



Cyngor Sir  
**CEREDIGION**  
County Council



## **AREA 43 HERE FOR YOU COUNSELLING SERVICE REPORT DECEMBER 2020**

### **Overview**

Area 43 aims to support all young people aged 16 - 25 within a geographic area encompassing the three counties of Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire. The charity works directly with this age group to promote and advance health and well-being through support, information, training, advice and where appropriate counselling as described by the charity's objects below:

“The charity's objects are to promote the benefit of the young inhabitants of Cardigan and the surrounding area predominately aged 16-25 years without distinction of gender, sexual orientation, race or political, religious or other opinions by the provision of facilities to advance education and provide facilities in the interests of health and social welfare, counselling and advice, recreation and leisure time activities.”

Area 43 has provided counselling services from its base in Cardigan since it's founding in 1996. Over time it has expanded its range of counselling services to include schools counselling (since 2008) and online counselling (since 2018).

The online counselling service has been developed as a result of identified need seen at Area 43's Centre in Cardigan, where professional, face to face counselling for young people has been offered for more than 20 years. The young people that Area 43 works with at its Centre are considered 'hard to reach' and tend to have been affected by adverse childhood experiences, which statistical evidence suggests, can lay the foundations for mental health issues in adulthood. Although this service is not exclusively targeting this group it does aim to develop a strategy of resilience in young people. Hopefully, the strategies and coping mechanisms learnt in the counselling relationship can be drawn upon in times of adversity, for themselves and others and enable them to be more likely to ask for help in the future.

The online service has expanded from Area 43's work in Ceredigion, as a result of previous funding. It is currently delivered by 6 counsellors including Welsh speakers, an experienced Counselling Assessor, Clinical Supervisor and an experienced management team. We provide a freephone contact number for service users in addition to online referral via our website. At the moment there is no limit to the number of sessions offered and the average

to date has been 8 sessions per user. All sessions offered at no cost to the service user and referrals are usually responded to by a member of our team, within 3 days.

There is flexibility in the delivery of the online service with the counsellor and user agreeing the most appropriate method of engagement. We feel this flexibility and the relationship developed between counsellor and user is the key to achieving positive outcomes. The interaction from assessment with an experienced counsellor can provide comfort and confidence to the user and the continuity is an important element in the service. All engagement is made through scheduled appointments providing a structured counselling experience for the user.

We have been encouraged by the take up of the online counselling service previously funded. Referrals are being received through Area 43's website <https://www.area43.co.uk/here-for-you/> or via our freephone number 08000 385778.

All referrals require a name, address and contact phone number. We also request the details of the service users GP as a safeguarding precaution. The user receives an assessment to

- Verify the details supplied on the referral form
- Ensure the user understands what counselling is
- Ensure the service is appropriate and safe for the user
- Agree when counselling can take place and the users preferred format and time
- If the service is not suitable to signpost the user to more appropriate support

Area 43 is an organisational member of the BACP.

## **Delivery**

Delivery has been made using Zoom meeting rooms, a popular platform amongst the counselling profession. This includes video, audio and real time text. Some service users have preferred to use phone counselling and we have accommodated that where possible.

The feedback received from the counsellors has been very positive, they have adapted well to different delivery methods and in some instances find they can connect as well if not better than face to face. For some service users they would find it difficult if not impossible to engage face to face so adapting to their needs in a safe way for both parties has allowed them to receive counselling where they would not have otherwise.

