



ABACUS
COUNSELLING & SUPPORT
SINCE 2007



Abacus Counselling and Support
Annual Report
2023 - 2024

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Introduction

Welcome to the 2023-24 Annual Report for **Abacus Counselling and Support**. The report summarises the work that the charity has completed, in order to continue to provide services over the last year. It also details some of the issues presented by the clients that we work to support. Clients may have several issues needing support to deal with, which they may have coped with for years. Helping clients to overcome these problems and give them the opportunity to move forward with renewed hope and new perspective, is always a privilege.

The report firstly sets out the charity's objects stated on its constitution, along with its aims, organisational objectives and values and who is involved in its running. There is a breakdown of who contributes to the charity and in what role. There is a report from the Chair of Trustees. The Project Managers Report goes into more detail, regarding the work completed this year. There is a variety of information on the output of the charity, using a variety of statistical data and feedback from clients. There is a summary of the Finances, for the last financial year, with comparison to the previous year. Finally, there is a summary of plans for the next year and thanks to various local agencies.

We hope you find this document to be useful and informative. If you have any questions, please contact us on info@abacuscounsellingandsupport.co.uk Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the trustees and volunteers who have continued to provide their time and skills, to keep the charity running. Whilst the charity itself is small, the impact it has on a client lives, is significant and long lasting.



Objects, Aims, Objectives, Values

Charitable Objective

Abacus Counselling and Support is a Registered Charity, number 1163844.

It's charitable objective as stated on the charity's constitution is to:

Protect and promote the mental and emotional health of people living in England and Wales, by providing, developing and maintaining an affordable and accessible counselling service, with relevant and assessed support.

Main Aims

Clients referred to the service will:

- Go through a robust assessment process, to ensure the charity is able to provide support and the client is willing to engage with the support provided.
- Be provided with good quality counselling sessions, which is monitored effectively.
- Be supported to overcome personal and emotional issues, identified and agreed upon in the assessment process.
- Be able to have improved mental health, as a result of session provided.
- Be advised of alternative forms of support available, if the client/referral is identified as someone who cannot be supported by the charity, in the assessment process.



Organisational Objectives

The objectives of **Abacus Counselling and Support** are to:

- Develop a secure funding and income generation base from which to develop a sustainable and high-quality service, for clients supported to the charity.
- Ensure our services are delivered to a consistent high quality, which meets the targets set by funders and the needs of our service users, within the diverse communities of Southend and surrounding areas.
- Continue develop the board of trustees and volunteers for recruitment and training, to build a team best placed to deliver our services.
- Continue develop and assess the range of support the service providers, to ensure it continues to evolve and develop in line with changing needs of the community's mental health.
- Engage with key stakeholders and work in partnership with statutory bodies, the charities and commercial organisations to meet the needs of clients referred and improve the emotional and psychological health and well-being of the community.
- Identify and understand the needs, concerns and mental health problems of the community, by annual consultation and ongoing contact with clients and relevant local organisations.

Our Values

Safe: we work at all times to ensure the safety of clients, workers and the community.

Ethical: we work to ensure that all counselling is in line with agreed ethical standards set out by the necessary professional bodies.

Professional: all support provided is of a high standard and carried out in line with agreed policies and procedures.

Accessible: support provided is accessible to clients regardless of their financial situation, age, gender or ethnicity.

Partnership: we will work in partnership with other agencies, to ensure that services are connected to meet the full range of client needs.



Who's Who at Abacus Counselling and Support

Board of Trustees

Lesley Butcher - Chair

Brenda Lewis

Carolyn Williams

David Bannister - Minute Taker

Paula Buck - Minute Taker

Steve Harvey

Senior Management Team (Paid)

Nick Chard - Charity Development Officer Treasurer / Secretary

Norman Livermore - Operations Manager

Volunteer Counsellors

Alex Watson

Hayley Robinson - Student Placement

Lynn Lynne - also Sessional Supervisor

Naomi Angel

Nick Chard

Norman Livermore - also Sessional Supervisor

Rebekka Chambers Ward - Student Placement

Sharon Horwood

Contractors

Andrew Clark at **A Clark Accounts** – Book Keeper

Lea Williams of **Yours Creative Lea** – Marketing



Professional Standards

All counsellors are members of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and/or National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society (NCPS). They have regular supervision, have their own professional indemnity insurance and take part in regular training and CPD. These requirements ensure **Abacus** works towards providing its values of providing a service that is Safe, ethical and Professional, for clients.

Partnership Working

Abacus Counselling has links to a number of local organisations, in and around Southend.

Abacus currently rent rooms from Hub 151, on West Road in Shoeburyness. A number of other community organisations work out of the venue and future partnership opportunities are being explored. It now also sees clients at St Luke's Community Centre, on Cluny Square. It is currently planning on running activities for groups who meet there.

The charity receives referrals from a number of sources including Therapy for you and other medical professionals and Southend Council. However many come direct from the community.

If **Abacus** is not able to provide support, we can refer on to other community mental health agencies. We have forwarded clients on to Mind, Southend on Sea Rape Crisis, Safer Steps Sea Domestic Charity and the Olive Tree Centre in Eastwood, amongst others.

Abacus attends network meetings run by Counselling and Support Services Southend, Southend's Mental Health Partnership Forum and Castle Point and Rochford's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Board. This helps the charity to link further with other agencies providing similar support and gives it a voice, at a strategic level.



Chair of Trustees Report

This is my first year of acting as Chair for **Abacus**, and have found there has been a lot to learn. It has been very interesting monitoring what the charity has been doing, and seeing more what goes on behind the scenes. For example the paperwork and tasks required to run and develop the charity.

I was delighted to attend the charity fundraising at Leigh Con Club, where the charity managed to raise over £1000. The trustees also arranged for **Abacus** to attend Leigh Rotary club, to help raise awareness of the charity and the work that is done to help clients.

One of the main things the trustees have done, is to revise the charitable Objective, to allow it to work throughout England and Wales. This is to allow it to offer virtual support, to a much wider geographical area.

At this difficult time, maintaining finance has been effecting everyone. But I am pleased to say we have been able to manage do so successfully, whilst also continuing to ensure counselling services remain affordable and accessible to clients.

