

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR PLANETARY HEALING

Therapies Project User Survey Spring- Summer 2010

This survey of past and current users of the CFPH Therapies Project was carried out by Joelle Marlow working with the support of Denise Jones. It is the first stage of a process of developing performance measures and more comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of activities of the CFPH. The goals of the survey were:

- To evaluate customer care overall
- To identify results and outcomes of therapy experiences (which can help funding applications)
- To provide a means for therapists to learn how well they did
- To offer users a chance to reflect on their own goals and achievements.

What impact are we making? Developing outcome measures

We identified a number of possible indicators of users' wellbeing:

- 1) improvements in energy,
- 2) mood or stress levels;
- 3) improving management, or reducing symptoms of long term conditions;
- 4) reducing prescribed medication;
- 5) feeling able to make positive changes in their lives.

However it was decided to use open questioning rather than offering suggested indicators, to allow users to define their own indicators of progress.

Methodology

In April, a meeting with Lynne Molleson who carried out the evaluation of the Youth Vision Project broadened our awareness of methodologies that could be used in future to define wellbeing. The approaches would involve volunteers, therapists and users in focus groups and face to face discussion. This would make it possible to co-create outcomes measures. For this initial study, however, it was necessary due to time constraints to use a simple

telephone questionnaire using open questions. Lynne's input is reflected in our use of a **grid system** to make recording and collating of responses easier, (see Appendix) and in the simplicity of the questions eventually used.

Factors affecting the sample group & results

Interviews were carried out in April and May 2010. The intention had been to interview 20-30 users. In the event only 9 interviews successfully took place due to various factors. Delays in carrying out the survey resulted in a smaller sample than hoped. Some respondents received treatment as long as a year ago. A significant number of people had moved on and changed contact details. A further disadvantage of a time lapse is that it can be harder to assess the impact of a service as memories fade and other more current factors come into play when people think about their wellbeing. However as we see later, there can be the advantage of hindsight in seeing the longer term influence on wellbeing.

Results of questionnaire

1: When you first came, what did you feel the project could help you with?

i) Support in a crisis, emotional issues, stress and mental health: 8/9 respondents

All participants talked about coming to the centre at a time when they were emotionally low or struggling to cope with stress. People define this in different ways. "I was quite ill with depression", said one. Whilst some could name a life event as a cause, "I was recently bereaved and went for help"- for others, it was less clear. "I'd been suffering for many years without knowing what was wrong" said one. Another commented that she was always "flustered" looking after her children and not taking care of herself.

ii) Long term health conditions: 5/9 respondents

It is common for both physical and mental health issues to bring people to the project, and both were usually mentioned together as equally important. Some users suffered from skin conditions, one from arthritis, another from a fatigue related condition, and reducing or helping to manage symptoms was an aim. Complementary therapies unlike orthodox treatment, allow them to address all levels of their health and to relieve the strain of living with adverse health conditions.

iii) Users of other services at the CFPH & Shamanic Centre: 4/9 respondents

The opening question was deliberately ambiguous so respondents who wished to could say something on their experience of the centre as a whole (and the Shamanic Centre if applicable) and what attracted them. Around half had been volunteers or attending courses when they learned about the therapies project, and their words often reflected appreciation of the values the centre represents. One who struggled with stress at work commented he “wanted sacred space.” Another “was interested in shamanic work and had made contact about that.”

The usage by a high proportion of existing centre users may need further consideration. It is favourable that people in need of support are able to access a rich variety of experiences at the Centre. The benefit of treatment can be an increased interest in spiritual development, or motivation to take courses. However analysis of a bigger group and of overall usage is needed to ensure sufficient newcomers are also referred to the therapies.

2: Which therapies did you chose?

A wide range of complementary therapies were mentioned, and all but one person had more than one type. The majority of people had received 6 or more sessions. The time lapse before interview is reflected in the fact that two had forgotten which treatments they had had!

“Forgotten them all” 8 - Shamanic healing 13 - Homeopathy Meditation course with Inez	13- Homeopathy	7 Reiki healing 8 - Shamanic healing	“Forgotten them all- three or four” 4 -Hot stone massage	3- massage 4 - hot stone 13 - homeopathy	7 – reiki 8 – shamanic healing	4 Hot stone massage 13 Homeopathy 15 Thai Massage	4- hot stone 7 - Reiki healing 8 - Shamanic healing 16 – Thai yoga	1 Indian head massage 7- reiki 10 soul retrieval
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3: What did you get out of it?

Enthusiasm and gratitude was expressed by every participant in their own way. Lengthy comments are given in full below, and additional responses have been integrated into feedback from later questions.

