

AURORA FOUNDATION

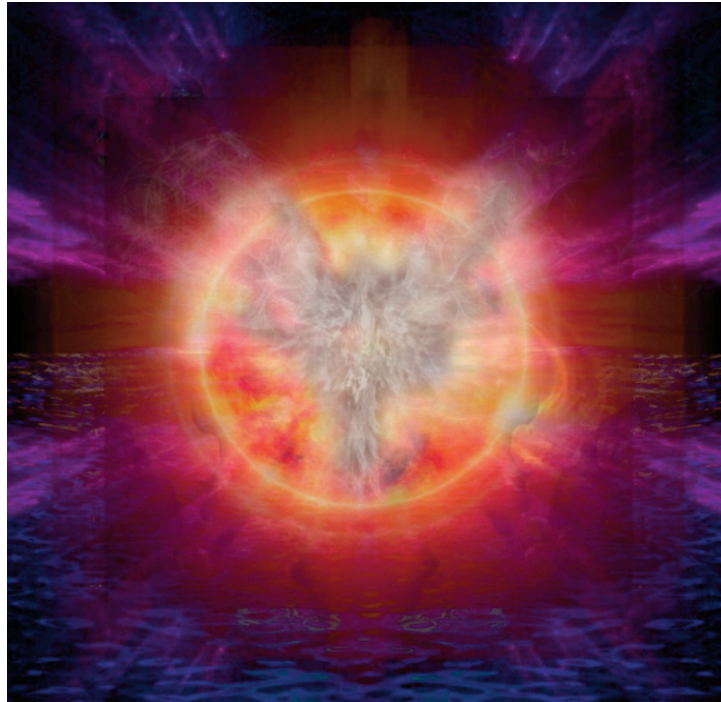
for People Abused in Childhood



Trauma Recovery Service & Therapeutic Community

2007 - 2017

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS FOR A DECADE



The Aurora Mandala

The silver phoenix – symbol of restored hope - rises over a golden sun – symbol of health, well-being and life. Stretching its wings out into the cosmos, carving a pathway into the future. Its wings blur and merge with the symbols and energy of the Flower of Life – the tapestry of life that underpins all of reality, connecting all things together, all people together as one and aligning them to the source from which they came and to which they will return.

The circle of the sun – representing the cycle of life – is squared – grounded in the material universe, anchored and made manifest the higher powers of promise come into manifestation and reality. The echo of this shape becoming in itself a doorway leading ever onwards to new opportunities and possibilities. Beneath the sun an ocean of amethyst and azure blue ripples and flows out to the horizon, it represents the unending movement of time and the ebbing and flowing of life as well as strength, purging, spirituality, alignment and endurance. The vibrant blues and purples in the sky represent the spirit world reaching down and lifting humanity up, the blue represents the nurturance of the Divine Mother, the energy of everlasting and eternal compassion and unconditional love – born from non-judgement and acceptance.

The image vibrates outwards to the border, spirals carrying the energy forwards and backwards – linking the past to the present and the present to the possible future. There is also a sense of movement here – a sense of travelling – flowing forwards – embracing the future and all the wonders and glories it carries. Hidden in the mandala is the Aurora logo – enriching the tapestry of the piece with its own powers!

Thank you to Edwin Courtenay who very kindly designed the Aurora Mandala

www.edwincourtenay.co.uk
www.spiritlightgallery.co.uk

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How we work:

The Charity is managed by a Board of Trustees through its full time Chief Executive. Operations are met through the Aurora Management Committee, Therapist Team, Supervisors and Volunteers all of whom are part-time and without whom we could not operate.

Organisational Member of the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP):

The BACP is a professional body and a registered charity that sets standards for therapeutic practice and provides information for therapists, clients of therapy, and the public (<https://www.bacp.co.uk>).

Member Agency of The Survivors Trust:

The Survivors Trust (TST) is a UK-wide national umbrella agency for 130 specialist organisations for support for the impact of rape, sexual violence and childhood sexual abuse throughout the UK and Ireland (<http://thesurvivorstrust.org/>).

MEET OUR TRUSTEES



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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Eleven years ago on the 20 October 2006, Susannah Faithfull founded and became the first CEO of the Aurora Foundation. A few months later on 10 May 2007 Aurora gained charitable status and opened its doors to survivors.

Susannah was (and still is) a visionary who saw the need for an Aurora through her own healing journey and therapy work with clients who like herself had endured childhood abuse. She was aware of the distinct lack of a safe and supportive haven for adults who had suffered the profound and unimaginable crime of childhood abuse. Her response was to create a charity that would provide a healing environment for survivors; a place where people could go, be heard and be supported for as long as was necessary. Hence, Aurora was born.

Ten years later I have recently taken the CEO reins and am delighted to be able to celebrate a decade of Aurora in this special anniversary report. Much has changed since 2006 and what stands out for me is that however much we have struggled to keep going, however much the Team has changed and our services have developed, Aurora's approach, values and ethos remain the same.

It could be argued that with me at the "helm" Aurora is not officially a "survivor led" agency. This might be true, but I believe I have survivors' interests at the heart of what Aurora does and to help me I am surrounded by people who "know" what is like to be a survivor. They help me keep on the right track, and for this guidance I am particularly thankful to those in the Team that "know", to members of the Aurora Client Advisory Group (ACAG), to the clients I have worked with over the years and of course to Susannah.

At the heart of all of Aurora's work is the care and support of survivors. We couldn't have achieved what we have achieved without the dedication of the Aurora Team and Trustees (both past and present), and the hard work and commitment of the clients who have reached out to us for help. Thank you to all of you!

