

# Student Counselling Service

## Annual Report 2015-2016



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BACP is the trade name of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

## The Report

This annual report was produced in December 2016 and covers the academic session from August 2015 to July 2016. In order to give an up-to-date picture, we also report on key issues beyond August 2016.

## Contents

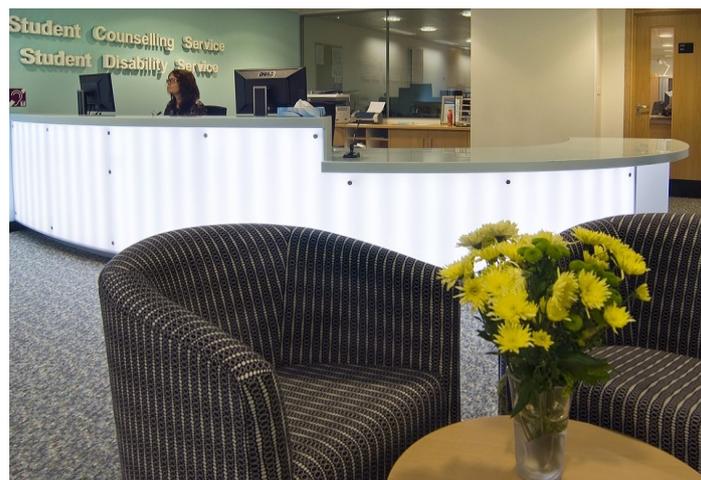
1. Summary of impact of service activities from the previous academic year
2. Fit with the Strategic Plan
3. Service usage figures
4. Innovations and successes
5. Business process developments
6. User communications & feedback
7. Service reputation/esteem measures
8. Analysis of service monitoring and achievement of service levels
9. Income generated during 2015-16
10. Partnerships/shared services
11. External reference points
12. Staff Development activity
13. Risk analysis
14. Summary of key priorities for 2016-17

## Appendix Acronyms

This report can be provided in alternative formats on request.

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**“Found the service very welcoming and helpful - really changed my perspective on getting professional help.”** (Student feedback)

## **1. Summary of impact of service activities from the previous academic year**

Service priorities for 2015-16 were:

**1. To maintain the delivery of effective, efficient, timely, professional counselling.**

This has been challenging with regard to the timely aspect. This report demonstrates that the Service continues to be effective, efficient and professional, but the very significant increase in demand (33.5%) impacted on our response times during peak periods of service usage. There was an average of 75 new referrals per week during semester time (an increase of 41.5% on 2014-15). See below re response times.

**2. To maximise the matched care approach, encouraging students to access all available opportunities identified at assessment and appropriate for their needs, putting support plans in place at assessment, which may include counselling.**

Work on this began in 2015-16 and is ongoing. We identified the most impactful additional supports for the most common issues (e.g. anxiety and depression) or specific issues (e.g. eating problems) and signpost students to these resources as appropriate. Attendance at Skills for Life and Learning programme events increased.

**3. To secure additional Service resources, and to maximise usage of new premises at Moray House Lodge (to be shared with the Staff Counselling Service).** This has been achieved. An additional £140,000 over two years were allocated for additional staff (p/t counsellors and p/t administrator) and c.£250,000 invested in the refurbishment of Moray House Lodge as a Counselling Centre, with capacity both for individual face to face sessions and small group work activities.

**4. To deliver the training developed as part of the Student Mental Health Strategy**

The material was developed in consultation with Prof. Alan Murray, Assistant Principal Academic Support, and will be funded by SES resources. Originally aimed at Personal Tutors, the target population has been extended to include other Student Support Team staff (starts 2016-17).

**5. To secure ongoing funding for Big White Wall**

Additional funding of £20,000 from the last of the SEP budget secured enough places for semester 1 2016-17. Further funding, preferably on a population model, remains challenging and would require sourcing through Development and Alumni.

