



**Abertay
University**

Counselling & Mental Health Service

Annual Report 2015-16

Senior Student Counsellor

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Introduction

The Counselling & Mental Health Service is part of Student Services. The primary aim of our department is to support all students in times of personal crises or distress, assisting students to realise their full potential. Our counselling team are trained, qualified and supervised in accordance with the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) professional standards and ethical framework. In addition we have a Mental Health Advisor who is able to advise and offer mental health support. The service offers placement opportunity for trainee therapists and associate (volunteer).

Aims

- To provide a high-quality student support service to the University community.
- To develop and sustain a service that responds flexibly to different students' needs.
- To innovate and increase the quality, range and level of student services available.

Key Results

- Increased student participation in group-based, resilience-themed workshops such as Mindfulness and 'Beating the Blues' (for depression).
- Reduced waiting times for one-to-one sessions
- Referrals for students with transgender-related issues have increased.
- There has been a year-on-year increase in total number of referrals, which we are addressing by innovations such as the new group-based sessions and peer-to-peer mentoring in order to pre-emptively promote wellbeing and build resilience.
- Launched of the 'Stop/Pause/Play' sexual consent awareness workshops.
 - Developing the 'Nightline' service, in collaboration with Dundee University, to provide, an out of hours telephone crisis service for students run by students under direction from both universities.
 - Development of an early assessment protocol of detecting patterns, trends and disturbances in individual or group behaviour in collaboration with Dundee University in regards to the two campuses (NaBita).

Impact

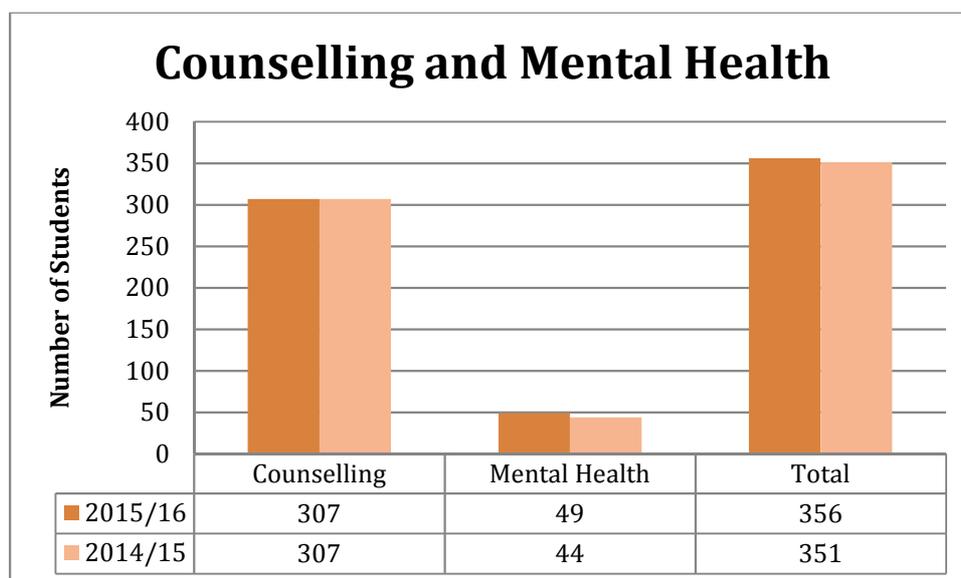
The Counselling & Mental Health Service

1. Maximises each student's potential to benefit from their university experience by offering quality short term counselling and where appropriate mental health support and advice.

2. Increases awareness of mental health issues and support amongst the student population e.g. Road Show at Alloway Halls, showcasing counselling & mental health, and other services from Student Support Services.
3. Fast-tracks students requiring urgent help with our 'on the day' appointment system.
4. Develops and delivers appropriate workshops and training, provide peer-to-peer mentors for those students who need additional help from another student who has been specifically trained to support them.
5. Provides training in Mindfulness for students to build resilience and learn new ways of coping with stress and depression.
6. Works collaboratively with others such as the Student Association
7. Supports students with pre-existing mental health issues of whom there are increasing numbers due to inclusion of a range of mental health diagnoses under the disability discrimination act 2005.
8. Supports students who experience university study-related issues.
9. Supports student in serious crises and at risk e.g. suicide, self-harm, abuse, trauma, and refer students on to their local GPs and appropriate NHS resources.
10. Supports individuals and groups of students when a traumatic situation occurs at university (e.g. suicide attempt of a peer in halls of residence, thus preventing psychological crises).
11. Supports those who are trans-gendering/transgendered and trans-historied¹ and are struggling to deal with the emotional adjustment.
12. Constantly forms and updates its knowledge-base with regard to supporting students,
13. Increasingly develops community-wide awareness collaborating with other agencies e.g. Police and Counter-Terrorism Unit and their 'Prevent' workshop.

