



## Trustees' Annual Report

1st April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

**MEET in Oxford** provides a low-cost trauma focused therapy service using fully qualified and experienced psychotherapists. We offer the trauma therapies known as EMDR and Energy Psychotherapy to people whose lives are seriously affected now by difficult experiences in the past and who are unable to pay the usual fees for private therapy or access it through the NHS.

**MEET in Oxford** was founded by three members of Oxford Quaker Meeting and is financially supported by the Quaker Meeting through provision of free counselling space and office facilities. It was formally adopted as a concern of the Meeting in July 2018.

### Constitution and current trustees

**MEET in Oxford** ("MEET") was constituted as a small charity in June 2014 and registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), charity number 1182200 in 2019.

- The charity's registered address is: 43 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LW.
- The charity's governing document is the Constitution of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019.
- Significant decisions affecting the charity are made at the quarterly trustee meetings when a quorum is present or in writing agreed by a majority of the trustees.

Trustees of the charity for the year were:

**Nancy Browner, Sandra Figgess (Chair), Jane Fisher, Katharine Nicholas (Safeguarding Officer)  
Becky Riddell (to July 2021), Karen Stowe, Michael Taylor (Treasurer).**

- All the trustees acted for the whole year except Becky Riddell, who stood down at the AGM in July 2021. The trustees would like to thank Becky for her commitment and contributions over two and a half years.
- Trustees are appointed for a term of three years by a resolution passed at a meeting of the trustees.
- The trustees meet quarterly. All meetings during this year took place by video call.

### Objectives

The object of the charity under its Constitution is:

**To relieve the mental distress of persons resident in Oxfordshire who are suffering from the effects of traumatic experiences by the provision of the trauma focused therapies known as EMDR and the energy psychotherapies with priority given to persons of limited means by way of free or subsidised treatment.**

The trustees meet this object, having regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit, by:

- providing trauma focused therapy to people living in Oxfordshire, who are referred or self-refer to the charity because their lives are seriously affected by past experiences and who cannot afford private therapy or access it through the NHS;

- offering and allocating therapy spaces without regard to an individual's ability to contribute to the cost of their therapy;
- working with practitioners who give their time unpaid.

## Activities and achievements

Therapy with MEET in Oxford is provided by experienced psychotherapists and psychologists with additional training in either Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) or Energy Psychotherapy (EP); these are approaches that facilitate healing through an understanding of the impact of trauma on the body, and work with the mind-body connection alongside talking psychotherapy. All therapists are registered/accredited by a relevant professional body and offer at least one session per week to a MEET client.

### How MEET in Oxford operates

A management group of six MEET therapists, experienced practitioners in EMDR and EP, meets every week. The group includes two of the three founding members of MEET; three are also trustees of the charity.

The management group:

- discusses newly assessed clients and decides who to accept to the waiting list;
- looks at any challenging issues relating to MEET clients;
- considers questions around the management and development of MEET;
- supports the service coordinator in her work.

We take both self-referrals and referrals from a range of organisations and services within Oxfordshire. There is more information below about the source of referrals over the past year.

After receiving a referral, we carry out an assessment. This provides an opportunity for MEET to find out more about an individual's needs and to see whether MEET therapies are likely to be helpful, and for the individual to learn more about what we offer so they too can decide whether this is what they need. If it is agreed that the approaches we offer would be helpful, they go on our waiting list until an ongoing therapy space is available. MEET offers a maximum of 26 sessions, an unusually generous allocation for a free/low cost service, with reviews at four and 12 weeks.

At assessment, clients are asked if they would be able to make a financial contribution towards the running of the charity. It is made clear that no-one is refused therapy or treated differently because they cannot afford to donate. We suggest, as a guideline, that someone who is on benefits or the minimum wage may be able to contribute £5-£10 per session, while some clients donate just a couple of pounds. For those on a higher wage or family income we suggest a contribution of £15-£35.

### Volunteer therapists

In April 2022 we were working with 14 practitioners.

MEET does not work with trainee therapists and is unusual in this respect. All our therapists are fully qualified, experienced practitioners, some of whom work with the charity in order to gain experience in their newer skills of EMDR or EP, others for purely philanthropic motives. All are required to attend a monthly peer support group. This provides an opportunity to meet and discuss with others working in the same modality, enables MEET to maintain an overview of the work being done with our clients, and is a forum where questions can be raised, challenges discussed, and support requested.

All the psychotherapists working with MEET give their time unpaid. However, we feel it is important that volunteering should not leave people out of pocket and are aware that therapists have costs such as insurance and professional registration fees. We therefore have a policy, where the charity's financial position allows, of paying a small honorarium when a therapist finishes work with a client. For the financial year 2021-22 this was maintained at £160 for each client with whom the therapist completed 26 sessions (or a pro rata amount for fewer sessions).

### **Day to day management**

The Coordinator Ana Novaković works 18 hours a week and manages the charity on a day-to-day basis.

