



Solace

Annual Report

2005/06

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CHAIRPERSONS REPORTS

During the year Roger Male served as Chairperson of Solace for six months of the year and Geoff Anderton was acting Chairperson for the remainder. Comments from both are given here:

As Chair of Solace for six months of this financial year I can again report with pride that we achieved 100% coverage of our commitment in providing the Helpline. My thanks go to all our volunteers for their dedication, and in particular to Sarah for her determination and tenacity in ensuring the rota is fully operational. A fantastic achievement

I would also like to thank Gillian Sanderson, who became our Coordinator in May 2005. Gillian has added a great deal of 'professionalism' to our organisation, in particular the Newsletter that she produces which has proved to be a tremendous improvement in communications with our volunteers.

Although Lance did not resign until later in the year, I would like to place on record my thanks to him for the enormous amount of time which he gave to the role of both Treasurer and volunteer. He also gave me a great deal of support during my time as Coordinator and he will be greatly missed by the organisation and the callers alike.

Roger Male
Chair (June to November 2005).

Acting chairman's report

My main impressions have been that although we, as your management committee, can be pleased that the Service itself has provided 100% cover, there is a lot of hard work still to be done in many areas.

We are under-funded and have been for several years. This has meant that, although we can fund and support our day to day activities, our ability to react to and implement changes (both internally and externally driven) is severely hampered.

In two years' time the contract for the help line in South Warwickshire will be put out to competitive tender and in order to win it we will need to be in a much more organised and professional state. If we do win it, I expect that our funding will be greatly increased and among other things we will be able to rent our own premises; employ full-time staff and be able to implement changes efficiently.

Next year our THA Quality Standard will be reviewed and there is work to be done to ensure that we still meet it.

I have made representations to Warwickshire County Council Social Services Department asking for more funding. To date, nothing has been forthcoming.

Your committee has been aware for some time that there is a need for more personal contact and exchange of views between volunteers from our two Centres. We have tried to encourage this by allocating funds for social meetings; by promoting the supervision available to all our volunteers; and with on-going training. We would also like our volunteers sometimes to work in a different Centre.

Our lack of funding and resources has resulted in many committed members of your Management Committee working many hours to keep Solace moving forward and I thank all those who have made that additional and valued effort.

On a personal note, I would like to add to Roger's comments about Lance. His work for us as Treasurer, Supporter and volunteer was invaluable and I shall miss his presence at our meetings, though perhaps his influence was strong enough for him still to be there in spirit.

I think we have done reasonably well in difficult circumstances, I've enjoyed the last six months and look forward to the challenges we face in the future. I am confident that we will achieve much in the next twelve months.

Geoff Anderton

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

The Charity Solace is a Registered Charity (No: 1099262) and is administered and managed in accordance with a Constitution by members of the Executive Committee (Trustees) who are appointed annually at an Annual General Meeting held in June each year. During the year the following served as Trustees:-

R. Male [Coopted]	Chair (July – November, 2005)
G. Anderton	Acting Chair (December, 2005– April 2006)
L. Evans	Treasurer (Resigned March 2006)
V. West	Secretary (Resigned February 2006)
M. Baker	
R. Cansell	
D. Nunn [Co-opted]	
K. Rowlands	
S. Rashleigh	
S. Tunney	

The Trustees are assisted in their role by two part-time paid employees:

Gillian Sanderson	Coordinator (Appointed May 2005) [18hours per week]
Roger Male	Administrator [6 hours per week]

Solace is a Mental Health Helpline for South Warwickshire, funded by Warwickshire County Council Social Services and South Warwickshire Primary Care Trust.

It is also a member of the Telephone Helplines Association and the Mental Health Helplines Partnership.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Management Committee has met on 6 occasions during the year. Apart from receiving reports on the on-going operation of the Service it has given considerable thought to issues arising from the use of some Operational Policies. It was felt it might be helpful to bring in a Consultant to help us look at how the issues raised might be resolved and how our policies might be enhanced in the light of current thinking in the Mental Health Services. Unfortunately the costs in the region of £3500 were felt to be prohibitive.