We always aim to promote the interests of those that come to us for help - not simply by providing support through counselling/psychotherapy, through community activities such as workshops, regular "meet-ups" and our resident choir "Aurora Choralis" - but also by providing a safe, peaceful and nurturing space for clients to meet and chat with others. A place where survivors can have the opportunity to feel connected to other people. To not feel so alone.

As we look towards the future we know that the work of Aurora and other agencies in the abuse sector is more important than ever before. The increase in awareness of childhood abuse - prompted largely by high profile "celebrity" cases - is encouraging more survivors to come forward for help and there is an ever increasing demand on services.

As with many, if not most, small to medium charities finding the finance to keep Aurora going is an ongoing and challenging process. We need funds to pay the rent for our premises (we don't own a property); for essential overheads and to pay therapists for providing counselling services. Unlike many charities Aurora is largely self-funded through the contributions clients make for their therapy. In fact, on average 90% of our annual income is generated this way, and although this allows a level

of independence and security not often possible with organisations totally reliant on external funding it also creates a moral dilemma for when clients cannot afford therapy. In an ideal world, we would be offering counselling services to everybody at a much reduced cost or even free, but if we were to do that Aurora just would not exist as we would be financially unsustainable.

The answer is of course to try and find a balance; to try and generate income from external and diverse sources. In this way we can move towards making our services available to a lot more people in need. There are too many people who Aurora currently cannot help as we just can't afford it.

For a long time we have been trying to find this balance so we can ensure we get the external funding needed to open our doors wider to more people. However, the level of competition from other charities, all trying to promote their cause to the general public and to grant holders, makes this an enormously difficult task. Securing grants is particularly challenging and Aurora has fought for many years to gain sufficient funding to make a real difference.

Over the years we have been successful in securing small grants from charitable trusts and from the statutory sector (acknowledged later in the report), but I am very pleased to announce that this year Aurora was (in principle) awarded 3 years funding by the London Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) from their Victims Fund programme. Apart from injecting Aurora with much needed funds I feel that this award also recognises the importance of the abuse service sector that to my mind has been for so long overlooked. There is still a long way to go to gain long-term, core funding, but it's a start and we can look ahead to the future with increased optimism.

Lastly, I am very grateful to those who contributed words, photos and pictures to this report. The photos and pictures are all from Aurora clients and with their permission have been reproduced here.



Nick Cantello

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

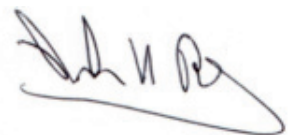
Aurora's core work is to help relieve the suffering and distress of people who have been abused in childhood and we do this by providing one-to-one counselling/ psychotherapy together with workshops and social events.

The mix of clients' problems remains the same, but the increase in publicity surrounding adults who have suffered abuse in childhood has also meant a rise in the number of clients wanting our services, but without funding we are limited in the amount of counselling we can provide which in turn leads to long waiting periods for clients who so richly deserve our support.

We are a small charity and as a result of funding issues we have had to review the priorities whilst determining the most efficient means of servicing our clients with the resources available.

Our hope for the future is to recruit and retain more counsellors and reduce waiting times for those seeking our assistance who are experiencing very acute distress.

As Chair of the Trustees I am grateful for the guidance and support offered by my fellow Trustees who come from a range of backgrounds so that we can both understand better the needs of our clients, but also ensure we meet the regulatory requirements expected of a well-run charity. In turn we are grateful for the hard work and dedication of the Executive Team with whom we have an excellent relationship and the commitment of those who provide the necessary services and the volunteers who give support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John H. B.', written below the portrait photo.

I believe what was fundamental to my healing at Aurora was the compassion, love and understanding I experienced from all its staff and volunteers and from the place itself. What also supported my healing at Aurora was the very non-clinical setting. I experienced at Aurora a very comfortable, homely, safe and cosy environment with still the appropriate boundaries in place; it was just the right balance which created a safe and welcoming platform where I had the opportunity to just be myself and work on my healing.

"Aurora's approach is exactly what I feel was missing throughout those years - somewhere that completely understands where I am coming from & has an understanding of what I went through in the past and am going through today, as an adult survivor. I feel relaxed and safe in the environment and believe that the staff at Aurora really care & do genuinely want to help. What Aurora provides, is invaluable to me and has assisted me in feeling better within myself, about myself and with opening up. As a result, I already feel more positive about the future, my abilities in life and about my journey towards healing. I'm finally moving forwards again."

"Aurora gives the sort of treatment that can makes long term and deep change - where people can radically change their lives and free themselves from the issues that have been dominating and destroying their lives.

The need for this sort of intervention in people's lives is impossible to overstate"

A FEW WORDS FROM AURORA'S FOUNDER

People ask me how I founded Aurora. The idea of Aurora was always with me. Was it from compassion, personal experience or necessity? Partly all those things, but the main reasons that Aurora came into being was from a childhood dream to help others like me and pure rage - what I call white hot rage - as an adult victim/survivor at the injustice and misunderstanding that people who have been abused in childhood often face. Too rarely there is the specialist help and support needed let alone the basic understanding and respect for the abuse and trauma victims endure.

