

Abacus Counselling and Support

# Annual Report

2020 - 2021



**Abacus Counselling and Support**  
**Annual Review Contents**

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## Introduction

Welcome to the 2020-21 Annual Report for Abacus Counselling and Support. The report summarises the work that the charity has completed, in order to continue to provide services of the last year. It also details some of the issues presented by the clients that we work to support. Clients may have several issues needing support to deal with, which they may have coped with for years. Helping clients to overcome these problems and give them the opportunity to move forward with renewed hope and new perspective, is always a privilege.

The report firstly sets out the charity's objects stated on its constitution, along with its aims, organisational objectives and values and who is involved in its running. There is a breakdown of who contributes to the charity and in what role. There is a report from the Chair of Trustees. The Project Managers Report goes into more detail, regarding the work completed this year. There is a variety of information on the output of the charity, using a variety of statistical data and feedback from clients. There is a summary of the Finances, for the last financial year, with comparison to the previous year. Finally, there is a summary of plans for the next year and thanks to various local agencies.

We hope you find this document to be useful and informative. If you have any questions, please contact us on [info@abacuscounsellingandsupport](mailto:info@abacuscounsellingandsupport). Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the trustees and volunteers who have continued to provide their time and skills, to keep the charity running. Whilst the charity itself is small, the impact it has on a client's lives, is significant and long lasting.

## Objects, Aims, Objectives, Values

### Charitable Objective

Abacus Counselling and Support is a Registered Charity, number 1163844.

It's charitable objective as stated on the charity's constitution is to:

Protect and promote the mental and emotional health of people living in South Essex, by providing, developing and maintaining an affordable and accessible counselling service, with relevant and assessed support.

### Main Aims

Clients referred to the service will:

- go through a robust assessment process, to ensure the charity is able to provide support and the client is willing to engage with the support provided.
- Be provided with good quality counselling sessions, which is monitored effectively.
- Be supported to overcome personal and emotional issues, identified and agreed upon in the assessment process.
- Be able to have improved mental health, as a result of session provided.
- Be advised of alternative forms of support available, if the client/referral is identified as someone who cannot be supported by the charity, in the assessment process.

### Organisational objectives

The objectives of Abacus counselling and support are to:

- Develop a secure funding and income generation base from which to develop a sustainable and high-quality service, for clients supported to the charity.
- Ensure our services are delivered to a consistent high quality, which meets the targets set by funders and the needs of our service users, within the diverse communities of Southend and surrounding areas.
- Continue develop the board of trustees and volunteers for recruitment and training, to build a team best placed to deliver our services.
- Continue develop and assess the range of support the service providers, to ensure it continues to evolve and develop in line with changing needs of the community's mental health.

- Engage with key stakeholders and work in partnership with statutory bodies, the charities and commercial organisations to meet the needs of clients referred and improve the emotional and psychological health and well-being of the community.
- Identify and understand the needs, concerns and mental health problems of the community, by annual consultation and ongoing contact with clients and relevant local organisations.

### **Our Values**

**Safe:** we work at all times to ensure the safety of clients, workers and the community.

**Ethical:** we work to ensure that all counselling is in line with agreed ethical standards set out by the necessary professional bodies.

**Professional:** all support provided is of a high standard and carried out in line with agreed policies and procedures.

**Accessible:** support provided is accessible to clients regardless of their financial situation, age, gender or ethnicity.

**Partnership:** we will work in partnership with other agencies, to ensure that services are connected to meet the full range of client needs.

## Who's Who at Abacus Counselling and Support

### Board of Trustees

Steve Cooper - Chair

Lesley Butcher - Secretary

Janice Lyons

Sarah Cooper

Brenda Lewis

David Bannister

### Senior Management Team

Nick Chard – Project Manager/Treasurer (volunteer)

Norman Livermore – Operations Manager (volunteer) and Counselling Supervisor (sessional)

### Volunteer Counsellors

Lynn Lynne (also sessional Supervisor)

Naomi Angel

Alex Watson

Nick and Norman also see clients for counselling

All counsellors are members of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), have regular supervision, have their own professional indemnity insurance and take part in regular training and CPD.

### **Partnership Working**

Abacus Counselling has links to a number of local organisations, in and around Southend.

