



**University of
Nottingham**

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Annual Report 2021-2022

University Counselling Service



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Headline information

Client related

2554 clients (students and staff) were seen, a slight decrease of 3% on 2020/21.

- 6656 appointments were attended
- 24% were attended in-person, 32% by audio/telephone and 44% by video
- 6% of the total student population accessed counselling, down 1% on 2020/21.
- 4% of university staff accessed the service.
- Attendance decreased to 77% (from 81% in the previous year)

Of the 2554 individual clients:

- 43.2% attended for 1 appointment only
- 90.5% attended between 1-5 appointments
- 7.8% attended 6-10 appointments
- 1.6% attended 11 or more appointments

Waitlist for counselling consultations

- 3249 requests received, a 10% increase on 2020/21
- Average 64 requests received per week, up from 58 weekly average in 2020/21
- Average wait 24 days (excl weekend) up from 15 days (excl weekend) in 2020/21
- Approximately 8% of people requesting an appointment decided not to take it up when offered

ProblemShared

87 students attended 243 counselling sessions with ProblemShared

- 37% attended 1 session
- 88% attended 1 – 5 sessions
- 6% attended 6 sessions
- 6% did not attend any sessions

The top three presenting issues were:

1. Anxiety
2. Depression
3. Stress

Workshops programme

- 30 workshops were offered.
- 318 students and staff attended

Therapeutic groups

- Three fixed term therapeutic counselling groups were provided. Both the Coping & Connecting groups were run online, the Being Male group was run in-person
- The monthly International Students Support Group meets in-person and remotely

Staff support groups

- The University Counselling Service provided consultation, support, and guidance to individual schools and departments following critical incidents and events affecting staff groups and individuals in staff teams.

Head of Service report

The past year has seen high demand for appointments with the university counselling service. This is reflected across other wellbeing and therapeutic services in the UK, and the question of how to most effectively respond to demand for support is now a priority concern for senior managers at the university.

For much of 21-22 the service carried a large waiting list, with waiting times reaching 12 weeks at its peak. In response to this, we procured the services of a third-party provider Problem Shared. UCS Head of Service and the Administration team worked hard to ensure that Problem Shared provision was consistent with what is currently offered from UCS in order to protect equity of access. Procurement is a lengthy process however, and it took six months before we could start to refer student requests for counselling through to this provider.

At the end of the academic year, we were asked to carry out a review of service provision. A detailed report of all significant aspects of service provision (staffing and administration; the use of One at a Time approach; provision for staff; counselling access and waiting list; therapeutic groups and workshop provision) was produced with recommendations for future planning. The service was benchmarked against other provision in the higher education sector and possible tools for outcome measurements were considered. We also collected stakeholder feedback and while the number of student responses was low (due in part to the timing of the review) we had a better than anticipated response from staff. Stakeholder feedback consistently conveyed that the service is spreading itself too thinly: insufficient numbers of appointments; waiting times that were felt to be too long; the time between appointments was felt to be too long; and frustration with the brief interventions that the service offers.

Clearly it is time for a re-think and to consider how the service can most effectively respond to student and staff need for counselling in the short term, and in the longer term.

I shall be leaving my role on 23rd September after 21 years of working at the university. The difficult task of ensuring access to counselling for those students and staff who request it, will be a matter for the Campus Life management team and their managers, and when they are appointed, a new UCS Head of Service.

I hope that the UCS review will be a useful reference point in this process.

I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all the people with whom I have had the pleasure to work – be they clients or colleagues. I have enjoyed a rich, varied and fulfilling time at the University of Nottingham.

UCS performance in relation to goals for 2021/22

- Provide clear information about what we can offer and what it is not possible to offer – to manage expectations of counselling provision

The service carried out an extensive update of the information published on the UCS web pages. We have also updated the guides and leaflets produced in-house that are available to download here [Guides and Leaflets - The University of Nottingham](#)

The service review carried out in June 2022 now provides a comprehensive account of key aspects of service delivery. This will provide a useful reference point in terms of planning, providing clear information as to how UCS delivery has been shaped and structured into its current framework.

