



UNIVERSITY of  
**BRADFORD**

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Counselling Service

# The Counselling Service

## Annual Report

2014/15



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## Counselling Service Team

### *Head of Service*

Penelope Aspinall

### *Permanent staff (core team)*

Yvonne Messenger, senior counsellor (0.6 fte)

Peter Wakefield, senior counsellor (0.5 fte)

Gill Barlow (previously Nina Wright), full-time counsellor

Sarah Farnell (previously Pip Mobbs), counsellor (0.6 fte)

### *Administrative Staff*

Gilly Butcher, administrator, (0.55 fte)

Bharti Mistry, administrator (0.5 fte), previously Cathie Raw

### *Associates and trainees*

In addition to paid permanent counsellors, we use a team of associates and trainees to deliver the service. Associates are qualified counsellors who work on a voluntary basis in order to gain more experience and accrue the necessary hours in order to be eligible for BACP accreditation (or equivalent). Trainees are counsellors in training who, as an essential part of their training, need to be on a placement in order to gain the necessary experience as a course requirement. Both associates and trainees are provided with appropriate extensive supervision, training, mentoring and support in order to ensure that they provide the best service for our clients.

In 2013/14 we had twelve associates and eleven trainees in the team, although three of our associates left during the course of the year. We have, however, reviewed this practice and are focussing on creating a smaller team of volunteers for 2014/15, consisting of six trainees and seven associate counsellors.

## **Introduction**

2014/15 was another busy year, which also saw a lot of change. In total, 1059 clients registered with the service, we saw 871 individual clients and offered 4982 appointments, very similar to the previous year. We further developed our provision for staff, making the service more responsive and appropriate to the needs of the University and college staff. Cathie Raw moved to a new post in March, Nina Wright retired at the end of August and Pip Mobbs left in July. Their hard work, experience and expertise will be missed but we are delighted to have two new members of the counselling team, Gill Barlow and Sarah Farnell. Bharti Mistry came to the rescue in terms of our administrative post when she was seconded over from the Academic Quality and Partnerships Office for half the week.

## **About the service**

The Counselling service continues to provide counselling and psycho-educational training for the students and staff of the University of Bradford and Bradford College. We are a busy service, and in order to accommodate the numbers of clients and minimise waiting times, we usually offer a brief therapy model of up to four sessions in the first instance, after a 25 minute intake interview to assess need and/or offer immediate help. We will always endeavour to extend this contract when appropriate, in cases of risk, for example, or where the work cannot be usefully or ethically contained in four sessions. Most counselling takes place at our premises in Student Central, although we do run a service where students can be seen for pre-booked Intake appointments, at Bradford College three times a week. We stopped our service at the Bradford Student Health Centre as it was very under-used and we felt that the resources could be more productively allocated. We also developed links with FLM and have reintroduced our service at Emm Lane, so that clients can be seen for pre-booked Intake appointments there. Prospective clients need to access the service through an on-line registration form; they will then be invited to book an intake interview.

Another initiative was to bring together the Faculty Welfare contacts. We had a useful meeting in April where they were able to express common concerns and needs. Following on from that we have set up a Reflective Practice Group, which will aim to meet regularly in the Counselling Service, facilitated by Peter Wakefield.

In addition, we ran a series of psycho-educational workshops for students on issues such as sleep, managing exam stress etc as well as contributing to the People Development programme for staff and training for course reps and sabbatical officers.