Abacus currently rent rooms from Hub 151, on West Road in Shoeburyness. A number of other community organisations work out of the venue and future partnership opportunities are being explored.

The charity receives referrals from a number of sources including Shoeburyness High School and Southchurch High School. Various teams in Southend Council refer to us, including Social Care and Early Help and Family Support. Some referrals come from medical organisations such as GPs, Community Nurses and Therapy for you.

If Abacus is not able to provide support, we can refer on to other community mental health agencies. We have forwarded clients on to Mind, Southend on Sea Rape Crisis, Southend on Sea Domestic Abuse Partnership and the Olivetree Centre in Eastwood, amongst others.

Abacus attends network meetings run by Counselling and Support Services Southend, Southend's Mental Health Partnership Forum and Castle Point and Rochford's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Board. This helps the charity to link further with other agencies providing similar support and gives it a voice, at a strategic level.

### Chair of Trustees Report

What a year! I'm sure that's been said more than once by more than a few people. As Chair of Abacus I've been asked to write a few words by Nick towards this report.

As it says on the website *Abacus Counselling and Support is a registered charity, providing counselling services to individuals, couples and families, in South Essex.*

It's probably safe to say that the services of Abacus (along with other counselling services) have never been more needed. The challenge has been how to deliver to deliver this support and service in the middle of a global pandemic.

I want to place on record my (and my fellow trustees) appreciation to all those who have contributed to the 'cause,' particularly Nick and Norman who do much of the work required to keep Abacus going. Also to the Counsellors without whom there wouldn't be a counselling service.

I'm pleased to say that we (Nick) has been successful in obtaining funding to enable Abacus to continue into next year and I'm sure all the counsellors are looking forward to a time where they can have face to face meetings with their clients?! Most if not all of us have grown used to virtual meetings, however meeting clients in a Covid-secure setting at the Hub is hopefully the way forward.

Here's looking forward to a more straightforward year where Abacus can continue to go from strength to strength.

Steve Cooper – Chair of Trustees for Abacus Counselling and Support

## Project Managers Report

2020 and 2021 has so far proven to be a challenge beyond what anyone could have imagined, a few years previously. The pandemic and subsequent impact on every aspect society has been difficult for every individual and organisation. Abacus was no exception, in having to work with the consequences of the changes. What resulted was an evolution and development of the charity, in ways that were not previously planned, but still worthwhile, to the charity.

When the pandemic first arrived, all counselling services were either suspended or delivered through alternative means. The organisation was not at first geared towards a more flexible and remote working practices. A range of new policies and procedures had to be developed and subsequently updated, to allow the support to continue.

Health and Safety became a key issue, to keep everyone safe from the virus. Covid was a risk to everyone in the service – clients, counsellors, and trustees. However, there was a mental as well as physical risk, due to isolation. The need to continue to meet regularly and safely, was important for everyone's mental health. Abacus obtained funding to pay for zoom subscriptions, to allow meetings to occur virtually. There was a greater risk to the team than normal, due to the age of the counsellors placing them at a higher risk. Clear covid procedures and equipment was required, to keep everyone safe.

Another challenge was moving the location of face-to-face sessions, from Shoeburyness Baptist Church to the Hub on West Road. This move was due to the church no longer being able to provide caretaker service in the evenings. This foreseen circumstance was potentially a catastrophic challenge for the charity. As without a venue, it would be very difficult to continue to see clients face-to-face. Outdoor therapy is very dependent on the weather and virtual therapy is not always appropriate or possible. Fortunately, an alternative venue was found close by, which was available at the times required. There was an increase in room hire cost, due to the rooms being bigger. However this was an advantage in relation to covid, as a social distancing could be maintained. The service is now embedded within the new Hub and has helped the charity to develop better links with other community organisations. Funding is being explored to cover additional room hire cost.

We are now beginning to move out of lockdown and into a post covid world. Financially Abacus has managed to remain stable (see finance report). Abacus now has an increased range of delivery methods available and a new venue which will help it to be better connected, to the local community. Surviving the pandemic at a personal and organisational level was a huge challenge. But with a lot of work from everyone in the charity, we have managed to come through this. With continued work, Abacus Counselling will be in a good position to make the most of future opportunities and now be more resilient, when facing future challenges.

