

Chairman's Report

for the year ended 31 December 2019

This report summarizes the activities of the CHS for the year to 31 December 2019. It includes discussion on the activities of the Helpline and the Mental Health Services Centre as well as the other aspects of CHS, notably our financial results, events schedule, website and communications.

The Helpline

This has been another busy year with calls to the Helpline, excluding silent calls, totaling 4,710. This represents an increase of over 13% on the previous year. The Helpline continues to function on a 24/7, free, confidential and anonymous basis. Whatever a caller's problem, a CHS volunteer (recruited, supervised and supported by two professionals from our Mental Health Services Team) is available to listen sympathetically and provide emotional support or helpful information.

Over the years we have seen a gradual reduction in the number of calls to the Helpline from people seeking information. This is, without doubt, directly related to the expanding use of the internet across a wide swathe of the population. However, the decline in information related calls (roughly 8% of all calls in 2019) is also due to the exponential increase in mental-health related calls.

During the year a number of our long-standing Helpline supporters have moved on to other ventures. At the end of the year we had 21 Helpline volunteers, although not all of these are active and/or available all of the time. Although there is no shortage of willing volunteers who are keen to join the Helpline team, it is true that our internal requirements (e.g., regular attendance at weekly meetings of Helpline volunteers) can prove to be an insurmountable barrier for some, especially those in full or even part-time employment.

The Mental Health Services Centre

Similar to the Helpline experience, this has been a record-breaking year with nearly 1,200 new "intakes" during the year – a 23% increase on 2018. And we see no sign of this trend reversing with 175 new intakes in January 2020 alone. In line with our prior year experience, our intakes represented over 40 different nationalities, although the UK, USA, Belgium and Germany account for the majority (roughly 75%).

These unprecedented levels of demand are placing a certain amount of strain on the entire CHS team – therapists and office staff alike, but we are doing our very best to manage these intakes in-house rather than refer them to third party professionals. Even in January 2020, we were able to allocate over 92% of intakes to a CHS professional.

During 2019, the Clinical Team has remained relatively stable with around 17 therapists divided between the Children's Team and the Adult's Team. We also have an additional three "Affiliated Members" who provide a range of complementary services (e.g., an Art Therapist, a Dietician and a Family Mediator).

COMMUNITY HELP SERVICE ASBL

Avenue des Phalènes 26
Nachtvlinderslaan 26
1000 Brussels
Tel: +32 (0)2 647 67 80

office@chsbelgium.org
www.chsbelgium.org
IBAN: BE83 4388 1352 9115
RPM: 0408.409.887

We continue to look for one additional Affiliated Member as well as two clinical psychologists (one for each team) as well as a separate psychiatrist for the Adult's Team.

Financial Results

After a series of years where we have struggled to cover our costs and had to eat away at our cumulative reserves, 2019 was another good year from a financial perspective. After a return to a net surplus of €8,997 in 2018 we generated a further surplus of €23,761 for 2019.

For the first time we have moved from a standard cash-basis of accounting to a more stringent accruals basis as this provides a much better alignment of our income and expenses with our activities in a given period. The effect of this change in accounting policy has been to reduce our 2019 surplus by just under €4,000 due to a combination of capitalising the purchase of new furniture and testing materials (which serve to increase our surplus) but providing for 2019 expenses that were not paid until 2020 (which serve to reduce our surplus).

A brief summary is shown in the table below:

	Total CHS		MHSC		Helpline	
	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018
	€	€	€	€	€	€
Receipts	146,876	134,486	112,822	109,831	34,054	24,655
Expenditure	(123,114)	(125,489)	(91,784)	(98,194)	(31,330)	(27,294)
Surplus (Deficit)	23,761	8,997	21,038	11,636	2,723	(2,639)

Whilst the Mental Health Services Centre generated a better than budget surplus for the year, we know that MHSC revenues are heavily dependant upon maintaining the Clinical Team at its current size. The loss of just one member of the Clinical Team can have a negative impact on the bottom line by anything up to €10,000.

As more fully discussed below, our numerous fund-raising events have helped move the Helpline into surplus. However, included in Helpline receipts is an amount of €16,462 which we drew down against the Funds held on our behalf by the King Baudouin Foundation. These amounts are only taken to income when physically received into the CHS bank accounts. As at 31 December 2019 there is approximately €12,000 held by KBF in Euro and \$5,000 held in US dollars.

Events

During 2019, CHS volunteers either attended or helped to organise nearly 40 specific events. These ranged from independent fund-raising activities organised by our numerous supporters (e.g., the British Chamber of Commerce's Quintessential British Jolly and the BBKA's Christmas Party) as well as Christmas Markets at local schools (e.g., the British School of Brussels and the Da Vinci International School), and Charity Concerts (e.g., the Carmel Dempsey Band and the International Chorale Concert).

Whilst fund-raising is an important component of our events calendar, we also need to raise awareness about the CHS's role in the wider community in order both to recruit new volunteers and, more importantly, reach out to those segments of the population (e.g., the elderly or students) that could

COMMUNITY HELP SERVICE ASBL

Avenue des Phalènes 26
 Nachtvinderslaan 26
 1000 Brussels
Tel: +32 (0)2 647 67 80

office@chsbeltgium.org
 www.chsbeltgium.org
IBAN: BE83 4388 1352 9115
RPM: 0408.409.887

benefit from our services. CHS participation at seven separate workshops run by ING and Bright Expats and targeted at the expatriate community in Belgium, all helped fly the CHS flag and attract new volunteers. Our 2020 Calendar, the costs of which are also covered by ING, was also a popular give-away at these events as it contains a wealth of valuable information that is essential to anyone moving to Belgium for the first time.

Conclusion

Whilst mental health statistics are often several years out of date by the time they are published, it is very clear from our activities in 2019 that the importance and relevance of a mental health Helpline has never been greater. Although the stigma attached to mental health issues (whether from a third-party or personal perspective) may be slowly diminishing, there is still scope for significant improvement. Today, people seem to be more comfortable in talking about their mental-health related issues than was the case a decade ago and companies have elevated mental health to the level of the Boardroom. But as the pressures of modern life continue to increase, it is likely that demand for the services the CHS offers will continue to grow.

We are indebted to all our sponsors for their financial support over the past year and hope that this support will continue into the future, although, at time of writing, we find ourselves in the grips of a global pandemic and that future is uncertain. I will not dwell on this subject in what is, essentially, a report on our activities and performance in 2019. However, the relevance of an organisation such as CHS in the current environment has never been greater. 2020 will be a year of significant challenge for everyone but I am confident that the CHS is well placed to respond to these challenges and continue to do what it does best.

Finally, a note of thanks to every member of the CHS family – office volunteers, Helpline volunteers, the Mental Health team and the Board for their dedication and commitment over the past year.

Jeremy Jennings
Chairman
May 2020