

Counselling and Wellbeing (C&WB) – Service Report 2016/17

The Counselling and Wellbeing Service (C&WB) directly supports the student experience by providing professional counselling and mental health support. This is delivered through a range of resources: 1 to 1 individual sessions, online supported therapy, workshops, crisis intervention and drop in sessions.

We also help to ensure that there is an organisational wide understanding of mental wellbeing and appropriate responses to mental ill-health by providing consultation, training and awareness raising to staff and leading on process such as Fitness to Study and Cause for Concern.

This academic year two members of the service trained as Sexual Violence Liaison Officers (SVLO's) in accordance with the UUK Guidelines Changing the Culture. As part of this remit our services will extend to delivering awareness briefings to staff and facilitating Domestic and Sexual Violence workshops alongside individual student support.

Key headlines

- **Increase in demand:**

Number of registrations with the C&WB– 1368 (15/16 - 1291) – **increase of 6%.**

Between academic years 2010/11 and 2016/17 there has been a **151% increase** in the number of students registering with the C&WB Service (from 544 registrations to 1368)

Total number of **individual interventions** – 6181¹ (15/16 - 5706) – **increase of 8%**

Since 2012/13, when we began recording individual interventions, there has been an **increase in interventions of 60%** (from 3852 to 6181).

To ensure maximum attendance and to minimise no shows and cancellations, we have introduced an online booking system where students can register and book directly in to an initial consultation for the new academic year.

- **Evidence that the service supports retention:**

Feedback² shows that C&WB continues to make a direct contribution to student retention. Of those accessing the service who had said they had been missing lectures, considering or planning to intermit or drop out, **71%** said that the support they received changed this.

¹ Counselling 2406 / Mental Health 696 / Assessments 651 / Drop In 556 / Crisis intervention 65 Cause for concern interventions 181 / Appointments booked but cancelled or did not attend 1426 Fitness to Study 16 meetings / Workshops 29 participants / Supporting evidence for mitigation and extensions 128 / Risk case review meetings 7.

² 229 completed evaluations (17% response rate). In response to 'If you were missing lectures, considering or planning to intermit or drop out, did the support you received change this?'
Not applicable 53.95% / Yes 36.4% / No 9.65%

- **Evidence that shows the service has contributed towards employability skills:**

84% of students, where applicable, have said that our service has made a direct contribution to their confidence and / or focus regarding future employment.

- **Evidence that our online CBT platform is effective and helping us to meet the increase in demand for support**

Silver Cloud was introduced to help us meet the increasing demand for support from students with 'low-level' mental health conditions and has now been in place for two full academic years. In 2016/17 133 students used this platform in conjunction with guidance from C&WB (an increase of 114% from 2015/16) and further 279 used it for self-guided therapy (an increase of 156% from 2015/16).

Clinical based 'before and after' measures of depression/anxiety show 28% 'recovered', 56% showing reliable positive change and 26% reliably recovered.

- **High levels of satisfaction with the service and its effectiveness.**

88% of respondents said they were satisfied with the support received and this was also evident in qualitative feedback.

1. I have learned a lot about myself and have felt that i have started to become a much stronger person from having counselling at university.
2. I was offered valuable support through some very difficult times. I have found my counsellor to be both compassionate and professional and she has personally had an enormous positive effect on my wellbeing.
3. Great service. Well delivered.
4. It can be difficult making the decision to use counseling, but I found this service to be very open and welcoming.
5. It has helped me to continue on with my studies whilst trying to learn to cope due to unfortunate circumstances.
6. I cannot express enough how great and helpful this service has been for me over the years I have been a student at ARU. Without the support I have received here, it was impossible for me to complete my studies.

- **It is important to note that satisfaction with the service is 10% lower than last academic year and is mostly associated with long waiting times and what is perceived as short term therapy (6 sessions).**

1. Only selected no for satisfaction because in my belief, 6 weeks is nowhere near enough time to help someone in the same mental state that I was in. The service started to help, but then the sessions ended, and I reverted to the way I was before enrolling. Both counselling and CBT have not worked for me because of this constraint.

2. had 6 weeks of counselling and then no help whatsoever and no follow ups
3. Counselling. Waiting list was 3-4 months which was not satisfactory as a semester is 3 months. I had to seek help elsewhere.
4. Only started counselling in the last week of term
5. I went to these services understandable there is a waiting list due to the amount of students which require help prior to my visit. So I would NOT recommend as the timing is slow.
6. I think while group sessions would be a good idea for some people, there are others who are just too embarrassed to interact during the session or even turn up to the session, so maybe only advise group sessions to those who you really think can handle that type of session. Other than that, the counsellors were very helpful and very kind. Definitely would recommend to a more confident friend.

