

National Phobics Society
The anxiety disorders charity



Annual Review **2007**



Foreword

It has been another exciting year for the National Phobics Society as the charity continues to expand and develop. This year has seen the launch of important initiatives as we seek to address every aspect of anxiety disorders. The NPS is strengthening links with partners in terms of funding, service provision and research and we are beginning to roll out training as we seek to raise the profile of anxiety sufferers and improve the quality and availability of treatment.

I would like to offer a word of thanks to all of the excellent volunteers, staff and supporters of the NPS. Like most of you, I am a sufferer and I understand more every day how vital the National Phobics Society is in terms of support, treatment and championing the cause of those of us who find it difficult to make our voice heard.

David Thomas, Vice Chair



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Our aims:

To promote the relief and rehabilitation of persons suffering from agoraphobia and associated anxiety disorders, phobias and conditions, in particular but not exclusively by raising awareness in such topics.

Put another way, we are all about helping people who are affected by anxiety.



“Thanks for your time. I wish I had contacted you a year ago”

How do we go about meeting our aims of helping people with anxiety?

National Phobics Society, or NPS as we more commonly known, works to relieve and support those living with anxiety disorders by providing information, support and understanding via an extensive range of services including 1:1 therapy services and helpline, email and online support.

We work regularly with external agencies and healthcare professionals to improve the service provision offered to those living with anxiety disorders whilst also assisting with significant research studies in the field of anxiety.

Our Belief

We strongly believe that those who have experienced anxiety disorders are well placed to offer support to others similarly affected because they are truly

able to understand the impact anxiety disorders have on people's lives.

Because of our ethos, those who have personal experience are central to the delivery of NPS' services and are integrally involved in all aspects of the charity from the Board of Trustees through to our diverse team of volunteer practitioners, self help group facilitators and helpline workers.

Although we are a 'user-led' organisation – that is, we are run by and for those with personal experience of anxiety, we recognise that we can't exist in isolation and that in order to achieve our aims we need to work with others. Because of this we have developed a patron team comprising a range of highly skilled individuals, all of whom are active in the world of anxiety disorders! Without the support of our patrons, many of the exciting initiatives that NPS has embarked on this year would never have got off the ground.

NPS' Patrons:

- Professor Karina Lovell
- Professor David Clark
- Professor Paul Salkovskis
- Professor Adrian Wells
- Dr Raj Persaud
- Dr David Baldwin
- Dr David Wheatley
- Dr Chris Williams
- Ursula James
- Dr Sam Cartwright-Hatton
- Dr Fred Penzel
- Professor Cary Cooper
- Professor Malcolm Lader
- Professor Robert Edelmann

Each of our patrons bring a unique contribution to the NPS and we are indebted to them for their ongoing support and enthusiasm. Similarly, our Board of Trustees has overseen the strategic development of NPS this year demonstrating considerable expertise and commitment. NPS' Board of Trustees throughout 2007 comprised:

- Danny Hulme – Chair
- David Thomas – Vice Chair
- Rose Beech
- Amandip Kalar
- Julie Kelly
- Liz Bradford

And finally, the NPS wouldn't be the NPS without its small, but dedicated staff team and of course its amazing team of volunteers (of which there are now over 600).

In 2007, NPS' staff team comprised:

- Nicky Lidbetter – Chief Executive
- Glenmore Nunes – Operations Manager
- Clare Mayo – Development Officer (until 31 August 2007)
- Catherine (Cat) O' Neill – Services Co-ordinator (from Sept 2007)
- Dominic (Nic) Seccombe – Administration Co-ordinator (until November 2007)



Grants and Awards

Throughout 2007 we were able to secure support and assistance from a number of funding bodies, organisations and individuals including:

- Department of Health – Section 64 grant
- CN4M (Community Network for Manchester)
- Manchester City Council – via the 'Carers Grant'
- Pfizer Pharmaceuticals
- Lewis Family Charitable Trust

So what happened in 2007?



Like any year, 2007 was a very productive and busy year for the charity, with a number of exciting new initiatives taking place. Similarly this year the hard work of the NPS staff and volunteer team was rewarded by the receipt of several awards including the 'Investing in Volunteers' Quality Standard and a 'Hope Award'. The latter is an award given by a user-led website: www.ibstales.com. The website comprises a collection of personal experiences from individuals affected by Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) and therefore to receive recognition from another service user-led organisation was fantastic.

