



acorn
PREGNANCY
COUNSELLING CENTRE

Annual Report 2024

Acorn's "Fantastic"!

Client's and School's Feedback

"Acorn created a safe space for me to be able to share my feelings and experiences. It made a dark time more manageable. Being able to share and speak about my emotions has left me feeling more positive about the future."

"I think you offer a great service."

"I found a place where I could go and say everything I was feeling or thinking, without being judged or without someone trying to fix me."

"Thank you once again to all involved with this fantastic organisation."

These are quotes from four of the counselling clients we have seen in the last year. Our schools team have also received feedback from students and teachers, for example:

"I really enjoyed this lesson, it was informative. Thank you very much."

"Excellent lesson – love having Acorn in and would highly recommend."

"It was really useful, and I think the students found it interesting."

Richard Marshall, Chairman.

April 2024

Acorn Pregnancy Counselling Centre

Annual Report 23/4

Charity 1094389



See you at the
AGM on Mon 20 May, 7pm!
At Pilgrim House
RSVP

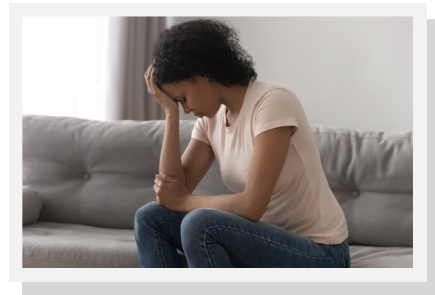




Acorn Counselling

Clients in 2023

After a very busy previous year, the number of client referrals and appointments reverted to more 'normal' levels. Clients continue to be offered a choice of face-to-face, telephone or on-line counselling alternatives.



Who we helped

226 Counselling sessions

79 clients made contact with us during the year of which 32 came to appointments. 4 of these were for crisis pregnancy counselling, with some 28 clients seen for up to 12 weeks of pregnancy loss counselling sessions each (predominantly miscarriage and abortion). In total 226 x 1 hour sessions with clients were held.

How they found Acorn

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

- 32% Website/social media
- 18% Friend
- 14% NHS West Sussex Talking Therapies
- 12% GPs

Counselling team

Ever since its establishment Acorn's counselling service has been provided by trained volunteers. Over the years the number of counselling volunteers has fluctuated but Acorn and its clients have benefitted hugely from the contributions made by the different individuals.

Saying hello and goodbye

We have however recognised that whilst it is still the intention for the charity's work to mainly be done by volunteers, it is perhaps unrealistic to always expected fully qualified counsellors to work for it without remuneration. In the last year we recruited Roz Merrick to our first paid counsellor role. Roz has become a valuable member of the team appreciated by her colleagues and clients alike.

We have said farewell this year to 2 members of the team Jean and Linda. We wish them both well.

Supervision

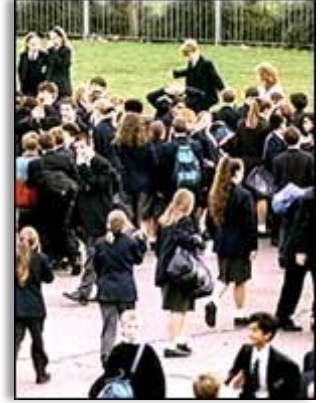
The provision of counselling supervision is integral to provision of a professional counselling service. This continues to be carried out on a fortnightly basis by Angela Watt who also completes the initial client assessments.



"I found a place where I could go and say everything I was feeling or thinking, without being judged or without someone trying to fix me."

Client

Acorn Schools work



Fewer Schools in 2023/4

After a busy 2 years during which the schools team were visiting 10 schools in the Worthing area and providing around 100 x 1 hour sessions each year to students, in this academic year it has been harder to enable inclusion of Acorn in a number of schools' timetables. This has been mainly due to a

change in the staff responsible for decision making with more caution being evident towards outside organisations. Our schools team led by Steph Spanner are having to work much harder in explaining the benefits of Acorn sessions. This is despite our long record of successful involvement with schools and the investment during the year in production of a professionally produced video providing a dramatic presentation of a number of the issues involved in teenage pregnancy.