In response to these comments regarding waiting times, we have introduced (after initial consultation) the option of a one off session where students will be seen within 10 working days. We are hoping that this new initiative will help with waiting times. The six session model is in place in order to balance and maximise our resources which some students find dissatisfactory but without this model some students would receive no support.

- **90% of students would recommend our service to a friend.**
- To assess impact, students accessing therapeutic support are asked to complete scores against factors such as concentration, motivation and confidence after accessing support. Overall % report positive improvements on a range of factors:
 1. Improvement in concentration – 61%
 2. Improvement in motivation – 73%
 3. Improvement in confidence – 77%
 4. Improvement in ability to study – 64%
 5. Improvement in anxiety – 69%
 6. Improvement in depression – 68%
 7. Improvement in other – 70%

Commentary

The ongoing challenge for the C&WB service is the year-on-year increase in demand for counselling and mental health support. This is reported across the HE sector. We had some staffing issues which left the service undermanned for a period of time which in conjunction with the increase in demand, particularly in Cambridge, we had a waiting list for support (Cambridge) from semester one and 100 students remained on the list until it was cleared in

Summer 2017. All counselling staff have been trained in telephone counselling and all students who were on the list were asked if they would like to access telephone counselling from our team in Chelmsford as this could be provided sooner and were advised of drop in which can be used as and when required.

The full time mental health adviser post has been filled and in place for 22/08/2017, ready for the new academic year. With this additional resource it is hoped that students presenting with lower to medium levels of mental health issues, currently contained within the counselling role can be passed to the mental health advisers.

Our online CBT platform is enabling faster response times for low-level mental health needs and is continuing to prove to be effective for users.

The Student Minds project was introduced and funded by Student Services but has unfortunately not proved successful with very limited numbers of students accessing the groups.

We continue to liaise closely with external agencies in order to signpost and refer appropriately.

We continue to provide CPD and support and advice to staff across ARU to understand mental health issues amongst students and their role in supporting and referring. A total of 264 staff attended sessions in Mental Health First Aid/Lite, Dealing with Crisis and Mindfulness. Feedback from these sessions shows 100% satisfaction and highly positive comments:

Staff satisfaction: 100%

Would recommend to a colleague: 100%

1. Much greater understanding of the different mental health illnesses and the appropriate responses.
2. When engaging with students to have this knowledge in mind and apply it.
3. Excellent!
4. Great to have an opportunity to discuss the complexities of this issue - I'm a clinical psychologist and found this very helpful from the point of view of role clarity!
5. Useful overview and good to discuss as a group. Thank you for taking the time to offer this for us.
6. Very informative - great presenter - felt comfortable talking about the subject matter - will definitely help with student interaction.
7. This course should be compulsory to all staff at ARU.

Risk protocols and interventions:

In addition to the general increase in demand there has also been an increase in cases of severe mental health problems that require immediate attention and involve significant time and potential risk.

Crisis Intervention 2016/17: Cambridge 53; Chelmsford 12

Cause for Concern 2016/17: Cambridge 111; Chelmsford 25

Fitness to Study 2016/17: Cambridge 5; Chelmsford 1

Looking ahead:

- In 2016/17 we secured additional resources from within Student Services and employed two term time counsellors who were in place from mid semester two. These additional counsellors will be invaluable to meeting the increase in demand for the academic year 2017/18. We have also recruited a full time mental health adviser to fill the vacant post from October 2016. An additional service strategy for managing demand was to increase our placement initiative to 6 placement counsellors (trainees and qualified counselling staff).
- A new online booking system for the facilitation of registration and access to a consultation with a counsellor will be introduced in August 2017.
- A one off session will be offered to students who feel this would be beneficial and will be offered after consultation within 10 working days.
- Our group work programme has been adjusted to a rolling programme of x4 individual workshops covering self-esteem and confidence, stress management and mood management and will be running throughout the semesters (x2).
- We will be introducing additional staff training for Domestic and Sexual Violence Awareness and contributing to our Universities response to the new UUK Guidelines, Changing the Culture, through the provision of specialist support as SVLO's. The SVLO role is an accredited position and provides a pro-active support and advice service to any students who have experienced sexual violence. This may include recent and non-recent cases of sexual violence.
- We will offer staff briefing sessions regarding the new SVLO role.
- Two additional members of the service will be completing the Train the Trainer MHFA training (2 day) in order to increase the potential of additional trainings.

- X 2 pilot 'reflective practice' groups for Student Services front line staff will be running from August 2017.