

# Talking Helps



*Janet Johnson, Centre Manager*

In times of crisis, loss or dramatic change, people often experience a deterioration in their important relationships, their ability to work or to lead a normal life and, quite often they turn to alcohol, tranquilisers or other drugs to relieve their stress. PUT UNDER ENOUGH PRESSURE, ANYONE CAN BREAK.

The Dover Counselling Centre came into being in July 1988 because, apart from the loss of the 'Herald', it was generally felt that the Dover Area and its community was experiencing changes as a result of undertaking the largest civil engineering project in the world – the Channel Tunnel. It was appreciated that there would be many difficulties for the community to adjust to and for many they would be traumatic. Added to this would be the changes in working practices for the EEC's 1992 target date for trading harmonisation and that too would have a serious impact on our way of life.

Additionally –

one in three marriages is likely to end in divorce and one in eight dependant children live in a one-parent household;

up to 25% of problems at work are directly linked to problems at home;

Dover has one of the highest drinking problems in Kent as a result of easy access to cheap alcohol;

the large number of people on shift-work imposes particular stress.

Against this background, the concept of offering a general counselling service to the community in conjunction with the CRUSE Bereavement Care, the KENT COUNCIL on ADDICTION, and RELATE Marriage Guidance was realised. A suggestion was made to these three agencies to try to establish a Unit

18 where we could not only provide counsellors to work in their own specialist areas but we could also try to meet the needs of people whose difficulties were outside of these three areas but who were suffering from different 'non-specific' stresses. We hoped to be able to meet the many and differing needs of the community by creating a centrally-run Counselling Centre to offer skills and services to meet the needs of the people in the Dover area in the most effective way.

Counselling is 'offering a person skilled assistance to help them to explore their thoughts, feelings and behaviour. This enables clearer self-understanding, which can be the basis for people to redirect their strengths more effectively by making appropriate decisions or taking relevant action.'

THE DOVER COUNSELLING CENTRE now exists at 9 Cambridge Terrace, Dover, CT16 1YZ, phone Dover 204123, and the office is open between 10 am and 4 pm, Monday to Friday. Anyone who needs help with a personal problem, or indeed is affected by someone else's difficulty, can visit or telephone the Centre and discuss their concerns. The 24 Counsellors are drawn from the three voluntary organisations in the partnership, and are trained by them. Most of them are volunteers. Those who approach the Centre are helped in a number of different ways, some with a counsellor alone, or with other members of their family; some will be invited to join a group of others sharing similar experiences like the Baby Bereavement Group which meets once a month at the Centre.

The Dover Counselling Centre is a Registered Charity and a Company whose members are the Dover District Council, the Dover Christian Council, P & O European Ferries, Sealink U.K. Ltd., Kent County Council, statutory agencies and the three voluntary agencies, CRUSE Bereavement Care, the KENT COUNCIL on ADDICTION and RELATE Marriage Guidance.

Anyone can receive help from the Centre free of charge, although those who have the means to make a contribution towards the work of the Centre are encouraged to do so. The management and administration cost of running the Centre is £45,000 a year and more help is needed to raise the finance to continue to make this possible.

I am hoping we can find a volunteer to chair a willing group of fund-raisers to ensure the survival of The Dover Counselling Centre. We are secure for a year and I hope will also be for the next ten!

In the *whole* of 1989 296 people received ongoing help from the Centre as against 236 in the *first half alone* of 1990.

Help us to help those who need help.

TALKING HELPS!

S. JANET JOHNSTON  
*Centre Manager*

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THE DOVER COUNSELLING  
CENTRE,

9 Cambridge Terrace, Dover.  
Tel. (0304) 204123.

Monday - Friday 10am - 4pm

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