Investing in Volunteers



Investing in Volunteers is a highly prestigious quality standard and is awarded in recognition of the work undertaken by an organisation with its volunteers. Certainly NPS' volunteers are

the most critical part of the organisation; it is they that are on the frontline of NPS' efforts to help those with anxiety disorders and it is volunteers who enable the NPS to offer such a diverse and comprehensive service to sufferers. It was therefore most satisfying to see that our work as an organisation around striving to deliver the best working environment and support for volunteers has also been recognised.

“Living Life to the Full” online support project

In conjunction with the University of Glasgow and our patron, Dr Chris Williams, a team of volunteers from the NPS were trained in the delivery of email support to site users of the lifeskills website: www.livinglifetothefull.com as part of a research project which seeks to evaluate the impact of email support alone compared to those individuals who access the website whilst also receiving email support. Over 20 volunteers have participated in this project and at the time of writing this report, over 100 participants had actively registered with the project. The aim is to recruit in total 200 people to allow for a good sample size to be achieved. Our volunteer team of 'email supporters' continue to provide support to what is a very exciting research project.

“I think its great that an institution like yours exists”

New Fact Sheets

In response to feedback that we received on our helpline and via emails received to our email support services we compiled three new fact sheets: one on fear of the dark (aimed at adults), another on fear of the dark (aimed at children) and a fact sheet aimed at those individuals who are caring for someone who has an anxiety disorder. The latter fact sheet's production was kindly supported by a small Carers Grant received from Manchester City Council.



The illustration shows a path leading through a landscape. On the left, the path is dark and leads to a signpost that says 'RELAPSE'. On the right, the path is bright and leads to a signpost that says 'CONTINUED WELLBEING'. A group of five people (three men and two women) are standing at the junction, looking towards the path. The background features a sun, trees, and a path leading into the distance. The text 'Relapse Prevention Pack' is written in large blue letters across the bottom of the illustration. Below the title, it says 'National Phobias Society' and 'The anxiety disorders charity'. At the bottom, it says 'NPS' Relapse Prevention Pack has been supported by Pfizer Limited'.

Relapse Prevention Kit

Those of us who have been unfortunate enough to suffer with an anxiety disorder but have thankfully got to a stage in our lives where we feel our anxiety is under control, will know the importance of learning to 'stay mentally well'. Relapse prevention packs, that is information about how to stay mentally well and avert a relapse in mental state, exist for mental health conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and other more

serious mental health problems, however there were no such kits that seemed available in a user-friendly format for those affected by anxiety. We therefore decided to make the compilation of a Relapse Prevention Kit something that we would focus on in 2007. We were fortunate to receive the support of Pfizer Pharmaceuticals who kindly funded the graphic design, printing and dissemination costs of this useful kit (which is now also available as a download from our website).

Launch of the new NPS website



This year we totally revamped our website! This project was undertaken by David Rogers who redesigned the whole site, painstakingly making necessary alterations to pages and implementing new features such as a 'search' facility enabling site visitors to search for specific items whilst adding sections dedicated to 'children and young people', 'welfare benefits and anxiety', NICE (National Institute for Health & Clinical Excellence) guidelines and condition specific information on health anxiety, compulsive nail biting and compulsive skin picking.

In fact David did such a good job on our website that he received formal recognition of his work at this year's IT 4 Communities Award Ceremony where he was a finalist in the 'Best IT Volunteer'

award category.

The website is fast proving to be the main point of contact for our service users with it attracting over 300,000 hits on average every month. We have noticed that following on from high profile media coverage, hits to our website in the corresponding month almost double. For example, in October, when GMTV ran a feature on phobias giving our website as a 'useful link' and when BEST magazine ran a feature on 'summer phobias', again listing NPS as a useful organisation to contact, this resulted in many more people visiting the website.

How do people find our website?

We know exactly how people come to visit our website as our website hosts fortunately provide us with a wealth of statistics relating to this very issue. People mainly visit our site as a result of visiting the BBC website's health pages, BUPA and social anxiety UK websites as well as from doing a 'google' search.

Although our website is great as it is, we are planning further additions and improvements over the coming months, and in the latter quarter of 2007, we were fortunate to secure the services of Stephen O'Shea, who is now our volunteer website developer. Stephen has already started work on a number of projects relating to the website including adding shopping cart functionality to the site, and adding useful sections of information such as links to Department of Health guidelines for service users on CBT competencies alongside other useful information resources.

"You made me feel valued. I am impressed"

Toilet Phobia

This year we continued with our successful Toilet Phobia (TP) project which is kindly supported by the Lewis Family Charitable Trust. In September, we appointed a new 'Awareness Manager' – Catherine O'Neill whose role it is to raise awareness of Toilet Phobia and other anxiety disorders amongst the general public and key stakeholders, GPs, psychologists and other healthcare professionals of NPS. Already Catherine or 'Cat' as she is more widely known has attended a number of high profile events, including a primary care mental health conference in Cardiff as part of the Wales Alliance of Mental Health in Primary Care initiative. Cat also presented on Children & Anxiety at Manchester Primary Care Trust's World Mental Health Day celebrations, which were focused this year on young people and mental health.

