

The Sara Lee Trust
Charity Number: 1055048

The Sara Lee Trust Evaluation Report 2022-23



August 2023

The Sara Lee Trust Evaluation Report 2022-23

Contents

The Sara Lee Trust	3
The Evaluation Process	3
Data collected	4
How this information is evaluated and used	5
Service Delivery – The year in review	6
Current range of therapies and activities provided	7
Eligibility and referral criteria	11
Hours of services provided	13
Stakeholder Views	15
Annual Service User and Referrer Survey	15
Service User Monitoring & Evaluation form collection and analysis	19
Service User Feedback	21
2023/24 Trust Action Plan	23

The Sara Lee Trust

The Sara Lee Trust is an established charity in Hastings and Rother that aims to significantly improve the quality of life of local people, including loved ones and carers, affected by cancer and other life-threatening illnesses by providing **free** psychological and counselling support, complementary therapies, and therapeutic group activities.

The Trust is the only provider of this combined range of specialised services in the region, and is also the dedicated provider of these services for St Michael's Hospice (St Leonards on Sea) and The Rye, Winchelsea and District Memorial Hospital (Rye).

The Trust's aims are to:

- develop capacity to fully meet local need and reduce local health inequalities
- provide services of the highest quality that best meet patient needs
- deliver care in the most appropriate setting for the patient
- ensure long-term sustainability

The Evaluation Process

The Trust is committed to developing the services it provides to best meet its users' needs. Essential to achieving this core aim is effective and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring is how the Trust measures progress, identifies problems, and makes modifications and interventions accordingly. This is enabled by a number of tools and mechanisms including: bi-monthly performance reports covering referral and appointment activity; significant event monitoring; regular attendance at multidisciplinary team meetings; and the holding of regular meetings of the therapy team, service user group, operational team and Board of Trustees.

Whilst monitoring is an ongoing process, the aim of our annual **evaluation** is to step back, reflect on the year, and learn from our experiences and the information obtained, to make our operations more effective and efficient in the longer term. The aim of this report is to summarise the in year evaluation process, highlight key findings, and communicate the resulting action plan for year ahead. The action plan will serve as a road map in the ongoing monitoring process and a benchmark against which to evaluate our progress at the end of the year. Our monitoring and evaluation processes also cover reviews of other regular Trust reports which include:

- Trust performance reports
- Financial statements and reports
- Corporate governance and HR reviews
- Relevant external updates (e.g. legislative changes, Information Commission and Charity Commission guidance)

All stakeholders including staff, service users, volunteers, local partners and the wider local community are actively involved in the monitoring and evaluation processes through a variety of forums, regular events and feedback mechanisms which include:

- Service User Group
- Annual Surveys including Service User, Referrer, Staff and Volunteer surveys
- Focus group reviews
- Feedback forms and case studies
- Board of Trustees
- Specific project groups / committees (e.g. The National Lottery Community Fund Project Board, I-KNOW-HOW)

In addition the Trust held an open visioning day in February 2023 attended by a wide range of stakeholders where our activities and operations were reviewed, and needs and priorities for the future discussed. The summary level themes from this important day are included within the findings and proposed actions of this report.

Information and Data collected

This report takes account of a wide range of feedback and information from key stakeholders, including patients, their carers and family members, staff, referrers, volunteers, community partners, and regional and national organisations to help evaluate and contextualise our service.



TRUST SERVICE USERS

- Quantitative data on service provision via EMIS clinical system
- Results of annual service user survey
- Feedback from Service User Group
- Complaints/suggestions forms and other feedback
- Monitoring & Evaluation form data



THE SARA LEE TRUST

- Referral and appointment activity data via EMIS clinical system
- Results of annual staff and volunteer surveys
- Therapy team meetings
- Therapy team personal development plans
- Operational and strategic meetings
- HR & Performance reports and audits including SEA analysis



LOCAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PROFESSIONALS

- Survey of local referrers
- Multidisciplinary team meetings
- Letters of support from local referrers
- GP and Secondary care activity data
- Local partner service feedback



THE WIDER COMMUNITY

- Feedback back from volunteers, local community groups and organisations.
- Local community and care networks (e.g Hastings Care Network / Integrated Primary Care Networks)
- Open forums at visioning events (inc. the Trust AGM)



