



**RIVERSIDE
COUNSELLING
SERVICE**

2022/2023

ANNUAL REPORT

Riverside's annual report for FY 2022/2023 including a summary of financial, operational and clinical performance.

PREPARED BY :

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**RIVERSIDE COUNSELLING
SERVICE**

**The Friends Meeting House,
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Note from the Chair of Trustees

Looking back over the last financial year, there are many positive developments in which Riverside Counselling Service can take pride, as well as, inevitably, some major challenges and uncertainties which remain.

We started the financial year in a state of flux, wondering who our next Clinical Director would be after the departure of our previous long-term Director, Hilary Arthur. After an exhaustive (and exhausting!) process of reflection and selection, we were delighted to announce that Christine Gregory would take the reins. Christine felt well-placed to lead the organisation, having experienced Riverside as a placement student and combining this insider perspective with a huge amount of external management experience gained during the pre-counselling phase of her career. Although the whole Riverside team can take pride in what has been achieved during the past year, Christine deserves a lot of credit for coordinating the team, working extremely hard, and keeping everyone aligned.

Coinciding with Christine's appointment, several other changes were announced in the senior management team – mostly promotions from within, offering a welcome amount of continuity after an extended period of change spanning the pandemic and the departure of Hilary. I thank the whole management team, as well as my fellow trustees, for their commitment to Riverside during another demanding year.

Here is a summary of some of the most important developments that have taken place this year.



Fundraising and Finances

After a tough financial year in 2021 – 2022, I am pleased to report that we were able to at least partially restore the health of our finances during 2022 – 2023. This was achieved through a tremendous team effort – the clinical team managed to increase fee income by 7%. Our fundraising efforts paid real dividends, achieving an 83% increase in income generated through a combination of grants, donations and fundraising events. I would like to thank all our donors for their continued support during this year, and would particularly like to highlight the Tambour Foundation, whose generosity towards the end of the financial year made a significant contribution towards restoring the health of our finances. I would also like to thank Amanda Collins, our Fundraising Manager, who left on a real high! Amanda moved on to explore new career horizons in the spring of 2023 – we wish her every success for the future, and welcome Jason McMahon, our new Fundraising Manager, into the Riverside family.

Service Delivery

We have had a strong focus during the year on service delivery, staying open minded and willing where appropriate to offer greater flexibility in our approach. Whilst retaining a focus on providing counselling for as long as it has been needed. We have been offering clients shorter term therapy or group approaches where the clinical team feels this is appropriate, an approach which also helps to contain service delivery costs, and often matches the preferences of clients.



Board of Trustees

We have retained the services of all our Trustees during the past financial year – something I am intensely grateful for, their purely voluntary contributions are invaluable and highly appreciated throughout the organisation. We continue to evaluate what skills we may need going forward and have the ambition to take opportunities as they arise to evolve our Board of Trustees and make it as representative as possible of the varied communities we serve.

Ongoing Changes

Although occurring after the end of the period in question, it would be remiss of me not to mention that after a very successful, but equally busy and demanding, year in the post, Christine Gregory has recognised that it is not feasible to combine running Riverside with entering the final year of her Doctorate. After some intense reflection and very open, honest and helpful discussions with the board of Trustees, Christine has announced her intention to step back from her post for a period at least, during the Riverside summer break in August. We are currently in the midst of interviews for an Interim CEO, and I am pleased to report that we have had a good response to the post and have already seen several good candidates for the role.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Christine for all her hard work in leading the organisation over the past year. Her success in the role and insights into the challenges and opportunities facing the organisation will be invaluable input for the new Interim CEO once appointed.

Adrian Marsh
June 2023



Director's Report

Following two years of service delivery and operations impacted by the Covid-19 restrictions, this year has seen the resumption to a “business as usual” state, albeit we have retained some pandemic working practices to help streamline our services, increase flexibility for clients and counsellors alike, and make counselling more accessible to a greater number of clients.

To address the needs of our clients, we have moved most of our initial consultations online, while retaining some face-to-face sessions for those that cannot connect online. We have continued to offer online and face-to-face counselling for ongoing sessions. Our drop-in services are delivered in person and over the phone and, in addition to our existing Berinsfield service, have expanded into Didcot this year to address growing demand. We have found the increased anonymity and accessibility of a phone-based service have been well received. Towards the end of the financial year, we secured new rented premises in a central Henley location, close to the station, which we hope will increase the accessibility of our service to young people and adults alike.

