

# Survey of COSCA Recognised Organisations November 2024



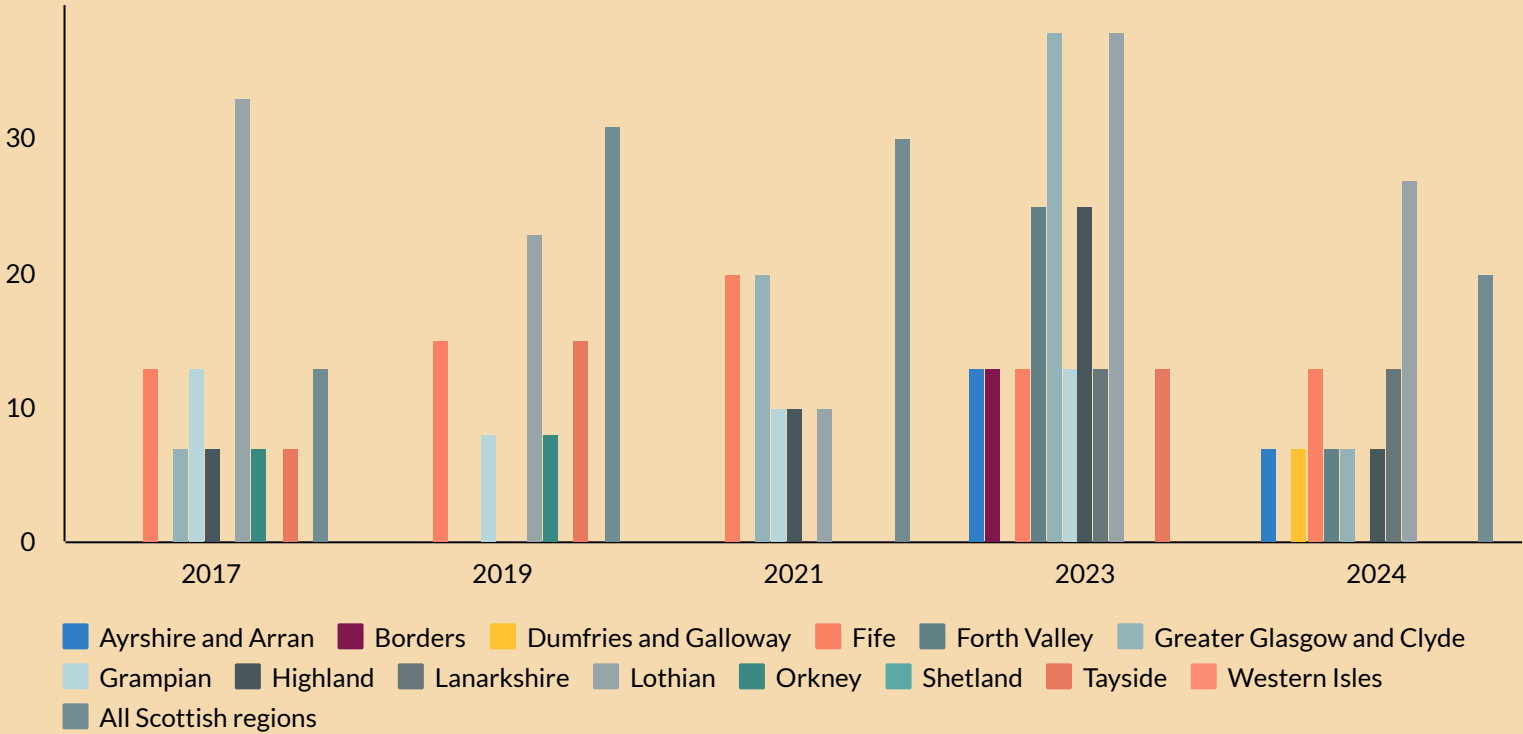
# SURVEY RESULTS 2024

# Introduction

There are currently 25 COSCA Member Organisations and one Corporate Organisation of 8 services who have gained the COSCA Recognition Scheme Award. During Autumn 2024 COSCA Recognised Organisations were asked to respond to our survey.

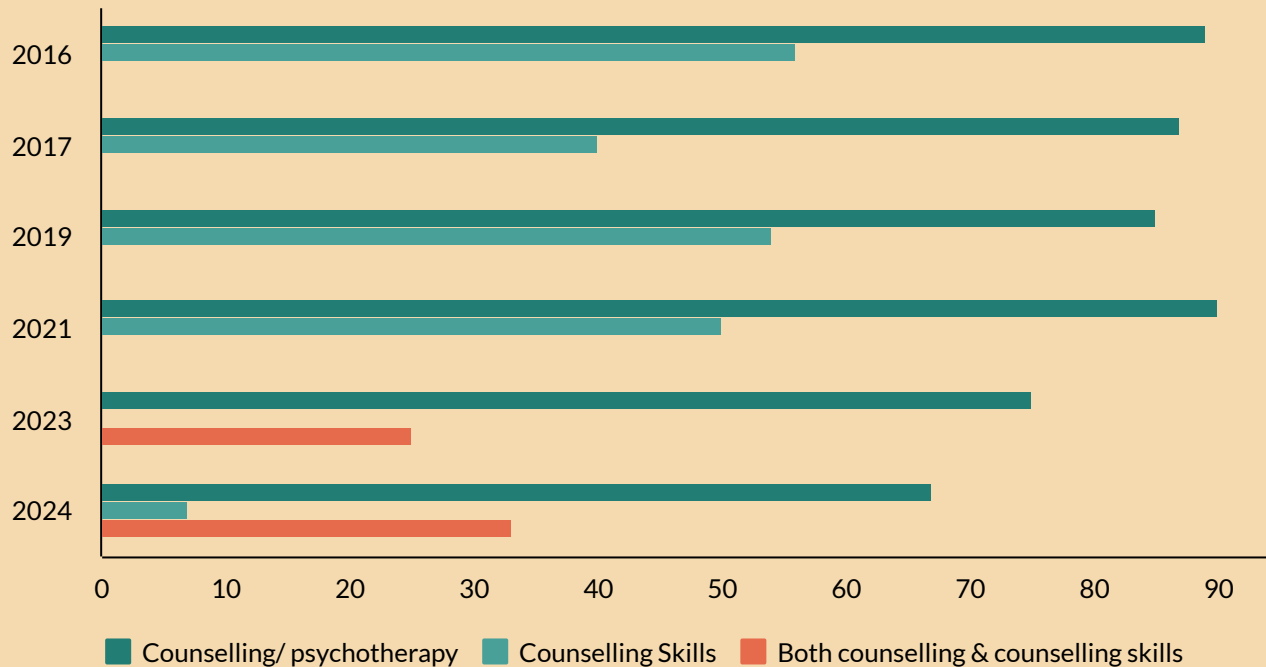
15 Recognised Organisations responded to the survey and the insights they provided are given below.

# 1. In which health board region(s) of Scotland does your organisation provide services?



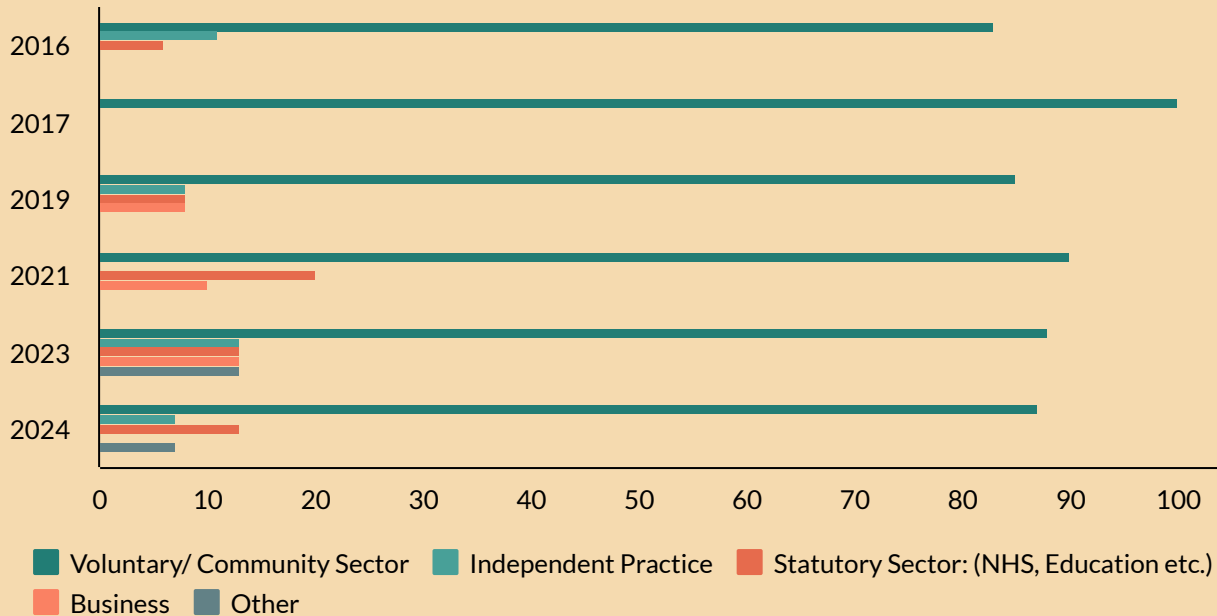
The biggest representation was for the Lothians (27%), but other regions were well represented with only 5 regions being unrepresented this year. All Scottish regions has returned with 20% of COSCA Recognised Organisations working throughout Scotland.

## 2. What services does your organisation provide?



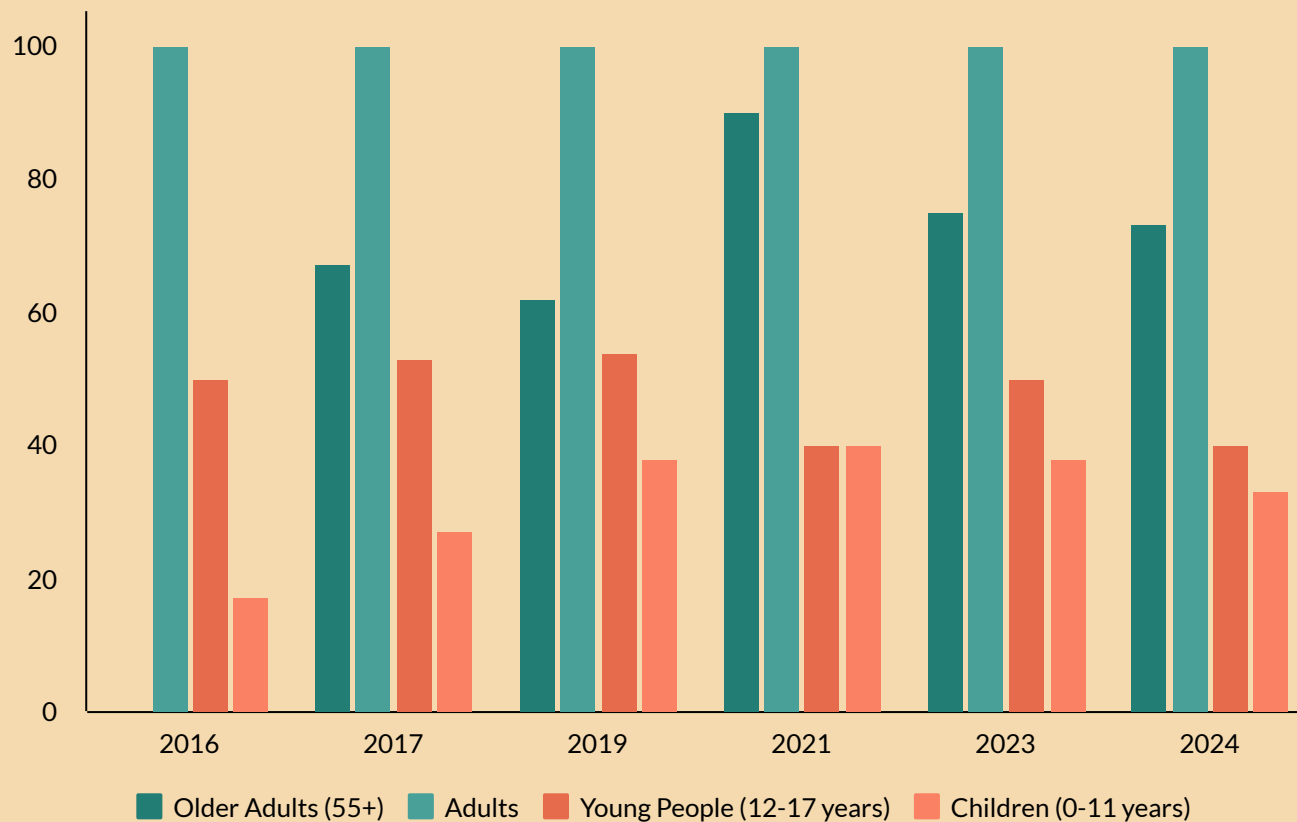
Counselling and psychotherapy continued to be provided by the majority of respondents (67%). 33% (slightly higher than last year's 25%) provide both counselling and counselling skills. 7% provide counselling skills alone.