As a victim of childhood abuse and trauma myself I struggled for years trying to get the specialist help I really needed. As a single parent on a single woman's wage I had to find help on a limited income. That meant free or low cost counselling from small organisations - themselves with sporadic funding - with often well meaning volunteers ill equipped to begin to deal with the severity of my childhood experiences. But thank God they were there! Fortunately being practical minded - and blessed with boundless gratitude - I found most of it generally helpful with a few invaluable pieces of advice that I still use today. But it wasn't until I received funding for Arbours Crisis Centre in North London that I finally found some much needed specialist help. There I not only found the kind of help I needed but I also met other survivors. It was at Arbours that I rekindled my dream to help others who'd experienced abuse as children.

Aurora was born on the August Bank Holiday weekend in 2006. On the Saturday Nick and I were driving to our book stall at a Holistic Fayre in Devon. The week before had been a particularly unusual one - it comes in three's - as the saying goes. On the Tuesday morning before a young man I'd met at a survivor rally had rang me in tears. It took me some time to recognise him and he rang off before we could speak. He'd called from a private number so I couldn't ring him back. I sent a silent wish for him to ring again but he never did and I've held the hope ever since that he was ok. I found myself thinking that like my childhood wish if there was a Centre that he and others like him could meet he wouldn't be so alone in his grief...

Then on the Friday at my private practice I had a client for a Reiki healing. Afterwards as he sat with a cup of tea in my client sitting room he mentioned he'd been abused in childhood and had struggled for years trying to rebuild his life. Therapists had helped him for awhile but it was meeting other victim/survivors of childhood abuse that he felt could really help him as he felt so very isolated and alone. He said there should be a place where survivors could safely meet regularly not necessarily to share their darkest experiences but so that together they could once again feel 'part of the human race'. Food for thought I felt - a reminder of what was needed...

On the Friday evening I was running late to meet a dear friend for supper. As I got into my car to drive to the venue I texted her to say I was on my way. A missed call and a distressing voicemail

from her told me she was in her car too afraid to go into the restaurant as she was crying so much. Her mother had recently died and my friend having been abused in childhood by her stepfather was now being subjected to him taking all her mother's belongings. I was shocked as although I'd known her for years she had never been so distraught.

That did it! Three people representing other victim/survivors all struggling and suffering - I was enraged! The white hot rage consumed me as I drove through the park. With rock music full blast on the car stereo and driving rain I shouted at the Universe - à la John Cleese Fawlty Towers - to send me the money, the premises and as no one else was going to do it muggins here would set up a Centre for others like me to meet and get the specialist help they needed...

The Bank Holiday Saturday dawned bright and sunny as Nick and I drove to Devon. I spoke about my outrage and the need for a holistic therapeutic community and a trauma recovery centre. I described how it would be.

Nick was made redundant from his job - a premises near to us was vacant - so with Nick's redundancy money and the vacant house - Aurora was born. First a registered company in October 2006 then a registered charity on 10th May 2007 and here we are celebrating Aurora as a charity ten years later!

My vision is for many more Aurora's like ours to exist and also Aurora residential crisis centres for those who need intensive therapy. I hope for Aurora public meeting places for any victim/survivors as long as they remain sober and respectful for the meeting times. In fact a range of Aurora services everywhere so that people abused in childhood can benefit from whatever service best suits their needs. A tall order? Well it starts with a dream that becomes a hope that becomes a reality...



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. W.' or similar, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

How Aurora Has Helped Me - Martin's Story

I found Aurora via the Survivors Trust, August 2016. I was in conventional psychodynamic therapy for 2.5 years, and the therapist kept changing venues, the last one had no waiting room, so I had to time it that I arrived 2 minutes early, and leave straight after my session. I remember after a couple of sessions I was left on the pavement crying. People walking past must have thought I was homeless.

Where Aurora has helped me is showing me love and valuing me as a human being. There is a lounge I sit in up 30 minutes before my session and stay up to an hour afterwards. I have found this space very useful, as I have been able to make valuable connections with other service users. Whilst the therapeutic process is very useful, I have found making friends, particularly useful.

I regularly WhatsApp my friends from Aurora, and the great thing is if I have any paranoid thoughts, I can check these out with my friends, and likewise.

The therapy sessions themselves have been great, in that the therapist is consistent, and patient. This is what I need as a survivor.

Another unique selling point of Aurora is the meet up groups. I have had some wonderful experiences, going on a Thames boat trip, making bread, and Harry Edwards Healing place. Again we are altogether and understand each other's pain. It has been a great space to be able check out thoughts and feelings, and share.

An example of a meet up was going to Harry Edwards. This is a spiritual healing centre in Surrey. It was so peaceful there, and in April the bluebells were out. It reminded me how healing nature is, and important to get out in it as much as possible.

We also have the choir, which helps me reach out my creative side, not worrying if I make a mistake.

I guess, in all, the Aurora makes me feel safe, it is amazingly supportive, and offers additional services which a lot of private counsellors don't offer.

THE CONTEXT OF CHILDHOOD ABUSE

Introduction

Over the past few years extensive media coverage of celebrity cases (e.g. Operation Yewtree) and inquiries into public schools and other institutions has raised the profile of non-recent childhood abuse to an unprecedented level. This has not only brought a traditionally hidden and taboo problem to public attention, but the testimonials of victims have also provided insights into how much damage sexual, emotional and psychological can do to an individual. More and more victims are coming forward seeking help which in turn has exposed the inadequacy of available support. This is reflected by the lack of appropriate support services and the poor responses victims do receive when seeking help. Now more than ever it is glaringly obvious that more suitable and better service provision to help victims of childhood abuse is urgently needed.