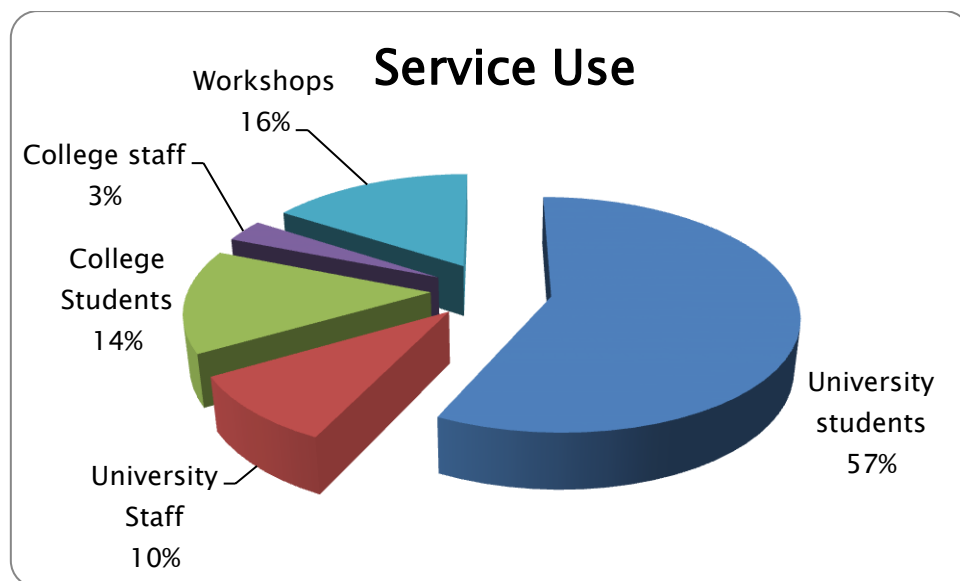
## Service Use

### Headline Statistics

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|                               | 2013/14 | 2014/15 |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Individual Clients registered | 949     | 1059    |
| Individual Clients seen       | 877     | 871     |
| Appointments provided         | 5325    | 4982    |
| Appointments attended         | 3264    | 3244    |
| Workshop attendees            | 315     | 185     |

*Figure 1: Service use*

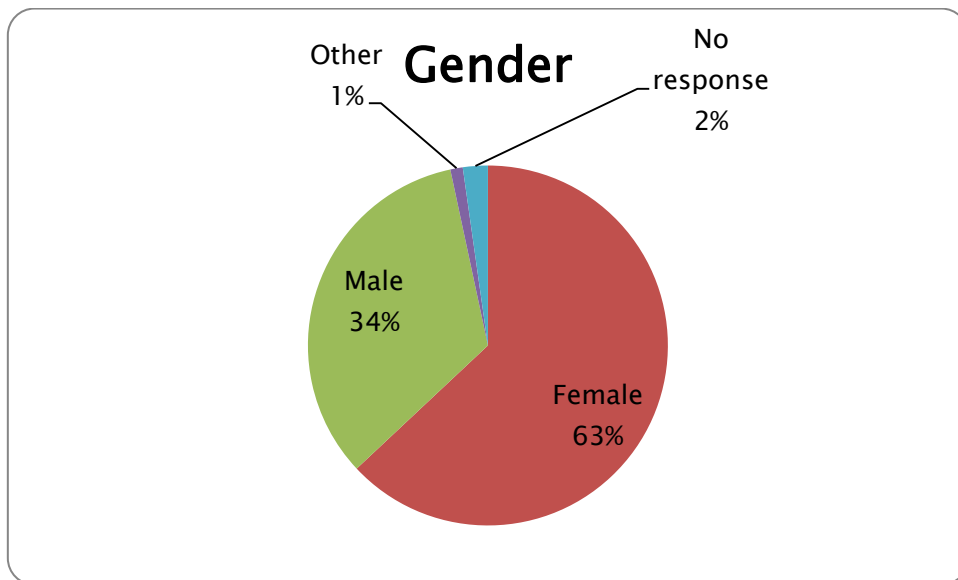


As can be seen in *figure 1*, the majority of clients are University students. Numbers show a slight increase over last year. We are concerned about the numbers of appointments missed due to no shows and cancellations. No shows decreased after we introduced text reminders before every session in November but the high rate of missed appointments still remains to be a challenge. Also, when looking at the figures, it needs to be recognised that some clients attend for more than one contract in a year. There were 188 (17%)