### 3. In what context does your organisation work?



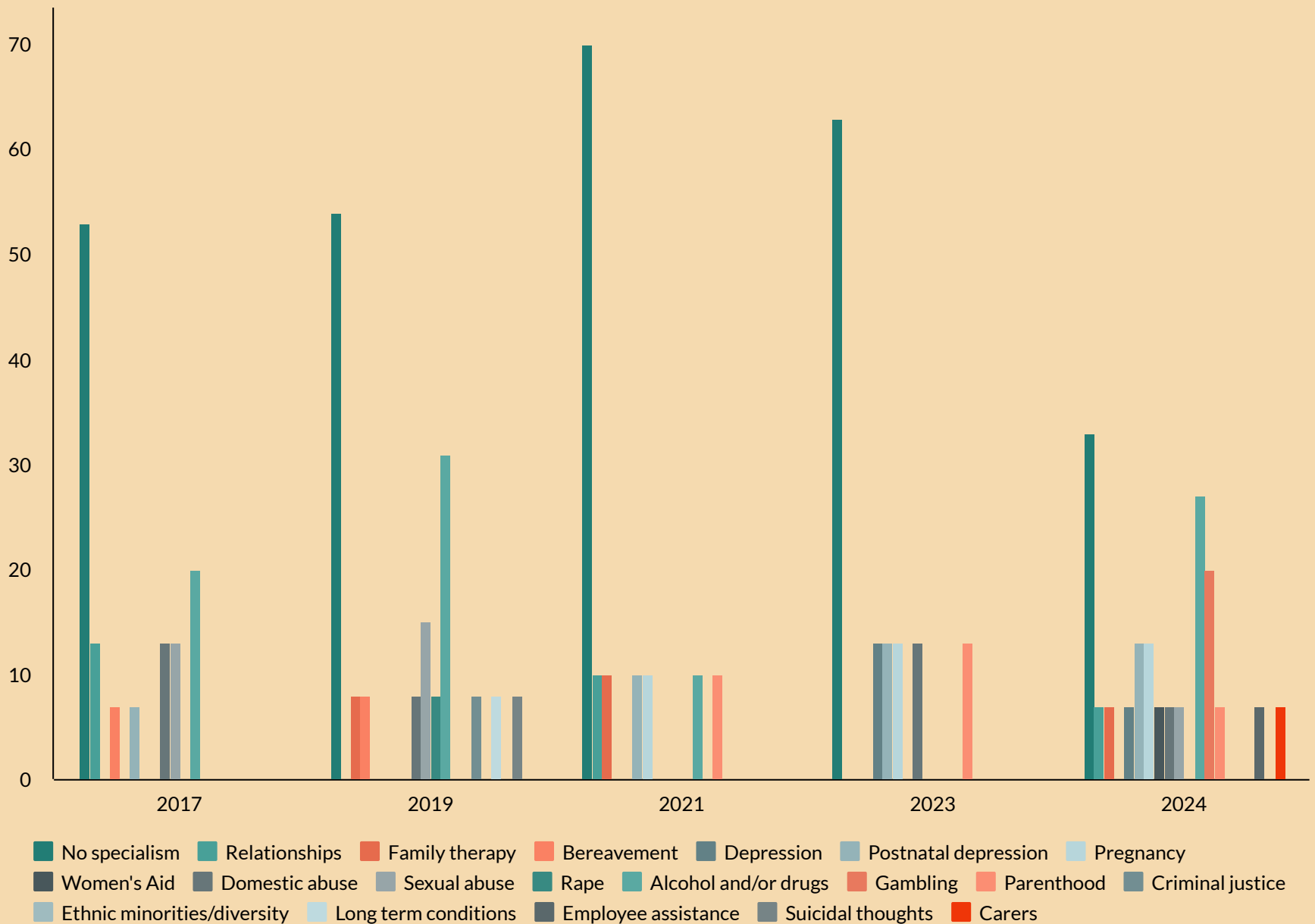
The vast majority of respondents (87%) continue to work in the voluntary/community sector. Only 13% work for the statutory sector and just 7% in independent practice or other. This shows what a large and important role the voluntary sector has and continues to play in providing Professional Body quality assured counselling and counselling skills services across Scotland.

#### 4. What population does your Counselling/ Psychotherapy/Counselling Skills organisation provide services for?



All services offered support to adults with 40% offering support to young people and 33% to children. This suggests that there are services out there for young people and children, but the main focus of the majority of services is provision for adults.

## 5. Does your service specialise in one or more areas?



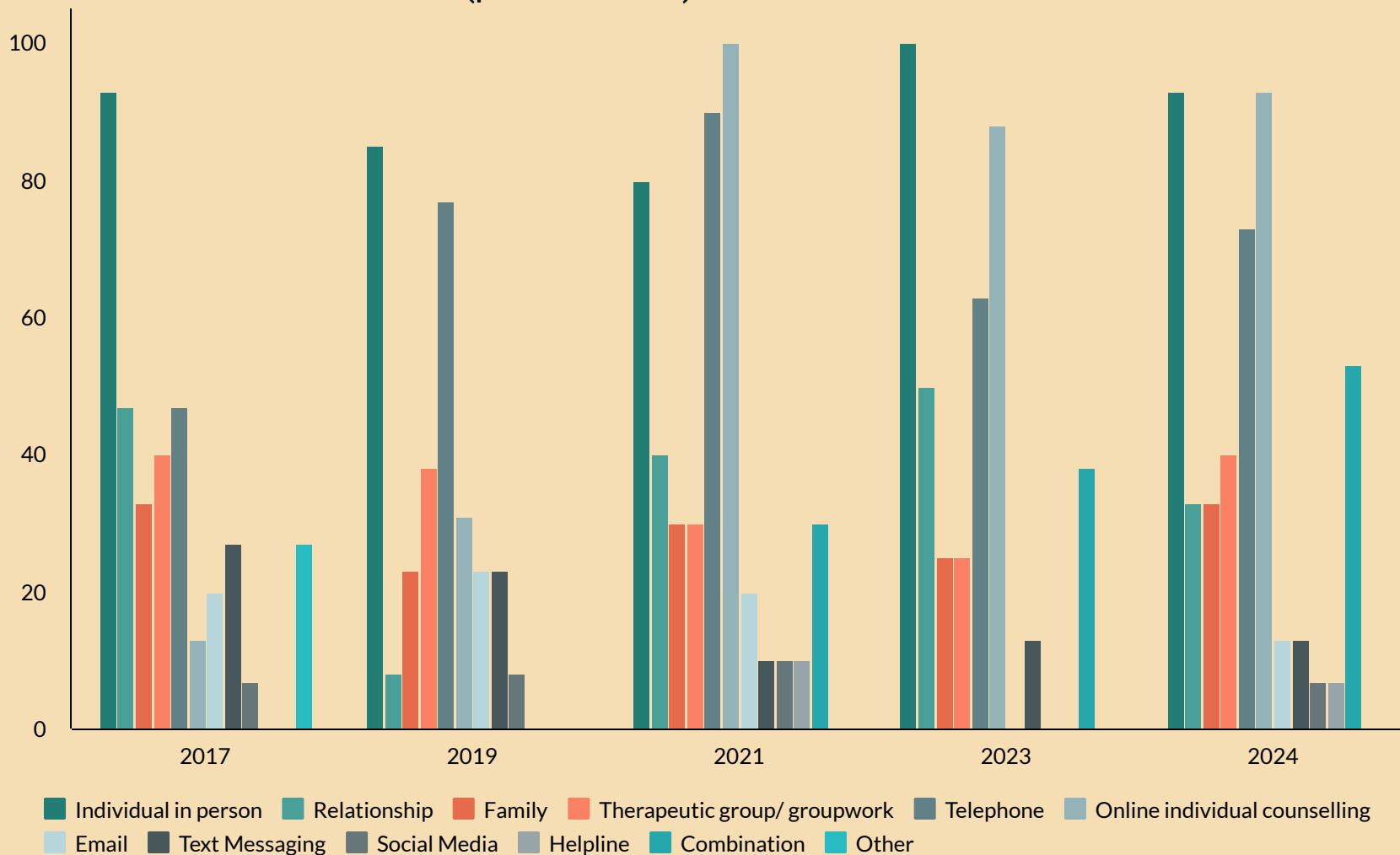
This showed a real change to previous years. Still the majority, but by a far smaller margin were non-specialist services, 33% compared to 63% last year. Alcohol and/or drug services followed closely behind at 27%. It will be interesting to see if this trend toward specialist services continues in later surveys.

This is not to say that specialist services have not been a valued part of COSCA for some time:

*We're just celebrating our 30th year of providing support to carers.*

**Karen Kaufman VOCAL**

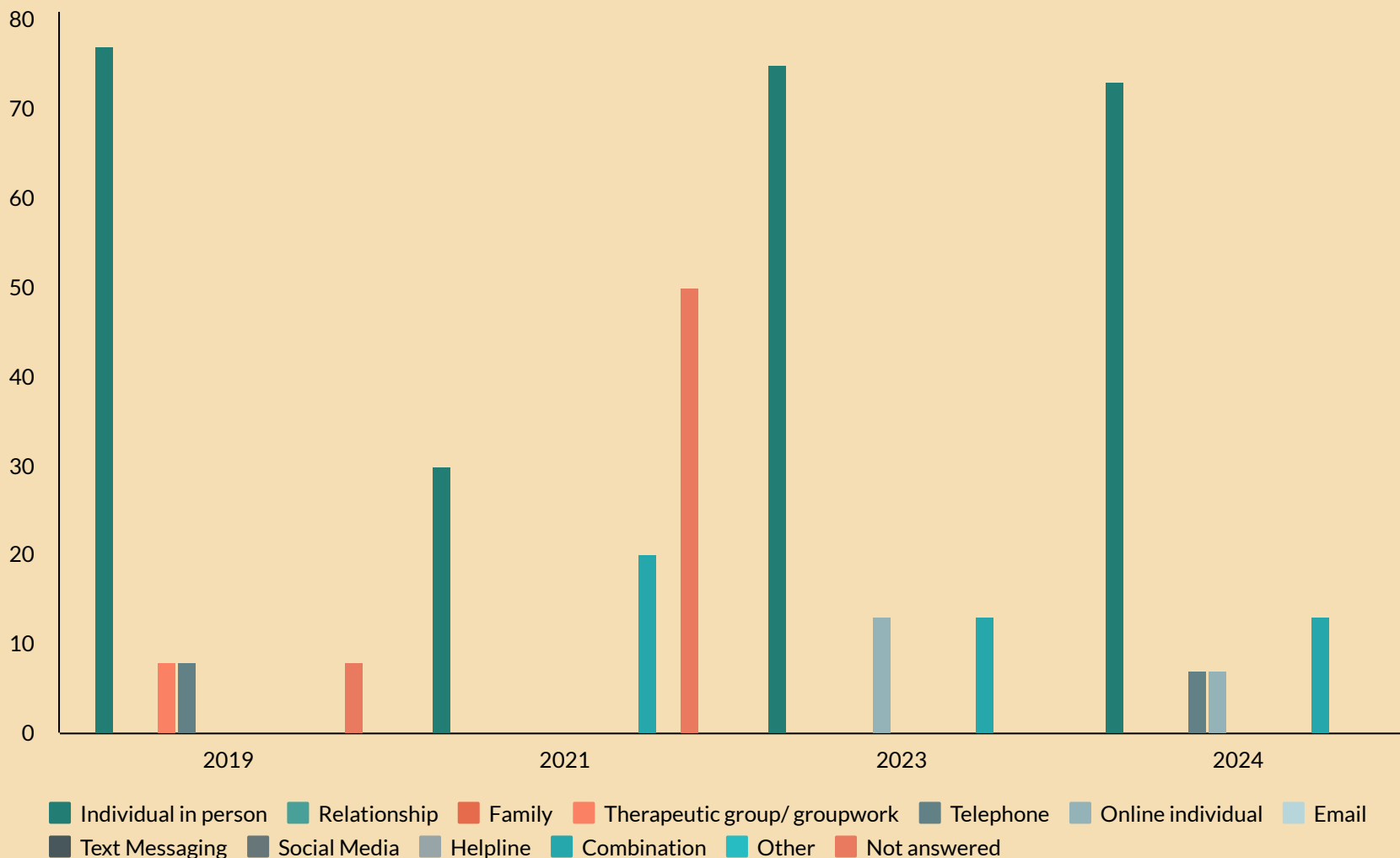
## 6. How do your counsellors/ Psychotherapists/ Counselling Skills users (practitioners) work with clients?



Since 2019 individual online counselling and has become offered by as many organisations as individual in person 93%. This year shows a slight rise in telephone counselling from 63% to 73%. Combination of in person and online continues to grow to 53% (up from 38% last year). It seems that being able to offer a range of ways to access counselling and counselling support organisations is becoming standard across all COSCA Recognised Organisations increasing accessibility and providing more flexibility.



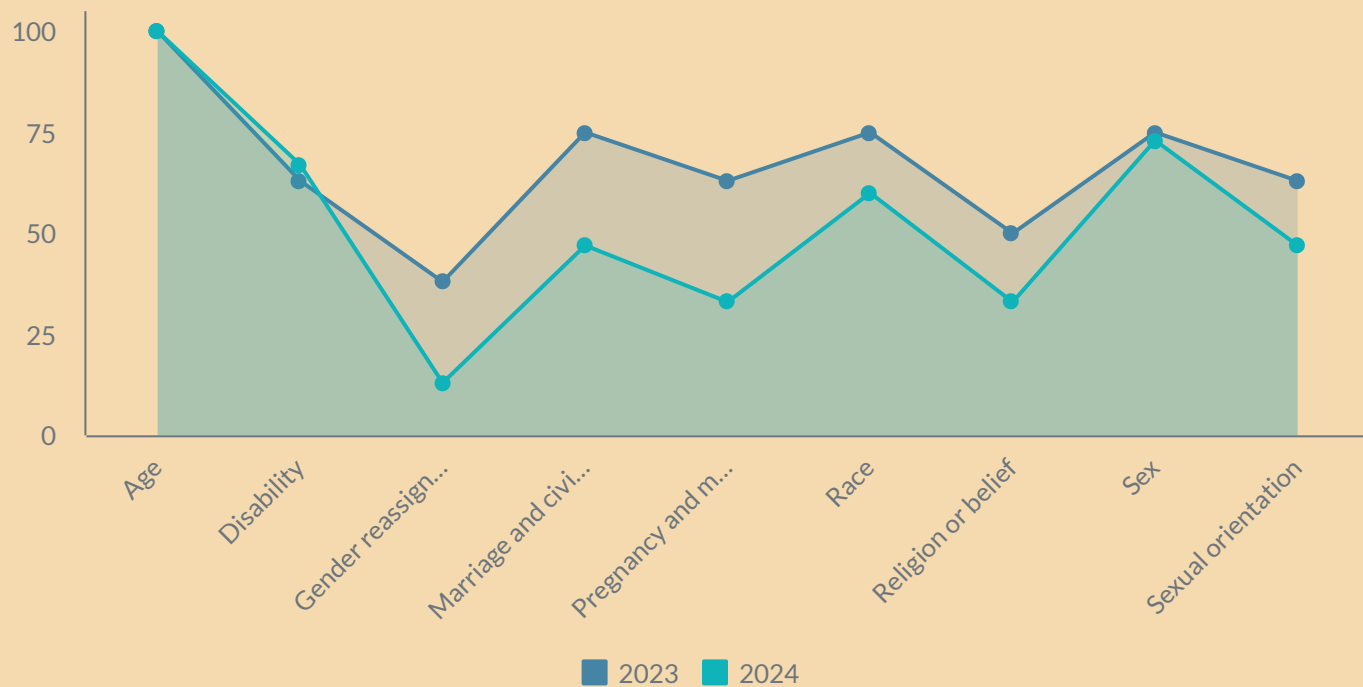
# What is the main way your Counsellors/Psychotherapists/Counselling Skills Users work with clients?