For many adults, the consequences of abuse in childhood can be devastating and numerous victims experience long-term emotional, psychological, physical and social problems. Historical (or non-recent) abuse can result in deep hurt and isolation that can leave the victim unable to form healthy relationships and function well in society. In addition, many victims suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder symptomology, be struggling to survive and may also be suicidal. Not all victims seek help, but for many the consequences of their abuse can be so overwhelming and long lasting that they need long term psychological treatment to help them recover from their experiences.

The scale of the problem

Given the nature of childhood abuse and the taboo that surrounds it - and the fact that many survivors do not come forward due to fear and/or shame - accurate prevalence figures are difficult to obtain. A report published by the Children's Commissioner in September 2017 indicates that the true scale of child sex abuse in England is likely to be significantly greater than official figures suggest. Indeed, current research indicates that only 1 in 8 children being sexually abused are identified by health professionals and most will only disclose the abuse many years later as adults, either to seek help or to prosecute their abuser.

Although official figures are unlikely to accurately reflect the scale of the problem an indication of prevalence from surveys is all we currently have. For example, an NSPCC survey (Radford et al 2011) on 1,761 young adults (aged 18-24 years) found that nearly a quarter (24.1%) experienced sexual abuse during childhood. Furthermore, in an international meta-analysis of 65 studies from 22 countries published in 2009 fewer reports of abuse were found with estimates of 19.7% for females and 7.9% for males (Pereda et al 2009).

More contemporary data is now available from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) who in 2016 introduced a new range of question in their annual Crime Survey to ask survey respondents about their experiences of childhood abuse.

In the report's main points, the ONS summarises the methodology and the results:

"A new module of questions included in the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 asked adult respondents aged 16 to 59 whether they had experienced a range of abuse while a child. The questions were restricted to abuse carried out by an adult and included psychological, physical, and sexual abuse and also having witnessed domestic violence or abuse in the home.

The survey showed that 9% of adults aged 16 to 59 had experienced psychological abuse, 7% physical abuse,

7% sexual assault and 8% witnessed domestic violence or abuse in the home. With the exception of physical abuse, women were significantly more likely to report that they had suffered any form of abuse asked about during childhood than men."

(p3, ONS 2016)

We can use these figures to estimate the prevalence of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) in local populations. For example, Kingston-upon-Thames (where Aurora is located) has an adult population of 135,597 (mid 2016 estimates) and drawing on figures from the above Crime Survey data the estimated number of adults living in the borough sexually abused as children is estimated to be just under 9,500. The table below estimates the number of victims of CSA in Aurora's five local Boroughs and London wide.

BOROUGH	ADULT POPULATION (BASED ON MID 2016 EST)	ESTIMATES OF CSA
Kingston	135,597	9,492
Merton	157,850	11,050
Richmond	150,766	10,554
Sutton	155,694	10,899
Wandsworth	243,397	17,038
TOTAL	843,304	59,031
London wide	6,575,030	460,252

References

Office for National Statistics (2016). Abuse during childhood: Findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, year ending March 2016. London: ONS

Pereda, N., G. Guilera, M. Forns, and J. Gomez-Benito (2009). The prevalence of child sexual abuse in community and student samples: a metaanalysis. Clinical Psychology Review, 29: 328-338

Radford, L., Corral, S. et al (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today. London: NSPCC.

"Meet-Up" to the Harry Edwards Healing Sanctuary

"Meet-Ups" are monthly events held on a Saturday that involve social activities at Aurora or outside at various locations. Examples of external events are a trip to Kew Gardens, a cruise on the River Thames and a visit to the Harry Edwards Healing Sanctuary.

We visited the Sanctuary in early Spring 2017 and below are some photographs taken by one of our party (thank you Jean). The photographs were on a noticeboard in the client sitting room at Aurora where clients and team members are able to pin inspirational material.



Bluebell Walk
Harry Edwards Healing Sanctuary



Surround Yourself With Blue - Allow Yourself To Heal



For those clients who enjoyed the Harry Edwards Healing Sanctuary Meetup - a little something to focus on if you are having a difficult day.

Aurora's Objectives

To provide specialised counselling and psychotherapy; therapeutic community support and bodywork therapies to promote preserve and protect good physical and mental health with the emphasis upon recovery exclusively for adult survivors of childhood trauma/abuse

To also raise awareness of the negative post traumatic effects of childhood abuse and campaign for the prevention of childhood abuse in the form of appropriate training and other activities to various stakeholders.