Counselling & Mental Health Service Statistics

1. Number of Students Referred To The Whole Service

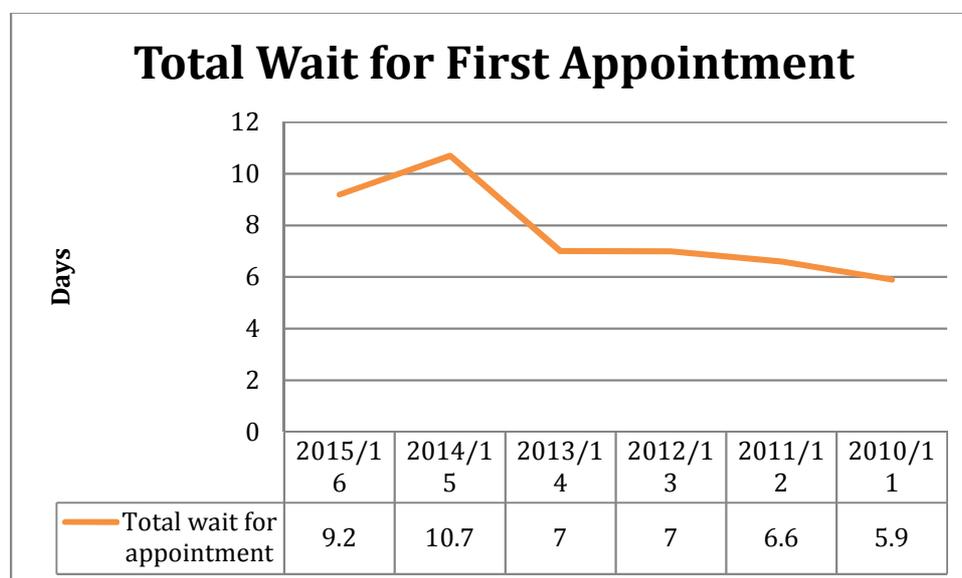


¹ The term *trans-historied* offers respectful inclusion to those who have completed transition, hold a gender recognition certificate, have changed their birth certificate, and who no longer consider themselves members of the trans-population at all.

Number of Students	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
Counselling	307	307	334	312	278	232
Mental Health	49	44				
Total	356	351				

Approximately 9% of the student population accessed one-to-one support from the university's student counselling & mental health service over the year. Referrals to the counselling & mental health team were at very similar levels to the previous year, with just a small increase in those to our mental health advisor who is now in his second year as part of the team here at Abertay. This breaks down as 86% of the referrals being seen by counsellors and the other 14% by the mental health advisor. Whether or not this is a plateau is hard to know at this stage though one possible reason for this may be that students who are accessing mindfulness and other workshops are no longer seeking counselling; in order to evidence this we will be looking at capturing this information. Note: the Mental Health service started in 2014.

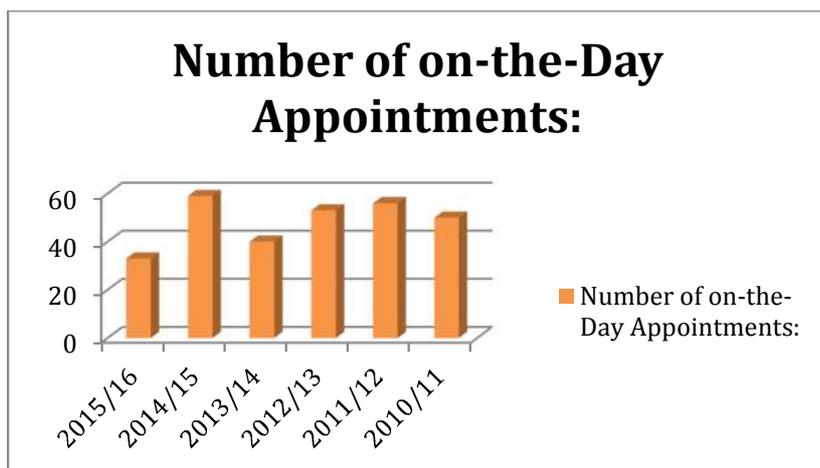
2. Average Total Wait for First Appointment in Days



As can be seen above, this year we have achieved a reduction of 1.5 days in the average waiting time for first appointments. We accomplished this reduction by using some of the 3 on-the-day appointment slots, during the busiest time of year, and offered students these as assessment appointments instead. We also had help from our sessional counsellor who took on some sessions during this peak period.

3. Number of On-the-Day Appointments For Counselling

We reserve a number of appointment slots each week for on-the-day take up for students in immediate crisis. This year there have been 33 on-the-day appointments taken up by students. This is a decrease of 44% 'on-the-day' appointments on the previous year. A possible factor to explain this reduction is that, in order to reduce the waiting list in times of peak demand (e.g. the lead up to exams/holidays), we offer two 'on the day' appointments in the week instead of five. This reduction of availability of 'on-the-day' appointments actually led to greater flexibility in ensuring that every student on the waiting list received an appointment before they left for Christmas holidays.