- Continue to develop access to counselling support that is inclusive and of consistent quality and availability to both students and staff.

While progress has been made in terms of inclusivity (see goals re diversity) there is work to be done to improve accessibility.

The procurement of third-party provision from Problem Shared was essential in managing demand over the past year and the service saw 2554 clients despite staff departures and the resulting loss of resource while recruitment took place.

Head of Service was part of the Staff Wellbeing Committee and Susie Ward has contributed to the Work-related Stress Task and Finish group and was a panel member on the University Staff Carers Network, 'the Wonder of you' event.

- Develop our provision in terms of hybrid working to achieve optimum flexibility and accessibility of appointments and workshops. We will resume offering appointments at Sutton Bonington and Jubilee campuses

Student preference in terms of how appointments were delivered was wherever possible, a service priority. In person provision resumed on Sutton Bonington. UCS lost its accommodation at Jubilee and has yet to acquire suitable counselling premises there. Counselling space should be a priority for planning this year as the team has increased in number and size.

- Contribute to the data collection across Campus Life to ensure that service net promoter scores can be attained, and user feedback collected. UCS Annual Report 2020-21 page 6 Operations Manager Davina Malcolm has ensured that UCS data has been provided on a regular basis as required.

- Develop systems to support counsellors in maintaining self-care while responding to intensive and sustained demand.

Systems have been introduced and will be built on in the coming year to ensure that counsellors are able to manage their caseloads flexibly and effectively, while maintaining their own wellbeing. These systems have been positively received by the team.

- Collaborate with partner services to provide a robust and effective pastoral support network at the university

Head of Service has met with lead colleagues in other support services at the university and developed liaison roles alongside reciprocal communications to improve consistency and increase collaborative working. Examples of collaborative working across the team include: Susie Ward, who contributes to the Health and Improvement Communication Group; Dan Pitt who provides Talk Shops as part of the Men's Health Active campaign by the sports division; Alison Hammond who provides supervision to the SU run Nightline supervisors. Our clinical placement support counsellor Beth Hill has been working closely with colleagues in Support and Wellbeing and MHAS to form a multidisciplinary approach to student support which might be a model that can be built on elsewhere.

- Focus on neurodiversity as a theme for our service CPD for the forthcoming year UCS spent two of our in-service training days considering themes relating to clients and colleagues who have been diagnosed with ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder); ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder); and other specific learning difficulties. Sarah Olds – a UCS counsellor with considerable expertise in Neurodiversity - delivered a training session to the counselling team and is looking at providing this elsewhere in the Campus Life pastoral support network. The service aim has been to increase our awareness of the challenges are experienced in relation to neurodiversity, and to understand the ways in which we can work most effectively to support people facing those challenges.

- When we recruit staff, a key principle will be to increase diversity where it is possible to do so

