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There are some really astonishing statistics about the state of our children's mental health. About 695,000 children aged 5 to 16 years in England have a clinically significant mental health illness which is a really startling fact. Our children increasingly seem to be experience high levels of distress and anxiety in their everyday lives. Many experience a wider range of issues that can be serious in nature. Calls to our service asking for support for children are escalating. The Mental Health of young People in particular is a national concern; so much so that it has been highlighted by the younger adults in the Royal Family. Prince William, The Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry have developed an incentive 'Heads Together' a Charity Organisation that supports Mental Health Awareness and aims to eliminate stigma around mental health difference. This is fantastic in terms of bringing attention to the problem but the funding from this incentive goes to larger Charities with well know nationwide profiles who have Marketing people to source fundraising rather than small local organisations like U&I Counselling. It is wonderful that the spotlight is being placed on the importance of mental health in this way because it is something we need to be aware of. Our remit at U&I Counselling recognises and responds to that concern and is available to offer support to local people and funding for our work is sadly very hard indeed to source.

At U&I we offer counselling support without the benefit of an expensive paid marketing team to gather funding and all our professional counsellors offer their counselling expertise without payment. All donations made go towards paying rent, professional costs like insurance, further Continual Professional Development for our counsellors and telephone and Internet costs. We also need to replenish our creative resources.

Early on in the development of U&I we recognised the lack of provision for children and Young People's counselling, especially locally and passionately set about developing and building the expertise of our team in this area of counselling also working on building resources to support the work. We now gather referrals from doctors, schools, CAMHs, Social Services and many other organisations as well as people being able to self refer but without any regular commissioning fees in most cases. Many schools and families are finding CAMHs interventions are only available to the those with highest need and can sometimes involve a long wait. Often the intervention offered can be short term rather than a longer term provision due to budgeting and rationing constraints and can involve offering referral on to an online provision. All of our counselling U&I Counselling offer is face to face and delivered by trained counselling professionals in sessions that can last up to 50mins. Traditionally professional counselling CPD is really expensive and so our training programmes have not only supported our own team of counsellors but offered quality lower cost training to other professionals thus extending the pool of skills available to meet growing need.

Since opening in 2011 we have supported over 2,300 clients...all local people. Approximately 850 of these have been between the ages of 8-18. We have grown from 3 Counsellors to 30 with each of our current team offering between two and twenty hours of counselling expertise. Many of our children's counsellors are all experienced in working with children and young adults in other fields and as well as specialised counselling training, offering skills included from fields such as teaching, special needs and emotional behavioural difficulties. All of our counsellors are member of the BACP and U&I Counselling CIC is an organisational member. The BACP is a recognised profession body for counsellors: The British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists.

We offer a therapeutic approach in counselling which means our interventions don't involve medication. Therapy is offered as an Integrative approach which fits around the clients need and is not time limited. Approaches include a variety of models including PersonCentred, Pschodynamic, Transactional Analysis, Gestalt, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Mindfulness and Creative Interventions. The latter are particularly popular with our younger clients who often find expressing themselves in this way more comfortable.

Therapy isn't about 'fixing people' , it is an exploration of underlying feelings, emotions and beliefs about past, present and future concerns and how these affect comfortable functioning in day to day life. It fosters understanding and offers coping strategies where appropriate and most importantly the opportunity to be listened to. The feeling of being listened to is incredibly powerful and very cathartic.

In order to maintain our service we really need donations and ask for your help. We don't only offer support to children but adults too and this can be one to one, as a couple or part of a family group. We want to continue to be a valuable resource for local people...there to support at times of need.