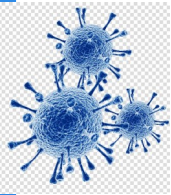




Annual Report 2020

Still open in lockdown



As I write the annual report this year, the UK, indeed the whole world has been facing a crisis greater than most of us have ever experienced.

Covid-19 has resulted in the closure of substantial areas of the economy with the 'Stay at Home' message restricting physical contact to those in the immediate household. We have all had to adapt the way we live and become used to queueing to enter food shops. A new language has developed with words such as 'shielding', 'furlough', 'Zoom', and phrases such as 'social distancing' now in regular use.

Acorn has remained open to clients throughout this period with our Centre Manager and counselling volunteers working from home and clients offered telephone rather than face to face counselling. Whilst our schools work has inevitably stopped following the closure of schools, our schools team are poised ready to return when it is possible.

It is **25 years since Acorn started**. Over that 25 years we have never stopped being available to serve people in the Worthing area. In the past year we have continued to receive feedback emphasising how valuable this service has been:

Clients say...

'I'm so grateful that this service exists and that I've been able to be helped through a really hard time'

'I want to say a big thank you to my counsellor for the professional and sensitive way she

supported me this year. I will always be grateful'

'Services like yours are vital and without your support many like myself would be in a dark place'

NHS therapist says ...

'I know from having spoken to many clients who have received counselling from Acorn, that you do a wonderful and valuable work' **(referrer of clients)**

Schools say ...

'Thank you so much, brilliant as always'

'The pupils were engaged – thought provoking topics. The presentation was clear and easy to understand'

'We have been lucky to have established a link with Acorn and hope to carry on with the lessons'

Richard Marshall, Chairman.

May 2020

See you at the

**AGM on Zoom Mon 22 June,
7pm!**

RSVP

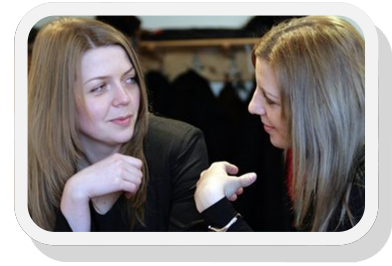




Who we've helped

51 clients contacted in 2019

Over the past year 51 clients made contact with us of which 35 came to appointments. 5 of these were for crisis pregnancy counselling, 6 for initial assessments only, with some 24 clients seen for up to 10 weeks of pregnancy loss counselling sessions each (predominantly miscarriage and abortion). In total 187 x 1 hour sessions with clients were held.



86% of clients seen have come for pregnancy loss counselling and 14% for crisis pregnancy.

The trend towards a smaller proportion of clients coming for crisis pregnancy counselling has been clear over the past 3 years (in 2017 41% of clients seen came as a result of a crisis pregnancy). Given that anyone who comes to Acorn for crisis pregnancy counselling usually attends just one appointment whereas those who come as a result of pregnancy loss attend a course, the amount of counselling time has been even more dominated by pregnancy loss with just 3% of sessions relating to crisis pregnancy.

How they found Acorn

Acorn remains open to provide free non-directive counselling to both crisis pregnancy and pregnancy loss clients. We continually seek to promote the availability of our service through all possible channels.

Over the past year the main sources of referral have been:

32% from Time to Talk (the NHS Counselling service)

28% Website 17% from GPs

The increasing importance of the website can be seen given that it accounted for just 12% of referrals in the previous year.

I want to say a big thank you to my counsellor for the professional and sensitive way she supported me this year. I will always be grateful

Client

Pregnancy counselling team

Our counselling service has been provided by a team of 5 counselling volunteers supervised by Angela Watt. During the year we have said 'goodbye' with our thanks to Pauline Carroll but welcomed back Alison Crosthwaite to the team. They continue to work well as a group with a range of expertise and skills. We are however conscious of the need to recruit and train more counselling volunteers and two of our most experienced members will be seeking to develop our training material during the year towards this purpose.

One of the key differentials between Acorn and other counselling services is the very short waiting timescales. Due to the number, commitment and availability of our counselling volunteers we are often able to offer an appointment within 2 weeks.

We are very grateful to all of the team as they give their time and expertise so selflessly. The evidence of the impact of what they do is clear from the fact that every client provides feedback of the positive benefit to them.

Acorn in Schools



Schools work disrupted by closures!

Some schools missed out!

