

St Barnabas Counselling Centre Newsletter January 2022



It gives me great pleasure to wish you all a Happy New Year and to introduce myself as the new Director of St Barnabas Counselling Centre. I am an Accredited Integrative Psychotherapist with experience of working with individuals and communities from various marginalised backgrounds including refugees and asylum seekers, survivors of trafficking and modern slavery and clients affected by sexual abuse and intergenerational trauma. Having lived and worked overseas in India, Chile, Greece and Australia, I am pleased to have returned years later to the beautiful wide skies of Norfolk where I was born and where my mother is originally from.

Having been in the role for only four months there has been plenty to be getting on with. We have been making the necessary adjustments to safely welcome our clients back to the centre for face-to-face counselling, whilst continuing to offer online sessions for those who can't make it in for various reasons. We have been interviewing and selecting new trainees to complete their placements with us and have three new Group Supervisors join our Team: Ruth Clark, Tracey Woodcock and Ron Upton. On our Advisory Council we are saying our fond farewells to Caroline Brown after several years and a warm welcome to Marysia Renshaw. On our Board of Trustees we have been joined by three new members: Karl Jermyn, Jane Simpson and Gillian Anderson Brown.

With the help of donations, we are planning on replenishing our Bursary Fund which helps those in financial difficulty access counselling at a reduced rate, give our website an upgrade and potentially give our building some long needed TLC! Following on from COP 26, we are also keen to make some organisational changes to help us become more sensitive to climate change and evaluate our contributions.

As we are all aware, the pandemic has had a huge impact on people's mental health and wellbeing. With NHS waiting lists increasing all the time, charities such as our own have been stepping in to support where we can. At St Barnabas, we pride ourselves upon offering longer term therapy as well as short term counselling. This means we can spend additional valuable time with clients who may have more complex needs. Meanwhile, our employee assisted counselling service continues to receive high referrals as individuals continue to juggle the demands of work life balance and the ripple effects of lockdown.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your kind contributions to us over the past few years. You have enabled us to continue doing the meaningful work in stabilising and enhancing people's mental health in Norfolk. We are coming up to nearly 50 years of providing low-cost counselling in the community, for which we are very proud.



Updates:

• *'Experiential workshop: The Helping Relationship - through a systemic lens'*

This year we will be offering an exciting one-day CPD session on 12th March 2022 which will be delivered by Systemic Therapist & Constellations practitioner Anna Magee.

Spaces are limited but we do have a few places left, so do get in touch if you are interested in attending (visit our website for more details: www.stbcc.org.uk/for-counsellors.html)

• We have 7 lovely rooms that continue to be available for bookings at very reasonable rates (contact our Centre Coordinator for more details admin@stbcc.org.uk).

• If your employees are struggling with emotional difficulties and would benefit from counselling, do get in touch with us for more details about our Corporate counselling support.

St Barnabas – My Experience of Surviving the Pandemic



I will never forget day in March 2019. For more than 10 years it was usually myself, after having counselled clients in the evening, that would lock up the counselling Centre. But this time I was not returning. I feel that we had been an amazing community that deeply valued each other just as we valued our clients. Now, we were in our own isolated worlds, separated from each other and from our clients by the government's first lockdown. A world without touch or hugs.

The Centre had been extremely fortunate as, for the past year, the Director at that time had been working on the use and introduction of clinical software rather than paper files, and on client payments by card machine to reduce the cash that the centre handled – both of which helped enormously with this difficult transition to online working. The Director and the office staff worked tirelessly so that counselling could recommence as quickly as possible, this time online and by phone, and arranged for professional training for counsellors to support this new way of relating to clients – though we were still in uncharted territory. Before this time, I'd not heard of a 'Zoom' communications app; now it helped make counselling possible again.



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Working face to face, we had always strived for a counselling hour free from interruptions, while for many of us including myself, relying on an Internet connection was far from reliable. But we made it work. And clients seemed incredibly understanding when it didn't. But for some counsellors and some clients too, it simply wasn't possible to continue counselling while lockdown lasted, giving concerns for those clients, as well as for the reduced financial position of the Centre. The Centre Co-ordinator very kindly moved the Counselling Centre's office to her own home, although this was far from easy. Keeping track of client sessions held remotely and identifying their payments proved particularly challenging.

'Zoom' held us together as a community during this time, as each month all of the counsellors had previously met together at the Centre for training, support and much more; now we did it a different way. Group supervision was held online, too. The pandemic was difficult for many of our clients, and so it was for some of our counsellors too, especially those who were part way through their counselling training, and the Director appointed myself in a kind of 'pastoral' role to offer some further support for those counsellors who found these times especially challenging.

Navigating the pandemic has been a life-changing experience for us all, and a character-building one too.