Flexibility in the duration of counselling is a strength of the Riverside Counselling Service, and there continues to be significant variation in how clients engage with the service. Clients and counsellors work collaboratively to decide whether short (12 weeks), medium (20 weeks) or long-term (44 weeks) therapy is most appropriate based on the complexity of their presentation and their current circumstances.

The five most commonly referenced issues, representing over 50% of all issues are: Low self-esteem, confidence and self-worth (15.89%), Anxiety (12.35%), Depression (8.92%), Family difficulties (incl. divorce & child-related issues) (7.43%) and Stress (5.73%).

The top five issues have been consistent over the past three years. However, family difficulties has overtaken stress as the fourth most commonly referenced challenge facing our clients. The prevalence of low self-esteem, anxiety and depression have also increased year-on-year. However, since there is no limit to the number of presenting issues a client can select when they self-refer, nor a ranking category for each issue, every client is likely to reference several overlapping concerns. As a service more broadly, we continue to see increased complexity in the type of challenges our clients bring.

Throughout the year we have recruited nine counsellors, all of whom directly approached the service due to our strong reputation as a highly regarded placement provider. The nature of Riverside Counselling Service's model as a placement organisation for trainee counsellors inevitably means that we lose counsellors each year as they finish placements and move to the next phase of their career transition. As an organisation, Riverside typically faces a high level of attrition during the summer months, with recruiting necessary throughout this period to maintain volunteer numbers from September. Over the course of the year, Riverside modified its recruitment strategy and qualifying criteria, and consequently sourced, advertised and recruited for volunteer counsellors throughout the year. This has allowed us to increase the diversity of our counsellor base, better manage attrition spikes, provide a more consistent experience for our clients, manage waiting times and client allocation throughout the year and reduce the impact to operational capacity in the summer months.

In the first six months of FY22/23, we delivered two clinical workshops (CWs) for our counsellors: Time Limited Contract Extensions - Dilemma or Temptation and Working with Autism. Unfortunately, following the departure of our Clinical Lead for Training and Development towards the end of the summer, we were left with a gap in our CPD (continuing professional development) offering. However, I am pleased to say that this has been reinvigorated towards the back end of the year. Our training programme was further strengthened by the considerable support and generosity of the Tambour Foundation, whose grant provided a dedicated training fund to develop and grow our counsellor population. As a result of the grant, Riverside Counselling Service has offered CWs including: Safeguarding and Time-Limited Counselling at Community-based Counselling Services. Additionally, counsellors have had the opportunity to engage in monthly clinical discussion groups (CDGs) focusing on trauma, the role of money in the counselling room and psychodynamic approaches to short-term psychotherapy. Feedback following Riverside's revamped CPD programme has been consistently excellent and we look forward to maintaining momentum and introducing further planned training to support the learning and development of our counsellors and, thus, the experience and quality of service and support that our clients receive.

In response to counsellor feedback over the summer, Riverside has streamlined its working practices, delivering monthly team meetings and CPD sessions online, while establishing a quarterly face-to-face community meeting to allow a chance for connectedness, networking, exploration of ideas and collaboration. Additionally, our team have worked hard to streamline processes, procedures and technology to support our service delivery and build greater efficiency in our operations.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the retirement of Hilary Arthur mid-way through the year. Hilary held the mantle of Clinical Director at Riverside for over 15 years and ably steered the charity to its current position, expanding both its services and footprint to ensure we maximised mental health provision within and across the communities we serve. It is fair to say that Hilary's departure and those of several other team members, including a Clinical Manager, Clinical Lead for training and development and our Fundraising Manager, all of whom were stalwarts within the Riverside community, felt like a significant loss. This has meant bringing on board several new faces to join the existing team, some of whom were already working for Riverside in another capacity and others who joined from the external market. Understandably, these changes have felt unsettling. As a team and a wider organisation, we have navigated these changes together, and ensured that our clients continue to receive the same levels and quality of counselling they have come to expect.