REGIONAL & NATIONAL

- Updates from the BACP and National Association of Complementary Therapists in Hospice and Palliative Care (NACTHPC) and other relevant professional bodies
- ONS Data
- Public Health Statistics (Local area indices of deprivation)
- Regional groups such as the Sussex and Surrey Cancer Alliance

How this information is evaluated and used

Quantitative data on operational areas including service provision is compared to that of previous years to measure growth year-on-year, and track themes and patterns relating to seasonal and other variations. Data from our monitoring and evaluation sources and surveys, along with other feedback from service users, staff, volunteers, referrers, stake holders and community groups, is analysed to highlight key areas of achievement and areas for improvement.

These findings are shared with the Service User Group, Trust therapy and operational teams, and Board of Trustees. Recommendations for improvement and development are collated through these discussions by the Trust operational team, resulting in a Trust Action Plan which identifies the areas of learning and plans for improvement, and also highlights areas of best practice to support internal development and recognise good performance.

The Trust Action Plan is presented at the Trust's AGM and made publicly available via our website. Where appropriate, specific highlights and action points are shared with service partners and colleagues, in the interests of promoting best practice and improving partnership working. This may include sharing findings and developing plans through the following forums, initiatives and channels:

- Sussex Palliative and End of Life Care Oversight Group
- The Surrey and Sussex Cancer Alliances
- East Sussex Cancer Support Network
- National groups such as the NACTSPC
- The Trust's bi-monthly newsletter, sent to various stakeholders including local healthcare professionals and Trust volunteers
- Regular meetings with the Rye & Hospice multidisciplinary teams to explore ways of working in partnership to develop group activities and other opportunities

Service Delivery – The year in review

Service provision and activities

In the financial year 2022/23 the Trust provided 4,823 hours of therapy and activities, an increase of 22% on the previous year. Our services benefitted supported 653 service users, an increase of 18% from 2021/22.

These increases reflect the removal of pandemic related restrictions in the early part of the financial year and are expected to continue as services and capacity are re-established.

The Trust received 1,092 referrals over the year.



In Year Developments

Highlights

- Our Sara Lee Therapy Centre in Sidley was closed for major improvements and enhancements for a considerable part of the year. Re-opening in March 2023 the centre now has 2 complementary therapy suites as well as a dedicated counselling room.
- In addition, a large annex to our centre, built in year and opened in April 2023 provides a second dedicated counselling room as well as two new hall spaces for group based support and activities
- Remote based services have now been integrated into our core service offering dramatically improving access for those unable to use our in person services
- Both the number of service users supported and activity levels provided increased year on year.
- Established group activities including gentle yoga, healthy cooking and Look Good Feel Better sessions are as popular as ever
- New group support activities were introduced in year including drop in Information & Awareness sessions run in partnership with Bexhill Primary Care Network, Brighter Outlook Exercise programmes and Wellbeing Through Nature groups.



Our Therapy Services

Key
Where each therapy takes place

- Sara Lee Therapy Centre
- St Michael's Hospice
- Hub on Rye Hill
- Home Visits
- Online & Telephone

Talking Therapies



Counselling



A chance to share your thoughts and feelings with an experienced therapist who will listen without judgement. Counselling can bring new understanding to your situation and your relationships, and make things much more manageable. Counselling for couples is also available.



Coaching*



Support from our Counselling team specifically around supporting you back to a more active social and working life.



Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)



CBT is a talking therapy that shows you how to change your mindset. You will learn how to recognise negative patterns and behaviours in yourself and others, implementing coping mechanisms that improve the way you feel, and how you make others feel.



EMDR



EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing) is a therapy that helps you process traumatic or distressing experiences, memories. The therapy involves a combination of techniques such as eye movements or tapping.

*Using support models developed through an EU funded research project called 'I-KNOW-HOW'

Touch Therapies



Aromatherapy



The use of essential oils to support wellbeing and reduce feelings of stress, tension and anxiety. Aromatherapy can be included in a massage or reflexology.



Dry Needling



Involves the insertion of very fine needles into specific points around the body which can provide relief from pain, stiffness and hot flushes.



