

Evaluation of the Relate Macmillan Counselling Service

This service, delivered by Relate Birmingham, provides relationship support for people affected by cancer through counselling, training and workshops

Year One Report for Relate

(Summary only)



Evaluation Services

Summary of the Relate Macmillan Counselling Service Evaluation

Introduction

The Relate Macmillan counselling service is a three year, Macmillan-funded intervention being delivered by Relate Birmingham which provides a relationship support service to people affected by cancer (patients, their partners and families). The main strand of support is relationship counselling for individuals, couples, families and young people. Other support is delivered through sex therapy, workshops, and training for professionals in partner organisations. The service is available to people living in, or receiving the majority of their cancer treatment in Birmingham and Solihull, the Black Country and South Staffordshire.

This report records the results of an independent evaluation of the first year of the service (July 2016 to July 2017) undertaken by Cloud Chamber. Evidence is drawn from service monitoring data and interviews with counsellors, clients, referral agencies and the service coordinator.

Service delivery

The service has made a strong start to delivery. Counsellors have been recruited and trained. Substantial effort is devoted to promoting the new service to potential referral agencies, including cancer teams in local hospitals, hospices, and relevant not-for-profits. This is crucial in ensuring a steady flow of potential clients into the service.

Effective governance processes are in place, and the service is administered smoothly, according to clients and referral agencies. Despite the substantial logistical challenges of making effective use of counsellor time while meeting clients' needs and availability, the service is running efficiently. Overall client numbers will need to rise in the next two years if it is to meet its output expectations, but progress to date has been good.

Feedback from clients and other partners

Overall satisfaction rates for the service have been very high to date, from clients, partners and referral agencies.

80% of clients completing their counselling said that they were 'very satisfied' with the experience

What clients told us:

"It was very skilfully done and subtle"

"It was brilliant, [the counsellor] was amazing"

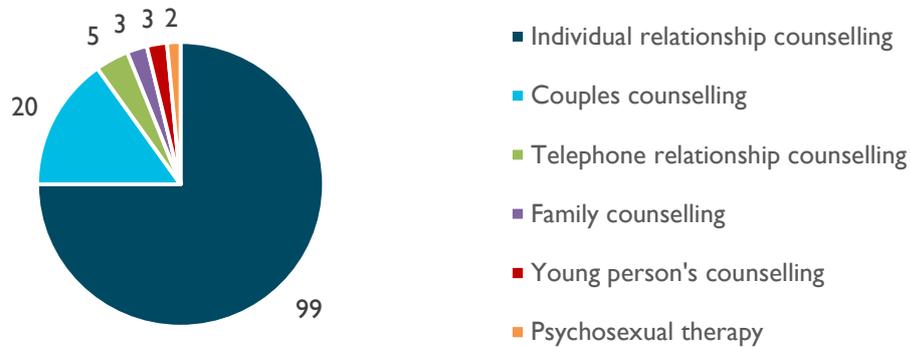
"I didn't think I would be able to open up like I did"

"I felt I could tell [my counsellor] anything"

Service numbers and client profile

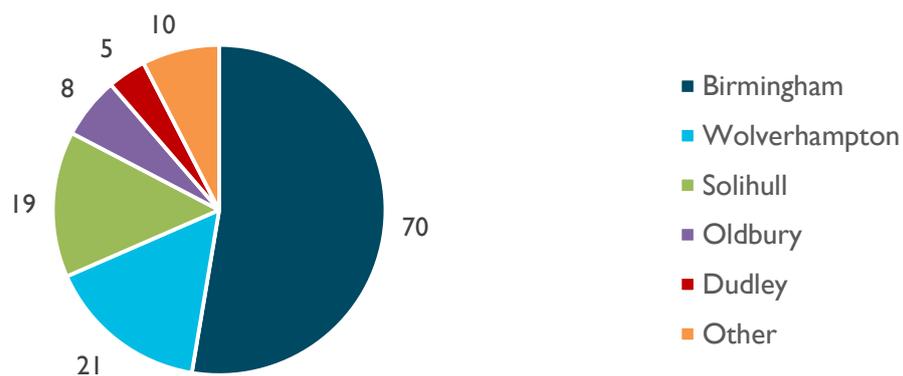
The service has supported 160 clients and worked with 133 cases

Individual relationship counselling was the most common type of support



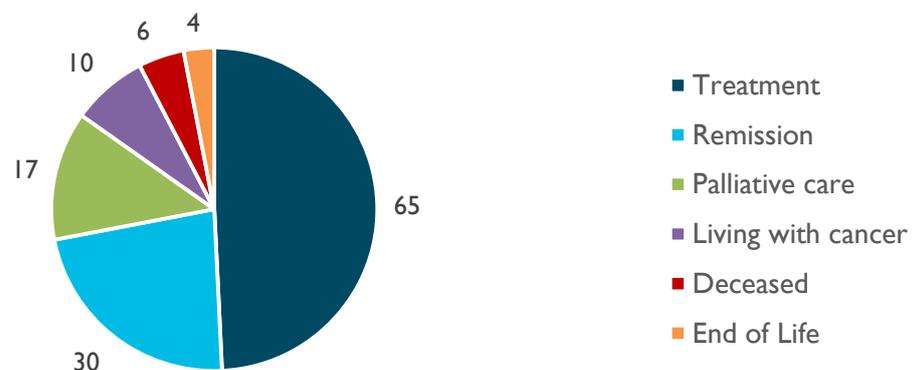
70% of counselling clients were female and 30% were male

