

A Brief History of Off the Record

Off The Record originally opened in 1992 to meet a gap in services for young people. A coordinator, administrator, and 9 volunteer counsellors were initially recruited and the project was officially opened in November 1992. The counselling team rapidly grew to meet demand, and a sexual health clinic also started up in 1993. For a period OTR merged to form a bigger charity, the Richmond Youth Partnership, which also ran other projects. However, when this charity closed down in March 2013 Off The Record moved forward once again to form a separate charity, now officially called Off The Record Twickenham.

Over the years, we expanded to provide a range of services to 11-24 year olds who live, work or study within LBRUT. These included:

- counselling, at the Church Street premises, and schools in the borough, employing around 23 counsellors
- a drop-in supported information service (run alongside the counselling)
- a sexual health clinic on Mondays
- crisis counselling sessions on Monday and Wednesday evenings
- mental health workshops in schools
- satellite counselling services in various locations across the borough

In 2021 the focus at OTR is still on providing counselling, information and sexual health advice. The SH clinic is run in partnership with CLCH – Central London Community Healthcare Trust. OTR has been successful in receiving grants from local grant-making trusts and winning CCG tenders since July '14 to provide an expanded counselling services in youth service and satellite venues.

Prior to the lockdown for the coronavirus pandemic, in addition to our services at Church Street in Twickenham, we provided counselling sessions at The Greenwood Centre in Hampton Hill, The White House in Hampton, Whitton Youth Zone, Ham Youth Club, Essex House in Barnes, Parkshot in Richmond, ETNA in East Twickenham, and at Heatham House Youth Centre, Twickenham. We also ran a counselling service in East Twickenham supporting children and young people with disabilities referred to us by the charity, Skylarks. In March 2020, our face-to-face and drop in services were put on hold in response to the pandemic and members of the counselling team began working remotely, mainly through online and phone contact with young people, for assessment and regular counselling sessions. Many young people expressed a preference to wait for face-to-face services to resume, and we have been gradually increasing our face-to-face offer over the course of the year, responding positively wherever possible to the needs of young people and our counsellors in what has continued to be a volatile situation locally and nationally.

Off The Record employs a full-time Manager and an Assistant Manager (part-time), a part-time Business Manager, supported by two part-time Administrative Assistants and a Financial Administrator, alongside a team of over 30 paid and volunteer counsellors.

OTR is registered as a charitable company with a skilled and experienced Board of Trustees who support the strategic and operational direction of its work, and oversee its financial sustainability through a strategic fundraising programme.