It has been at pleasure to welcome back Carolyn Williams as a trustee, after moving away for several years. Her contribution has been highly useful and we look forward to her continued input and support.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the volunteer counsellors for their time and work, in helping improve the mental health of the clients. I also wish to thank the other trustees for their continued support. Finally I would like to thank Nick and Norman, for the dedicated and hard work that they put in.

I feel it is important to appreciate the help that this charity provides, to its clients. People are becoming more aware of the need of mental health services and the delays in the NHS. **Abacus** is helping to reduce emotional and mental health problems in the community, by offering a swift, accessible and high-quality service.

I am looking forward to a more settled year, where we can go from strength to strength and help more people.

Lesley Butcher

Lesley Butcher



Charity Development Officer's Report

2023 to 2024 has been what has felt like the first 'normal' year, for several years. Delivery has returned to how things were pre pandemic, as pretty much all sessions were done face to face again, rather than via alternative means. The one possible legacy from the pandemic was a general increase in demand, due to a population that overall need more mental health support to previous years. This includes mental as well as physical health. See the next page on an analysis of work completed.

The main development in a delivery was **Abacus** running sessions in St Luke's Hub in Southchurch. **Abacus** was invited by the manager Jodie Cook for counsellors to run sessions in the hub, with referrals provided by herself. This was run initially as a pilot and proved to be a complete success. Two counsellors Naomi and Lynn agreed to go in there at various points in the week, depending on their availability. St Luke's is another area in Southend which has a very high level of deprivation and the sessions proved invaluable to the community. Having counsellors available for sessions also helped to raise the profile of the charity, further helping to gather referrals. Feedback showed the support to be highly valued.

As a result of the work, **Abacus** now offers an outreach service, in St Luke's. Lynn and Naomi attend several groups in the week and are there to offer support on a more casual basis, which may or may not lead onto a formal referral. This has been effective in reaching those hardest to reach, who may not be accessing mental health support elsewhere and in effect 'fallen through the cracks' in agency support. Special thanks need to be given to Lynn and Naomi, for their work and support in running this service.



At present **Abacus** is now looking to run a similar counselling and outreach service with the 'One Love' homeless project. This is still in the planning stage and dependent upon a number of factors including volunteer availability, confirming health and safety processes, CPD requirements and funding/capacity. But if it is possible, this would allow **Abacus** to provide accessible and affordable support to a large group of very vulnerable and needy community.

Abacus is also looking to develop its couples counselling service further, by training another volunteer to offer this service. This reflects an increase in demand for this service, in the last 6 months. This is despite running no marketing on this support. Funding is currently being sought, to pay for the training. If obtained, training will be run in the autumn and increased service run in the new year.

All in all **Abacus** has progressed well in developing its depth and range of support, over the last year. At the same time, it has continued to offer counselling in an accessible and affordable way.

Nick Chard

Nick Chard



Work Completed, Achievements, Outcomes, and Feedback

2023 was a successful year for delivery of services, as we provided almost the same level of delivery to before the pandemic. The following pages show various graphs and charts, giving details of output.

We received 48 referrals, 2 more than the previous maximum. We provided 276 counselling sessions, just shy of the previous maximum of 310. Over 90% were female, though we had a slight increase in under 18 referrals to last year. This is still low compared to historical numbers. Both would need more work and increased marketing, to target the clients. Monthly referrals numbers were steady, with on average 4 referrals being received a month. A pattern is also starting to emerge, where popular months for referrals are February, June/July and November. 31 referrals were accepted and started sessions, 13 didn't engage and 4 were rejected, or referred to other agencies.

Presenting issues showed a wider range of issues than previous years. Loneliness/isolation, bullying, money issues, crime, anger management, drug and alcohol, transgender and being a looked after child were mentioned. This is along with the usual issues of anxiety, bereavement, communication and family/relationship issues.

Most referrals came from Shoebury and Southchurch, with some from central Southend. A small number were from Thorpe Bay, Westcliff and Leigh on sea. The rest were from Essex.

Timescales for processing referrals remain good. Most referrals took 7 days each to be allocated, assessed and start sessions. Most clients also had up to 6 sessions, with a small number needing more.

Evaluation and CORE scores both showed a reduction in symptoms, as a result of sessions. Average core scores reduced from 39.6 to 23.4. Average evaluation scores reduced from 9.4 to 5.5.

Specific Feedback form clients:

Client S, age 43 year old male

“The service has been very helpful and has made a remarkable difference to my relationship with my partner.”



Client P, age 56 year old female

“Brilliant service, made a huge difference to my life and ability to cope and thrive - thank you.”