### **Covid 19**

Over the course of this year, with restrictions related to Covid 19 still in place for much of the year, MEET in Oxford continued to offer most sessions online. Three of the therapists who used to take clients in person are no longer able to do so, but two returned to the Quaker Meeting House and by April 2022 we were able once again to offer a few face-to-face sessions.

While we cannot see as many clients in person as pre-pandemic, we supported more individuals than before Covid. This is because we can now work with therapists based anywhere in the country, since they do not need to live locally, and clients who may have found it difficult to get to Oxford for weekly sessions can do the therapy remotely.

### **Demand for the service**

Even working with more therapists, demand for our service continued to outstrip supply. When we judge the waiting list to have reached around six months, we have a policy of closing for a few weeks or months to new referrals as we don't believe it is helpful for people to stay on a waiting list for too long. During the year, we did this twice. On the second occasion, two weeks after we reopened, we had enough referrals to keep all the therapists busy for several months, and had to close again.

### **Planning for the future**

In January 2022 the trustees agreed a 3-year plan for the future of MEET in Oxford.

It was agreed that MEET in Oxford's overarching aims remain:

- **FOCUS.** Stay focused on our core activities and the most vulnerable client groups, delivering a high quality and effective service.
- **DISSEMINATE.** Make the service available to as many people as possible without becoming overwhelmed. Work to make the approaches we use better known and more widely available.
- **SUSTAINABILITY.** Ensure the charity is sustainable in the longer term, both operationally and financially.

One aspect of future sustainability covers the staffing of MEET and we intend to try and recruit a part-time fully qualified therapist, experienced in working with trauma. Among other things, this would help us to run more self-support groups for people on our waiting list, find new ways of providing support to our clients, and develop more ways to connect with particularly hard-to-reach individuals including through partnerships with other organisations and services in Oxfordshire.

To receive a copy of the strategic plan, please email [admin@meetinxford.org](mailto:admin@meetinxford.org)

## Referrals, self-referrals and enquiries

In the course of the year we received:

### Referrals for therapy: 65

- Please see below for details of the source of referrals.

### Enquiries about therapy: 69

- Enquiries are made by phone, via the website or by email.
- 44 were from people enquiring about therapy for themselves, 20 were from referrers/organisations, 4 were from family members or others.

## Clients we worked with in 2021-22

- Over this year, 28 clients completed a course of therapy and a further 10 had between two and 13 sessions.
- The total number of free or very low-cost therapy hours provided to these clients was approximately 692.
- In addition, 14 clients were having ongoing therapy appointments at 30/04/2022.
- In total, we helped 52 individuals over the year.
- Data is collated when a client's sessions end. The data below is based on the 28 clients with whom therapy was completed in the course of the year.

- **Age of clients:**

Under 20	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s
1	12	4	7	3	1

- **Gender identity:** 25 identified as female, three as male.
- **Number of sessions** provided to clients completing therapy (the maximum offered by MEET is 26):

26 sessions	Between 20 & 25 sessions	Between 10 & 19 sessions	Fewer than 10 sessions
16	5	6	1

- At the start of therapy, the following **issues** were identified (23 clients for whom data is available):

Childhood trauma	PTSD symptoms	Adult trauma	Anxiety/depression	Psychiatric diagnosis	Relationship difficulties
25	27	26	23	5	15

- Clients are asked how they choose to describe their **heritage**. 12 described themselves as White British. Others described themselves as: British 4; mixed white/Asian 1; Asian American 1; Kurdish 1; Asian 1; Indian/British 1; Japanese 1; British/Hispanic 1. For five, we have no data or they preferred not to say.

### Source of referrals.

Of the 65 referrals received:

- Most clients (40) self-referred.
- Almost half (19) of these had been signposted or recommended to apply to MEET by a professional, specialist NHS service or other organisation.
- Organisations either signposting or referring to MEET in Oxford included Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service, Crisis, Victims First, GPs, specialist NHS services.

## Practice Based Evidence

We use a [PCL-5](#) form, which assesses the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, as an objective means of evaluating progress. The form is a 20-item self-report measure developed by the US-based National Center for PTSD.

Clients complete the form when they are assessed and again when they finish therapy. A reduction of at least 10 points in their score over that period indicates a significant reduction in trauma symptoms and is regarded as clinically meaningful. An increased score, no change, or a clinically less significant improvement (less than minus 10), usually indicates that a client was undergoing further adverse life experiences during the period of therapy.

We have been doing this since 2017 and at the end of March 2022 had collected data for 54 clients, laying the foundation of a small project to provide practice-based evidence for the efficacy of the methods we use. Given that most of our clients have complex trauma histories starting in childhood, and many are still living in challenging circumstances, we are encouraged by the results so far, with some clients showing tremendous improvement.

