



UNIVERSITY of  
**BRADFORD**

.....  
Counselling Service

# The Counselling Service

## Annual Report

2017/18

**Bradford** College  
...Further and Higher Education

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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, counsellor (1.0 fte)

Sarah Farnell, counsellor (0.6 fte)

Stuart Yates, counsellor (0.5 fte)

### *Administrative Staff*

Gilly Butcher, administrator, (0.55 fte)

Helen Trevisani, administrator (0.6 fte)

### *Sessional Counsellors (casual hours)*

Agnes Ndebele

Barbara Rundle-Smith

Brian Lambert

### *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 2017/18 we had five associates and five trainees in the team.

## Introduction

2017/18 was another busy year. Although staffing levels in the Counselling team remained stable, external events such as the snow and USS strike in February and March, created a general feeling of unsettledness in the Spring term, with lower numbers than usual as clients cancelled or did not attend their appointments. Organisational change in the University, such as the StAAR review impacted on our staff numbers with high demand from staff. Client satisfaction remains extremely high, with 97% of our clients being either very happy or happy with the service.

In total, 1337 people used the service for individual counselling and workshops. 1057 clients registered with the service for one-to one counselling, we saw 884 individual clients and offered 4935 appointments. In addition, we increased our workshop programme to include a monthly *Space to Breathe* session for college staff as well as the monthly *Space to Breathe* for University staff. 280 staff and students attended our workshops.

The Counselling Service played an important role in the University of Bradford's partnership with the University of York's EU-wide research project on creating an evidence based approach to responding to disclosures of sexual violence. As part of the project, members of the counselling team delivered a one-day training package to 67 support staff across the University, which was very well received. Penny Aspinall delivered the findings at a conference at the University of York in April 2108. The Counselling service is now working with the E & D team to create a bespoke version appropriate to the needs of our Institution.

As always, we made a substantial contribution to the POD offer for staff. We continued to develop our provision for staff, making the service more responsive and appropriate to the needs of the University and College staff.

Finally, the Service was successful in maintaining its British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy accreditation. This is an extremely rigorous process that happens every five years.

## About the service

The Counselling Service provides 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 for students and 6 for staff 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. Prospective clients need to access the service through an on-line registration form; they will then be offered an Intake appointment.

## Service Satisfaction headlines

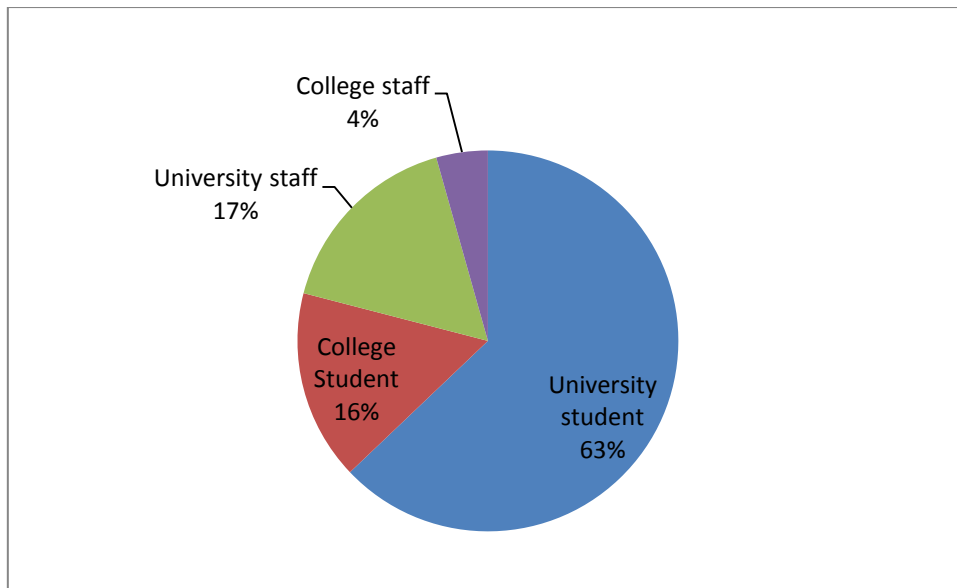
- 97% Very happy or happy about their experience of the counselling Service
- 65% found counselling was the most significant factor or an important factor in helping them stay at University/College/work
- 67% said counselling helped them do better in their academic work/work
- 66% said coming to counselling improved their overall experience of University/College/work
- 70% said that Counselling helped them develop skills that might be useful for future employment (eg building resilience, increased confidence etc)

## Service Use

### Headline Statistics

	2016/17	2017/18
Individual Clients registered	1103	1057
Individual Clients seen	932	884
Appointments provided	4988	4935
Appointments attended	3262	3126
Workshop attendees	384	280

