to qualify, who have not yet secured a job.

Emotional and psychological factors also play a significant role in student dropout. (*Retention and student success in HE*, Manse Yorke and Bernard Longden, AUCC Journal, Winter 2004). Nursing

students report particular difficulties with:

- Relationship issues – a survey of nursing students reported a 50% rate of relationship breakdown during their nursing course (*Changes in nursing students' out of college relationships arising from the Diploma of Higher Education in Nursing, Howard 2002*)
- Placement issues - witnessing distressing events on placement, managing relationships with mentors and other colleagues, dealing with bullying and poor practice. Students from minority groups sometimes report cultural misunderstandings and racism.
- Nursing students are likely to be the first member of the family to attend University and this can cause problems at home and alienation from families.

The Counselling Co-ordinator attends the induction events for the new nursing and midwifery students, to reinforce the message that caring for themselves is a vital aspect of being mentally and physically fit to care for patients and to inform them of the network of support in the University.

Personal tutors and mentors offer front line support to their students and this is particularly important at those sites with limited access to the support services based at University Park. Consultation and liaison with staff is an important aspect of the outreach service and the 'Listening and Responding Skills' course is occasionally offered to staff at other sites who are not able to access the courses at University Park.

University Counselling Service provision at Sutton Bonnington has undergone considerable change over this year. A new student services office was created and equipped in the Amenities Building. There were some teething problems as all staff involved adjusted to the change of venue, but the diverse needs of each of the services who now share this facility were taken into account in the planning. On the whole, the University Counselling Service's need to be discreet yet accessible has been respected and catered for. One of the gains for the Service has been the provision of a quiet and private waiting area for clients which has proved to be a very positive addition.

As the facilities are now shared it has been useful for the SB User Group to meet on a regular basis over this year to exchange views, coordinate provision and iron out difficulties and also to prepare for the new intake of Veterinary School students and staff starting September 2006.

The usage of the University Counselling Service by the School of Biosciences students and staff has risen over the past 4 years by 12.8% and although at peak times a waiting list has been in operation, on the whole capacity has met demand. The impact of an increase in numbers of potential users of the Service will be monitored, assessed and reported over the next academic session.

Heather Nelson
Counselling Co-ordinator

Groups and Workshops

A significant part of the University Counselling Service's provision is the annual programme of workshops and groups. For many students, joining a group or taking part in a workshop is the most appropriate way for them to resolve their difficulties. It is helpful to realise that other people experience similar difficulties and students gain confidence by supporting one another.

University life requires students to participate in many different group situations, and the skills required form an important basis for life. Although working in groups and workshops can be challenging it is also very rewarding. It takes courage and commitment on the part of the students to attend and it is satisfying to see the progress they make.

The number of groups and workshops has gradually increased over the years in response to student need. We have identified difficulties common to many students and thought carefully how best to help them to resolve their problems. We pay attention to the feedback questionnaires that are completed at the end of every workshop and group in order to make improvements year on year.

The workshop programme

Stress Management

Two linked workshops are offered five times a year. The workshops help students to understand stress and how internal tension is created.

The emphasis is building on skills that the students already have and developing new ways to cope. Strategies for managing both social and academic anxiety are practised.

Coping with Exam Anxiety

A one-off workshop offered twice a year prior to exams to teach skills in making anxiety manageable.

Managing Depression

Three linked workshops are offered twice a year in which students can learn about depression and the impact it has on every day life. We look, in particular, at how thinking impacts on mood and offer ways for individuals to help themselves. We encourage students to challenge and change unhelpful thoughts and behaviours, and feel more in control.

Assertiveness workshops for Nursing and Midwifery students

These are run throughout the year at different educational sites. Students on practice placements may have to manage difficult situations that require advanced communication skills. The workshops introduce alternative ways of communicating and handling real situations. There are opportunities to develop support networks and learn from each other.

In 2005-06 we ran two new workshops reflecting the particular

needs of some of the students at the University of Nottingham:

Understanding Perfectionism

This new workshop has two linked sessions. Although having high standards is often helpful, perfectionism is connected with having standards that are so high that they interfere with performance. Perfectionism is associated with problems such as anxiety, depression and procrastination.