FIGURES SINCE 2017							
<b>EMDR</b>				<b>Energy Psychotherapy</b>			
<b>21 clients</b>				<b>59 clients</b>			
Downward change less than 10 points, increased or unchanged	Downward change of 10-19 points	Downward change of 20-29 points	Downward change of 30 or more points	Downward change less than 10 points, increased or unchanged	Downward change of 10-19 points	Downward change of 20-29 points	Downward change of 30 or more points
<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>20%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>FIGURES FOR YEAR 2021-22</b>							

<b>EMDR</b>					<b>Energy Psychotherapy</b>			
<b>11 clients</b>					<b>15 clients</b>			
Downward change less than 10 points, increased or unchanged	Downward change of 10-19 points	Downward change of 20-29 points	Downward change of 30 or more points		Downward change less than 10 points, increased or unchanged	Downward change of 10-19 points	Downward change of 20-29 points	Downward change of 30 or more points
<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>19%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>72%</b>		<b>7%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>47%</b>

Since MEET in Oxford started recording clients' scores, 80% of all clients for Energy Therapies, and 81% for EMDR had a significant drop in PCL-5 scores.

In the year 2021-22, 93% of all clients for Energy Therapies, and 81% for EMDR had a significant drop in PCL-5 scores.

*Note: sometimes it is not possible to do obtain a final PCL5 score.*

*If you would like to see the full table, which gives detailed scores and shows the number of therapy sessions each client had, please email [admin@meetinxford.org](mailto:admin@meetinxford.org).*

## Clients' evaluations

When sessions end, clients are asked to evaluate the therapy they have received and respond to questions including: What did you learn about yourself from the therapy? What has changed for you as a result?

Please see below some of the responses.

*"The therapy has been life changing." (PCL5 score 55 – 22)*

*"I have gradually been able to view things with more compassion and acceptance and start to think about things in a different way. . . I am extremely grateful to (*therapist*) and to MEET for giving me the opportunity to have these therapy sessions. . . I have really benefitted from them, and I wouldn't have been able to do this without MEET's assistance. Thank you so much for your help." (PCL5 score 43 – 22)*

*"I had almost become resigned to repeating self harming habits and could not see a way out. However, (*therapist's*) intervention shifted patterns like no other therapist has ever been able to do so before. The benefits were tangible and difficult to believe at first. My life is almost unrecognisable. I feel extremely grateful to MEET and (*therapist*) for this life changing therapy." (PCL5 score 39 – 21)*

“I am kinder to myself and more understanding of myself.  
I felt cared about as a human being for the first time.” (PCL5 score 77 – 39)

“Though I know I will still have my ups and downs I feel positive that going forward that I will be ok.”  
(PCL5 score 57 – 19)

“I learned that I can challenge my anxious thoughts and panic attacks by rationalising them and catching the cycle before it escalates. . . I feel more confident in my ability to do things and go outside.” (PCL5 score 35 – 14)

“Before things were pressing down on me, things feel lighter now, the difficult times are in the distance... I’ll never put myself in the same position again, I have the strength to avoid situations. I feel more confident as a person.” (PCL5 score 67 – 21)

“I am hopeful for the future – the beginning of a new adventure” (PCL5 score 32 – 9)

“I noticed that my night terrors reduced noticeably and my sleep improved.” (PCL5 score 63 – 53)

“I can’t imagine this year without it.” (PCL5 score 55 – 41)

## **Making EMDR and Energy Psychotherapy better known in Oxfordshire**

One of the aims of the charity is to raise the profile of the trauma focused therapies EMDR and Energy Psychotherapy in Oxfordshire. We do this primarily by disseminating information and by giving experienced psychotherapists the opportunity to practise these approaches:

- We provide experienced therapists, who have added EMDR or Energy Psychotherapy to their therapeutic repertoire, with the opportunity to practise these skills in working with trauma. We refer clients to them who are already assessed as suitable for these methods.
- Our supervision groups, which MEET in Oxford therapists are required to attend, provide an opportunity for discussion with peers and for sharing knowledge and experiences.
- We work with a range of referring organisations which offers an opportunity to disseminate knowledge and understanding of the approaches we use and, through our work with the individuals referred, to demonstrate their effectiveness in working with trauma.

## **Acknowledgements and thanks:**

We would like to thank our therapists, trustees, donors, referrers, clients and the Oxford Quaker Meeting who make MEET happen.

- MEET benefits enormously from the generosity of its therapists, all of whom give their time *pro bono*. They offer one or more sessions each week, run MEET groups, or contribute to the management of the charity. Without them, MEET would not exist, and we are immensely grateful.

- We are supported by the Oxford Quaker Meeting, which generously provides rent-free therapy rooms and the support of the Meeting House managers.
- A grant from the Quaker Mental Health Fund UK (previously Retreat York Benevolent Fund) helped us to plan ahead.
- We are grateful to everyone who made a financial donation to MEET in Oxford, including the clients who made contributions towards the cost of their therapy.
- We thank our trustees who give generously of their time.