55 Schools' Sessions This Year

The schools who have welcomed us again are Angmering, Bohunt, Davison, St Andrews, Shoreham Academy, Sion and The Littlehampton Academy and some 55 sessions will have been held in these schools this academic year. We remain hopeful that the other local schools will appreciate the benefits to their students of including Acorn next year. Many thanks as always to Steph and the team who remain passionate about the schools work.



"Excellent lesson – love having Acorn in and would highly recommend."

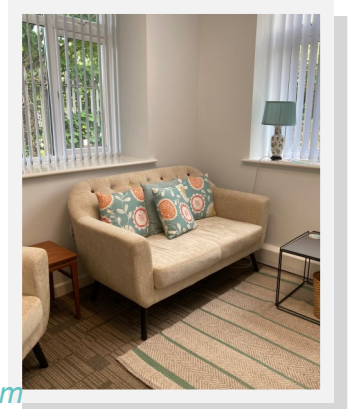
Teacher

Acorn premises



Great premises

We continue to be based from our office and counselling room at Pilgrim House. We are thankful for these excellent premises including the availability of the upstairs conference and prayer rooms which we use for meetings including our forthcoming AGM.



Sunny counselling room



Finance



Income

Income received a significant boost following provision of grants from Sussex Community Foundation, Green Hills Christian Trust and the David Hunt Trust. Many thanks to each of these organisations. In addition, we are very grateful to Paul Carnell who ran the Bath half marathon fundraising for Acorn.

Whilst overall income is up on the previous year, regular giving has reduced. We do appreciate those who commit to give in this way usually by monthly standing order. It helps massively as we seek to budget for future outgoings knowing we have the support of regular donations.

We continue to get donations from some schools and clients and now also from those who use Easyfundraising to pay for goods and services (please see the link on our website for this simple way of providing more funds for Acorn).

Expenses planned

Our expenses also rose but we planned for this. We spent £1700 on a professionally produced video for use by the schools team in their sessions with the students. Contact any of the schools team to find out more about this valuable additional resource which we have made available to other local centres.

We also increased our outgoings following the decision to establish a paid counsellor role and a social media and marketing role (see later).

Overall expenditure was higher than income with the deficit met from reserves held

Thanks to the team

Many thanks to our finance team of Patrick Woodward (Treasurer), Debbie Squires (bookkeeper) and Andrew Kean (independent examiner).

"I think you offer a great service."

Client



Acorn Centre

Centre Management

Angela Geach has been Acorn's Centre Manager since May 2016 and has decided to retire at the end of July this year. We will be sorry to see her go as she has done an excellent job over the years.

The Centre Manager role is really important being amongst other things the first point of contact for clients and indeed for most enquiries about the charity. Angela has worked well with volunteers including the trustees and her sensitive and caring manner combined with her diligence and attention to detail has ensured that Acorn's reputation remains high.

We wish Angela a very happy retirement and trust that she will stay in touch with the charity.

We are currently in course of recruiting a replacement.



Acorn Trustees & Patron

Who are they?

During the year there have been 5 trustees – my co-trustees being Paul Cross, Pam Denman, Patrick Woodward and Gillian Woodward. Patrick and myself will be seeking re-election for another 3 year term at our forthcoming AGM. We meet at regular intervals through the year and exchange views and information at any point as the need arises. We would always welcome new members of our trustee team. Do let me know if you are interested.

Tim Fooks continues as Acorn's patron. We are grateful to have him in this role as a wise and experienced reference point.

Official bodies

Acorn continues to be registered with the Fundraising Regulator and remains a member of the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and of the British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP).

