

Community Foundation for Planetary Healing Therapies Project - User survey report 2011

Introduction

The Therapies Project has had a significant increase in users –approximately 100% - this year. Volunteer project Coordinator has shown huge commitment and hard work developing the service with support from the team of volunteer therapists and receptionists. Ten therapists offer their skills and time for free. Oct 2010/Oct 2011 the Project delivered 504 therapies (229 in 2009/2010 and 123 in 2008/09) this year saw an increase of 121% more therapies delivered then the year before. The service is possibly unique in the UK in offering a professional, holistic service with no paid staff. Users contribute what they can afford on a sliding scale.

This survey of users followed the same methodology as the pilot in 2010. The sample group of 24 (2 male, 22 female) represents approximately a third of the total users. Participants were randomly selected from booking records, contacted by telephone and interviewed in confidence. To avoid them being identified, health and therapy data have also been mostly separated in the report.

Aims of the survey

- To evaluate customer care
- To collect qualitative information about outcomes of use
- To provide users with an opportunity to reflect on their experience
- To provide feedback for therapists on the impact of their work.

1. “When you first came, what did you want the project to help you with?”

The results show the overlap of mental and physical health conditions presented. From the sample taken, the majority (**22 out of 24**) named **mental health**, **‘emotional’ issues** and **Stress** as motivating factors for attending.

Table 1. Support in difficult times

I'd lost my husband.	I'd been made redundant.	I've had breast cancer. Its about staying well and helping with the side effects.	I was looking for a job.	Life was running away with me. I'd had a big fall out with my brother. I'm looking after my mum. I'd like to be slowing down at my age.
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Whilst 15 (63%) mentioned a Chronic physical health condition eg Diabetes, Asthma, Eczema, Arthritis, Post Polio Syndrome, Cervical spondilitis. 14 out of those 15 also mentioned stress or mental health.

Presenting problem	Total (out of 26)	Proportion (approx)
a. Physical condition	(14 also b & c) 15	62%
b. mental health & emotional issues	8	33%
c. stress	14	58%
d. To make positive life changes	2	8%
e. Musculoskeletal problems	10	41%
f. Pain	7	29%

Finally a quarter of the sample mention that their problem relates to musculoskeletal complaints(e) eg. back, neck, and shoulder pain or stiffness, injury rehabilitation etc.

<i>My back. The muscles went into spasm. I was at the top of the painkiller dose.</i>	<i>Injury didn't heal properly. Just after lunch I'd hit the wall with exhaustion and pain.</i>	<i>Pain from sciatica. My back bothers me.</i>	<i>My neck was getting stiff.</i>	<i>I get a sore shoulder. It might be arthritis – i was told I would get it.</i>
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	Therapy	No of users accessing therapy
1	Massage Indian Head/head & shoulder	5
2	Massage Holistic	9
3	Massage Hot Stone	2
4	Crystal Healing	1
5	Reiki Healing	10
6	Shamanic Healing	5
7	Spiritual Healing &relaxation	2

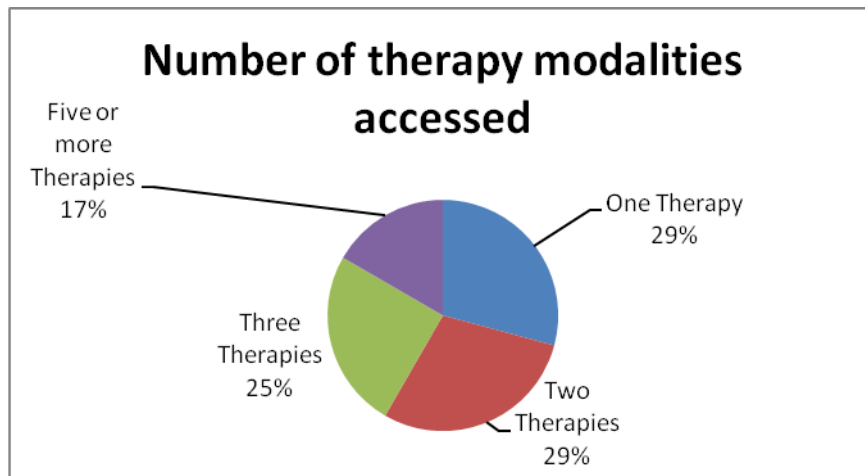
8	Soul Retrieval	1
9	EFT	2
10	Homeopathy	3
11	Shiatsu	2
12	Bowen technique	2
13	Craniosacral therapy	1
14	Bio aura	2
15	Guided meditation	1

2. "Which Therapies did you Choose?"

A wide range of therapies were on offer. The majority of the survey sample had had more than 4 treatments in total. Most users reported receiving a form of energy healing therapy and/or massage.