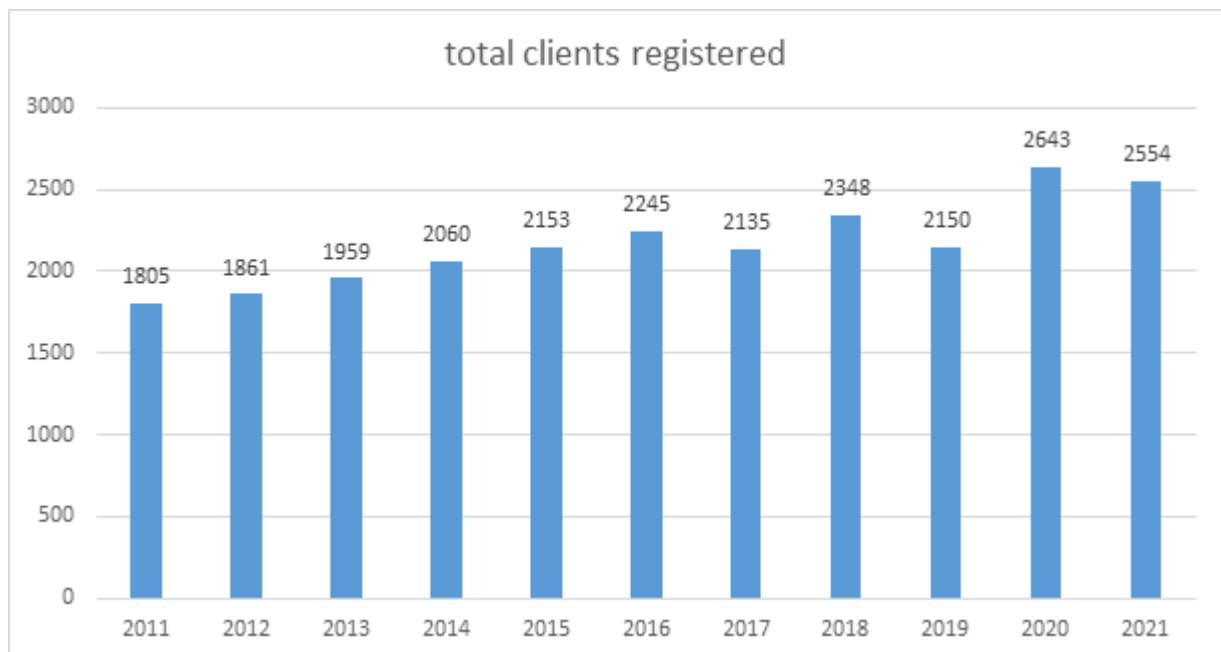
UCS has recently recruited 8 new members of staff to its team of counsellors and is happy to have improved the diversity of the team as well as ensured that the staffing structure itself has become more accessible to potential candidates seeking a role as a University of Nottingham counsellor.

- We will liaise effectively with internal and external services to ensure that students and staff can make informed choices about the help they need and are effectively signposted when necessary.

UCS counsellor Liz Cowley, has maintained regular links with IAPT services and built on the working relationships between university provision and the NHS psychological therapies service. This development has been welcomed by the IAPT services who report that it has informed their approach to and awareness of supporting students. It has also enabled UCS counsellors to be kept up to date with provision outside the university to better inform our signposting to those services.

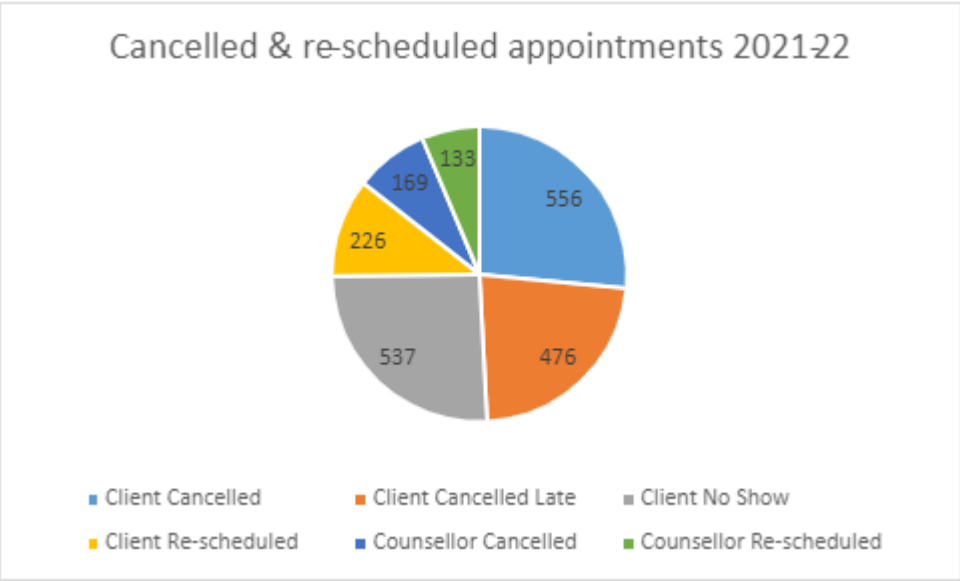
Statistics

In this academic year, 2554 individuals attended at least one appointment with UCS, 97% of the number seen last year.