Participants in the workshop are guided in exploring their own perfectionist tendencies and helped to develop strategies to cope with them.

Procrastination and how to deal with it

Two linked workshops are offered to explore how and why people procrastinate, and the impact on relationships and work. The workshop outlines some of the underlying causes and begins to help students to develop strategies to become more effective in their lives.

Therapeutic Groups

Personal Development group

This is a weekly group for students who are willing to commit themselves to attend for two semesters. Students are likely to be experiencing significant difficulty in the way they feel about themselves and relate to others. The group enables members to share experiences and reflect on them, to experiment with different ways of behaving and to receive

feedback in a supportive environment.

Managing Relationships group

An eight week group which increases awareness of oneself and others in social situations. There is opportunity to reflect on how people communicate and behave in relationships and acquire confidence in identifying and asserting personal needs.

New developments

We received funding this year to enable us to develop our services for men. The counsellor responsible for this project is Rob Sharp. He is planning a series of workshops for men, with the possibility of a therapeutic group.

We receive a lot of very positive feedback from students who attend the workshop and groups. For those counsellors involved in the programme it is a rewarding and stimulating part of our work.

Marion Dillon
Workshops and Groups
Co-ordinator

Client Feedback 2005-06

Summary

- Satisfaction with the quality of counselling offered remains very high
- Service profile is high and likely to remain so as 96% of respondents said they would recommend us to a friend
- The majority of respondents reported a sense of improvement in their difficulties
- Dissatisfaction with waiting times has decreased both for initial appointments and ongoing appointments.

The University Counselling Service is committed to providing a high quality service that is responsive to the needs of the University community. Students and members of staff who use the Service are sent a brief questionnaire approximately one month after their final contact. The questionnaire invites clients to comment on their experience, so that the team can identify areas of dissatisfaction and those aspects we are getting right. Respondents may remain anonymous or give their name if they wish.

The primary aim of this exercise is to obtain feedback from clients to help the counsellors to reflect on their individual practice and the quality of the Service overall. It also provides an opportunity for clients to reflect on their experience and the outcome of counselling.

It addresses issues raised by respondents in previous years and covers areas known to be of concern. The questionnaire also offers space for respondents to add comments or raise issues not covered by the questions and provides valuable qualitative data.

Response rate

This year 562 questionnaires were posted and 203 were returned (before August 1st 2005) representing a 36% return rate. This is a high response rate for a postal survey and means that we are receiving feedback from just over 17% of our total client group.

Respondent profile

The respondents are a self selected group in that the completion of questionnaires is entirely voluntary. The respondent profile represents a cross section of the client group.

85% of respondents were students and 15% were staff (some respondents identify as both i.e. postgraduates). Of those who said they were students 79% were undergraduates and 21% were postgraduates. This reflects the overall profile of the client group of the Counselling Service.

Female respondents (76%) outnumber male respondents (24%) reflecting the tendency for there to be a female/male imbalance in usage of the service. We are very aware that male students and staff in difficulties are

less likely to approach the Service. Helping men to acknowledge difficulties and seek help is a problem for most health and welfare providers and is part of a wider social issue.

Service administration

94% of respondents agreed that it was easy to find out about the University Counselling Service. In additional comments a small number of clients called for more publicity to raise awareness of the Service and help overcome the stigma of seeking help. In general there is an expectation, particularly amongst students that a counselling service will be readily available.

Our administrators are a vital part of UCS and use their experience and skill to provide an appropriate initial response to a person seeking help. They are usually the first point of contact for clients and as such 'set the tone'.

94% found the reception staff helpful and they were described as 'friendly'.

First appointment

The Service aims to offer an initial appointment within 7 days of first contact. In practice a first appointment is often offered within 1-3 days of contact and some provision is available for urgent situations. 89% of respondents agreed that they had been offered an initial appointment within a reasonable time period, although 6% felt this had not been the case.

Assessing and responding

This first appointment with a counsellor may offer some immediate space for thinking and provide some relief and may help the person to identify a course of action to take. This meeting is often used to determine which, of a variety of options for further help, it is appropriate for the client to pursue. For some this appointment is sufficient to enable them to deal with the issue they have brought.