**“Never thought it would help as much as it did. Staff and counsellors are professional yet caring. Would recommend to anyone struggling academically or with family issues.”** (Student feedback)

From the annual QA report for 2014-15 the Student Counselling Service was asked to: (a) consider how to further develop the programme of psycho-educational workshops and (b) consider how to continue to provide a high quality service in the context of rising demand and financial and space constraints, in particular considering what further efficiencies can be gained.

SCS Developments during 2015-16 included:

- two new workshops: “Mindfulness for everyday living” and “Don’t lose sleep over it: how to manage insomnia”
- a three session version of the NHS Stress Course aimed specifically at students
- a new series of presentations and workshop sessions on “Managing Anxiety” and “Managing mood”
- a session on Sleep and Self-care for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Week
- Fully utilising new rooms at Paterson’s Land (Moray House) available from summer 2015 with additional resource secured for 2016-17 (Moray House Lodge)
- Administrative efficiencies and process efficiencies were implemented or reviewed (see below)

As a result of the significant rise in demand by the beginning of March there were 405 students on our waiting list for counselling and we were quoting a waiting time of c. 8 weeks for students who had been assessed as suitable for short term counselling but not at risk. For these students, and those subsequently referring, there was a possibility of the service being unable to see them before the end of semester, when many students would no longer be in Edinburgh. In order to see as many students as possible, while continuing to provide an evidence based high quality and effective service, the decision was made to vary the provision as follows:

- i. Based on the average number of sessions used by students over several academic years (and the sector norm), students not assessed at risk were offered up to four counselling sessions, though the capacity for additional sessions subject to clinical need and criteria is available on a case by case basis to all students.
- ii. Where appropriate students unlikely to be seen for counselling were referred to the Managing Mood and Managing Anxiety programmes outlined above. These comprised weekly presentations and weekly skills practice sessions on managing mood and managing anxiety.
- iii. This model was informed by the developing practice at other Universities in the UK and North America.

The impact of these measures was that the waiting list was halved in seven weeks, and there was no detriment to CORE outcome results.

**“I’m really glad this service is available as it has really helped me and if it hadn’t been, I would possibly have left Uni because of all the stress in my personal life”**  
(Student feedback)

## **2. Fit with the Strategic Plan**

In all that the Service delivers, through brief therapy, psychoeducation, and support for staff, it increases student performance, improves retention, promotes resilience, reduces stress, builds employability skills and above all helps keep students safe. How this impacts on the student experience is further described below.

Our activities are intimately linked with SES and USG strategic priorities:

- Responding to students as individuals, meeting needs, reaching goals, enhancing skills through developments having most impact on improving student experience. exceptional value for money, a talent for continual improvement and efficiently meeting budget targets
- Providing a high-quality service to the University community
- Further developing and sustaining a responsive service culture
- Pursuing continuous improvement of the Service.

**“The counselling service was there for me through a very difficult time. I feel that the support and advice given to me will help me throughout the rest of my life.”** (Student feedback)