Lymphoedema Massage (Manual Lymph Drainage)



A specialist massage technique that can relieve lymphoedema swelling and pain (a fluid collection).



Massage



This involves the therapist using their hands to rub your skin and apply pressure to your muscles and tendons to help you relax and ease anxiety, stress and pain.



Reflexology



A massage for your feet or hands that can positively affect different parts of your body promoting a state of deep relaxation and reduce tension and pain.



Reiki



Simple, gentle touch and visualisation techniques for relaxation that can be used over your clothes or blankets and bring relief from many symptoms, including pain.



Shiatsu



A combination of body movement and some pressing and tapping on different parts of your body to bring balance, calm and wellbeing.

Group Activities



A Place To Talk

A supportive and facilitated group helping people to talk about the impact of life threatening illness. Looking at relevant topics such as isolation, body image and stress.



Activity Through Cancer

With Albion in the Community
(Brighter Outlook)

Physical activity sessions and tailored support to help you through your cancer journey.



Food For Thought

A regular group for patients and carers to talk about the impact of life threatening illness and treatment on appetite, the benefits of healthy cooking and to learn and share experiences, recipes and more.



Information & Awareness Drop in Sessions

Delivered in partnership with the NHS aimed at improving awareness of the support available locally for people affected by cancer.



Look Good Feel Better

Skincare, make-up and grooming workshops for women to help boost confidence and manage the visible side-effects of cancer treatment.



Service User Socials

An open regular drop in social event for current and former service users, providing the chance to chat with others in a similar situation.



Therapeutic Yoga

A slow mindful form of yoga that is helpful for people who are / have been unwell. This is a safe and effective way to improve physical activity whilst helping to relieve stress and anxiety.



Wellbeing Through Food

A 6-week course for patients and carers wanting to explore healthy eating during treatment and recovery.



Wellbeing Through Nature

Each season has a 6-week programme which combines group support and creative therapy with a nature focus to encourage sharing and personal reflection.

Other Activities



Law Clinics

Working in partnership with Heringtons Solicitors, these free clinics are aimed at improving the legal support and assistance available to local people with a new life threatening diagnosis.

The Sara Lee Therapy Centre Timetable

	Group Activity	Time	Room
Monday	Therapeutic Yoga – Introduction & Maintenance	12:30-2:30	Woodland & Meadow
	Service User Socials	2:00-4:00 <small>3rd Monday every two months</small>	Meadow
Tuesday	Therapeutic Yoga – Meditation	12:00-1:00 <small>Weekly</small>	Online via Zoom
	Wellbeing Through Nature	10:30-12:30 2:00-4:00 <small>Weekly</small>	Woodland & Meadow
Wednesday	Look Good Feel Better	6:00-8:00pm <small>Monthly - Dates TBC</small>	Meadow
	A Place To Talk	5:00-7:00pm <small>Weekly</small>	Woodland
Thursday	Therapeutic Yoga - Maintenance	9:30-12:30 <small>Weekly</small>	Woodland & Meadow
	Activity Through Cancer	1:00-5:00pm <small>Weekly</small>	Woodland
	Information & Awareness Drop in	3:00-5:00pm <small>3rd Thursday every month</small>	Meadow
Friday	Activities to be confirmed		
Bi-monthly	Wellbeing Through Food	<small>6 weekly programmes run throughout the year. Days Vary.</small>	At Sidley Freedom Church or St Michaels Hospice
	Food For Thought	5:00-7:00pm <small>Days Vary</small>	Meadow
On Arrangement	Law Clinics	Via appointment only	At Heringtons offices, or home visits are available

Our activities are updated periodically.

For the latest information, visit www.saraleetrust.org/timetable

Eligibility and referral criteria

Eligibility

Our remit as a charity is to provide services to people affected by cancer and other life-threatening illnesses* in the Hastings & Rother area. The impact of a life-threatening illness varies from person to person and can be experienced at different times, with some needing more support through the course of their treatment, others once treatment is finished.