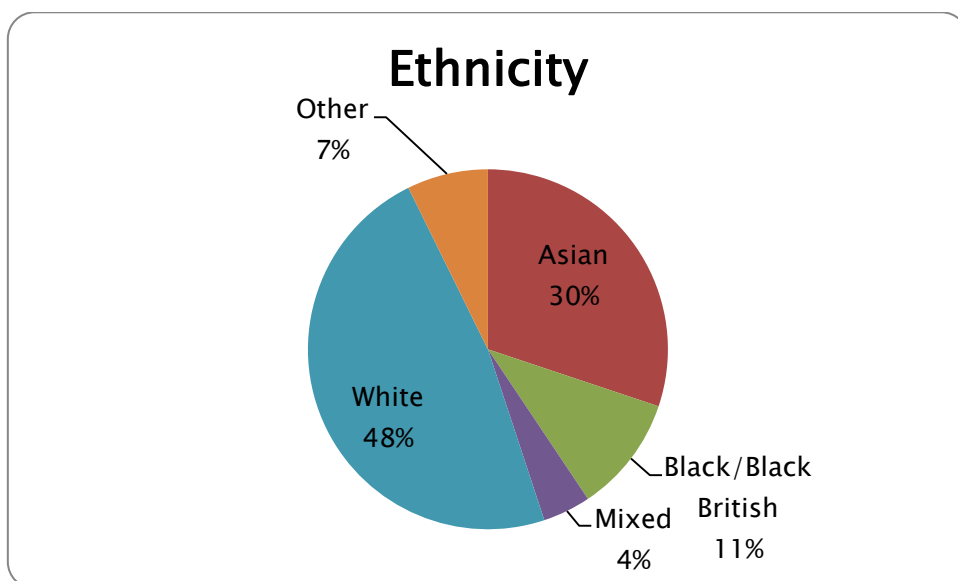
clients who registered but did not actually use the service (ie they did not attend or respond to an offer of a first appointment).

### Demographics

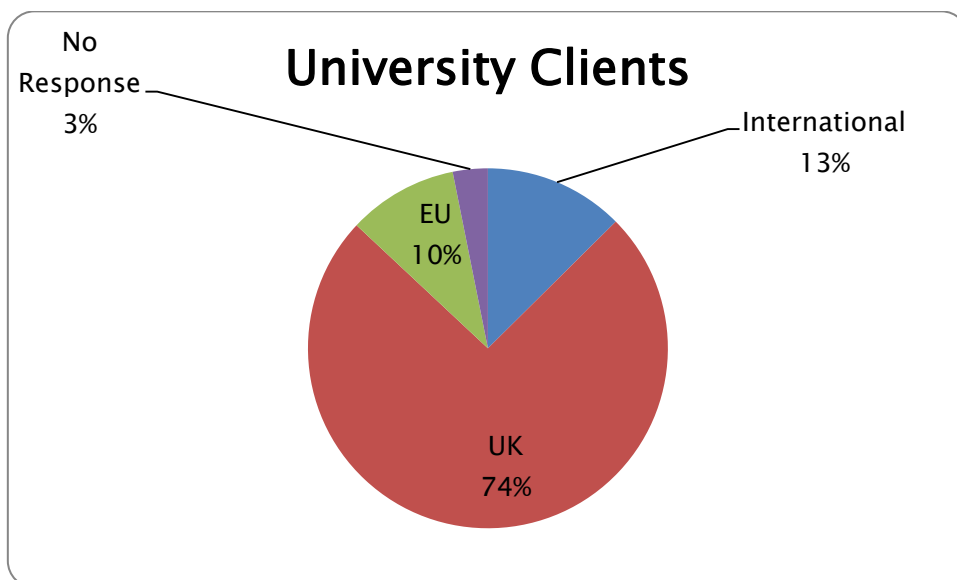
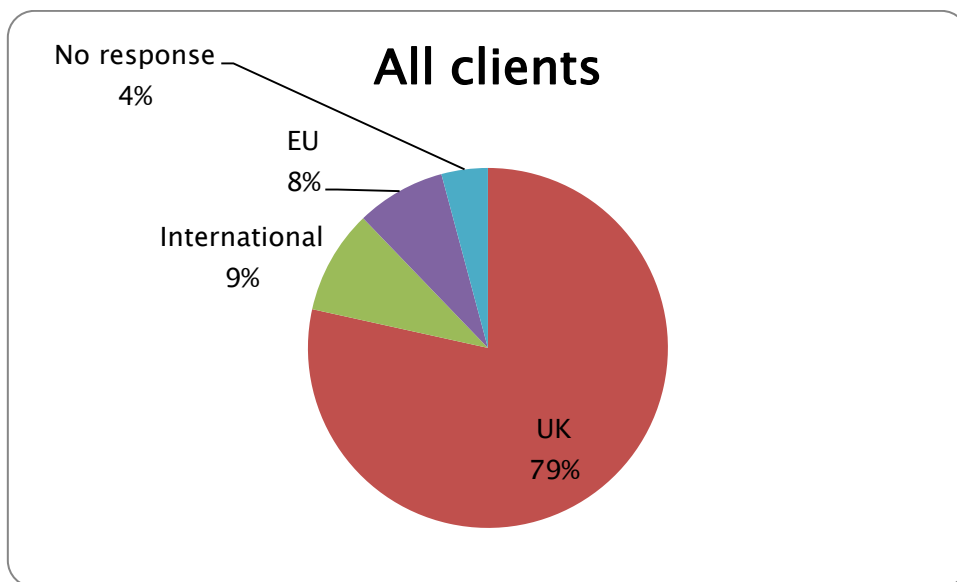
The majority of our clients are female (64%). This is typical of counselling services across the sector.