It is interesting to compare these results with the question above. While other forms of contact are offered more and more routinely, most counsellors and counselling skills workers are working with individuals in person 73%.

Future surveys will reveal if this is a reaction to having to work online during the pandemic, if we will see a gradual shift to working remotely, or if this continues that clients and service users prefer to connect with an organisation in person.

## 7a. Do you collect data on the following characteristics protected in the Equality Act 2010:



It was interesting to see that again 100% of organisations collect data on age, only 13% of them collected data on gender reassignment (down from 38% last year). Fewer characteristics were asked about in general this year.

Some organisations have found this data to be unhelpful:

*Purely helps to identify the client on our system.*

**Alison Smith Lochaber Hope**

*Previously we collected all of this data due to contracts from statutory bodies which required the information. However, on several instances people felt this was overly intrusive questioning; when the contracts no longer required this information, we decided to reduce it to sex and age. This allowed us to inform any new projects which may have a specific focus such as women only service or young people.*

**Margaret Halbert Liber8:**

7b. What do you do with this information to tackle disadvantage and discrimination?

Others have found it more helpful, but not always without its challenges:

*We use this information to assist us to offer adjustments as required and to actively recruit counsellors to our counselling team that better reflect our client groups.*

Claire Edwards Bright Light

*Across our perinatal services, we know that counselling is accessed by relatively few dads. We have developed strategies to make our services more inclusive: we continue to encourage perinatal mums to signpost partners to our services; have been working on ensuring our literature is more inclusive; have been promoting our services more widely and developing better and more informed referral networks.*

*We can see that the work done to engage/promote our services to male clients is continuing to have a positive impact, and demand from male clients is increasing (up from 18% in 2020/1 to 29% in 2023).*

*Gathering equality data has proved challenging – it is voluntary and often clients do not provide us with the data we need to have a full and clear picture of those accessing our services. This is something that we will continue to work on, in a way that is quick, straightforward, non-stigmatising and anonymous for clients.*

Claire McNally CrossReach Counselling

*We look at the data to see where gaps may be and consider ways we might be able to fill them. As an inclusive organisation we strive to break down barriers and if our data is showing gaps we look into what they are, how they might be caused and what strategies we can develop to eliminate them.*

Karen Kaufman VOCAL

*We analyse the data to ensure we are reaching a range of women who have experienced domestic abuse, such as women from different age groups and women from black and minority ethnic communities.*

Anon

*We monitor equal opportunities data as part of a number of measures to ensure that discrimination is not present within its service delivery or other opportunities, such as volunteering and employment. Equality and diversity is supported by a range of organisational measures including our Equality Policy, Recruitment Policy, Values, staff training, working practices and membership of accreditation schemes. Equal opportunities data is provided from our equal opportunities monitoring system.*

Anon

*This information allows ACT to ensure that rooms are accessible and suitable for clients needs. It also enables ACT to allocate to therapists who have more of an understanding or specialism in the areas outlined.*

Michelle Haazen ACT Counselling

- 1. Identifying Gaps and Inequalities:** By analysing the collected data, we can identify any gaps or disparities in access to our services among different groups. This allows us to develop targeted initiatives to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their protected characteristics, have equitable access to our support and services.
- 2. Tailoring Services:** Understanding the demographic makeup of our clients enables us to tailor our services to better meet their specific needs. For example, age and disability data help us create age-appropriate and accessible programs, while data on sex and sexual orientation informs us about any specific considerations or additional support that might be required.
- 3. Monitoring Progress:** The data collected serves as a benchmark for measuring the effectiveness of our EDI initiatives over time. We regularly review this data to assess our progress in creating an inclusive environment and to make data-driven adjustments to our strategy as needed.
- 4. Training and Awareness:** The insights gained from this data inform our training programs for staff and volunteers, ensuring they are aware of and sensitive to the needs of diverse populations. This helps foster an inclusive culture within our organisation.
- 5. Compliance and Reporting:** Collecting and using this data ensures that we remain compliant with the Equality Act 2010. It also helps us fulfil any reporting obligations and demonstrates our commitment to EDI to stakeholders and funding bodies.

Sharan Brown ACI

*This is an area of development for us: We are undertaking a data review process and as part of this we will collect much more comprehensive equality and diversity monitoring – this is a strategic aim for us. We will then use this to assess more fully who is accessing our services and whether targeted outreach / input is needed to support members of particular communities to reach our services.*

*We currently pay close attention to the gender of our clients as attracting more men and dads to our service is a strategic priority.*

*We are planning to collect data sexual orientation as LGBT+ may feel there are barriers accessing a pregnancy focused service / may have a concern regarding stigma.*

*We also want to know more about the racial diversity of our client base as we know Black women are more likely to experience poor birth outcomes, but are not necessarily as reflected in our client population as in the population at large. With more data we will be able to tailor our outreach.*

Sophie Temple PCCS

## 8. How do you measure the outcomes of your service?



Client comment continues to be highly sought for feedback (73%), closely followed by CORE10 and complaints (53%). There are still a great diversity in measuring tools as evidenced by the 27% that reported other. Although traditional ways of assessing a service's effectiveness continue to be important it also seems that COSCA Recognised Organisations know that one size doesn't fit all and are keen to tailored monitoring to the needs of their client group and organisation.

*We gather baseline information in the registration form for accessing counselling. We have struggled to encourage clients post covid to complete feedback forms once counselling has been completed and are looking at ways to capture feedback. However, we actively responded to client comments on the layout of the lounge/waiting room area and the changes we have made have been very positively responded to. Within our Promise Project we have developed a number of ways to record client experiences of the service including use of QR code for young people to use on their phones.*

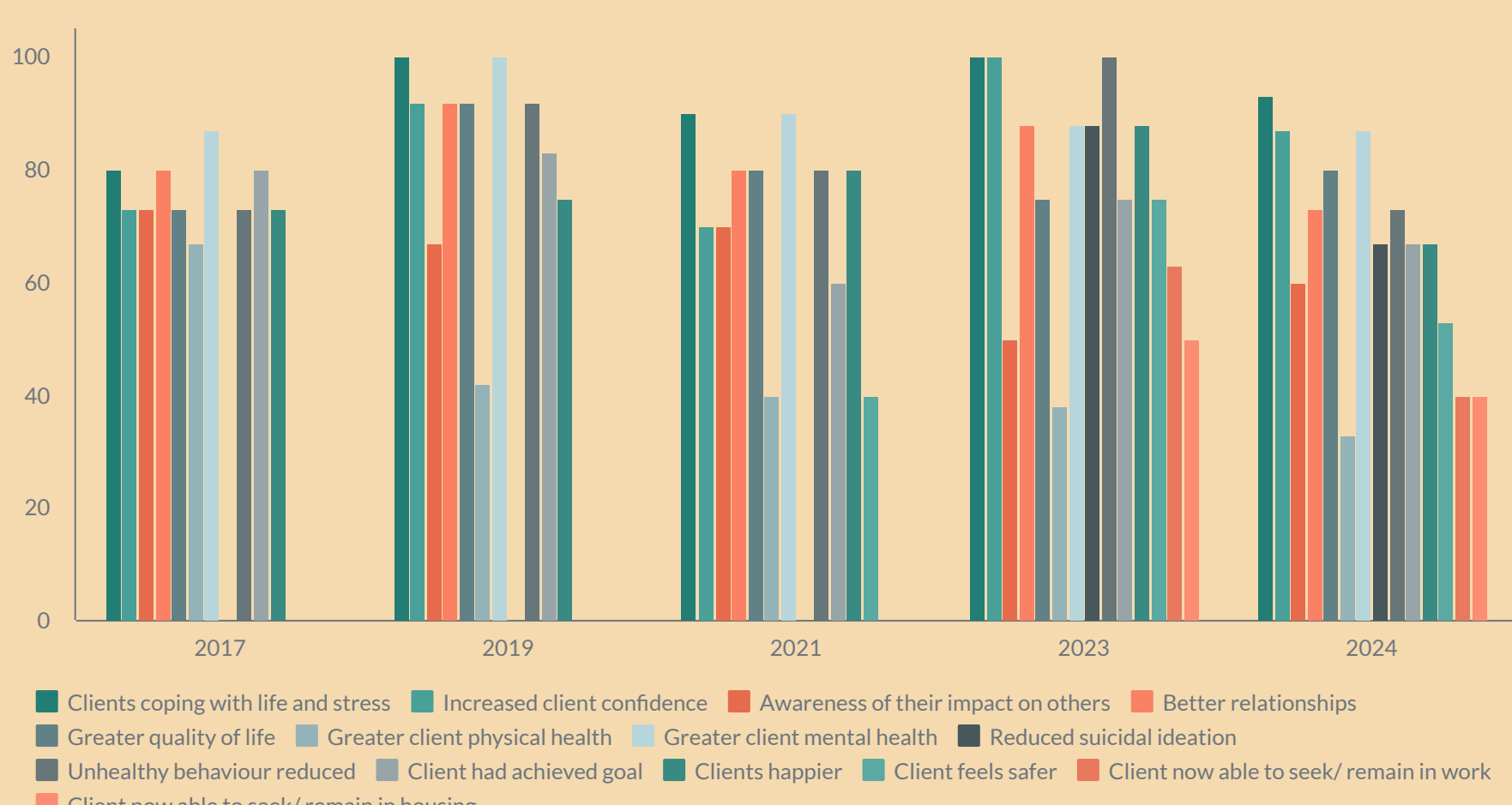
Claire Edwards Bright Light

*CrossReach looks to source staff & volunteer's feedback via annual surveys. These are an opportunity for staff and volunteers to make their voices heard and all responses help inform and influence how CrossReach delivers its' services and develops its policies. In our survey April 2024, 77% of volunteer respondents said they felt very valued. Volunteers' reasons for volunteering were varied, for example, gaining valuable experience, helping my local community, course requirements, building skills when returning to world of work, accreditation purposes, support from administrative & clinical staff, welcoming atmosphere; sense of community & being valued, opportunity to help others, CPD; training & peer supervision opportunities, learning from other counsellors, opportunity to meet other people.*

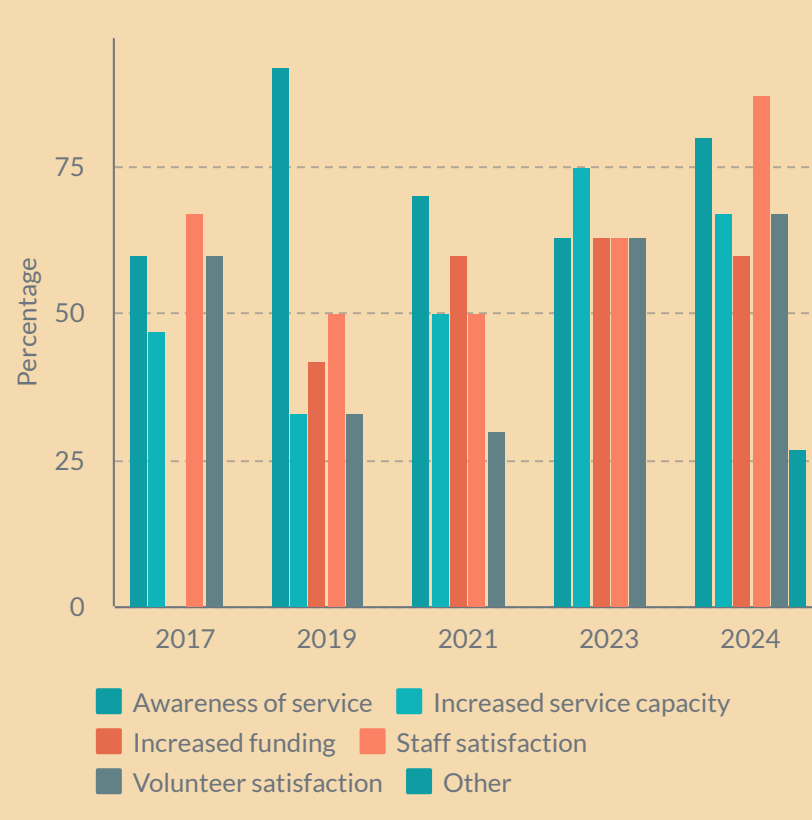
Claire McNally CrossReach Counselling



## 9a. What are the outcomes for your clients in the past year?



## 9b. What are the outcomes for your service in the past year?



Still rated encouragingly high were clients better able to cope with life and stress, increased client confidence and better mental health. Interestingly, reduced suicidal ideation and reduced unhealthy behaviour have decreased slightly to 67% and 73% respectively.

It's great to see that staff satisfaction continues to rise (87%) and awareness of service is back on the ascent (80%).

