



unsung heroes

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2008



SPECIAL EDITION!

THE 10th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEACON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

CONGRATULATIONS —

to all of our "Beacon Friends" who have subscribed to this Newsletter for 10 years!! We salute all our loyal friends who have stuck with us through thick and thin.

A potted history.....

Way back in the Autumn of 2000 I wrote the very first quarterly Beacon Friends Newsletter and amazingly here we are now celebrating its first decade. It was originally sent to everyone who worked for Beacon (amounting to about 30 people) but during the intervening years new groups of interested people, partnerships and local agencies have increased its circulation and we now email or post over 200 Newsletters every couple of months or so.

Do you remember, 10 years ago we were listening to the Spice Girls at the height of their fame, watching the Olympic Games from Sydney, and experiencing the wettest autumn on record?

In 2000 :-

- *We worked in 11 venues in Stockport including 3 schools.*
- *We had 20 counsellors who offered about 2,000 hours of counselling.*
- *We saw about 300 clients adults and young people in that year.*
- *We were awarded funding for training and a computer.*

However, Beacon was already a healthy 16 years old and was rapidly developing into a professional organisation and was well known and respected in the local community.

The office staff were Melanie Gardner as Manager, ably assisted by Sandra Bailey, Olive McCallum, Jean Green and me - all working to a rota - and what a mean efficient machine we made! We had a team of about 20 counsellors and the Board of Trustees was in the safe hands of Mary Moon as Chair, who led our organisation with skill and determination, together with Michael Grainger as Vice Chairman.

Over the years I have kept a copy of each newsletter and I have the very first one! It was an unsophisticated 4-page document, no colour, no graphics and no pictures! However, some comparisons between 2000 and 2010 in Beacon statistics are interesting and worth a mention.....

In 2010: -

- *Our counsellors work in 25 venues including Wythenshawe, Adswold and 10 schools including Macclesfield.*
- *We have 49 counsellors who will have offered over 7000 hours of counselling.*
- *We have already seen over 1000 clients, including adults and young people.*
- *Funding has been granted to develop an important partnership with Disability Stockport, to work in 7 primary schools, to continue our work in Wythenshawe and to deliver Stressbuster programmes.*

So it is clear that Beacon has gone from strength to strength in the last 10 years, and each Friend of Beacon has played a part in this—so thank you!



Some snippets from my first Newsletter....

Our founder Eleanor Sykes retired in 2000. She was an inspiration to know, and despite her advancing years (about 93!) her enthusiasm for Beacon was unstinting.

We revised our Constitution.

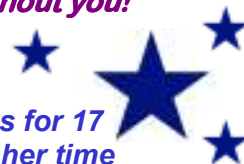
Beacon's success in Schools Counselling was given recognition in the Stockport Neighbourhood Health Strategy Annual Report.

We were already aware that Quality Assurance was an integral part of service delivery and we became part of a 10 member pilot group in Stockport to take this "commitment to quality project" on board.



Sincere thanks to all our Friends from the Counsellors, the Office Team and the Trustees

- ★ *To all of you who have shown an interest in our work, - thank you*
- ★ *To all of you who have been our Beacon Friends for 10 years – thank you for your support*
- ★ *To all our numerous counsellors who have given, and continue to give, their time and expertise – you know how valuable your work has been in changing the lives of people in our community*
- ★ *And to all of you who have worked as a volunteer for us – we simply couldn't have run our services without you!*



Ten years ago Mel Gardner was Beacon's administrative leader. She worked for us for 17 years, firstly as a counsellor, and then as manager. Below she remembers fondly her time with Beacon and what it all meant to her.....

If Anne Sejrup was at the birth of Beacon and carefully nurtured it through childhood, and David Ackroyd and now James Harper have guided it into the mature professional organisation it is today, then my time of "custodianship" could be classed as Beacon's adolescent years. Often challenging and sometimes difficult, the teenage Beacon was always an interesting and exciting place to be!

We were growing and learning in response to the increasing demand for counselling in a widening Stockport community, building up our credibility with improving professional standards in recruitment, training, supervision and management. It all felt quite "cutting edge" and scary at times! We were restless too, dependent on some very generous friends to house us whilst we dreamed of our own offices one day.

We explored the many possibilities opening up in counselling at that time, but some of which we simply couldn't stretch ourselves far enough to reach. The ongoing support of

local churches was crucial to the development of Beacon as a charitable voluntary organisation, but there were times when our "roots" seemed almost to be at odds with our commercial "wings". Voluntary Beacon branched out across Stockport, and contract counselling for fund holding GP practices was established. Yet by far my most proud moment was the setting up of the first school counselling service in Stockport, piloted at Bramhall High, and then rolled out in 5 secondary schools. We were then asked to write the quality standard for schools counselling in Stockport.

Looking back at my years of service, Beacon gave me far more than I could ever give back, and that was simply the friendships and support of so many wonderful people. Beacon is so special, and I am privileged to have been part of it, and have every confidence that many more clients in the decades to come will come to appreciate just how extraordinary it is.

Mel Gardner

