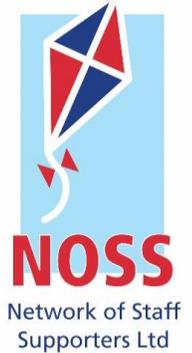


# Network of Staff Supporters Ltd (NOSS)

## Annual Report: September 2017 to August 2018



This is the annual report of **The Network of Staff Supporters Ltd** (NOSS). The report is for the period from September 2017 to August 2018 for our **contract holders, associates, service users and other stakeholders**.

### NOSS Mission Statement

The mission statement underpins the ethos of NOSS.

*We provide wellbeing services including counselling, mediation and training to all sectors of the community and do so in accordance to the relevant professional standards. We are committed to the promotion of ethical, confidential, open, honest and transparent communications that not only promotes the emotional health, wellbeing and harmony of all people who in anyway access our services or seek our help but ensure that we conduct all aspects of our business in accordance with the law and with integrity and consistency.*

Our aim is for an organisation's workforce to be happy to go to work, confident they are supported and working in a culture that values the wellbeing, health and motivation of the workforce with the aim that the organisation continues to be successful. **Healthy, Happy and 'Here'**.

The company provides counselling, mediation, wellbeing and training services - this report relates solely to the **counselling and psychotherapy service**, though for context, the overview of NOSS is for the whole company.

### 1. Overview of NOSS: 2017-2018

As another successful year of business draws to a close, we are pleased to report that in the last 12 months we have successfully onboarded and further developed the business of 3 new contracts/framework opportunities as well as successfully delivering our independent conflict resolution (mediation) support service and wellbeing training, aligned to the trends and issues identified through our service delivery reporting mechanisms and contract management reviews for contract holders.

Additionally, we have seen an increased requirement for

- ✓ bespoke lunch-and-learn drop-ins,
- ✓ topical workshops to support the holding or delivery of '**difficult conversations**' for managers and colleagues alike in relation to mental health of team members, or '**stress awareness for managers and staff**' to identify stressors colleagues & signpost or raise awareness of support available inhouse or through 3<sup>rd</sup> party organisations or '**overcoming feelings of 'guilt' for working parents**' – a new contributory factor in stress in the workplace
- ✓ NOSS supporting wellbeing sessions delivered by organisations, as their suppliers of counselling or additional employee assistance support services

This provides evidence of, and continues to embed, the strong working relationships we have with contracting organisations as well as the growing awareness that organisations and the nation have, as a whole, developed around mental health and wellbeing; both in terms of supporting the '*it is ok to talk about it*' culture as well as delivering a more pro-active approach to mental health and resilience.

The increase in awareness extends itself to organisations recognising that employees are generally more stressed at the moment – the expectations being 'do more with less, do it quickly and be innovative'; managers are more keenly aware that if they lose staff within their teams, the organisation may not replace them so its even more important to look after the staff they have.

We continue to offer a range of services at NOSS:

- therapeutic counselling provision – widening our range of therapies on offer in response to contract and client need
- crisis support
- telephone and other alternative solutions to deliver our counselling, responding to the needs of the clients we support
- conflict resolution through mediation
- training on a range of mental health support initiatives
- wellbeing and health awareness initiatives/promotional activity
- life and business coaching
- independent investigations

We are delighted that this year we have been able to join the UK Employee Assistance Programme Association (UK EAPA) to reflect the wider range of service and delivery options available through NOSS and supports alignment of their respective approaches to best practice and the promotion of counselling availability within the workplace.

We look forward to continued success in the forthcoming years through our ongoing implementation of new ways of working with both clients and the organisations we support as well as continued developments of existing service provision and in the delivery tools we adopt.

## 2. Service Delivery

Once again, we have had an extremely busy year consolidating our existing counselling provision and have seen continued growth in our conflict resolution service (independent mediation) and wellbeing support/training.

We have seen a 10% increase in demand for our counselling provision during this reporting period and a rise in training and wellbeing workshops delivery aligned to the trends data which is an output of our reporting process. Our training and wellbeing workshops are welcomed by the organisations we support and in particular the employees who attend and contribute to the sessions; we know this based on the positive feedback scores we receive from workshop evaluation and direct feedback from commissioning officers. Our attendance at wellbeing events, in support of the organisations, has received anecdotally positive feedback as well as direct, face-to-face positive comments and compliments. The increase in demand reflects national trends and the issues reported to us and is significant in times of budgetary pressures for organisations.

### Response Times for Counselling Provision

We continue to ensure our response times meets Key Performance (KPI) targets - a typical KPI - the first appointment delivered within 7 working days remains a key priority for NOSS. Wherever possible we ensure that we see clients sooner than 7 working days, and according to the contract specification. Where possible and we have availability, they are given appointments much quicker including same day or next day where this is convenient for them. We report initial appointment to first counseling session as part of our contract management reporting mechanism. Our reports are confidential, anonymous and are exception based e.g. we only report the number of appointments that fall outside the KPI (numbers receiving counseling is reported in other ways). Higher rates of referral during peak times have been managed successfully through recruitment and our business contingency/flexible operating model.