This is just a fraction of the outcomes from COSCA Recognised Organisations. Below are a few more that they are rightfully proud to share:

*Neurodiverse reported ability to be self and unmask around us and more gradually with other people. Started succession planning.*

**Alison Smith Lochaber Hope**

*CrossReach is a well-respected national organisation, recognised for its ability to make an enormous difference to the communities it serves. We have a strong culture of participation and work hard to understand what we can best offer to help build stronger, more cohesive communities. CrossReach's wider infrastructure, including its small Business Support and Fundraising and Engagement teams, underpin our locally embedded Counselling Services and help us to evolve with regards to service scope, awareness, income generation and added value.*

*CrossReach is a valued placement provider for many counselling courses.*

Some of the recent feedback that we have received has been:

*CrossReach Counselling 'provides well-structured placements with excellent clinical support'*

*'There are no concerns when our students go to [CrossReach], they are in safe hands'*

*'The service is well run with good student support, risk management and safeguarding are clear, that is reassuring'*

*'I like the professional approach to all parts, they know how to work with students .....the supervision groups are a great place to learn, I have really made the most of these'*

*Communication is excellent and I have no hesitation contacting Bluebell or the Tom Allan Service. Student queries, difficulties or problems are discussed and addressed in a prompt, professional and friendly manner. Policies are clear, students are well supported and always speak very positively about their placement. I have always found both services to be supportive and easy to work with and an excellent experience for our students.*

**From volunteers:**

*My client work has been varied, challenging and I have learned loads'*

*'I feel so safe. I know where to go and with whom to speak when I have questions. As a trainee counsellor I have many of things to deal with, so having such a supportive placement with CrossReach helps a lot. I absolutely feel secure and love it here. I would like to stay here longer and work here in the future.'*

**Claire McNally CrossReach Counselling**

*Our carer surveys, as well as volunteer and staff surveys show that, over all, people are pleased with our service and what we provide. We use the surveys to also see the ways we can improve on services to carers and to improve employee/volunteer satisfaction.*

**Karen Kaufman VOCAL**

*An encouraging outcome for us this year was the two consultation surveys we launched. On was aimed at referring agencies and the other was aimed at clients who had attended counselling services.*

*The feedback from both surveys were excellent and very satisfying for the teams, to know that the outcomes experienced were so positive.*

*In our client survey (n=65):*

*100% stated they would use Liber8 again, 86% highly recommending it and 9% likely to recommend it.*

*66% felt more capable of dealing with their issues.*

*51% learned new techniques to help them cope.*

*77% were very satisfied with the service, and 23% were satisfied.*

*"I would have done something very stupid to myself had I not went. They helped me gain a sort of balance, it's a challenge every day but I expect nothing less"*

*"Just that it's so great that I could open up, it's not easy for me to do, I also have memory issues, my counsellor was patient and helped me have tools that I still use today thank you"*

*"A very worthwhile, essential and caring service"*

*In our Referring agencies survey (n35)*

*100% would recommend Liber8's counselling services*

*Some comments included:*

*"As I stated above, an excellent service, willing to go the extra mile. I have no hesitation referring patients to them "*

*"Liber8 is such an important and essential service within South Lanarkshire"*

*"Have no complaints, always treated well and the feedback I have received from clients attending counselling has been very positive"*

**Margaret Halbert Liber8**

*Other than the client outcomes outlined above our counselling service's most significant outcomes are firstly gaining the COSCA Recognition. Others include growth in referrals, regular team meetings, a developing community, and robust systems and procedures.*

**Michelle Haazen ACT Counselling**

*We have implemented targeted outreach to professionals in our new area – as we have moved our office base and Baby Bank to the West of Edinburgh. We have met with members of key NHS perinatal teams such as Edinburgh's MNPI unit to promote our services.*

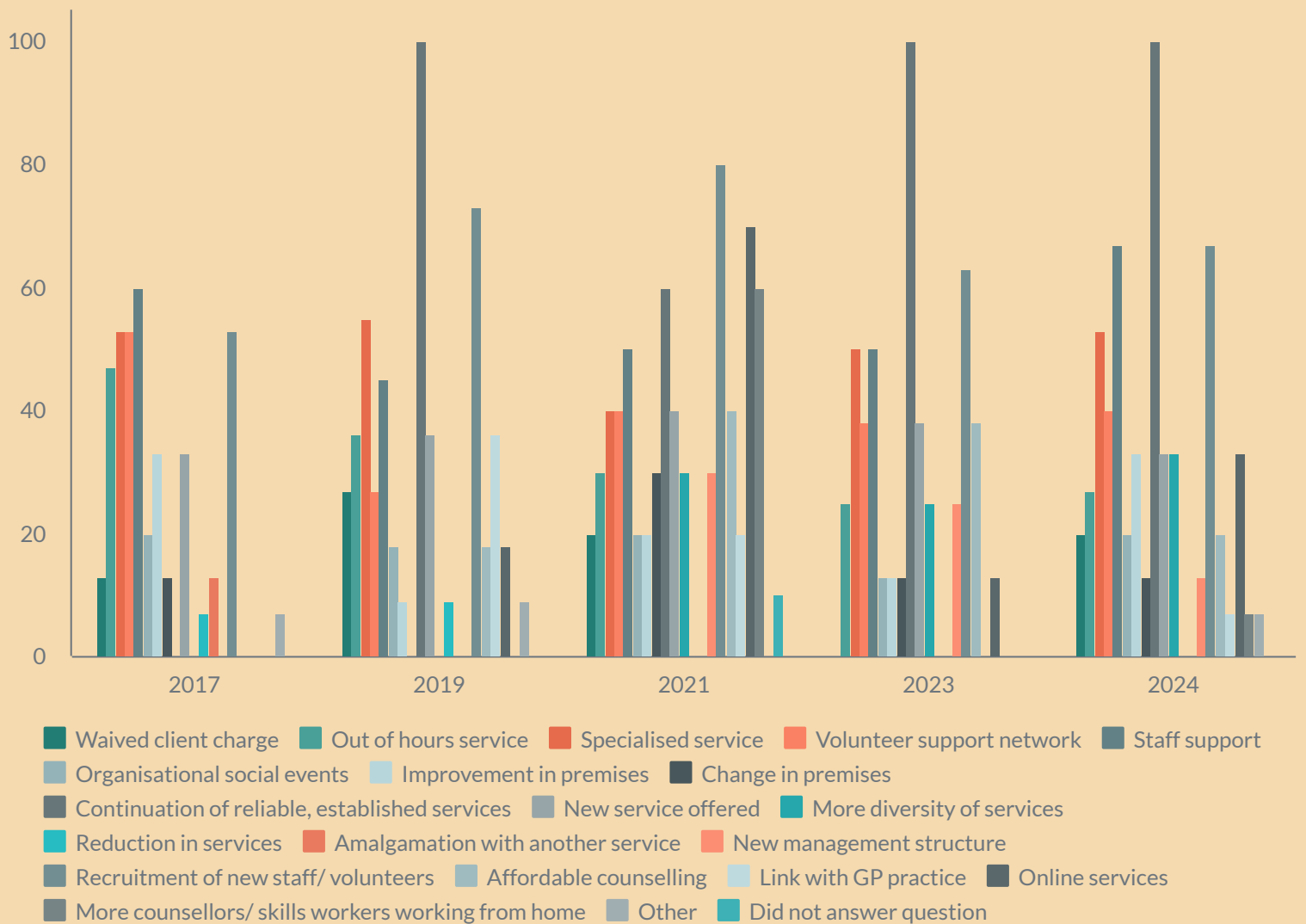
*-We have recruited 6 new trainee counsellors & one senior counsellor*

*-We have implemented team building staff days to build team cohesion*

*-We have further developed our volunteer training materials, handbook, guidance, procedures and support systems.*

**Sophie Temple PCCS**

## 10. What activities produced the outcomes in the question above?



Continuation of reliable, established services is once again cited by 100% of COSCA Recognised Organisations as a reason for their success. New services are obviously important and to be encouraged, but it seems there needs to be more recognition of the importance of a services that has continued to meet the needs of their clients and service users for a number of years. Recruitment of new staff/volunteers and staff support (67%) continue to rate highly, illustrating the importance of creating and supporting a strong counselling and/or counselling support team to be able to deliver high value services.

Some of the other activities contributing to the success of COSCA Recognised Organisations are below:

*Responding holistically to more complex needs clients and being able to hold them when there was no other support in the community.*

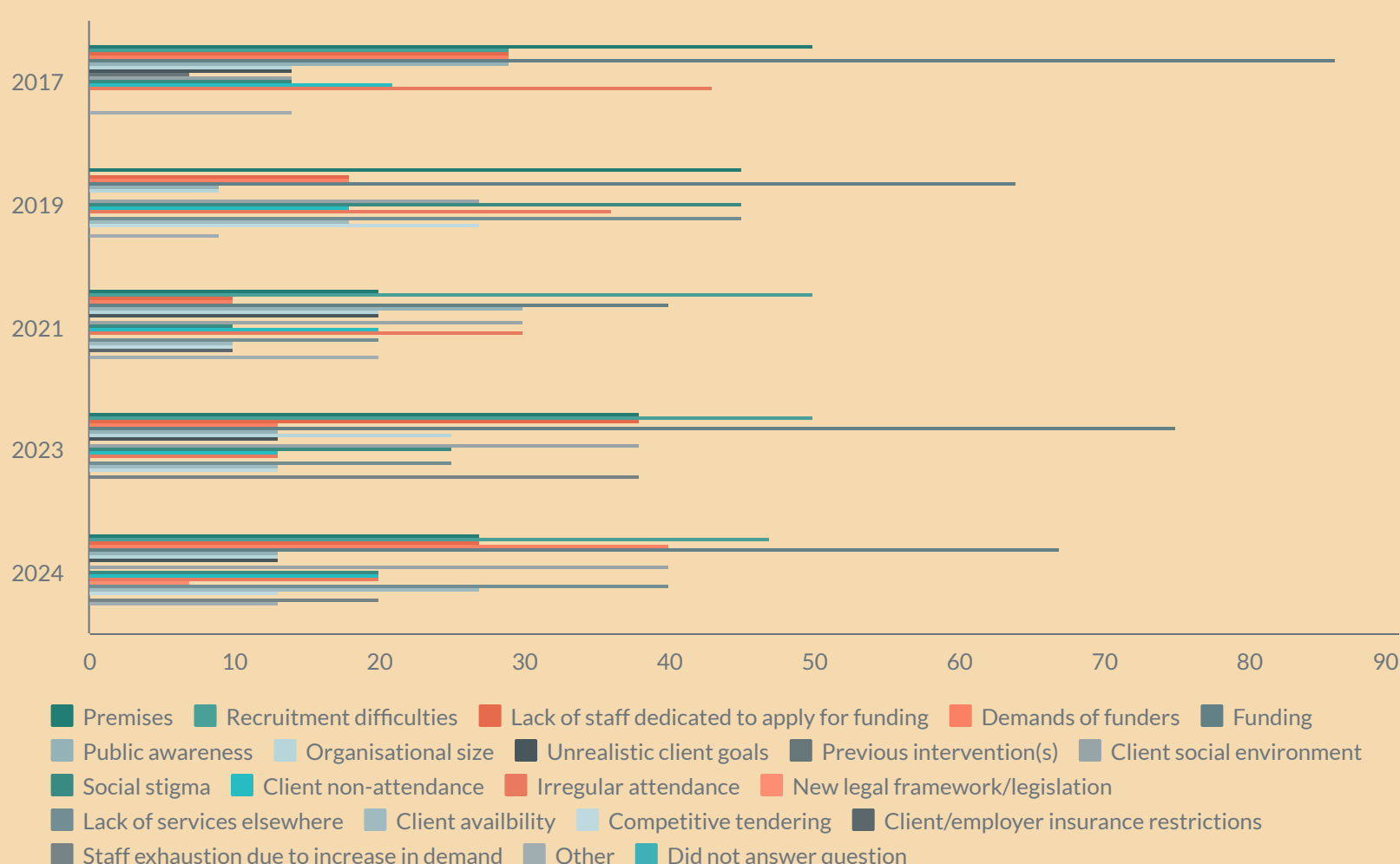
Alison Smith Lochaber Hope

*Implementing evidence-based treatment formulations and plans has brought an enormous level of standardisation to the services that our clients receive. Being in a position to offer appointments from 9am until 9pm 3 days per week has been a large contributor to the growth in referrals and also suits some of our therapists well. Bringing a sense of community to our therapists has also created a sense of belonging.*

Michalle Haazen ACT Counselling

*Webchat very popular as a supportive tool and option for those who wished not to speak.*

## 11. What were the challenges for your service in achieving the above impacts/ outcomes?



Funding (67%), although slightly down from last year (75%) is still the largest concern for COSCA Recognised Organisations, closely followed by recruitment difficulties (47%). Demands of funders, client social environment and lack of services elsewhere are not far behind (40%).