Communication & Marketing



We continue to seek ways of communicating the existence of Acorn to those who would benefit from its services. Despite serving the local area for 29 years, many people are not aware of Acorn's existence. This will be a continual challenge for Acorn and we need to adapt our efforts and focus our resource as we feel it appropriate. However, we also need to recognise that there are many routes by which people come to Acorn – in the past 7 years there have been 38 different sources of referral (GPs being just one source). We therefore need to spread the message as widely as possible.

We decided during the year that promotion of the charity was so important that it was time to create a new paid role of Social Media and Marketing Officer. Charlotte Bailey has been recruited to this position working 2 hours per week for the charity. The increased Acorn Instagram activity since she joined is one evidence of the work she is doing.

Keeping in touch and networking

Our monthly mailing continues to keep supporters up to date and our quarterly newsletters available for download from the website are also sent to former clients who wish to keep in touch. We continue to keep the church community of Worthing informed about the work with regular updates sent to leaders. During the year presentations were held at St Mary's, St Matthew's and St Georges' churches. We continue to seek opportunities to share about the work of Acorn at other churches in the town.

We had a stand at the annual Worthing Mental Health Awareness focus. The event was based on the ground floor of the Guildbourne Centre with many other charities represented. We had contact during the day with a variety of people who were interested in Acorn's work including the deputy mayor.

The monthly prayer meetings are attended by a committed core group and we also have a WhatsApp group to keep those interested in praying for the work of Acorn more immediately up to date with needs.

We remain closely in touch with other similar West Sussex-based pregnancy counselling groups holding regular meetings with them and a number attending the annual Regional day.



Conclusion



Challenges for the future

We have had to grapple with a variety of challenges this year. The main ones being:

How do we retain and recruit more counsellors?

How do we increase promotion of the charity?

How do we ensure Acorn sessions are within the timetables of each of our local schools?

Each year there will be challenges, sometimes the same, sometimes different from the previous year. It has been like this for all of Acorn's existence and whilst the challenges at times seem great and perhaps insurmountable, each year individual clients and individual students still benefit from its services as evidenced by the individual feedback received.

Acorn counselling provided to 900 people and talks to 35000 students ... and counting!

Since its establishment we estimate that over 900 people have received counselling from Acorn and around 35000 students have participated in an Acorn session at their school. Given that the schools work started in 2001 many of the students will have had their own families by now.

Many thanks to all those who keep the work of Acorn going, its real impact will probably never be fully measured.


Richard Marshall, Chairman. April 2024

Can you Volunteer?

Acorn volunteers are "fantastic"!

Our volunteers are special people, in fact schools and clients find their work "fantastic!"

Could you help?

We are always looking to increase our volunteer numbers. If you would like to join our fantastic volunteer team, please let us know. 

Counselling volunteer

School's team

Admin

Treasurer

Trustee

Church friend


Fundraiser

Donor

Prayer partner

Member

Like a visit from Acorn?

If you'd like Acorn to speak to a group you're involved in (church group? social club?), or for Acorn's Schools team to visit your school's year 10 students, do get in touch. 

 office@acornworthing.org.uk



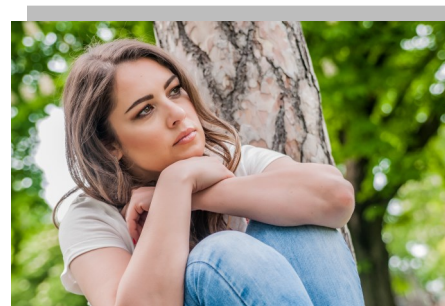
Acorn Charitable Objects

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 :	Pilgrim House, St Dunstan's Road, Worthing, BN13 1AA
Trustees:	Richard Marshall (Chair), Patrick Woodward, Gillian Woodward, Pam Denman, Paul Cross
Company secretary:	Patrick Woodward
Treasurer:	Patrick Woodward
Centre Manager:	Angela Geach
Independent Examiner:	Andrew Kean
Bankers:	Lloyds Bank, South Street, Worthing

Contact Acorn

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acorn
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COUNSELLING CENTRE

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