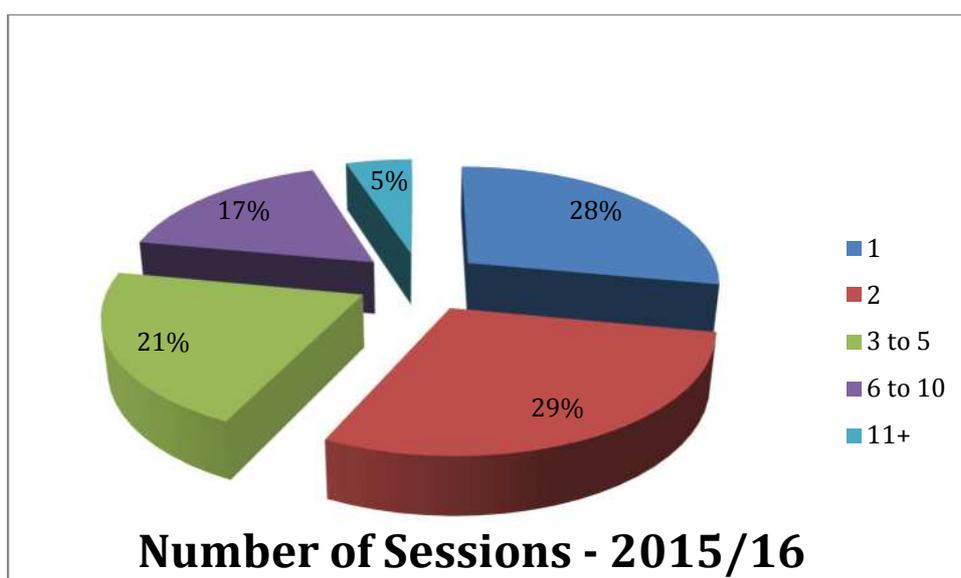


Year:	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
Number of on-the-Day Appointments:	33	59	40	53	56	50

4. Number of Counselling & Mental Health Sessions Provided

We offer short-term counselling of 6-12 sessions maximum; some students need more sessions due to the complex nature of their presentations and the long wait for appointments from NHS services. It would be detrimental to these students' mental health if we were to suddenly stop seeing them after 12 sessions, so in these limited number of cases we are willing to provide further sessions until NHS services can take over or until the crisis passes.

Due to the complex nature of referrals to the mental health advisor the level of support has no cut-off point; this is down to professional judgment as to when the provision of further sessions come to an end.



Number of Sessions	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
1	28%	19%	24%	24%	21%	33%
2	29%	17%	14%	12%	12%	13%
3 to 5	21%	32%	32%	35%	33%	27%
6 to 10	17%	20%	19%	21%	23%	16%
11+	5%	7%	11%	8%	10%	11%

This year you will notice that we have seen a significant shift in the number of students completing counselling in 1-2 sessions rather than in 1-5 sessions. Essentially this year more students appear to be getting what they need from counselling in fewer sessions. At present we are not certain why this should be the case but now that we are aware of it we will monitor the situation and seek to learn any lessons that can help us to provide the service students need efficiently.

5. The Reasons Students Come for Counselling & Mental Health Sessions

This table outlines what the student reports verbally during their first session as the reason(s) for them seeking support:

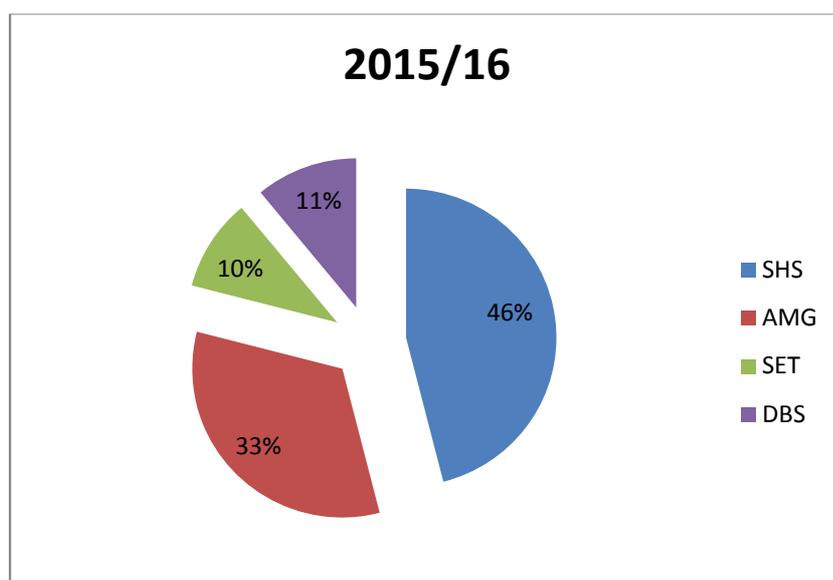
Presenting Issue at First Session (%)	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
Abuse	4	4	2	2	4	4
Academic	22	24	10	16	15	16
Anxiety	28	23	21	25	25	31
Addictive Behaviours	*	*	2	*	*	*
Depression	19	19	19	19	23	18
Loss	5	6	7	8	4	5
Other Mental Health	3	4	4	2	2	3
Physical Health	*	*	2	*	2	*
Eating Disorders	*	*	*	*	*	*
Relationships	8	10	15	16	14	8
Self and Identity	3	3	4	4	2	2
Sexual Issues	*	*	*	*	*	*
Transitions	2	*	2	3	4	5
Welfare and Advice	*	*	*	*	*	*
Self-Harm	2	4	4	3	*	*