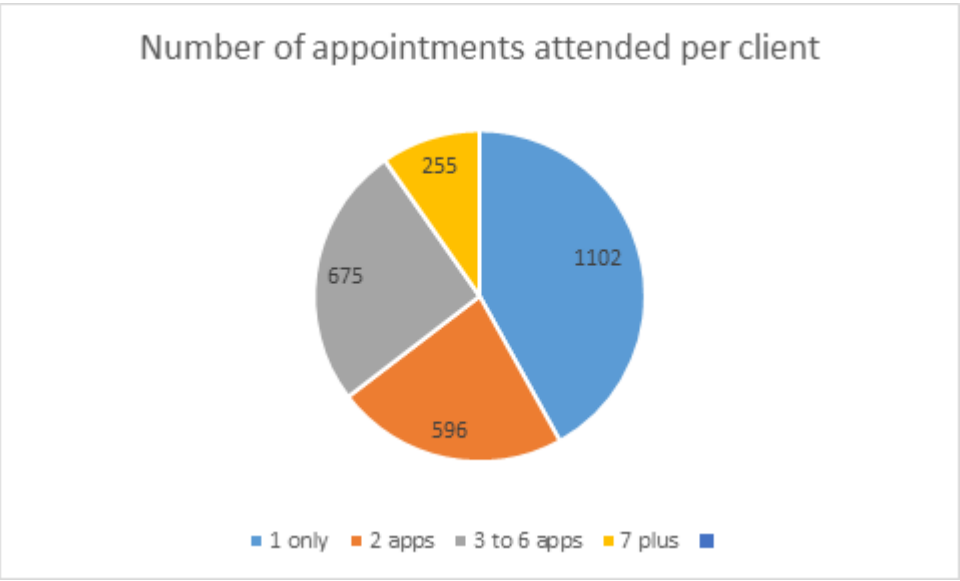


69% of clients seen were undergraduate students, 18% postgraduates, and 13% staff (346 people). In previous years, the proportion of staff clients has been around 9%.

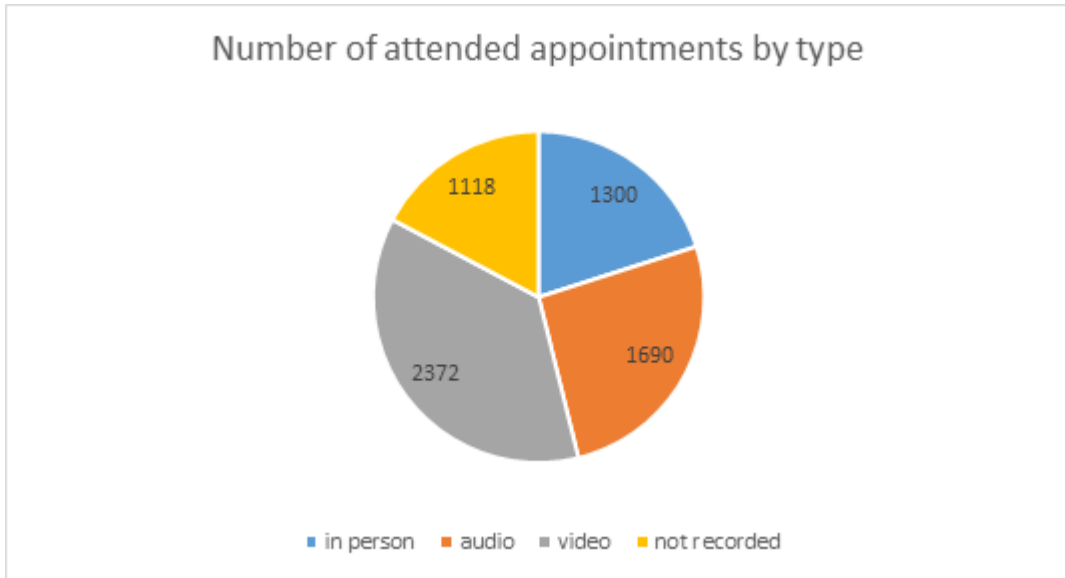
UCS offered a total of 8441 appointments, individual, and group; 76% of appointments were attended. 37% of appointments attended were initial/consultation appointments, 61% follow on and 3 % group. The numbers of unattended appointment are shown below.



