

Strategic Plan
(2010 - 2015)

“we’re listening”

The Freedom to Grow

New Life Counselling Strategic Plan 2010/2015



New Life Counselling is a voluntary counselling organisation committed to supporting the emotional health and wellbeing needs of its clients through the provision of counselling and therapeutic services.



Introduction

Background to the Organisation

Having operated in Belfast since 1993, New Life Counselling continues to extend its service provision so those requiring counselling support can access these.

At the present time New Life Counselling offers one-to-one counselling services for children, young people, adults and families through our offices at 25 Ardoyne Road and Unit 20 North City Business Centre Duncairn Gardens as well as within 12 outreach centres across the city. In addition, New Life Counselling provides therapeutic group work programmes in conjunction with existing youth and community groups and newly formed groups who meet for weekly support.

New Life Counselling provides these services in relation to a wide range of issues. Typically referrals are received from those affected by stress, anxiety, depression, relationship breakdown, drug / alcohol issues, bullying, self harming and suicidal ideation. Our therapists have specific knowledge in dealing with these issues and seek to support the client using a range of therapeutic processes. The staff team includes art, drama, music and play therapists as well as psychodrama therapists. This range provides the capacity for the organisation to work with a wide variety of clients.

New Life Counselling seeks to provide services free of charge to those in the community who need them. This is achieved by fundraising

from a range of sources but relies heavily upon financial support from statutory agencies and for this we are very grateful. This support ensures that the availability of counselling services is not dependent on the financial means of the individual and that we can contribute to addressing health inequalities.

New Life Counselling is committed to continuing to deliver these critical services. We have also expanded service provision by developing our work in the field of trauma (with financial support from Peace III), piloting work with older people, developing our team of volunteer counsellors and providing services in post primary schools across the majority of the province on behalf of the Department of Education's Independent Counselling Service for Schools.

The years ahead will be challenging, but we believe that as a well positioned, enthusiastic and committed organisation we will meet these challenges and in doing so will be able to meet the emotional needs of our clients through the delivery of counselling and therapeutic services.

Achievements

In the five years covered by our last strategic plan, New Life Counselling has made significant moves forward. This has been possible due to the firm foundations upon which the organisation has been built. The relationships already formed with our client group, key stakeholders, statutory bodies and funders have enabled us to be in touch with the changing needs in which we have operated and to maintain a secure financial base for our work.

These achievements have included:

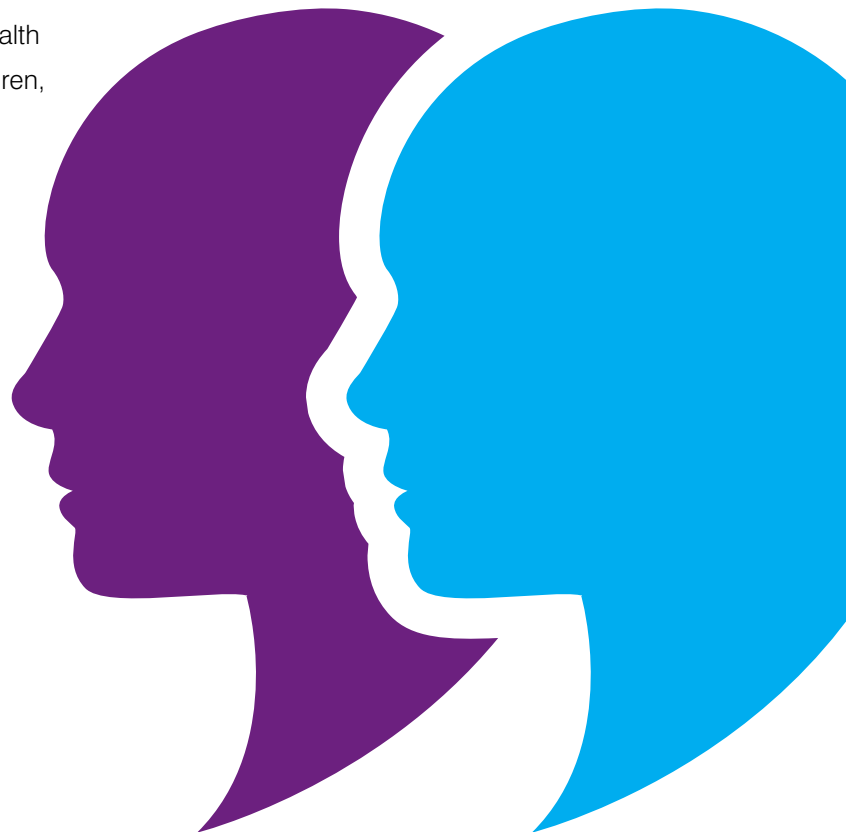
- Securing of the Department of Education tender to deliver counselling services in 187 post primary schools across Northern Ireland
- Achieving ISO 9001 certification
- Continued provision of free counselling services to some of the most disadvantaged communities in Northern Ireland
- Being the only community-based counselling organisation in North Belfast offering a professional service for children, young people, adults and families
- Securing of funding to extend and upgrade our Ardoyne Road facilities and the securing of a lease on a second subsidiary office at Duncairn Gardens
- Retained organisational membership of BACP and our record of award-winning, safe and ethical practice
- Continued diversification of the therapy orientations available
- Successfully managed a substantial organisational change and expansion process
- Building collaborative working relationships with a wide range of stakeholders
- Extensive governance review undertaken with assistance from NICVA to ensure best practice in organisational governance.
- Implementation of a staff handbook and best practice HR policies



