



Annual Report 2015

Introduction

2015 has, as we all know, been a tumultuous and traumatic year for the fate of many people worldwide who have been displaced by war and conflict as well as other catastrophic world events. The increased number of people needing sanctuary globally is bound to have an effect on the numbers of highly traumatised people who come to the UK to seek asylum in the future. It already affects the wellbeing of our present-day clients who are disturbed and distressed by the daily news of deaths and suffering they see amongst their fellow refugees. These are very uncertain times and the next year is likely to be dominated by unfolding events. We have already spoken at a meeting called by George Ferguson, Mayor of Bristol, about the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Bristol, and offered our services in Bath.

For TFSW this year has brought some changes which will be described in more detail below. In brief, our provision of support and supervision for other organisations that work with asylum seekers and refugees is increasing and is becoming a major part of the way we carry out the second of our charitable objectives which is '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'. Our relationship with Bath Spa University has developed and our Director, Judy Ryde, is now a visiting fellow which provides a good platform for research as well as therapeutic activities. Our work with Bath Spa University and the provision of support and supervision of staff from other agencies ensures that we reach many more people than the clients we see directly with the provision of counselling and psychotherapy. Those for whom we work directly (51 in all this year) are the ones who suffer from the most complex traumatic states.

The Work of the Counsellors and Psychotherapists

Our therapists have continued to work with three clients each this year though some take on more if they see some of them fortnightly. We have engaged two new therapists, having provided a training and orientation for them. They are now fully participating in our work and proving very valuable. Two of our therapists have been taken ill over the year. One is not able to return and we are very sad to lose her sensitivity and insight. The total number of clients we see per week is usually around 35 which equates to 1575 sessions per year.

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. 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 vicarious trauma.

Referrals

(numbers in brackets, here and elsewhere in this report, represent the relevant number from last year – 2014)

Many of our refugee clients are referred by GPs but asylum seekers are often referred by the Haven. The Haven gives a health check to all asylum seekers who come to Bristol and ensure they have a GP. We now have an arrangement with them that only very complex cases are referred directly to us and this has resulted in these being more appropriate and a smaller waiting list. At the end of October there were only 8 on the waiting list rather than 24 at this time last year. Others are referred to Bristol Wellbeing Therapies (formerly IAPT (spell this out?)) where they can be seen more quickly and then referred on to us if they think that would be more appropriate.

26 clients have been referred to us since the end of October 2014. We saw 51 (47) altogether but 26 (31) of these were referred before the start of the year. Only 10 (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. 16 (17) clients finished therapy during the year.

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.

Supervision for other agencies

As mentioned above we now regard the supervision of staff from other agencies as a growing and important activity of the charity. Several of our therapists have trained or are training in supervision with The Centre for Supervision and Team Development Bath and are providing this supervision. The work with traumatised people is always stressful and in today's climate becoming more so. Helping others to carry the heavy load is a significant aspect of our work. This now includes supporting volunteers and interpreters.

We have been asked to run a series of workshops for volunteers at Bristol Refugee Rights about vicarious trauma so that they understand the need for them to take care of themselves before they become too stressed or burnt out to carry on the work.

The organisations we work with so far are:

- The Haven
- Bristol Refugee Rights
- Bristol Hospitality Network

Art Therapy

Within the last year we have seen the completion of a year-long art therapy group. Sarah Robinson, our HCPC registered art therapist, writes: 'Five consistent group members use the safe, creative space as a means to sharing their stories through image making and using the process and product of image making to contain that which cannot be put into words. The evaluation, using the AIRS method (Springham, 2013) saw a consistent value across the five members; that they realised that they were not alone in their suffering. Other comments included that they could use their stories to communicate something specific to the group, that they could allow the image to hold meaning without having to tell their stories verbally and that the group was a place for laughter as well as holding a common understanding, as people who are or have been through the asylum-seeking process in the UK.' Sarah is encouraging referrals for this year's art therapy group.

Work with Bath Spa University

A collaboration between ourselves and Bath Spa University has been extended this year. Research was carried out at Bristol Refugee Rights into the needs of men who have Leave to Remain. We identified this group as being in particular need as special provision is often made for women and men often feel that their traditional role is undermined when they become refugees. As a result of this study a paper has been written by Agata Vitale with Judy Ryde as second author, several conference papers given by Agata and a PhD student has been employed to put on a course which is designed to help them get into work and this will be written up as a doctoral thesis.

Work with Humanitarian Workers

This year we furthered our aim to work with humanitarian workers from charities in areas affected by Ebola, by providing Confidential and Psychological reviews for workers who were returning from those areas. They worked through various charities, most commonly Save the Children. We were offered this work by an organisation called Interhealth which works to ensure the health of humanitarian workers worldwide. This work finished when the number of people suffering from the disease reduced.

Premises

We are still enjoying the rooms we rent in which to see our clients and supervisees at St Agnes Lodge, St Pauls. We have now taken on a second room and both are used extensively. Unfortunately, the council intends to sell this property so it is likely that we will have to move but understand that there are rooms available to rent elsewhere so do not expect to be homeless. As the wheels turn slowly we may have many more months there.

Report Writing

Although therapists are 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 51 (47) clients seen this year only 9 (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.

