

Grief Support AGM Chair Person's Report 2018-2019

It has been a busy year for Grief Support Services. Client sessions have increased from 1747 in 2018-2018, to 1901 in 2018-2019. The service continues to be provided by a mix of volunteers, students and paid staff, under the excellent management of Janet Baird the Service Manager/Senior Counsellor. I would like to thank all the staff (volunteers, students and paid staff) who have worked so willingly and hard to ensure clients receive a top-class service from GSS.

There have been changes of staff and on the Board. During the year we said goodbye to Jacqui, the fundraising co ordinator and Sue Bacon, the Board member responsible for overseeing fundraising. Both have had a big impact on the ongoing financial health of Grief Support and its ability to provide leading services to the community.

We welcomed Mel Lewis, Craig Wilson and Dawn Picken onto the Board. GSS has followed recruitment strategies and carefully considered advertising to add members to the Board who bring experience, skills and energy. Similar recruitment strategies will be followed in the future as this approach has been successful in attracting high calibre people to the Board.

Client activity has grown again. This is in line with our strategic objectives. It has however seen a strain on our resources and unfortunately, we now operate a waiting list. This is less than desirable. The Board continues to seek ways to find sustainable funding to meet our growth targets.

We have made a proposal to the DHB to increase the suicide post vention contract. This fits neatly with the government's Wellbeing Budget. Success in expanding the contract would mean more DHB clients could be provided for. As yet, there is no funding provided by the MoH for these types of proposals. However, GSS will be in a good position to use any forthcoming monies should they be available through the DHB.

Our premises were sold early 2019. It had been a long period without a clear lease in place. The lease is now finalised and gives us some security going forward. The premises continue to be less than ideal, but the new landlord has priced them competitively. As any money not spent on premises is available for services, it was considered best to refresh the current rooms rather than go into more expensive offices. We continue to provide services in other locations if clients cannot negotiate the stairs.

Fundraising is a constant activity for GSS. This year we raised \$159,211. This is an increase of \$18,479 on the 2017-2018 year. Fundraising is a busy and critical part of GSS operations. The Board would like to thank the organisations that have generously given in response to our requests. Without community generosity services would not exist for most of our clients. We continue to ask clients to pay according to their ability to do so. This year clients donated \$8473 compared to \$3000 in 2017-2018. This amount goes some way to allowing us to provide counselling services for more people.

Over recent years we have been working to form an organisation that holds DHB contracts for a number of agencies. This has been at the request of the DHB, who would prefer to work with one contract rather than many small ones. The agency Allied Potential Group (APG) is now functioning with five agencies. GSS contract start to be managed by APG from 1 July 2019. It is hoped that APG will allow us to collaborate and leverage scale GSS could not achieve on its own.

Through the work of Yvonne and Philip on the Board, Infoodle is now in use. This is a system that allows us to track our community networking and key contacts. This will allow us to stay up to date with our contacts and communicate regularly with them. My thanks to both of them for working through the implementation of this.

Also, in the IT arena, staff under Janet's leadership, have transitioned to electronic note taking and reporting. This means staff can work away from base and still have all the information needed. It allows for greater flexibility in work, and ease of reporting as reporting is a big component for the DHB contract.

The challenges for the coming year include working on our waiting list to make the services readily available to as many as possible. We will continue to fundraise to keep GSS functioning well. In 2019-2020 year we will review and refocus our strategic plan.