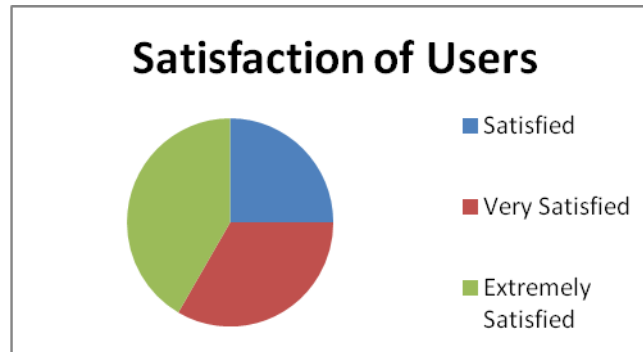
The table to the right shows the 15 options and how many mentioned them. The average number of different therapy modalities accessed was 2.5.

Users include those who have used the services over a long term, so it is naturally these who have been fortunate enough to try a wide range of modalities. A detailed breakdown of how these were distributed is shown in the pie chart below.



3. “Can you rate how satisfied you are with the Project as a Whole?”

Participants were asked to rate satisfaction on a scale. The results are shown below.

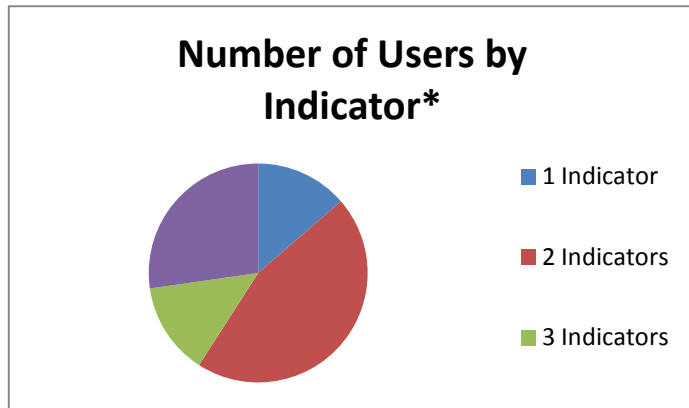


4. “What did you get out of it?”

We naturally hope to hear stories of recovery or improvements, changes in mood, confidence, motivation and ability to manage their own condition. The survey used an open question rather than prompts, to allow users to define their own experience. We can see from the chart how these 13 markers were represented across the group.

***Indicators list**

1. Relaxation & Reduced stress
2. Improved mood
3. Awareness
4. Emotional Support
5. Knowledge/ understanding
6. Community (meeting people)
7. Confidence
8. Motivation
9. Acceptance
10. Reduced Pain & Symptoms
11. Improved Mobility
12. Reduced medication
13. Maintained/stabilised condition



“Soft Outcomes” and “Soft Indicators”

Users of the Project include people disadvantaged economically, affected by mental and health and stress Problems, LTC (Long term conditions) and resulting social isolation. How can the results of treatments be measured? We can identify “soft outcomes”. These are those which, unlike “hard outcomes” cannot be measured directly or tangibly. Soft outcomes are more of a matter of degree, and subjective ie they depend on the client’s personal situation and perspective. They are also intermediate - they do not show a definite simple result eg. a “cure”, or getting a new job after sickness. Whilst we know that all users are looking for something to improve their lives, we clearly cannot chose the same life change for everyone as a measure of success. But soft outcomes are of great importance in enabling to recognise users’ progress. Studying these kinds of data helps understand whether the organisation is achieving its goals.

Table 5. What did you get out of it? - Users descriptions of their experience

INDICATORS	RESPONDENTS’ OWN WORDS
1. Relaxation & reduced stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I got lots of relief [from the tension]. • Absolute relaxation, letting everything go. • I feel like I’m walking on air [after a treatment]. • It helped me immensely, calmed me down a lot.
2. Improved mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [It gave me] Inner peace with certain situations and healing. • It made me feel good. I didn’t feel quite so crappy and anxious. • I’m not so down. My head was full of cotton wool. • My thoughts become more peaceful.
3. Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Various Therapies) What I get there is centring. I get grounded. I needed to ground and my whole body feels different. • (Remedial Massage) She helped identify what was aching, she makes me aware (of those places) and how I can improve. • [I’m] getting psychic [experiences] back. Feeling /seeing things. [I’m] gradually more aware.
4. Emotional Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was quite unexpected - you talk as well. The more I went, I was getting a bit of counselling as well. There was stuff there I didn’t realise needed to be said, from childhood. • (Homeopathy) I know it’s made a difference. Its forming a relationship with someone who’s a therapist. It’s so gentle, it works over a lengthier period of time. They go through every aspect of your life. • (Homeopathy) To have her walk alongside me for that time was more helpful than (anything)... having someone listen was as good as the pills. I felt I was being heard, I wasn’t being rushed. • It was just fabulous (to find) someone to listen.
5. Knowledge/ understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was impressed with the information on what you could do to help yourself. • She explained the Anatomy & Physiology, and the reasons for treatment.
6. Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The people are lovely. It’s wonderful - you get a cup of tea. I’ve been coming back into the real world. • I’ve noticed a difference how you’re seen [when you have disability.] [The centre’s] a wee lifeline as I had the stuffing knocked out of me. • I enjoy the people that are there and the chit chat. 4