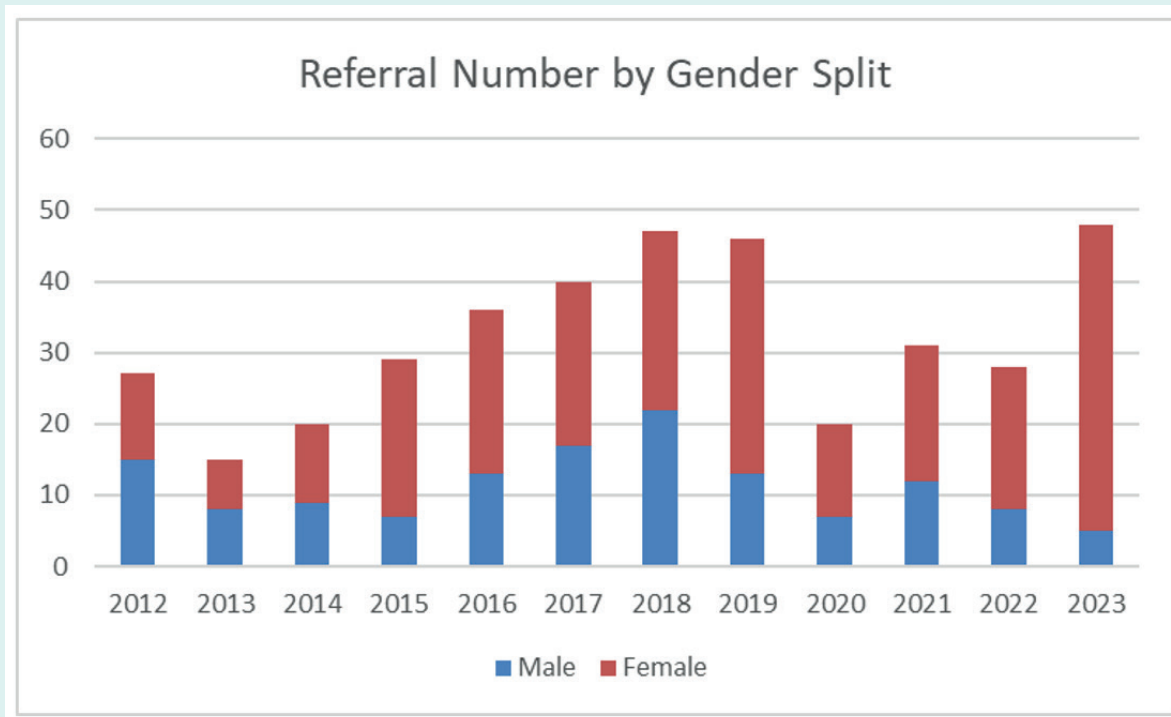
#talkingforchange



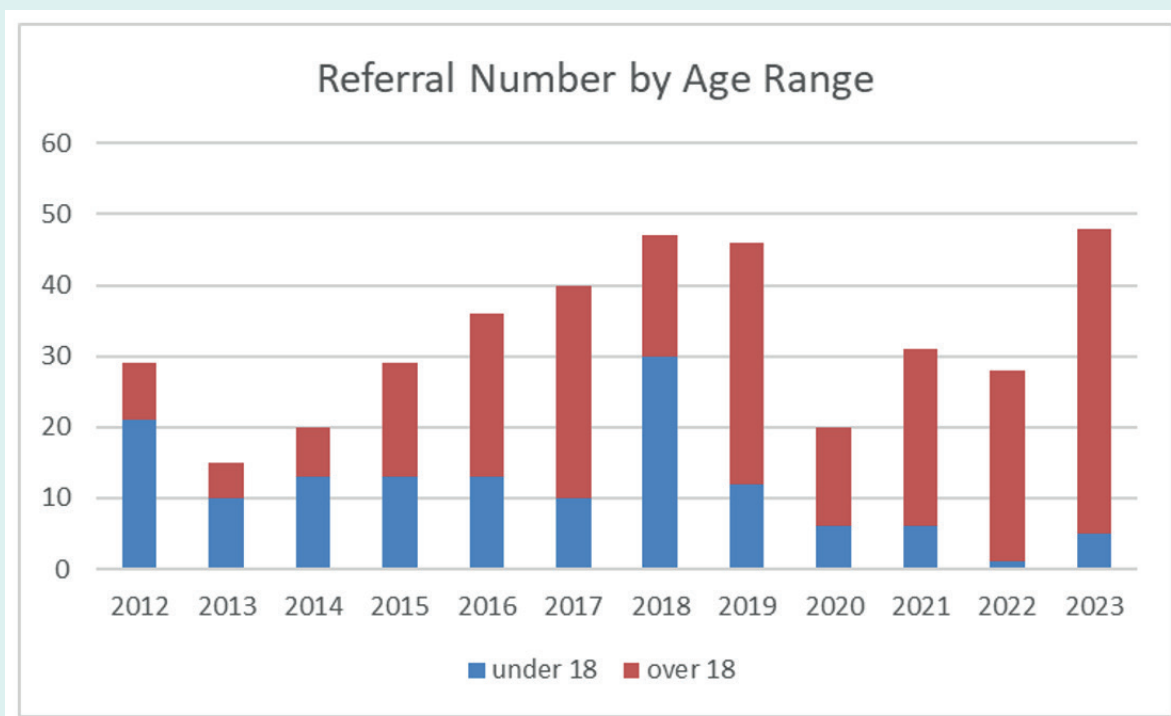
Statistical Information on Work Completed

2012 - 2023

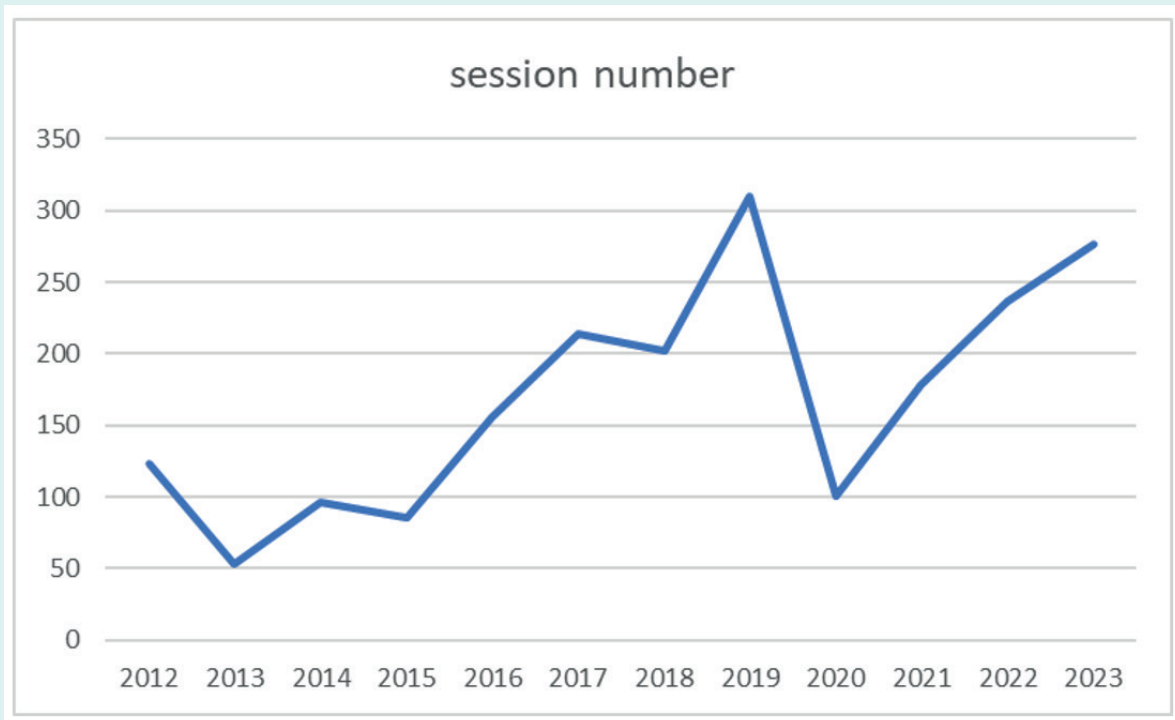
Number of referrals received from 2012 till 2022, detailing gender split



