COUNSELLING & THERAPY SERVICE:

We have been offering counselling and therapy for over 12 years. I began working for Mind in Mid Herts in November 2008. This was to develop and expand the psychological therapy service. Our funding is from the Integrated Health and Care Commissioning Team, Working on behalf of East and North Hertfordshire CCG, Herts Valleys CCG and Hertfordshire County Council. We also ask that people donate towards the service in order that we can continue to offer the service free to everyone who cannot afford to pay for counselling. We also are very pleased to discuss contracts for counselling in the workplace for employers who want to ensure their workforce stays well and overcomes any of the ups and down of every one’s life for example: relationship breakdown, bereavement, stress, physical health problems and diagnosis.

I managed the service until April 2015, now I am 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 Hertford. We offer a variety of approaches – Psychodynamic; Person Centred; Psychosynthesis; Integrative and we have counselling psychologists who offer an eclectic approach including cognitive behavioural therapy ideas. The counsellors come from a wide range of backgrounds, age, and 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, Gill and Linda Supervisors.

We have adopted a new framework, we offer people 6 sessions to see how they get on. At the 6th 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. We encourage people to attend 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 2000 people over the 12 years. We are currently looking at ways of expanding the service again, with the hope of reducing the waiting times. We are developing the resources, policies and procedures for counselling to be offered on the telephone.

We always collect feedback from everyone who uses the service 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, 15 May 2020