* Numbers too small to calculate a percentage/may be able to identify client(s)

The four most common presenting-problems are anxiety, depression, academic issues and relationships; this is identical to last year. In response the counselling and mental health service has provided workshops on 'Beating the Blues' for depression and although the numbers attending were low, we believe this was due to lack of publicity and we will seek to address this in the future. We also ran a seven-week 'Mindfulness' course to enable students to cope with anxiety, stressful experiences and help maximise general wellbeing; this was better attended and will be run again in the 2nd semester.

5. School

Which School The Students Coming For Counselling Are Studying In:



School	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14
SHS	46	44	26
AMG	33	29	17
SET	10	18	10
DBS	11	9	47

5. Equality & Diversity

A. Nationality

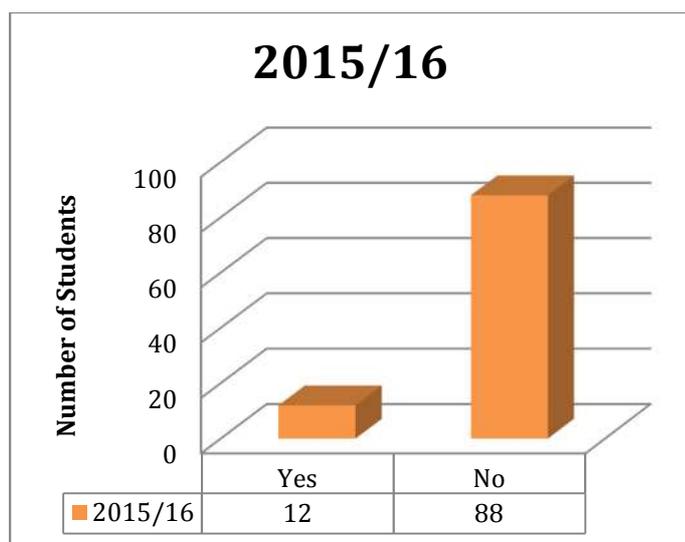
International students can be particularly vulnerable given their distance from home, cultural-language differences, and separation from family & friends' support. We offer two workshops titled 'Mind the Gap' in orientation week which aim to provide support and information to international and national students in looking at how to transition from one culture to another and from college/school to university. These workshops are well received.

Comparison of the Numbers of Students from the UK and From Other Countries:

Nationality (%)	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
UK	90	88	89	82	84	83
International (Including EU)	10	11	11	18	16	17

B. Disability

The Numbers of Referrals for Counselling, Declaring/Not Declaring a Disability:



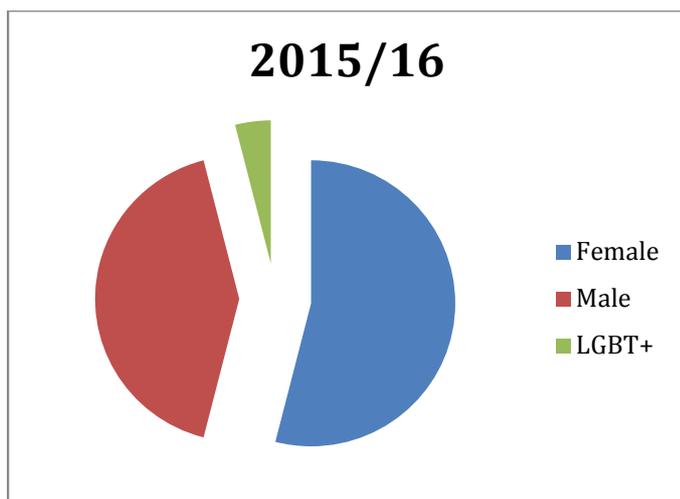
Students who declare a mental health diagnosis are informed by the Disability Advisor of support that is available within the university; appropriate referrals are then made if the student wishes to take up this support.