*Figure 1: Service use*

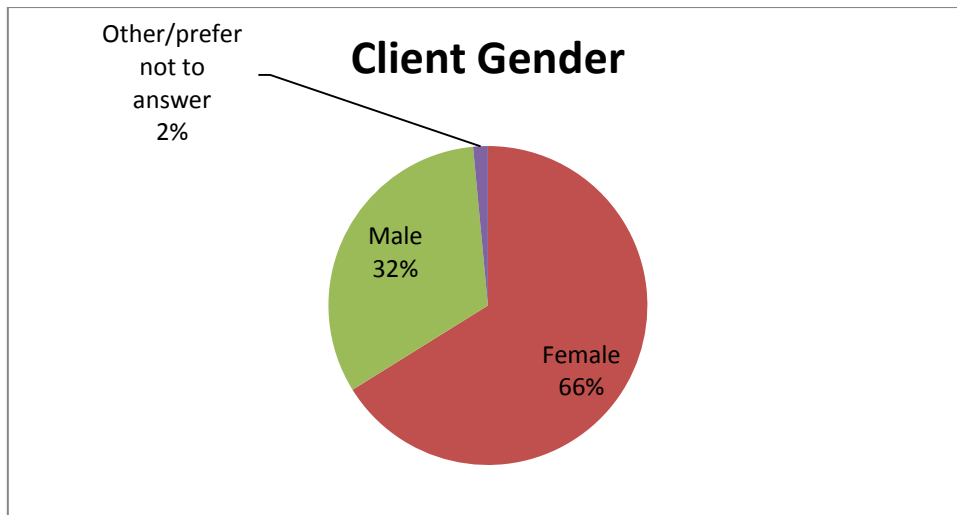


63% of clients using the service for one-to-one counselling were University students, 561 in 1017/18 attended at least the service, an slight decrease in numbers over last year but actually representing slightly more of the University student population (6.5%) demonstrating a small increase in demand from University students. 148 members of staff from the University (8.7% of the University staff population) attended for one-to-one counselling, a 15% increase over the previous year, which saw a peak rise of 24% over the previous year. This testifies to the value of the counselling service to the University staff at a time of organisational change.

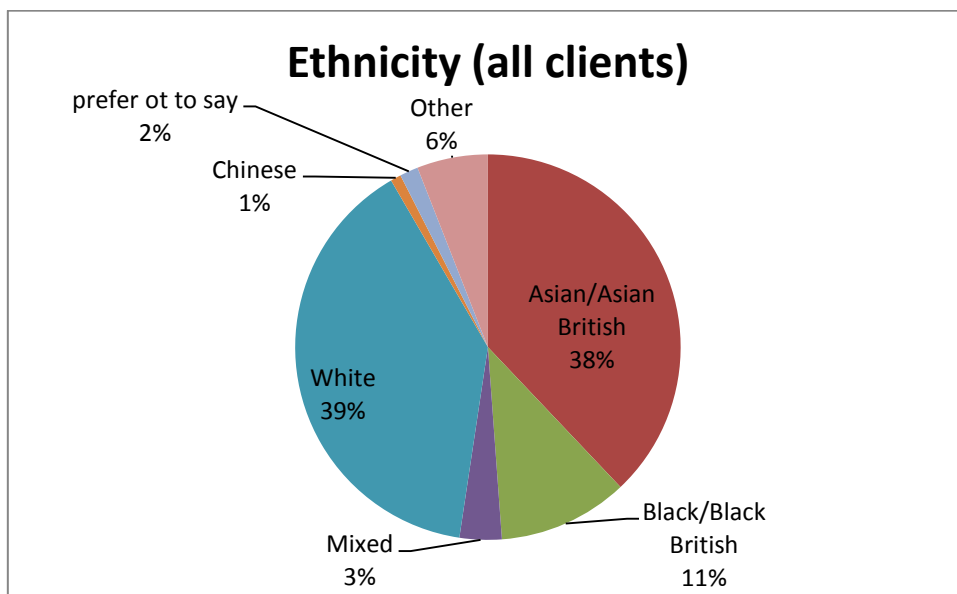
We continue to work hard at reducing the numbers of DNAs and cancellations, which is always a challenge. We do this by a variety of means but most popular are text reminders sent before each session. However, we still lost 27% of student and 17.5% of staff appointments to cancellations and DNAs in 2017/18. This seems to have steadied but still represents a waste. Our CRM system, Titanium, is extremely effective in helping us to manage demand and reduce unnecessary administrative time. This all means that we can maximise our resources and provide a quick and ethically responsible service. We use a screening and Outcomes measures tool (CCAPS) which is integrated into Titanium, our CMS system. This helps us to pick up students at risk as soon as they register with the service. We can then triage appropriately.

### Who uses the Service?

The majority of our clients are female (66%). This is typical of Counselling Services across the sector, however we are seeing slightly increases in males using the service, 4% this year, and 3% the year before.



Looking at all our student clients, 77% are from the UK, with 21% from EU or International and 2% giving no response, a rise from last year. The majority of staff (77%) are from the UK.