### Work Completed and Achievements/Outcomes/Feedback

Due to disruption from covid and lockdowns, referral and session numbers were significantly disrupted in 2020. Only 20 referrals were received, and 102 sessions completed. This is nearly half of normal output. By comparison in 2019 the service received 46 referrals and completed 310 sessions.

Of the referrals received in 2020, 7 Referrals were accepted, 4 did not engage with the service, 4 were rejected after initial enquiry, 6 referred to other agencies and one was accepted but could not engage, due to being too far to travel. Virtual sessions were not available at the time.

Presenting issues ranged from bereavement, depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic abuse, mental health problems, relationship issues and covid itself. Clients frequently had multiple issues.

Due to changes in recording and delivery, a breakdown of session types can now be provided. Delivery methods can be via normal face to face sessions. Due to covid, session can now take place by phone, outdoors or virtually. The vast majority of the 101 session took place F2F (70). 14 were by phone, 9 virtual and 8 outdoor. There may be a slight level of inaccuracy in these figures, due to covid disrupting recording.

Referrals sources were mostly from people referring themselves (12). The rest came from other agencies such as Shoebury High School, other counselling agencies and the NHS.

When referrals were received, was highly affected by covid. Referrals came in three periods: the time up to lockdown (March), July/August, then October - December.

Feedback was difficult to gather, due to covid disrupting paperwork administration and running sessions.

Client RG (28yr old male)

Clinical score 28 reduced to 10. Evaluation score 9 reduced to 3 (out of 10).

Feedback: (Counselling has) Given me tools to rethink situation. Look at things more logically, from others perspective. I don't dwell on the negative so much. Found it useful/helpful.

Client KS (29yr old female)

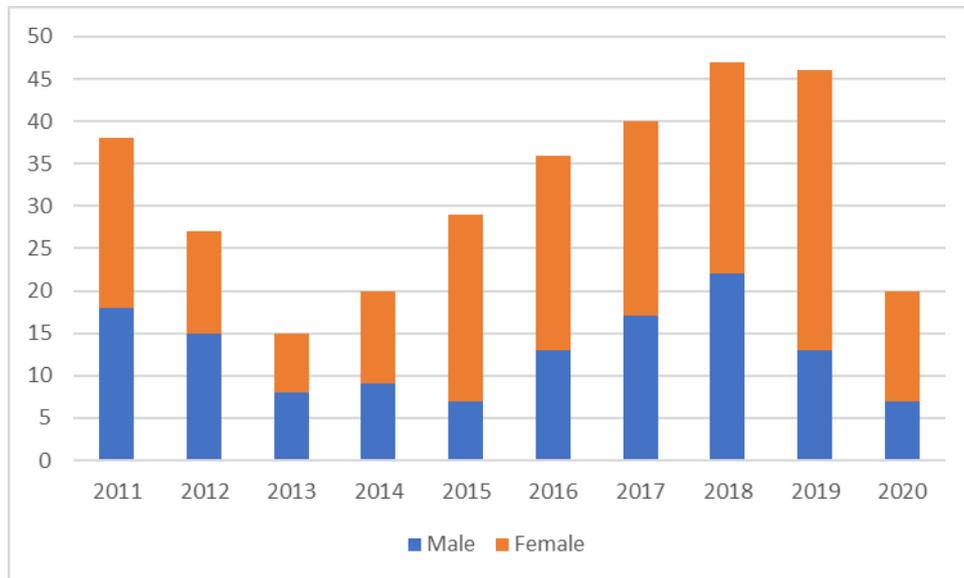
Evaluation score 9 reduced to 4 (out of 10).

Very happy. Able to change perspective and edits thoughts before sharing them.