The high demand for our services means that we can generally only support those who meet the following criteria:

- are receiving palliative or end-of-life care, or
- are in active treatment for a life-threatening illness, or
- are within 2 years of active treatment, if in remission, and
- for whom equivalent mainstream services are not appropriate or adequate

We also accept referrals for carers and loved ones of patients under the same guidelines.

Suitability

Our services prove to be most helpful to those who meet the above criteria and one or more of the following:

- they have emotional or spiritual concerns regarding the illness and its effect on quality of life,
- are coping with the side effects of treatment e.g. chemotherapy/radiotherapy,
- need complementary symptom management e.g. pain, nausea, breathlessness, constipation, diarrhoea, tiredness, sleeplessness, poor appetite, or
- in the case of the patient's loved ones, are coping with the demands of the caring role and/or facing the prospect of bereavement.

Duration & Accessibility

- Patients receiving complementary therapies will be offered an initial block of 6 sessions.
- Carers/loved ones receiving complementary therapies will be offered an initial block of 3 sessions.
- The number of counselling sessions will vary depending on individual need with some people finding just 1 or 2 sessions sufficient and others requiring longer-term support of up to 12 sessions.
- Our mindfulness and yoga courses are open to patients and they run for a set number of weeks. Places are limited.
- Our healthy and nurturing cooking courses are open to patients and carers/loved ones, and they run for a set number of weeks. Places are limited.
- Our Look Good Feel Better workshops are open to female patients. Places are limited to 1 workshop per patient during a 2-year period.
- Our other group activities are open to patients on an on-going/ad-hoc basis subject to them still meeting the eligibility criteria and to availability.

* **Life-threatening** describes a condition that will most likely be fatal if untreated, and may still be fatal even if treated; as opposed to **chronic**, which describes a condition that is limiting, of long duration and generally slow progression.

Referrals

Our services are accessed by referral from a healthcare professional (e.g. GP, nurse specialist, consultant). To refer patients or family members and carers for our services, please complete our referral form and, where relevant, the home visit needs/risk assessment form. These forms are available on our website and through the DXS clinical referral portal. Referrals should be sent electronically to our secure nhs.net email address: saralee.trust@nhs.net

On receipt of a completed referral form we will do the following:

- Confirm receipt to the referrer using the email address provided.
- Contact the person being referred, provide them with information on our services and a first appointment within three weeks (subject to their availability and ours).

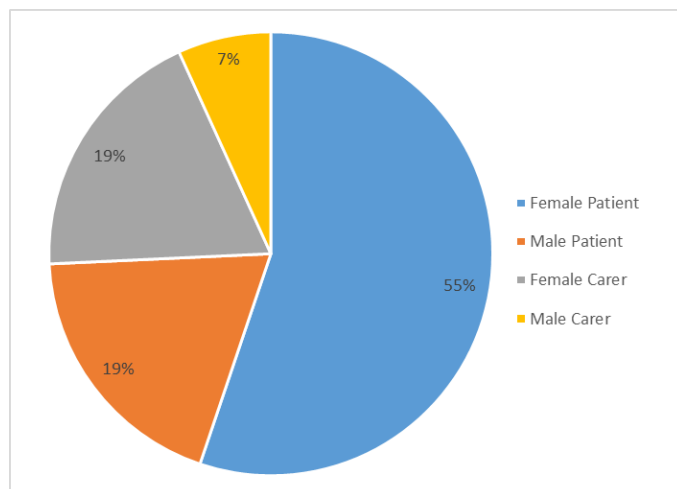
Hours of services provided

Summary

Service	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
Aromatherapy	50	31	35	31	38	26	35	23	31	43	58	41	442
Brighter Outlook											18	12	30
CBT	28	36	23	33	16	26	36	22	35	29	30	41	355
Counselling	177	187	168	169	167	153	199	97	144	147	188	134	1930
Dry Needling	4	12	6			3	25	18	16	7	20	11	122
Look Good Feel Better	14				12	10	12				10	12	70
Massage	40	30	36	55	36	28	41	21	20	25	28	27	387
Reflexology	37	40	27	45	29	53	51	29	44	32	48	30	465
Reiki	11	10	6	15	8	9	12	5	6	4	6		92
Shiatsu	5	5	6	1	6	4	6	10	5	12	3	14	77
Wellbeing Through Food		12	24			8	14			8		6	72
Wellbeing Through Nature												8	8
Yoga	52	53	63	86	72	48	67	59	57	55	59	84	755
Sub Total	418	416	394	435	384	368	498	284	358	362	468	420	4805
PCN Info & Awareness												18	18
Total	418	416	394	435	384	368	498	284	358	362	468	438	4823

Individual sessions are tailored by the therapist to meet the needs of the client at the time by using the range of skills and therapies they have. Often two or three therapies are given during one session to meet the needs of the client.