When we look at the ethnicity of our clients, we see what a diverse population we have in Bradford, with 39% being white (British or other). 38% are Asian or Asian British, representing an increase from last year. Figures for University students are virtually identical, with 37% Asian/Asian British, 13% Black/Black British and 39% White.

## Presenting Issues

The main presenting issue was anxiety, followed by depression and relationships, the same as last year. However, most of our clients are complex with multiple problems. 'Presenting issue' is what is identified by the counsellor on Intake as being the primary initial problem. This year we saw a very slight reduction in *Anxiety* and *Depression* as presenting issues, with *Self & Identity* overtaking *Loss* as the fourth most common presentation. This continues an identical trend to last year.

1. Anxiety	25.3%
2. Depression	21%
3. Relationships	16.6%
4. Self & Identity	11.5%
5. Loss	8.7%

We use a screening and outcomes measures tool, CCAPS, to measure initial distress at the start of the contract. In all areas except alcohol use, our clients are substantially above the national average for other counselling services (NB these are US norms), showing the high level of complexity of the cases we are dealing with. This is particularly so for Depression and Academic Distress.

## Waiting times

The Counselling service believes that clients should be seen as soon as possible and work very hard to keep our waiting times to a minimum. In 17/18, the average waiting time for an Intake (first) appointment was 3.93 days. The average waiting time for an ongoing counselling appointment following Intake was 8.52 days. This is remarkable compared to the NHS.



## **What we have done**

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

### ***Group work and training***

The service saw 280 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 offered to the People and Organisational Development department was expanded to reflect the impact of a time of major organisational change and restructure. We collaborated with HR to run *Building Resilience* training for managers alongside new workshops eg *Living Through Anxious Times* and repeating the ever-popular *Developing Assertiveness*. We expanded the mindfulness offer to include a weekly (in term-time) *Mindfulness for Students* in addition to the monthly *Space to Breathe* mindfulness sessions for University and College staff (separately). We have also provided bespoke *Mindfulness* workshops for both College and University staff and offered a slot on *Mindfulness at the Health, Safety and Wellbeing* Conference in June. We started looking at the specific needs of Post Graduate students and offered a 3 session course on *Overcoming Procrastination* during the summer academic break which was well attended and successful. We also collaborated with colleagues in Academic skills on their writing week, providing input into areas such as writer's block and procrastination. We also formed part of the Universities Supporting Victims of Sexual Violence (USVreact) EU wide project, involving 6 countries and 13 partner institutions. Through this project we delivered 5 separate training days to student facing support staff at the University on how to respond to disclosures of sexual violence.

### ***Website and Self-help***

We revamped our website and created a series of leaflets on common problems. These are extremely attractive and have proved very popular, available on-line and in paper format. Bradford College have customised them and again these have been very successful .

### ***Open days and wellbeing fairs***

We have focused on widening our participation and presence at University and College open days and wellbeing fairs this year, attending evening and weekend as well as daytime events. We have developed a more interactive approach to engaging with students and staff. Our 'tree' is especially very popular providing a fun way to engage people in how to care for their wellbeing and mental health.

## **Staff counselling**

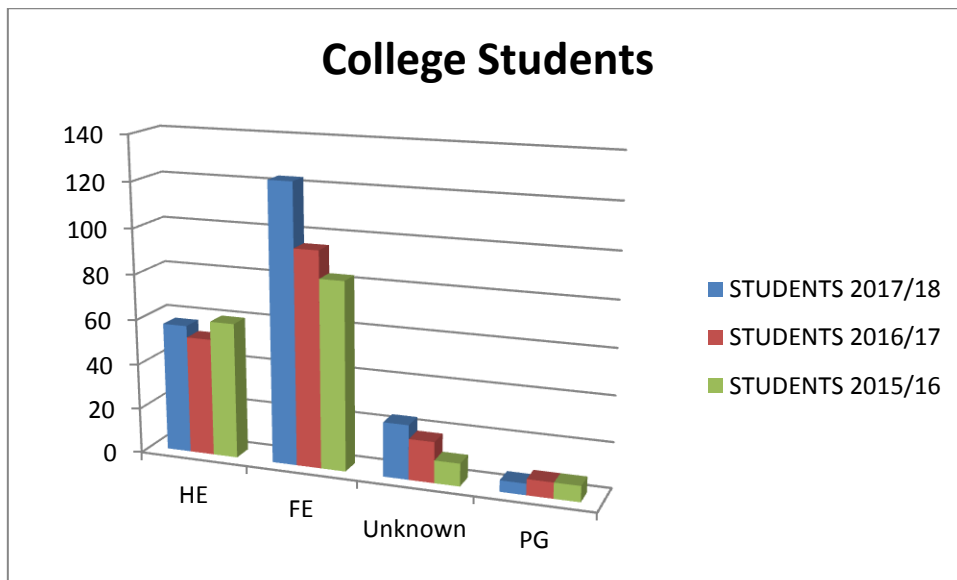
201 staff attended the Counselling Service this year, 162 from the University (8.7% of all University staff) and 39 College staff. The University staff numbers represent a 15% increase on last year but the College staff numbers have dropped from 57 to 39. The majority (35.9%) were Administrative followed by Academic (26.2%). This is a change from last year where most of the clients were Academic. 12.8% were Academic Related, 13.3% other and 2.6% ancillary. There has been a drop in the numbers of staff who were at work throughout (68.7% compared to 77% last year), with 7.5% off work at the start and then returning, 8% off work throughout and 4.5% at work at first and then off work (decrease on last year 6.4%). This field was not completed by 11.4%. 78.6% (1% less than last year) of these clients were described by the counsellor as experiencing anxiety, depression, stress or a combination of these. Similar to last year 46% (85 clients) of these clients saw this primarily as work-related.