*Lower staff salaries, low retention. Inability to work collaboratively with NHS. Trusts and grant funders have been fantastic; they engage with us and collaborate effectively. In contrast, NHS and Scottish Government funding processes are excessively demanding. Their applications require far too much information that's difficult to gather, such as community surveys and extensive evidence, making it extremely challenging for small charities like ours to apply.*

Alison Smith Lochaber Hope

*The threshold has risen in terms of presenting problems, clients can't access support via GP and mental health services, so are coming to counselling with higher levels of anxiety, depression, family breakdown, financial pressures etc.*

*We received specific funding under the Promise Project however, this is only for a year and the funding climate remains very challenging. We have an income stream from fee contribution, however, the cost of living crisis has impacted on clients' disposable income and many have sought to make reduced contributions. This in turn impacts on our operational costs and has led to some redundancies and efficiencies over the last year.*

Claire Edwards Bright Light

*The availability of suitable funding and the criteria for the funding that is available. One example is the Scottish Government Community Mental Health Fund; this was launched, and each local authority was allocated significant funds; this was a light for us, thinking that the work we do would certainly fit the criteria.*

*However, we were extremely disappointed and aggrieved that the fund would not support 'professional counselling / therapy' but was focused on generic wellbeing activities and group activities. This is despite the significant NHS waiting lists and the demand for professional therapeutic intervention and our waiting list being 10 months – mainly from NHS referring agencies.*

Margaret Halbert Liber8

*Increasing complexity of presenting issues with clients, mainly due to lack of NHS services.*

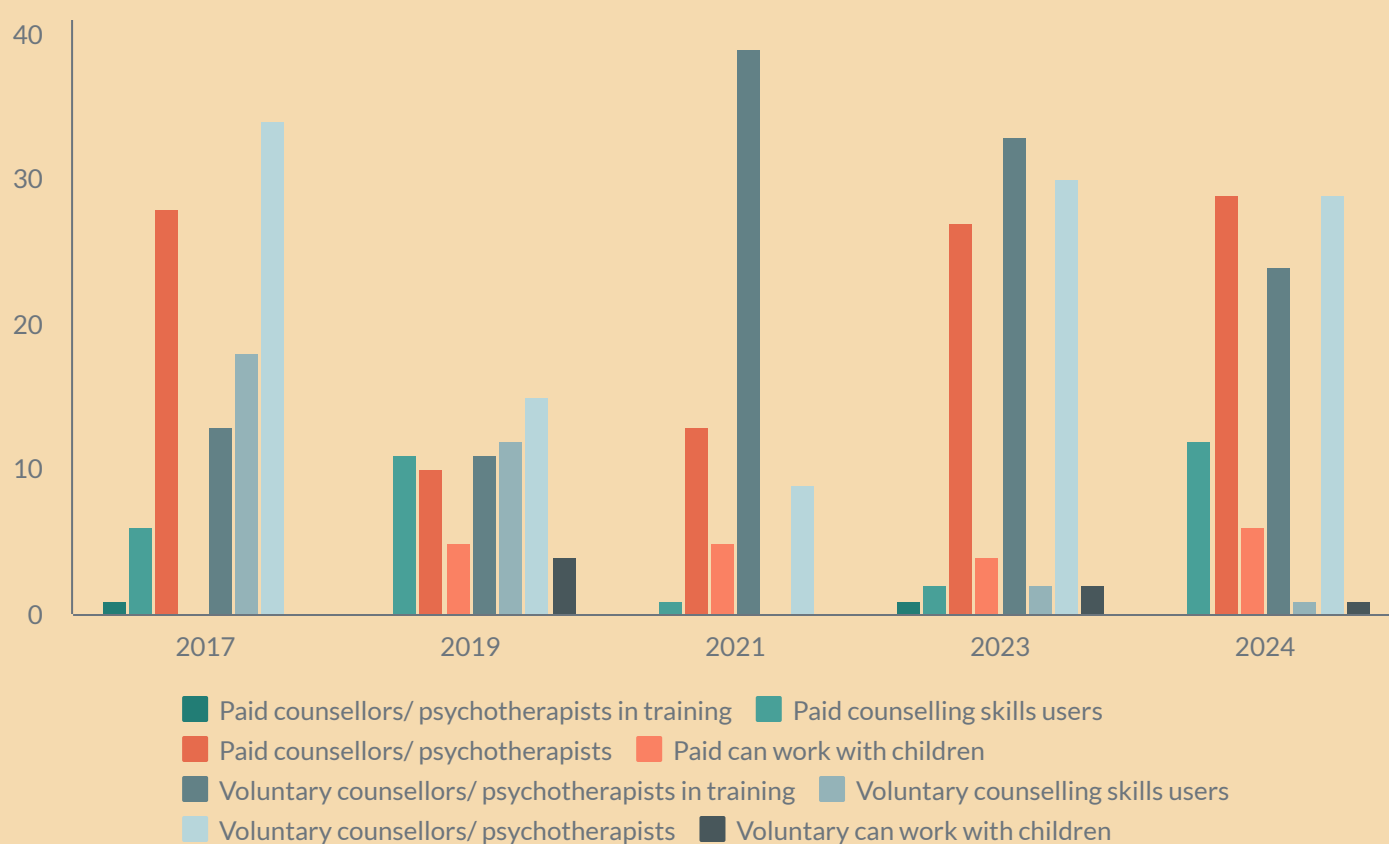
Matthew Haggis PF Counselling

*Growing public awareness is the next stage of our counselling service development. Despite being a reasonably busy counselling service ACT have yet to advertise the service on social media. This will take place before the end of 2023. Client's environment can and probably always will be a challenge for those impacted by trauma or abuse. Client's who work shifts can also be a challenge with irregular appointment times.*

Michelle Haazen ACT Counselling



## 12. How many practitioners within your organisation are:



This year is the first that there have been equal numbers of paid and voluntary counsellors/psychotherapists (29%). It also seems the number of voluntary counsellors/psychotherapists in training has continued to drop (24%). It's also great to see that the number of paid counselling skills users is again on the rise (12%). Although voluntary work continues to be incredibly important in the counselling and counselling skills field this seems to suggest that the number of paid positions are on the rise.

With increasingly tight budgets, balancing the needs of the counsellors and skills providers with the needs of the service is not without its challenges:

*Our counsellors are self-employed, we had a staff member counsellor, however, that post had to made redundant earlier this year as this was not an efficient way to deliver the counselling (salary and 'on costs' as fixed costs regardless of client hours).*

*The Promise Project has 4 salaried counsellors (2 fte), however, they are on 12 month contracts and there is currently no further funding post March 2025.*

Clare Edwards Bright Light

*We have a consistently strong reputation for delivering quality therapeutic services and have well established referral pathways, (in 2023, 41% of our clients were directly referred to us by statutory services), however, maintaining financial sustainability across all our services remains challenging.*

*Managing our resources (including human) effectively and balancing our involvement in any new opportunities with our capacity to deliver and prevent burnout.*

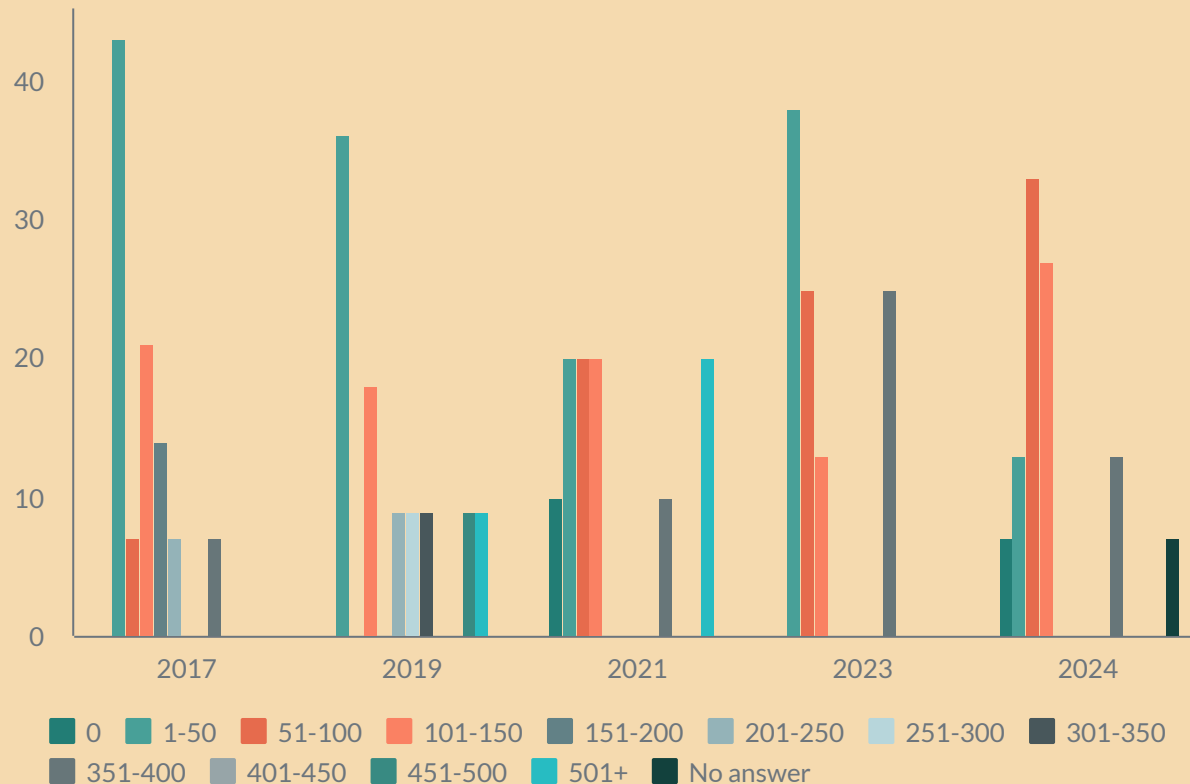
*Across all our services, we are working with an increasingly complex caseload. For example, 48% of clients reported distress levels on COREnet as 'moderate to severe' or 'severe'. In 2023, 83 clients were placed on our risk registers, 21 of whom were supported with help and expertise from our internal Safeguarding team. Suicidal ideation and self-harm were the most frequent risk factors recorded.*

*Many of our CYP clients are facing challenges such as Parental Drug death, Parental Imprisonment, Separation for siblings, Domestic Abuse, Self-Harm.*

*The cost-of-living crisis continues to mean that the pool of professional counsellors who can volunteer is reduced as they need to complete more paid work to cover their costs. Regular volunteer recruitment is therefore required, which is both time consuming and costly. Overall, our pool of volunteers has remained fairly inexperienced, a third of our volunteers are in training. This means that much time and effort is put into both extensive induction training and ongoing support and guidance from clinical teams.*