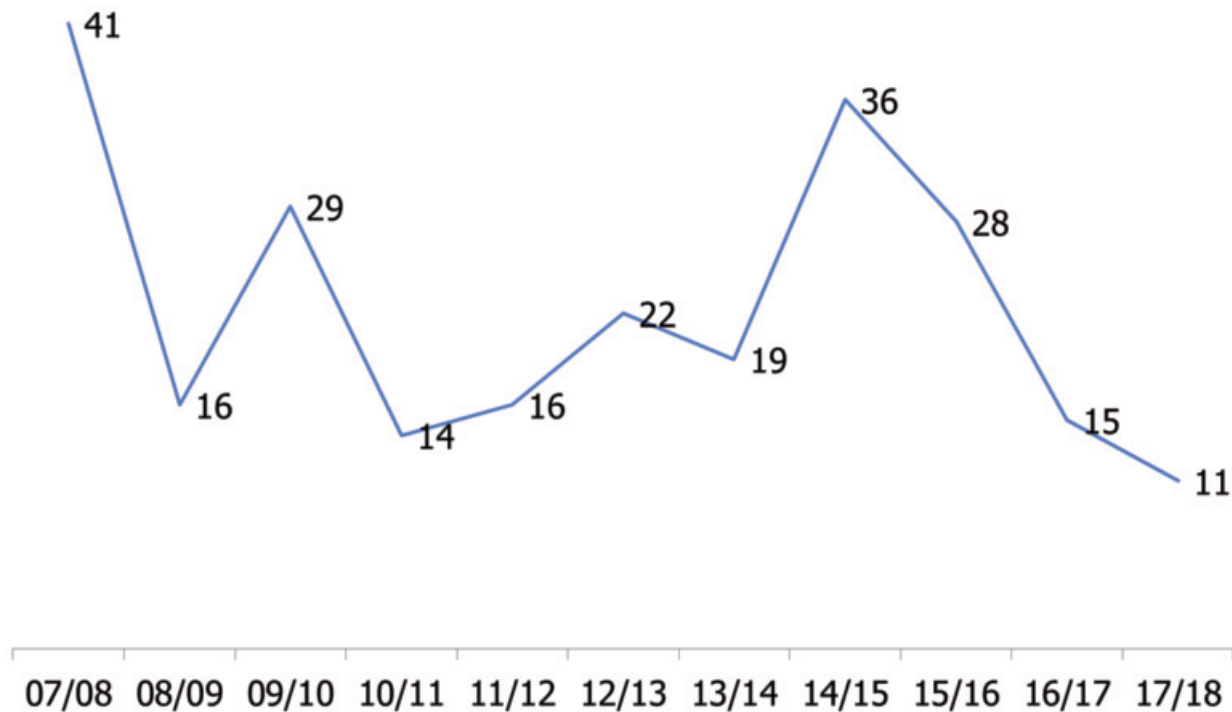
SOME STATISTICS

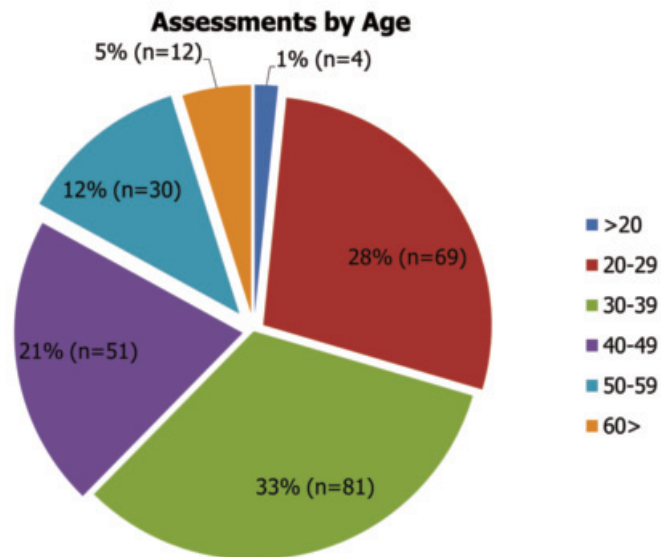
Since May 2007, 247 people received an assessment at Aurora and the following data and figures provide a snapshot.

Of people assessed, 123 (50%) completed therapy

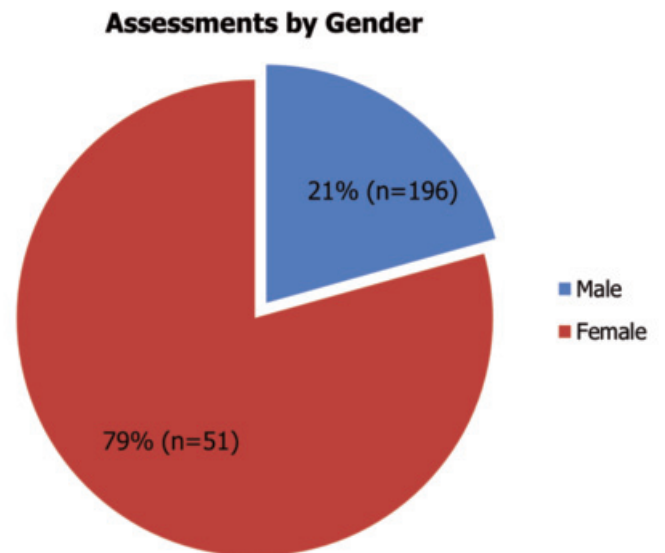
Mean length of therapy - 392 days

No of assessments per year

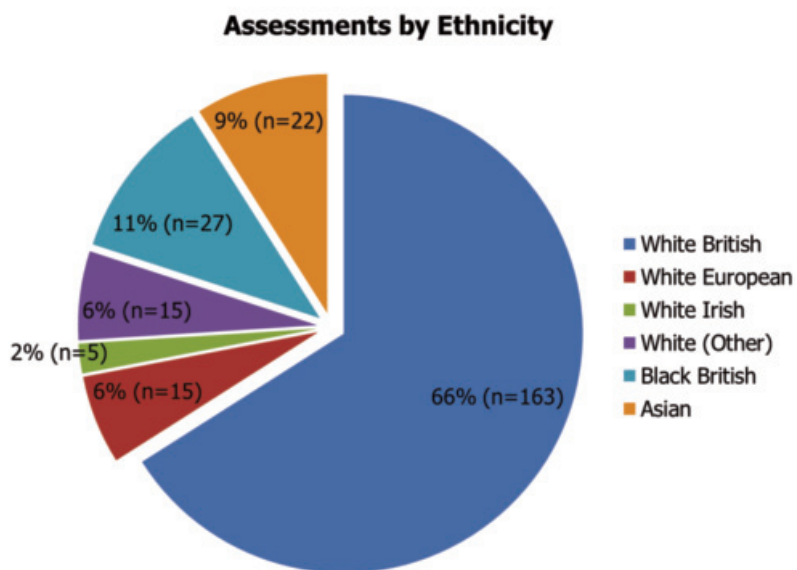




■ >20
■ 20-29
■ 30-39
■ 40-49
■ 50-59
■ 60+



■ Male
■ Female



■ White British
■ White European
■ White Irish
■ White (Other)
■ Black British
■ Asian