It is true to say that Toilet Phobia is now much more widely recognised thanks to our TP campaign and because of this, we hope that those who are affected by a toilet related anxiety condition are able to access help for their problem in a timely and effective manner. We were fortunate to attract high profile media coverage with a large article on TP being featured in the Manchester Evening News and also the Daily Express newspaper. We continued to provide support to individuals affected by TP by maintaining the TP web pages on our website, whilst also holding regular peer and professionally led support sessions in the dedicated TP chatroom. Similarly, we have supported hundreds of individuals to access our therapy services, in particular our telephone Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) service.

Raising the profile of NPS:

This year we undertook a range of activities specifically aimed at raising the profile of the NPS. In particular, one of our volunteers, Christine Molloy, led on a fundamentally important piece of work which was to set about compiling a list of all Primary Care Mental Health Teams that are in operation in England. To say this activity was like getting blood out of a stone, is quite frankly an understatement, but Christine persisted and today we now have a fully functional database. Towards the latter part of 2007 we sent out a comprehensive mail-out to all these teams to advise them of the services that NPS provides and which included a complimentary Toilet Phobia DVD and information booklet.

Media Work

As always, this year we dealt with hundreds of media calls, with on average the office receiving two media enquiries every day.

Throughout 2007 we were fortunate to secure the services in a voluntary capacity of Kevin Garwood and Dave Thomas as media co-ordinators. Kevin in particular made some real inroads into the way that NPS manages its contact with the media and produced a media database whilst handling the numerous media enquiries – sourcing relevant case studies and liaising with professionals.



On-line Advertising

As mentioned earlier in this report, the internet is increasingly taking over from other forms of contact that individuals have with ourselves and as a result, we decided to apply for a 'Google Grant'. Fortunately our application was successful and as a result we have had a free listing on the Google website home page such that whenever anyone types the words 'phobia' or 'anxiety' or 'anxiety disorder' into the google search engine, the National Phobics Society's details are listed alongside organisations and companies that have paid to advertise in this way. Certainly the 'google grant' has increased traffic to the website significantly and we are very grateful to 'google' for their support.

New Patron

This year we were fortunate to secure the patronage of Dr Chris Williams. Chris is a leading figure in the world of self-management of common mental



"I would be lost without you guys"

health problems and is author of the two popular 'Overcoming' books on anxiety and depression as well as the ever popular lifeskills website www.livinglifetothefull.com

Strategically, NPS' Chief Executive, Nicky Lidbetter was asked to join the North West Commission on Mental Health's reference group. This has been extremely useful as Nicky has been able to represent the views of people living with anxiety disorders at these events.

Psychological Therapies

In addition to continuing to provide our extensive range of in-house psychological therapies, this year we undertook a large scale exercise which sought to elicit the views of our membership on the provision of psychological therapies via a questionnaire sent to all members.

This project was set against the back-drop of the Government's own drive to increase access to such therapies and the national campaign 'We need to talk' led by Mind and other leading mental health charities. The findings of the survey were numerous and included respondents stating that they wanted a choice in the way that their therapy had been delivered (i.e. people stating that they would have liked the option to have tried phone therapy but that this had not been a choice that had been made available to them through their local NHS service). Also not surprisingly, many respondents stated that despite there being all the new initiatives around to increase access to psychological therapies, many

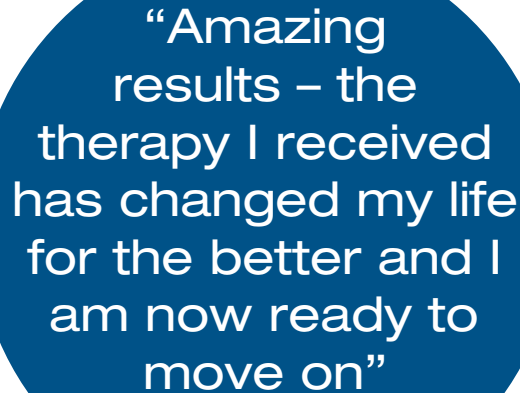
people were frustrated with the wait that they had endured when trying to obtain therapy. Another theme that came out loud and clear was around respondent's frustration at being offered on average just six therapy sessions with many people stating that they felt that they had only just touched the surface of their problems and required more sessions.