## **3. Service usage figures**

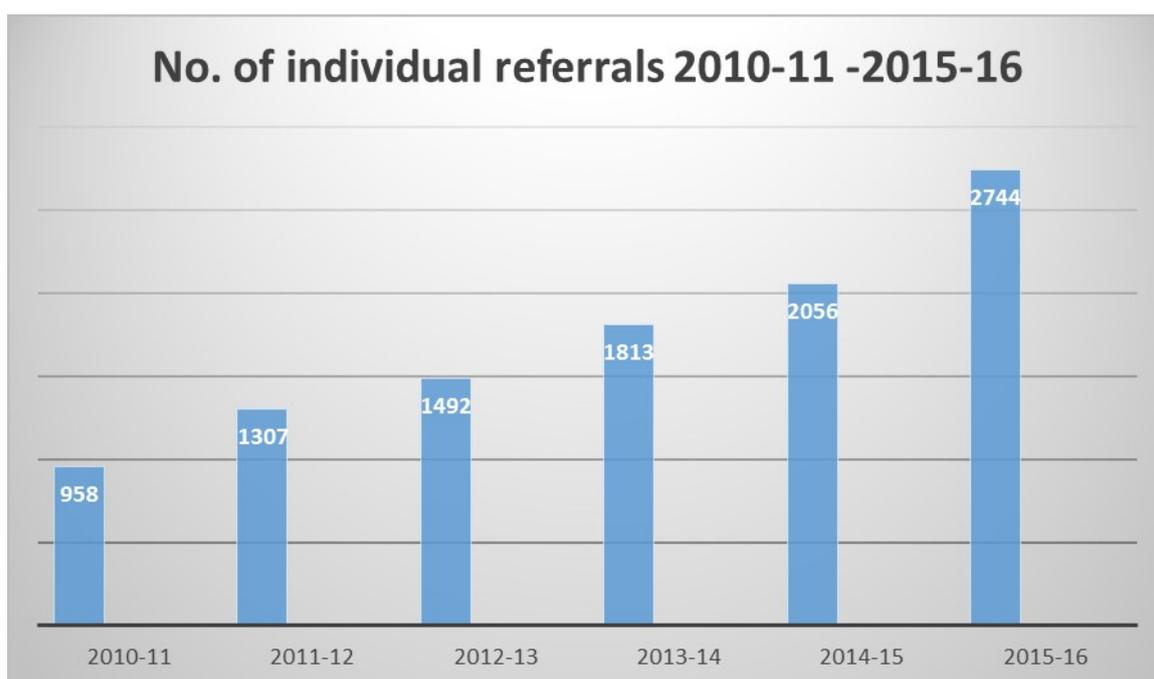
Summary of key trends:

- Overall Service usage increased by 30% to 3666, 9.8% of the whole student population.
- The number of individual referrals for counselling increased by 33.5% to 2744. The increase during semester time was actually 41.5%.
- 298 students attended the SLL presentation/workshops, an increase of 75%; there were 603 attendances at the Paws Against Stress therapist events (up 4%), 19 students attended the new Stress Course, and two attended Sleep and self-care during mental health and Wellbeing week.
- Additional resources allowed for an 18.5% increase in individual sessions offered.
- 21 students used email counselling
- Total service usage in five years has increased by 245%, and referrals for counselling by 200%.

**Overall user population is relatively stable:**

- Gender balance male/female 28%/72% - no significant change
- No change UG/PG 68%/32%
- 3% change PGT/PGR 64%/36% (1% change in student pop as a whole)

- Slight increase in UK students 60% (+5%) EU 16% (-4%) and overseas 24% (-1%) though the balance changes for attendance at SLL events - 40% UK/60% international
- Chinese students remain the highest user group by nationality among overseas students, though disproportionately fewer than in the student population as a whole.
- 552 students with disabilities used the service (39% increase on 2014-15, and 19% of all service users), i.e. 15% of the all students declaring a disability to the University. 7% of service users declared a learning difficulty and 6.5% declared a mental health condition as a disability.



The main issues students presented with remained the same: anxiety 29% (-1%); depression 20% (+1%); self and identity 13% (+4%); relationships 10%; academic 8% (-2%).

The top five sources of referrals remain consistent: website 30% (+2%), School/PT/SSO 26%, GPs 16%, friends 13% (+1%) and Advice Place 6% (+1.5%), with a drop in the number of students commenting on leaflets as a source of referral 0.5% (-2.5%).

### 3.3 Student Mental Health Coordinator

SMHC activity	2014-15 No. students	2014-15 No. sessions attended	2015-16 No. students	2015-16 No. sessions attended
SMHC assessment	16	43	60	60
SMHC sessions	56	148	78	198
SMHC drop-in	18	45	9	13

The increase in referrals to and support offered by the SMHC reflect the fact that the role is now fully embedded in the Service.

There were c.1200 enquiries to the service from staff, parents, students and others (outwith routine student user contact), by way of phone calls, emails and drop-ins.

There was a concerning increase in failed appointments, up from 9% to 14%, despite our best efforts, redoubled in terms of our equitable access policy. This is still lower than the sector average of 24%. 1255 appointments failed i.e. could not be used because students did not attend appointments or they had cancelled so late that the appointment could not be offered to another student in time for them to attend.