EVALUATING THE THERAPY

Evaluation of counselling at Aurora is done using the OM34 questionnaire from the CORE (Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation) system and the IES (Impact of Events Scale). Both are self-report questionnaires that ask clients to rate how they have felt the week before using "Likert type" 5 point rating scales for each form, i.e. "not at all" to "most of the time" (CORE) and "not at all" to "extremely" (IES).

CORE Scores

The CORE-OM34 is an established measure commonly used in counselling practice. It covers a range of issues giving an overall score of mental health well being. Figure 1 below relates to all clients who completed CORE forms and ended therapy in any given year between 2010/2011 and 2015/2016 (n=46). Clients start therapy with an average CORE score of 59.6 which falls within the "moderate to severe" level on the clinical range. Final scores show an average drop to a score of 25. The clinical cut off point where a person is considered 'healthy' or 'low level' is a score of 34.

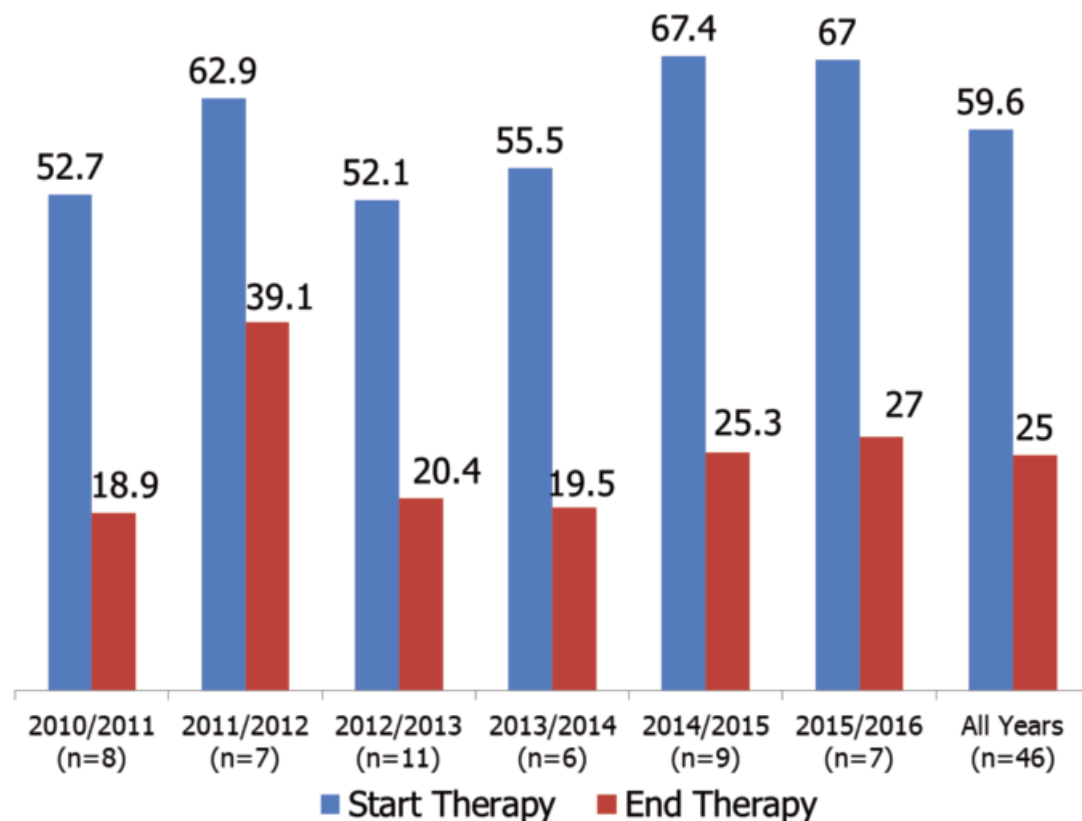


Figure 1 CORE Scores

IES Scores

The IES is a questionnaire specifically designed to measure post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms consisting of a range of difficulties people sometimes experience after a stressful event. There is less data as the IES was started to be used at Aurora from mid 2013.

Figure 2 below relates to all clients who completed IES forms and ended therapy in any given year between 2013/2014 and 2015/2016 (n=18). Clients start therapy with an average IES score of 42.9 and end therapy with a mean score of 17.5. The clinical cut off point where a person is considered to exhibit post traumatic stress symptoms is 31.