Other important themes that arose from the questionnaire were respondents' complete lack of awareness of NHS primary care mental health teams – not only of their existence but of what services they offer. This was not surprising to hear given the almost military exercise we had to undertake in order to get details of such teams earlier on in the year.

Similarly, very few respondents had heard of the NICE guidelines for depression or anxiety – again this showed a clear need for more work to be done in this area by the statutory sector. We feel that anyone affected by anxiety should be aware of NICE guidelines and to this end, we have created a new section on our website which provides links to the guidelines produced by NICE in the treatment of depression, anxiety and other common mental health problems.

Whilst it is important to ensure that all of our service users know about NICE guidelines, we have also undertaken several pieces of work this year which have been very much about updating our existing

literature/information to ensure that it is up to date and accurate. To this end, we have republished our information pack and several of our fact sheets including those on illness phobia, school phobia, claustrophobia, Irritable Bowel Syndrome and food phobia.



“Amazing results – the therapy I received has changed my life for the better and I am now ready to move on”

Research

NPS continued throughout 2007 to be formally involved in a number of research projects including the REEACT trial – this is a Randomised Evaluation of the Effectiveness and Acceptability of Computerised Therapy, and the National Institute for Health Research's Programme to increase equity of access to high quality mental health services in primary care. We have also continued to help researchers working in the field of anxiety to recruit participants to their studies through offering free advertisements in our national magazine: 'Anxious Times' and free website advertising in the 'anxiety research' section of our website.

Fundraising and Finances

This year, our membership levels stayed very much the same as those seen in previous years. We have noticed (as mentioned earlier) that the majority of our members are now opting to take out membership online, and because of this, early in 2007 we introduced a 'three year' membership package – aimed at trying to improve membership retention rates. This is a problem area for us as we find that because of the nature of anxiety disorders, many people discontinue their membership once they have found the support and assistance that they need from us in order to continue on their path to recovery. Because of this although membership

continues to provide a much-needed income stream for the charity, we have focused our efforts on other fundraising strategies including the implementation of a new 'text to donate' service.

Clearly the grant that we receive from the Department of Health continues to be fundamental to the funding of NPS' core activities and to this end we must ensure that this support continues in future years. Similarly, we have been most fortunate that the support from the Lewis Family Charitable Trust has continued into 2007. This support has provided NPS with some stability as well as enabling the organisation to work towards taking on additional staff in the future whose specific remit it will be to raise funds.

Balance Sheet

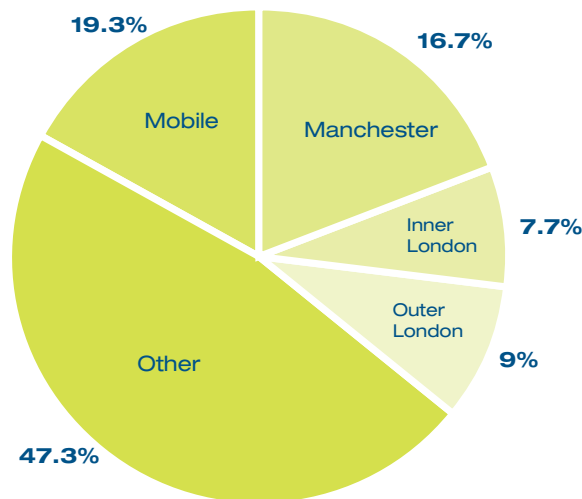
	Notes	2007 £	2006 £
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible Fixed Assets	(6)	2,331	643
CURRENT ASSETS			
Stock		3,500	3,500
Debtors	(8)	2,802	343
Cash at Bank and in Hand		<u>209,414</u>	<u>201,053</u>
		215,716	204,896
LIABILITIES			
Amounts falling due within one year	(9)	<u>(44,223)</u>	<u>(11,599)</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>171,493</u>	<u>193,297</u>
NET ASSETS		<u><u>173,824</u></u>	<u><u>193,940</u></u>
ACCUMULATED FUNDS			
Unrestricted	(10)	172,692	187,392
Restricted	(10)	1,132	6,548
		<u><u>173,824</u></u>	<u><u>193,940</u></u>

NPS' Core Services

In addition to all the numerous activities undertaken as already described, throughout 2007 we continued to provide our mainstream services which included:

National Telephone Helpline: 08444 775 774

The helpline took over 15,000 calls this year and we continued to provide a service throughout the entire year offering people affected by anxiety, alongside healthcare professionals etc, information and support via the helpline. The helpline is staffed entirely by volunteers who give freely of their time to take calls from individuals presenting with a range of anxiety disorders and/or healthcare professionals, carers and family members.