C. Gender

Gender as declared on their referral forms by the students coming for counselling:

Gender (%)	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
Female	Approx. 57	Approx.52	Approx.56	Approx.60	Approx.63	Approx.60
Male	Approx.42	Approx.48	Approx.43	Approx.39	Approx.37	Approx.40
LGBT+	*	*	*	*	*	*

* Numbers too small to calculate a percentage/may be able to identify client(s): percentages have therefore been slightly disguised and/or rounded for the Female and Male categories.



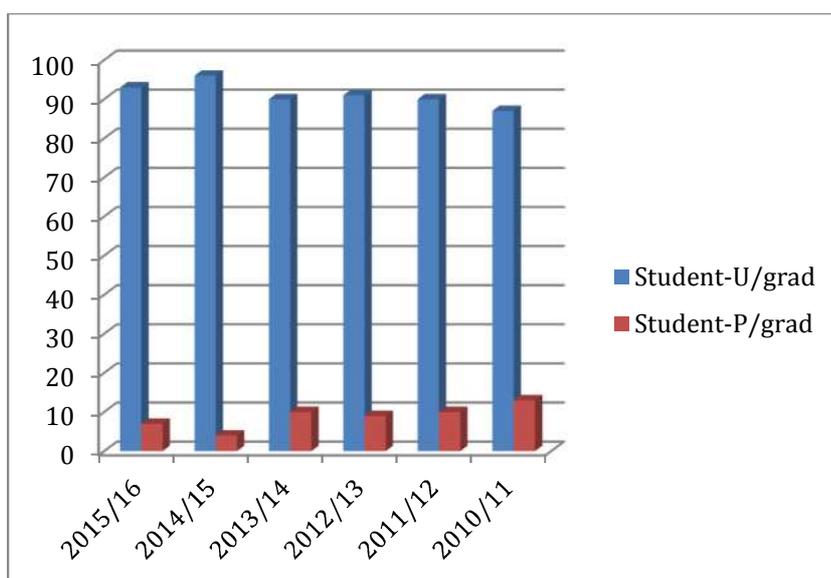
It is important to note that, although none of the students declared themselves to be in the transgender category *on their referral form*, some of the students themselves verbally disclosed, during counselling and mental health sessions, that they were engaged at varying points on a transgender process and they varied in which gender category (male, female or neither) they would currently put themselves in.

This year we have started recording on our forms those students who verbally declare in the counselling sessions that they are dealing with gender-identity issues. The figures demonstrate a rise in the number of those accessing our services from LGBT+; this suggests that we are being seen as a safe environment for students to explore their sexuality and sexual identity for themselves.

D. Course Level

Break down of the students coming for counselling based on the level of degree they are studying, i.e. undergraduate or postgraduate:

Type of Client	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
Student-U/grad	93	96	90	91	90	87
Student-P/grad	7	4	10	9	10	13



6. Risk

An important part of the work of the counselling and mental health service is in responding to crisis situations. This protection occurs via these crisis-intervention and risk-reduction strategies:

- Distressed individuals receiving early help so that they are less likely to get to the point of risky/reckless behaviour, self-harm or suicide.
- Students affected by a traumatic event having somewhere to talk and receive support.
- The use of CORE questionnaires as an extra tool in helping identify those at risk.
- Working in partnership with NHS primary care and community mental health teams to access further enhanced care.

Because the counsellors and mental health advisor are accredited by their appropriate professional bodies, there is external verification that the service meets professional quality standards and is regulated by governing body profession. Such BACP & NMC (British Association of for Counselling & Psychotherapy & Nursing and Midwifery Council)

Breakdown of the Number of Students Showing/Not Showing Significant Risk Factors:

Students presenting risk	2015/16	2014/15
Yes %	16	16
No %	84	84

A number of referred students present with 'risk' issues such as self-harm and suicidal ideation. This year 48 students, 16% of all those referred, communicated that they were at risk of harm to themselves. We use the risk questions from the CORE (Clinical Outcomes Routine Evaluation) questionnaire to provide the basis for identifying, managing and containing risk. These questions cover suicidal ideation, harm to self and to others. If any student scores 5 or more on any one question then the counsellor completes a risk form and discusses the implications for future care with the Senior Counsellor.

The counsellors and mental health advisor deal with the immediacy of the risk situation by providing further one-to-one support from the service and assessing whether a referral to their GP for assessment is necessary. In most cases the interventions the team propose de-escalate the risk; this is due to the high standard of training and experience of our counsellors and mental health advisor. The service has developed appropriate information leaflets on self-harm, which have now gone out into the student population.

Due to the high proportion of students at risk it's vital that we are able to provide support quickly, and that these students are fast-tracked for counselling or mental health support. It's also vital that waiting times are kept to a minimum and to achieve this it's necessary that we have the right number of qualified and experienced staff available at the right times. I believe we will be able to achieve this with the staff we have, and we will continue to monitor the situation. It is worth noting that for the risk statistics we only record those scoring above 5 (significant risk to life); however there are many students who self-harm but who do not actually breach this high-risk threshold.