Last but not least, I'd like to extend a huge thank you to our team, our counsellors and all of our many and varied supporters. Your grants, donations, time and support enable us to provide a much-valued service to our local community and we simply would not exist without you. With your contributions, we have been able to directly help 417 individuals within South Oxfordshire in the past year. Many more, including family, friends, work colleagues and employers will have been indirectly impacted by the support our clients receive. Thank you!

Christine Gregory
June 2023

Impact Report

Our clients, and the communities we serve, remain at the heart of what we do. We have expanded our drop-in services in Didcot and Berinsfield to support those in more immediate need. We continue to focus on further embedding ourselves in our communities and have forged strong links with community organisations and healthcare providers in Berinsfield and Didcot, though we know there is always more to be done.

Snapshot

6251

121 counselling sessions delivered

492

Client enquiries

411

Clients supported through 121 and group counselling

237

Initial consultations conducted by our counsellors

67

Clients supported through our drop-in services

20

Average number of group sessions attended by each client

FY22/23 was another busy year with an increase of 10% in adult enquiries year-on-year and 47% on FY20/21's enquiry rate. This was likely, artificially low resulting from client's focusing on other priorities during the pandemic.

We received 109 enquiries for young people specifically, and delivered 550 sessions to 51 clients during this period. We were particularly fortunate to benefit from a multi-year grant from The Thamesfield Youth Association, which has enabled us to pay some of our Henley counsellors to deliver 121 sessions to young people in the area, helping us address waiting lists and increase capacity.

Drop-in services have proved popular with clients and funders alike and we have received several grants, including a multi-year grant from the Berinsfield Garden Village scheme and the Didcot Powerhouse Grant to support further expansion of these services within these communities.

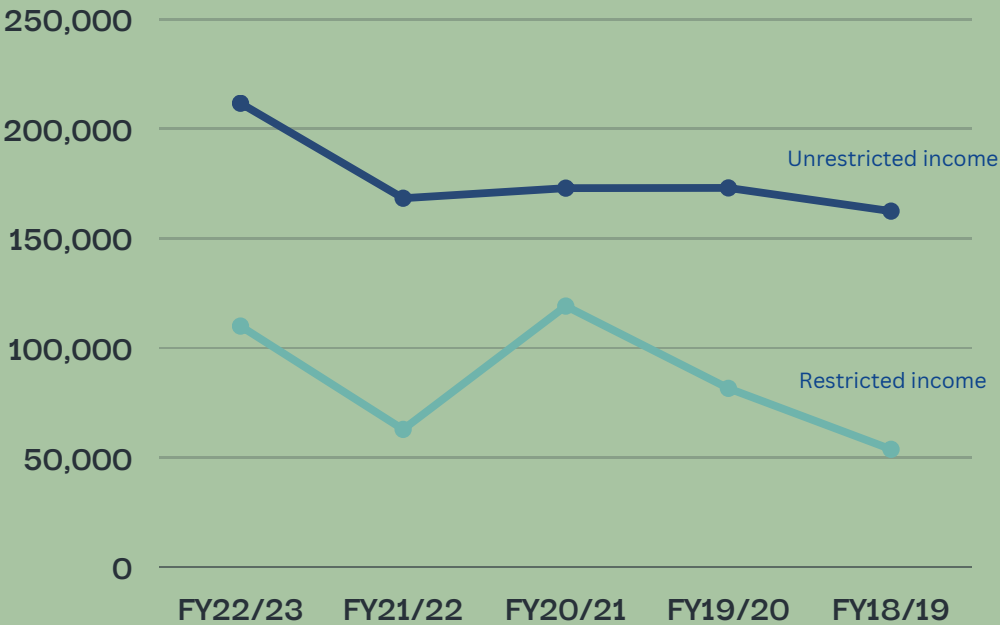
With thanks to

- Albert Hunt Trust
 - Berkshire Community Foundation
 - Big Lottery Fund
 - Brightwell cum Sotwell
 - Coopers Charitable Trust
 - Crowmarsh Parish Council
 - Didcot Town Council
 - Doris Field
 - Garfield Weston
 - Graham Woodgate
 - HTC Finance
 - Invesco Cares
 - John Hodges Trust
 - KJ Smith Solicitors
 - Louis Baylis Trust
 - Lottery Community Fund
 - Oxford County Council
- OCC Councillor Bennett
 - Openwork
 - Oxfordshire Community Foundation
 - Postcode Lottery
 - Pye Settlement
 - Rotherfield Peppard
 - Shanly Foundation
 - South Oxfordshire District Council
 - SODC Councillors
 - Stoke Row Parish Council
 - Tambour Foundation
 - Thamesfield Youth Association
 - Tony Lane Association
 - Williams Grey Foundation
- and to all other individual contributors,
whose generous donations supported
our ongoing activities

