



## Objectives and Activities

To offer professional quality Christian counselling to any individual, couple or family in need across the North West; ensuring that finance is not a hindrance to them receiving help. Christian counselling includes, *pastoral counselling* which we offer to those who have a Christian faith and who want their faith incorporated into the counselling, and *community counselling* which we offer to those of any other faith or of no faith. This ensures we offer this distinctive service with a commitment to respect each client. We also aim to increase peoples relational and care skills through training in listening, counselling and related issues.

## Achievements and Performance

This year again we have we have been able help hundreds of hurting people right across the North West of England to find the relational, emotional, mental and spiritual help they have been looking for in their time of need. We have arranged 2743 counselling appointments across our 6 different venues around the North West. This is over 100 more than last year and our highest ever number. We are pleased to note that we have now counselled over 4500 people since Reach began just over 30 years ago. Again his year, our clients have included people from a wide variety of backgrounds, ages and ethnicities. Most of this year's clients are between the ages of 21 and 70, and include a significant number of married couples. We have also helped children and young people (ages 6-17), as two of our counsellors are trained and experienced in this type of work.

## Clients

To all our clients we have offered a distinctive, professionally managed and evaluated counselling service (quotes from some of this year's evaluation forms are inserted throughout this report). Once again, most of our clients (about 70%) make it clear that they have chosen Reach because of our identity and practice as a Christian agency and request pastoral counselling. Those for whom community counselling is more appropriate often express their appreciation for the values they see associated with a Christian agency, especially when dealing with marriage issues. This year we have had a record 180 newly registered clients, up from last year's 163. Over 5% of these have been children and young people. The main source of all referrals has been personal recommendation, accounting for over half of all new clients, other significant sources of referral include: the internet, G.Ps, other organisations and church relationships.

We continue to have no fixed charges for counselling but to encourage client's to consider our *fair donation principle*, where they are asked to consider donating in line with their income at £1 per session per £1000 of annual income (eg. £20 per session for someone earning £20k p.a. and so on). This allows people at all levels of society to access counselling with us and enables us to offer help to those who are on benefits right through to those who are at the top of their professions. This, of course, means we don't control all

the levers that influence the average donation. However, this year we set a target of £15 per session, and achieved £13.20, an encouraging increase from last year's £11.68

*"I can't express my gratitude enough for the service that Reach provides for a deep down cleansing of the mind, spirit and soul. This service has it all. I pray that God keeps blessing Reach."*

The main issues newly registered clients have presented on their registration forms, of the 19 areas we monitor, are marital and relational, followed by fear/panic/anxiety/stress with cases of depression and loss also frequently identified. These newly registered clients add to the existing client caseload, where longer term issues, such as trauma, abuse and rape, are being worked through.

This year's caseload has been managed by a team of 17 counsellors and an administration team of 5, which includes 2 long-term volunteers and one new volunteer, this is overseen by our appointment's manager. We have also installed a new computer network this year as the previous one was struggling for capacity.

*"I felt much better and able to move on (after having dealt with decades of trauma and guilt)."*

## **Venues**

This year we have added West Kirby to our 5 existing venues in: Liverpool, Chester, Manchester, New Brighton and Southport. A small number of appointments take place in people's homes for those who are house-bound. The addition of West Kirby is due to a new partnership with West Kirby United Reform Church, who are keen to serve their community with this service. Reach Counselling takes place in their modern and discrete extension, and we are able to fund a counsellor there due to this exciting new partnership. Our co-ordinator and the designated counsellor spoke at the church there earlier this year.

We have been involved in lengthy negotiations on the renewal of our lease for our Liverpool building, hopefully these will conclude successfully in early 2018. The venues beyond Liverpool are generally available to us due to the generosity and co-operation of either an individual church or a group of churches working together. Special thanks are due to: King's Church Manchester, New Brighton Baptist, Kingsway Chester and Family Life Southport for their exceptional generosity in making suitable rooms for counselling available for free or at token levels. This co-operation translates into a strong positive collective message of care to those in need seeking a safe place with safe people.

## **Team**

The 2743 counselling appointments were managed by a team of 17 counsellors, 5 of whom are now employed at some level, last year it was 4. This increase in the proportion of employed counsellors is something we have been preparing for over a number of years, and we are pleased to be in the position to be able to fund it due to the generosity of our Partners. We were sad to lose a couple of counsellors from the team due to either ill health or re-location. The saddest being the sudden and tragic loss of Jan Williams due to pancreatic cancer in July. Jan had been a volunteer counsellor on the Wirral, where her reputation for care and commitment to her clients was exceptional and well deserved. This was fully demonstrated by the high attendance at her funeral and the very warm messages that many people shared. Her faith in a loving Heavenly Father and her care for those in

need set the tone for the service, which was taken by our co-ordinator. Our thoughts and prayers are still with: Jon, her husband, and her adult children Samantha and Barry.