Birmingham was the most common counselling location



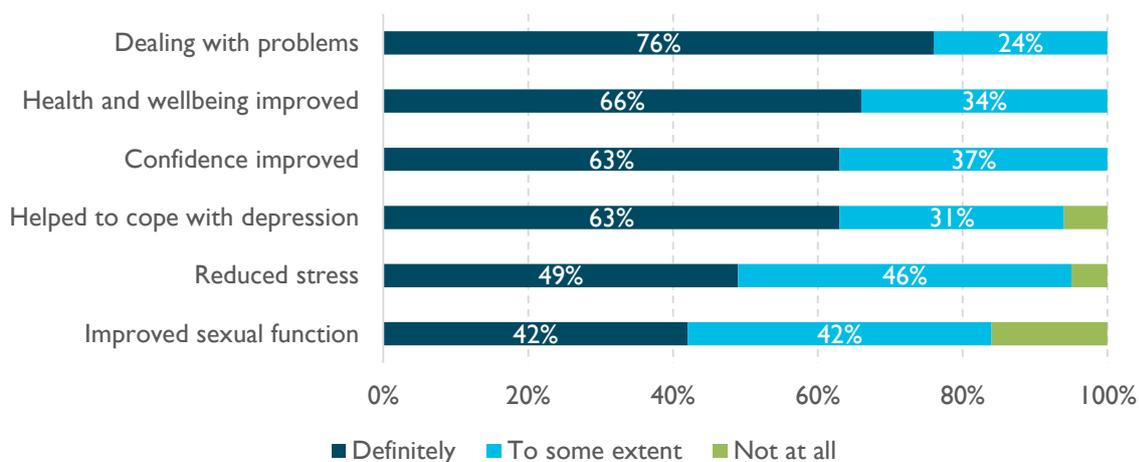
Nearly one third of clients had a breast cancer diagnosis. Other significant cancer types included lung, colorectal, and prostate cancers; and leukaemia.

Nearly half of clients were in treatment during counselling



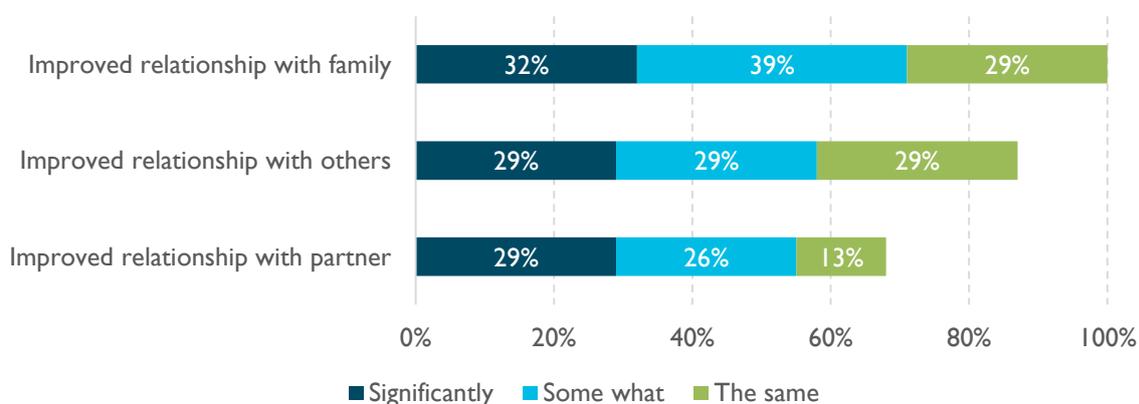
Client outcomes

Clients reported strong improvements in their health and wellbeing



63% of clients had 'clinically significant depression' before they started counselling; this fell to 20% by the end of the counselling relationship

A majority of clients said they had improved their relationships



Clients explain what counselling has meant to them:

- A sense of re-establishing control over a life severely disrupted as a result of a cancer diagnosis: **"I can't let it [cancer] define my future"**
- Reassurance: **"My husband's condition has made me lose sense of reality...counselling was helpful in simply reassuring me that I'm not abnormal in a very stressful situation"**
- Support for the partner of someone with cancer: **"It's the only real support just for me"**
- A means of understanding oneself, and accepting the position that cancer (and life) has put someone in: **"I've got clarity on some things, closure on other things and acceptance of other things"**

Background

In 2016 Macmillan Cancer Support funded a three-year project to be delivered by Relate Birmingham (referred to in this report as 'Relate'). The project is designed to provide a relationship support service ('the service') to people affected by cancer (patients, their partners and families). The main strand of support is counselling for individuals, couples, families and young people. Other support is delivered through sex therapy, workshops and training for professionals in partner organisations.

The geographical scope of the service covers Birmingham and Solihull, the Black Country and South Staffordshire. The service is available to people living in, or receiving the majority of their cancer treatment in these areas.

A logic model for the service is provided at **Error! Reference source not found..**

In February 2017, Cloud Chamber was commissioned by Relate to evaluate the service. This is the first evaluation report, which reviews the first full year of delivery from July 2016 to July 2017..

Evaluation objectives

The objectives of this evaluation are as follows:

- To assess what difference the service makes to those people affected by cancer who use it
- To assess what difference the service makes to other health and social care services
- To highlight ways in which the service can be improved during the course of its operation
- To assess the service's value for money, with a particular focus on demonstrating any economic benefits that might help to make the case for the service to future funders
- To provide guidance on a future sustainable delivery model when Macmillan funding comes to an end

Work completed for this report

We undertook the following evaluation activities to provide the evidence required to complete this report:

- Face-to-face interviews with two service counsellors
- A telephone interview with the service coordinator
- Telephone interviews with four clients
- Telephone interviews with two referral agencies
- Analysis of service monitoring and outcomes data

The views in this report are those of the evaluators only.