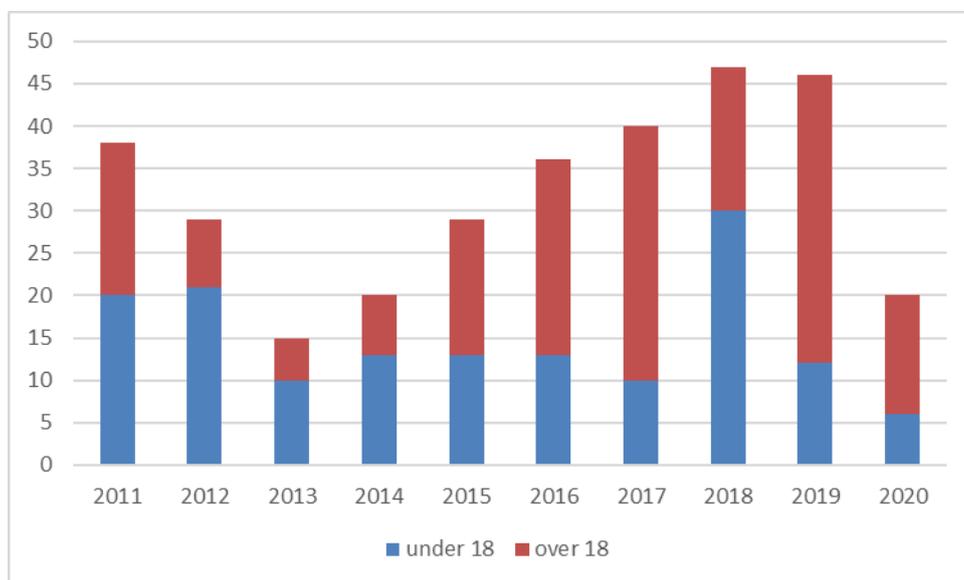
**Statistical Information on Work Completed**

**2011-2020**

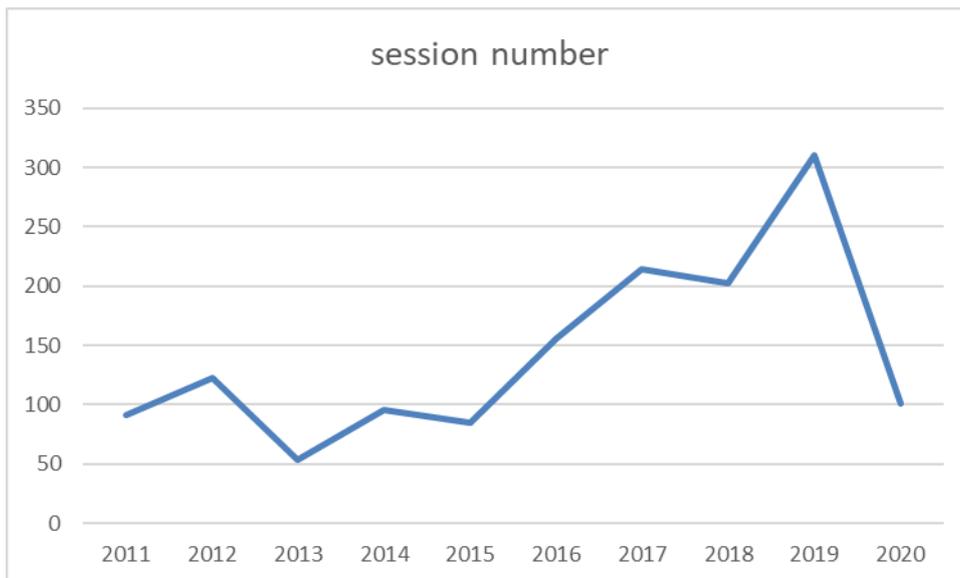
**Number of referrals received from 2011 till 2019, detailing gender split**



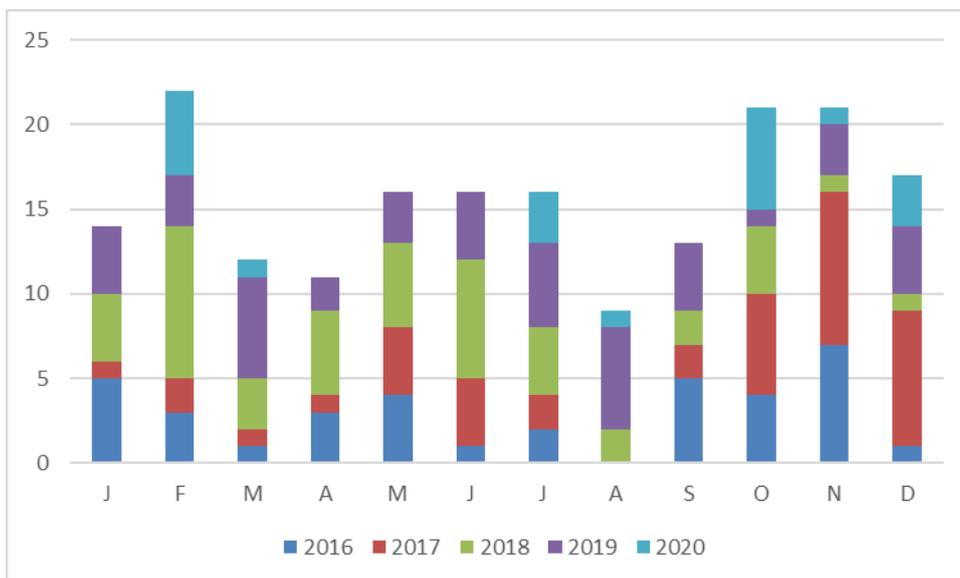
**Number of referrals received from 2011 till 2019, detailing age split**