<p>It was an oasis of healing and compassion. You have to have money in Edinburgh [usually]. I started to make real changes around the time the therapy ended. I moved away. I felt like I had built confidence...been given support... it gives a safe place to go and let go of your feelings. The treatments were great.</p>	<p>All holistic work has an impact. It's not necessarily going to be a miraculous return to energy. It's going to enable you to continue with a sense of self acceptance, [acceptance] of your health whatever your health is. Not everything is going to be helped or improved. Reassurance, yes, this is alright. A different sense, what you've been doing too much of, prioritising, how you use your time if your energy doesn't allow you a full day.</p>	<p>It was very very powerful. It did what it said on the tin! It's a very welcoming centre. I enjoyed all the treatments. You felt at home as soon as you came in the door. I'd recommend it to anybody who was troubled in any way.</p>	<p>The rash came up but [differently], it transmuted to something else. It seems better... I am still seeing Sheila, We are working on the emotional side</p>	<p>I felt more balanced in myself My head not buzzing any more, more clear headed and supported</p>	<p>My will... The strength... A strong, a functional, working life</p>	<p>All the treatments were really helpful. A time and place totally removed from ordinary life. An opportunity to connect with myself in a sacred space To reconnect with sacred energy, returning reenergised, re-inspired, remembering what's real</p>	<p>It helped. The relaxation aspect. I feel more relaxed, It calms everything down.</p>
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4: Can you rate how satisfied you are with the project, where 0 is not at all, and 9 is the highest/ extremely satisfied? 5/9 respondents gave the highest score of 9 “extremely satisfied”, whilst the remainder gave the next score down of 8 out of 9.

Despite having several suggestions for improvement of customer care and the systems one respondent had chosen to give the project the highest score on the scale, “for the actual therapies.” The volunteer therapists “were very devoted”, she said, more than she had found to be the case in “paid-for therapies.”

5: Were there any surprises?

This question had been suggested by Lynne Molleson as a way to encourage users to think about unexpected impact. Comments are given below, and other responses are integrated into feedback for the final question.

No – just how quickly it changed the condition to something I could cope with. It's been tremendous really	I always find homeopathy a revelation as it's connected to all the kingdoms. Homeopaths tend to have a good sense of discovery	The different therapies, the crystals and that, the network, that it wasn't one individual but a group that can give loving support	How functional I feel! By coming into contact I can send out functioning energy to others	How they made you feel really welcome	It's just been so good. Feeling better generally
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6: Any suggestions for how the project could be improved?

i) Reception, staffing and administration

A period of time when the centre had had a shortage of volunteers for reception was alluded to by respondents whose usage had gone back to a year ago. They remembered that it made it "a bit chaotic," and "the appointments ran late a lot and it meant it affected the ones after". Another suggestion was, "if it had paid staff, it would run more smoothly...I wasn't sure who was the boss...they weren't banking cheques." Organisational and administrative improvements were suggested by a total of 4 users. One commented, "I'd like to know how many therapists there are and how many users." Also, "it should always be booked up. There should be a list for cancellation to ensure it's used to its maximum." Improvements were noted by some. One interviewee simply said in her feedback "Everyone's very professional, and very good."

ii) More advertising, more users, more ideas...

7 out of the 9 respondents said that it needed to be better known and used more.

"Lots of people don't know about it. I talked to someone in Portobello who never went in."

“It wasn’t well used.” “More advertising, more people using it.” “It would benefit a lot of people. I didn’t know about it.” “Should reach a wider audience as it’s a very good thing.” “It would be good if there was notices on the wall more information about what’s on, for people who don’t use the internet”
“Leaflets in libraries? Get us all to help spread the word” “More volunteers for longer opening hours as the hours were short”
“Group activities on the beach.”

iii) Support

Two interviewees commented that more support would be beneficial after sessions. One suggested perhaps some guidance or explanation of what they had experienced. “I don’t want to say anything.. [negative] it’s just the state I was in... a course of treatments maybe... more of a structure. There were lots of therapists and I wasn’t quite sure what to do. “After the session, “I needed someone to talk to.

During the period of this survey, changes were being made to enhance the physical environment of the centre, providing a space for people to relax before or after a session if they needed quiet and a chat.

iv) Structure & number of sessions

How many sessions are enough?

Setting limits on sessions is difficult where people might have long term and complex issues. User definitions of “success” of treatment or how many is enough, vary. The difficulty of how to place limits is shown by two respondents who brought different but equally well thought out perspectives. The first woman was surprised “people could go on and on” getting treatment. She **did not agree with unlimited sessions**. She talked about “structure” and saw this as part of the support a project offers. “It’s good to know what the limits are so you are building it in yourself. I don’t use it now. I think it should be for people who are the worst off.” The second woman had used the project many times, most recently after a long break and compared these two distinct periods of use. “I didn’t feel it was going to be successful then... but using it again **I’m a lot more ready so it feels like it’s going to work**. I wasn’t taking it in [last time].” Here is a reminder that users heal at their own pace, not according to a pre set timetable. It also conveys how the “felt” impact can be different for a client at different times in their lives.

Taking responsibility for one’s own healing

Insights around this arose naturally as people were asked to assess the “success” of the therapy. An advantage to interviewing after a time lapse emerged, as some understood where the experience fitted into their lives now. The second woman quoted above was recognising she had to bring her own commitment into it to move forward. A man who had depression at the time of use, when asked about its impact, hesitated, then said: “I had a vision this place would cure me of all my troubles. I felt down again after. It was a difficult time for me. I was looking for a cure.” In telling his story, however, he made clear that he didn’t see it like that now: he had grown in awareness, through his own spiritual practice, and expressed gratitude for the support he had had.

The future...

The last word goes to one woman who was thoughtfully responding to the question about how we could improve: “The best way to continue is... to continue refining things. See potential to grow. Good results happen, gently keep doing the work. Gentle, continuing work creates change.” At this point she paused, and realised she was also talking about herself.