The schools team were scheduled to provide 74 x 1 hour sessions to year 10 students in 8 schools in the Worthing area this year (Davison, The Littlehampton Academy, The Angmering School, Durrington High School, Steyning Grammar, Chatsmore, St Andrew's and Shoreham Academy). By the time the schools had been closed in March some 60 of these had been completed. It is not currently known when the schools will reopen or indeed when the sessions can start again.

Acorn's School's team

The schools team has continued to be led by Steph Spanner. She and Pam Denman have been joined by Mary Parish as presenters ably assisted by Alison Bray, Christine Cross, Kate Latter and Jan Peacock.



New Acorn session launched

The team continue to seek to develop their coverage and material. Following demand, in one school they provided a second session giving students the opportunity to discuss in more detail scenarios around unintended pregnancy. The session was well received but as always providing this to other schools and indeed adding more schools to the list of those visited depends on volunteer availability.

School Feedback

Evaluation forms are completed by the teacher and students following the sessions. In analysing the forms from all the schools nearly all respondents either **strongly agreed or agreed** that the session was engaging, organised and easy to follow, the length and pace appropriate, the presenters engaging and well prepared and the content and materials used informative.



We have been lucky to have established a link with Acorn and hope to carry on with the lessons

Teacher

Thanks to the schools team!

We have a wonderful team of schools workers. They are all really enthusiastic, extremely helpful and strike up great relationships with the students. Many thanks to them all.

Welcome to Acorn's First Patron



Acorn's first patron!

We are delighted that Dr Tim Fooks has agreed to become Acorn's first patron.

Tim has recently retired as a GP in Pulborough and is a well-known figure in the medical profession locally. He is currently High Sheriff of West Sussex and his appointment will increase Acorn's visibility as a local charity and enhance our credibility amongst funding organisations. We look forward to learning from his wisdom and experience.

Services like yours are vital and without your support many like myself would be in a dark place

Client

Finance



Funds increase since May 2019

This time last year our funds had suffered due to a significant drop in income from trusts and fundraising.

We sent out a letter to our supporters and as a result of an increase in donations, several fundraising events and a number of successful grant applications our income level grew by over £10k in the period. This combined with lower outgoings following the premises move has restored Acorn's financial health and we are grateful to all our supporters for this. We are particularly pleased with the increase in regular giving being seen and donations from clients and schools.

Income has this year been boosted by being one of the charities within the Co-op Local Community Fund. We are grateful to Co-op members who have designated Acorn as their charity of choice.

Future fundraising needed

We will continue to need to increase our supporter base alongside seeking grant income from trusts and taking forward various fundraising activities to support and expand the provision of the services provided by Acorn.



Acorn counselling room

Centre Management

Angela Geach has continued to work as our part time (12 hours per week) employed member of staff. Her role encompasses administration, communication, promotion, networking, coordination, supporting, collaborating and implementing. She is the first port of call for anyone approaching Acorn be they a client, referring agency, supporter or supplier. We are grateful to her for the sensitive way she has carried out her role in the last year.

Centre Premises

During the year the lease on Acorn House expired. Acorn had been based at these premises for many years and it had served us well. However, they were not ideal and increasingly expensive to run. A premises sub-committee, including the Centre Manager spent time assessing the needs of the charity with the counselling volunteers and considering the various options on the market.

In the end it was decided not to renew the lease but sign a 1 year licence on 2 offices within Action for Deafness' premises in central Worthing.

Moving again!

This arrangement worked well until the advent of Covid-19 when we were required to vacate our offices. It is not known when Action for Deafness will be able to re-open their premises and given the likely changes they will need to make to work with their patients they have decided not to renew the licence. We will therefore be re-forming the premises sub-committee to consider again an appropriate solution for Acorn.

I'm so grateful that this service exists and that I've been able to be helped through a really hard time

Client

Trustees

New appointments and retirements among trustees

There have been 6 trustees over the last year – my co trustees being Mary Parish, Patrick Woodward, Wendy Marshall and Steph Spanner, and the trustees co-opted Gillian Woodward to the role as well during the year. We have also had the support of Acorn's Advisory GP Dr Becky Richards. Wendy and Steph will be stepping down at the AGM but will remain serving Acorn by concentrating on their chosen prime focus – for Wendy counselling and for Steph schools. We are grateful to them both for the valuable input they have provided within the trustee team.