All staff are required to complete a Clinical Outcomes Routine Evaluation (CORE) 10 form on registration, before the first ongoing counselling session and at the last session. The average score on registration was 19.4 and at ending 12.1. The clinical cut off point is 12. This means that after a brief 6 session intervention a clear improvement from substantially above the clinical cut off to just on the cut-off point was achieved.

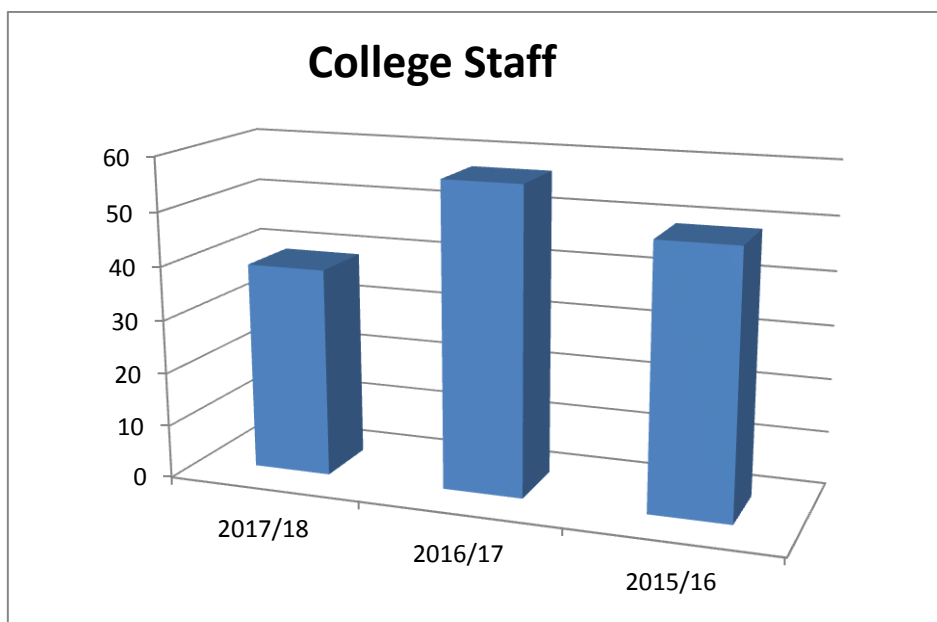
This year we dropped the staff only drop-in at 8.30 on Friday morning, there was a very low uptake on this, but we continued with the monthly lunchtime mindfulness sessions (*Space to Breathe*). We also initiated a monthly *Mindfulness for Staff* for College staff. These are bookable via the People Development website (University) and the HR website (College) and have proved to be very popular.

## **Bradford College**

The University continues to work in partnership with the College to provide a counselling service for its staff and students. Last year, 183 clients from the college attended the service, 144 students (209 registered) and 39 staff members. This shows a marked difference over last year, with an increase in student numbers and decrease in staff numbers, reversing the trend of the last two years. We also saw a substantial increase in 16 – 18 year olds; 67 as opposed to 43 in 2016/17, with the majority of the increase being in the 16 year old age bracket – an increase of 13.



We continue to provide intake appointments three days a week at the college, in the Madiba room. This service is well used. We do, however, continue to see high incidents of college students either cancelling or not turning up for their appointments; 32.4% in 2017/18, slightly higher even than 2016/17 and higher than the University students. This represents a large waste of resources in terms of counsellor time. We are constantly working to reduce this, for example, using text reminders and giving clear guidelines. One of the problems is when college staff recommend or even send students, who are not ready. They register but then fail to attend or fail to engage in the contract.



In addition to providing one-to-one counselling, we attended open days, had stands on wellbeing fairs, gave student inductions and provide consultative support for members of the student welfare team. Both college staff and students have access to our workshops.

Because of the popularity of *Space to Breathe*, our monthly mindfulness session for staff, we introduced a monthly session for college staff. This has had a very good take-up with college staff, with 40 staff members attending 7 sessions.

## **Equality monitoring**

All students registering to use the service are invited to complete an equality monitoring form, looking at most of the protected characteristics. We try to ensure that the service remains accessible to all our students.