As the chart shows, the majority of our calls come from mobiles, followed closely by calls from Manchester and London (surprisingly the averages are the same this year).

Finally, throughout 2007 we remained an active member of the Mental Health Helplines Partnership, and delivered a workshop on Technology and Helplines at a national IT and mental health conference in London.

Email Support Service

This year our volunteers supported on average 10 people per day via the NPS email support service. This service is proving to be a very effective alternative to the helpline being particular popular amongst those individuals who feel unable to talk about their difficulties over the phone.

On-line Services

We provided on-line services not only through our website but via a dedicated 'members only' section of the site which offers users access to on-line contacts lists and dedicated bulletin boards and chatrooms.



“Thank you for all your help. I have felt like an embarrassment to my family for such a long time and its good to know that what I am feeling is common”

‘Anxious Times’ Magazine

Our quarterly publication: Anxious Times proved to be ever popular amongst the readership with positive feedback continuing to be received. The magazine is a lifeline to many – particularly those people who have such severe anxiety that it affects their ability to leave their home.

Therapy Services

This year, we dealt with a record number of referrals from people wishing to access NPS’ psychological therapy services. In 2007 we supported over 1050 people to access therapy with over four times as many individuals as the year before choosing to access therapy via the telephone. The results of a qualitative evaluation undertaken by researchers at the University of Manchester of our telephone CBT service are nearing completion and it is clear that this mode of delivery of therapy is becoming increasingly popular.

We continued to expand on the number of locations where therapy is available to access through our in-house therapy services and now have therapists practicing in over 180 locations throughout the UK.

Specialist Helpline Services

We continued to provide specialist helpline services in the following areas:

- Panic attacks/panic disorder
- Tranquilliser issues
- Psychiatric medication (via a specialist volunteer led psychiatric pharmacy team at Manchester Mental Health & Social Care NHS Trust)
- Psychology information line (via a volunteer consultant psychologist based at Wythenshawe Hospital, Manchester)
- Emetophobia (fear of vomiting)
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Public speaking

Self Help Groups

We have continued to maintain a comprehensive listing on our website of self help groups that are in operation throughout the UK. Similarly we have supported the development of a number of anxiety support groups in the Greater Manchester area through our partnership work with the organisation, Self Help Services (www.selfhelpservices.org.uk)

Workshops

This year our volunteer workshop facilitator, Joan Callaghan, kindly ran four workshops in London and Manchester on Self Esteem & Assertiveness and Public Speaking/Presentation Skills. All workshops were well attended and we received very positive feedback about the facilitator. One member in London gained so much from attending the public speaking course that she has now gone on to set up her own public speaking self help group in London.

Where Next?

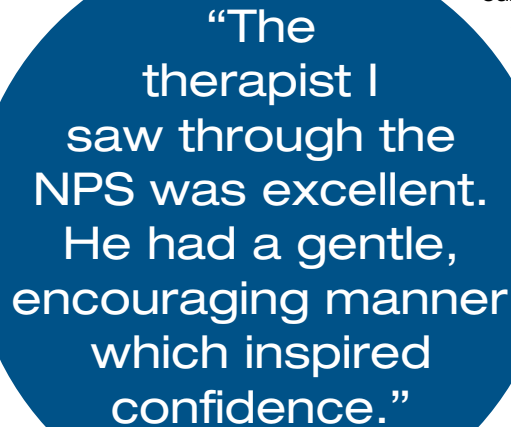
Certainly 2007 was an action-packed year for the NPS but as ever we are keen to continue to build on our extensive range of services whilst also taking a lead on raising the profile of anxiety disorders nationally

by continuing to support statutory sector initiatives such as the Department of Health's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme. We have decided in 2008 to focus our efforts on making services better for children and young people affected by anxiety and aim to embark on an ambitious project to train mental health professionals so that they feel adequately equipped to offer support to such individuals. Certainly child and adolescent mental health services in the UK at the moment are probably developmental wise where adult psychological therapy services were ten years ago and it is because

of this that we feel our input into current service provision, and in particular, our taking the lead in the training of therapists to enable them to support children and young people affected by anxiety is much needed.

Another strand of work that we intend to focus on throughout 2008 is around developing services throughout the country for individuals affected by 'driving phobia'. The need for a specific service of this kind was identified following on from the large volume of calls received on the helpline after a national newspaper featured an article on

the subject. Whilst there are private driving phobia services in existence, we are aware that many of our members are unable to access such services because of their cost. We therefore intend to develop an accessible, low cost service in 2008 to meet this unmet need.



“The therapist I saw through the NPS was excellent. He had a gentle, encouraging manner which inspired confidence.”

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