Thus the first appointment may result in:

- No further intervention
- Further counselling
- Group work
- A workshop
- Referral to another agency within the University
- Referral to an outside agency
- A book 'prescription'

28% of respondents had attended one appointment only, 46% had attended between 2-7 sessions and 26% had attended more than 7 sessions. 84% of respondents felt they had had sufficient time to address the issue they brought to counselling. Some clients will have ended their counselling prematurely through suspending or leaving the University.

It seems that the large majority of respondents are satisfied with the number of sessions offered and that the flexibility in the system allows the counsellors to offer a response that in most cases matches clients' needs and expectations accurately. It is not always the case that the more sessions someone receives the

more satisfied they will be. The appropriate assessment of need is more important.

Overall, the majority of our respondents felt they had sufficient time to address the issues they brought to counselling. 89% thought their concerns and feelings had been understood by their counsellor, and 3% thought that they had not. Coupled with high levels of satisfaction with the quality of counselling (88% were satisfied, 8% neutral and 4% dissatisfied) this would seem to indicate a high level of accuracy in assessment of client need.

Waiting times

74% of respondents, who were offered ongoing counselling after the initial appointment, agreed that this was offered within a reasonable time. 14% were dissatisfied with the length of time they waited for further appointments, while 12% were neutral about the waiting time. This represents a decrease in dissatisfaction with waiting times compared to last year. It is, however, still an area of concern. There are periods of high demand during the academic year when waiting time increases and vacations can add to the length of time before a client can be seen for regular counselling.

The University Counselling Service has always faced the challenge of providing a quality service with finite resources. Some waiting is inevitable when a service, which is perceived to be helpful, is free of charge and easily accessible. A brief waiting period offers a period of time to reflect prior to

counselling and this can be therapeutically valuable. However, we are aware that those using the service wish to be offered help as quickly as possible.

Clients on the waiting list are encouraged to seek appropriate support from the University's wider system of pastoral care and from the health centre or local GPs. It is the quality and strength of this broader support network that, in part, makes it possible to manage the high demand for counselling.

Environment

Our permanent home in the Trent Building provides a high quality of accommodation. Some of our counselling is delivered at sites off University Park, and the suitability of this accommodation for counselling is variable. We do our best to manage the issues that arise from this.

Next year we will be monitoring this issue more closely by asking clients at which venue they were counselled.

The quality of the counselling relationship and the counselling process

The quality of the relationship built with the counsellor is a vital component in the effectiveness of the contact.

Clients were asked to evaluate the quality of the relationship with their counsellor. 89% responded that the counsellor understood their concerns and how they felt and 95% reported that the counsellor

had created a safe atmosphere in which to explore their concerns.

In respect of the counselling process, 85% thought that the counsellor had helped them gain a better understanding of their behaviour and feelings. 80% of respondents agreed that the counsellor had helped them become more aware of their choices while 69% said that counselling had helped them to make changes.

Many respondents used the feedback form as an opportunity to thank their counsellors personally and valued the relationship they had experienced and the help they had received. Many respondents made positive comments about their counsellors; having found them to be 'supportive', 'helpful', 'objective', 'understanding', 'patient', 'respectful', 'professional' and 'caring'.

Other respondents were less satisfied. Negative comments referred to uncomfortable silences, insufficient emphasis on providing information or advice or making changes, and feeling that the counsellor didn't understand or failed to appreciate how bad they felt. A few people had clearly not experienced their counsellor as at all helpful or understanding. Some respondents had expected more from counselling or something different, although others had realised through coming to the Service that it was not a panacea for all their problems.

It is a delicate balance for the counsellors to respect peoples' choices and decisions by not pushing unwanted help on them,

whilst making that help accessible. Counselling is a joint venture, which requires both parties to share responsibility for communication; some clients who had found counselling difficult were also able to acknowledge this.

The counsellors aim to match their interventions to the needs of the individual client wherever possible and the therapeutic relationship between client and counsellor is of vital importance. However, clients come with different expectations and goals and sometimes there may be a genuine mismatch between counsellor and client. UCS publicity states clearly that the Service and the individual counsellors are keen to address problems where these are identified and clients may (and do) request to see a different counsellor. Sadly, some may not feel able to raise the issue at the time. As counsellors we can use any criticism provided through this feedback mechanism to reflect on our practice.