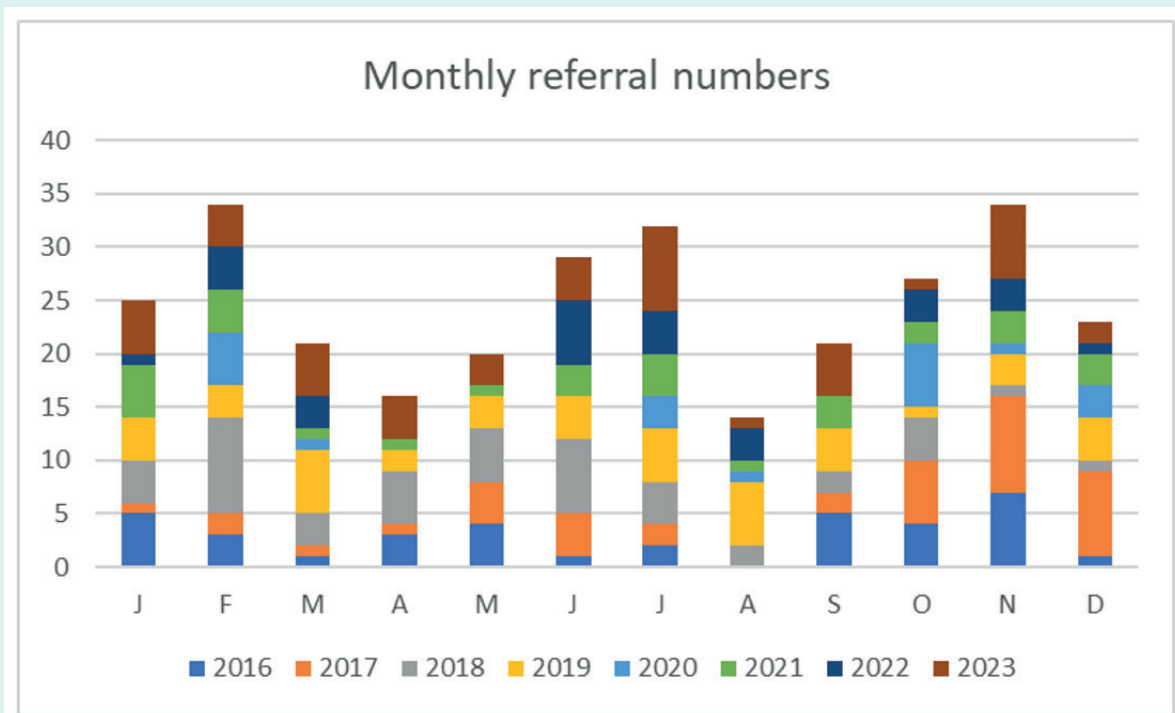
Number of referrals received from 2012 till 2023, detailing age split