In terms of ethnicity, just under half (48%) of our clients describe themselves as white. 30% of clients are Asian, 11% Black or Black British and a further 11% describing themselves as either 'mixed'(4%) or 'other'(7%). This reflects the rich diversity of the university and the client group that we work with.



Looking at all our clients, 79% are from the UK, with 17% from EU or International and no response from 4%. This changes slightly when we look at only clients who are university students. Here 23% are International or EU, representing the demographic of the University as a whole.



## What we have done

In addition to one-to-one counselling, the service has been involved in training and outreach initiatives.

### *Group work*

The service saw 185 students and staff as part of its group-work programme. The people we saw were a mixture of previous clients and entirely new contacts. The programme was revised to include Mindfulness for Staff, which has proved very popular. We introduced a monthly lunchtime 'Space to Breathe' for staff, which we will continue to run in 2015/16. The Assertiveness workshops for students and for staff have been well attended

| Subject            | Audience               | Times run | Attendees (total) | Duration (hrs) |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------|-------------------|----------------|
| Assertiveness      | Students               | 3         | 34                | 1.5            |
| Culture Shock      | International students | 1         | 2                 | 1              |
| Mindfulness        | Students               | 3         | 21                | 1              |
| Panic-Free Exams   | Students               | 3         | 20                | 1              |
| Relaxation         | Students               | 2         | 9                 | 1              |
| Setting Boundaries | Course reps            | 2         | 16                | 2              |

### *Training events*

The service has delivered training packages across three distinct areas.

- Staff Development/People Development training packages: *Managing Difficult Conversations, Introduction to Assertiveness, Counselling & Communication Skills* and *Managing Stress through Relaxation*.
- In-house training for Wardens, Security Staff, HR staff, SABS and Student Reps covering topics including *Understanding Boundaries, Communication Skills, Assertiveness, Managing Stress through Relaxation*, and *Referral Procedures*.
- Monthly training to the team of trainee and associate counsellors on a variety of themes and issues appropriate to our work with both students and staff clients.



| Subject              | Audience                           | Times run | Attendees (total) | Duration (hrs) |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|----------------|
| Assertiveness        | Staff                              | 2         | 28                | 2              |
| Counselling Skills1  | Staff                              | 2         | 18                | 3.5            |
| Counselling Skills 2 | Staff                              | 1         | 10                | 3.5            |
| A Mindfulness Taster | Staff                              | 1         | 10                | 1              |
| A Space to Breathe   | Staff                              | 2         | 18                | 1              |
| CVS                  | Community Voluntary services Staff | 1         | 12                | 6              |
| Warden Training      | Hall Wardens                       | 1         | 7                 | 2              |

### ***Community Engagement***

Over the last four years we have been developing our work with the Community Voluntary Services, the umbrella body that supports all community and voluntary work in the Bradford area.

This year they asked us to deliver a two day training open to all workers in the participating agencies. The focus of the training was on Communication Skills, Assertiveness and Managing Boundaries in Helping Roles.

### ***Open days***

We have focused on widening our participation and presence at university and college open days this year, attending evening and weekend events. We have developed a more interactive approach to engaging with students and staff. Our little bunches of University of Bradford lavender proved particularly popular.

### **Staff counselling**

150 staff members applied to the Counselling Service this year, 111 from the University and 39 College staff. There was an even split between Academic (54) and Administrative staff (55), WITH 18 Academic Related, 4 Ancillary and the remaining described as 'Other'.

105 of these clients were described as experiencing anxiety, depression, stress or a combination of these and 57 (50%) saw this as work-related.

