



Annual Report 2006-07

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Head of Service Report

Introduction

This has been a demanding, and at times difficult, year for the University Counselling Service. The number of staff and students who contacted us increased by 7.5% from the previous academic year to a total of almost 1300. Whilst I welcome that the Service is so well used, levels of demand of this order stretch our staffing resources to their limit. By the end of the academic year the length of our waiting list was of concern to all of the team. Some of the consequences of this were reflected in our evaluation questionnaires this year with clients expressing disquiet about the length of wait for an appointment and also the number of appointments offered. As a temporary measure additional staff hours were used over the summer to reduce the waiting list. The whole team met to consider an appropriate response to the situation, and we have agreed changes to some of our procedures in order to try and reduce the numbers on the waiting list and the length of the wait in the coming year.

Perspectives from other university counselling services

A network of Heads of University Counselling Services exists which includes the services in Britain, Northern Ireland and Eire. This is an extremely useful forum through which policy developments,

statistics and ideas can all be shared. It is clear from discussion with this group that the increase in the demand for counselling that we are experiencing at the University of Nottingham is not an isolated phenomenon, but is synchronous with a pattern of what appears to be increasing levels of disturbance in the mental health of students in Higher Education.

It is estimated that one in four adults will experience a mental health difficulty at some point in their life. Universities are communities of stress and change, as well as of rich educational opportunity, and both students and staff are vulnerable to developing mental health problems. "The combination of widening participation ... and the various sections of the Disability Discrimination Act has dramatically changed the profile of mental illness in HE. We see more students who have severe and enduring mental health problems, and we have more incidents around our institutions where this is a factor and where staff want support." (Julie Walking, Chair of AMOSSHE - The Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education, February 2007)

Staffing

Our Receptionist/Secretary Margaret Tindall left the Service in May 2007 as she moved to the United States. Margaret joined UCS in Summer 2004 in what was

then a newly created post. She has done excellent work in establishing and developing this role, and we will miss her. Della Cope has been appointed to replace Margaret, and we look forward to working with her.

Extenuating Circumstances

Where students have a long-term mental health condition or are suffering acute stress which impacts on their academic performance, they can make a request that extenuating circumstances (EC) be taken into account and then are required to gain evidence to substantiate their situation. The University Counselling Service is authorised to provide such evidence in the form of a confidential letter in situations of long term mental illness and acute personal/emotional circumstances. The number of such requests received by UCS has been increasing over the last few years. In the academic year 2005/6 the number of requests was 137, and during 2006/7 it rose to 192.

There is an overwhelmingly positive case to be made for the extenuating circumstance procedure and for UCS's involvement in it. Mental illness and situations of acute stress are highly likely to undermine a student's academic performance and may obscure their true intellectual ability. It is entirely appropriate that for students coming for regular appointments in the Service we are able to support their situation through being able to provide evidence. However a substantial number of requests for

evidence to us in 2006/7 are not from ongoing clients, but from students attending the Service for the first time (80 in 2006/7).

This annual report is not the appropriate forum for a full discussion of the complexities of the use or possible misuse of the EC system, however it is appropriate to highlight here the consequences of the situation for service delivery. At exam and assessment times UCS is now overwhelmed with students requesting appointments to ask for EC evidence, while other students and staff contacting the Service for our core provision may be kept waiting longer than necessary.

Men's Project

Between September 2004 and June 2007 the University Counselling Service has been conducting a project aimed at increasing the accessibility of the Service to male students. Young men are at risk of depression and mental illness. Current statistics demonstrate that the highest cause of death in young men under 30 in the UK is suicide, but male students often find it hard to ask for help in managing their personal, emotional and mental health problems.

The first year of the Men's Project was externally funded, and successful application was made to HEFCE to provide matched funding to allow the project to continue into the academic year 2006/7. During the second year of the project a series of workshops have been run in the autumn and spring terms aimed at addressing some of the emotional and mental health

difficulties that male students encounter. This year we bought in professional design skills to help with our advertising for the workshops, and this was distributed widely around the University. The level of attendance was small but increased from the first year of the project.

The approach of the workshops is to try to make it less difficult and not so stigmatising for male students to seek help and talk about their difficulties. It is noteworthy that the percentage of male students who contacted the Service for one to one work in 2006/07 has increased to 33.3%, and perhaps the existence of the workshops has helped in making UCS more accessible to male students.

In the coming year we will continue to run a series of workshops for male students drawing on the experience gained over the last two years. It is encouraging that these workshops are now an integrated part of the Groups and Workshops programme of the Service.