At the AGM we will be pleased to propose Gillian's appointment as trustee. Gillian has been a counselling volunteer with Acorn for many years and was previously a schools presenter as well. We will also be pleased to propose Pam Denman's appointment as trustee. Pam has many years of experience working in schools and has been doing a great job as an Acorn schools presenter for the last 3 years. They both have much to offer to the trustee board.

The trustees have tackled many issues over the last year not least the change in premises and adapting the service following the impact of Covid-19. Acorn continues to be registered with the Fundraising Regulator and remains a member of the National Council of Voluntary Organisations and of the British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy.



The Future



I know from having spoken to many clients who have received counselling from Acorn, that you do a wonderful and valuable work

NHS therapist

What to expect, next year and beyond?

Acorn has been serving people in the Worthing area for over a quarter of a century.

We are grateful to Bronwen Pearson and others who had the vision in the first place to establish it. Since that time it has impacted on the lives of thousands of people.

Letting them know we're here

We do however realise that there are many people who are not aware of Acorn and over the coming year we need to continue to find ways of communicating its existence to help realise Acorn's vision of:

'The Worthing area to be a place in which no one has to experience pregnancy loss or unexpected pregnancy unsupported, and where all young people are able to learn the story of pregnancy'

Covid-19 precautions allowing, we will be actively seeking to deliver presentations about Acorn's work to local community groups, churches, health and wellbeing professionals and any other bodies with interests in our areas of activity.

In addition to reaching out to anyone who might value Acorn's help, we will also seek to grow our volunteer and supporter base.

Someone suggested a lovely image of prayer for another person. He likened it to crowd surfing with the person being prayed for lifted up to God on the prayers of the people. So Acorn has been lifted up and will continue to need such over the next 25 years.

Last year I mentioned about the vulnerability of Acorn financially. This year we are reminded about the transience of a physical home.

Helping with mental health and relationship issues—Acorn's more needed than ever

In reality these matters are small compared with the impact of [Covid-19](#) on the lives of many people. We are yet to know the devastation this has caused in terms of numbers of deaths and businesses closed.

[The impact on the mental health](#) of people may be even greater. In this scenario Acorn, a charity that helps young people think through [relationship issues](#), and which provides a listening ear to the inner hurts of people must be even more needed than it was 25 years ago.

Richard Marshall, Chair of trustees May 2020



How can I help?

Volunteering for Acorn

Acorn has some wonderful volunteers, and would welcome more help in a variety of ways— suggestions below.

If you'd like to help please let us know



What could you do?

Here's some suggestions...

- Counselling volunteer
- Helper to counselling volunteers
- Schools worker
- Cleaner
- Admin
- Member
- Fundraiser -Coffee morning?
- Sponsored walk?
- Prayer partner
- Church rep
- Monthly giving
- Co-Op local cause
- A gift in my will
- Amazon wishlist
- SmileAmazon

Email Acorn at: office@acornworthing.org.uk

Keeping in touch

If you would like Acorn to keep in touch with you by email—just contact the office:

[News Bulletins](#)

[AGM and event invitations](#)

[Fundraising events news](#)

Like a visit from Acorn?

If you'd like an Acorn speaker at your group or to apply for Acorn's schools team to visit your school's year 10 students, do get in touch... we'll help if we can!

Charitable Objects

Summary of the objects of the charity as set out in its governing document:

To educate people on the subject of pregnancy and the termination of pregnancy and its effects.

To preserve and protect women's health and to provide advice, counselling and assistance to women and their families who are suffering from any effects or distress as a result of pregnancy or following an abortion, miscarriage, cot death, still birth, or loss of a child.

A summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects is contained in this report.

Administrative information

Name of charity:	Acorn Pregnancy Counselling Centre Limited
Registered Charity Number:	1094389
Company registration number:	04407431
Registered office :	River of Life, 19a Broadwater Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN14 8AD
Trustees:	Richard Marshall (Chair), Wendy Marshall, Mary Parish, Patrick Woodward, Stephanie Spanner, Gillian Woodward
Company secretary:	Patrick Woodward
Treasurer:	Patrick Woodward
Centre Manager:	Angela Geach
Independent Examiner:	Anthony Jackson, CPFA
Bankers:	Lloyds Bank, South Street, Worthing

office@acornworthing.org.uk

01903 823893

acornworthing.org.uk

Charity no 1094389

Acorn PCC is a company limited by Guarantee no 04407431



Find us on Facebook and twitter