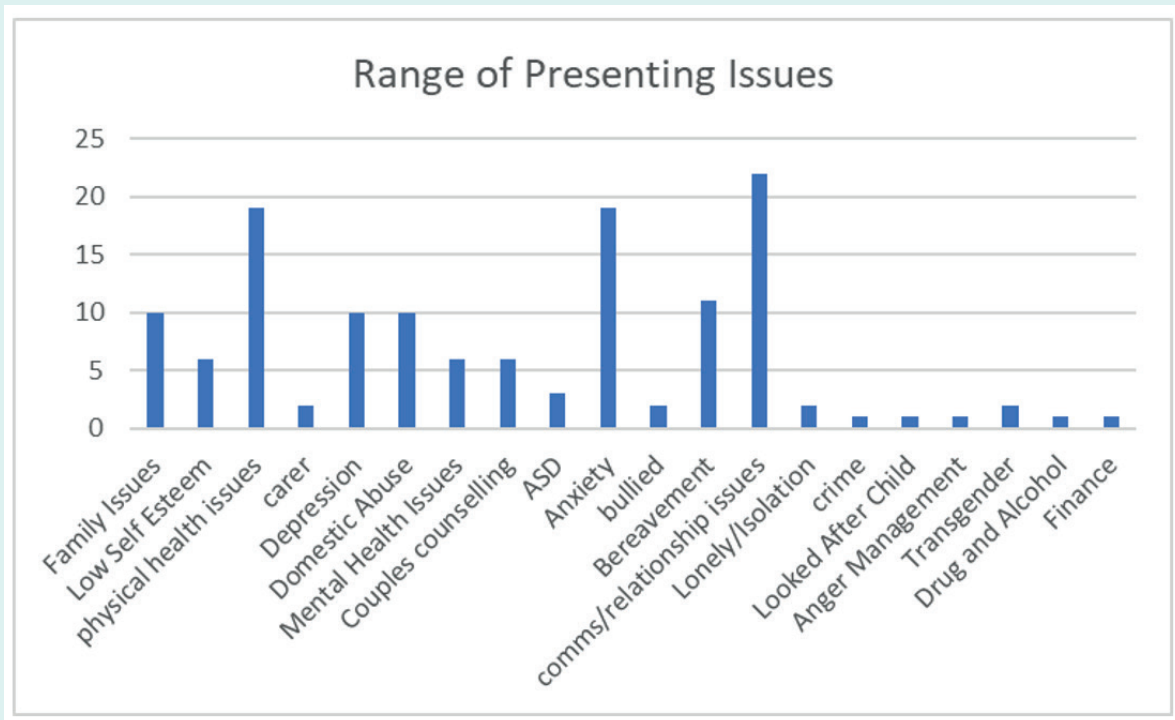
Session numbers 2012 – 2023



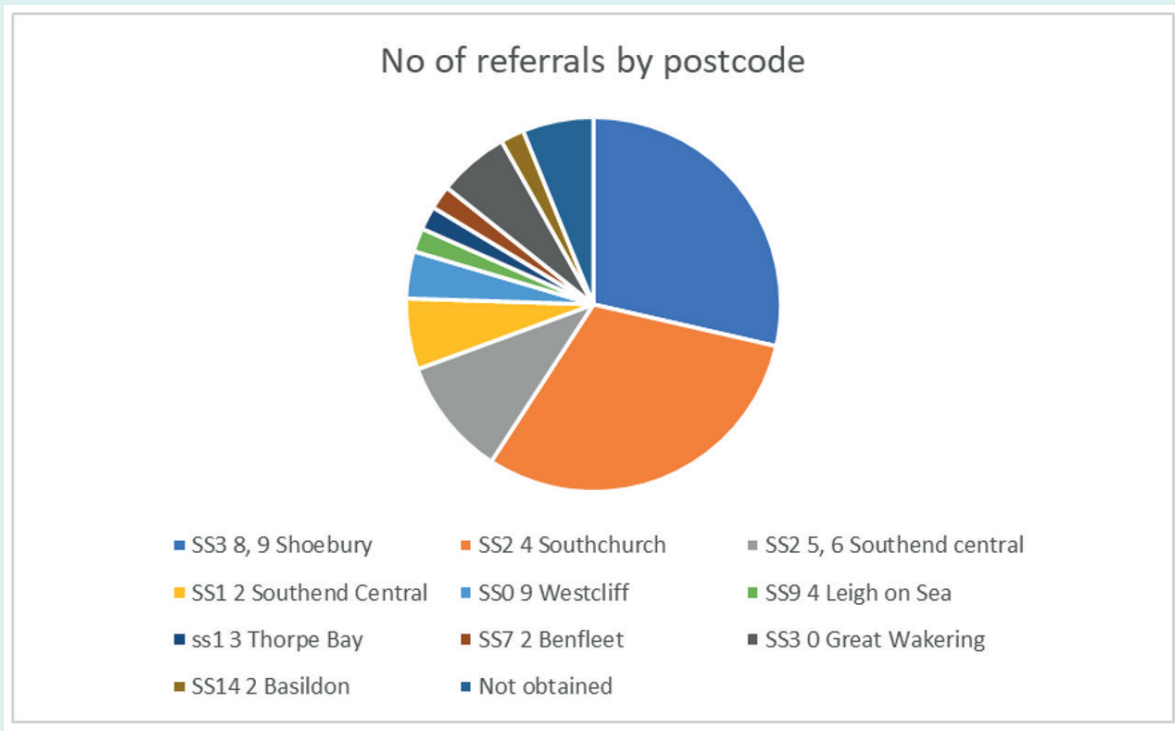
Referral numbers monthly breakdown 2016 – 2022



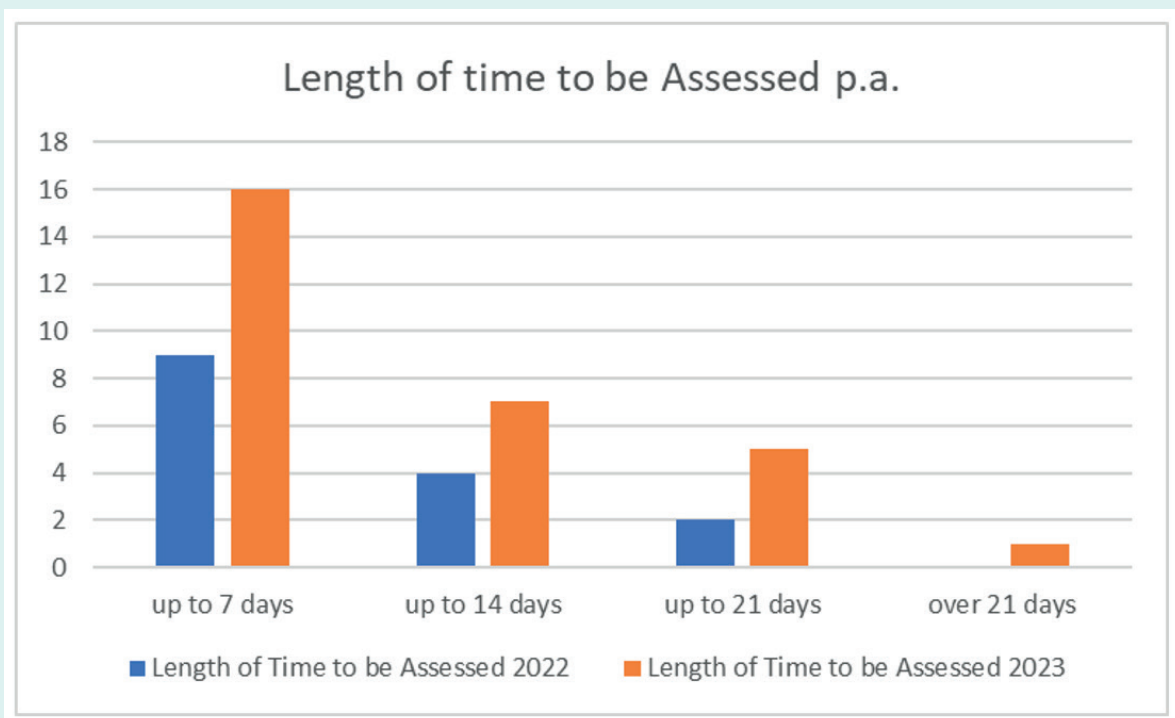
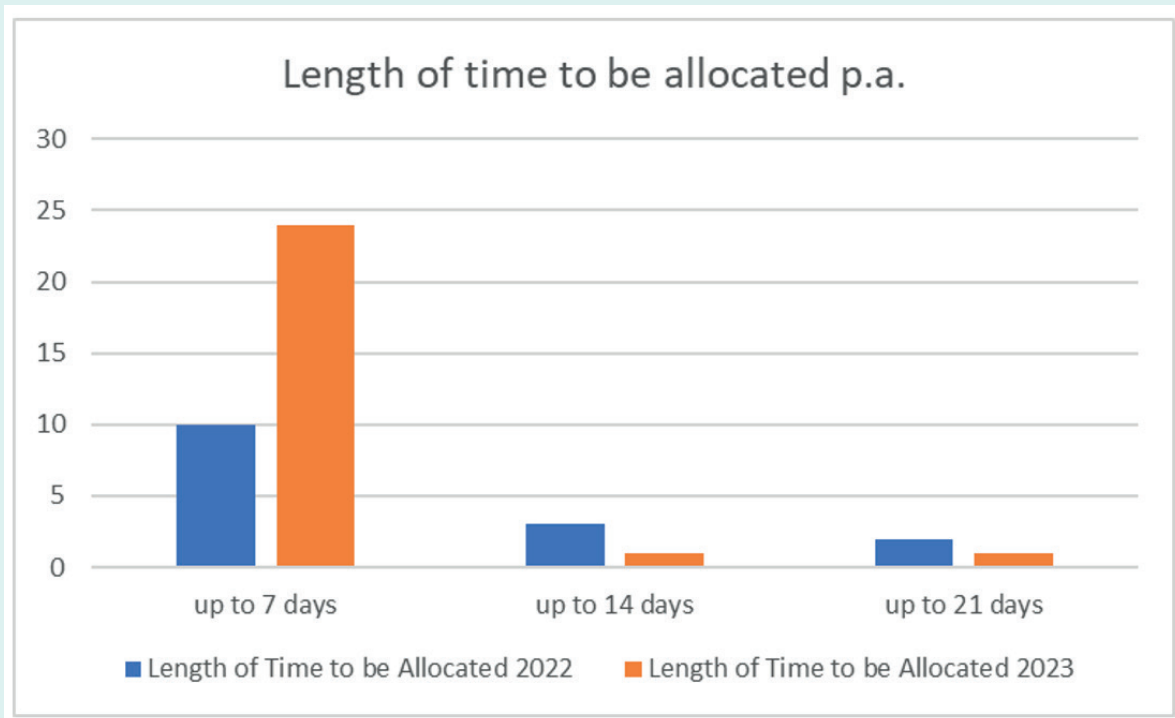
Range of Presenting Issues