Building on from the improvements developed in 2013/14, we continued to further enhance the staff provision by ensuring that each staff member who contacted the service was offered the opportunity to talk with one of our senior counsellors on the telephone to assess their needs and identify what they needed. This usually meant that staff would not need to attend an Intake appointment and could be referred straight into counselling with either a core team member or experienced associate. Using members of our highly skilled experienced associate team is particularly beneficial where there might be a potential boundary issue with a core team member having contact with the staff member in other contexts.

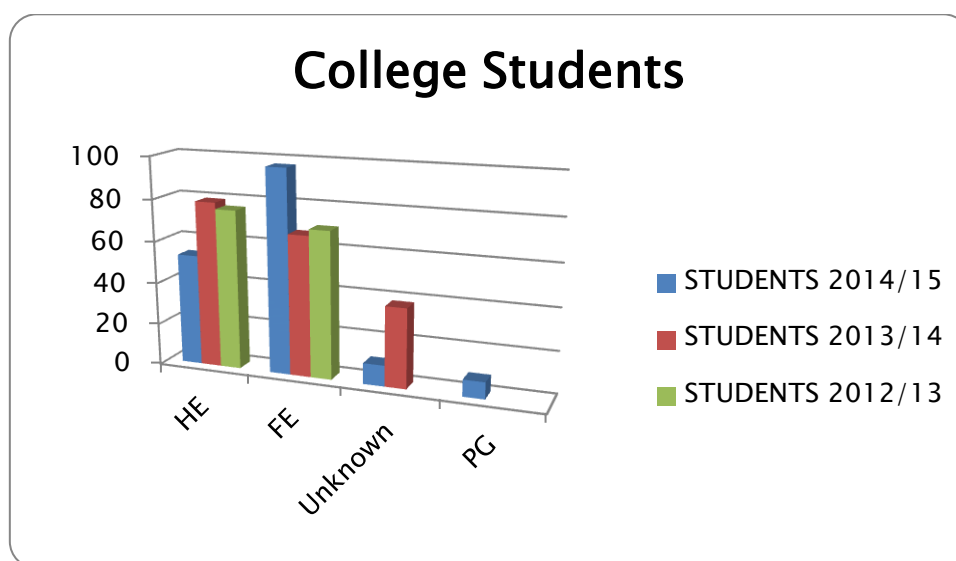
In addition we have introduced a staff only drop-in at 8.30 on Friday mornings and run a monthly lunchtime mindfulness session (*Space to Breathe*). This is bookable via the People Development website.

As we are keen to provide a join-up approach to delivering the right kind of support for students, we convened a meeting with the Faculty Welfare advisors to explore their needs and concerns. Following on from this, we are now running a reflective practice group for these staff members to share good practice and provide support for each other.

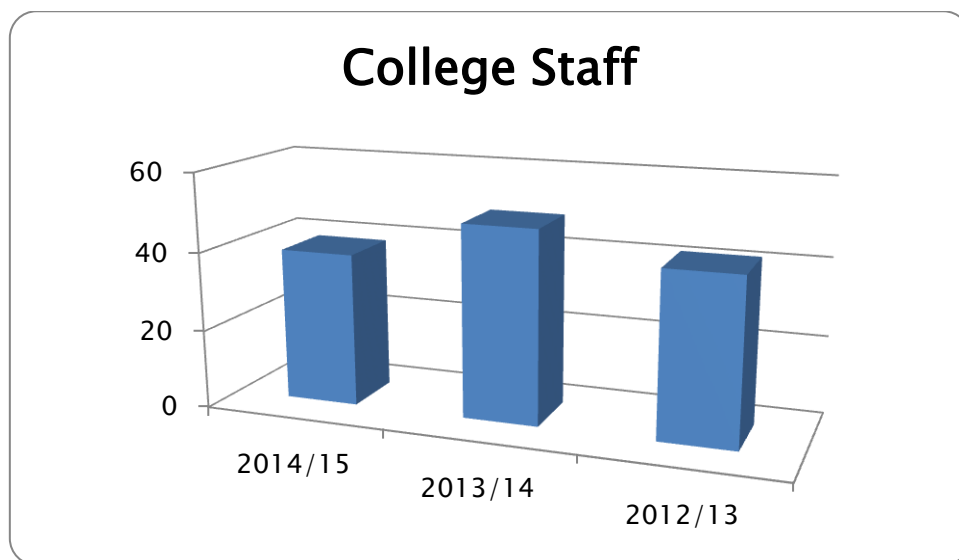
## Bradford College

### *Overview of Service*

Once again the service has been busy, with 168 students and 39 staff members registering to use the service.



