

## **Annual Report**

### **2014**

#### **Introduction**

This year has been an important and busy one for TFSW. There have been many developments and activities which I will describe in more detail below. In brief we have moved into our own premises in Bristol, extended our fund-raising activities, both by directly raising money and setting up fund-raising opportunities for the future, and attended to our second charitable aim:

*The education of the public in their understanding of the kinds of mental distress suffered by asylum seekers, refugees and others who have experienced oppression and armed conflict and, in particular, to advance education in effective skills and/or practice and in the supervision of counsellors and psychotherapists to help them to carry out their work more effectively for the benefit of clients who have suffered in this way.*

This has included a highly successful conference, an expansion of our provision of supervision for organisations who work with asylum seekers and refugees in Bristol, a more informative website, a higher profile Facebook page, and for the first time we have a presence on Twitter as well.

Most importantly we have, as usual, carried out our core work of providing counselling and psychotherapy for refugees and asylum seekers supported, not only by supervision, but also by a highly valued on-line course which all therapists are undertaking.

#### **Move to St Agnes Lodge**

We are now renting a small but comfortable therapy room in St Agnes Lodge, Bristol, which is a council property and sub-let to us by St Paul's Unlimited. We are next door neighbours of Sarah Robinson who provides art therapy for us (see below), and a group room is also available with a kitchen. Several of the therapists and interpreters in the charity helped to clean, decorate and furnish the room, which is small, light, warm and comfortable. It looks out over St Agnes Park, so has a pleasing aspect. Most of our therapists now work from there and some of the supervision is carried out there as well. Some therapists still work from home or from Health Centres.

#### **Supervision**

We now regard the supervision of those who work with refugees and asylum seekers as a growing activity of the charity. We are extending the ability of our therapists to provide supervision by helping them to afford training. The trustees have agreed to pay the fee of the first three-day module of the certificate in supervision provided by the Centre for Supervision and Team Development (Bath). Three therapists have taken up this offer. On completion of that module the TFSW therapist will be able to work as a supervisor for us and receive supervision on their supervision. The money for the module will be returned to the charity when the therapist starts to earn money from it, until it is paid back. This will put the therapist in a position to finish the certificate and practice as a supervisor more widely.

## **Art Therapy**

We started our collaboration with the art therapist Sarah Robinson last year. This has borne more fruit this year and a very successful art therapy programme is now in place. We are very happy that Sarah is able to provide this for asylum seekers and refugees, as art is a universal language beyond the verbal and can often express that which cannot be expressed in words. It is soon to be evaluated.

## **The work of the counsellors and psychotherapists**

With an increase in our income this year we have allowed our therapists to take on three rather than two clients, as before. Many of them took on three in any case but only charged for two. The trustees agreed that the first call on extra money should be to pay our present therapists properly. This puts us in a clearer position to be able to think about taking on more therapists and thus more clients. Because of the often harrowing nature of the work we restrict the number people can take on to three sessions per week.

Working with people who have no status, or whose status is uncertain, makes the work stressful and difficult, as much of it involves being with people who feel hopeless about their lives, with little prospect of their material circumstances improving, and often feel that their lives are in danger. Being able to listen well to these experiences can be tiring and distressing but important for our clients, who otherwise have nowhere to bring these hopeless feelings. As is being underlined by our on-line course, the capacity to stay with and respond to highly distressing emotional states is key to healing for those suffering with trauma. Those who have British citizenship or Leave to Remain can settle into longer term work in which they can try to come to terms with the extremely traumatic events that they have suffered over the last few years. We often find that a sense of safety leads our clients to allow emotions which were 'on hold' during the asylum process. Although they have become relatively safe, it is frequently a time when depression is most evident and therapeutic work most important.

Clients whose early attachments were not good, often because their parents' lives were disrupted, have an additional developmental trauma to overcome. We are also increasingly aware of the possibility of intergenerational trauma in our clients where the trauma from one generation is passed to another. The longevity of conflicts makes this increasingly a factor which we recognise and address with our clients.

All counsellors and psychotherapists continue on-going supervision, having received extra training for this work before being taken on. Just as clients need emotional understanding and support, so do therapists who can otherwise suffer from co-traumatisation. Most of our therapists have undertaken a course put on by Speak your Mind, an organisation which promotes the support and training of interpreters who work with therapists. This course is for both interpreters and therapists, to help them to work together effectively.

As mentioned above, on top of these ongoing supports we have added an on-line course on Trauma and Dissociation, which all our therapists are undertaking. The speakers on this programme are all world-renowned specialists in trauma, and we are all finding it very beneficial.

Although therapists are now paid for all their face-to-face work with clients, they often do extra, unpaid work for the Foundation, such as writing professional reports to solicitors and letters to GPS for clients. Of the 47 clients seen this year only 7 did not require letters or reports to be written on their behalf during the year. Payment for this work is within the overall payment of £30 per session and not an extra cost. It is often an integral part of the work.

## **Assessment**

Each client referred is seen by one of our assessment team. They are assessed for suitability for the work and motivation for undertaking it. The assessor finds out practical details such as their time and place availability and whether they need an interpreter. These details are recorded on our waiting list so that therapists only take on clients that meet their own availability, and they have necessary details such as the contact information, information about the referrer (usually the GP) and the name of the interpreter if there is one. This helps make the initial contact run more smoothly and leads the client to feel that the service will be reliable. There are 24 clients on the waiting list at the time of writing, which is many more than we would like. With more money we could take on more therapists and this would cut waiting times.