The current Code of Conduct used by all volunteers has been revised and changes made to the Consulting Panel and the way it operates. Work has also been undertaken on updating the Procedure Manual and this should be completed during the next 12 months.

There is an established Book Club resource at the Leamington branch and during the year a similar resource has been set up at Stratford. Additional Mental health related books, videos etc will be added during the next year.

Policies relating to Data Protection and CRB requirements have been considered and further work on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures carried out.

A hot topic of debate in ours and other organisations is the question of 'Empowerment of Callers'. We are currently looking at what training is available which might help volunteers identify when a more pro-active approach might be appropriate and how to help callers reduce the length of time they spend on the phone. The Committee intend to do some more work on this complex issue and produce suitable additions for the Solace guidelines.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

“To work for the assistance of persons who are suffering from mental health problems, and their carers, by providing a service to enable such persons to receive help and support in times of depression, stress and anxiety.”
(Constitution Paragraph C)

These objectives are met by providing an 'out of hours' telephone helpline which offers emotional support and care to people suffering from mental health problems, and their carers, in the South Warwickshire area. Solace operates from 7.00pm to 1.00am, seven days a week, 365 days a year. It is operated almost entirely by volunteers.

Solace supports its volunteers by issuing regular newsletters, holding on-going training events and supervision, Supporters' meetings and Social Events. Management Committee Meetings also take place every 2 months: these meetings deal with the overall management and development of the service and may also discuss concerns or suggestions raised by volunteers.

ACHIEVEMENTS & PERFORMANCE

VOLUNTEERS : RECRUITMENT; TRAINING & ONGOING SUPPORT

We are continually attempting to increase our volunteer base in order to provide a full, reliable service and meet the demand from callers. Two recruitment campaigns are held in the Summer and Spring of each year mainly through advertisements in the Local Press and assistance of the Leamington and Stratford Volunteer Services.

In total 17 new volunteers have been recruited and trained this year.

INITIAL TRAINING:

Two sessions were held in October 2005 and March 2006. These were headed up by Geoff with excellent input from several of the volunteers, especially with the role plays which always prove to be extremely helpful. Comments from the new volunteers include the following:-

“what a so very refreshingly ‘real’ organisation over brimming with compassion and integrity you are!”

“Overall, an excellent course, well structured, relevant and interesting content delivered in an easily accessible manner.”

“This has been a great experience.

Informative, useful, encouraging and fun! Well done!”

Our thanks go to Geoff and the Team for such excellent training.

SUPERVISION:

The generous donation from Mr. Straub has meant we were able to set up regular Supervision sessions for all our volunteers with Doug who is a qualified supervisor who supports volunteer workers in numerous organisations including Myton Hospice and Safeline. Over 20 volunteers have so far been involved in the groups. We would like to record our thanks to Doug for the support he has provided and also Caroline who was instrumental in setting up the groups. Some comments from participants follow:

“I personally enjoyed the supervision session with Doug very much and found it of great benefit to discuss our different viewpoints in a relaxed, non-threatening atmosphere.”

“I found the supervision a worthwhile exercise and should be available to all volunteers. It allows the opportunity to share experiences and helps towards feeling part of a team” rather than as individuals.

“An invaluable opportunity to share thoughts and feelings with fellow volunteers, I found it comforting to realise that I wasn't alone. Provided insight into other peoples perceptions and experiences. Overall a surprisingly helpful event, when is the next one scheduled!!”

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS!

We currently have 30 active volunteers.

Our thanks go to all the volunteers who have provided over 3000 hours of unpaid work as well as tremendous support and encouragement to all our callers.

PERFORMANCE

Solace has continued to provide excellent 'out of hours' telephone support throughout the year to supplement the professional service of the South Warwickshire Primary Care Trust and Warwickshire Social Services. Once again over the Christmas period, lines were open for all of the available sessions.

We have provided 100% cover on both evening and late shifts.

Our success in achieving these figures, with an entirely voluntary staff, has been largely due to the magnificent efforts of Sarah and Maggie, the centre managers, in co-ordinating the Rota duties. A tremendous achievement – thank you!