Who are we providing services to?



Referrals received

Referrer	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
Hospital / Nurse Specialist	55	32	43	44	49	48	44	33	36	24	30	46	484
Hospice @ Home	7	2	0	13	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	26
Hospice / Rye Memorial Hospital IPU	25	21	26	20	25	17	17	34	27	28	23	17	280
SLT Team	21	9	2	13	7	12	14	4	10	21	29	14	156
GP	2	12	7	11	24	15	13	10	14	14	8	10	140
Hospice Wellbeing Services	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Total	110	79	78	104	105	94	88	81	87	87	90	89	1092

Stakeholder Views

The Trust has established processes for engaging stakeholder views on its services and care which includes the use of monitoring and evaluation forms as well as annual surveys. The form and content of these are reviewed and agreed on an annual basis in partnership with the Trust Service User Group. The results of these processes are given below, along with a service user case study.

Annual Service User and Referrer Survey

The form and content of the Service User Survey is reviewed and agreed on an annual basis in partnership with the Trust Service User Group. The survey is hosted and completed online using Survey Monkey, an off-the-shelf interactive software provider. To ensure the survey is representative, the Trust requires a minimum of 10% of its service users to complete and return it. This is a challenging target given the acute ill health and short prognosis of many of the people we support.

This is the eighth year of asking service users to complete our survey, and the fifth year of asking referrers. The results of both surveys are incorporated in this report.

2022-23 Survey Findings

This year 71 **service user** questionnaires were completed compared to 94 last year. 33 of these were electronic entries and 38 paper copies. We sent 268 surveys out, with a higher return rate of 26% compared with 20% last year.

The referrer survey was sent to 63 **referrers** (by email only) which is a similar number to last year, and was completed by 11 people, compared with 10 last year.

The Trust team will work with the SUG and other stakeholders over the coming months to identify and put in place measures aimed at improving response rates for future surveys.

Significant themes and trends are highlighted in this summary.

Summary

- Response rates, particularly from our referrers remain relatively low. Measures to improve these should be considered with our SUG and other stakeholders.
- The importance of retaining remote based services as part of our core offering continues to be highlighted by both service users and referrers.
- Respondents highlighted the importance of services restricted by the pandemic (i.e in person services, support groups & activities) and the need to increase capacity in these areas where possible
- As services return to normal the Trust needs to consider how it manages increased service user demand without compromising standards in relation to waiting times from assessment to first appointment
- People continue to be very satisfied with the care they receive and feel it impacts positively on their health and well-being. Overall 99% of **service users** rated services as Excellent or Very Good, 98% of **referrers** rated services as Excellent or Very Good

Awareness of and access to our services

- There is high level of awareness of our services across the local care network with almost 84% of service users being made aware of our services through a health professional. The impact of our promotional activities across retail and fundraising remains muted.
- Whilst most people continue to be referred for our services relatively quickly, a higher proportion than in previous years said they had to wait up to 2 months for a referral. Just over 10% had a wait longer than 2 months.
- More people than previous years reported feeling that they could have been referred to our services at an earlier stage and over 45% had to wait more than 2 weeks post referral to be offered an appointment.
- Some respondents felt that access was restricted by the lack of services outside normal working hours (9am – 5pm)

Impact of our care

People report that accessing support from the Trust results in significant improvements to their health and well-being. Highlights from this year's survey include:

- Over 70% indicated improved confidence and/or wellbeing.
- Almost 50% said that our services helped reduce feelings of anxiety and/or depression.
- 40% said that treatment helped to reduce symptoms/side effects of treatment (e.g. radiotherapy, medications, surgery) such as breathlessness, pain, nausea, lack of appetite, poor sleep, fatigue, etc as well as providing self-care strategies to help with difficult times
- A third reported reduced isolation

These indicators underline the importance of our services in improving mental and physical health in the people we support, and the lack of alternative comparable, accessible services to meet this essential need.