Mental Health Support Worker

The role of Mental Health Support Worker has been developed within Student Services over the last 18 months as a response to students with very serious mental health difficulties whose needs were not fully met by existing provision. The Support Worker's post complements UCS as this post has an outreach component enabling students to be visited at home where necessary, and to meet staff and students in their schools.

We are very pleased that this post is now filled by Claire Thompson and we have begun to work closely with her. Where academic tutors or staff in the halls are concerned about a student the first course of action is still to direct them to either their GP or to the University Counselling Service. UCS can refer to the Mental Health Support Worker where this is appropriate, and in addition she can refer students to us. Another aspect of her role is to develop links between the University on the one hand, and the statutory and voluntary mental health services on the other.

Consultation for staff

It has been a longstanding role of UCS to offer consultation to academic and non-academic staff who are concerned about a student. Our hope is that we can facilitate the ability of staff to support students, and at times this may result in a referral to UCS. This is a well used service and much appreciated by academic staff in particular. In addition we offer a training course for academic and non academic staff, 'Listening and responding to students in difficulty', which is organised through the University's Staff and Educational Development Unit (SEDU). We have run this course twice each year for a number of years now, and have just taken the decision to extend this to three for the academic year 2007/8 due to the level of demand.

In 2003 one of the UCS counsellors, Myra Woolfson, wrote the booklet 'Identifying and Responding to Students in Difficulty: A Guide for Staff'. This

guide accompanies the course, and was also distributed to all members of academic and non academic staff of the University to use as a resource. The guide was updated in 2005 and distributed to new members of staff. It has been a very successful publication, and knowledge of it has spread far beyond the University of Nottingham. Several similar versions now exist in a number of other HEIs in Britain and also Australia – all having sought permission of course! This year it has become clear that a more substantial re-writing was needed to update staff on the recently opened Student Services Centre and also on the role of the new Mental Health Support Worker, and the new guide will be distributed to all University staff in Autumn 2007.

Contribution to University Life

Although the provision of a specialist counselling service to the whole University Community is our primary role 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 and contribute to policy development within the University.

We are pleased that a new Students Services Centre has opened providing a central point of contact for students. We have been involved in training the reception staff of the centre so that they are able to respond appropriately when a student can be signposted to the University Counselling Service. Through the

Student Services' Management Team we are able to play a role in the ongoing development of the Student Services.

Malaysia and Ningbo Campuses

The development of University of Nottingham campuses in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and Ningbo, China has been an extraordinary achievement in recent years. The University's policy is to provide similar services at all of its campuses. In the area of student services this is quite a challenge! Shamani Najaradin offers counselling on the Malaysia campus and good working links have been forged with her. During the course of this year she has visited University Park and we have had detailed discussions. She has taken back to her own campus many of our policy documents and is now working to implement these as appropriate within her own setting. Shamani is hoping to be able to appoint an additional counsellor during this coming year, and we have liaised over this process. Developments in Ningbo are less well advanced, however the Vice Chancellor is keen to develop counselling provision, and I was invited to a meeting with him to discuss both the possibilities and difficulties of appointing a counsellor for the Ningbo campus.

Conclusion

Over the years, the University Counselling Service has developed a strong team of specialists with a high level of skill and

professionalism. This has enabled the UCS not only to survive the difficulties and demands of this year but to continue to thrive. I would like to thank the whole team for their hard work and dedication during this year.

We would like to extend our thanks to Robin Dollery, Head of Student Services for his sustained and enthusiastic support for all areas of our work as well as his help to ensure funding for particular projects.

We are fortunate that the University has its own excellent health centre on University Park and that over many years, we have been able to establish a close working relationship with the doctors there. We would

particularly like to thank Dr Hugh Porter, who has been responsible for liaison between Cripps Health Centre and the University.

We also value the interest in and recognition of our work by the Registrar, Dr Paul Greatrix. Being part of the Registrar's Department gives us an important connection to other sections of the University.

Finally we would like to thank the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir Colin Campbell for the key role he has played in the development of a thriving counselling service for both students and staff. We wish him well in his retirement.