In general, the comments suggested an informed understanding of the counselling process and the counsellor's role. However some felt they had taken a risk or overcome their own scepticism or fear in coming to counselling, not knowing how it might help and had been genuinely pleased and surprised to find it helpful.

Difficulties and problems

Clients were asked to comment on the nature of the problems they had brought to counselling. 98% of respondents reported that their problems affected their emotional

life, 81% reported that the problem affected their social life and 80% reported that their difficulties affected their academic or work performance. Some problems affected people in all aspects of their lives.

Effectiveness of counselling

Counselling does not aim to make decisions for people or take control but to increase an individual's ability to manage his or her own life. It had enabled some respondents to address issues that were interfering with their work: sometimes this meant being able to cope better, for others a positive outcome involved a change of direction or time out to recover.

Several respondents felt the value of UCS for them lay in its relative objectivity. The effects of counselling may take time to translate into action or changes in the way someone feels and several clients had noticed and commented on this. Counselling is only one factor amongst many that operate in a person's life to bring about change. Bearing this in mind, 88% of respondents reported an improvement in their general sense of well being. More specifically, 80% of respondents reported an improvement in their effectiveness in dealing with emotional issues, 65% stated that their effectiveness in relationships with others had improved and 70% felt that counselling had helped them to continue with their work or studies.

Sometimes profound life changes were the outcome of counselling, but more often it was small

changes in attitude or behaviour or a different way of seeing things, that made a difference. Some situations cannot be resolved but respondents reported that they had found ways of living with the situation.

Satisfaction with the University Counselling Service

Overall the level of client satisfaction with the Service remains high: 88% of respondents reported satisfaction with the quality of the counselling they received and 96% of respondents agreed that they would recommend the Service to a friend. In personal comments several respondents said they felt reassured by knowing the Service was there and that they could return if they needed to.

Some people were disappointed that counselling could not solve the problem for them or did not offer the solution they desired as quickly as they might wish. However, the feedback demonstrates that the majority of respondents found counselling to be helpful to some extent and several respondents described the service as 'invaluable', 'excellent', 'very beneficial'.

Mel Wraight Counsellor

Appendix 1

STAFF

Pat Hunt (Head of Service)	1.0		
Counselling team		Support staff team	
Anita Bartys	0.8	Ruth Kneale	1.0
Marion Dillon	0.8	(Service Administrator)	
Alison Hammond	0.6	Margaret Tindall	0.5
Helen Kerry	0.6	(Receptionist - Term-time only)	
Heather Nelson	1.0		
(Counselling Co-ordinator)			
Lucy Rowley	0.4		
Rob Sharp	0.2		
Valerie Watson	1.0	Trainee Placement	
Myra Woolfson	0.6	Judith Cockrell	0.2
Melissa Wraight	0.8	Sept 2005-June 2006, term-time only	

Membership of professional bodies

Association for University & College Counselling

Marion Dillon
Alison Hammond
Heather Nelson
Lucy Rowley
Val Watson
Melissa Wraight

Association for Counselling in the Workplace

Heather Nelson

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Anita Bartys (Senior Accredited counsellor)
Marion Dillon (Senior Accredited counsellor)
Alison Hammond (Counsellor)
Heather Nelson (Accredited counsellor)
Lucy Rowley (Accredited counsellor)
Val Watson (Senior Accredited counsellor)
Melissa Wraight (Senior Accredited
counsellor)

British Association for the Person- Centred Approach

Val Watson

Gestalt Psychotherapy Training Institute

Helen Kerry

The Higher Education Academy

Val Watson (Registered Practitioner)

United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy

Alison Hammond
Pat Hunt
Helen Kerry
Rob Sharp
Myra Woolfson
Val Watson (student member)

United Kingdom Association for Psychotherapy Integration

Alison Hammond

Appendix 2

Continuing professional development

Anita Bartys

Workshops and short courses for students:

Coping with Exam Anxiety
Managing Depression
Managing the Stress of University Life

Workshop and short courses for staff:

Counselling Associates

Publicity talks/fairs:

Sutton Bonington new intake (UG/PG)

Meetings/liaison:

Sutton Bonington liaison
ILM/Apple learning set facilitation (SEDU)

Professional development:

UCS team day 'Working with Self Harm', Maggie Turp
ILM/Apple Professional, Personal, Leadership Experience

Marion Dillon

Workshops and short courses for students:

Managing Depression
Understanding Perfectionism
Personal Development group

Workshops and short courses for staff:

Listening and responding to students in difficulty

Publicity talks/fairs:

Welcome event for new staff

Policy/Steering Groups:

UCS Workshop and Group Coordinator
Steering Group for specific provision for male students

Meetings/liaison:

Workshop and Group planning meetings
Counsellors in Higher Education (Group Work)
Cripps Health Centre GP meetings

Professional Development:

Developing Group Work, Leeds University
Patrick Casement Public Lecture: 'Learning from our mistakes'
Conference: A team approach to Borderline Personality Disorder, Birkbeck College
UCS team day
Attendance at reading group for therapists in Lincoln

Alison Hammond

Workshops and short courses for students:

Dealing with Procrastination
Managing the Stress of University Life

Workshops and short courses for staff:

Counselling Associates
Hall Tutor training

Professional development:

MSc in Integrative Psychotherapy
UKAPI Conference
Workshop: Interactive relational technique
Workshop: Managing the narcissistic spectrum
UCS team day 'Working with Self Harm', Maggie Turp

Pat Hunt

Workshops and short courses for staff:

Counselling Associates

Publicity talks/fairs:

Welcome week presentation for International students

Introductory presentation to IT students

Presentation to Careers Service

Presentation to Chaplaincy Team

Meetings/liaison:

Registrar's consultation meetings

Pro-Vice Chancellor's consultation meetings

Academic Secretary's consultation meetings

Cripps Health Centre GP meetings

Professional development:

International Congress on Self harm and Suicide. Psychoanalytic perspectives on theory, practice and prevention.

Hallam Institute of Psychotherapy: day conference on adolescence with Margaret and Michael Rustin, Tavistock Clinic.

Hallam Institute of Psychotherapy: seminar on chiaroscuro and sexuality by Bernard Ratigan

Seminar: 'Insights from Greek classical tragedy into the human condition', Prof Jane Davidson

UCS team day 'Working with Self Harm', Maggie Turp

External commitments:

Member of Heads of University Counselling Services (HUCS) Executive Committee

Member of HUCS National Forum

Member of HUCS Regional Group

Chair (Ex officio) Hallam Institute of Psychotherapy

Helen Kerry

Professional development:

Membership of professional development group

Attended Gary Youtef workshop

Ruth Kneale

Publicity talks/fairs:

Postgraduate Welcome Event

Welcome Event for New Staff

Meetings/liaison:

Workshop and Group planning meetings

Professional development

City & Guilds Senior Award in

Professional Practice (HE

Administration) course

ECDL Modules 1 & 2

Heather Nelson

Workshops and short courses for students:

Assertiveness for Nurses and Midwives

Managing difficult situations

Workshops and short courses for staff:

Listening and responding to students in difficulty

Presentation to UCS team training day on 'Counselling student nurses'

Publicity talk/fairs:

Introductory talks to new nursing students

Introductory talks to new midwifery students

Introductory talk to Graduate Entry Medical School students

Health Promotion Fair, King's Mill Hospital

Policy/Steering Groups:

Represented UCS at QAA for School of Nursing

Meetings/liaison:

Study Support Advisor meetings

Review Meeting for School of Nursing and UCS

Cripps Health Centre GP meetings

Derby Placement Co-ordinator meeting

Professional development:

'Staff counsellors working in the Public Sector' workshops

UCS team day 'Working with Self Harm', Maggie Turp
Domestic Violence 1 day workshop,
Nottingham Domestic Violence Forum
Introduction to Couple Relationships: 4
day workshop, Tavistock Centre for
Couple Relationships

External commitments:

Secretary of AUCC Staff Counselling
Special Interest Group

Lucy Rowley

Workshops and short courses for students:

Managing Relationships group

Workshops and short courses for staff:

Listening and responding to students in
difficulty

Policy/Steering Groups:

Steering Group for specific provision
for male students

Listening and responding to students in
difficulty: working group

Professional development:

BACP Accreditation
IGA Introductory course Year 1
Patrick Casement Public Lecture:
Learning from our mistakes

Rob Sharp

Workshops and short course for staff:

Listening and responding to students in
difficulty

Policy/Steering Groups:

Steering Group for specific provision
for male students

Listening and responding to students in
difficulty: working group

Meetings/liaison:

Action research project for men-only
workshops and groups

Professional development:

Member of the Integrative
Psychotherapy continuing professional
development group
Liverpool Hope University conference
on Men, Masculinity & Therapy

Margaret Tindall

Publicity talks/fairs:

Postgraduate Welcome Event

Professional development:

Certificate in Humanistic Counselling
Practice

Val Watson

Workshops and short courses for students:

Dealing with Procrastination
Coping with Exam Anxiety

Workshops and short courses for staff:

Listening and responding to students in
difficulty: working group

Meetings/liaison:

Exploring the counselling needs of
international students
Voluntary supervision for a city based
short-term counselling project
Cripps Health Centre GP meetings

Professional development:

Existential Psychotherapy Practice
Year 2 – MSc in Person Centred
Psychotherapy and Counselling
UCS team day 'Working with Self
Harm' – Maggie Turp
Introduction to coaching and mentoring

External Commitments:

External examiner: Nottingham Trent
University (Certificate and Diploma in
Counselling courses)

Myra Woolfson

Meetings/liaison:

Cripps Health Centre GP meetings
Exploring the counselling needs of
international students

Publicity talks/fairs:

Welcome week presentation for international students

Professional development:

Hallam Institute of Psychotherapy: day conference on adolescence with Margaret and Michael Rustin

Hallam Institute of Psychotherapy: talk on chiaroscuro and sexuality by Bernard Ratigan

Hallam Institute of Psychotherapy: Alternative Dialogues – working with parents by Janine Cherry- Swaine
Vaughan College Psychotherapy seminar series – talk on Shame by Phil Mollon

UCS team day 'Working with Self Harm' – Maggie Turp

External commitments:

Supervisor for counsellor on post-training placement

Melissa Wraight**Workshops and short courses for students:**

Managing the Stress of University Life
Understanding Perfectionism

Policy/Steering Groups:

Advisory Group on Disability
Listening and responding to students in difficulty: working group

Meetings/liaison:

Cripps Health Centre GP meetings

Professional development:

Working with Diversity and Diverse Way of Working (University College London)

Patrick Casement Public Lecture:

'Leaning from our mistakes'
UCS team day 'Working with Self Harm' – Maggie Turp

Appendix 3

Aims of the University Counselling Service

- To provide professional, confidential personal counselling to the University community; to be available to registered undergraduate and post graduate students and to all members of the academic and support staff.
- To offer an accessible and appropriate service to all its clients; to take proper account of all requests for counselling and to ensure an adequate conduit for any complaint.
- To fulfil a role within the University which is preventative and developmental through the provision of courses and workshops.
- To work at the interface between the personal and the institutional; to understand the academic environment which may exacerbate, or help to contain, the difficulties of those who study or work within it. To deepen the understanding of the University community as to how individual difficulties may affect academic or work performance.

Objectives of the University Counselling Service

- To offer an accessible service by providing:
 - counselling in term time and vacations
 - evening counselling
 - counselling at the Schools of Nursing and Midwifery and at Sutton Bonington.
 - access for wheelchair users
 - information in alternative formats
- To inform the University of issues, concerns and trends that may become apparent through the therapeutic work.
- To offer up to six counselling sessions initially, with the possibility of offering longer term counselling where necessary.
- To offer staff and students an initial appointment with a counsellor which will usually be offered within 10 days (subject to availability). To offer ongoing counselling, when appropriate, usually within 12 weeks (subject to vacations and timetables).
- To offer workshops for those involved in pastoral care
- To offer workshops and groups specific to the needs of student groups.
- To maintain the professional development of the Service, and of the counsellors, in line with professional requirements.

