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Bridge of Hope is a department of Ashton Community Trust that opened its doors in 2001 in direct response to the alarming levels of stress and trauma in North Belfast. Since then, over 13,000 people have accessed our holistic and wellbeing services which include: complementary therapy, stress management/personal development courses, life-coaching, counselling, counselling support or accredited training.

Bridge of Hope’s origins lie in North Belfast and its experiences of conflict and poor physical and mental health. As we move away from conflict and into a more peaceful transition phase, learning how to live with the aftermath is hard for everyone. Our core aim in addressing this legacy of conflict is to offer people time to heal through a holistic approach to trauma recovery. Our services are funded by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister through the Victims and Survivors Service. We also receive funding from the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust to deliver complementary therapies to support those experiencing poor mental health and from the Public Health Agency under its Protect Life suicide prevention strategy.

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

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

Bridge of Hope is headed up by Ashton Community Trust Senior Manager and Head of Victims & Mental Health Services Irene Sherry. She is a member of key strategic bodies such as the Belfast Strategic Partnership that is working to address health and life inequalities across the city of Belfast.

The Bridge of Hope team work across three satellite offices in Churchill Street, Henry Place and Duncairn Gardens as well as outreach centres in Shankill Women’s Centre, Falls Women’s Centre, Tar Anall, Sally Gardens Community Centre in Poleglass, GRACE in Ardoyne and Carrickmore in County Tyrone. Individuals can self-refer themselves into our services or through a friend, family or community group. Alternatively we welcome referrals from GP, social worker or other health professional.

Maintaining a high quality of services is crucial for us. It is fundamental to everything we do. As a reflection of that commitment we currently hold a range of quality assurance governance standard certificates. Bridge of Hope also set out on a path in 2007 to achieve the Investors in People and ISO 9001:2008. It has successfully retained that level of standard after regular examination by external verifiers.

**Our Services**

Complementary Therapies including Reflexology & Therapeutic/Aromatherapy massage

Counselling

Counselling Support

Life coaching

Accredited training courses including Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT) Level 3 Certificate in Swedish massage; VTCT Level 3 Diploma in Reflexology; VTCT Level 2 Award in Thermal Auricular Therapy

Personal development and stress management courses:

* Love Yourself Heal Your Life (This 2 Day Workshop is based on Louise Hay's bestselling book You Can Heal Your Life.)
* Understanding Stress for Personal Growth
* Relaxation De-Stress Programme - This involves yoga stretches, meditation, body and mind awareness, life coaching using the Strengths Weaknesses Ambitions Needs (SWAN) technique and also head, neck and shoulder massage with acupressure points.
* Reducing Stress for Women
* Empower Me