This represents an increase in student numbers but a slight drop in staff using the service. The move to the Madiba room has been especially successful with many students choosing to have their Intake appointment at the college. We no longer run the service as a drop-in. Clients will need to pre-book their Intake appointment if they wish to be seen at the college. They can, of course, use the drop-in at the Counselling Service premises if they wish to attend without an appointment.



### ***Liaison with support staff***

We value our good working relationship with all Bradford college staff with a pastoral responsibility for students. We provide consultation for staff members concerned about a student's wellbeing and strive to work closely with student welfare advisors, the safeguarding officer and mental health advisor.

### ***Workshops***

In addition to one to one counselling, college students have attended workshops on Assertiveness, Managing Exam Stress and Improving Sleep. The advertising for this is now working well through all available channels.

### ***Publicity***

The College have taken over producing their own leaflet for the counselling service which is now much better. The internal electronic newsletters produced for both staff and students are working well to disseminate information about the service and the workshops on offer. The BACP-UC produced a short 'Ted Talks' style video promoting College counselling services, which was put on the College website in June.

### ***Inductions and Open days***

This year the service has taken a full part in the Induction programme for new students and Open Days, in order to have a greater presence within the College. We also successfully contributed to the Well Fair, with a stand aimed at increasing awareness of the importance of looking after your mental health.

### **Equality monitoring**

As with most counselling services, the majority of clients both students and staff are female. We do, however, see a sizeable proportion of male clients who engage with and benefit from using the service. We continue to monitor all aspects of the way we deliver provision in order to ensure that the service feels accessible to all who might benefit from using it.

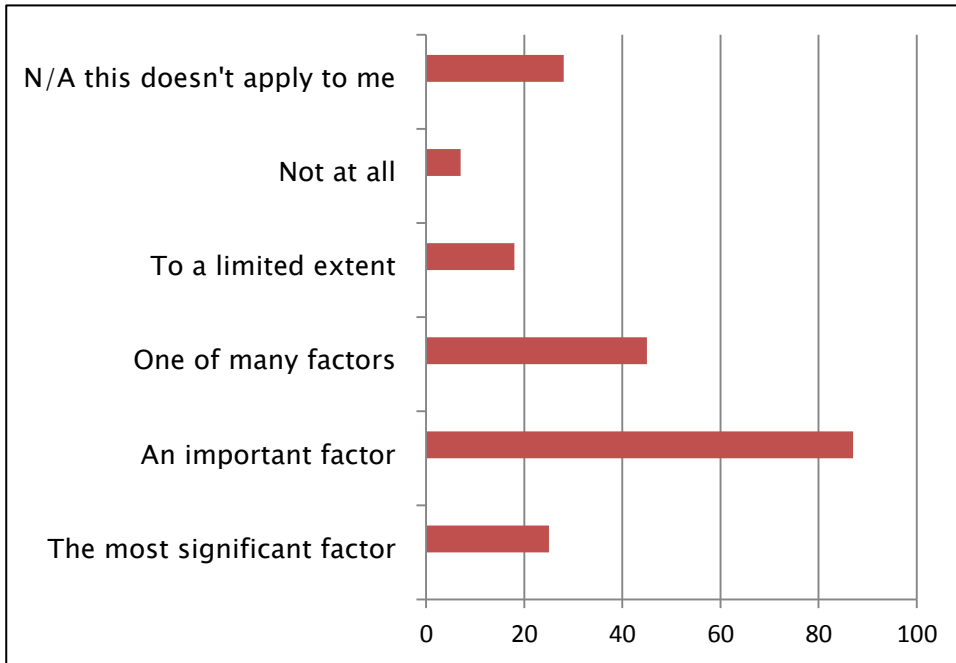
### **Evaluation**

As we found that we were getting very low return rates on the evaluation forms we sent out by email at the end of counselling, we decided to change our approach. In April, we introduced a simple feedback post card which clients can complete at the end of their contract or at any time during their use of the service. The post card gives a quick and easy snapshot of the client's experience of the service as well as collected some data. This has proved to be a popular way of getting feedback, which has been overwhelmingly positive. In addition to this, we had a 'snapshot week' in the Spring and Summer terms where every client of the service was invited to complete a questionnaire. People can also give us feedback via our website. This proved very encouraging with 95% either strongly (72%) agreeing or agreeing (23%) that that they had a positive experience or with the Counselling Service.