Service user comments from the 2022/23 survey:

“Sara Lee therapists and teachers are very professional and supportive. The services provided have literally changed my life. Thank you all for being there at the most difficult time of my life.”

“The support I have received has been and still is wonderful. My counselling sessions were Life saver as I was struggling to except what was happening to me.”

“I cannot thank you enough for your support. I have greatly benefited from counselling and it is really helping me to move forward. Shiatsu is incredible and is really helping with my mental and physical recovery. I honestly cannot thank you all enough.”

“I've found the 'scope' (reflexology, counselling, mindfulness, yoga etc.) very useful to my mental as well as physical health. Thank you”

“The reflexology sessions have helped relieve the neuropathy in my feet from chemo. It helped to build my self-confidence back.”

“The yoga has helped me gain confidence and had improved my mobility. The Therapist is awesome and she makes us all feel better about ourselves. Thank you”

“Deep felt thanks for the EMDR counselling sessions they have felt like Life Saving Sessions. Thank you Sara Lee Trust.”

“I don't feel alone”

Facilities

Core services are now routinely provided both in person and remotely. Whilst most respondents were highly satisfied with our facilities and the online environment some important areas for improvement were highlighted including the noise and heat issues at the Sidley Therapy Centre and parking limitations particularly at St Michael's Hospice.

Service user comments from the 2022/23 survey:

“The service offered at the new centre is first class, a credit to Sara Lee. A safe inclusive modern and well-designed environment providing excellent therapies for service users going through tough times.”

“excellent facilities and excellent therapist”

“the new therapy rooms in Sidley are top notch”

“Facilities were very good. I had a few sessions at St Michaels where parking was more of an issue.”

“a safe, relaxing environment.”

“Facilities are excellent”

“I have received counselling at Sidley and the sessions are held in a small but pleasant room. Sometimes it can be a bit hot!”

Developing our care and services

Our ability to develop the care and services that service users need is dependent, to a significant degree, on the effectiveness of our monitoring and evaluation processes. Over 90% of respondents felt the surveys/evaluations easy to understand and none indicated that they felt their feedback would not be put to good use.

Whilst the aim of the Trust and its team over the coming year will mainly focus on recovery and building momentum respondents have identified the following areas as high priority developments / initiatives:

- Developing our range of in person and online support groups and activities including those specifically focused on post cancer / recovery
- Introducing guided self-help tools (e.g. online videos)

Some suggested areas of development such as beauty treatments and craft activities are outside the core remit of the Trust.

We asked referrers what they need or want from The Sara Lee Trust. They told us they would like us:

Services

- To widen the scope of our group support activities

Support and training for referrers

- To hold regular open days to improve awareness and understanding of Trust services
- To provide comprehensive patient information leaflets for referrers to discuss and give patients

Patient Information

- To improve the information available to patients that sets out exactly what services are provided by the Trust, where and when they are delivered and how to access them

General Service User Comments (from our April 2023 monthly report)

- *B's visits were the high point of my week. I knew I would feel less anxious afterwards and would sleep better. She was amazing at reflexology.*
- *Very friendly and professional treatment at home and always very punctual. Made me feel very relaxed.*
- *Very impressed by the service - thank you*
- *I felt this helped a lot and I am most grateful.*
- *Advice, help and general help to overcome problems has been amazing*

Service User Feedback

Case studies demonstrating how the Trust has made a difference to the life of an individual and their family through the service it provides. The first case study relates to our Shiatsu therapy and the second our Counselling service.

Names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of the patient and their family.

Steven is a gentleman in his seventh decade. As part of his treatment plan with his Medical Team, he is receiving Hormone Therapy. He experiences hot flushes. Here is his account in his own words regarding the time he has shared with various members of the Team with The Sara Lee Trust.