Session numbers 2011-2020



Referral numbers monthly breakdown 2016 – 2020



### Financial Summary Balance Sheet

Below are summaries of finances for April 2019 to March 2020 and April 2020 to March 2021, as comparison.

2019-20		2020-21	
<b>Current Assets</b>		<b>Current Assets</b>	
<b>Cash and Bank</b>		<b>Cash and Bank</b>	
Bank Account	4,560.06	Bank Account	10,093.79
<b>Deposit Account</b>	3,002.95	<b>Deposit Account</b>	3,004.32
Petty Cash		Petty Cash	
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>7,563.01</b>	<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>13,098.11</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b><u>7,563.01</u></b>	<b>Net Assets</b>	<b><u>13,098.11</u></b>
 <b>Funds Position</b>		 <b>Funds Position</b>	
<b>Restricted</b>		<b>Restricted</b>	
AWA		ECF	
Rosca		ECF 2	
ECF	2,201.23	Rosca	4,708.87
	<b>2,201.23</b>	G work	856.97
<b>Unrestricted</b>	<b>5,361.78</b>	<b>Unrestricted</b>	<b>7,532.27</b>
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b><u>7,563.01</u></b>	<b>Total Funds</b>	<b><u>13,098.11</u></b>

#### Unrestricted Funds Breakdown (last yr)

Counselling sessions	1070 (2070)
Investments	1.37 (2.23)
Fundraising	0 (231)
External Supervision	0 (275)
Other Income	2132.12
(2666.96)	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>3203.49</b>
(5245.19)	

## Financial Report

The pandemic presented some financial challenges, to the charity. Lower session numbers meant less income could be generated from sessions. Also, no fundraising events could be carried out. So unrestricted income levels were lower than normal. However, funders were sympathetic to the situation, therefore were willing to give some flexibility to their terms and conditions. The at the time funder (Essex Community Foundation) was willing to extend the end term of the funding, from August 2020 to January 2021. This meant the funding could be completed without issue.

Funders were more willing to provide funding, if the reason was due to covid. Mental health is seen as a clear priority, for funders. So they were more willing to support services working in this sector. Essex Community Foundation funded zoom accounts for Abacus to use for virtual sessions and meetings. The Rosca Trust provided generous funding for core costs, after ECF funding completed. Tesco's Bags of Help provide £1000 of funding. Abacus received another donation from a private donor. Financial reserves are stable and growing. The charity is currently exploring other saving methods, to increase rates of return. At present the charity has reserves to continue to pay for costs for roughly 6-9 months. This is long enough to apply for and obtain other funding.

There were some adaptations to cost of sessions, with different delivery methods. When outdoor, phone and virtual sessions did occur, they were at a reduced rate. This is because no room hire was required. Counsellors could also claim additional expenses, for use of their own electric/equipment.

A funding application for an Operations Manager, has recently been submitted to ECF. If successful, this will help the service to be more responsive to enquiries and be better at managing client work, on a weekly basis.

Abacus counselling has continued to have its accounts examined by David Robb. David has now retired but is still able to offer his services, via SAVS. The accounts review process will be carried out in the summer rather than nearer to the end of financial year in the autumn, due to time constraints at that time.

### **Future Plans**

The impact of the Coronavirus has caused delays to the implementation of the business plan. Going forwards the aims for 2021-2022 are:

- Increased website/marketing.
- Develop further links with community organisations and groups, in Shoeburyness and Thorpe Bay.
- Look at obtaining funding for play therapy, to work with preteens.
- Continue to recruit more counselling volunteers, to further expand the team.

Thanks to:

