



RIVERSIDE COUNSELLING SERVICE - WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Riverside Counselling Service is a charity, established in 1989, offering individual, affordable counselling to adults and young people living in Henley, Wallingford and the surrounding areas. We have 30 highly trained counsellors seeing over 85 clients a week. 'The Space' is the branch of our service dedicated to counselling young people from the age of 12 to 20+. Riverside is the only service offering affordable counselling in our area and demand is constantly increasing, with enquiries up 30% over the past 2 years.

Our clients represent a complete cross-section of the community and at the moment range in age from 12 to 80 years old. Riverside counsellors help them to deal with depression and anxiety, relationship issues, loss, bereavement, eating disorders, self-harm, post-natal depression, redundancy, domestic violence, family breakdown and many other problems. Clients are often referred by GPs or other health-care professionals and can also contact us directly.

We are committed to providing affordable counselling, but everyone pays something toward their sessions because it has been proved time and again that people value and gain more benefit from a service that they have paid for, however small that amount. Even though our counsellors largely donate their time, it is still expensive to run an organisation and we rely on fundraising to ensure that our service remains viable and that we can continue to offer subsidised places.

Increased availability of mental health services is urgently required. The NHS have recently reduced the amount of counselling available due to commissioning changes so that patients are now offered CBT groups in the first instance or online programmes such as 'Beating the Blues'. The nearest groups are in Abingdon and most are in Oxford and are therefore not accessible for many in this area. Online programmes do not really replace the relationship between counsellor and client, which is key to enabling changes to happen. Since the changes in NHS provision

in March, the number of clients approaching the service for support has more than doubled.

Private counselling is more readily available, but not affordable for everyone. Riverside bridges this gap by providing affordable professional counselling, with little or no waiting time, for those in the community who need help right now.

We also know that counselling works. We regularly monitor our clients' progress and 87% of them make a significant improvement over the course of their therapy. In our clients' own words:

"First class service. An amazing journey and a truly transformational experience."

"She really listened to me and helped me to validate my own experience. I feel that she has helped me enormously and in a way that I can continue to benefit from by using the skills and lessons she has taught me."

"I think you provide a very important service filling a big void in the NHS. Your service should be available in other areas of the country."

"My counsellor has been amazing. She has helped me through a very difficult time in my life. She has taught me how to become my own counsellor. I feel like I can face the unknown future remembering to have faith in myself. She has given me that confidence, restored my self-worth and helped me to turn a corner."

Most families are touched by mental health problems in some way, but many do not have access to the help they need. Riverside has been meeting that need in our community for over 25 years.

Hilary Arthur

Director and Clinical Lead

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