Pat Hunt
Head of the University
Counselling Service

Statistics for the academic year 2006 – 2007

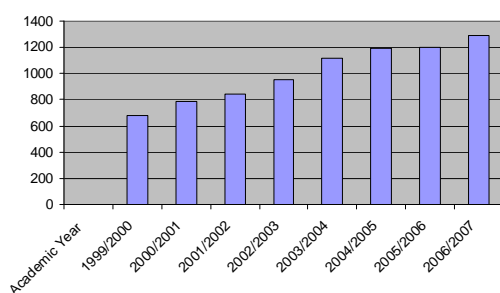
Summary of key changes

- Increase in the number of students and staff coming to the University Counselling Service
- Increase in the proportion of male students and staff using UCS
- Increase in the number of Extenuating Circumstance requests

Introduction

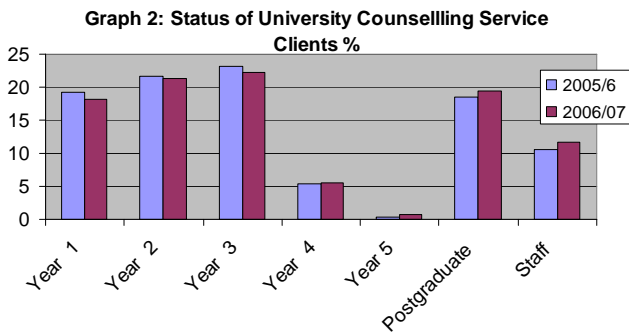
The total number of staff and students seen for individual counselling in 2006/7 was 1295. This is an increase of 7.8% from the previous academic year when the total was 1201. As Graph 1 demonstrates there has been a marked and sustained increase in the number of members of the University community being seen in the Service over an eight year period between 1999 and 2007. The increase from 1999 to 2007 is almost 100%.

Graph 1: Total Number of Staff and Students Seen By The University Counselling service

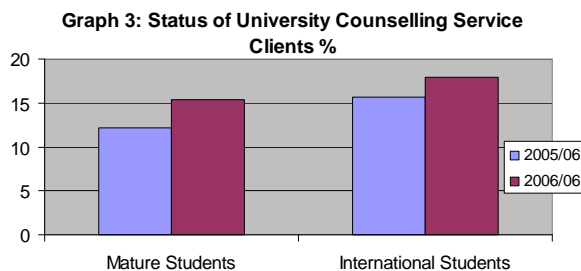


Of the 1224 staff and students included in the analysis, 66.9% were women and 33.1% were men. In 2005/6 the figures were 71% women and 29% men. These figures are to be understood within the context of the gender balance within the whole University population, and in both the staff and student communities there are more women than men. We have been actively exploring ways in which we can make our Service more accessible to male students, and it is encouraging that this year's figures reflect an increased use of the service by male students and staff. In fact 68 more men contacted UCS during 2006/7 than 2005/6.

As can be seen from Graph 2 which records the year and status of clients, 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. 238 postgraduate students used the service, and 142 members of staff. 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. It is also noteworthy that the numbers of students using the service from the School of Nursing is increasing.



International students make good use of the Service, and the proportion of international students coming for appointments grew from 15.7% in 2005/6 to 17.9% in 2006/7. International students have particular needs, and well attuned support for them is a vital component of their education in the UK.



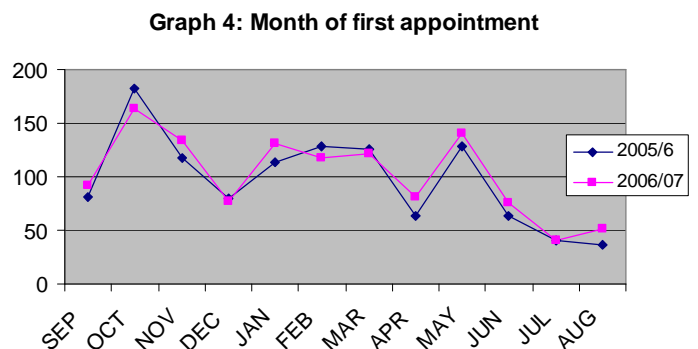
In 2006/7 the percentage of mature students who contacted the service was 15.4%. Mature students often have particular and complex needs, and may be juggling their university education with family commitments and the care of parents or children.

79% of the students and staff were seen for the first time, 7.5% were continuing counselling from the previous year and 13.5% had been seen previously in the Service and were returning for further help.

Peak periods

Graph 4 records the month of first contact with the Service. In 2006/7 the overall pattern of contact during the year reflected trends from earlier academic years with peak periods in October, November, January and February.

It is noticeable that year on year the figures for the quieter months are growing. The Service has always been open during the Christmas, Easter and Summer vacations as we are a service for the whole University community. Staff, international students and postgraduate students all use the service in both term time and vacations. Last year the Easter vacation was particularly busy, and our resources were severely stretched as during vacations we have only one member of staff (the Service Administrator) running reception and the office, as our Receptionist works during term time only.



Waiting times

In the academic year 2006/7 the average wait between the first contact with the Service and the initial appointment was 4.83 working days. This is an increase

of 1.1 days from the 2005/6 figure, reflecting the impact of the increased level of demand, however it is within our Service aim of offering an appointment within one week.