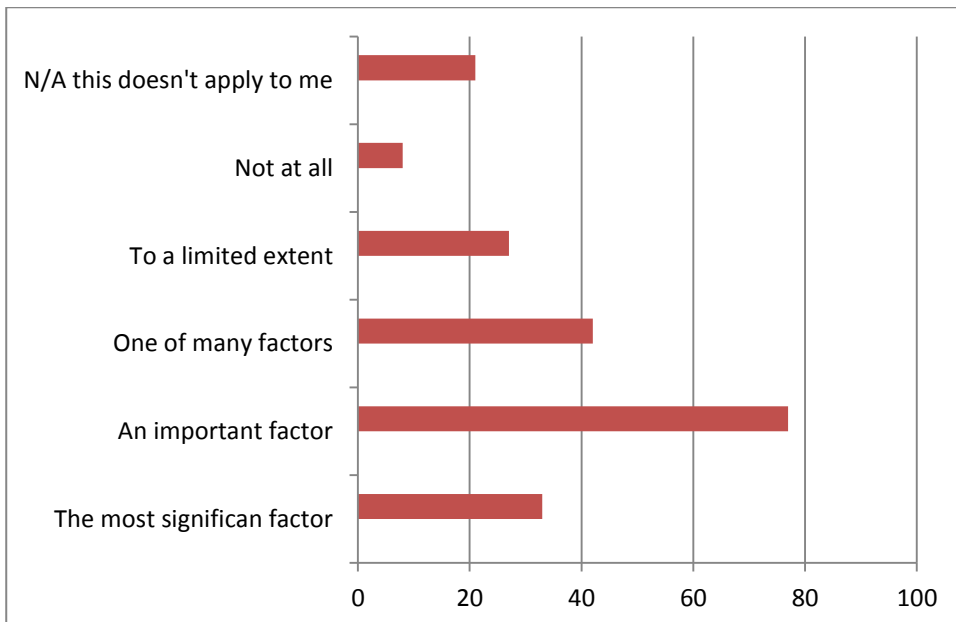
As well as questions about client satisfaction with the service, we ask questions based on the 2012 BACP-UC (Wallace, P 2012 BACP) research looking at retention and employability. The following results, gathered through using a Bristol Online Survey, show that for many of our clients, the counselling had a very strong impact on their ability to stay at university, their academic performance, their student experience and employability.

To what extent would you say that counselling is:

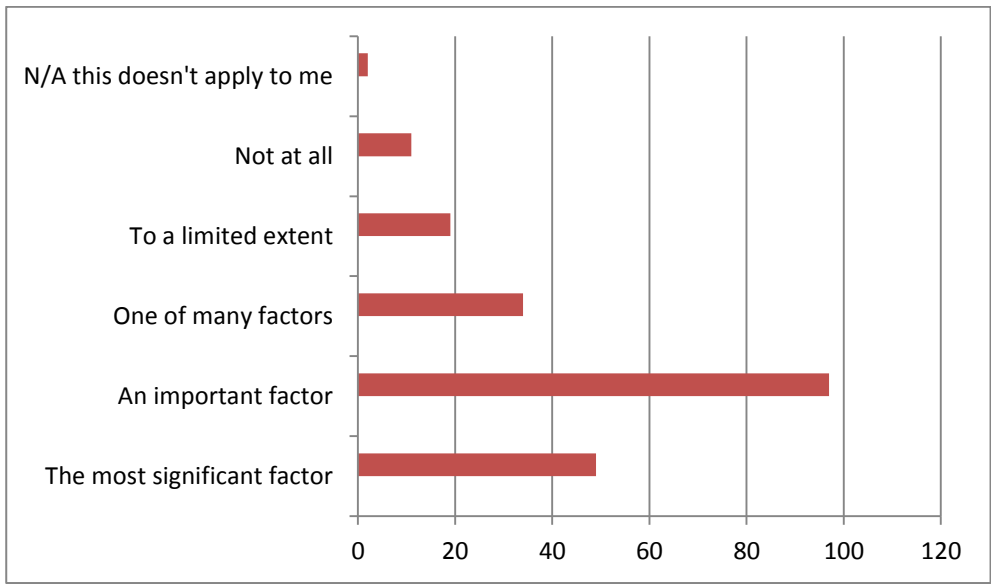
**1. Helping you stay at university/college?**