### **Referrals**

42 clients have been referred to us since the end of October 2012. We saw 47 altogether but 31 of these were referred before the start of the year. Only 6 of these were women. This imbalance is partly because there are fewer female asylum seekers and refugees and partly because women are often referred to Womankind for counselling: this year we have made referrers aware that women may get seen more quickly if referred to Womankind. 17 clients finished therapy during the year. The majority were referred by GPs, only a few were not, and most of those were from The Haven.

### **Status of clients**

18 of the 46 clients seen this year had Leave to Remain, though five have been given a limit of five years. Four have been granted British citizenship. 10 were asylum seekers and only two failed asylum seekers. Two were preparing fresh claims and eight are appealing a negative decision.

### **Interpreters**

Usually about half of our clients make use of an interpreter but this year only 15 of the 46 did (two stopped using one part-way through as their English improved). Using an interpreter is a mixed blessing for us. Often the interpreter provides a link with the client's culture and can help us understand our clients culturally as well as linguistically. We work with our interpreters relationally – ie not mechanically - but with a real other person in the room who inevitably changes the dynamics. Although this can sometimes be difficult, we find that most of our interpreters understand our work and are a useful part of the 'holding' of our clients. Of course the use of an interpreter makes the session twice as expensive, so from that point of view it is helpful to have had fewer interpreters.

### **Age of clients**

The vast majority of our clients were aged between 20s and 40s this year with more in their 40s than previously (nine in their 30s and 10 in their 40s), but we had 16 in their 20s and one of 18. As in other years, this represents a lower age presentation than in work that is not with this client group, though is slightly older than last year.

### **Nationalities of Clients**

18 Countries are represented this year (12 last year). Iran and Iraq are the most represented, with eight from Iraq and 10 from Iran. Almost all of these from both countries are Kurdish. The biggest group after that is Sudan (three). There were two from Somalia, Libya and Sri Lanka. It is interesting to see how few Somalis are now amongst our clients, as for many years they were the largest group. The following

countries had one each: Afghanistan, Armenia, Burundi, Chad, Eritrea, Gambia, Kuwait, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka.

### **General meetings of the Charity**

We feel that the commitment of our counsellors and psychotherapists is made possible by providing sufficient emotional and physical support for their work. Twice a year all members meet as a whole group. One is an AGM and the other is a study day. This year we have had two study days focussed on digesting the first 14 lectures on our on-line course, Trauma and Dissociation. A further study day will take place next year to cover the rest of the lectures.

### **Conference**

This year, in October, we put on a highly successful conference called Trauma Dialogues. It was held at M Shed in Bristol which was a very suitable and well liked venue. It was opened by our patron, the actress Ann Mitchel. We had detailed feedback which can be found on our website. Ninety-eight percent of delegates marked the conference good or excellent and we had many appreciative comments. Five experts in different approaches to trauma spoke for 25 minutes each, and some small, round-table discussions were had after each. There was a panel discussion at the end. The speakers were videoed and their talks are available on the website, along with short videos in which most of them answer the question 'What is the single most important thing to remember when working with traumatised people?'

### **Fund-raising**

We have put much effort into raising our game on fund-raising this year, and the fruits of this are not entirely apparent at the present time. The following has been put in place:

- We hired a fund-raiser who has spent some time getting to know us, so that she can accurately represent us, and has been very successful in this. She has drafted well-targeted letters to 20 trusts asking for grants. So far only six have replied, but one has donated £2000, which is very welcome. This is the Edith M Ellis Charitable Trust. We are very grateful to them for recognising our work and donating this considerable sum. Several have said they would look at our application again.
- There have been two fund-raising events: one a triathlon run by Matthew Green raised £525, and one by John Witt, our treasurer, who had a sponsored shaved removal of his magnificent beard. It was great fun as an event and raised £1,100.96. We are very grateful to both for their efforts on our behalf. Various others give on a regular basis and we are grateful to them too, particularly as it gives us some reliable funding.
- We have acquired a Just Giving site, which will help to raise money and to put on fund-raising events.
- The conference raised over £1311.89++, thanks mainly to our treasurer, John Witt, for very a generous donation to pay for a considerable amount of administrative time.

### **Accounts**

Accounts for this year will be prepared in May 2015 and will be sent to Company's House and the Charity Commission. Last year's accounts are available on request.

## **Next year**

We will be running a course next year for those who wish to work with asylum seekers and refugees. Those who have completed the course will be eligible to join us when we can afford to take on new people. We hope to take on one or two new therapists next year.

We are also considering increasing our brief to include work with humanitarian aid workers. We are in negotiations with Interhealth, who are the main providers of services to charities in regard to the mental health of these workers. We hope to be able to report much more about this next year.

## **Trustees**

Jill Beavis	Financial advisor
Indrani Curry	Legal advisor
John Eames	Immigration lawyer
Sarah Fairbairns	BCPC psychotherapist and ex TFSW therapist
Miriam Nye	Social Worker
John Witt (treasurer)	Spectrum Psychotherapist
Polly Wood	BCPC psychotherapist and ex GP

Dr Judy Ryde November 2014  
Director and Company Secretary

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