The waiting time between the initial appointment and the first ongoing appointment was recorded throughout the 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 figure is well within our objective of offering ongoing appointments within twelve weeks, however it is not a complete representation of the situation. The 90 percentile figure for last year was 13.5 weeks, representing that for 10% of our clients the wait was longer than our stated objective.

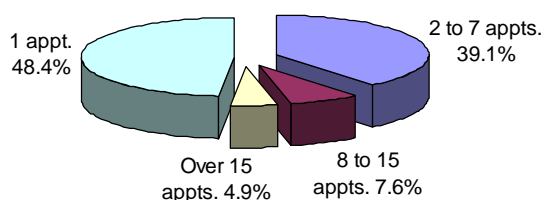
With the level of demand which the University Counselling Service experiences it is a considerable challenge to keep the waiting times for ongoing appointments reasonable. We recognise that any length of wait can be difficult for some people and were concerned about the length of wait that a number of clients faced last year.

The number of people on the waiting list at the end of the summer term was 67. 37 of those on the list were available to come for appointments during the summer vacation. This is a large figure for the summer waiting list, and additional temporary staffing provision was arranged to respond to this situation. As a result all 37 were offered appointments by the middle of the summer vacation. The remaining group on the waiting list

were continuing undergraduate students who had been offered a choice whether to begin to receive a series of weekly appointments towards the end of the academic year 2006/7, or to wait until September 2007 and all had elected to begin in September.

Number of appointments offered

Graph 5: Analysis of the total number of appointments as a percentage



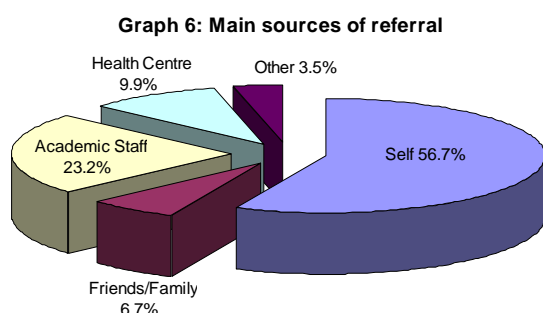
The percentage figures for the total number of appointments each client has remains remarkably consistent from one academic year to the next. The most common number of appointments is one. Many of these people receive the help that they need to resolve their situation within one session; others may be referred to one of the University Counselling Service workshops or groups, or referred on to other services within Student Support. Others may be offered regular counselling within the Service but not take this offer up.

39.1% came for between two and seven sessions. We initially offer a series of short term weekly sessions where this is appropriate, and this focussed, time limited 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 staff and students have more serious mental health, relationship and/or emotional problems (12.5% in 2006/7). As our aim is to meet the diverse needs of the whole University community this provision represents a vital component of the work of the Service.

Sources of referral and contact with other agencies

The majority of students and staff (56.7% in 2006/7) refer themselves to UCS. Of the other sources of referral the percentage from academic staff has increased slightly from 20.2% in the academic year 2005/6 to 23.2% in 2006/7.



Liaison with and referral to other support services in the University and to services beyond the University is an important element in our work.

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.

One very notable feature of the presenting problems in the academic year 2006/7 is that the number of requests for Extenuating Circumstances evidence rose from 137 in 2005/6 to 192 in 2006/7. Of the 192 requests last year, at least 80 were students who came for just one appointment with the Service. As has been noted and discussed in the Head of Service Report these figures are a concern to us.

In 2006/7 21.6% of the problems presented were academic or work related (19.7% in 2005/6). 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.

36.7% of the concerns were personal and emotional including anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts (38.6% in 2005/6). 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.

28.4% of concerns were about relationships, and this includes relationships with peers, family, colleagues and also bereavement and loss of relationship (28.1% in 2005/6). During the year 2006/7 13.3% of concerns were specific issues which include eating difficulties, and alcohol and drug use (13.6% in 2005/6).

Conclusions

The statistics recorded in this section of the Annual Report are drawn from comprehensive documentation of data for each

client who contacts the University Counselling Service. The data allows us to reflect on our clinical practice, to report to the University, and to contribute to a database of national statistics of the work of University Counselling Services. Two members of the team have been responsible for processing the statistics this year, Anita Bartys and Alison Hammond, and I would like to thank both of them for their work.

Pat Hunt
Head of the University
Counselling Service

Counselling Co-ordinator's Report

The University Counselling Service (UCS) offers individual counselling to students and staff based at the Sutton Bonington campus and serves the School of Nursing, the Academic Division of Midwifery and Derby Graduate Entry Medical School at the Mansfield, Derby, Lincoln and Boston sites. Counselling is offered at each site on a regular day each week: Rob Sharp started at Boston in October 2006, whilst Heather Nelson continues to provide the service at Derby, Lincoln and Mansfield, and Anita Bartys at Sutton Bonington.