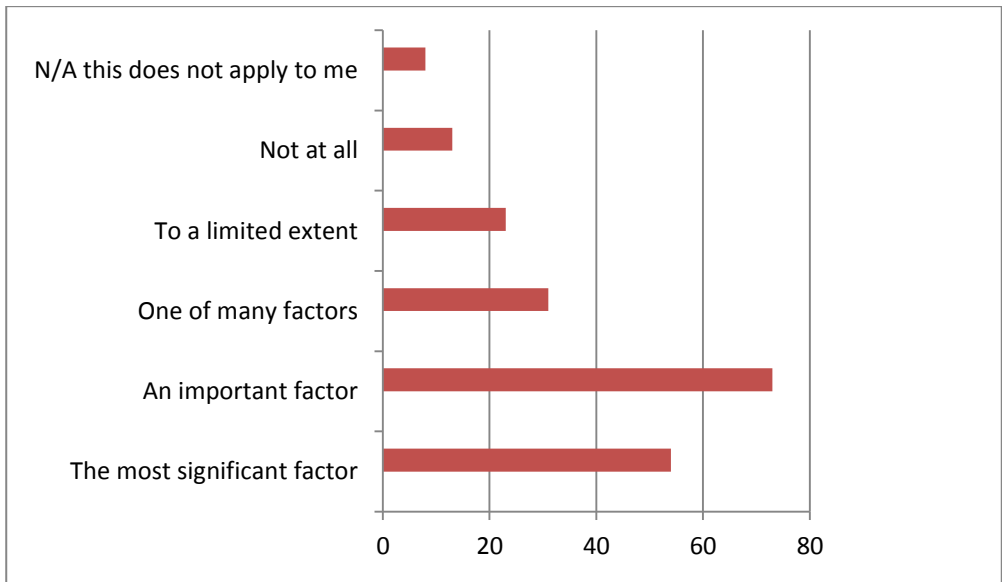
**2. Helping you do better in academic work?**



**3. Improving your overall experience of University/college?**



**4. Helping you develop skills that might be useful for future employment (eg building resilience, understanding of others, managing difficult feelings better, increased confidence/assertiveness)?**



**214 responses**

Postcard (61)

February Snapshot (47)

April Snapshot (47)

Previous system August – April (59)

### **What the clients say about us (comments from feedback forms)**

- I feel more confident expressing my true emotions, believing in myself and challenging negative thoughts about myself.
- I am very grateful for this opportunity/facility, everything is helping me, the sensitive welcoming environment. The professionalism and friendly service is changing my life for the better. Thank you very positive, helpful.
- Making me learn about myself and challenge things in life. An excellent and accessible service lovely environment, very useful
- Come in sad, confused but now am sure of what I want and who I am.
- Gave me strength to go on. Enabling me to not feel alone
- The Service has helped me a great deal. It's always good to have a smile to greet you when you walk into reception.
- Helped me touch on difficult issues as I felt I could discuss things without being judged. It helped me learn how to deal with frustration & communicate my feelings effectively. I felt my counsellor understood the difficulties I am facing, which is valuable as I have felt misunderstood by people recently.
- I have learnt a great deal about myself & have a better sense of how to ask for help & work through issues.

### **Suggestions for improvement**

- More advertising at Uni would be good, I only found out about the service for a friend
- The entrance should be a little bit more discrete, I feel a bit uncomfortable walking in with a lot of people looking at me.
- Thank you for being there. It's been fab. The waiting list is large though. Given how helpful the service is, you'd think more counsellors would be employed.

We take all feedback very seriously and where possible try and address problems and concerns. We are extending our publicity for 2015/16, planning to make more use of technology eg the UoB app and are open to any suggestions about how we can reach greater numbers of people who would benefit from our service, as well as break down any perceived stigma. We have also made huge efforts to decrease waiting times, with more efficient allocation of resources and systems. However, it is inevitable that at times of high demand people will have to wait longer than they like. To put it in perspective, though, it is very unusual for someone to have to wait longer than three weeks for an ongoing counselling session (unless they have very limited availability) whereas the wait for Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) NHS individual counselling in Bradford is currently two to four months.

Further statistics on service use and evaluation can be obtained from the Head of the Counselling Service.