Student Participant Feedback on One-to-One Sessions:

These are combined figures for counselling & mental health. *Although this year saw a low number of feedback questionnaires returned the results themselves are similar to previous years. At this moment in time we do not have the reason. This year we are providing hard copies of the questionnaires at the final session.*

- 61% reported that the sessions have improved their experience of university.
- 62.2% reported that the therapy was an important factor in helping them continue at the university.
- 57% reported that the therapy was an important factor in developing useful skills for the future.
- 96.1% reported they would recommend this service to a friend.

Staff

The team comprises:

- 1.8FTE counsellors (5 individuals)
- Mental Health Advisor
- 1 Associate counsellor- voluntary
- October-May 3-4hours a week.
- 1 Student trainee – voluntary October-May 3-4 hours a week

In addition to providing one to one therapeutic support, team also provides, workshops, courses, mentoring, advice to academic staff and colleagues as well as supervision.

Professional Standards

In order to uphold professional standards and to retain our accreditation and membership of the BACP our counsellors have to have a minimum of 30-hours professional development every year.

This year the counsellors/mental health advisor have attended courses on:

- Bereavement
- Sexual abuse
- Behavioural intervention

They have also attended workshops delivered by the police on:

- Rape
- Cyber-bullying
- Counter-terrorism's 'Prevent' programme.

The knowledge gained is passed on to other counsellors at our regular team meetings, which helps develop the professional standards of the service. Counselling and mental health team meet twice a month for professional and personal and service development this aids with the hours the counsellors and mental health advisor need to obtain their accreditation. As stated above staff in the counselling and mental health service work on a part time basis and the team meetings is a vital way of communication and support as a team.

Voluntary Placements

Associate Counsellor

Each year an associate counsellor placement goes to a student who has recently *completed* the Post-graduate Diploma in Counselling at Abertay University; the student is mentored by a counsellor. This year's placement student very quickly became part of the team and took on a caseload, effectively providing a valuable contribution to the team and students.

At the end of the year the associate counsellor was asked to produce a report on their experience as a part of the counselling team during that year.

The associate counsellor has kindly agreed to continue to provide further counselling sessions on a voluntary basis if required and a new associate will be starting with the service in October.

Placement Counsellor

This year, for the first time, a 'placement counsellor' was taken on; this is someone who is studying in the 2nd year of their diploma in counselling. Mentoring for the student was provided by one of the counsellors from our service. The student who was accepted was from Edinburgh University and this proved to be a very successful placement for both the student and the service.

Contributions - Counselling & Mental Health Team Contributes To:

Supporting Academic Staff

The counselling & mental health service helps in supporting other university staff (academic and support staff) in dealing effectively and supportively with students. This is done in a variety of ways by email, telephone conversations, meeting one to one as well as meeting with larger groups. This process also helps to manage the anxiety of the staff.

Provided a 1-hour **Mindfulness** Taster session at the request of the Sports & Psychology department with an emphasis on mindfulness contribution to athletes. This is particularly significant as Mindfulness is now well researched as being helpful to athletes to aid concentration. Future requests expected.

The Student Association

The counselling & mental health service is and will continue to work collaboratively with the Student Association on a number of projects such as the 'Stop/pause/play' & Nightline. Our aim is to continue to build on the relationships. We see this as a way of reaching out and becoming accessible to more and more students.

Collaborating on New Policies Working with Academic Staff

Due to a trend of incidents of **cyber-bullying** within the student population, meeting with ██████████, Secretariat and workshop giving by Police we have now produced our own policy on cyber-bullying in line with university policy; and have taken this forward with the stop/pause/play campaign on sexual consent.

GP & Mental Health services

As a service we have become aware of a number of GP services who have closed their patient lists due to a shortage of doctors. Hillbank Surgery which we have good links with and sets aside appointments times just for Abertay students closed their list in February and at this present date is still closed. Obviously this has a huge impact for the students and the service. We are compiling a list of those GP's who are taking new patients. . We have requested to meet with the community mental health team in order build relationships, understanding of roles and referral pathways.

Request made to meet with mental health team in order to clarify referral pathways for the care of those students who are at imminent risk of harm.