Changing Public Policy Context

In developing this strategic plan for 2010-2015 New Life Counselling has been very conscious of the changing public policy context and the extent that the organisation is helping to deliver important Government priorities. Some of the key public policy developments we need to take account of in developing and delivering our services are as follows:

- Bamford Review of mental health
- Promoting Mental Health Strategy
- Mental Health Service framework
- Suicide Implementation Strategy
- Investing for Health
- Psychological Therapy Strategy
- Victims' Strategy
- UN Convention of Rights of the Child
- Priorities for Youth (in development)
- European Youth Policy on mental health
- Young People's Strategy – Our Children, Our Young People, Our Pledge
- Safeguarding Children
- PBNI and young offenders policy
- Domestic violence Strategy
- Drug and Alcohol strategy
- Bill of Rights
- Section 75 – Equality, discrimination & diversity
- Disability strategy
- Statutory Regulation of Counsellors
- Review of Public Administration (RPA)



Changing External Environment

In developing this strategic plan for 2010-2015 New Life Counselling has identified the following in terms of some of the changing societal needs and trends which we will be aware of in terms of developing and delivering our services:

Families

Families are becoming increasingly diverse. More children are living in families where the parents are divorced or separated; and/or where at least one of the adults is not their parent.

Children

Children and young people are increasingly communicating using social networking and mobile technologies. Children of a younger age are likely to be exposed to alcohol and/or drugs both within and outside of the family.

Suicide

There has been a growing awareness of the issue of suicides particularly amongst young people in Northern Ireland, and some of the preventative and early intervention work that is required to tackle this issue.

Diversity

Northern Ireland is becoming an increasingly diverse society with an increase in minority ethnic groups, where English is often a second or even third language.

Sexual identity

There is a growing openness in Northern Ireland around issues of sexual identity, while homophobia still remains a significant problem.

Civil Conflict

Northern Ireland has made major strides

towards building a shared cohesive society. Many people are still struggling to deal with the trauma that they experienced during years of violent conflict. We are also increasingly experiencing the effects of trans-generational trauma.

Education

There have been important changes to the educational entitlement/curriculum which gives greater recognition to personal development. There has been increasing recognition of the crucial value of having counselling available to all school students.

Economy

Economic difficulties have resulted in job losses and the need to respond to the needs of people who are facing losing their job. It is also likely to mean that public sector funding will be much more restricted in future.

Regulation

The need for accreditation and regulation of counselling has been increasingly recognised.

Stigma

While for some people there remains a stigma attached to counselling and mental health services, there is an increasing demand for good quality confidential counselling and therapeutic support services when they need them.

Introduction to the Plan

Within the context of the issues set out above the Board and staff of New Life Counselling have developed their strategic plan for 2010-15. In developing this Strategic Plan New Life Counselling has consulted widely with our partners and key stakeholders.

The Strategic Plan for 2010-15 represents some changes in emphasis in the organisation's work. Whilst it seeks to continue to deliver the core community counselling services in Belfast upon which it has built its reputation, it also seeks to be aware of our responsibility in contributing to the wider agenda for the promotion of emotional health and wellbeing.

To guide us in this we have set out seven long term aims for this period and within each a series of priorities for action which will determine how we progress our work and the organisational development over the next five years.

Mission

To support people to achieve their personal potential through professional counselling and therapeutic services.

Vision

Our vision of the future is one where society actively promotes positive emotional health and wellbeing, gives everyone the freedom to grow and provides access to excellent counselling and therapeutic support services when they are needed.



Values

Respect

The rights, needs and aspirations of those we work with are central to everything we do. Every human being has the right to be treated with respect and dignity. We will provide a safe, inclusive, nurturing and confidential environment for clients, staff and volunteers.

Quality

Everyone has the right to receive services that are excellent and meet their needs. We will ensure all our services and activities are of a consistently high standard and will strive for continuous improvement.

Responsive

The needs of the community, those we work with, and what is considered best practice, are continually changing. It is vitally important that services reflect these changes. We will constantly reflect on our work and the needs of clients and develop new services and approaches.

Integrity

We will demonstrate the highest standards of professionalism, honesty and openness in all aspects of our work. We will consistently do what we say we will, be transparent in our communications and promote professional ethical standards.

Long-Term Aims

1. Developing Services

To plan and develop services in response to unmet needs and opportunities across Northern Ireland.

2. Quality

To ensure the quality of all aspects of New Life Counselling's work is of the highest standard and continuously improves.

3. Research and Advocacy

To carry out and commission appropriate research to further the mission of New Life Counselling and influence relevant public policy and practice.

4. Communications

To become well-known by the public and communicate effectively with all New Life Counselling's external and internal stakeholders.