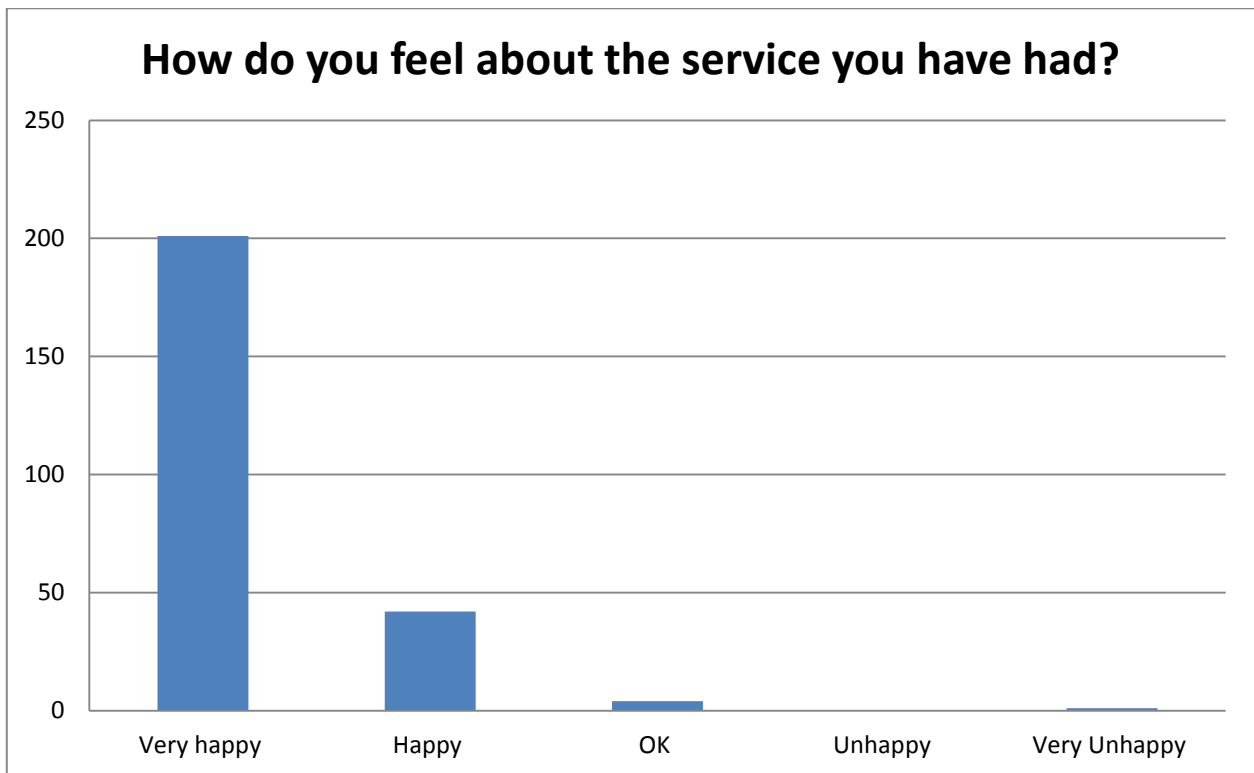
As with most Counselling Services, the majority of clients both students and staff are female. We do, however, see a sizeable proportion of male clients who engage with and benefit from using the service. The ethnicity of our clients reflects that of the general student population as does the use by International and EU students.

We continue to monitor all aspects of the way we deliver provision, including staff recruitment, in order to ensure that the service feels accessible to all who might benefit from using it.

## **Evaluation**

We continue to use the highly successful feedback postcards which are given to each client at the end of each contract. We also do a 'Snapshot' week three times a year where every client who uses the service that week is given a more extensive feedback form to complete. Attendees at all our workshops also complete a feedback post card. We have found these tools to be extremely effective, yielding a response from 42% of clients attending the service for one-to-one counselling (slightly less than last year which was 48%). The charts that follow show the combined feedback for one-to-one counselling ie the post cards and student and staff snapshot week.