Sutton Bonington

The one day a week provision at the Sutton Bonington campus has continued to be well used. In September 2006 the new Veterinary Medicine School opened and this has added to the number of students and staff requesting appointments. The number of students accessing the service has increased from 44 (05/06) to 56 (06/07). This represents an increase of 27%. At peak times a waiting list has been in operation for those needing ongoing support but, on the whole, capacity has met demand. Whether this remains the case as student numbers increase remains to be seen. The impact of further increases in student numbers on the Service will be monitored over the next academic session.

Derby, Boston, Lincoln and Mansfield

There is good news to report this year as the UCS has secured temporary HEFCE funding for an additional 0.5 day per week at Derby for the next academic year. This is expected to meet the additional demand on the Service at Derby.

It can be particularly difficult for nursing, midwifery and medical students to attend regular counselling appointments due to the requirements of their course and their placements, so a degree of flexibility is required. 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 the caring professions often find it difficult to ask for help, so this group of students is at particular risk of presenting in crisis or dropping out and it is important to respond promptly.

The UCS has established a consistent and accessible service at the different sites with year-round provision, as these students do not enjoy the usual academic vacations. The number of appointments taken up by students and staff at Boston, Derby, Lincoln and Mansfield increased from 500 in 2004-2005 to 634 in 2006-7.

The counsellors represent UCS at the welcome events for new students at the different sites, to encourage them to seek help appropriately and to inform them of the network of support services in the University. Assertiveness workshops were offered to midwifery students at City Hospital, Nottingham and for nursing students at Derby, Nottingham and Lincoln. These workshops were well attended and generated positive feedback from the participants.

UCS has a strong commitment to working in partnership with personal tutors and other University staff who offer front line support to their students and last year, the "Listening and Responding to Students in Difficulty" workshop was offered to staff at the School of Nursing at Mansfield.

Heather Nelson
Counselling Co-ordinator

Groups and Workshops Co-ordinator's Report

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.

In the coming year we are increasing the number of workshops run during the summer term. We are also offering two workshops in June, shortly after the end of term, aimed at postgraduate students.

The workshop programme

Stress Management

Two linked workshops which offer the opportunity to:

- Understand what stress is and how internal tension may be created
- Build on skills individuals already have and develop new ways of coping
- Find out about strategies for managing social and academic anxiety

Coping with Exam Anxiety

This workshop focuses on techniques and strategies for managing exam stress.

Managing Depression

Three linked workshops in which students can learn about depression and the impact it has on everyday life. We examine ways in which students can help themselves especially through exploring how thinking impacts on mood. Students find out how to challenge and change unhelpful thoughts and behaviours, and feel more in control.

Understanding Perfectionism

Although having high standards is often helpful, perfectionism is connected with having standards that are so high that they actually

interfere with performance. Perfectionism can be associated with problems such as anxiety, depression and procrastination. In these two linked workshops participants are guided in exploring their own perfectionist tendencies, and helped to develop strategies to cope with them.

Procrastination: How to deal with it

These workshops explore how and why individuals procrastinate and the impact it has on relationships and life. We outline and identify some of the underlying causes of procrastination and begin developing strategies to help individuals become more effective.

Assertiveness workshops for Nursing and Midwifery students

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

Men's workshops

These workshops focus on promoting men's emotional health and wellbeing.

Therapeutic groups

Personal Development group

A weekly group for students who wish to improve their interpersonal skills, and are willing to commit themselves to attending a group over two semesters. Students learn about themselves and others, and have the opportunity to share experiences and reflect upon them. The group encourages experimenting with different ways of behaving and enables feedback to be given and received in a supportive environment.

Managing Relationships group

An eight week group which focuses on helping students to increase their awareness of self and others in social situations. This is an opportunity to reflect on how to communicate and behave in relationships, and acquire confidence in identifying and asserting individual needs.

New developments

We are pleased to be offering two new workshops this year:

Assertiveness

Single session workshop held in a small supportive group which will focus on improving communication skills and find ways of managing difficult situations more effectively.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotions play a far greater role in thought, decision making and individual success than is commonly acknowledged. Increasing self awareness enhances effectiveness. These are single session workshops held in a small supportive group.

Evaluation

Students have always been asked to complete questionnaires at the end of the workshops and groups. This year we altered our evaluation process and sent the questionnaires several months later via e-mail. We are interested to discover the longer term benefit of attendance and whether students continue to use the new skills they may have acquired in the

workshops and groups. Results so far are promising.