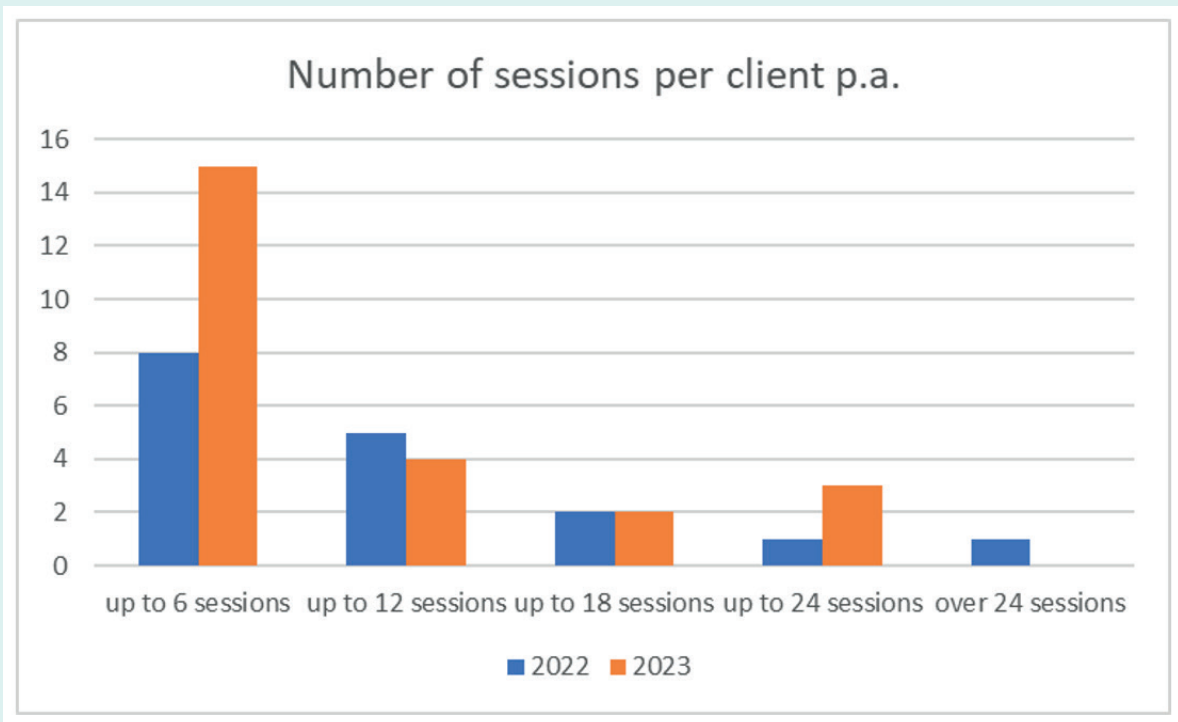
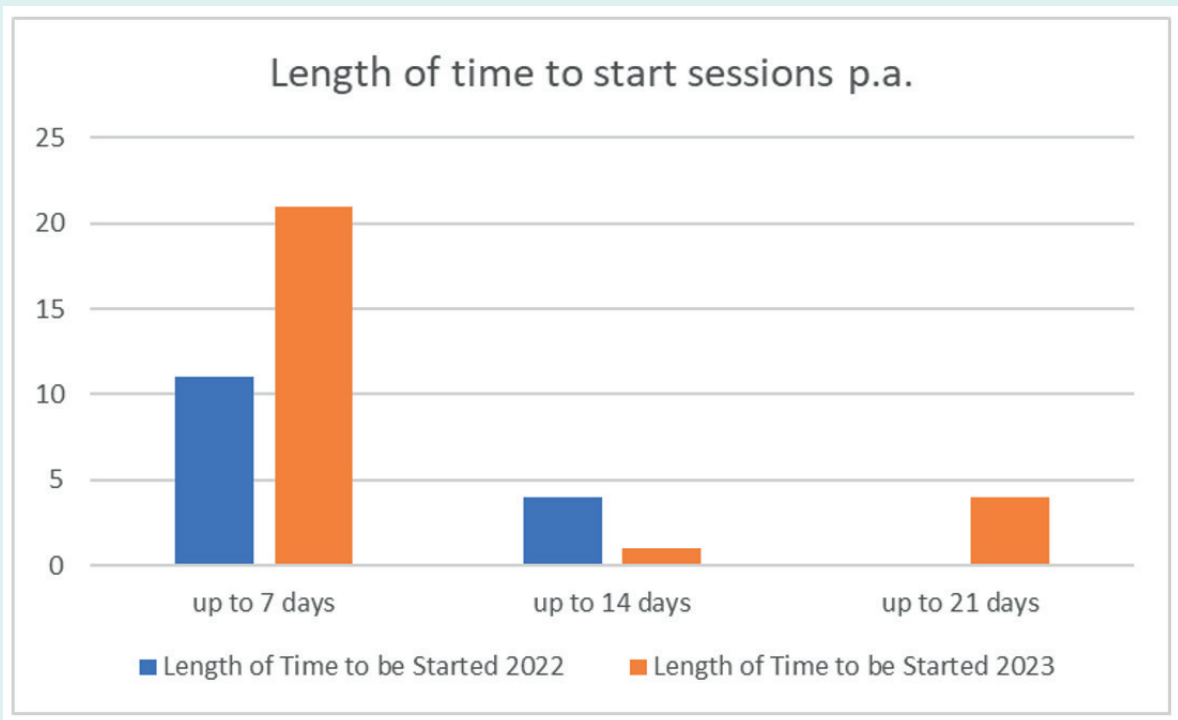