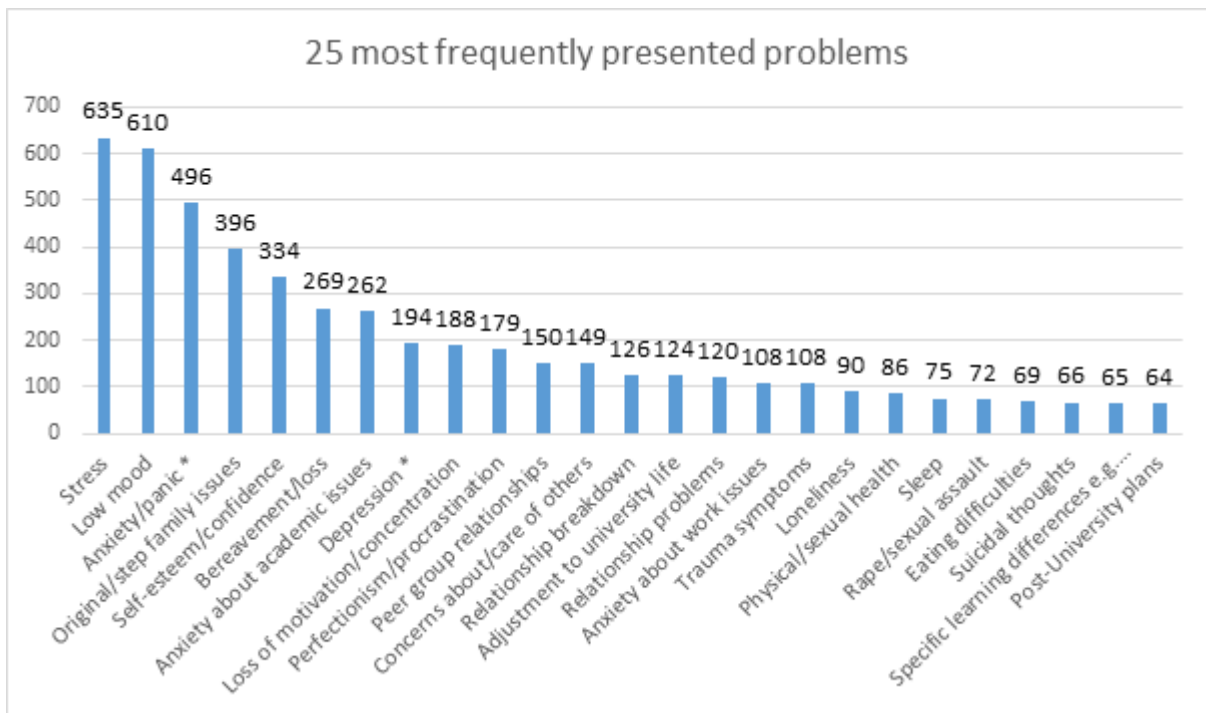
The average number of appointments attended per client was 2.6, with 66% of clients attending one or two appointments.



For the attended appointments where the mode of contact was recorded (5362 appointments representing 83% of the total), 24% were in person, 32% were audio/telephone calls and 44% were video calls.



The most frequently cited presenting problems were also similar to previous years. Difficulties relating to Covid-19 was only cited as a problem 43 times this year.