There was a disproportionately higher use from students in five schools in CAHSS. These Schools are being prioritised for the Student Mental Health training.

**“I am very grateful to my counsellor for her time, guidance and professionalism. This has been such an important process which has improved my emotional and mental well-being.”** (Student feedback)

#### **4. Innovations and successes**

**Online registration** - By the beginning of 2015-16 phase 2 of our online registration project was fully in operation: students can register online, enhancing the efficiency of the process for students and our administrators. Over the year 99% of students chose to register online, with 1% opting to register by completing paper forms in our offices. The process of referral and registration with the service has never been more accessible, but based on our experience and that of other HEI counselling services who have adopted a similar system, at least two thirds of the 33.5% increase in demand is likely to be attributable to the new process.

The developments to the Skills for Life and Learning programme are commented on above. The new sessions for managing Mood and Anxiety were very beneficial for those attending (see below).

Following the outcome of the change in the model of delivery from March 2016, and in view of the likelihood that demand was likely to increase, these changes were further developed into a Service Upon Need model for 2016-17. The emphasis is on offering students **timely, evidence based** support through (a) **immediate access online self-help** (b) **guided self-help support** via SLL programme and online tools and (c) **brief therapy**. Options (a) and (b) need to be seen as valid in themselves, and not merely to fill the gap until individual counselling can be arranged.

**“I also liked that there were many other resources such as mobile apps or hotlines available, which I hadn't considered using before.”** (Student feedback)

## 5. Business process developments/new ways of working

As described above the online registration project was fully in operational in 2015-16: the registration process draws from pre-existing information held on EUCLID and the administrative staff time to process registrations is now minimal.

Website Development - The move from polopoly to drupal during 2015-16 allowed for further refinements and updates of the visual and textual content of the website.

During 2015-16 the SMHC further developed information sharing and referral pathways between NHS Lothian, in particular MHAS, and the Service on behalf of the University.

In semester two we consulted with Student Systems on business process enhancement. The outcome before the end of the academic year was that our current systems are at their limit of efficiency from an administrative perspective. Further efficiencies would be at the cost of reducing the number of appointments being offered or changing the appointment booking system which could in itself reduce the service's capacity to respond promptly to all its user population. The recommendation was that a business case be developed for a new system along with a clear set of requirements.

## 6. User communications & feedback

During 2015-16 our primary focus was on addressing our priorities in the context of a dramatic rise in demand. We focussed our evaluations on Service and SLL programme evaluation, as well as reflecting on the feedback from ESES and ISB.

**“Has genuinely saved my mental health this year.”** (Student feedback)

<b>Service Evaluation summary</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>
Satisfaction with service (reception, waiting areas, interaction with staff, accessibility and discreetness)	99%	99%
Satisfaction with service publicity	95%	98%
Percentage of students reporting waiting time for initial appointment as “too long”	8%	15%
Percentage of students reporting waiting time for counselling as “too long”	21%	43%

There is consistently high satisfaction rate with accessing the Service and contact with staff, and a further improvement on publicity, with now only 2% of users considering the service is not well publicised. The dissatisfaction with waiting times demonstrates the importance of addressing response times, although the detail often reveals unrealistic expectation of some students.

SLL programme evaluation - 209 students attended - 97.5% rated the content and style as good; 95% would recommend the workshops to other students.

Anxiety and Mood group programme – 22 students attended – 96% rated the content and style as good; 96% would recommend the workshops to other students.

The feedback from students on the PAWS events remains very positive.

ESES survey 2015-16 showed the satisfaction rate remained at 63%. There was no valuable or illuminating feedback from free text comments that would reflect on this score.

ISB Survey wave	Autumn 2013	Autumn 2014	Autumn 2015
Support satisfaction Student Counselling	87.6%	91.4%	87.5%

The 87.5% satisfaction rate (-4%) is likely to be due to the experience and perception of waiting times.