Funds raised

£321,635

Riverside has seen an increase on both restricted (funding earmarked for a particular project or use) and unrestricted funding year-on-year. Funding remains in line with pre-pandemic levels. However, moving into FY23/24 and beyond, we will be looking to broaden and deepen our fundraising and PR efforts to support service growth and address increasing need.



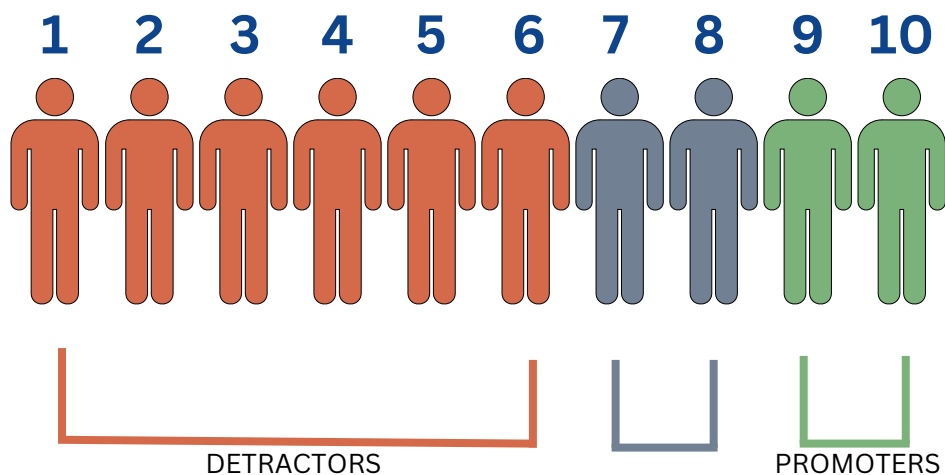


95%

Clients who would use our service again. For the remaining 5% this would depend on their individual circumstances

NPS = % promoters - % detractors

*+50, deemed “excellent” by Bain & Company (the creators of NPS)



+67

Client Testimonials



“(My counsellor) was amazing. She was exactly what I needed in this time period of my life and she really helped me work through some tough feelings and emotions I was going through. Riverside in itself was always in communication to guide me through the process, when I first joined.”



"Fantastic service & my counsellor was amazing. It's been life changing for me. Thank you"



““Everyone I dealt with at Riverside, at each stage of the service, from initial approach, to the counselling sessions, to ending the sessions, was professional, caring and understanding, which was much appreciated.”



“My counsellor was wonderful. Kind, considerate, sensitive, understanding, knowledgeable and above all excellent at listening and supporting me through some very tricky, personal experiences.”



“I am so glad I pushed myself to use Riverside’s services. I feel so much more positive about my future and am so grateful for the support I received from my counsellor.”



“I found embarking on counselling quite daunting. However my counsellor ensured that I felt comfortable with the process very quickly and this was key to its success. Counselling has guided and supported me while navigating through one of the most challenging times of my life. I’m so glad I took that first step and approached Riverside.”

The year ahead

Looking forward to FY23/24, we aim to balance our existing service delivery with a growth mindset, focused on creativity and innovation to address the continued demand for mental health support. We will review our fee structure and service model, informed by data and community and client feedback, to ensure we are providing services that are fit for purpose and that reach those clients most in need in the areas of the community that Riverside currently underserves. Indeed, following community and client feedback, we hope to launch our first Young Person's drop-in mid-way through the year, in Berinsfield, and have already received partial funding for this.

We will broaden and deepen our fundraising strategy and community outreach, to address the growing need for our services and will continue to streamline our internal processes and procedures to ensure a smoother and more efficient client journey and experience, while also aiding the administrative burden on our staff and volunteers. To that end, we are hoping to work with a web design company to develop a more user-friendly site, that has a better user experience and becomes a one-stop shop for funders, clients, communities and volunteers alike, for which we have received partial funding.

