

Primary Care Trust Counselling Service

In May 2007, following a tendering process The City Counselling Centre (CCC), was commissioned to provide an Adult Counselling Service to the 27 GP practices in Milton Keynes.

This is a pilot project, funded by Milton Keynes Primary Care Trust on a limited budget and this is due to run until March 2009. (In response to the very high level of demand the Trust has been able to provide extra funding to help support this objective.) Its aim is to provide a prompt brief therapy intervention service for adults with specific issues at the mild to moderate end of the mental health spectrum. Clients that meet the Service criteria are referred either by their GP or other Secondary Mental Health Care Teams; referrals have been accepted since the 1st of September 2007.

The contract is also seen by the trust as an opportunity, to research and identify the needs of the population of Milton Keynes to inform future planning for the provision of counselling/therapy Services in the area.

A rolling programme of visits to all GP Practices was undertaken in July and August to establish working procedures and the partnership concept. The visits also gave the opportunity to update and provide written information of the existing counselling services provided by the CCC and its member organisations and how these will continue in the future, in relation to, and in conjunction with, the new project.

A team of 22 counsellors from a variety of orientations and with a wide range of experience in different areas provide the service. All are volunteers in other CCC projects. As this was an innovative service for Milton Keynes the level of demand was unknown, although uptake was anticipated to be high. This has proved to be the case, a total of 689 referrals having been received by the end of March 2008.

The results of feedback from service evaluation forms and clinical score results have been very positive. Clients who completed their counselling, have both valued the service experience, and appreciated the less clinical and friendly atmosphere of the centre. The majority of the client CORE scores measured at the start and completion of their sessions have shown a significant downward change to fall within the 'healthy' range of the scale.

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