Postcode of Clients

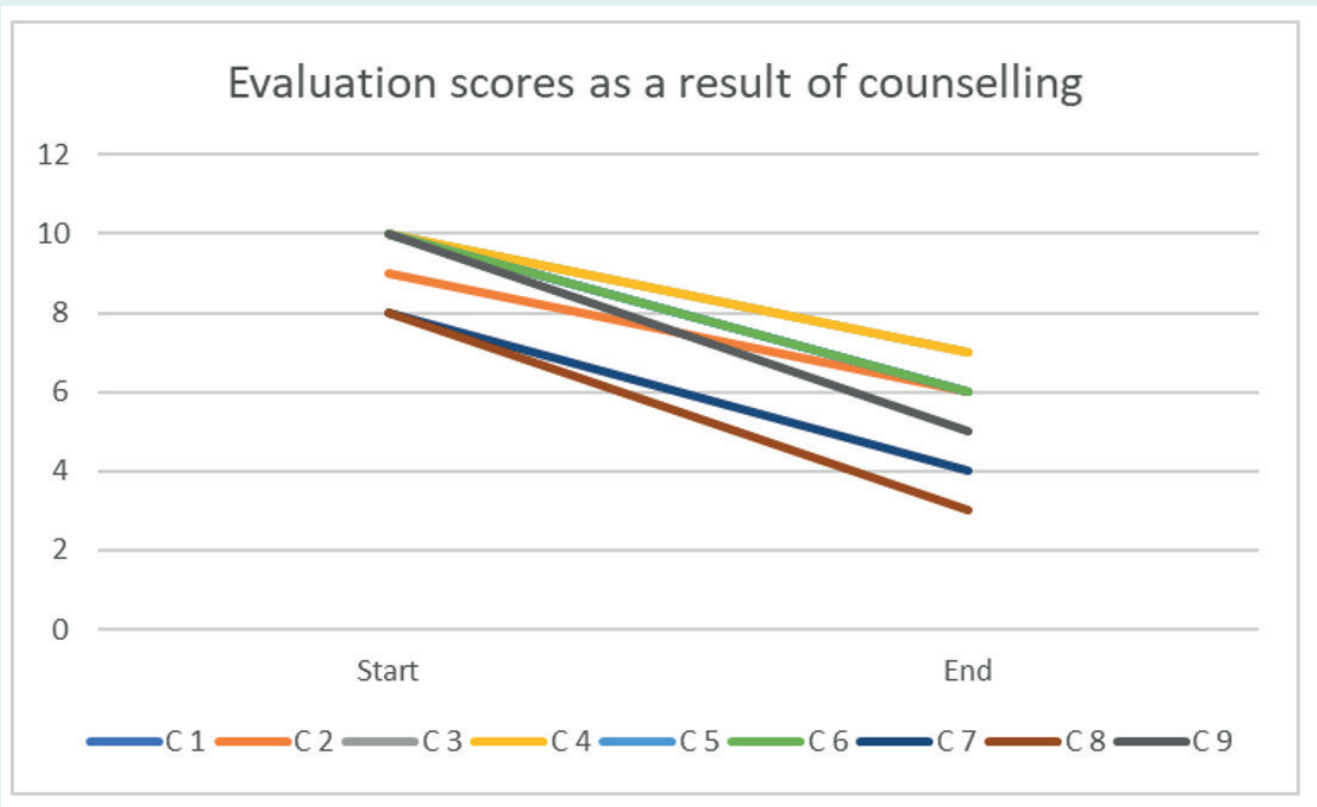
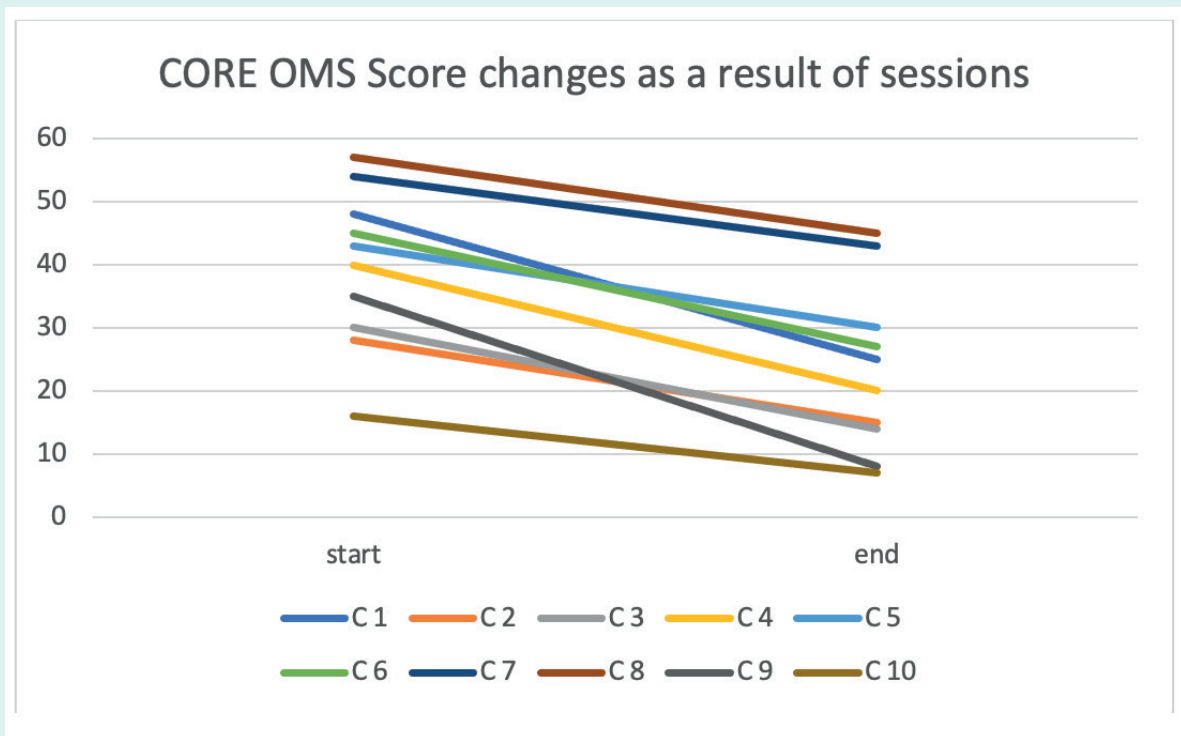


