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Bridge of Hope, a department of Ashton Community Trust, is a wellbeing service that supports individuals affected by the conflict and poor physical & emotional health.

It opened its doors in 2001 in response to alarming levels of stress and trauma in North Belfast. Since then around 20,000 individuals have accessed our wellbeing services.

The majority of individuals seeking support come from the areas that continue to experience poverty and life changing health and life inequalities.

We provide complementary therapies, CBT & trauma counselling, physiotherapy, life coaching, accredited training and personal development courses as well as legacy conflict analysis.

We also provide services through the work of Health & Wellbeing Caseworkers, who are managed by the Victims and Survivors Service and funded through PEACE IV.

Positive health and wellbeing is a priority for Bridge of Hope and through our work with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and Public Health Agency we are doing our part to help improve emotional wellbeing and resilience levels right across the city of Belfast. We are also a service provider to the BH&SCT Primary Care Mental Health Hubs across Belfast in relation to life coaching and psychological therapies.

Bridge of Hope’s origins lie in North Belfast and its experiences of conflict and poor physical and mental health. As we move into a more peaceful transition phase, learning how to live with the long term effects of conflict is a challenge for all of us.

Our core aim in addressing this legacy of conflict is to offer people time to heal through a holistic approach to trauma recovery.

Services are funded by The Executive Office (TEO) through the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS). We also receive funding from the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust (BH&SCT) to deliver complementary therapies to support those experiencing poor mental health and from the Public Health Agency (PHA) under its Protect Life suicide prevention strategy.

Bridge of Hope engages with local communities to assess the impact of conflict at grassroots level. In recent years we have successfully engaged with marginalised communities through initiatives such as ‘Making Sense of the Past in the Present’ and ‘Who Am I?’. In January 2011 we began work on the Grassroots Transitional Justice Toolkit initiative, a ground-breaking piece of work examining how communities are coping with peace/political arrangements. This programme is now a joint partnership between Bridge of Hope and the Transitional Justice Institute (TJI) at Ulster University, and in particular academic Eilish Rooney. We have published a suite of materials to accompany this work:

* Transitional Justice Grassroots Engagement Report
* Transitional Justice Grassroots Toolkit
* Transitional Justice Grassroots User’s Guide
* Transitional Justice Grassroots Toolkit: Trainer’s Manual (forthcoming)
* Transitional Justice Grassroots Training for Trainer’s Programme due to commence in September 2015.

Bridge of Hope is headed up by Ashton Community Trust’s Head of Victims & Mental Health Services Irene Sherry. She is a member of key strategic bodies such as the Belfast Strategic Partnership that is working to address health and life inequalities across the city of Belfast. She is also Joint Lead of the Belfast Alliance for Suicide Prevention.

Bridge of Hope’s team work across 4 satellite offices: Ashton Centre, Alliance Avenue, Henry Place and Duncairn Gardens. Services are delivered in outreach centres in Shankill Women’s Centre, Tar Anall, Sally Gardens Community Centre in Poleglass, GRACE in Ardoyne, Lurgan and Carrickmore in County Tyrone. We also deliver services to PIPS Charity and Lighthouse.

Individuals can self-refer themselves into our services or through a friend, family or community group. Alternatively we welcome referrals from GP, social worker or other health professional.

Maintaining a high quality of services is crucial for us. As a reflection of that commitment we currently hold a range of quality assurance governance standard certificates.

**Services**

Complementary Therapies including Reflexology & Therapeutic/Aromatherapy massage

Counselling

Life coaching

PEACE IV Health & Wellbeing Caseworker Support

We are a Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT) approved training centre and offer a range of courses that assist individuals become qualified therapeutic practitioners and contribute to the local economy. Courses include Level 3 Certificate Swedish massage; Level 3 Diploma Reflexology and Level 2 Award Thermal Auricular Therapy

Personal development and stress management courses:

* Love Yourself Heal Your Life (Based on Louise Hay's bestselling book You Can Heal Your Life)
* Understanding Stress for Personal Growth
* SWAN (Strengths Weaknesses Ambitions Needs)
* Reducing Stress for Women
* Empower Me
* Take 5 Resilience
* Resilience
* Mindfulness
* Confidence & Communication