Our Response to the
University of Aberdeen Counselling Service
Client Feedback Survey Results 2015

In March 2015 we sent our annual Client Feedback Survey to all student and staff clients who had attended the University Counselling Service in the first semester of this academic year, September to December 2014.

In brief
We received 157 responses (30% response rate). Everyone who responded had attended a minimum of one initial Exploratory or Emergency session. Of the respondents, 74% had also received ongoing counselling sessions and 10% were still on the waiting list for ongoing counselling. For the first time this year we included those on the waiting list in our survey and directed respondents to different sections of the survey according to what they had been offered. Overall:

- 88% of respondents found counselling was very helpful or helpful in addressing their situation
- 28% of respondents wanted a reduced waiting time for counselling and 9% wanted more information about the waiting time whilst on the waiting list

In detail
We analysed all the survey results, including all the individual free-text comments that you have made. We are grateful to you for taking the time to give us feedback and this has influenced any modifications that we are planning for our service in order to improve the experience of our clients. We have grouped the information that we received from you under the following headings and have described the changes that we have made or intend to make below in response to your comments:

- Experience of the Counselling Service reception and procedures
- Ways in which counselling has helped those who have received ongoing sessions
- Experience of those who had to wait for ongoing counselling sessions after their initial Exploratory appointment
- Responses regarding what would have improved your experience of the Counselling Service
Experience of Counselling Service reception and procedures

What you said:

- **100%** of you were **very satisfied** or **satisfied** with the reception you received in the office
- **97%** were **very satisfied** or **satisfied** with the appointment booking system
- **90%** were **very satisfied** or **satisfied** with our explanation of the waiting process
- **56%** were **very satisfied** or **satisfied** with the location of our books which are available for clients to borrow, with the remaining **44% neither satisfied or dissatisfied**

Ways in which counselling has helped those who have received ongoing sessions

What you said:

- The following graph indicates what respondents received at the Counselling Service:

  ![Graph showing the percentage of respondents receiving different types of counselling sessions.]

- **40%** felt that counselling was **the most significant** or was **an important factor** in helping you stay at University and 24% felt this was one of many factors
- **37%** felt that counselling was **the most significant** or was **an important factor** in helping you do better in your academic work and 21% felt this was one of many factors
53% felt that counselling was **the most significant** or was **an important factor** in improving your overall experience of University and 21% felt this was **one of many factors**

49% felt that counselling was **the most significant** or was **an important factor** in helping you develop skills that might be useful in obtaining future employment and 17% felt this was **one of many factors**

88% felt that counselling has been **very helpful** or **helpful** in addressing your situation

Analysis of individual comments indicated that about 33% of you found the experience of being listened to and given space to explore your issues and express their feelings in a non-judgmental and empathic environment useful.

In your comments 22% of you referred to the location of the service, ease of access, availability of resources and the friendliness at reception as beneficial

Finally, 10% felt that your relationship with your individual Counsellor was an important factor and 6% of you valued the confidentiality and the independence of the service from the rest of the University and family

80% of respondents said they would ‘**definitely**’ recommend the Counselling Service to a friend or colleague, and 16% responded to this question with ‘**maybe**’ or ‘**perhaps**’

**Experience of those who had to wait for ongoing counselling sessions after their initial Exploratory appointment**

**What you said:**

- Of those of you who had to wait for an ongoing appointment, 24% waited for **under a month**; 12% waited for **1-2 months**; 32% waited for **2-3 months**; 12% waited for **3-4 months**; 20% waited for **over 4 months**

- For those of you who had to wait for ongoing counselling the consequences were: 15% of respondents reported that their **situation resolved itself**; for 54% of respondents there was **no change**; 31% felt that their **situation deteriorated**

- 24% of those waiting reported that they had taken up the option of one or more ‘holding’ appointments offered during the Exploratory session during the waiting period

- 68% of respondents found the Exploratory session itself ‘**definitely**’ or ‘**a bit**’ useful
• **44%** of those waiting said they used alternative sources of help during the waiting period, including resources they found on the Counselling Service website

• **70%** of those who used alternative resources during their wait found these ‘helpful’

• In response the question asking what other resources those awaiting counselling had tried, written comments listed the following: yoga; breathing exercises; self-help books; leaflets; online resources; private therapy; GP referral to specialised service in hospital; meditation

• In terms of being kept up to date about the waiting list during the waiting period, **74%** of respondents felt that they were not kept adequately informed with updates

• The following graph shows the overall impact on respondents of having to wait for counselling on a scale of 1-5:

What we are doing:

• From September 2015, those on the waiting list for ongoing counselling will be contacted at two points during the year, around mid-November and mid-March to update them on the current situation and to provide additional information about alternative sources of support

Responses regarding what would have improved your experience of the Counselling Service
**What you said:**

46% of respondents said that there was nothing that could improve the service for them and felt that it is very good as it is

28% felt that a reduction in the waiting time for counselling and that faster, more immediate service would improve their experience

9% specified that they would like more updates about the waiting time

20% would appreciate more suggestions from the Counsellor, such as: coping mechanisms; therapeutic exercises; group discussions and activities

**What we are doing:**

- In order to offer a more equitable service, from September 2015 we will put an upper limit on the duration of counselling for all clients which will be established in discussion with a Counsellor
- From September 2015 if a client cancels 2 consecutive appointments or does not show up for an appointment and does not contact the service within 24 hours we will re-add them to the waiting list. In doing this we hope to increase the chances of those on the waiting list receiving ongoing counselling sooner
- From September 2015, those on the waiting list for ongoing counselling will be contacted at two points during the year, around mid-November and mid-March to update them on the current situation and to provide additional information about alternative sources of support
- We have taken on more newly qualified Associate Counsellors for the forthcoming academic year, 2015-16, in an effort to reduce waiting times