“When I was diagnosed with advance cancer a year ago I was given the opportunity to have some therapy by the ‘Sara Lee Trust’, but not knowing what I was about to experience was something out of this world. I was offered 6 sessions of body therapy which was totally relaxing and cleared my mind of the complaint. At a later time I was introduced to another therapist for 6 sessions this time of ‘Acupuncture’, whereby very small needles where inserted into various places on the body and to my and everyone’s amazement the ‘Hot Flushes’ I was plagued with ever since I started my monthly injections had decreased a lot, not completely but a lot.

The centre at Sidley had to be closed for major improvements and all services were put out onto the road, but ‘The Trust’ was unable to obtain a license from the local council to carry on therapy in people’s houses and alike. We were told that we could go to St Michael’s Hospice where space was given to the trust to carry on therapies of other kinds. We were again invited to see another Therapist who could perform therapy in the form of ‘Shiatsu’.

This was a soothing and very relaxing form of therapy whereby it was to train your mind to try and control these Hot Flushes. Again things began to work in reducing the severe hot flushes from the first session not completely but gradually. Having now had 4 sessions and they seem to get better all the time. Before I started my sessions the Hot Flushes were quite severe but now only 4 sessions into this therapy they have decrease immensely.

I have to say that the ‘Sara Lee Trust’ have given me faith in the therapies I have had and I cannot thank them enough and all the staff are so kind in their care for what they have done for me, I am and will always be eternally grateful, as without all their help I would still be suffering these severe flushes. As once I could count anything up to 20 a day, but now I don’t bother to count as there as so few.

Thank you to the Sara Lee Trust.”

Marian was referred by medical profession for Sara Lee Trust counselling support. She had in total 24 telephone sessions started in May 2022 till February 2023. In her assessment session the counsellor addressed boundaries, confidentiality, data protection as well as her goals for what she wanted to achieve. Marian’s’ initial goals was to work on having a happy life so that she could say at the end of her life that she hadn’t wasted it due to her health anxieties. She already had health anxieties and cancer exacerbated these anxieties. In several of our sessions we used mindfulness techniques with my client as she regularly had what she called “meltdowns” over these anxieties.

In our penultimate sessions together I reminded her of her original goal for therapy which was to have a happy life and not feel that she had wasted it. I asked her to imagine what living her life meant to her. Marian said that travel, friends and having fun meant that she had lived a good life. Also having a relationship of equals would be something she would

want for the future. She was able to look ahead to when her surgery was finished and then book a group holiday to Rome.

My client was anxious about our sessions ending so my supervisor suggested that we look our journey together so far in our penultimate session, and for her to draw this journey whilst on the phone with me. She really enjoyed this activity and described our journey together as a roller coaster which had highs and lows.

At the beginning of our journey my client was sitting with fear of dying and was processing recent family bereavements due to cancer. She went through a period of “static and calm” and was at a high point on the roller coaster. She then had a car accident which sent her crashing downwards and had a “Why is this happening to me?” period. We explored all the tools and techniques we had used throughout our sessions so that she felt that she had a “toolkit” to help her when our sessions ended.

She felt positive at the end of our sessions as she could see how far she had come on her personal journey. My client was able to see the benefits of having time to reflect on all the insights that she had gained from our work together. She wanted “to be her own therapist.”

2023/24 Trust Action Plan

This action plan sets out the areas of focus for the Trust in the year ahead, as identified by this evaluation process and a separate Human Resources evaluation process. The plan was approved by the Trust Service User Group on the 21st September 2023 and Board of Trustees on 9th November 2023.

Recovery and building momentum (post pandemic)

Due to the long term impact of the coronavirus pandemic and temporary closure of our centre for a considerable part of 2022, the first set of priorities for the Trust and its team during the period will continue to be focused on:

Services

- Maintaining safe and accessible services
- Re-establishing services suspended or restricted by the pandemic
- Increasing therapy capacity to pre-pandemic levels and beyond
- Responding to changes within the local cancer and palliative care referral pathways to ensure easy access to our services for all adults affected by life threatening illness

Support activities

- Adapting our fundraising and income generating activities in response to the changed operating environment
- Delivering a sustainable post pandemic future for the Trust

Services

The action plan reflects some areas of development from previous years that are either still in progress or were put on hold due to covid restrictions.