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

We are particularly grateful to Ruth Kneale our Service Administrator who has developed a new Microsoft Access database to support the programme. This records attendance figures for each workshop, and supplies statistical data for the annual report, reducing repetitive administration procedures and increasing our efficiency.

Marion Dillon
Workshops and Groups
Co-ordinator

Client Feedback 2006-2007

Summary

- Satisfaction with the quality of counselling offered remains very high
- The majority of respondents reported a sense of improvement in their difficulties
- Dissatisfaction with waiting times for ongoing appointments has increased
- Satisfaction with number of counselling sessions offered has decreased

Why we ask for feedback

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 University Counselling 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 to help the counsellors reflect on their individual practice and the quality of the Service overall. It also provides an opportunity for clients to think about their experience and the outcome of counselling.

The questionnaire addresses issues raised by respondents in previous years and covers areas of concern. It also offers space to add comments or raise issues thus providing valuable qualitative data.

Response rate

This year 641 questionnaires were posted to clients and 183 were returned (before August 1 2007) representing a 29% return rate. This means that we received feedback from just over 14% of our total client group.

Respondent profile

The respondents are a self selected group in that the completion of questionnaires is voluntary.

83% were students and 18% were staff (some respondents identify as both i.e. postgraduates). Of those who said they were students 73% were undergraduates and 27% were postgraduates. This broadly reflects the overall profile of the client group of the Counselling Service.

Female respondents (74%) outnumber male respondents (26%) 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

- 93% felt it had been 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 the Service 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'.

- 92% found the reception staff helpful and they were described as 'friendly' and 'welcoming'

Environment

Our main offices in the Trent Building provide a high quality of accommodation. Some of our counselling is delivered at sites other than University Park and the suitability of this accommodation for counselling is variable. We do our best to manage the issues that arise from this. Responses from those counselled at other sites this year were separated out and analysed for comment on the counselling environment: no

comment was made either positive or negative.

First appointment

The Service aimed this year to offer an initial appointment within 7 working days of first contact. In practice a first appointment is often offered within 1-5 days of contact and some provision is available for urgent situations.

- 85% of respondents stated that they had been offered an initial appointment within a reasonable time period.
- 7% felt they had waited too long.

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.

29% of respondents had attended one appointment only, 51% had attended between 2-7 sessions and 20% had attended more than 7 sessions.

- 74% of respondents felt they had received sufficient time to address the issue they brought to counselling

- 26% felt they had not had sufficient time to address the issue they had brought to counselling

Some clients will have ended their counselling prematurely through suspending their studies or leaving at the end of their university career.

While the large majority of respondents were satisfied with the number of sessions offered there has been a decrease in satisfaction compared to last year when 84% reported satisfaction with this aspect of the Service. We endeavour to maintain a degree of flexibility in our system which allows the counsellors to offer a response that in most cases matches clients' needs and expectations.

Difficulties and problems

Clients were asked to comment on the nature of the problems they had brought to counselling.

- 83% reported that their difficulties affected their academic or work performance.
- 96% reported that their problems affected their emotional life.
- 78% reported that the problems affected their social life.

Some people were affected in all aspects of their lives.

Waiting times

There are periods of high demand during the academic year when

waiting time increases and vacations can add to the length of time before someone can be seen for regular counselling.

- 69% of respondents agreed that ongoing counselling was offered within a reasonable time.
- 18% were dissatisfied with the length of time they had to wait.

This represents a small decrease in satisfaction with waiting times compared to 74% last year who felt that they had been offered counselling within a reasonable period of time.

The University Counselling Service has always faced the challenge of providing a quality service with finite resources. Some waiting is inevitable when a service is perceived to be helpful, 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 support from the University's wider system of pastoral care and from the health centre or local GPs if appropriate.

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 a

variety of questions about this aspect of their experience.

- 90% responded that the counsellor understood their concerns and how they felt.
- 92% reported that the counsellor had created a safe atmosphere in which to explore their concerns.

With regard to the counselling process:

- 85% felt that the counsellor had helped them gain a better understanding of their behaviour and feelings.
- 77% agreed that the counsellor had helped them become more aware of their choices.
- 68% said that counselling had helped them to make changes.

High levels of satisfaction with the quality of counselling (85% were satisfied, 10% neutral and 5% dissatisfied) would seem to indicate a high level of accuracy in assessment of client need and matching of available resources.