Status of clients

28 (18) of the 51 clients seen this year had Leave to Remain, though 9 (5) have been given a limited number of years before having to reapply. Three (4) have been granted British citizenship. Eighteen (10) were asylum seekers and this year we had an increase in the number that were refused. There were 11 this year but only 2 last year. Six of these have lawyers that are preparing fresh claims and 6 are awaiting a decision.

Interpreters

Usually about half of our clients make use of an interpreter and this year was no exception. Twenty-seven out of the 51 used an interpreter. We value the use of our interpreters who provide us with an excellent service. Often the interpreter provides a link with the client's culture and can help us understand them culturally as well as linguistically. We work with our interpreters relationally – ie not mechanically - thus acknowledging that there is 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 majority of our clients were aged in their 30s. This year we had 1 in their teens, 9 in their 20s, 26 in their 30s, 12 in their 40s, 3 in their 50s and 1 in their 70s. As in other years, this represents a lower age presentation than in work that is not with this client group as 35 of the 51 are aged under 40.

Nationalities and ethnicities of Clients

18 (18) countries are represented this year (12 in 2013). As before Iran and Iraq are the most represented, with 9 (8) from Iraq and 12 (10) from Iran. Almost all of these from both countries are Kurdish. The biggest groups after that are Somalia 4(2) and Sudan with 4 (3), 2 of whom are from Darfur. This year we have 3 Sri Lankan Tamils, 3 people from Libya, 2 from Syria, 2 from Nigeria, 2 from Mali, 2 from Afghanistan and all the rest have one each; these are Burundi, Kuwaiti Badoon (Bidoun?), Sierra Leone, Pakistan, Kenya, Algeria and Zimbabwe.

General meetings of the Charity

Besides our usual AGM we had our usual study day which this year discussed and digested the on-line course on Trauma and Dissociation that most of the therapists undertook last year. We had three study days to cover the course and this was the last one.

Fund-raising

It has been agreed by our trustees to keep on our fund-raiser, Jan Swann, for an indefinite period and we now have a fundraising strategy in place. This comprises applying to trusts and foundations sympathetic to our cause as well as running fundraising events and selling Christmas cards etc. Through this strategy we have increased our income by approximately 23%. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the trusts and foundations who have supported us this year.

Accounts

This year's accounts are now available and can be requested by writing to tfsf@tfsf.co.uk

Next year

New therapists

We will be running another course in 2016 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 two or three new therapists next year which will help to keep our waiting list smaller.

Training

As a result of a huge need felt by lawyers who represent asylum seekers at tribunals, most of our therapists are going to receive special training in how to write expert witness reports. It will be run by two of our trustees who work in the legal profession. This will enable lawyers to commission reports from us and does mean that we will be paid for this exacting and time consuming work. We hope in this way to ensure that our reports are of a standard that the tribunals will respect. If a report is commissioned rather than offered unsolicited, the therapists will be paid and some of the money will go to TFSW so we hope it will be a small income stream for the charity as well as the therapists.

Meeting with Interpreters and Therapists

Next year we plan to have a meeting between therapists and the interpreters we use on a regular basis to discuss issues of mutual interest and the kinds of dilemmas that arise such as the difficulty in translating unfamiliar concepts and how to cope when the material of the therapy is disturbing and distressing.

Conference

We are intending to mount a conference on October 1st 2016 and the M Shed (last year's venue) has been booked. The title of the conference will be 'Trauma Dialogues: A World in Turmoil' and will focus on the refugee crisis and other related world upheavals. In particular, we will focus on the traumatic effect of these events on whole populations as well as on therapists and other humanitarian workers who work with those who are traumatised and who often become co-traumatised. Donna Orange and Judy Ryde will be keynote speakers and the format will be dialogic as it was last time. We have learnt many lessons from the way we ran our 2014 conference and hope to make improvements.

Collaboration with Bath Spa University

Another project with Bath Spa University, which we hope to mount next year, is to put on a creative writing group for refugees in collaboration with their well-known Creative Writing Department. This will not be 'therapy' as such but we hope will be therapeutic. It will also be a research project. Refugees will be encouraged to write about their experiences though there will be no expectations that they will write about traumatic events. We hope it will give refugees an opportunity to discover their skills, their creativity and their ability to express themselves in a world that does not always realise they have something important to say. The prize-winning author Nathan Fowler, will take the class and Judy Ryde will be present to talk to anyone who becomes distressed by any material that arises. This project depends on Bath Spa being successful in obtaining the necessary funding.

Conclusion

This year we have expanded our work in various ways. The amount of work with asylum seekers who suffer from complex traumatic states has been extended to some extent. Our recent growth has been in our work with sister organisations and with humanitarian workers. Developing our understanding of co-traumatisation and vicarious trauma has become vital for this work. We are developing our capacity to provide this support and supervision by training

our staff with the Centre for Supervision and Team Development Bath to ensure they have the expertise to make this provision. This gives us a special place in the community of organisations which provide help and support to refugees and asylum seekers in Bristol.

Trustees

Indrani Curry

John Eames

Sarah Fairbairns

Miriam Nye

John Witt (treasurer)

Polly Wood

Jill Beavis (until November 2015)

Legal advisor

barrister

BCPC psychotherapist and ex TFSW therapist

Social Worker

Spectrum Psychotherapist

BCPC psychotherapist and ex-GP

Charity worker

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November 2015

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