**University of Central Lancashire - staff mental health and wellbeing case study**

## Staff Counselling Service

Our in-house Staff Counselling Service was established in 1995 and has since grown five-fold, now seeing around 190 clients (colleagues) a year. The service provides one-to-one confidential counselling using a variety of methods through one lead counsellor, five sessional counsellors and access to a BSL counsellor as required. The service maintains a person-centred ethos whilst offering a diversity of models, e.g. humanistic, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, mindfulness and EMDR (Eye movement Desensitisation and Re-processing). Group workshops for self-help, mindfulness and anxiety management, particularly related to Covid-19 at present, are supplemented by signposting to other resources as appropriate.

The move to online provision in March 2020 saw participation drop initially by 30%, but now staff have got used to working online, numbers are back to pre-pandemic levels[[1]](#footnote-1). Very few clients are awaiting face-to-face provision, although we are acutely aware that any colleagues without private space to video call from have not had access to the service since March 2020.

## Winter Wellbeing Programme

During lockdown we conducted three pulse surveys to assess how our staff were feeling, what was working well and what else would help. This resulted in our developing a ‘Winter Wellbeing Programme’ in which we offered group activities for Tension Release Breathwork, Mindfulness, advice about managing boundaries, time and team connections, running drop-in online sessions for isolated colleagues to chat, and a whole host of manager support.

## Return to campus and future provision

We are currently consulting existing clients about future provision as we plan our return to campus. It seems a blended approach will be best in future, as many have preferred online support, which coincided with an increase in the number of men accessing the service by 77%.

From our 2019/20 review we found 38% of clients referred themselves after colleagues suggested it to them, and Occupational Health had suggested it to 14% of clients. All clients self-refer and the service is promoted via the intranet, manager briefings and wellbeing programmes. In terms of impact, 98% of clients said counselling helped their life as a whole, 94% of clients said counselling helped work and life and 100% would return/recommend the service to others.

**Mental health strategy**

In the past year we have established a Mental Health Strategy Group to pull together the various strands of activity such as our Mental Health First Aiders, Health Champions, and our Mentally Healthy Universities action plan. This will ensure greater connection of the Staff Counselling Service with other initiatives, whilst maintaining the essential and precious respect for confidentiality the service holds.

August 2021

1. Responding to COVID-19 | March 2021 | University & College Counselling Journal Anupama Garg [↑](#footnote-ref-1)