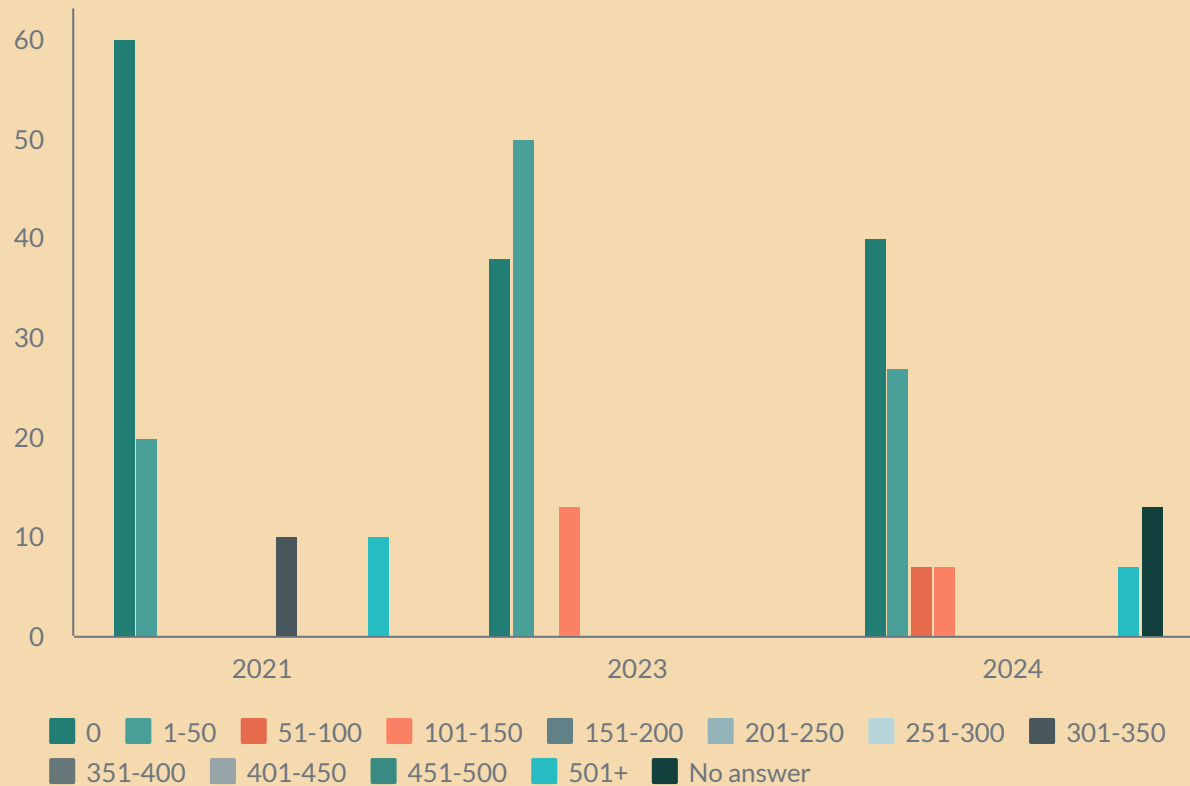


### 13a. On average, how many hours of counselling per week are provided by your organisation?



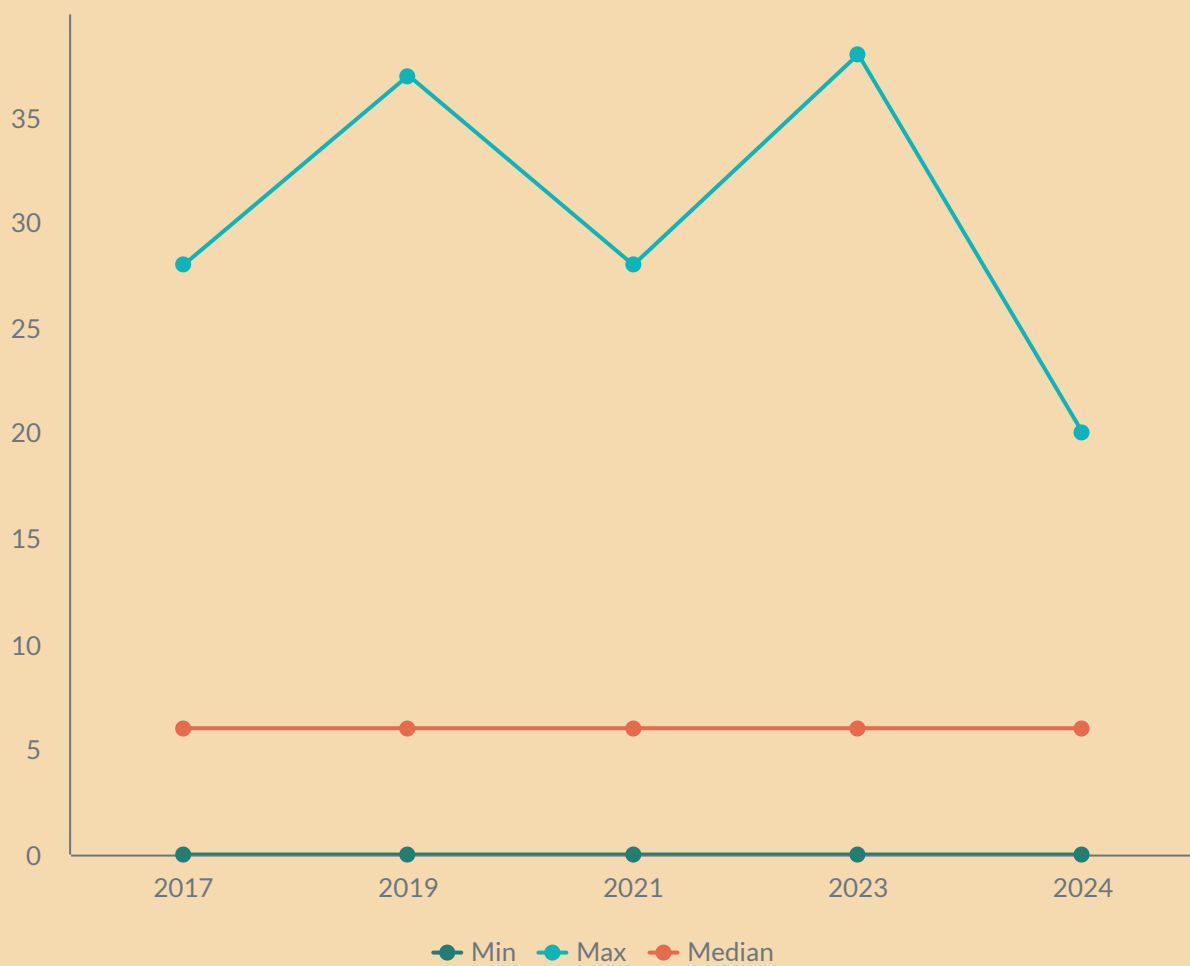
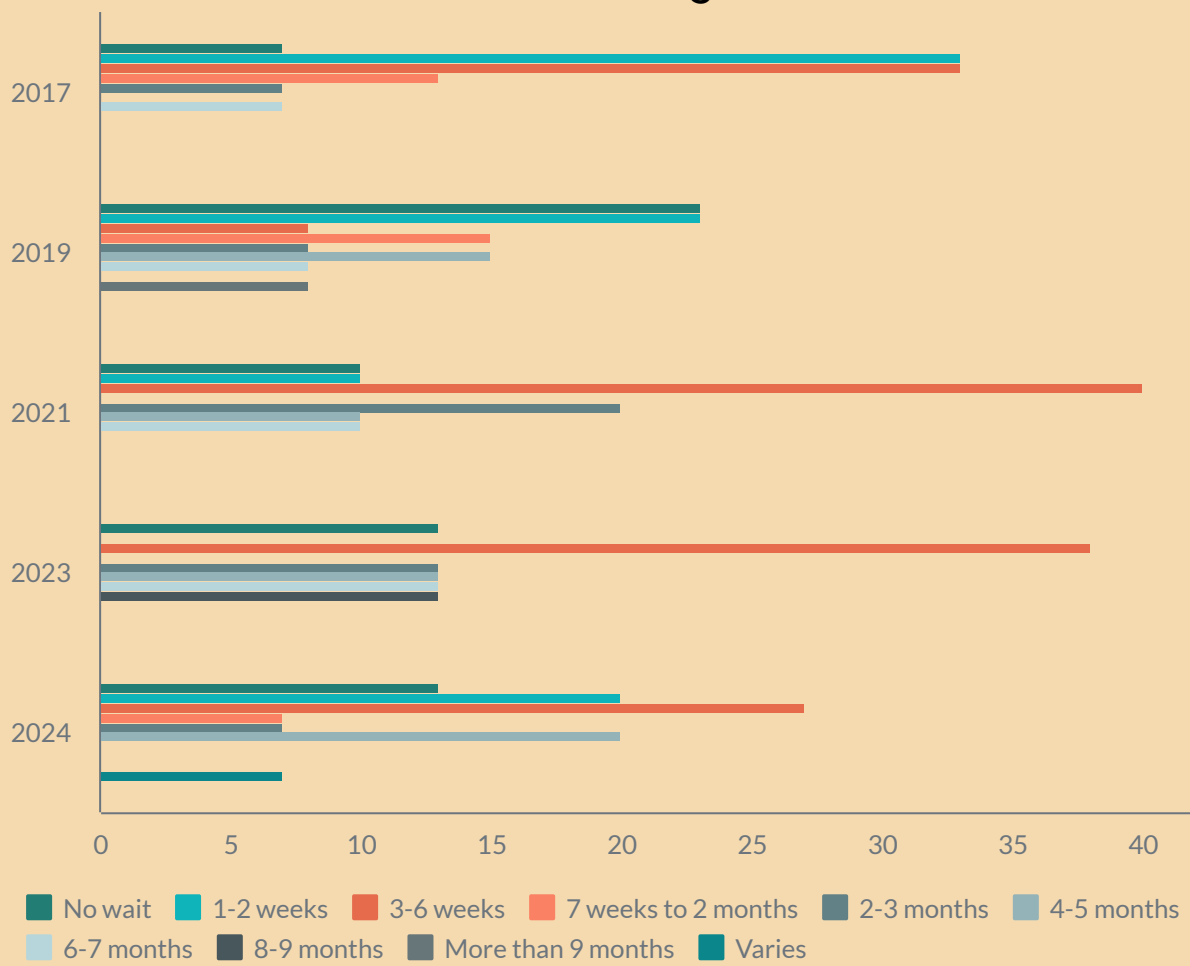
This year seems to show either existing organisations are getting bigger or that larger organisations are more likely to complete the survey. The highest (33%) offered between 51 to 100 hours counselling per week, closely followed (27%) by 101 to 150 hours. It will be interesting to see if this trend toward more medium to large sized organisations continues.

# 13b. On average, how many hours of counselling support per week are provided by your organisation?



About half of the respondents offer counselling skills support, with 40% offering counselling exclusively. Of those offering skills support this is mostly less that 150 hours per week.

## 14. How long can a client expect to wait from first contact with your organisation to the start of regular counselling?



The maximum waiting time has decreased quite dramatically, down to 5 months (from 9 months last year). Interestingly, the median time from first contact to first session remains at about 6 weeks.

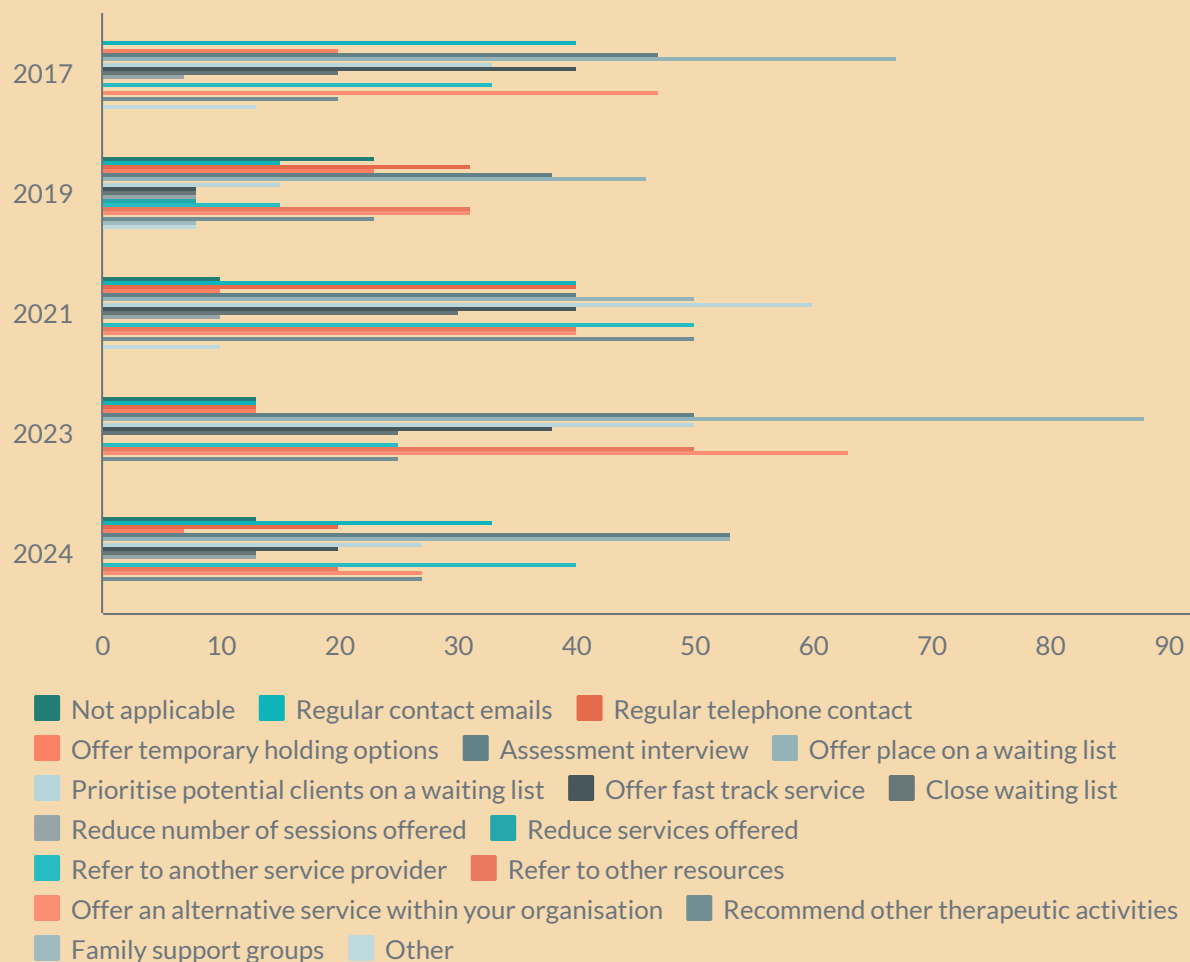
*This is very variable depending on client availability matching counsellor availability and within the specific service they are looking for i.e. couple, family, SRT etc.*

Claire Edwards Bright Light

*We used to sit regularly under 3 weeks but NESH DARS service have recently changed their screening process and are signposting many people to ACI who are seeking clinical assistance. We have a meeting in Sept with NESH about the affect this had on operations.*

Sharan Brown ACI

## 15. What are you doing to manage these waiting times?



Assessment interview and offer place on the waiting list are joint highest at 53%, but there are a great number of things that COSCA Recognised Organisations do to manage their waiting lists, including regular contact emails (33%) and referring to another service provider (40%).

## 16a. How many sessions are your clients usually offered?

Year	Min	Max	Average
2019	6	Open ended	23
2021	6	Open ended	30
2023	8	Open ended	26
2024	9	Open ended	22

Clients were offered sessions from 9 to up to open ended. With the open ended removed the average was 22, so although the minimum number of sessions seems to have been increased, overall sessions offered has slightly decreased.

## 16b. How many sessions did your clients usually attend on average?

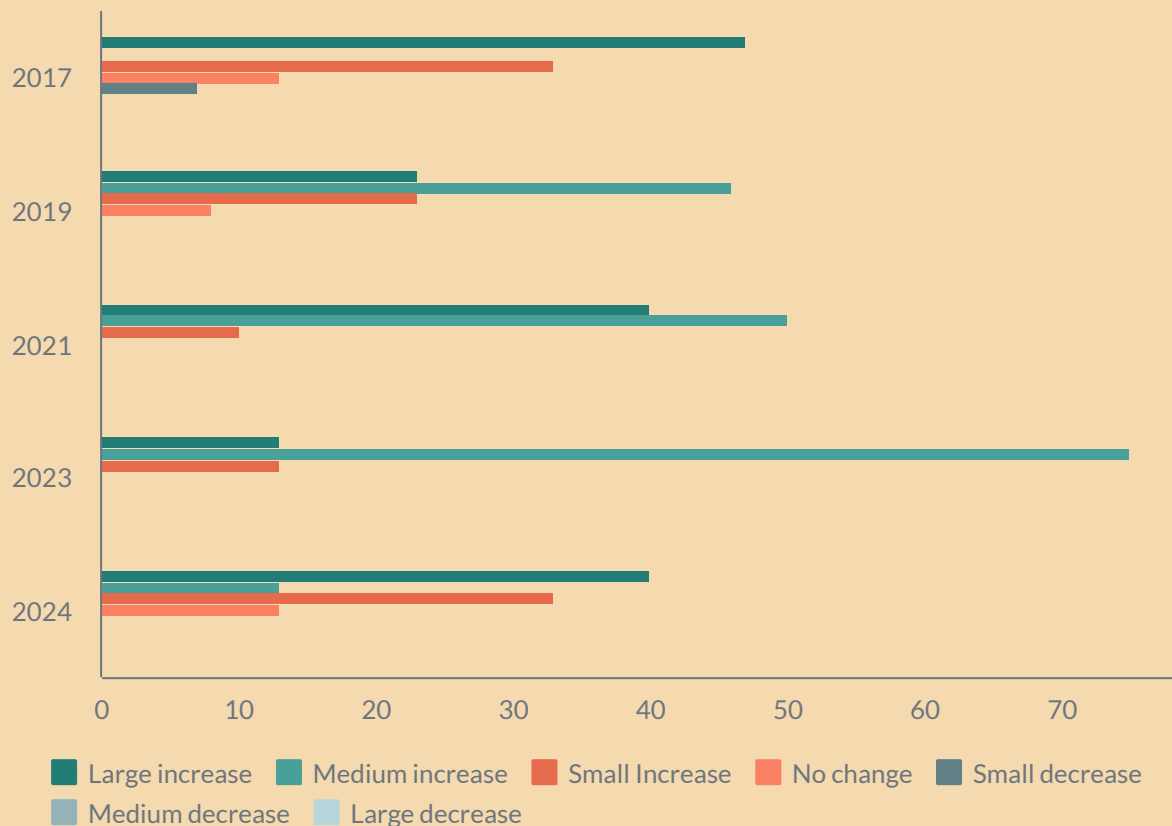
Year	Min	Max	Average
2019	2	25	11
2021	6	33	13
2023	10	26	14
2024	9	24	14

Clients attended between 9 and 24 sessions (on average per organisation) with the average of all COSCA Recognised Organisations that responded of 14. The number of sessions attended continues to be pretty stable.

Again, this is not always straightforward to gauge:

*This is difficult to determine as client's lapse and relapse which can lead to multiple episodes of engagement, this is also very individualised.*

17. Has your organisation experienced an increase or decrease in demand for support over the last 12 months?



All COSCA Recognised Organisations saw no change or an increase in demand from last year with 40% reporting a large increase and 33% reporting a large increase. It looks like demand for counselling and counselling skills is still on the increase, but that increase has continued to slow.