This year we have recruited two new volunteer counsellors, following successful interviews. We are enormously grateful to all our counsellors, whether employed or, especially our, volunteers. All of whom commit to work to the same quality and 'professional' standards within an evaluated service. The sense of team and consistency of values is maintained through the counsellors being treated with the same warmth and respect with which they are expected to treat the clients. Our appointment's manager's individual relationship with each counsellor is instrumental in this.

We are very fortunate to have such a team of skilful, faithful and committed counsellors. Their availability, good heartedness and call to this work, is inspiring to clients and to referral agencies alike. To ensure a high quality of counselling we continue to use evaluation forms with clients once their counselling has concluded. Some of our counsellors also use measurement tools particularly when working with client's dealing with depression and anxiety. The returned evaluations are generally very encouraging showing average progress from a well being of 1-2 to 4-5 (on a scale of 1-5).

*"I was in a very sad place; with help and talking about my pain I am now able to move forward. Having someone outside your bubble with an open perspective was so refreshing and it took a great weight off my shoulders. I am stronger and more confident in my communication because of my counsellor. She is greatly loved. "*

In order to comply with the most up to date government regulations regarding counselling we are in the process of encouraging all our counsellors to join the accredited register of counsellors. This is overseen by the Professional Standards Authority and although it is 'voluntary', it is seen as an expected hallmark of professionalism and involves a commitment to work to a code of ethics (which we were already doing). We are encouraging all our counsellors to join the register held by the Association of Christian Counsellors (A.C.C) which we are already affiliated to, although some may prefer to join the register held by the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (B.A.C.P). We are aware that some of our counsellors may not want to take this step and may see it as an appropriate time to retire. We intend to have this process completed by the end of 2018.

We also offer supervision to in-house counsellors, as well as to external counsellors and chaplains, but then on a fee paying basis. It has been good to be able to play a significant role in overseeing the quality, support and development of counselling and care outside of Reach. It has been a special privilege to offer supervision to two prison chaplains whose highly regarded and nationally awarded work in Wymott prison has led to them having one of the longest ever commissions in one place within the Salvation Army, and even attracts visits from senior officials of national agencies and government departments. It is an honour for us to be associated with this unique and distinctive work among elderly and vulnerable prisoners. The two chaplains regularly acknowledge their gratitude for this supervision.

*"Through counselling I felt my mental state had returned to normal. My counsellor was professional and focussed. This was a fantastic time of help for me. "*

## **Support**

Once again the combination of: the number of people helped, the quality of care offered and the distinctive Christian service has again only been possible because of the support provided by our Partners. These are the individuals/couples and churches who commit to regular giving, usually monthly and via standing order. Although the number of partners has again gone down slightly, this time, to 64 from 68 last year, the monthly level of giving is actually about 40% higher due to the generosity of new Partners and a few existing Partners increasing their giving. We are again especially grateful to one or two who have given very generously on an annual basis.

The invaluable and consistent support from Partners gives us a reliable financial foundation to work from each month and allows us to operate our fair donation policy which is at the heart of our highly socially inclusive service. We have 174 Friends, just up from last year's 171, these are the people and churches who are happy to be identified as generally supportive of Reach and may choose to give on an occasional basis. It is particularly heart-warming, and completes a fairly virtuous cycle, when a former client chooses to become a Partner or Friend, therefore helping others after they have been helped.

*"Thank you for providing compassionate, challenging counselling which helped us to evaluate our marriage. We are so much happier now and we have got new tools to help us stay that way, whatever may come along."*

## **Governance**

Reach is governed by a Council of Management of 4 individuals, and though small in number they bring a tremendous range of skills and depth of experience in: finance, medicine, mental health, business and management. They met four times this year.

Due to our stronger financial position we have implemented a reserve to cover up to 6 months running costs, as advised by the Charity Commission as good practice. The Council of Management will review this to ensure we have an intelligent reserve policy relevant to our situation. Discussions have begun around the issues of succession planning and up to date risk management.

## **Marketing and Fundraising**

Following on from last year's thanksgiving/pilgrimage 30km walk, we enjoyed the same magnificent route in the beautiful Derbyshire countryside concluding at the historical 'plague village' of Eyam via Chatsworth. However, this year we focussed on it being a sponsored walk. Each walker was actively encouraged to raise £200 sponsorship. The average sponsorship ended up being considerably higher and the 14 walkers will have raised well over £5000 once gift aid is taken into account. We are very grateful to all the walkers, support team and sponsors. Special thanks go to Alan Coleman (our volunteer financial administrator) who led the walk again and to Jeff Robinson who heads up our marketing and fund raising for organising the event. Our intention is for this to go towards our expected rent increase.