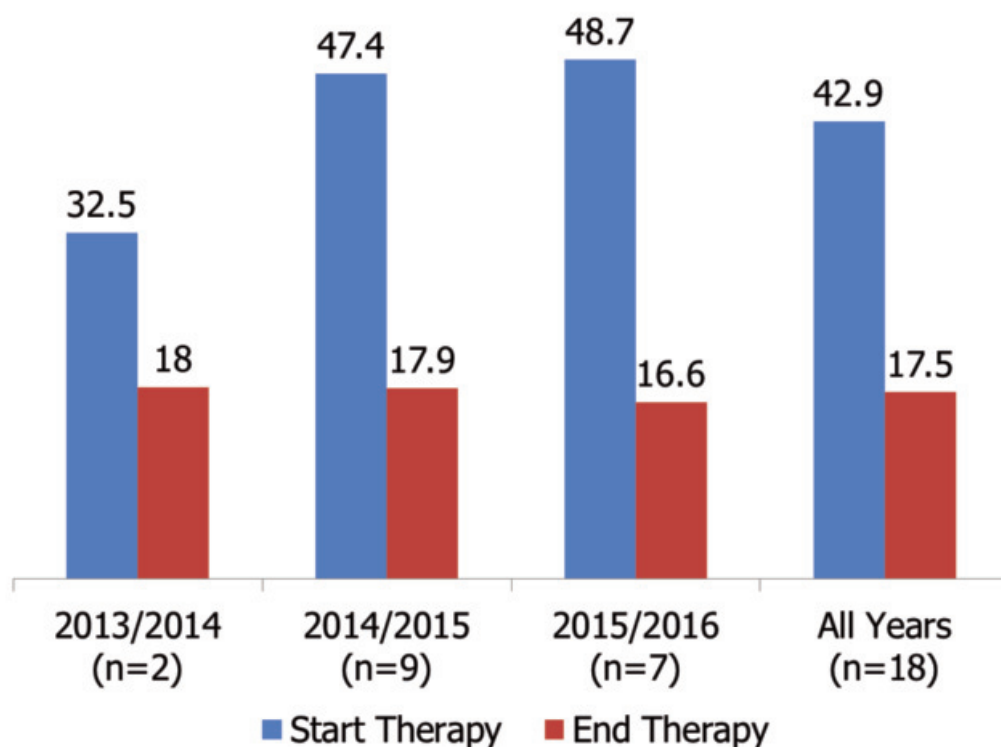


Figure 2 IES Scores

A Creative Approach in Working with Clients

As part of my Therapeutic Model I use Art Therapy. The overall aim in Art Therapy is to enable a client to effect change and growth on a personal level through the use of art materials in a safe and facilitating environment.

Art Therapy uses the creative process to enable clients to increase self-awareness, reflection and enhance emotional well-being. As well as being an aid to help manage symptoms of stress.

Human experience cannot always be entirely reduced to words. Expressing how it feels to suffer depression or talk about the experience of trauma may involve far more than struggling to find the right words. Some experiences and emotional states are beyond words. This is particularly relevant where difficulties originate in early childhood.

Through making art images and objects it is possible to externalise and objectify the experience so that it becomes possible to reflect upon it and begin to make sense of it.

For some the images created may help to hold or contain feelings that might otherwise be experienced as unbearable, unmanageable or chaotic. Art Therapy can portray deeper buried feelings that are beyond conscious awareness, and though it clients can find expression in symbolic forms through the painting.

The next time you do a doodle or create a picture here is a few things to think about:

- What's odd or unusual?
- What's your initial reaction?
- What's missing?
- What's in the middle, the core of the issue?
- Colour?
- Does the picture have a smell and/or sound?
- What's out of proportion?
- If people are in the picture who is larger and/or smaller?
- How does your picture make you feel?

Julie
Integrative Therapist

How Aurora Has Helped Me - Wendy's Story

Among the first things Aurora helped me to believe is that I have a voice, and that what I have to say has a right to be heard. Aurora has helped me hugely in finding my voice, & to believe in what I have to say.

One of the most important things Aurora gives is a safe place for you to be, - angry, sad, cry, & even be happy, & that is ok, you won't be judged & you won't be alone any more.

Aurora offers more than just a place to talk. It offers:

- A safe place to feel, & just be
- Space to talk about the bad & the good times
- A place to start to rebuild your life
- A place to rebuild relationships
- A place to rebuild YOU, learn about YOU, & learn to like YOU.
- And one of the most important things, is how to trust again.

To be able to trust you need to feel safe, so learning to trust your therapist is the first step. You are sharing part of your life that you have buried so deep. Because it is buried you don't always know the true extent of what has happened. So trust is a very BIG thing, you are trusting your innermost self to another person. By doing this you are trusting that they don't destroy you or use it against you, as in the past as a child, that is usually what has happened.

You ask yourself "Have I trusted the right person?" Your inner self questions this, as the people you trusted as a child abused that trust, & destroyed your ability to trust. I can't over emphasise how vital a safe place & trust are. I feel these are the two most important things Aurora offers me. Without these you can't begin to work on everything else.

I lived in care as a child, & as an adult I have spent a lot of my life in & out of the mental health system. I have had various forms of therapy on the NHS, but life just kept getting harder. None of it really helped me, as they weren't helping with the root cause, just the behaviour which stemmed from it. My past was encased & locked up tight, deep within me. It wasn't until it was seeping out through the cracks that appeared, over many, many years, that I was put in hospital for a long time. Luckily for me I then found Aurora. One NHS doctor suggested Aurora might be able to help me. There was nothing else that came close on the NHS. I am very fortunate that I have a fantastic husband, family & friends, who not only pay for Aurora they support me & travel with me on my journey with Aurora. This journey is to sort out the past, leave it in the past, live in the present, & look forward to a future. I don't think I would have this if I had not found Aurora.

I have come to realise over my many years at Aurora that I am made up of more than just the abuse. I can't change what happened to me as a child, but with help & support I hope to accept it & leave it in the past, & live in the here & now, & have a future.