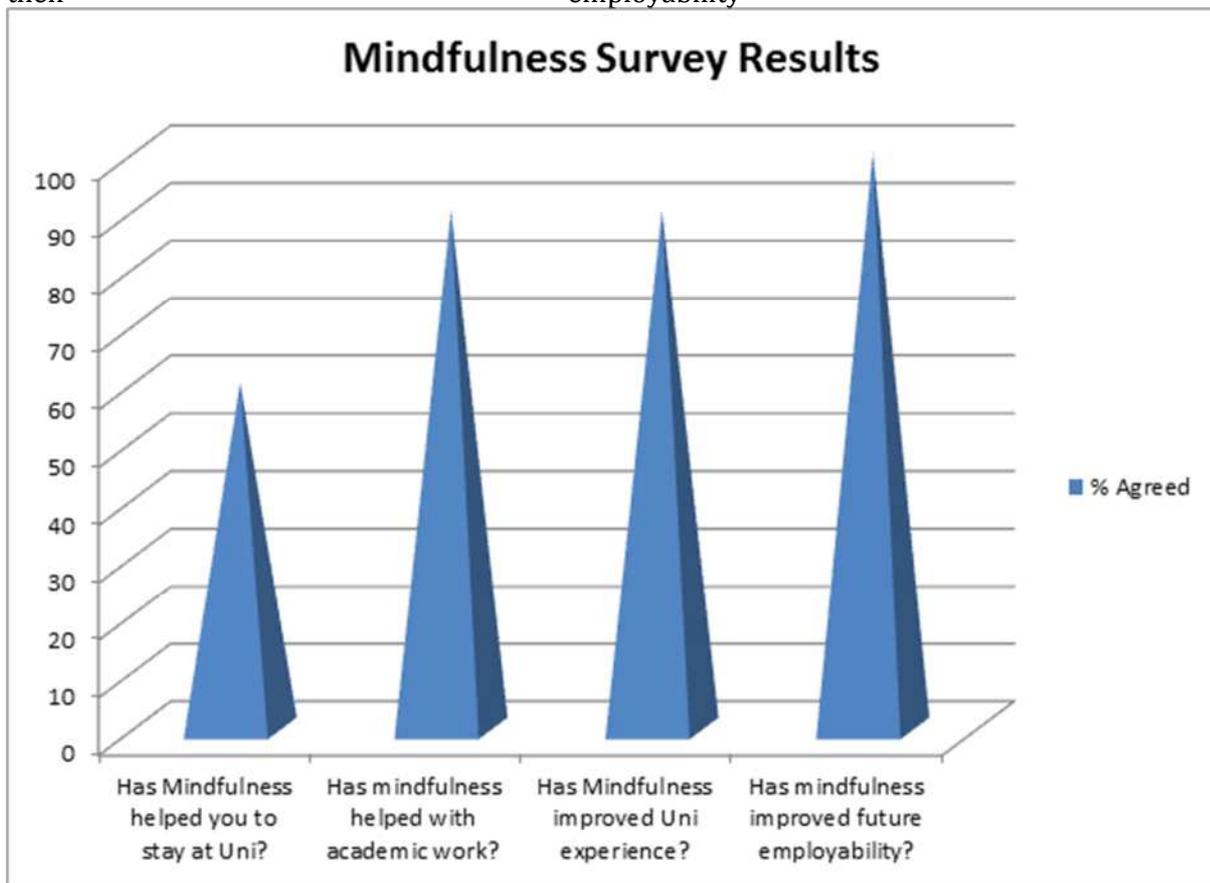
Mindfulness

Mindfulness is an integrative, mind-body based practice that can enable people to change the way they think and feel about their experiences, especially stressful experiences, maximise general wellbeing, building tools for life such as empathy, self-compassion, emotional resilience and tolerance.

The Counselling service ran a one-off taster session in mindfulness followed by a 7-session series in January. The taster session attracted 28 students, 18 of whom then chose to commit to the longer course. The value of the course was highlighted both in the number of completers, i.e. 10 and by the highly positive responses and comments received in feedback forms.

Mindfulness - Student Exit Questionnaires

Students completed a before and after Clinical Outcome Routine Evaluation (CORE) forms for the course. The former provided a baseline score and the latter showed the progress made over the duration of the course. Some 90% of those completing the CORE forms indicated that the course had had a positive impact on their academic work, helped them to remain at the university and developed their employability skills.



Question	% Agreed
Has Mindfulness helped you to stay at University?	60%
Has mindfulness helped with academic work?	90%
Has Mindfulness improved University experience?	90%
Has mindfulness improved future employability?	100%

Comments from exit questions

1. Can I ask you first of all why you came on the course?

Stress management/stopping unwanted thoughts and feelings

Anxiety & depression & negative automatic thoughts
 Stress and anxious wanted help
 Learn to cope with anxiety
 Curiosity

2. What have you gained from the course?

Techniques help to cope with life
 Positivity
 Calmness, less anxious
 Self-awareness
 Cope with stress, and focus better in general
 New insights better understanding of myself
 How to be mindful
 Helped with concentration with my studies

3. Would you recommend this to other students?

All said yes

Mindfulness in Schools

Mindfulness is now recognised and used widely in the professional world of sport to aid concentration, and help with stress. The Counselling Service responded to a request from the Sport & Psychology Department to deliver a 'mindfulness and sport' workshop for their students. Once again the feedback from staff and students was highly positive and the session will be repeated again in the next academic year.