Kevin Mann

Introduction of 2 Trainee Therapists

Hey, I am James, a Trainee Integrative Psychotherapeutic Counsellor and I am currently in my second year at Matrix College of Counselling and Psychotherapy. I have been on this counselling training path now for a number of years and I have built an interest and understanding in bereavement and loss through working for charity organisations and personal experiences. My reading and research has also focused on sexuality and the impact of self acceptance has on our psyche. My current role at the Big C - Norfolk Cancer charity has led me to becoming more aware of the existential crisis we as humans can face when we least expect it. Working with patients to navigate their way through this has been a huge learning curve for me. Learning to build my resilience and build a robust self care plan into my week. I am a pretty curious and inquisitive person and look forward to seeing more of the fellow St.B's staff and chatting to you.



Joining St. Barnabas has been a lovely experience from the start of my interview to the induction and then taking part in the St.B's Community Team meeting. I feel warm and very welcomed and really looking forward to becoming an integrated part of the team. When it came to my first day of seeing clients this warmth and acceptance continued and I felt really held. Being able to talk to Melpo and Lorraine before seeing my clients made me feel at ease and very at home.



A few other pointers about me are that I love gardening and getting muddy. I am a bit of a plant rescuer and can not resist buying the reduced plant from a shop and seeing if I can revitalise it. I think the rescuing part of me gets fulfilled this way! I love connecting with nature and being mindful when I'm submersed in it.

James



Hello! I'm a 2nd year Trainee in Integrative Psychotherapeutic Counselling at Matrix College. I grew up on a farm in Norfolk and studied English Literature at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne before moving to London where I lived and worked as a secondary school English teacher for 20 years. A few years ago I returned to Norfolk with my family for a slower pace of life.

Outside of work I am a Trustee with Riding for the Disabled which provides therapeutic riding to children and I am also a keen writer, recently completing an MA in Creative Writing at UEA. As a yoga enthusiast, I believe the spiritual, emotional and physical selves are all connected and hope to bring both creativity and mindfulness into my integrative practice.

I feel very lucky to be doing my placement at St Barnabas and have found everyone here to be incredibly warm, friendly and supportive.



Sally

Client Testimony:

'I wanted to drop a line to express my thanks to your service and in particular my counsellor.

Over the last year and a half or so I have been through some of the most difficult times of my life. Going through a divorce on top of many previous losses and traumas resurfaced a massive amount of unresolved feelings. I've had lots of counselling in the past but never felt as validated and listened to as I did in my sessions with them.

In the first session I felt at ease and able to be as open as I needed to be. She allowed me to explore difficult subjects and parts of me I'd always repelled. I have done more body work and growth than in my whole previous attempts in counselling.

At all times Clissie was professional yet she was consistently warm and friendly which I needed to get me through so many different emotions and low times.

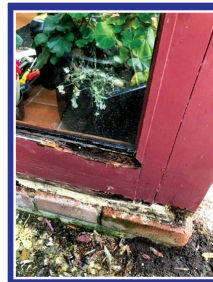
I am eternally grateful to Clissie and your service which allowed me the time on a budget I could afford to explore all that I needed to at my own pace with no limitations.

This really was a lifeline. I can't thank you all enough.'

Before the first lockdown, St Barnabas Counselling Centre was a busy building with counsellors and clients and volunteer receptionists coming and going; nonetheless it was a calm, welcoming space for all.

The doors were locked on March 19th 2020 as we prepared to work from home and remotely. Until this point, we operated with a tried and trusted paper system and mostly cash payments (a card machine had recently been introduced). Modernising our processes had been discussed and lockdown highlighted the need for a cloud based system. Temporary measures were put in place using spreadsheets to record sessions and payments made online.

In March 2021 we began using a software system called Cliniko, which is widely used and designed for the medical profession. Counsellors are now able to securely access their client records and make bookings remotely. A secure video calling facility is available with links automatically sent out to clients without the need to download Zoom-style apps. Data protection is paramount, so any system we use needs to be secure. Client details, session notes, session invoices, payments etc are all held safely. Whether working in the centre, or remotely, access to the administration of our counselling service is now possible by counsellors and admin staff alike, as we strive for a best practice approach.



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We are all very proud of the fact that we have continued to offer a vital service to our community, providing counselling to existing and new clients. 2743 appointments were booked between 1st March and 31st December 2021, some of these in person, some by telephone and some online.

It's not just IT that has been updated. Whilst this is a necessary part of operating a counselling service we recognise the importance of physical space we use as a community. The porch has been repaired and painted, we are in the process of refreshing the soft furnishings and new plants have been added to those donated over the years and cared for by many members who make St Bs a warm and respectful organisation. We have been so pleased to have our clients returning to the centre, welcoming them with a nice cup of tea.

Lorraine - Centre Coordinator

**To make a Donation to help us continue doing the meaningful work in people's lives,
please send an electronic transfer to:**

St Barnabas Counselling Centre, The Cooperative Bank,
Account Number: 65311394 Sort Code: 08 – 92 – 99

Or alternatively, send a cheque to:

St Barnabas Counselling Centre, Attention for: Melpo Economou Derby Street, Norwich, NR2 4PU