Also Aurora gives you the chance to belong somewhere, & belong to something. Outside the therapy room there is also a community of people that don't judge you, you can join in as much or as little as you feel able. There are social meet ups on some Saturdays, either in Aurora or we go out together somewhere. I would strongly suggest that people attend whenever possible the social side of Aurora. This social side of Aurora is very important; what you learn in the therapy room can be put in to practice in a safe way, with people who won't judge you & that understand. The meet ups have helped me a lot in many ways. One of the most important ways is to believe that there is more to life than abuse, & also that I have something to offer society which is worthwhile – ME.



Figure 3

Aurora offers different types of therapy, the two that I have greatly benefitted from are talking therapy & art therapy. Sometimes feelings get stuck inside because you don't know the words to describe them, or it is just that there are no words. The art therapy offers a way for these feelings to be expressed (Figure 3). Once they are out, the way is open for them to be explored through talking in a constructive way, rather than in the old way of self destruction.

Feelings need to be felt, they will not kill you, they are just feelings which need to be explored, made sense of, then hopefully left where they belong, in the past. Without Aurora I don't think this would be achievable for me & for so many others.

Working with the body-mind connection

The Aurora Approach to recovery has always included the understanding that both body and mind are negatively affected by the stress and trauma of abuse. In recent years the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on the body has become better understood, and we know now that both the “allostatic load” created by chronic activation of stress responses and the acute response to an individual traumatic incident can take a toll on health and wellbeing.

For this reason Aurora has from the outset provided opportunities to work with the body as part of, or complementary to, weekly counselling/psychotherapy. During the past decade we have been able to offer clients Massage, Reflexology and Reiki alongside “talking therapies”, and in the last few years Aurora has had Body Psychotherapists offering an integrated approach to working with the body-mind.

As a Biodynamic Body Psychotherapist, I encourage clients to be aware of their physical responses to the work we are doing, especially when they are not clear about which emotions they are feeling. Body awareness can also be helpful in grounding clients who are prone to dissociation.

Our language is rich in expressions which have their roots in an awareness of the body-mind connection, such as “I can’t stand it”, “I need to get something off my chest” “It’s a pain in the neck” etc. and it can be useful to work (in either direction) between thoughts/words like these and their very real physical manifestations.

One of the major features of Biodynamic work is the concept of self-regulation, and I will try to ensure that clients are able to return to a state of balance, and are aware of the need for self-care in this regard, between sessions - even if we have not finished working through a particularly difficult issue.

Sometimes I will offer work directly with the body, such as focussed breathing, body scanning, Biodynamic Massage, spontaneous or guided movement or muscle relaxation techniques. However, I find that clients who have been traumatised need plenty of time to develop a sense of safety and trust before they are really able to benefit from such working methods.

Nurturing the ability to self-regulate is vital both to clients for their recovery, and to therapists for the avoidance of secondary trauma. As a therapeutic team we are also using the body-mind connection to facilitate self-care and promote resilience, so we can continue the important work of Aurora into the future.

Hilary
Biodynamic Body Psychotherapist

LOOKING AHEAD

We can be proud of the work we have done over the past 10 years, but as we enter our second decade we will aim to focus on our Vision to grow and be a nationally recognised centre of excellence for helping people abused in childhood.

This Vision is underpinned by three ambitious - I believe achievable - goals that will drive Aurora to a be a centre of excellence known across the UK. These goals are to:

- Develop and expand Aurora to set up day therapy services in other parts of the UK
- Develop a short stay 24 hour residential facility to provide intensive therapeutic services for people in crisis
- Develop a training consultancy to equip other agencies and individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills for working effectively with people abused in childhood.

The above goals are outlined in a strategic business plan and we are still some way short of getting near any of them. A significant obstacle is financial sustainability and to this effect one of our greatest achievements is that we are still here. There have been a few times when this was in question due to funding crises, but very fortunately we managed to survive due to last minute injections of cash. It is therefore not surprising that the road ahead needs to bring financial stability, and I will be working closely with the Trustees to achieve this.

It has taken a long time for Aurora to achieve a level of recognition needed to make it easier for survivors to access our services. The majority of people find us via online searching, but we are now getting more and more agencies making contact to enquire about "signposting" clients to us meaning our reputation is growing. However, we are still trying to develop more positive relationships with our local partners such as statutory mental health services and other voluntary agencies, and working strategically with others remains an important objective.

We are fortunate to be a member agency of The Survivors Trust (TST), the national umbrella agency for sexual violence services. TST has recently been strongly campaigning to help London member agencies gain financial backing from statutory funding streams (a series of meetings with MOPAC in 2016 and 2107 may well have helped Aurora with our recent bid) and also to promote inter-member agency working. The phrase "better together" springs to mind and we will certainly be looking towards developing positive working relationships with our sister agencies in London.

Finally, a vital factor in looking ahead to a successful future is the developing Aurora Team. Unfortunate circumstances have meant that some excellent people have recently had to leave Aurora, but we are now gradually adding to our Team. I look forward optimistically to leading Aurora towards our collective goal of helping survivors have a far better life.

Nick Gauntlett
CEO

OUR SUPPORTERS

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**The London
Community
Foundation**



**WILLIAM
GRANT &
SONS**

The Tedworth Charitable Trust

M O P A C

MAYOR OF LONDON
OFFICE FOR POLICING AND CRIME

We are also very grateful to all individuals and companies who have supported Aurora either financially, in kind or by making gift donations.

A for Authenticity

U for Uniqueness

R for Recovery

O for Openness

R for Relationship

A for Acceptance



Thank you to Jean for designing the above image