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 very positive comments about their counsellors; having found them to be *'supportive'*, *'very helpful'*, *'effective'*, *'excellent'*, *'objective'*, *'understanding'*, *'patient'*, *'accepting'*, *'professional'* and *'encouraging'*. Being offered *'time to think'* and *'explore'* and being *'really listened to'* was also appreciated. Several respondents had also attended a workshop or

group and comment about these included: *'very helpful'* and *'informative'* and a good complement to one to one counselling.

Other respondents were less satisfied. Negative comments referred to uncomfortable silences, insufficient emphasis on providing information or advice to make changes and feeling that the counsellor didn't understand or failed to appreciate how bad they felt. There were also a number of negative comments regarding the length of wait before being offered appointments and not having enough time or enough sessions. 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 or the solution.

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 University Counselling Service operates under a professional code of practice and encourages clients to raise concerns. 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. Some people felt they had taken a risk to 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.

Counselling outcomes

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. Counselling 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 the Service for them lay in its 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.

- 68% felt that counselling had helped them to continue with their work (staff) or academic study (students).
- 86% reported an improvement in their general sense of well being.
- 80% reported an improvement in their effectiveness in dealing with emotional issues.

- 70% stated that their effectiveness in relationships with others had improved.

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.

Concluding comments

Overall the level of client satisfaction with the Service remains high.

- 85% of respondents reported satisfaction with the quality of the counselling they received
- 93% of respondents 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, and many described the Service in very positive terms.

**Mel Wraight
Counsellor**

Appendix 1

Staff

Head of Service

Pat Hunt 1.0

Counselling team

Anita Bartys 0.8

Marion Dillon 0.8

Alison Hammond 0.75

Helen Kerry 0.6

Heather Nelson
(Counselling Coordinator) 0.8

Lucy Rowley 0.4

Rob Sharp 0.4

Valerie Watson 1.0

Myra Woolfson 0.6

Mel Wraight 0.8

Support staff team

Ruth Kneale
(Service Administrator) 1.0

Margaret Tindall
(Term-time only) 0.5

Trainee placement

Stella Coyle
Sept 2006-June 2007
(term-time only) 0.2

Membership of Professional bodies

Association for University & College Counselling

Marion Dillon
Alison Hammond
Pat Hunt
Lucy Rowley
Heather Nelson
Val Watson
Mel Wraight

Association for Counselling in the workplace

Heather Nelson
Val Watson

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

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

British Association for the Person-Centred Approach

Val Watson

Counselling Children and Young People

Val Watson

Gestalt Psychotherapy Training Institute

Helen Kerry

The Higher Education Academy

Val Watson

United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy

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

United Kingdom Association for Psychotherapy Integration

Alison Hammond

Survivors' UK

Rob Sharp

Appendix 2

Continuing professional development

Anita Bartys

Workshops and short courses for students:

Coping with Exam Anxiety
Managing Depression
Stress Management

Publicity talks/fairs:

Sutton Bonington Veterinary Medicine
School Induction

Meetings/liaison:

Cripps Health Centre GP meetings

Professional development:

UCS Training Day *Men's Development*,
(Keith Tudor)

Marion Dillon

Workshops and short courses for students:

Managing Depression
Understanding Perfectionism
Personal Development group

Policy/Steering Groups:

UCS Workshop and Group Coordinator
Workshop & Group Evaluation Project

Meetings/liaison:

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

Professional Development:

Working with PhD students Kings College
London
BACP research conference, York
Attendance at a reading group for
therapists in Lincoln
UCS Training Day *Men's Development*,
(Keith Tudor)

Alison Hammond

Workshops and short courses for students:

Procrastination: How to deal with it

Stress Management

Workshops and short courses for staff:

Counselling Associates

Meetings/liaison:

Cripps Health Centre GP meetings

Professional development:

Solution-focused brief therapy, day
workshop
Spiritual narratives in psychological
therapies, 2 day conference
UCS Training Day *Men's Development*,
(Keith Tudor)

Pat Hunt

Workshops and short courses for staff:

Counselling Associates

Publicity talks/fairs:

Welcome week presentation for
International students
Presentation to Careers Service
Presentation to Chaplaincy Team

Meetings/liaison:

Student Services Management Team
Registrar's consultation meetings
Pro-Vice Chancellor's consultation meetings
Academic Secretary's consultation meetings
Cripps Health Centre GP meetings
Mental Health Support Worker – role
development meetings

Professional development:

HIP Seminar *The work of Jacques Lacan*
Inaugural lecture *Medically unexplained
symptoms and syndromes: Aetiology and
management*, Prof Richard Morriss
Psychotherapy, Ethics and the Law Day
Conference, Peter Jenkins
Recruitment and Selection Seminar,
University of Nottingham
Seminar in Management and Leadership
*The role of University Counselling Services
in HE*, Julie Walkling
*The future of University Counselling
Services*, VC of University of Westminster
UCS Training Day *Men's Development*,
(Keith Tudor)