Mindfulness - Conclusion:

This past year has shown how Mindfulness training can be delivered to students both via the academic curriculum and/or as a co-curricular activity, e.g. one off sessions/short courses. Given the positive impact it has on University priorities such as boosting employability and retention outcomes the Counselling service will seek to work with academic colleagues to enable greater numbers of students to benefit from this kind of support in the year ahead.

For the future

To meet the anticipated growth in demand the service will seek to train another of its staff members to train as a teacher of mindfulness. This would increase capacity and enable the service to run the 7-session course in both semesters.

The service will also seek to target the publicity for these courses towards those students and/or schools who may be struggling with attendance and resilience.

Mentoring

P2P (Peer to Peer) Mentoring Scheme

The P2P scheme was developed to help smooth the transition of new students into university life, in recognition that this can be a stressful process and that students often find it easier to approach their peers about things that are worrying them rather than talk to staff. Providing such support at an early stage can prevent difficulties escalating, can foster a sense of 'belonging' and thus can aid retention. We are able to offer every new undergraduate entrant (and some postgraduate students on a small number of courses) a mentor.

P2P Training 2015-2016 Session

- P2P Training ran from the 9th February – 23rd March 2016, facilitated by the Counselling and Mental Health Team.
- The Disability Advisor ran 1 session for the peer mentors and was received well.
- Feedback following the training, all the participants scoring in the positive range. Evidenced from training feedback forms.
- 15 students completed the training, 4 dropping out due to other, unexpected commitments.
- 10 students from the previous academic year left the scheme due to graduating.
- In total there are 25 Peer Mentors available for next academic year 2016-2017.
- A number of the students who undertake this role were also involved in the Principal's Award, adding to their skill-set and employability.

Feedback from participants

"The training has been really useful and valuable as it has taught me a lot about different scenarios in which a different approach is needed. I have also learnt to understand people a lot more and have become more self-aware"

"All the skills learned here could be put into practice in everyday life with family and friends"

"I became very comfortable within the group. I felt the group was filled with very caring, like-minded people. The group exercises were a lot of fun."

Development

1. How did we do?

Engagement with External Services Developed relationships and worked with the Police and the Counter Terrorism Unit Police Scotland who provided workshops on Cyberbullying and Prevent. Collaboration with Dundee University in regards to Nightline and NaBita (information below) (student listening service which is open at night and run by students for students). This was put on hold last year

Anxiety/Depression & Stress Delivered by Counselling & mental health team 1st and 2nd semester. 'Beating the blues' and 'Mindfulness' workshops delivered..

Roadshow Supporting Students Alloway Hall & Kidd Building, Roadshow lead by counselling & mental health team included Disability, Finance, Careers, International Services and academic support. Provided service input 9th November increase awareness of support services. Alloway Hall now closed. Exploring similar road show with Students' Association.

'Lad Culture' in Universities Stop pause play workshop devised by counselling & mental health team in conjunction with Student association and WRASAC (Women's Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre) 4 x 1/2hour sexual consent workshops to be delivered Orientation week 2016 for all

new entrants, with the plans to deliver workshops for all students as a

Accelerated Degrees

Staffing in the summer of 2016 considered to meet the demands of the students, no changes at this present time, to review summer 2016. -MHA increased hours and counsellor (1 day a week) provided counselling and mental health sessions. We have no data on how many students on accelerated degrees used this service, this is something we need to review.

Nightline

student listening service which is open at night and run by students for students. Due to the revamping of this service by Dundee University and our concerns regarding the running and lack of clear policies by Nightline our involvement in this project put on hold. We are currently working with representatives from Dundee University, and the student association ensure good practice and policies are in place before we enter into working partnership.

2. New Developments

NaBita Training

The Head of Counselling and Mental Health and the Mental Health Advisor attended the National Behavioural Intervention Association Training on the 25th-26th November 2015. This looked at behavioural assessment tools and their application on campus and promoting safety on campus. The training was designed and developed for campuses in North America however allows for the redesign and development of existing behavioural assessment tools to suit the needs of UK Institutions.

A representative from Dundee University was also on the training and a cross-campus working-relationship has been developed in order to redevelop the assessment tools and its application within Abertay and Dundee University in particular working with the needs of the academic staff. To date, 2 constructive meetings have taken place between the 2 campuses with further meetings proposed over the 2016-2017 session.

Proposed Workshops

- ***Procrastination*** Due to the number of students reporting, during sessions, significant adverse effects of procrastination on their university work and subsequent stress and anxiety, we propose to run procrastination workshops with academic services.
- ***Pause/Stop/Play*** Developing workshops as a rolling programme throughout the university.