*A steady increase in demand has escalated during and in subsequent years since COVID.*

**Helen Hutton FASS**

*We have increased visibility due to Lothian Buses recognising our organisation as their identified charity. This has greatly increased our demand.*

**Karen Kaufman VOCAL**

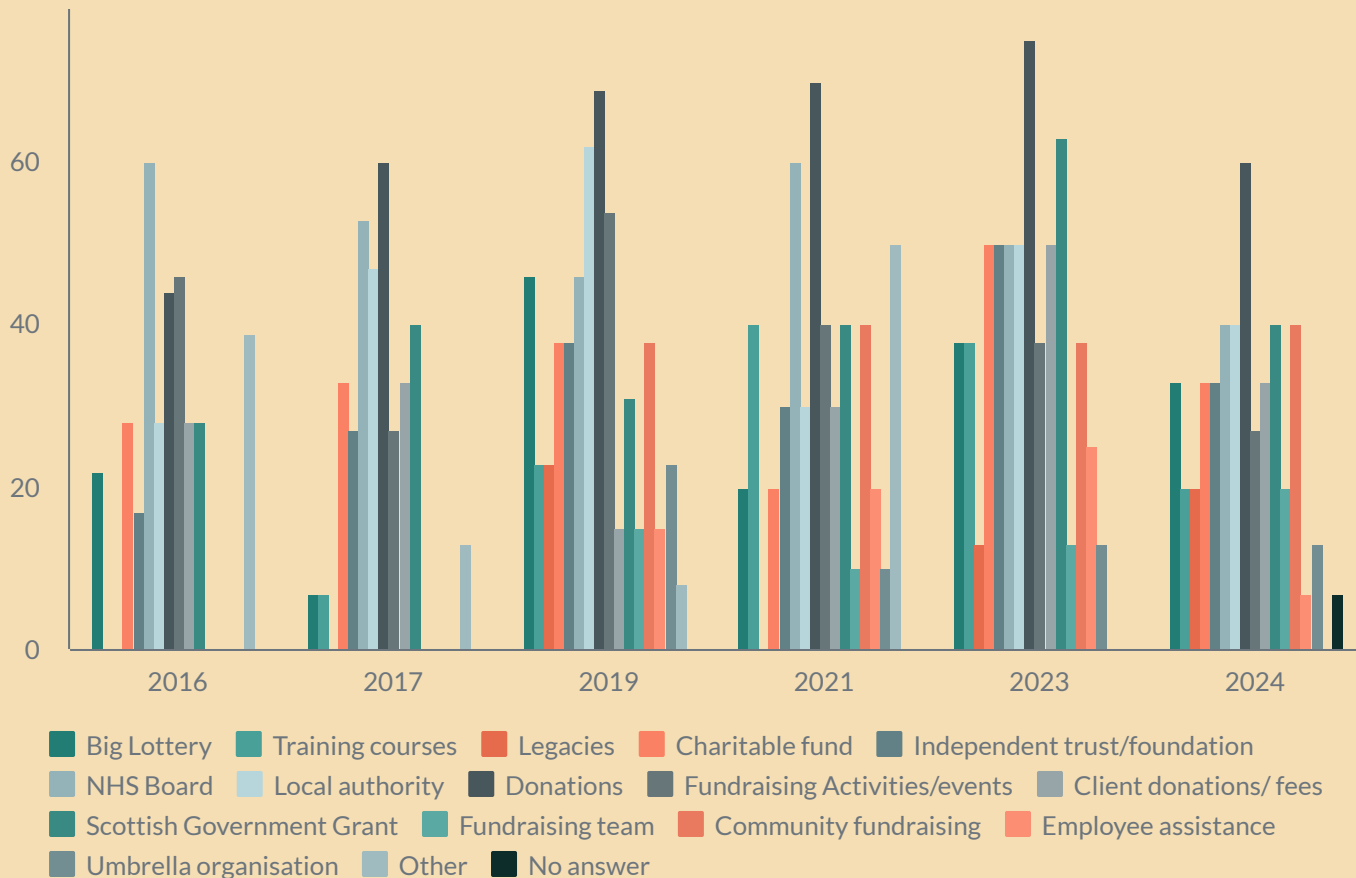
*Large increase is potentially due to having student therapists offer therapy for £5 (room hire charge). Also, word of mouth with clients having positive treatment outcomes. ACT has over 200 students on various courses, so this is a huge contributor to word of mouth.*

**Michelle Haazen ACT Counselling**

*On average 14k calls a month last year now 15k calls a month in 2024. Increasing every year as well as Webchat increasing.*

**Anon**

## 18a. In what way(s) do you generate income for your organisation?



Donations are still the most common source of funding used by 60%, followed by pretty much everything else. This shows a diverse range of funding streams.

Funding continues to be a main concern for COSCA Counselling and Counselling Skills organisations:

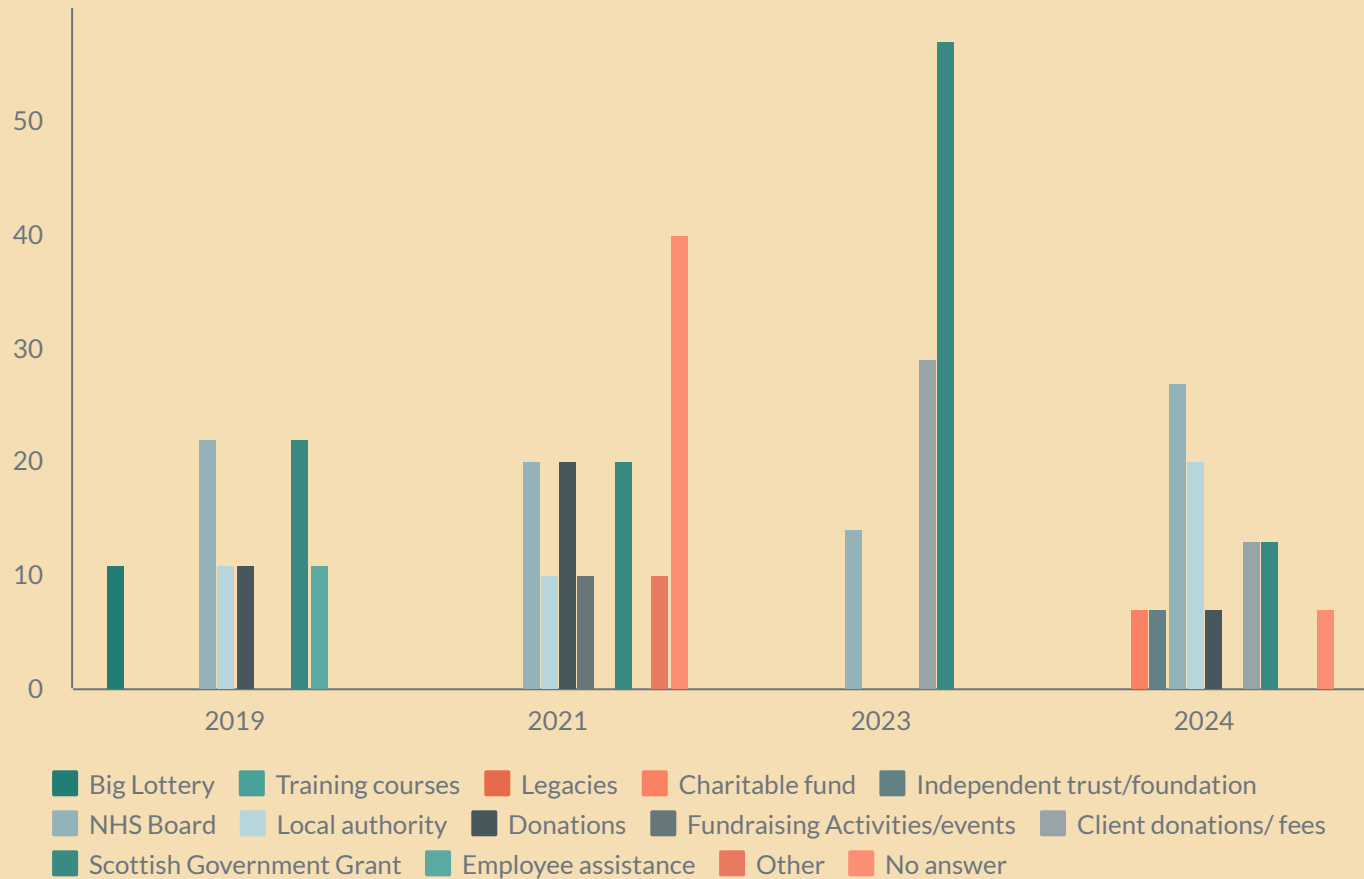
*Ensuring the financial sustainability of our services is challenging. Our counselling services currently bring in an income of around £1.7 million. There are a large variety of income sources, including individual client donations, fixed fee counselling in addition to tenders, grants and trusts and support from the Church of Scotland. A few of significant challenges are:*

- *The gap between our income and our costs (over £2million)*
- *The number of income sources to manage and report on, currently over 30 sources*
- *The short-term nature of much of this funding.*

*This means that a high percentage of management team time is spent chasing income to ensure sustainability of our services.*

*In 2023, 41% of referrals came from the statutory sector – including 19% direct referrals from NHS and many more as indirect referrals from NHS. Only one of our services receives direct funding from a health board.*

## 18b. Which of those is your main source of income?



When looking at the main source of income this changes quite dramatically with NHS Board being the main source of funding for 27% of respondents. Despite the diverse number of funding streams, the majority of organisations are funded by funds and grants.



19. Is there anything of which you are particularly proud to have achieved in the past year?

There are many things of which our Recognised Organisations are very justifiably proud. A few are mentioned below:

*Updating our management and operation systems, to bring us into the 21st century. Updating our Counselling Framework after consultation work. We have taken on a community hub premises, expanding our reach to more vulnerable or in crisis people and providing much more to the community.*

Alsion Smith Lochaber Hope

*Achieved COSCA Recognition. Shortlisted as one of the top 20 UK employers accredited with Investors in People.*

Angela Roberts ADSSWS

To have continued to maintain a professional and compassionate service in the context of range of challenges including staff health, maternity leave and tough funding environment.

Claire Edwards Bright Light

*Supporting over 1900 families, many of whom could not afford to access quality therapy elsewhere, (many of our clients are from areas of high deprivation including rural poverty), delivering over 17,300 sessions of therapy, positively enhancing clients' Psychological health; their Relationships with others; their Quality of life; their Physical health, often within just 9 sessions.*

*Breaking down the stigma around men's mental health and highlighting the positive impact of counselling: Andys story | CrossReach  
Successfully securing/maintaining funding from over 30 different sources, managing the reporting for all these funding streams.*

Claire McNally CrossReach Counselling

*That we more than fulfil our funding requirements in supporting the community of Fife within the Addictions Sector.*

Helen Hutton FASS

*We have almost double our counselling service in both Edinburgh and Midlothian which allows us to provide counselling for more carers. This means we have increased both student counsellors and contracted counsellors in both Edinburgh and Midlothian.*

Karen Kaufman VOCAL

*Starting to offer art therapy as well as talking therapies.*

Anon

*We have two paid full-time counsellors who manage their own caseload and the Counselling Service Manager also has a caseload of clients. Together with our dedicated team of volunteer counsellors, this has helped to reduce waiting times for our service.*

Anon

*One big achievement for our organisation was our tender submission in a competitive tendering field and securing the significant contract to provide the Beacons Recovery Hubs throughout South Lanarkshire. Included in the elements of the Beacons are Psychological & Psychosocial Interventions- Counselling and Therapeutic Interventions.*

*This is a large contract, with our team starting on 5th Aug; the team has 24 committed people providing a range of services, support, interventions and activities to people and their loved ones who are in recovery from alcohol and substance use.*

Margaret Halbert Liber8

*Once again, we are proud to have survived successfully for another year! Also, to have maintained our reputation as one of the best places for counselling students to have their placement, and to be one of the few affordable and widely accessible services in the city.*

Matthew Haggis PF Counselling

*COSCA Recognition for the counselling service. The process itself was so helpful in ensuring the correct systems and procedures are in place. ACT is now registered as a Charity.*

Michelle Haazen ACT Counselling

*We are delighted to have achieved our COSCA Recognition Scheme membership. We have been dealing with a high demand for our services and implemented Power Diary (digital platform for counselling team). For it all to come together in 12 months has been incredibly satisfying.*

Sharan Brown ACI

*Established two new in person venues and facilitated the successful return to face to face work in the East and West of Edinburgh.*

- *Enhanced our specialist training for in person counselling*
- *Developed our monitoring and evaluation procedures*
- *Drafted a three year strategy for the organisation.*

Sophie Temple PCCS

*Reaching our 20th Anniversary as a service for the people of Scotland.*

Anon

20. Have you found anything particularly helpful or inspiring during the past year?

*Inspired by my new managers. The passion and dedication of our staff and volunteer team.*

**Alison Smith Lochaber Hope**

*Working alongside COSCA to achieve membership of the COSCA Recognition Scheme was a really useful process, leading to several improvements in service delivery.*

**Angela Roberts ADSSWS**

*Hard work and willingness to step up by staff and counsellors.*

**Claire Edwards Bright Light**

*The continued dedication of our teams and the impact our work has on enhancing our clients' lives.*

**Claire McNally CrossReach Counselling**

*The most inspiring aspect of our implementation and delivery of our counselling/psychotherapy service is to experience the betterment of our clients who have made positive lifestyle changes and who have moved forward to leading a more resilient and improved quality of life in all areas.*

**Helen Hutton FASS**

*The feedback from the carers continues to encourage us and spur us to do more. We continue to work as much as possible to support this vulnerable community and they appreciate what we can offer to them. Our carers are amazing people.*

**Karen Kaufman VOCAL**

*Changing our model of working.*

**Anon**

*Most of our inspiration comes from the people who use our services, many provide feedback or send cards of gratitude. This is a hugely humbling experience and reminds all of us how important our work is.*

