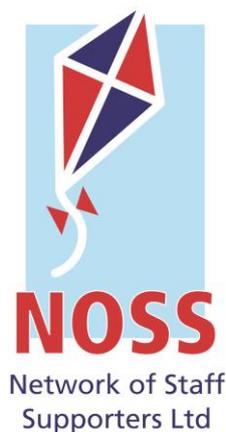


Network of Staff Supporters Ltd (NOSS)

Annual Report September 2018 to August 2019.



This is the annual report of The Network of Staff Supporters Ltd (NOSS). The report is for the period from September 2018 to August 2019 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.

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 2018-2019

As another successful year of business draws to a close, we are pleased to report that in the last 12 months we have successfully developed the business with the additional of 6 new contracts/framework opportunities as well as successfully increased by 25% delivery independent conflict resolution (mediation) and wellbeing training, aligned to the trends and issues identified through our service delivery reporting mechanisms and importantly contract management reviews in partnership with our contract holders.

Specifically, we have seen an increased requirement for

- bespoke lunch-and-learn awareness sessions – 30 to 40 minutes in the workplace with access to the specialist after the session delivering on topics such as menopause, managing conflict and bereavement

- workshops as opposed to longer training courses for stress and resilience in particular. We ensure our workshops include activity and discussion and have been developed to suit workplace demands following feedback from staff and commissioners
- assessments related to more complex clients
- support for staff in organisations that are under special scrutiny and staff supported through the justice process

Year on year the awareness from organisations, and staff about mental health continues to increase. Workplace stress as an issue and related to changes in the workplace, restructures, staff shortages and relationship breakdown continues to be reported for staff attending counselling sessions.

We continue to recognise the importance of close effective working relationships with our partners such as Occupational Health team staff, HR and contract holders and the benefits that the working relationships have for staff and the ability to discuss and develop innovative support solutions.

We continue to offer a range of services at NOSS

- therapeutic counselling provision – widening our range of therapies on offer in response to contract, client and therapeutic need
- increased session times outside the working day and includes early evenings and weekends
- increased support following death or serious injury
- significant increase initial contact made from clients via email (organisation and private email address)

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

New this year

- We are delighted that this year we have been awarded ‘Cyber Essentials’ accreditation following an independent assessment and supports our continued work on keeping information secure in line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations. Cyber Essentials certification is increasingly either a mandatory or ‘working towards’ requirement of tendering organisations especially in the public sector.

- The clinical Director of NOSS has been working as a member of the Counselling Skills Expert Reference Group who are working to developed competency framework for workplace counselling
- Development and introduction of an integrated client, invoicing and reporting system called iNOSS (further development will see the system able to interface with the HMRC requirements
- Increased demand, which we have been able to supply, for counselling where English is not the clients first language
- Newly designed awareness information for posters, pop up banners, leaflets which can be used as generic or organisationally specific

2. Service Delivery

NOSS has been extremely busy as we continue to consolidate our existing counselling provision and through tendering procedures, win new business. We have also seen an increase in the number of companies approaching NOSS direct to explore what support we can provide, these companies tend to be smaller companies with 100 to 200 staff, where the professionalism, flexibility and choice we can provide has proved attractive

We have seen a 20% 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 wellbeing workshops are often developed from an identified need through either feedback from clients attending counselling sessions or from the management reports we submit to our contract managers on a regular basis showing trends and highlights either issues or parts of an organisation (trend reports) so can focus on an issue or a part of an organisation.

Our close working with our contract mangers, occupational Health teams and HR has meant that we have be able to provide proactive support for teams that are undergoing significant change.

Response Times for Counselling Provision

We continue to endeavour to make contact with clients on the same day a referral where possible or the next working day taking account of weekend and bank holidays especially as more clients contact or provide us with an email address which aids response times

We provide for all clients and contract holding organisations a 24-hour, 365 day, 7 days a week telephone access – where phones are answered in person by dedicated staff.

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 counselling session as part of our contract management reporting mechanism which are confidential, anonymous and are exception based e.g. we only report the number of appointments that fall outside the KPI (numbers receiving counselling is reported in other ways).

The reasons for first appointments falling outside the KPI where specified remain -

- Client/service user not accepting the first offer of appointment
- Availability of client limited due to work, home commitments or other such as childcare issues, holidays
- 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, are given appointments cards and can be sent confirmation of appointment by email or text
- 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

Demand either higher or lower rates of referral is managed successfully through effective recruitment and our business contingency/flexible operating model. We value our counsellors highly and support them in business and clinical issues as they require.

We continue to offer our counsellor choice and opportunity, often talking to and secure emailing our counsellors daily. Where we are reviewing changes to the operational way of working – we will consult, ask for feedback, seek opinions before making changes.

Our continued thanks, as always, go to:

All our valued counsellors and associate advisers – both new and longstanding - who are extremely caring, professional and consistently deliver a service that we are extremely proud of, they are discrete, ethical and confidential and bound by the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions or equivalent of their own professional body and not least 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.

Often as the first point of contact for a referral, they are 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. This requirement is self-certified each month by all who have provided support that month.

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.

As a result of the increase of referrals made or confirmation of appointments via email we are reviewing the NOSS email footer to indicate to the recipient how to find more information on feedback, confidentiality and cancellation.

All the responses received including any negative comments, are reviewed by the 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 continues 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.

5. Service Reporting

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 but also a recognition and awareness from the workplace, be that directors, senior teams, managers, supervisors or colleagues that the increased demand in the work on staff can affect staff negatively and that there is a duty to support staff and to know how to support staff or how to access support. We do see caring and concerned occupational health and HR staff who are supporting individuals and 'going the extra mile' to do so.

Through our reporting mechanisms confidentiality and anonymity is 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, 24/7/365 telephone access to NOSS continues to enhance the service users experience and make our overall processes more effective and efficient – has continued to be a success
- Focus on timely and improved communications has allowed us to reach and communicate with all our colleagues on a regular basis
- Cyber Essentials accreditation
- Introduction of iNOSS (integrated customer management system) and the planned developments linking with HMRC increased reporting capabilities and secure access for associates are all being actively considered

7. Future Focus and Next Steps

- New integrated customer management system successfully linked in with HMRC requirements
- Secure portal technology for both client/organisation and associates
- Review business process for counsellors in administrative tasks we request of them to ensure that they continue to focus on counselling and where possible make working for NOSS as easy as possible
- Particular focus on support for SME's and the arrangements they can have in place for workplace support
- Ensure that the framework agreements we are awarded to, those with access know what support we can provide.

August 2019

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