Access

- Continue to integrate remote based services into our core service offering to improve support for those unable to access face to face services and activities
- Develop accessible online tools to promote self-care as well as support and care from others
- Further refine referral processes to improve accessibility
- Develop simple and easy to read patient information leaflets and make them accessible across all sites and activities
- Review internal systems with the aim of reducing average waiting times from assessment to first appointment to within 2 weeks
- Develop regular information and awareness events for people with a new life threatening diagnosis in partnership with local Primary Care Networks

Awareness

- Further develop links with key partners and referrers to raise awareness and understanding of our activities through a range of promotional activities including periodic workshops
- Continue to improve awareness of Trust Services through enhanced marketing activities across retail, social media and fundraising events and activities (e.g. increased availability and visibility of literature across our charity shops / major events i.e. Hastings Beatles Day)
- Develop our understanding of local partner services to enable improved signposting to other services as appropriate

Meeting service user need

As and when restrictions and funding allow:

- Increase our core therapy and group support capacity
- Develop our group support activities including
 - Post treatment / recovery short sessions
 - Regular information and awareness events
 - Regular sessions offering practical support (e.g. A Place to Talk)
 - In partnership with our Service User Group develop regular social events and activities for service users
- In the medium term, from mid-2024 onwards, to develop local partnerships to enable the provision of care in other locations where a need is identified (e.g. Judy Beard unit, Conquest Hospital)

Improving the therapy environment

- Put up signage at the Hallspace requesting consideration of others when using the reception area
- Ensure fans are available for periods of hot weather

Our People

The Trust will:

Evaluation processes

- Continue to refine the staff and volunteer annual surveys to enable better benchmarking and identification of key themes and actively encourage wider participation
- Consider in particular through regular team meetings how other opportunities for regular feedback can be developed

Communication, engagement and involvement

- Increase the regular opportunities for open discussion with key staff including Senior Management and Volunteer Coordinator including:

Periodic attendance across all regular team meetings

Involvement in Trust forums and committees including:

Service User Group

Volunteer Committee

Big Lottery Fund Project Group

Establishing a quarterly open drop in session for all staff and volunteers at the SLC Hall space

- Review the coverage and reach of Trust wide updates to ensure that these are routinely cascaded to all team members (employees, contractors, volunteers, supporters and other stakeholders). All team leads will be responsible for reporting back issues relating to coverage / reach of newsletters.

To provide and work to an annual plan of news updates.

- Ensure that all team members are aware of and attend regular departmental team meetings that are held across the Trust. Team Leads will ensure regular meetings cover

all team members (employees, contractors, volunteers, supporters and other stakeholders) and cover core areas including:

Pastoral care and health and wellbeing in the workplace
Operational updates.
Trust developments and initiatives
Training and development opportunities
Support and advice
Performance review and feedback

- Raise awareness and improve promotion of established forums aimed at maximising stakeholder engagement and involvement including:

Volunteer committee
Service User Group
Open meetings with Senior Management

- Ensure that all Trust events are proactively managed with visible leadership that includes

Timely communication in advance
Clarity around roles and responsibilities and expectations on the day
The event environment
Support to be provided by Trust Team Leads
Opportunities for post event evaluation

- Further develop our “whole team” approach through regular biannual team wide development sessions and adhoc social events and activities

Training and Development

- Continue to improve access to Training and Development opportunities for all team members in particular through the regular meetings as set out above
- Provide support and training in key areas including health and safety, retailing and customer service and managing conflict

Valuing People

- Continue to review contractual standard terms and conditions (for employed team members) and the working environment with a view to making enhancements where practical and possible.
- Build on existing initiatives to recognise and value volunteer support including team discounts, thank you events and long service certificates and badges
- Improve the working environment by ensuring all team members and volunteers have access to appropriate rest areas when and where needed

Work Environment

- Ensure all team members & sites have appropriate IM&T facilities to both carry out routine roles and responsibilities but also to enable involvement and engagement as set out in this action plan
- Provide accessible rest areas for team members across all sites

Monitoring

The action plan will be monitored on an ongoing basis with formal reporting to the Board of Trustees. A full review will be undertaken annually as part of the yearly Trust evaluation process.