Table 5. (Cont) What did you get out of it? - Users descriptions of their experience

<p>7. Confidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [(Homeopathy) I feel so confident on it I wouldn't like to let go of it. There's always something to be worked on. • At the time of the reiki, I got more confidence.
<p>8. Motivation For lifestyle change / self help</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Remedial Massage) I'm not just lying there on the table. We do something [too]. I can do my stretching exercises so I don't build up so much tension. • I try and walk more. • They were always fab. They even got me doing other things like getting an allergy test down the road. • My posture improves
<p>9. Acceptance of illness/pain /situation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It helped me to accept where I am. It didn't take the pain away, I learned not to be frightened by it. So for all they couldn't heal the problem, I got a lot from it. • I felt she'd done what she could. It had improved. I still have pain. There's limits to all treatment. But I got encouraged to do meditation. I try to do some every day. Meditation helps me to learn to live with it. • I didn't have expectations. I couldn't lie down. My muscles went into spasm. It was mostly on an emotional level it worked - the physical comes from that. If nothing else I'll be more relaxed.
<p>10. Reduced pain & symptoms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Reiki & Massage) I was at the top of the painkiller dose. The massage helped my neck. It was a bit sore the 1st and 2nd days but then eased the pain. I only take painkillers when I really need them. • It did help with the Migraine.
<p>11. Improved Mobility & movement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Shiatsu) was excellent and gave me more mobility. • [The remedial massage therapist] got my shoulder working better than its worked for years. • (Remedial Massage)- It was very painful and stiff...I've now got the full range of movement.
<p>12. Reduced medication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I still take my inhaler but its improved. It was stress related. • [I've been] completely taken off 3 drugs, Tranexamic acid, brufen, ponstan -mefenamic acid. • I was in a lot of pain. I managed to cut the drugs. • <i>I was on painkillers, 2 types. I reduced a dose of each.</i>
<p>13. Maintain /stabilise condition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I came back for aches and pains. • A feeling of more control over my health and feeling relaxed. [I'm] not cured, but using various techniques, NHS as well as complementary. • it's been very very helpful in the emotional and stress things. It's not cured the Rheumatoid Arthritis, maybe stabilized it, it does get better and worse.

5. “Do you have any Suggestions for how the Project could be improved?”

In over 40% of cases, the user couldn't think of any improvement and emphasised how positive their experience had been. Statements included:

Table 6. They've got it right: positive responses			
<i>They've got it right. As a community thing it's absolutely excellent. You have a blether, a look thru library and you feel 100%!</i>	<i>I'm very happy that you exist and there's something like this. Its 100% OK! The centre has such a positive atmosphere. Nothing I see is lacking.</i>	<i>I was never disappointed. They do wonderful work for the community.</i>	<i>They were great, they couldn't have done more.</i>

Around a quarter of users wanted the service to continue, to grow and offer more access. In total there were 16 comments made, within categories below:

1. Evening/weekend hours	2. Improved information on therapies
3. Less holidays	4. Use of the building
5. Disabled access	6. Bookings system / Reception
7. Improved information on events	8. Follow up support for users

The need for an IT strategy

Not enough of the Project's information is stored or used in electronic form (i.e. on a computer system). This means gathering data is difficult and time consuming. Once information is in computerised form it is available to the right person, at the right time- shared, copied, manipulated. There can be huge strides forward in evaluation, monitoring and marketing once this is possible.

Information technology will never be seen as important for its own sake in a project which is heart driven. But there is a need to evolve computer systems as the organisation grows, to help to be effective and efficient. Efforts to find volunteers skilled to make it happen have been ongoing.

Recommendations

- Consultation with IT professionals (some are available without fee to charities) regarding the most appropriate and accessible software to help the Project's work.
- Establishment of a system for recording usage, bringing in a time frame
- Establishment of a unified contacts database, segmenting service users, volunteers, etc.
- Subject to advice received and the decisions made, a minimum number of hours set aside for volunteers to maintain these computerised records.

The last word...

... goes to a woman who had been enthusing about therapists who had given her massage and healing. "She was very good, intuitive. I found her truly gifted... I'd never had healing. Yes. It was astonishing what she can do." At this point the interviewer referred to "volunteer" therapists.

"They aren't paid?" There was a long pause.

"That takes a big heart."

Joelle Marlow