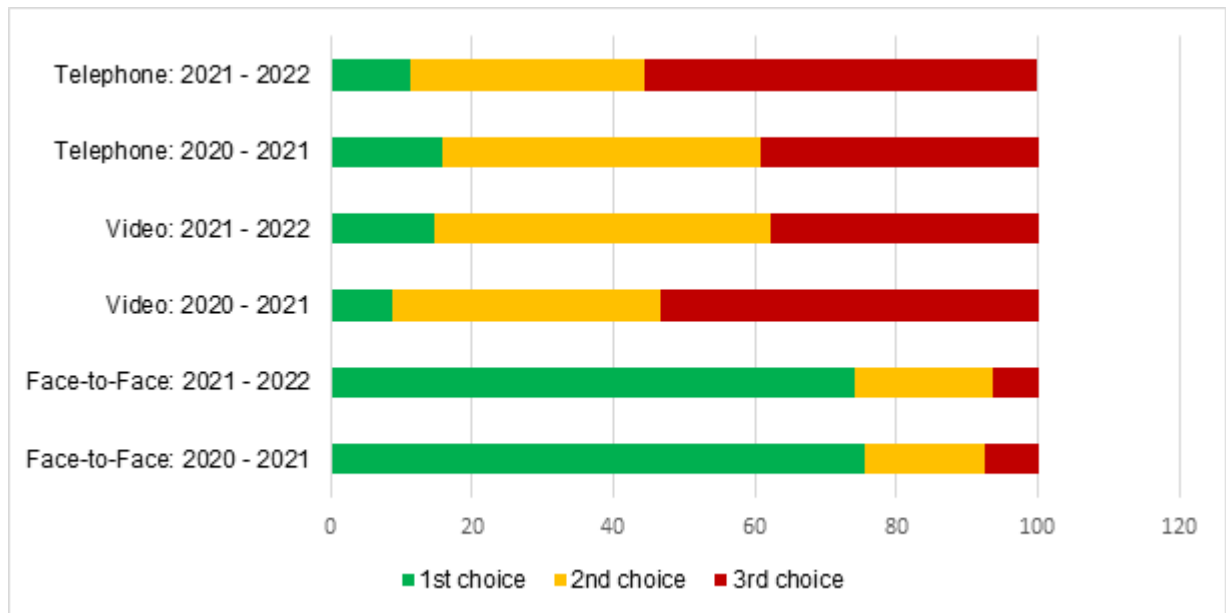
Client feedback

All clients who attended at least one appointment were sent a feedback questionnaire at the end of their counselling contract.

We sent 1878 questionnaires, 169 were completed giving a feedback rate of 9%, which is a 4% decrease on last year's return rate.

- 64% of the feedback was from student clients, 36% from staff clients.
- To what extent has counselling improved your sense of well-being?
 - 53% responded significantly or very significantly, up from 29% last year.
- How satisfied are you overall with the counselling you received?
 - 80% responded satisfied or very satisfied, up from 75% last year
- To what extent has counselling improved your overall experience of the University?
 - 49% responded that it was an important factor or the most significant factor, up from 45% last year
- To what extent has counselling helped you do better in academia, at work or on placement?
 - 31% responded that it was an important factor or the most significant factor, down from 34% last year.
- To what extent has counselling helped you develop skills that might be useful in (future) employment?
 - 39% responded that it was an important factor or the most significant factor, up from 27% last year.
- How satisfied are you with your experience of the administration of the counselling service?
 - 84% responded satisfied or very satisfied, down from 87% last year
- How likely is it that you would recommend the counselling service to others?
 - 1 = not at all likely; 5 = extremely likely
 - 83% scored between 4 – 5.

Since October 2021, we have offered face-to-face (F2F) and remote appointments. Surprisingly video appointments have seen an increase as both a first and second choice option. There was a slight drop in F2F as a first choice option and a significant drop in telephone appointments as a first and second choice option. The graph below illustrates the change in preferences.



Clinical Placement Counsellor

The role of Clinical Placement Counsellor has been in place since March 2020. The aim of the role is to support students in the health sciences and medical school whilst they are on placement. The role is positioned alongside UCS as an associate; this means it can flexibly meet the demands of a cohort of students who are in placement most of the time. It receives clinical support from UCS in the form of line management and group supervision and is supported clinically by an outside supervisor. The role is also managed in part by the Dean of Wellbeing in the medical school from where most of the funding comes. It meets the needs of the student in various ways, the main ones of which are outlined below:

- Transition groups for new and returning students who are anxious about placement
- Open Group – for students who struggle with their mental health whilst on placement
- Tailored training and workshop delivery for the NHS teaching hospital staff on mental health awareness and supporting students in placement
- Attendance of national conferences, presenting trainings and participating in Q&A panels on supporting students with mental health issues
- Collaborative MDT processes working with the medical school wellbeing staff and a named person in MHAS to triangulate and hold students who present with high risk
- Collaboration with the Psychiatric teaching Team in Nottingham Trent to create a positive and supportive induction for students on placement
- One to one counselling following the OAAT model but with some caveats for more complex students, those who have chronic mental health issues or who have a neuro-divergence which may affect the way they are accessing placement.
- Coaching sessions which follow the OAAT model but are more focused on problem solving, building confidence, decision making, planning and developing skills to move forward positively on the course.
- Specific exam workshops, mindfulness sessions and preparation for OSCE's in the lead up to medical school exams
- Trauma workshops with nurses, over 80 students attended over three workshops, feedback was so positive it will now be embedded in the curriculum this year.

- Drop in surgeries – The Listening Space – currently only at QMC but set to expand if role increases in hours.

The role originally was a split post, but the second role was not filled. The medical school has recently made the role to full time. There is a potential recruitment opportunity for 1-2 more posts to expand the support the students can access.

Beth Hill
Clinical Placement Counsellor

Workshops 2021 - 2022

32 workshops were offered online and included two in-person workshops.

318 staff and students attended our workshops

The workshop programme continued online, and the service has taken a proactive approach to the publicising of workshops, utilising our social media reach to Instagram alongside Twitter. In addition, we have been building links with other teams on campus and have sent regular emails flagging up workshops aimed at staff and students.

The service introduced new workshops this year including, '**Tips for coping with difficult feelings**', '**Imposter Syndrome**', '**Overthinking**' and '**Music as therapy-drumming**' and these proved successful in terms of attendance. In addition, the mindfulness sessions we have delivered and the 'Perfectionism and Procrastination workshops' have remained popular and well attended.

Feedback

The comments received this year were positive, with most respondents reporting either 'highly satisfied' or 'satisfied'. Comments included:

Mindfulness: 'As a newcomer to mindfulness, it helped me to realise that my busy mind can be helped to switch off, or at least be calmed'

'Very calming leader who set a good example, explained things clearly and had a lovely sense of humour. Opportunity to have camera off for parts that would have made me self-conscious.

Managing Stress & Anxiety: 'The Counsellor who ran the workshop was very reassuring and gave very good advice and tips for anxiety management. It was also helpful to hear that others were experiencing the same difficulties as me'

Looking ahead

The service will endeavour to get a balance between offering online and in-person workshop. We will continue to review and refocus our workshop programme dependent upon demand.

Susie Ward
Workshops and Outreach Coordinator

Therapeutic groups

This year there has been a consolidation of the group provision in the service and the return to some groups being offered in person.

The groups run this year and developments for 22/23...

- The Coping and Connecting Group – an eight-week group for students, ran in the autumn term and then again in spring. They were both run online.
- The continuation of the International Students Support Group. The group continues to meet monthly and is currently moving back to in-person format.
- The Men's Group has changed name to the more inclusive 'Being Male Group'. It was run in the summer term and was attended in-person.
- We are going to re-introduce the Open Group in 22/23 after it was paused in the pandemic due to a drop in service staff numbers. This is likely to begin in the second half of the academic year

Dan Pitt
Groups Coordinator

Outreach programme

UoN sports - Men's Health Active

In 2019/20, the counselling service agreed to facilitate regular, monthly 'talk shops' for users of the Men's Health Active service in response to student feedback. These sessions continued over the academic year, initially online and then in person as restrictions eased.