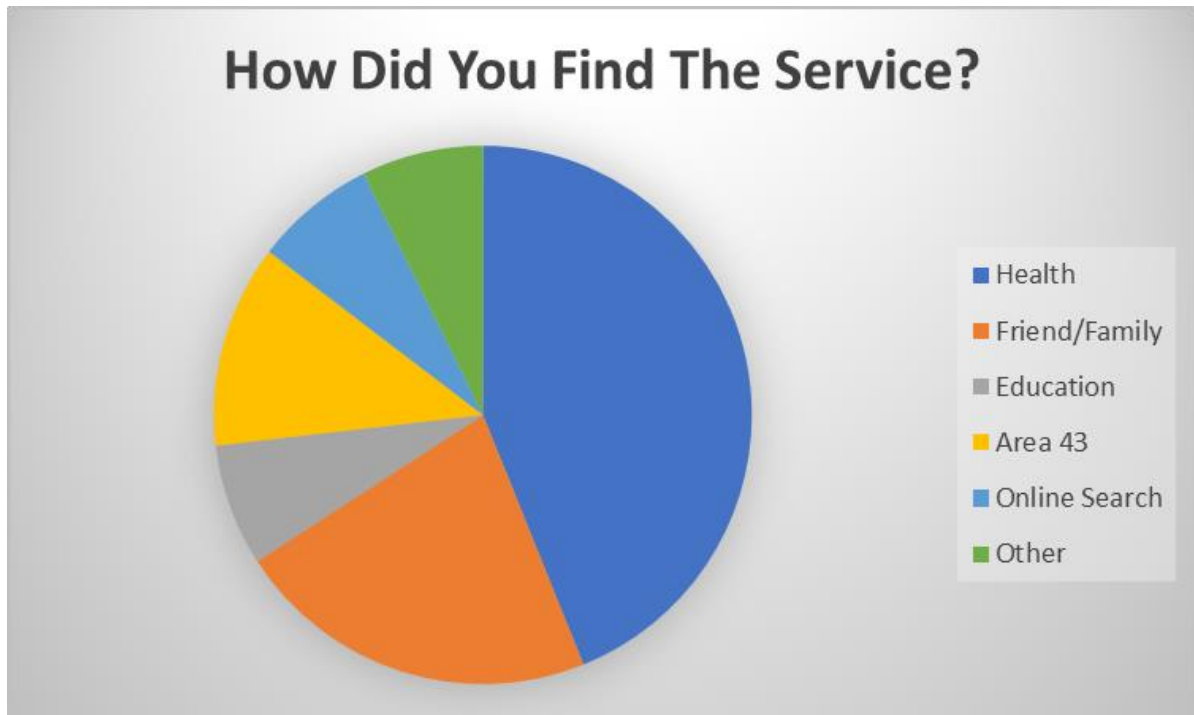
The timing of counselling has varied dependant on the needs of the service user, this includes both daytime and evening counselling.

## **Engagement**

Since the launch of the service in August 2018 we have received the following engagement

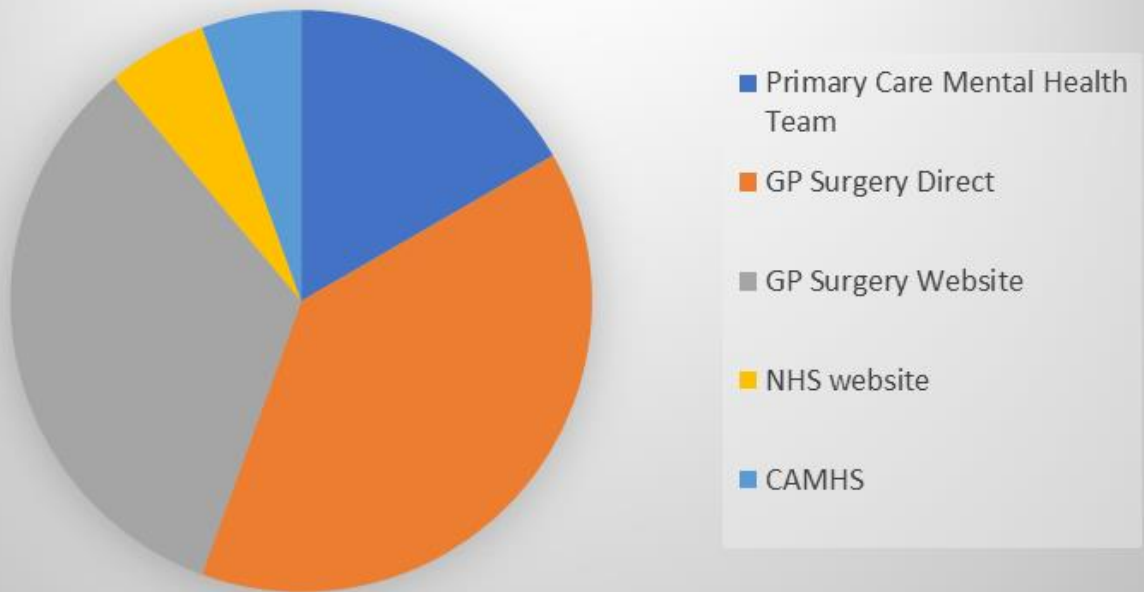
- 98 referrals; 41 referrals since 1 April 2020
- 72 counselling relationships
- Did not receive assessment (not contactable, no longer required) – 12
- Did not begin counselling (not contactable, no longer required) – 14