### 7. Service reputation/esteem measures

The Service has been a BACP Service Accredited Service since March 2006. Our application for reaccreditation was submitted in March 2016, and was successful. The Service is accredited until March 2021. BACP service accreditation is a recognised quality standard for organisations providing counselling and psychotherapy services, demonstrating that they offer an accountable, ethical, professional and responsive service to clients, staff, volunteers and stakeholders. The scheme sets the benchmark for high quality service delivery.

A Thematic Review of University services for students with mental health problems was held in March 2016 and took into account a range of student services and academic areas that deliver mental health and/or well-being services as a primary element of their remit or as one element of their remit. The Final Report can be found here <http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/thematicreviewreport-mentalhealthservices-final.pdf>

Commendations included:

- University services who deliver mental health services as a core part or as a subset of their remit. The Review Team heard excellent feedback from students and staff.
- SCS for the support they provide to online distance learning students. The Review Team heard excellent feedback about email counselling and the self-help material provided by the service.
- the Helping Distressed Students guide (produced by SCS jointly with SDS)

**“Most helpful mental health service I have ever attended.”** (Student feedback)

The Director serves on the Heads of University Counselling Service (HUCS) Executive, plays an active part in the work of HUCS Scotland, and is a member of the Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors. The Director had also been a

member of the BACP's Expert Reference Group developing a competency framework for counsellors in HE and FE. The competency Framework has now been published [http://www.bacp.co.uk/admin/structure/files/pdf/15731\\_ucl-competences\\_v4.pdf](http://www.bacp.co.uk/admin/structure/files/pdf/15731_ucl-competences_v4.pdf)

### 8. Analysis of service monitoring and achievement of service levels

The Service KPIs are related to the student experience and are common in the sector. They are based on:

- (1) Student evaluations: Service Evaluation, ESES and ISB (see above)
- (2) Response times
- (3) Effectiveness/impact – CORE outcomes
- (4) Effectiveness/impact - CIAO survey.

Response times: offer of appointments	Referral to Assessment		Assessment to counselling	
	2014-15	2015-16	2014-15	2015-16
1 week	79%	70%	37%	31%
2 weeks	17%	22%	25%	18%
3 weeks	1.5%	6%	13%	6%
4 weeks	1%	1%	6%	3%
4+ weeks	1.5%	1%	19%	42%

92% of students were offered a 50 minute assessment appointment within 2 weeks (-4%) of referral. 58% were offered a counselling appointment within 4 weeks (-23%). The factors influencing these response times were:

- Demand up 33.5% overall, though higher during semester time 41.5% (average number of referrals during semester was 75 per week).
- Student availability – limited by timetable or personal choice
- Christmas closure
- Innovative Learning Week – many students do not make themselves available
- Failed appointments – see above

Our response times are consistently quicker than local psychological services in the NHS in Edinburgh (who do not meet their 18 week target) and local third sector counselling agencies offering free or very low cost counselling.

**“Brilliant service that has really helped me in many ways.”** (Student feedback)

### CORE (Clinical Outcomes Routine Evaluation)

Year	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Overall Recovery and improvement for all clients (clinical and subclinical)	68%	68%	68%

The change in offering most students four sessions was effective from March. There was no detriment to clinical outcomes. The recovery and improvement rate for students in the clinical population alone (i.e. 90% of those completing CORE) was 73%.

**“I attended 3 sessions and felt this was a good amount of time to tackle the most serious of my issues currently affecting my life”** (Student feedback)

**CIAO (Clinical Impact on Academic Outcomes)**

“To what extent would you say that counselling...”	Total finding counselling helpful 2015-16	2014-15	CIAO National Survey
helped you stay at University?	76%	82%	81%
helped you do better in your academic work?	77%	82%	79%
improved your overall experience of University?	87.4%	89%	83%
helped you develop skills that might be useful in obtaining future employment	87.6%	87%	78%

Lower figures for help in retention and academic work reflect that these were not as pressing or as common issues in the user population for 2015-16.

