University of Aberdeen Counselling Service
Client Feedback Survey Results and Action Plan

Synopsis of results:

What would have improved your experience of the Counselling Service?

- 25 (23%) - Nothing (satisfied or very satisfied with service)
- 9 (8%) - Waiting time between Exploratory session and ongoing counselling too long
- 7 (7%) - Would like variety of different counselling approaches in addition to Person Centered approach offered
- 3 (3%) - Wanted referral to more appropriate resource/did not get what they needed at this service
- 2 (2%) - Wanted information about individual Counsellors in order to select most suitable one for themselves
- 2 (2%) - Wanted out-of-office-hours & lunch-time appointments to be available
- 2 (2%) - Were unhappy with the Counsellor they were assigned
- 1 (1%) - Were unhappy with the waiting area and possibility of meeting their students
- 1 (1%) - Wanted same Counsellor for all appointments (Exploratory, emergency, holding and ongoing)
- 1 (1%) - Were unhappy with appointment system and wanted text reminders

If you are no longer in contact with the Counselling Service could you briefly explain why this is?

- 7 (7%) – Fine now/issue is resolved
- 5 (5%) – Felt service couldn’t help or the approach was not right for them
- 2 (2%) – Still receiving counselling with service
- 1 (1%) – No longer eligible for service/no longer a student
- 1 (1%) – Work schedule means can no longer come for counselling

Please tell us any ways in which you found counselling or any aspects of the service helpful. The following aspects were referred to several times by those who responded:

- Majority of respondents emphasised feeling understood, supported and listened to in confidential, non-judgmental and impartial counselling relationship
- Just talking about problems helped as a means to arrive at solutions, understand themselves better, feel and cope better, make changes, gain new perspectives and contain their emotions
- Friendliness and helpfulness of staff
- Ease and efficiency of making appointments and interacting with service
- Calming physical environment of service house and garden
- Valued experience of Counsellors
- Enabled several respondents to achieve better work-life balance and feel more at peace with themselves
- Played a role in remaining at University
- Boosted confidence
- Valued information and leaflets available as well as use of SAD lamp
• Appreciated Person-Centered approach and open-ended number of sessions as well as the availability of emergency appointments in times of urgency
• Felt the service had been essential to them in terms of surviving

**Action Plan:**

In our Action Plan we have responded to the two issues which recurred most frequently in the feedback survey:

1. In response to the 8% of respondents who felt that the waiting time between their initial Exploratory session and ongoing counselling was too long:
   • We have tightened up our requirements for users of the service. If clients miss an appointment without letting us know or cancel 3 consecutive appointments we will offer their space to another client. If they wish to continue counselling they can get back in touch and rejoin the waiting list. This requirement is written on appointment cards and on a notice in the waiting room.
   • Clients wishing to continue ongoing counselling after the summer break are given a deadline just after the start of term by which to contact us to arrange an appointment. If we do not hear from them we offer their space to another client.
   • We have taken on additional Trainee Counsellors and Associates in order to be able to offer more appointments.
   • All Counsellors are very mindful of the high demand for counselling and where appropriate offer ongoing clients appointments fortnightly or rather than weekly in order to allow them to see additional clients.
   • During Exploratory sessions clients are made aware of other resources, such as local counselling agencies, NHS resources accessible through GPs, interactive websites, leaflets and books to make use of as an alternative to waiting for counselling or to use while they are awaiting ongoing counselling, if appropriate.
   • We continue to make one-off ‘holding’ appointments available to those on the waiting list who feel that their situation has deteriorated. In these ‘holding’ sessions we reassess the client’s Severity Rating (on a scale of 1-7 with 7 being the most urgent) and change their position on the waiting list for ongoing counselling if appropriate.

In response to the 7% of respondents who wanted a variety of different counselling approaches in addition to the Person-Centered approach offered:

• We have taken on Trainee Counsellors and Associates from Counselling courses using different core models, notably the University of Abertay Diploma in Counselling course which focuses on the Integrative approach and the Glasgow Caledonian University Doctorate in Counselling Psychology which trains students in both the Person-centered and CBT approaches.
• 5 of the 6 Counsellors in this Counselling Service have recently undergone in-house training in Coaching in order to introduce another approach to offer to clients when appropriate.