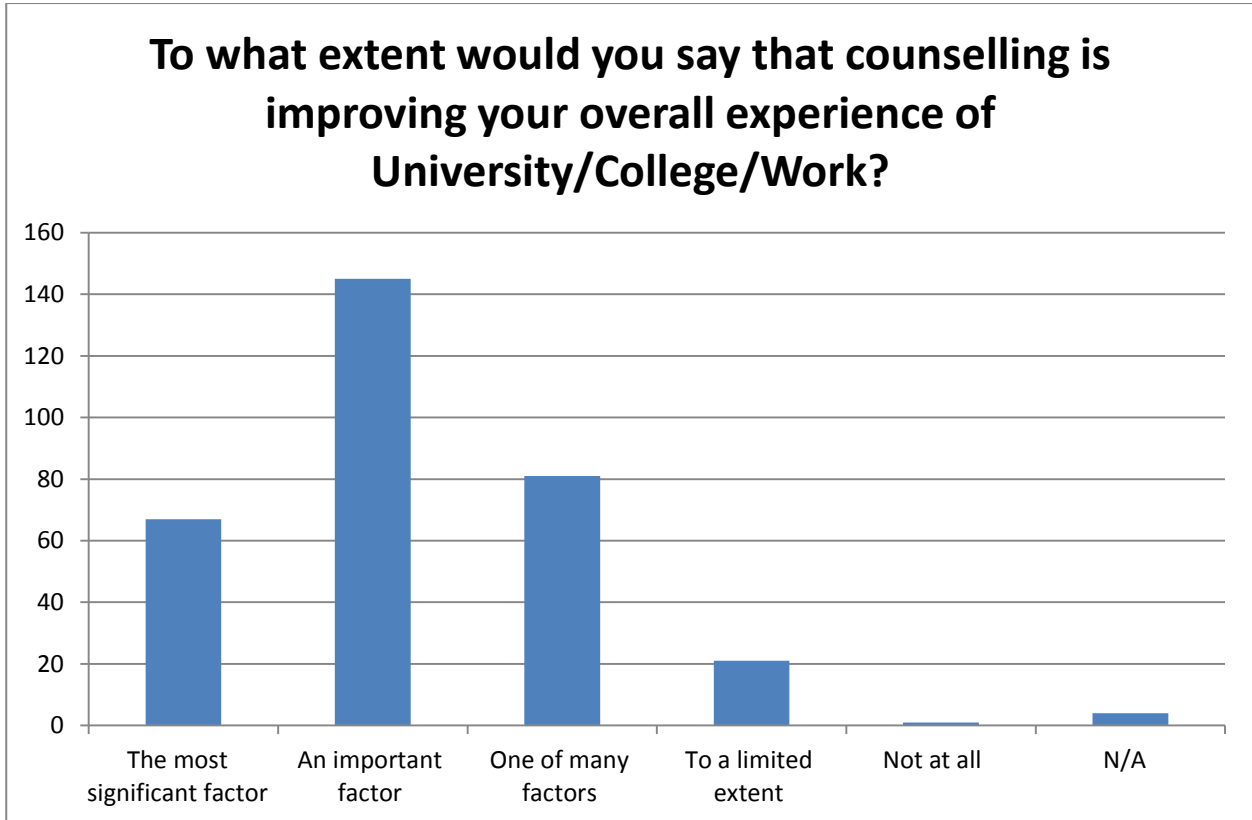
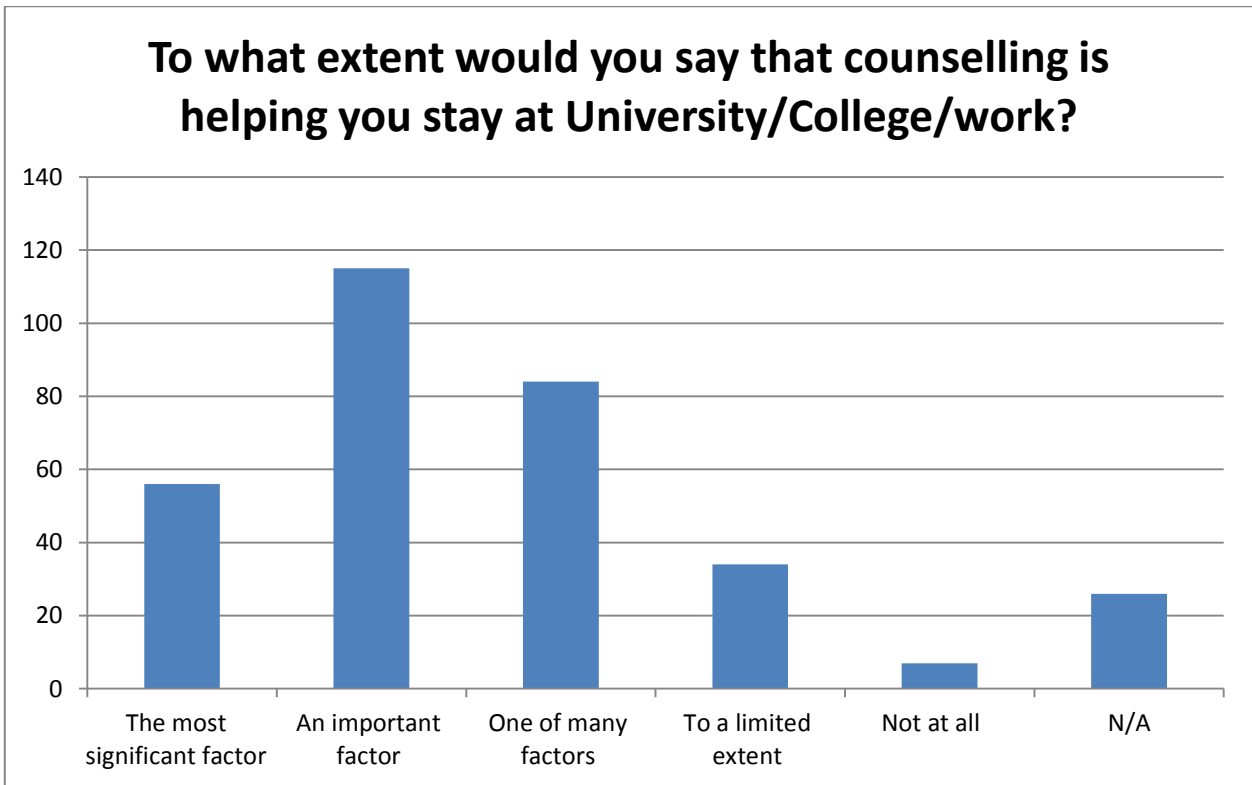
The feedback is all extremely positive, with 97.9% (compared to 90% last year) of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing that they had a positive experience of the counselling service.