While the recruitment of volunteers will continue, we urgently need the provision of a third telephone line in order to expand our service and make the best use of our volunteer base. Whilst this third line has been approved in principle by the PCT as yet no progress has been made in its provision or its location at Park House. This now needs urgent attention if we are to continue to provide the quality of service our callers have come to expect.

We have also agreed to re-introduce the LINK service which entails contacting people within 7 days of discharge from hospital and will be one of a few uses we will be able to put the third line to in the Leamington Office.

PARTNERSHIP

The Telephone Helplines Association (THA) & Mental Health Helplines Partnership has enabled us to continue to receive a discounted tariff for the phone lines and to operate a Broadband connection for internet access, emails etc which has improved our communication capabilities.

During the year we signed up to the Warwickshire COMPACT agreement which seeks to strengthen relations between voluntary and community organisations and public agencies.

The Leamington and Stratford branches of the CVS have continued to give us valuable support in many areas such as recruitment, technical advice and more recently training for Trustees.

We have continued to work closely with Springfield Mind and Leamington Mind.

Warwickshire Social Services and the SWPCT, as before, provided our core running costs and we are most grateful for their support. The Service Level Agreement previously agreed has been renewed for a further three years. This will provide our core funding until March 2009.

We would like to thank Warwickshire Social Services for a Capital allocation of £10,000 received during the year. This has enabled us to purchase new computers and other equipment for both the Leamington and Stratford Offices. We hope this will enable better communication between the two centres and look toward future developments of our service.

(See page 16)

STATISTICS (2005 figures in Brackets)

How Many Calls?

In 2005-6 324,000 calls were attempted to the Solace Helpline, 2.5 times as many as last year.

As a comparison with last year the 14 most prolific callers made 302,000 (110,000) attempted calls.

In 2005-6 we answered 4717 (4,471) calls, a 5% increase on last year.

There has been a significant fall in the number of calls received by male callers. 1556 (1929) this year which is a 20% fall

The number of calls answered to females has increased to 3161 (2542), an increase of 24%

How Many People?

338 people attempted to call us during the year.

In 2005-6 we spoke to 76 (96) different people, out of the 338 (308) who attempted to call us. This means we spoke to 20 fewer people over the year, even though 30 more people tried to call us.

Males 29 (33) and females 47 (63)

When Were The Calls Made?

Out of the 324,000 calls made only 2500 (1%) were made out of our service hours.

168,000 (52%) were made during the evening shift, and 150,000 (47%) during the late shift. This represents a 10% shift toward evening calls since last year.

The remainder, 29% of calls came from 30 different locations across the country.

How Long Did The Calls Last

In order to calculate a meaningful figure for this, the calls which went to the answer phone service have been disregarded.

The answered calls lasted an average of 27minutes (21).

COMMENTS:

It is apparent that Solace needs substantial additional resources if we are to extend our service to all those people who tried and failed to get through last year. An additional phone line is essential, as is the necessary funding to maintain our recruitment and training process. An additional room is urgently needed for the Leamington Office for the third line. It is also clear that an increase in paid employee time is needed to maintain, develop and expand the service we already offer. This should be at least the equivalent of a full-time post.

We have been giving careful thought as to how to help our most prolific and frequent callers. The use of a third line may help us here in that arranging to ring these callers ourselves will free up the lines for other callers to get through and will enable us to manage these calls better. The question of empowerment of callers had also been regularly on our Committee Agenda. (See Looking to the Future on page 16 for further details)

Because of the quality of our service other organisations e.g. Safeline Warwick have been referring a few people to our helpline. These tend to be some of the more demanding of our callers in terms of time and commitment but have been very worthwhile in view of the positive feedback we have received. The following are a few quotations from our callers:-

"Without Solace Line I don't know where I'd be. . . .you've all been there for good or bad times . . .I appreciate everything you all do to support me."

"U are all one in a million"

"...the response I received from the lady at Solace was really wonderful, although, I was only on briefly, my choice. She was so different and caring. . . . I just wanted to say thank you as without this support I may have taken yet another overdose, which I didn't and haven't since. . . ."