**“Helped me feel much happier at university and no longer have thoughts of dropping out.”** (Student feedback)

**9. Income generated during 2015-16 was as follows:**

Vet School - Counselling provision at Easter Bush	
- Non-managerial supervision for Student Support Team	£6847
Clinical Supervision (counsellors in training and NHS Shetland)	620
Income from Training Events	1100
Donations	<u>360</u>
	<u>£8927</u>

**10. Partnerships/shared services**

**Internal collaboration supporting service delivery:**

- Activities raising awareness of the Service with Schools and Induction team at induction and welcome week events
- Collaboration in general, consultation and referral with other SES services, Residence Life and the Advice Place
- Specific input to the Study Abroad team, informing and promoting support for students
- Input to specific programmes in the School of Education, the Dental Institute and Edinburgh Centre for Professional Legal Studies, and the Moving On Course with OLL
- Service level agreement with the Royal (Dick) Vet School for counselling at EBVC and non-managerial supervision
- Delivering mental health training to schools on request

- Input to EUSA's Peer Support training and the Mental Health and Wellbeing week
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Society: workshop for Freshers
- Contributing both to the planning of the Mental Health and Wellbeing week with EUSA and delivering specific events during the week: Mindapples, Sleep and Self-care, and for PhD students "ReVIVALise – Achieving a well-balanced PGR life"
- Sharing with EUSA President in the process for allocating resources from the Mental Wellbeing Fund
- Presenting to the Senior Tutor Network on Student Mental Health and collaboration with Prof Alan Murray.
- College Support for Study panels
- Contributing to the review of the Special Circumstances Policy
- Student Mental Health Strategy Group
- Mental health Sub Group Student Disability Committee
- Consultation and advice for staff through the Duty Manager system

#### **External collaboration**

- Liaison with Senior GPs at University Health Centre
- Facilitating the NHS Stress Course to be on campus
- Communication, information sharing and referral pathways with NHS Lothian
- Lead service for partnership with BigWhiteWall
- Collaboration with Canine Concern (Scotland )Trust for therapet events

Closer collaboration is supported by good communication, clear information and realistic expectations. The Service has a responsive culture to requests for support from schools, personal tutors, student support teams and colleagues in other services. However particularly during 2015-16 we have had to challenge misinformation (e.g. that the service was "overwhelmed") or misunderstanding as to our role (e.g. that we are an emergency service). During semester two a one sheet information flyer was sent to all PTs.

**"A highly valuable service for students, that has helped improve my university and personal life"** (Student feedback)

#### **11. External reference points/benchmarking (for example best practice outside the sector)**

The Service works to the BACP's *Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions*, and the BACP Universities and Colleges *Good Practice Guidelines*. Attendance during the year at the UUK Mental Health and Wellbeing in Higher Education Conference, the AMOSSHE conference and meetings of HUCS and HUCSS, allows for reflection on and contributing to best practice in the sector. Participation in the AUCCCD international conference has informed developments in relation to building resilience. There were no HUCS or Russell Group benchmarking activities during 2015-16.

**"I felt supported by my University and made to feel important - thank you!"** (Student feedback)

## **12. Staff Development activity**

The Service's Training and Development policy meets our BACP Service Accreditation criteria, and is applicable to all our staff. In addition to on-going training opportunities offered by the University to staff in general, the service undertakes to arrange training for both counselling and administrative staff. BACP Registered and Accredited Counsellors are required to undertake 30 hours CPD per year, and our training policy supports this. Training activities for 2015-16 included the Service Training Day on Working with Survivors of Sexual Violence and Harassment, a session for Service staff on pronouncing Chinese names (with the Confucius Institute), and Service staff attended the BACP UC Day Conference in Sheffield.

Once a month counsellors have an opportunity to meet in small groups to discuss clinical issues. All counsellors have clinical supervision to a minimum of 1.5 hours per month as a professional requirement, and regular case load management support. The Service held two half-day review meetings (September and January) and a review day in May. These provide an opportunity for staff to reflect on the work of the service, consider policy and procedures and share best practice. The support offered to our counsellors in training is an example of best practice as recommended by BACP. We had three trainees in 2015-16.