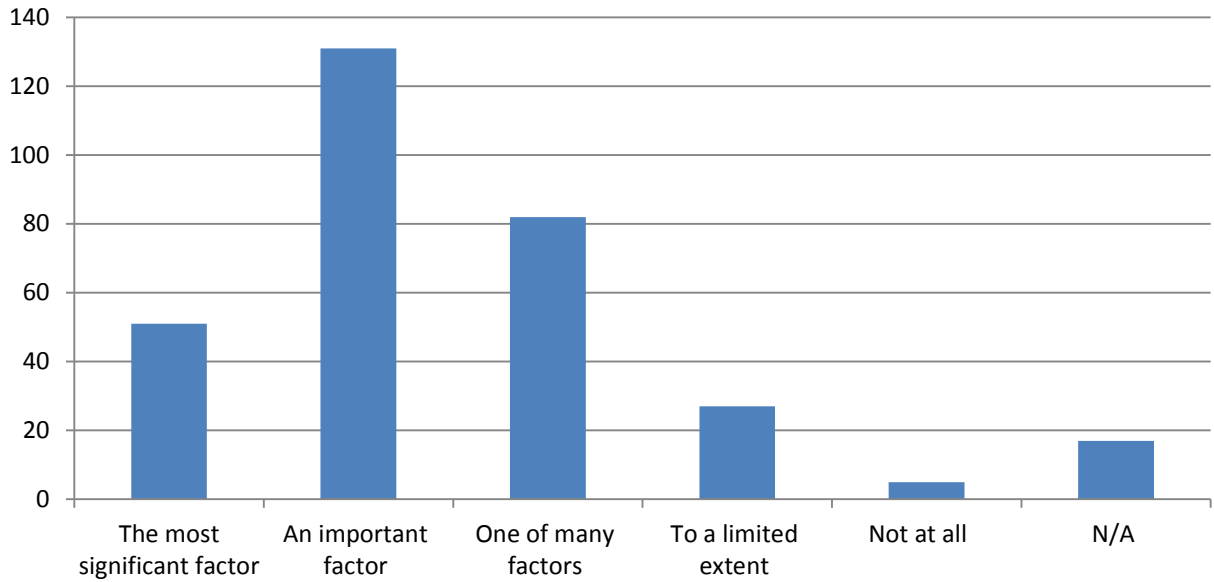
Clients are asked to complete questions from the Clinical Impact on Academic Outcomes (CIAO) measure. This is a measure devised by the BACP and used by many HEIs to measure the impact of counselling on important areas such as retention, progression, student experience and employability. We have slightly amended the way we use it to encompass staff clients as well. The results show that attending counselling plays a significant part in all the areas that it measure. In 2017/18, 56 clients felt that attending the counselling service for one-to-one was the significant factor in helping people stay at University or at work (staff).

The experience of counselling also showed significant benefit on academic performance and overall experience. Especially notable were the responses to the questions about ‘helping you develop skills that might be useful for future employment (eg building resilience, self-understanding, understanding of others, managing difficult feelings better, increased confidence/assertiveness. Of the people who completed the questionnaires, 370 (65%) felt that counselling was either an important (250) or the most significant (120) factor.

