

## **COUNSELLING & THERAPY SERVICE:**

We have been offering counselling and therapy for some time. I began working for Mind in Mid Herts in November 2008. This was following funding been received from the NHS Primary Care Team. Since then our income has been changed and we now our funded by the Hertfordshire County Council Integrated Commissioning Team which is funded partly from health and partly the local council.

I managed the service until April 2015 when I became the CEO. During the time I managed the service we expanded it to Stevenage and Hertford. When I began we had 5 counsellors at the St Albans office we now have over 25 counsellors both in Stevenage and St Albans and a counsellor at Hertford. We offer a variety of approaches – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy; Systemic Couple/Family Therapy; Psychodynamic; Person Centred; Gestalt; Integrative and we have counselling psychologists who offer an eclectic approach including existentialist ideas. The counsellors come from a wide range of backgrounds, age, ethnicity and during the time we have been offering the service demand has always been greater than the provision and we have always had a waiting list. This is always a cause for concern.

We now have a wonderful new team supporting and delivering this project – Pam Dhaliwal, Head of Services, Jo Williams, Counselling Coordinator, Julia and Linda Supervisors.

We have adopted a new framework, we offer people 6 sessions to see how they get on. At the 6<sup>th</sup> session we will review and determine if this course of talking therapy is working and whether it is completed or needs to be extended and we now offer people a maximum of 12 sessions. In very special circumstances, this can be extended.

Project officers also offer short solution based approach, to individuals to ensure that people's needs are met in the short term. The idea is that if a person can access support as soon as possible then they can remain healthy. The client also attends other appropriate groups or services that underpin emotional wellbeing.

We are currently seeing over 120 clients a week across the 3 centres. We have seen over 1500 clients over the 10 years. We are currently looking at ways of expanding the service again; with the hope of reducing the waiting times.

We always collect feedback from clients and we have a questionnaire which measures anxiety and depression, and with that evidence, we can confidently say that we are making a difference in people's lives and they are finding new ways to manage and improve their mental health. I am immensely proud of working for Mind in Mid Herts which is not prescriptive, at the heart is a collaborative approach "the client is the expert" offering a service that enables people to have choice in their lives.

Sharn Tomlinson, Chief Executive Officer, 3 June 2019