Data re Processing Referrals





Changes in Scores



Financial Summary Balance Sheet

Below are comparison summaries of finances for April 2022 to March 2023 and April 2023 to March 2024.

2022-23

Current Assets

Cash and Bank

Bank Account	21,516.85
Deposit Account	3,011.17
Petty Cash	

Total Current Assets **24,528.02**

Net Assets **24,528.02**

Funds Position

Restricted

ECF	0
CIF	9608.29
OM pay	2,500.00
FSJ	0
ICCT	1592.00
	13,700.29

Unrestricted **10,827.73**

Total Funds **24,528.02**

2023-24

Current Assets

Cash and Bank

Bank Account	20,600.84
Deposit Account	0
Petty Cash	

Total Current Assets **20,600.84**

Net Assets **20,600.84**

Funds Position

Restricted

CDO salary	2,548.19
CIF	18.91
OM salary	2,500.00
Room hire interim	1,038.38
ICCT	41.00
	6,146.47

Unrestricted **14,418.36**

Total Funds **20,600.84**

Unrestricted Funds Breakdown (last year)

Counselling sessions	2,758.48 (2,400)
Investments	0 (6.57)
Fundraising	0 (0)
Other Income (Donations/Gift Aid)	3,038.38 (2,609.86)
Total Income	5,796.66 (5016.43)



Financial Report

The charity experienced a continued increase in income both from restricted and unrestricted income, in the last financial year. A change of bank account from Barclays to Natwest resulted in little interest being paid, this year.

Restricted Funding

Funding was continued to be received from the Essex Community Foundation, to pay for the Operation's Manager post. This fund is a 2-year funding settlement, which will need to be reapplied to this year. Funding from the National Lottery was also obtained to pay a salary to the Charity Development Officer post, for one year.

Core costs were paid for from the Community Investment Fund, run by SAVS and Southend Council. This funding is coming to an end and we will look to reapply. However we will also look at other funds, in case we are not successful. An interim fund has been set up to pay for these costs, until alternative funding can be secured. This occurred in April, so does not show up on these accounts.

Funding from The Inter Church Caring Trust pays for room hire for sessions. This fund is almost ended. An interim fund has been set up, until further funding can hopefully be obtained from the ICCT in the coming months.

FSJ Charities funded online safeguarding CPD for trustees and counsellors. This has been completed and feedback provided. We are in the process of applying to further funding from them and Rosca Trust, to pay for 2 counsellors to have couples counselling training.

Unrestricted funding and Other Income

Abacus generated £2758, from 276 sessions. This works out as costing just under £10 per session for clients, on average. This is a little lower cost to last year (previously just over £10 per session) and shows how the cost of living crisis is effecting clients. They have less money for sessions, to previous years. **Abacus's** affordability is all the more important. The work in St Luke's hub in particular, is with those on a low income. They generally pay £5 per session.

Abacus was gifted £2000 from donations and received over £1000 in gift aid.

Reserves and Financial stability/ sustainability

As of the April 2023, **Abacus** currently has nearly £15 000 of unreserved income available. Whilst this is a significant amount, Abacus now has increased outgoings with salary. The reserves can be used to cover shortfalls if one fund is not successful in being renewed. But multiple unsuccessful funding applications would cause a significant drain on reserves. Continued careful management of reserves and funding applications is required. This is to ensure reserves are continued to be built and the risk of major demands on the reserves due to multiple unsuccessful funding applications, are avoided/minimised.

Future Plans

Going forwards the aims for 2023 - 2024 are:

- **Develop further links with community organisations and groups, across Southend.**
- **Explore the possibility of running outreach activities.**
- **Continue to recruit more counselling volunteers, to further expand the team.**
- **Look to expand online therapy services, to support more clients.**
- **Look to expand the couples counselling delivery.**
- **Look to increase numbers of male referrals and those for under 18s.**
- **Further develop financial reserves, through increased investments and savings and paying for all running costs with funding applications.**



Thank You!



**The Inter-Church
Caring Trust**



www.abacuscounsellingandsupport.co.uk

General Enquires **07910 261780**

Referrals **07843 387879**