5. Human Resources

To ensure that New Life Counselling has the personnel to achieve its aims and objectives and that they are effectively managed, supported and given the opportunity to develop.

6. Financial & Physical Resources

To ensure New Life Counselling has the financial and physical resources it requires to achieve its aims and objectives and that these are efficiently and effectively managed.

7. Governance

To ensure the governance of New Life Counselling complies with the requirements of the law and good practice and continuously improves.

Priorities For Change (2010-15)

Developing Services

Aim 1: To plan and develop services in response to unmet needs and opportunities across Northern Ireland

Priorities for Change (2010-15):

- Regularly review and research relevant needs in Northern Ireland, to identify further unmet needs and opportunities for the provision of services
- Identify, and take advantage of, opportunities to tender for the provision of counselling and other relevant services
- Develop and expand group work services
- Develop prevention and early intervention work
- Further develop appropriate partnerships to expand therapeutic services

Quality

Aim 2: To ensure the quality of all aspects of New Life Counselling's work is of the highest standard and continuously improves

Priorities for Change (2010-15):

- Maintain ISO 9001 quality assurance system to ensure all services are provided to a consistently high standard
- Ensure there are appropriate processes for regular internal reflection and review of all services in order to promote continuous improvement
- Develop, implement and review a stakeholder involvement/participation strategy

- Develop accessibility to services by under-represented groups
- Effectively measure and report on outputs and outcomes/benefits for clients

Research and Advocacy

Aim 3: To carry out and commission appropriate research to further the mission of New Life Counselling and influence relevant public policy and practice

Priorities for Change (2010-15):

- Promote evidence-based practice through the implementation of a research strategy
- Keep up-to-date with the international literature on effectiveness and evidence-based practice
- Develop, implement and review a strategy for evaluating all major aspects of the organisation's activities
- Contribute to the development of relevant public policy
- Collaborate with other relevant organisations to have a stronger campaigning voice

Communications

Aim 4: To become well-known and communicate effectively with all external and internal stakeholders

Priorities for Change (2010-15):

- Ensure there is an effective strategy for promotion and marketing to the public
- Ensure effective communication with all external stakeholders

- Develop, implement and review an ICT strategy and use appropriate technologies to promote effective internal and external communications
- Develop, implement and review an internal communications strategy
- Promote the positive value of counselling through effective public education

Human Resources

Aim 5: To ensure that New Life Counselling has the personnel to achieve its aims and objectives and that they are effectively managed, supported and given the opportunity to develop

Priorities for Change (2010-15):

- Achieve Investors in People status / accreditation
- Ensure the organisation has the right staff and in the right roles to enable it to achieve its aims and objectives
- Ensure all staff receive the induction, support, recognition, supervision and appraisal required to carry out their roles effectively
- Promote effective teamwork
- Ensure that the training and development needs of all staff and the organisation are regularly assessed and effectively addressed
- Ensure staff are appropriately accredited and ensure staff are effectively consulted on issues that affect them
- Ensure the appropriate terms & conditions of employment and human resource policies and procedures are in place to comply with the requirements of the law and good practice

- Promote and support self-care amongst staff
- Achieve Investors in Volunteering status / accreditation

Financial & Physical Resources

Aim 6: To ensure New Life Counselling has the financial and physical resources it requires to achieve its aims and objectives and these are efficiently and effectively managed

Priorities for Change (2010-15):

- Ensure financial resources are effectively planned, managed, controlled and reported on
- Ensure effective reporting to all funders and contractors
- Promote efficiency and value-for-money in all aspects of the organisation's work
- Ensure the organisation has the premises and other physical assets to achieve its aims and objectives and that these are effectively and efficiently managed
- Continue to improve the organisation's ability to tender for public contracts and negotiate full cost recovery in relation to services
- Maximise income from grants from statutory bodies, charitable trusts, private companies and foundations
- Maximise income from grants from statutory bodies, charitable trusts/ foundations corporates, individuals, groups and events
- Maximise net income from social economy trading
- Encourage and facilitate schools to fundraise for New Life Counselling

Governance

Aim 7: To ensure the governance of New Life Counselling complies with the requirements of the law and good practice and continuously improve.

Priorities for Change (2010-15):

Ensure the Board has processes in place to be appropriately aware of what is going on in the organisation

- Ensure New Life Counselling is compliant with the requirements of company and charity law and good governance practice
- Ensure the Board has the skills and knowledge it needs to govern effectively
- Ensure New Life Counselling has a structure that is fit for purpose
- Ensure New Life Counselling has strategic and operational plans to guide the development of the work and progress is regularly monitored
- Ensure the Board effectively holds the Chief Executive accountable and provides appropriate support and guidance
- Ensure the Board fulfils its role as a good employer of all staff
- Ensure financial control and internal and external audit procedures are in place to effectively protect the organisation against theft and fraud
- Ensure New Life Counselling effectively assesses and manages risk
- Ensure New Life Counselling fulfils its Health & Safety and Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults responsibilities
- Ensure New Life Counselling is appropriately accountable to its stakeholders

New Life Counselling aims to become well-known and communicate effectively with all external and internal stakeholders





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