**“Very approachable, fantastic counsellors, who clearly care about helping you.”**

(Student feedback)

## **13. Risk analysis (risk of under/non-performance, over delivery)**

The most significant risk to achieving service goals is that the demand continues to rise over our capacity and resources to meet the demand. If Service goals were not achieved then ultimately the risks for both users and the University are: risk to students' safety; risk to students' academic failure/retention; risk of students' deterioration of mental health problems which could ultimately lead to both of the above; risk of diminishing the student experience and student satisfaction and the consequent reputational, compliance and financial risk to the University.

The Service's triage approach pre and post initial assessment, ensures that students in crisis or at risk are seen promptly. The Service liaises with SSTs, Residence Life, GPs, MHAS, and NHS Primary and Secondary Care Services as appropriate. Referral forms are reviewed daily by the clinical management team who take into account additional information concerning risk or concern from staff, parents or others. The initial assessment is an assessment of the student's mental health needs, explores the suitability of brief therapy, and the outcome may be a range of supports, whether counselling and/or other supports or services. Students at risk or with high severity are prioritised for ongoing counselling appointments. The Service does not offer drop in sessions as such. However, the Duty manager system, with one of the clinical management team on duty each day, and the SMHC, mean that students who present without appointments but needing to be seen as a matter of urgency can be responded to quickly, sometimes immediately, usually on the same day.

From the CIAO survey for 2015-16, 313 students described counselling as being a very important, or the most significant, support in helping them stay at University. At a

minimum estimate, counselling saved the University £2,817,000 from potential loss of fees and SFC funding.

The ongoing challenge for the Service remains the same: to respond to increasing demand that continues to outstrip resources, and to offer interventions that are evidence based, meet students' needs, and that students are willing to engage with, at the risk of reduced satisfaction by not meeting unrealistic expectations.

Psychoeducational and awareness campaigns may be especially effective for reducing unmet needs for mental health services. However, these types of initiative can only be successful if the local resources are prepared to support increased demand for services.

**“Friendly, helpful and encouraging! Gave me the motivation to start taking control of anxiety and stress.”** (Student feedback)

#### **14. Summarise key priorities for the coming year**

1. To fully implement the new service model ensuring the delivery of effective, timely and professional support appropriate for student needs within a brief therapeutic modality.
2. To deliver the Student Mental Health training programme to PTs and SSTs.
3. To reflect on the commendations and recommendations of the Thematic review
4. Ongoing enhancement of online provision.

**“It was totally beneficial for me! I would recommend anyone to try it if they are looking for help.”** (Student feedback)

## Acronyms

AMOSSHE	- Association for Managers of Student Services in Higher Education
AUCCCD	- Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors
BACP	- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
BACPUC	- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Universities and Colleges
CAHSS	- College of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences
CIAO	- Clinical Impact on Academic Outcomes
CORE	- Clinical Outcomes Routine Evaluation
CPD	- Continuing professional Development
EBVC	- Easter Bush Veterinary Centre
ECA	- Edinburgh College of Art
ESES	- Edinburgh Student Experience Survey
EUSA	- Edinburgh University Student Association
HUCS	- Heads of University Counselling Services
HUCSS	- Heads of University Counselling Services Scotland
ISB	- International Student Barometer
KPI	- Key Performance Indicator
MHAS	- Mental Health Assessment Service (Royal Edinburgh Hospital)
ODL	- Online Distance Learners
OLL	- Office of Lifelong Learning
PAWS	- Paws Against Stress (therapets)
PT	- Personal tutor
PGT	- Postgraduate Taught programmes
PGR	- Postgraduate by Research programmes
QA	- Quality Assurance
SCS	- Student Counselling Service
SDS	- Student Disability Service
SEP	- Student Experience Project
SES	- Student Experience Services
SFC	- Scottish Funding Council
SMHC	- Student Mental Health Coordinator
SLL	- Skills for Life and Learning
SST	- Student Support Teams
UG	- Undergraduate
USG	- University Secretary's Group

During semester time the Service operates out of six locations across campus: the Main Library, Moray House (Paterson's Land and Moray House Lodge), Kings Buildings, Edinburgh College of Art and Easter Bush Veterinary Centre