Appreciation from our callers takes many forms. We receive many letters of thanks, poems and occasional gifts. E.g. one caller has spent many hours creating cross-stitch pictures which brighten up our working space. A picture of the most recent one is shown here:



And this is a poem received during the year:

*Solace is a helpline,
They are there from 7—1.
Solace are there for everyone
They are nice people.
They listen & don't hesitate.
Giving you time to talk whats on your mind,
They are the most understanding
Without this helpline where would people be.
These wonderful people, who work on Solace line,
God chose them to be wonderful friends
So don't be scared or alone
Don't be afraid, pick up the phone
They are the best beyond compare
Always showing they really care
God Bless you all!*

FINANCIAL REVIEW

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR 2005/6

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POLICY ON RESERVES:

The Policy of Solace is to hold at least 6 months operational costs on Reserve in unrestricted funds in line with the advice of the Charity Commissioners. Unrestricted funds are currently £9209.

PRINCIPAL FUNDING SOURCES:

Warwickshire Social Services and the South Warwickshire Primary Care Trust, provide our core running costs. This takes the form of a grant from Warwickshire Social Service and payment in kind from the P.C.T. with the provision of accommodation at both Leamington and Stratford and office stationary and telephone costs. In addition we have received a Capital allocation of £10,000 from Warwickshire Social Services the year.

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS

01.04.05 to 31.03.06

<u>RECEIPTS</u>	<u>UNRESTRICTED FUNDS</u>	<u>RESTRICTED FUNDS</u>	<u>ENDOWMENT FUNDS</u>	<u>TOTAL FUNDS</u>	<u>LAST YEAR</u>
Donations & Grants	15, 427	10,000		25,427	18,898
Investment Income	658			658	461
Other Receipts					125
Sub-total:	16,085	10,000		26,085	19,484
<u>PAYMENTS</u>					
Generating Funds					325
Support Costs	1791			1791	1922
Management & Admin	15812			15812	9866
Other Payments					1050
Sub-total	17603		17603	17603	13163
ASSET & INVESTMENT PURCHASES		4,001		4001	
Total Payments	17603	4001		21604	13163
Net receipts/ (payments)	(1518)	5999		4481	6321
Transfers between funds					
Cash Funds last year end	14446			14446	8125
Cash funds this year end	12928	5999		18927	14446
STATEMENT OF ASSETS & LIABILITIES AT END OF PERIOD					
		UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	RESTRICTED FUNDS	ENDOWMENT FUNDS	
CASH FUNDS	Lloyds TSB Standard Life Cash	(1951) 14823 56	5999	0	
Total cash Funds		12928	5999	0	

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

We will provide training to look at issues relating to the length of calls and how to end calls safely and encourage our volunteers to take advantage of the training provided by Social Services Workforce Development Service e.g. 'Working with people who self-harm'

Opportunities for ongoing supervision will be provided to all our volunteers.

A move to new premises at Stratford Hospital is imminent and will enable us to provide more comfortable working conditions for our volunteers as well as enhancing our communications with the provision of new equipment.

Capital Funding for 2006/7 has been applied for to enable us to produce a training video and other resources which will enhance our service.

The Website was revamped during the year thanks to the generosity again of Garry Butcher. A Forum for messages of support for users of our service has been included and apart from a few teething problems has been well used by a small number of people to date. We are looking at the provision of other means of communication such as e-mail and texting and feel this may be an area that could be developed in an increasingly technological age. It is also an area where new volunteers could be recruited.

The Management Committee have agreed to meet for specific "Away Days" (Planning Days) to consider pertinent issues together. The first of these days will be held in September and will focus on the issue of "Empowerment".

A FINAL WORD FROM THE CO-ORDINATOR:

This is the first Annual Report I have been responsible for producing. It is a pleasure to do so for an organisation which cares so much about the callers who ring the Helpline. I know you make a vast difference to their lives and I am sure they would want me to place on record their thanks to you for your dedication, commitment and support. I would also like to place on record my own thanks to Roger for his help and encouragement since my appointment and to members of the Management Committee and other volunteers for their support over the last year. I look forward to working with you during the next 12 months!

Gillian Sanderson