Dan Pitt
Groups Coordinator

Careers and Employability Service

We have written a blog for their Wellbeing series:

Navigating emotions

The post explored some of the positive and negative emotions students might experience and how these might lead to some highs and lows, with strategies for coping with this potential rollercoaster.

<https://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/careers/2022/02/09/career-planning-preparing-yourself-for-the-highs-lows-and-everything-in-between/>

Kick start HE Vocational Students

Two sessions were delivered for 'Kick Start' one for UG mature and care experienced students, called and another for students entering the university with a BTEC qualification (rather than A' levels). Sessions focused on introducing the team and our services and providing a drop-in to respond to further questions.

Fairs/Events

SU Wellbeing fair and the University Mental Health Day fair

We attended these events and proved a stall for the day in which we gave out leaflets about the service, met students and responded to questions about the service.

Faculty of Engineering Well-being week for staff

A session on mindfulness was delivered to staff during their well-being week and a workshop on 'Developing Resilience' was delivered in the faculty for students.

University Staff Carers Network 'the Wonder of you' event

We took part in a panel for staff and students, contributing to the experiences being a carer including providing information around how carers might take time to look after themselves, with a focus on supporting loved one's living with dementia/elder care.

Susie Ward

Workshops and Outreach Coordinator

Continuing Professional Development

Therapeutic practitioners are required by their professional bodies to engage in learning activities that develop and enhance their counselling abilities. This is achieved through the provision of both internal and external training that is aligned to the needs of the service and its users. Over the last academic year in-house training events have focused on the theme of Neurodiversity, namely Autism and ADHD. Exploring our understanding of diagnostic criteria, support pathways, client presentations has enhanced our capacity to work effectively with this client group as we strive to increase service accessibility and inclusivity

As a service, we continue to be guided by current themes within our clinical work, the wider University community, and the University's EDI strategy.

Over the next academic year, we plan to hold a full-day event on Focus-Oriented Therapy with an external facilitator, whilst in-house CPD will be focused on safeguarding and risk assessment as well as working therapeutically with client resistance.

Sarah Olds & Lee Wilkes CPD Co-coordinators

Appendix 1 – Our staff

Current staff – Counsellors

Alison Hammond	Counsellor
Beth Hill	Counsellor
Daniel Pitt	Counsellor
Des Reid	Counsellor
*Fiona Barnes	Counsellor
Fiona Mercer	Counsellor
Grace Lake	Counsellor
Ira Karakatsani,	Counsellor
Jackie Philippides	Counsellor
Jane Titterton	Counsellor
Liz Cowley	Counsellor
Lucy Halberstam	Counsellor
Matthew Johnston	Counsellor
Maya Gagni	Counsellor
Rani Mukherjee-Neale	Counsellor
Sarah Hinds	Counsellor
Sarah Olds	Counsellor
Susie Ward	Counsellor
Victoria Babalola	Counsellor

Current Staff – Reception

Davina Malcolm
Jane Hoddinott
Nicolette Poyzer

Sessional counsellors

Helen Wordley
Kathryn Perry
Steve France
*Fiona Barnes

Leavers

Adrian Langham	Counsellor
Myra Woolfson	Counsellor
Sarah Hines	Counsellor

We wish them all the best with their futures.

*Fiona Barnes started as a sessional counsellor and was recruited to a permanent post.

Appendix 2 – Abbreviations & Acronyms

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
EDI	Equality Diversity Inclusion
F2F	Face to Face
IAPT	Improving Access to Psychological Therapies
MDT	Multidisciplinary Teams
MHAS	Mental Health Advisory Service
NHS	National Health Service
OAAT	One At A Time
OSCE	Objective Clinical Structured Examination
QMC	Queens Medical Centre
UCS	University Counselling Service
UG	Undergraduate