Work has been slower than expected on the development of our new web site and the usage of our new logo. This is due to a number of factors including: priority being given to the sponsored walk, technical difficulties and our struggle to give sufficient time to this work. We anticipate the new website going live in 2018 and the new logo and strap line being gradually rolled out throughout the year.

The strap line accompanying the logo is *'for a better life'*. This encapsulates what we believe and hope is possible for our clients, what is worked towards in counselling and what many clients tell us they experience, through coming to Reach. It remains a great privilege for us to be able to play a significant role in helping hundreds of people each year to move through depression, anxiety, hurt, loss, suffering or whatever their starting point, to help them work towards finding their *'better life'*.

*"This was a very positive, nourishing and cherished experience. It has helped me to understand myself and to grow. My counsellor is an exceptionally warm, professional and wise person. I feel blessed to have received her help. Thank you so much Reach. "*

## **Public Benefit**

Our service is open to anyone in need in the north-west who requires counselling, where we believe we have the appropriate experience and skill to help. In practice this leads to our seeing: individual adults of all ages and ethnicities as well as couples who are married, co-habiting or pre-marital. We also counsel children and young people.

Our records show a range of 19 main categories that people present as their reason for coming to see us. These include: depression, abuse, fear/panic/anxiety/stress, anger, marital problems and other relationship concerns. Through supervision and evaluation of the counselling we can maintain and develop the safety and effectiveness of our work. We pay particular attention to the numerical evaluations and comments that clients put on their final evaluation forms, which, we are glad to say, consistently highlight how people have very positively benefited from their experience with Reach.

## **Plans for the future**

We are discussing the possibility of opening a counselling venue in Sheffield next year. One of our former counsellors has relocated there and has met with a number of church leaders, in the city, all of whom are saying: there is nothing quite like the Reach model available there, and that Reach would be very welcome. This would give us 7 regular counselling venues. We remain committed to a principle of relational development and would only expect to add further counselling locations should any proposals arise from strong relational development with another individual or church/organisation. We continue to have an ear to the possible development of a venue in North Wales.

We expect to have to continue carefully managing the balance of the number of counsellors with the level of publicity, as well as the appropriate balance of employed and volunteer counsellors. We would hope to keep moving towards the aim of having at least one employed experienced counsellor at each venue, often working alongside volunteers. We also accept that this may not always be possible. We will continue to incorporate newly qualified counsellors or student counsellors when they are successful through our interviewing and recruitment process (typically 50% are successful).

We intend to go live with our new website next year, and will use this as a catalyst to encourage people to see Reach as both a counselling agency and a fundraising organisation. Following on from this we will engage with the wider church particularly to stimulate greater understanding, co-operation and support. Our very ambitious target is to achieve supporter relationships (Partners or Friends) with 20% of all Evangelical Alliance affiliated churches in the North West by 2020, our present estimate is that this would be a target of between 60 and 90 churches. We will begin to contact at least half of the Evangelical Alliance affiliated churches next year in order to hear from them and to develop relationship with them.

Our new website will also allow for greater self-service for those wanting to register for counselling and will also be designed to encourage new supporters to see supporting Reach as a relevant way of being a good neighbour in the 21st century. It will also include a section for updated information for existing supporters, to be available whenever they want to access it and hopefully creating a stronger sense of the vital collaboration between team and Partners and Friends that makes Reach possible. To this end we are considering the supporter mission statement: *“Together, every week, we are changing lives.”*

External counselling training is only likely should there be a radical review of our priorities, a suitable available trainer or developing relationship with another training agency. All of these options will be considered next year. In light of our experience of counselling individuals and couples in crisis as well as leaders from many churches and due to interest from church leaders, a pastoral care course is still being considered.

We will explore how we can further integrate the work of marketing and fundraising into day-to-day activities, so capacity can be improved and progress can be accelerated. This is in order to increase supporter recruitment and engagement, as we want to further widen our supporter base. We will also launch a legacy initiative to work towards longer term sustainability and development. Regarding any major fundraising event, we will review options on holding a further sponsored walk next year, with a different time of year or route being considered. A walk seems such a good fit for us, particularly when it has both spiritual and therapeutic pilgrimage elements to it. The vision remains alive of 30 walkers being involved each raising £200.

When the rent negotiations on our Liverpool premises are completed, we hope to make considerable improvements to the building, including: external and internal redecoration including new carpets thanks to a very generous designated offer from one of our Partners. This updating of the building, will improve the experience for all those who attend for counselling as well as the hundreds of people who pass by every day.

We are excited to be introducing our new logo and strap line *‘for a better life’*, next year, so we can present ourselves to prospective clients and supporters in a contemporary and inspiring way. We hope this will spark discussion and interest, and enable more people to find connection with Reach and to appreciate the positive work that is being done in thousands of lives and families across the Northwest through the faith, generosity, skills, availability and compassion of so many people.