Promotion of the service has focused on sharing information with organisations and individuals working with young people. It is recognised that it is difficult to directly access young people who may need the service. As the chart below shows there is a high proportion of referrals received through the health sector. It is also noteworthy the proportion of recommendations from friends and family, which is evidence that the service is able to reach users through their close network. This was an aim of the service from its outset recognising that in rural areas word of mouth is still an important method of raising awareness of services.



As anticipated the number of referrals has increased as the service has become more established. It is evident that over time referrals generated through the Primary Care sector has increased significantly. GP's surgeries account for most of these referrals whether through direct recommendation to the young person or through the young person accessing information through a GP surgery website. It is reassuring that health professionals have confidence in signposting the service to young people and trust that the service can be effective to their users.

## How Found Service - Health

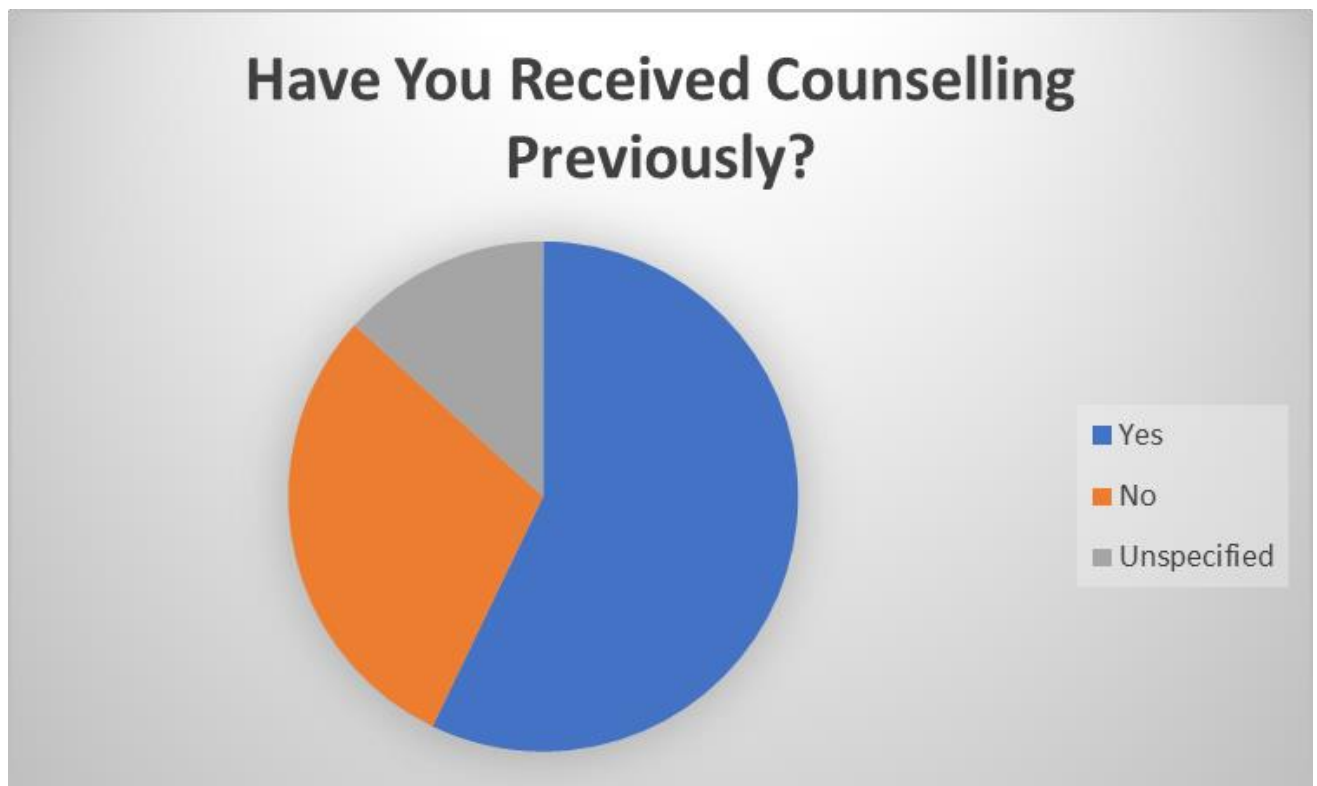


## Gender



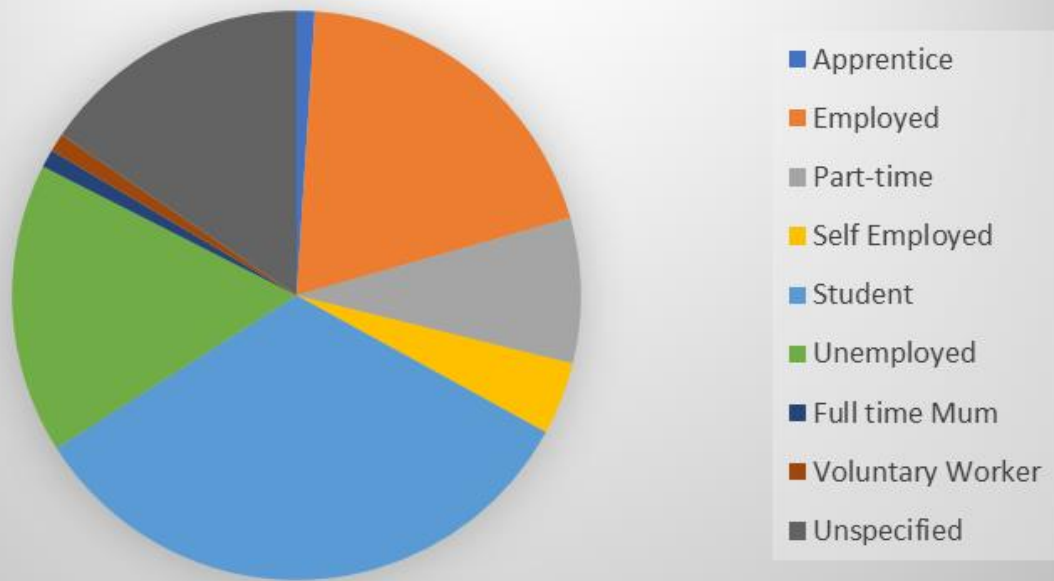
The share of referrals by gender are broadly as anticipated. It is interesting to note that service users are welcoming the opportunity to present themselves as the gender by which they identify.

Future promotion will continue to be inclusive, but we are mindful of the increased risk of suicide to those who identify as male.



The proportion of users who have previously received counselling could be reflective of the embedding of the Schools Based Counselling Service in Wales over the past decade. Counselling services and other talking therapies have moved into the mainstream of acceptable interventions accessed by the general public and previous stigma is being overcome.