External commitments:

Member of Heads of University Counselling Services (HUCS) National Executive
Treasurer of HUCS National Executive
Members of HUCS National Forum

Helen Kerry**Meetings/liaison:**

Cripps Health Centre GP meetings

Professional development:

Member of Integrative Professional Development Group
Member of Nottingham Gestalt Discussion Group
British Gestalt Journal International Seminar Day
UCS Training Day *Men's Development*, (Keith Tudor)

Ruth Kneale**Publicity talks/fairs:**

International Students Welcome Fair
Postgraduate Welcome Event
Welcome Event for New Staff

Meetings/liaison:

Workshop and Group planning meetings

Professional development

ECDL Modules 3,5,6,7
UCS Training Day *Men's Development*, (Keith Tudor)

Heather Nelson**Workshops and short courses for students:**

Assertiveness for Nurses and Midwives
Managing difficult situations

Workshops and short courses for staff:

Counselling Associates
Listening and responding to students in difficulty

Publicity talk/fairs:

Introductory talks to new Diploma & Postgraduate Diploma in Nursing students
Introductory talks to new midwifery students
Introductory talk to Graduate Entry Medical students

Introductory talk to Medical students

Meetings/liaison:

Forum for Counsellors working in the Public Sector, HSE guidance on Stress
Staff/Student Consultative Committee, Lincoln School of Nursing
Occupational Health Department Meeting, Mansfield
Cripps Health Centre GP meetings

Professional development:

Article published in Association for University and College Counselling Journal, August 2006 '*Staff Counselling: Models of Provision*'
Giving that big, scary lecture, University of Nottingham Associate Teacher Programme
Designing and leading tutorials! University of Nottingham Associate Teacher Programme
Uncover strengths and build resilience with CBT, workshop
UCS Training Day *Men's Development*, (Keith Tudor)

Lucy Rowley**Workshops and short courses for students:**

Managing Relationships Group

Workshops and short courses for staff:

Listening and responding to students in difficulty
Hall Tutors' Training

Policy/Steering Groups:

Groups and Workshops Steering Group
Steering Group for specific provision for male students
'Listening and responding to students in difficulty' workshop planning group

Professional development:

AUCC Conference
UCS Training Day *Men's Development*, (Keith Tudor)

Rob Sharp**Workshops and short courses for students:**

Series of workshops focussing on issues for male students
Stress Management

Workshops and short course for staff:

Listening and responding to students in difficulty

Publicity talk/fairs:

Welcome talk for Computer Science and IT students

Introductory talk to School of Nursing, Boston

Policy/Steering Groups:

Steering Group for specific provision for male students

'Listening and responding to students in difficulty' workshop planning group

Professional development:

Member of the Integrative Psychotherapy continuing professional development group:

2 day workshops on: Autism, Trauma, Art Therapy, and Eco- psychology

UCS Training Day *Men's Development*, (Keith Tudor)

External commitments:

Visiting tutor: Nottingham Counselling Service

Val Watson**Workshops and short courses for students:**

Coping with Exam Anxiety

Procrastination: How to deal with it

Stress Management

Workshops and short courses for staff:

Counselling Associates

'Listening and responding to students in difficulty' workshop planning group

Meetings/liaison:

Cripps Health Centre GP meetings

Professional development:

MSc in Person Centred Psychotherapy training, year 3

UCS Training Day *Men's Development*, (Keith Tudor)

External Commitments:

External examiner: Nottingham Trent University (Professional Certificate in Person-Centred Counselling Skills)

Supervisor: Nottingham Counselling Service

Myra Woolfson**Workshops and short courses for staff:**

Counselling Associates

Meetings/liaison:

Mentor for Mental Health Support Worker

Publicity talks/fairs:

Welcome week presentation for international students

Professional development:

Countertransference issues in relation to the suicidal client, Speaker Richard Jones, Clinical Director Leicester NHS

Psychotherapy Unit

Inaugural lecture *Medically unexplained symptoms and syndromes: Aetiology and management*, Prof Richard Morriss

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

Stress Management

Understanding Perfectionism

Workshops and short courses for staff:

Listening and responding to students in difficulty

Policy/Steering Groups:

Advisory Group on Disability

'Listening and responding to students in difficulty' workshop planning group

Meetings/liaison:

Cripps Health Centre GP meetings

Professional development:

HIP Seminar *The work of Jacques Lacan*

Counselling in Educational Settings: a psychodynamic approach, British Association of Psychotherapists course

UCS Training Day *Men's Development*,

(Keith Tudor)