The reason for first appointments falling outside the KPI remain -

- Client/service user not accepting the first offer of appointment
- Availability of client limited due to work, home commitments or other such as child care issues

- Wanting a specific counsellor, time or location other than or exceeding the contract specification requirements
- Failing to attend appointments or short notice cancellations even though appointments are only offered at mutually agreed times/locations. Clients are asked to give us as much notice as possible when cancelling appointments, and at least 24 hours, allowing us to offer the session to another person
- Changes to the service requirements beyond our control / not within the agreed specification and we have worked positively with the commissioner to ensure suitable alternatives are offered and made available.

Our focus is firmly on continued consolidation and growth of our core counselling service, expansion of our resources to accommodate the growing call on both our counselling and mediation service provision and the provision of support services aligned to a) national initiatives as well as b) general ongoing awareness and promotion. We do this with a continued focus on our core principles and professional ethics to ensure maintenance of our professional standing and accreditation.

Our continued **thanks**, as always, go to:

- ★ all our valued counsellors and associate advisers – both new and longstanding - who are extremely professional and consistently deliver a service that we are extremely proud of: *discrete, ethical and confidential and bound by the **BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions** or equivalent of their own professional body.*
- ★ our hard-working, yet often unseen, staff at our Head Office who are professional, experienced and patient with all our service users (contract managers and clients) and often go above and beyond their own business support remit to ensure a client/service user is supported. As the first point of contact in a referral, they are often able to effectively reassure the service user and explain the counselling process, answering any questions and allaying any fears or concerns about counselling even before an appointment is made. We know this personal contact makes a very positive difference to our service users from the feedback we receive during those conversations or from indirect feedback at the first counselling session. We continue to review how we operate this service and offer best value to organisations and clients alike.

### 3. Clinical Responsibility

NOSS Clinicians and Associates are required to work within the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's **Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions** and the **Professional Conduct Procedure**; our NOSS associate recruits are expected to work closely with us to ensure they fulfil the requirements of BACP standards. This ensures that we are able to evidence and demonstrate confidentiality, professional and ethical best practice throughout our network.

It is a mandatory requirement of our recruitment process that all our counsellors, associates or specialists are accredited, eligible or working towards accreditation to their relevant professional standard (such as BACP, BABCP, BPS, UKCP), that they maintain full professional indemnity and public liability insurance and ensure that they commit to and evidence the CPD requirements of their professional body including professional clinical supervision of their practice.

### 4. Service Evaluation

We conduct monthly, quarterly and annual contract management reviews and seek regular associate / counsellor feedback. We also promote the use of our online feedback forms for all service users to support our continuous improvement cycle – *review, evaluate, action, implement*. We continue to promote the value to us of receiving suggestions and comments or compliments; though due to the appropriately anonymous nature of client feedback this element is more difficult to capture and continues to be our focus to ensure a broad reach of evaluation tools are deployed and that we are able to evaluate and improve all our service areas. One of the main methods of receiving client

feedback is verbally when Head Office staff are talking to them on the telephone – this is anonymously captured and fed back.

All the responses we receive, including any negative comments, are reviewed by one of our senior team and, unless the response is marked as anonymous, we also share the feedback with the counsellor concerned – we know this is appreciated by our associate colleagues and reinforces our commitment to them in sharing compliments/feedback and good practice.

In this way, we use feedback to inform and improve our existing practices and service delivery.

In the main the feedback is positive and complimentary; we are happy to report only rare occurrences of negative / neutral feedback. We have used this feedback to make further improvements to our service offering or ensure we are able to explain why it is not possible to change process. Our Associate Newsletter has continued to be circulated on a regular basis, enabling us to communicate news and updates with all our remote working colleagues; we also use our face-to-face informal sessions to personally relate news and comments. This year we are pleased to report the production and circulation of our first edition of Contract Holder News. With so many things for us all to consider – not least in terms of the revised requirements for Data Protection and GDPR - it has been timely that we have been able to produce this for our organisational contacts.

## 5. Contract Management Reporting

Once again, this year, we have seen an increase in the demand for the service to demonstrate efficacy of counselling in the workplace to ensure that staff either stay in work or have reduced time absent from work. Through our reporting mechanisms confidentiality and anonymity is always maintained, reports (generally monthly) are used for example; to demonstrate the numbers accessing service, number of sessions delivered, status of in/ out of work, primary and secondary referring issues, trends and emerging issues, which are used to support an organisation's ability to effectively manage and support the wellbeing and emotional needs of its workforce.

## 6. Highlights

- Text app technology for first appointment or other non-urgent communications acknowledgement has been a success and we continue to use it where practical.
- Restructuring of our telephone answering channels and extension of our personal answering service provision – to enhance the services users experience and make our overall processes more effective and efficient – has continued to be a success.
- Associate and Contract News has allowed us to reach and communicate with all our colleagues on a regular basis
- UK EAPA membership, joined up thinking with BACP framework and our service delivery

## 7. Future Focus and Next Steps

- New integrated customer management system
- e-signature technology to reduce use of paper documentation where appropriate and applicable
- Secure portal technology for both client/organisation and associates

For questions about this report please contact [claire@noss.uk.com](mailto:claire@noss.uk.com)

References [http://www.bacp.co.uk/ethical\\_framework/](http://www.bacp.co.uk/ethical_framework/)