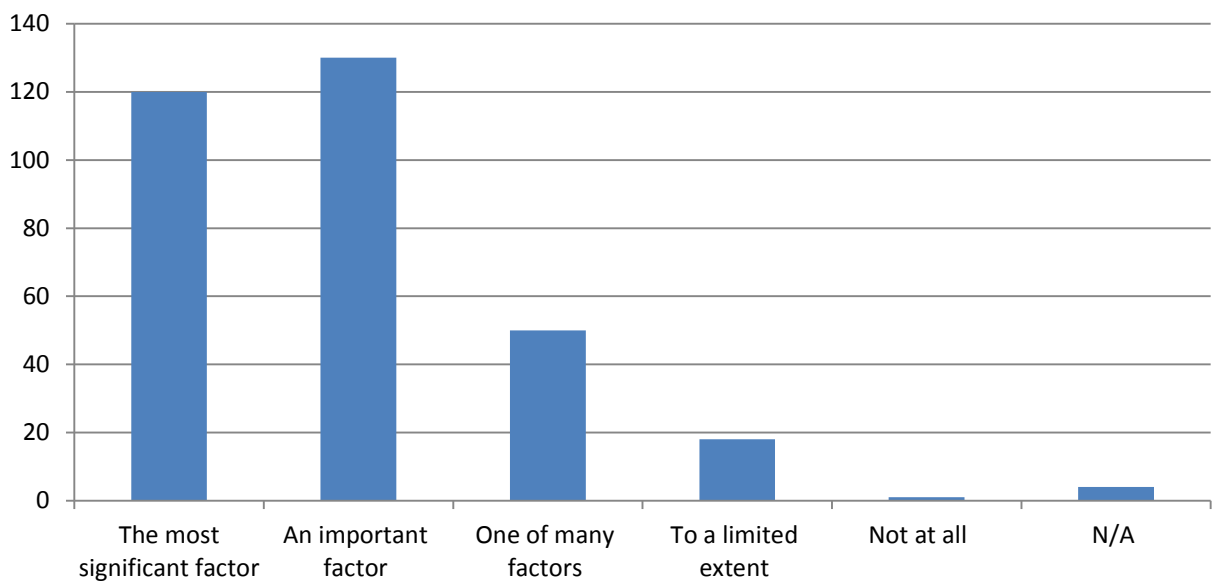
***To what extent would you say that the Counselling Service is:***



### To what extent would you say that counselling is helping you do better in your work/academic work?



### To what extent would you say that counselling is helping you develop skills that might be useful for employment?



## Comments

The comments we get on both the feedback postcards and snapshot week forms are overwhelmingly positive. Here are just few:

"I came here while I was in a very dark place but today I leave with my head held high. I feel ready to face the challenges of my course and life in general."

"Sometimes you crave a lighthouse – it can't help you swim but it can guide you, can help to reveal those dolphins around you who can help you in your struggle to shore. The lighthouse has to switch off at some point, in daylight, but by then you're safer, happier. Thank you for showing me the way, I can stand on my own two feet better now and the sand is warm around my toes. I can work better, live better and I understand me more – it's a wonderful and essential service. Thank you again".

"Fantastic service. Professional, caring and understanding. Lots of useful suggestions to help you understand yourself. Safe space to be honest and open".

"I really appreciated what counselling service help me to get back to normal and back to my study programme – thank you very much for a great service."

"Always very positive – Felt genuine care and understanding from my counsellor – Very useful coping strategies to take away."

"The service was good as it came in handy as I'd have been under a great deal of stress both at work and at home/personal circumstances. Thank you."

"Really great service, helped me a lot in very little time. Text reminders great. Counselling itself super insightful, everyone really friendly. I'm really glad I came in. Such a great and helpful service. 5/5A\* Only downside is limited sessions."

"The CBT method to breathe when feeling anxiety helped me immensely. Just talking about the anxiety & methods to overcome it has helped. Will utilise the drop-in sessions when needed."

"Very kind & understanding. Helped me to find ways to manage stress & boundaries."

"I was a bit wary about starting counselling but I feel as if I have conquered a lot through my sessions. I feel as if I am more in control of my emotional wellbeing and shouldn't be negatively influenced by it as much. Also grateful for my counsellor's help, she made me think about how to help myself. "

"Thank you SO much. You don't realise how much you've helped me gather my thoughts."



“The Counselling Service has been essential in my life and I am very grateful to have this service as I don't know where I would be without it. It has helped me through my darkest of times and has been there for me when nobody else has. My counsellor has been absolutely brilliant. I can never explain my gratitude enough. Thank you so much!”

“I wasn't one for counselling – was 'embarrassed', not comfortable to open up and didn't see how this would help. Would say now my views have changed a lot. It helps a lot and no one is judgemental and makes you feel ok about things. Very pleased I decided to come and try things out.”

“The sessions have helped me get back to myself, control my anger & gain confidence.”

“Very friendly, understanding and considerate. Motivating and engaging. Encouraging to embark on normal life and study.”

“This has been incredibly helpful for understanding big changes in my life & hopefully lead to more confidence & resilience.”

“With my counselling sessions I was able to open up more to people close to me as to how I was feeling. It has really helped me feel like me again.”

“Good service and help. Needs to be more than 4 sessions though.”

“My counsellor was, as before, inspired in how she helped me get from A to B. I'm deeply grateful.”

“This service has helped me understand my emotions following a painful bereavement. I now feel able to cope and reflect on fond memories of my dad.”

“My counsellor made me feel very secure & safe expressing my feelings & opinions. He offered interesting & useful ways to combat my irrational thoughts, & provided good insight into my experiences & how they have influenced my opinions.”

“I love Counselling Service at my Univ. I was all alone but my counsellor kept me motivated & supported me to remain focused. To be honest my counsellor has helped me to the fullest – to continue my studies here. Without her professional help, I don't think so that I would have even continued after coming to Bradford to do my PhD programme.”