**Margaret Halbert Liber8**

*The willingness of counsellors, both student and qualified, to commit to long term volunteering continues to be both helpful and inspiring.*

**Matthew Haggis PF Counselling**

*Building a community of Therapists.*

**Michelle Haazen ACT Counselling**

*The team here at ACI has always been inspiring. What has flourished this year is the inclusion of our clients in recovery. In making decisions. Planning events. Selling their recovery work on our website to raise funds.*

**Sharan Brown ACI**

*Building links with other organisations and referral agencies.*

**Sophie Temple PCCS**

*Partnership and Engagement activity throughout Scotland.*

**Anon**



## 21. What are your hopes for next year?

COSCA Recognised Organisations have big plans for the year to come. A few of these are below:

*To Continue succession planning and embed New Connections within the organisation. To increase self generated income, bring on more staff to relieve current staff workload and bring on a drug and alcohol worker.*

Alison Smith Lochaber Hope

*We wish to retain the current contracts we hold with the NHS. Delays with the procurement process are frustrating.*

Angela Roberts ADSSWS

*That our new technical system will show the benefits we anticipate and that we can access further funding e.g. Lottery application is successful.*

Claire Edwards Bright Light

*Secure financial sustainability for all our services.  
Evolve our service structures to future proof support for our clients  
Retain / recruit /train the right people in the right place with the right skills to provide the support that our clients/ teams need to develop.  
Have an opportunity to reflect and review on our success and areas for development so that we can move forward together in a healthy, sustainable way.*

Claire McNally CrossReach Counselling

*To sustain and continue to develop a high quality delivery of service within the addictions sector to the Fife Community.*

Helen Hutton FASS

*To continue to expand and offer counselling to as many carers as we can in Edinburgh and Midlothian. Our hope is for shorter wait times.*

Karen Kaufman VOCAL

*To maintain consistent staffing for the service.*

Anon

*To obtain further funding to recruit more counsellors.*

Anon

*Our plan for next year is the same as most years, to continue to try to keep our organisation at the forefront of service provision, to continually review our services ensuring they meet the needs of people who use them. Underpinning this is the ability to identify and secure funding which is becoming more difficult each year.*

*Prior to Covid we had planned to have an organisational restructure which never materialised due to competing demands. This year marks our 20th Anniversary, and a complete root and branches review is timely. We want to review and update all aspects of the organisation and attempt to future proof it, setting it on a solid foundation for the next 5-10 years. Increasing demands on existing staff time has made this impossible to progress as yet, but it is hoped that if we are able to secure funding for our existing services for a 2-3-year period, this will free up some time for senior staff to focus on planning and reviewing restructure options.*

Margaret Halbert Liber8

*To successfully complete the transition from one Director to another following the retirement of Alison Hampton. Times of change lie ahead for the PF. Our new Director starts on 2 September 2024: please update your records after that date – Eilidh Macdonald-Harte  
eilidh@pfcounselling.org.uk.*

Matthew Haggis PF Counselling

*As mentioned earlier, to advertise the services on social media and hopefully grow the service.*

*Be able to give back to the local community now we are a charity.*

Michelle Haazen ACT Counselling

**Expand Our Reach:** We aim to extend our services into Invergordon, Easter and Wester Ross, and Skye, increasing our presence to reach more individuals in need of addiction counselling and recovery support.

**Enhance Service Offerings:** We plan to introduce new programs focused on trauma-informed care and mindfulness, drawing on person-centred counselling and humanistic psychotherapy to better address the complex needs of those we serve.

**Strengthen Partnerships:** Building stronger partnerships with local organisations, healthcare providers, and community groups will enhance our ability to provide comprehensive, holistic support.

**Secure Sustainable Funding:** We will actively pursue grants and explore new fundraising strategies to ensure our services remain free and accessible.

**Counselling Education:** We plan to launch the COSCA Counselling Skills certificate in partnership with Grounded Learning, offering in-person training in Inverness.

**Invest in Staff and Volunteer Development:** We will invest in training and professional development to ensure our team is equipped with the latest knowledge and skills.

**Evaluate and Improve:** We will maintain robust feedback systems to continually refine our programs and better meet the needs of our community.

Sharan Brown ACI

*Enhance our equality and diversity monitoring  
New website with enhanced information for counselling clients, more information available on specific counsellors and how counselling works  
Data review project – streamline our use of data with pro bono expert support to enhance our ability to use data and understand our service  
Continue to build on our specialist training programme  
CPD training on working with men and dads  
Explore option to offer a creche  
Streamline NHS referral pathway (taking data protection into account)  
Establish secure continued funding.*

Sophie Temple PCCS

*Further development of our Webchat service as it is very popular with under people under 34 years of age.*

- Further work with workforces
- Recommendations from the Suicide Strategy
- Further development of staff teams
- Continued use of regular supervision with the staff
- Continued data recording and evidence of how the service is managing.
- Measuring demand of the Webchat service with Content Guru (service provider).

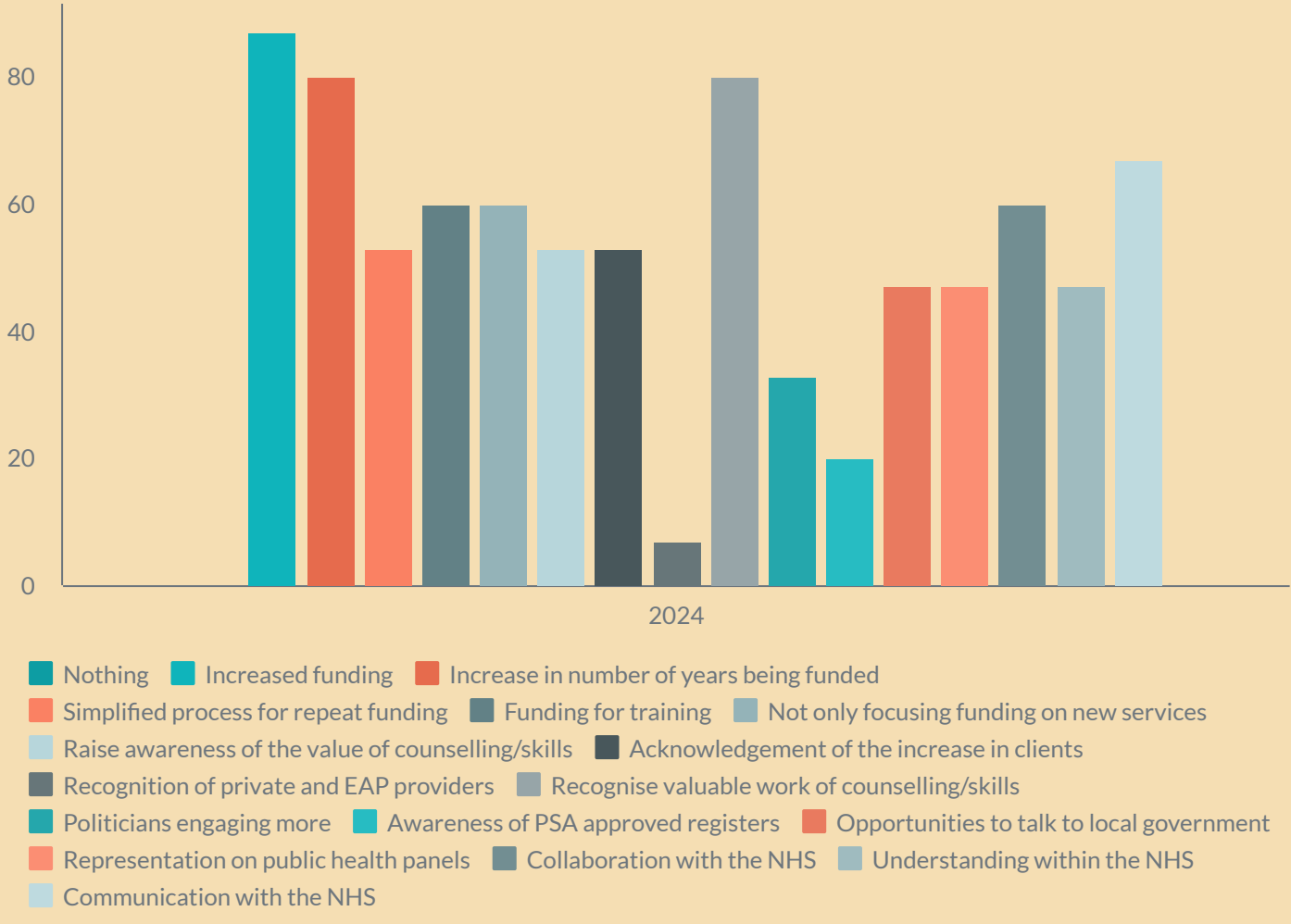
Anon



Some areas do not need to be explored every year, but are very relevant at the time. To capture and share this information COSCA ask a guest question.

Guest Question:

### What actions would you like to see from the Government, both Local and National, to support you in your work?



With the current political climate and the potential of more cuts in government spending, it seemed important to find out what COSCA's Recognised Organisations thought should be a priority for both local and national government regarding counselling and counselling skills support.

Not one organisation said that nothing needed to be done.

It's probably not a surprise that funding was given high priority. 87% (interestingly not 100%) of organisations wanted increased funding and 80% wanted an increase in the number of years funded. It's hard to make long-term plans with short-term funding.

Not all about money, 80% of COSCA Recognised Organisations wanted Recognition of the importance of the support they provide for their clients and service users. 67% wanted better communication with the NHS. That's an interesting number, as included in the survey were Alcohol and Drug organisations who already have strong ties with the NHS.

Here's what some of COSCA's Recognised Organisations had to say:

*Definitely NHS should be working in collaboration with counselling and counselling skills organisations.*

1. To reduce waiting lists
2. To increase mental health support
3. Suicide prevention.

*We could do so much for Scotland's poor mental health, by working together with NHS if only they would recognise that we are professionals, we need to be scaffolding, and be paid for it. Scottish Government are failing us drastically.*

Alison Smith Lochaber Hope

*We need to better reflect the communities we work with, so bursaries to facilitate more diverse people accessing training. Sounds counterintuitive but fewer counselling courses being run and fewer places as there are not the jobs and limited placement opportunities, fear some students are exploited and over reliance on voluntary counselling – which in turn leads to poorer representation as not many people can afford to so a skilled professional role in a voluntary capacity.*

Claire Edwards Bright Light

*Stable, sustainable government support that recognises the contributions that we make to the sector and the remarkable value for money that we offer. Funding that doesn't require us to consistently prove ourselves and be in competition with other organisations, when we are in fact so often working in partnership on the ground to support clients. Essentially, a secure base that allows our teams not only to deliver operationally effective services but also to reflect on and creatively evolve those services to meet client need.*

Claire McNally CrossReach Counselling

- increased funding for early intervention and prevention e.g. introducing programmes in primary schools to help children understand about anxiety and teaching coping mechanisms
- increased access to trauma training for counsellors
- increased funding to provide longer term therapy for those clients who present with trauma.

Anon

*Unfortunately, it doesn't appear that either national or local government does support counselling or counselling organisations, and this is disturbing, considering the value of the work they deliver in our communities. We continually hear about NHS waiting lists and the crisis in mental health and there is no acknowledgment or recognition of the work provided by counselling organisations to both alleviate these waiting lists and to prevent members of our communities developing severe and enduring mental health issues due to their initial symptoms and presentations not being assessed as serious enough for NHS intervention. I would be asking both to consider their future decision making and priorities.*

*As noted in my previous comment, the introduction of the Community Mental Health Fund was encouraging, despite it being for a 12month period- this has now seen two rounds of significant funds being available in localities. This gave hope for counselling organisations in terms of securing some funds for the vital work we do and for many to reduce their own waiting lists. However, this hope was quickly dashed when we were informed the criteria excluded 'professional counselling' (trained, experienced, skilled, therapists).*

*This was an unfathomable decision; it is difficult enough for counselling organisations to identify and secure funding but then to have a specific Government fund launched focused on the very work we do – Improving Mental Health & Wellbeing – which excludes our work in the eligibility criteria is simply unacceptable.*

*Whether this was a central or local government decision provided to the Third Sector Interface who governed the fund, should be established and reasoning given as to why professional quality monitored counselling was excluded from a fund in which the individual, family and community benefits of providing the therapeutic intervention can often be immeasurable.*

Margaret Halbert Liber8

*Since 2021 we have been waiting on an NHS contract for the services we provide for people challenged with addiction. MAT standards 6 and 10 are Psychosocial therapy and we have been providing that service since the implementation of DAISy (Treatment database) in Apr 21.*

*They do not want to admit our services are a treatment and have been classified as social care for the past nine years. 3rd sector funders do not want to fund our core services as they claim they should be statutory funded.*

*HADP were given funding for drug and alcohol services last year, did not give any to ACI and now the underspend has been moved to HTSI as a Community Mental Health Fund this year.*

*We are forever hopeful the Scotgov recognises the worth of counselling as a lifesaving intervention. Which is definitely is. Stop exploiting counsellors who deserve to be paid for the work. It is not a cup of tea and a chat, which too many other professionals think it is.*

Sharan Brown ACI

*We recently were not granted continued funding from the Perinatal Infant Mental Health fund despite no negative comments, it was simply hugely over subscribed. The majority of our referrals are signposted from within the NHS but we receive very limited statutory funding despite perinatal and infant mental health being strategic Scottish Government priorities. We would love this to be better reflected in available funding.*

Sophie Temple PCCS

## Conclusions

This survey shows the frustration with a decline in funding against an increase in demand for services. COSCA Recognised Organisations are also reporting an increase in complexity that take more time and expertise to help. Counsellors and counselling skills users are less able to volunteer their time due to the increase in costs of living.

However, there are enormous positives too. COSCA Recognised Organisations should be extremely proud of the quality and effectiveness of their services. Despite the funding challenges they are able to make a real difference in the communities they serve and support their counsellors and counselling skills users to provide this. They are taking active steps to reach out to those less likely to use their services and are anticipating and working towards removing barriers to access.

COSCA Recognised counselling and counselling skills organisations are already excellent at what they do. With an understanding of this from government, both national and local, and perhaps more collaboration with the NHS, just think what they could achieve!

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