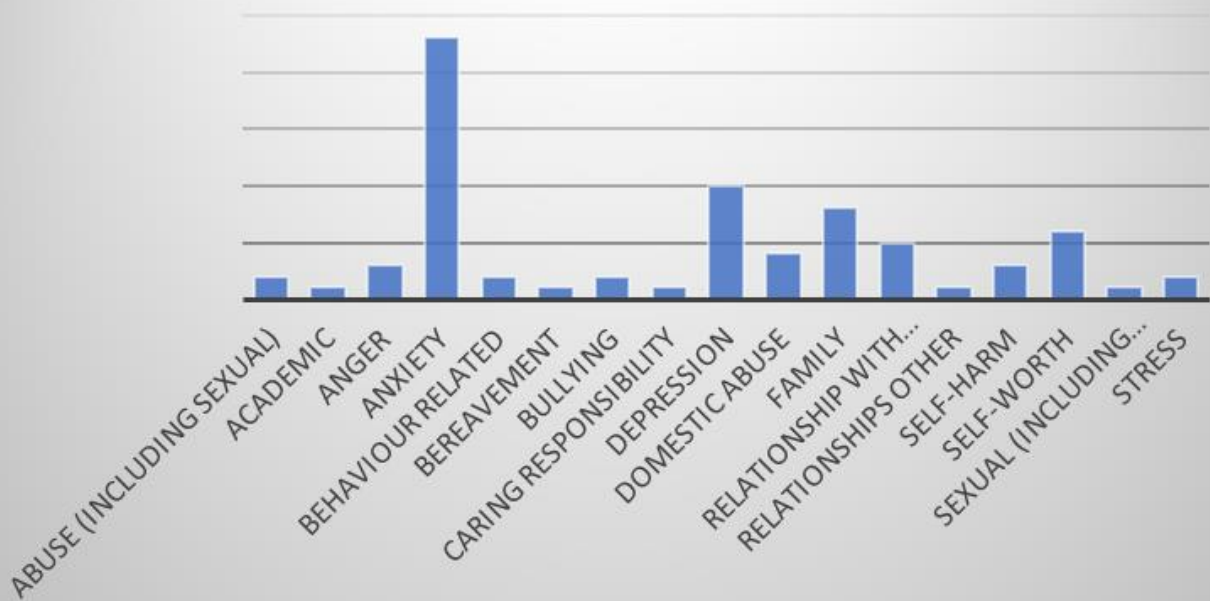
## Employment Status



The range of employment status is encouraging, as it confirms that the publicity and promotions we are using is reaching a wide range of potential service users.

We will continue to focus on receiving referrals from a variety of socio-economic situations.

## Predominant Issues



The chart shows that a significant number of service users presenting with anxiety and the current COVID-19 pandemic could be responsible for this to be heightened. As part of the counselling process, counsellors offer strategies and coping mechanisms that can become embedded and can be used over time and shared with family and friends.

### **Impact**

The engagement from service users has positive with several previous users recommending the service to their peers. The feedback received provides strong testimony to the impact that the service has had on those that have engaged.

### **Service User Feedback**

'Was a bit nervous at the beginning as I didn't know how I felt about having the meeting over zoom. But after time went on, it became a norm and I relaxed and loved being able to have the meetings from the comfort of my own home. It's been an amazing experience, and has helped me out massively. Have already recommended the service to some.'

'I am not having suicidal thoughts anymore'

'I would not have access to counselling otherwise'

'I am so glad I found this service, I really needed counselling, and I have been on the NHS waiting list for one and a half years'

'I have come out of a dark place since having counselling and can manage my life much better'

'I have stopped having panic attacks since having these sessions'

'My relationships are much better and I don't feel so isolated'

'These sessions were the high point of my week, when I was feeling so down, and now I am doing much better. Having online counselling has been invaluable to me'

'I feel much more comfortable talking to you online, and having the choice whether to see you or not'

'I used this service on two different times to talk to June as I relapsed with my mental health and it was so nice to be able to pick up where we left off. I would really recommend this service and I'm glad it exists.'

'June really helped me, she had a lot of ideas on how I could help my mental health and talking to her helped me work through some issues and made me feel more able to cope.'

### **Post Pilot Project**



The Yma i Chi service has been able to continue post pilot with direct commissioning from both north and south Ceredigion Primary Care Clusters. The positive impact and experience of participants being a key factor in the commissioning. The mental health services available free of charge in Ceredigion has expanded as a result of the pilot. There is an opportunity for any young person to access a talking therapy service quickly and confidentially within the county. The recognition from Primary Care professionals is a very rewarding approval for all of our staff that the work we do is valued and has a positive impact for the young people who engage with it.

Area 43 has also received commissions from the Primary Care and Education sectors in Pembrokeshire as a result of the pilot, enabling the organisation to expand its geographical impact and further develop partnerships regionally.

The above outcomes although not monitored as part of the pilot are the legacy of the project and will have a lasting impact on the health and wellbeing of young people in Ceredigion.

Area 43 has been able to grow and diversify its service offer to commissioners and has provided future potential stability.