

Calderdale
Sure Start Elland

Homeopathy Clinic
Evaluation Report 2004

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Introduction

Homeopathy was developed in the late 18th century, based on earlier Hippocratic medical theory of cure by similars. Samuel Hahnemann, a German doctor, was the founder of modern homeopathy and his ideas spread widely during the 19th century, when homeopathy became well established in Europe, North America and the Indian sub-continent. Homeopathy in-patient and outpatient provision was included in the NHS from 1947, though most homeopathy in the UK is through private-sector provision.



Samuel Hahnemann 1755 – 1843

Homeopathy uses a range of substances (from the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms) to treat disease holistically. There are more than 3,500 homeopathic remedies and prescription is based on the totality of symptoms rather than on the presenting complaint alone. The remedy chosen will be made from whatever substance produces the most similar symptoms to those being experienced by the patient; hence the principle of “like cures like” from which homeopathy derives its name.

Remedies are carefully made in special pharmacies (e.g. Weleda, Ainsworth’s, Helios) according to strict principles of dilution and potentiation through succussion¹. The effectiveness of correctly selected remedies is well documented and homeopathy is widely used both within and without health

¹ Succussion is a process of potentiation through vigorous shaking with impact by either hand or machine.

care systems in France, Germany, India, the USA and the UK in particular. Its advantage lies in the rarity of any side effects² – if a remedy is incorrectly selected, it simply fails to act and no effects are experienced.

Homeopathic remedies and pharmacy



Many millions of people use homeopathy on a regular basis, including most famously the British Royal Family, and it is underpinned by a huge clinical knowledge base, derived from 200 years of practice according to consistent principles, as well as an increasing amount of scientific data. As homeopathy does not lend itself to evaluation by randomised controlled trials (because of the precise individualisation of every prescription), it has only recently been able to access mainstream research funds.

Practitioners are either licensed homeopaths who have done a four or five-year training at one of the established homeopathic colleges, or medically trained personnel who have done further training in homeopathy, usually 6 to 12 months but sometimes considerably longer. Veterinary Surgeons are also increasingly training in homeopathy. Registration is post-licence and can currently be with any of a small number of recognised bodies, which are currently working together towards a joint system of state registration through the Council of Organisations Registering Homeopaths (CORH)³.

² The well-known homeopathic aggravation is rarely other than short-lasting and is a sign of cure rather than pathology.

³ Select Committee on Science and Technology Sixth Report: Complementary and Alternative Medicine 21 November 2000

Homeopathy at Sure Start Elland

The rationale for the homeopathy clinic at Sure Start Elland was to offer alternative support to families experiencing long-term health and behavioural problems. The idea was to introduce patients to new ways of thinking about their health and well-being and to find a wider range of strategies to address these. Both national and local reports of the heavy workload of GPs and the inappropriate use of NHS services, particularly to deal with problems whose roots lie in the social and emotional realms, suggest that alternative options are needed to build well-being in the most deprived communities.

Homeopathy, through its holistic approach, is able to treat the full range of emotional, behavioural and physical symptomatology rather than treating each in isolation. The homeopathic case-taking interview also gives patients an opportunity to look at their symptoms and their aetiology in depth and to explore what role they play in their lives. Follow-up interviews also encourage patient-led analysis of the impact of treatment.

From our knowledge of some of the needs of the local community (particularly in relation to behavioural problems in the under-4s), it seemed appropriate to introduce this sort of complementary option. Homeopathy was chosen over other therapies, firstly because a number of informal talks had been requested on it by various Sure Start Elland groups and drop-ins over the previous year and a great deal of interest shown by parents in it as a therapy, secondly because of its long tradition within the NHS, and thirdly because of keen interest expressed by a local specialist children's homeopath (Diana Seymour RSHom) in working with Sure Start Elland to provide a service geared to the needs of the under-4s and their parents. After discussion with a Sure Start programme in Bolton that had been running a "low-cost" homeopathy clinic for some time, a proposal was put together and approved by the Sure Start Elland Partnership Board.

The clinic opened in May 2003 on Fridays with funding for one year. Funding was for £4585 for up to 180 consultations over one year, and included £445 for the cost of prescribed remedies, stationary, leaflets, postage and telephone calls. The cost of each consultation to the client was £3, which was paid to Sure Start Elland. In a small number of cases, the £3 was waived because of family financial problems.

Referrals were invited from midwives, health visitors, GPs and Sure Start workers. Briefing sessions for these groups of workers were held throughout April 2003 in a range of premises. Leaflets were produced with a friendly-looking ape as a logo and each worker given a pack with referral forms and information leaflets.

Referral forms were sent to the Sure Start Midwife who passed them to the homeopath who then contacted the patient and made all appointment arrangements. An appointment diary and clinic attendance registers were kept at Sure Start Elland. Inter-appointment queries were rung to the midwife who then got the homeopath to ring the patient back. This meant that Sure Start Elland administered and organised the clinic and this worked well.

77 patients were referred to the clinic, and 67 attended (10 failed to attend for their appointment). 56 (84%) attendees were from the Sure Start Elland area, and 11 (16%) were from outside the area, and these were all from Baby Café, which ran alongside the homeopathy clinic. Attendance is illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. Patients attended for between 1 and 8 appointments and there were a total of 181 consultations (162 i.e. 90% from SSE area, and 19 i.e. 10% from outside the SSE area). The presenting problems for each age group are presented in tables 3 to 5. (Most patients had more than one presenting problem.)

Figure 1: Pie chart showing attendance by area

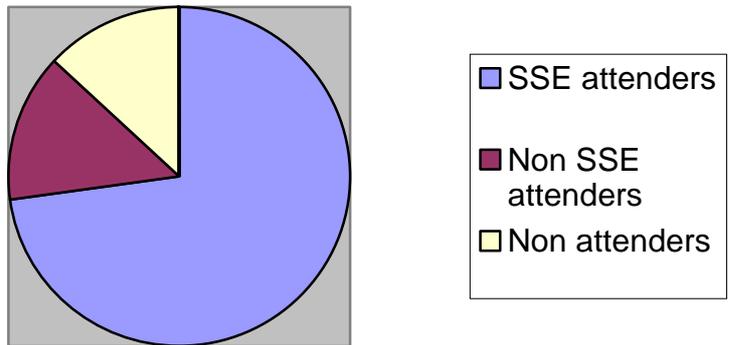
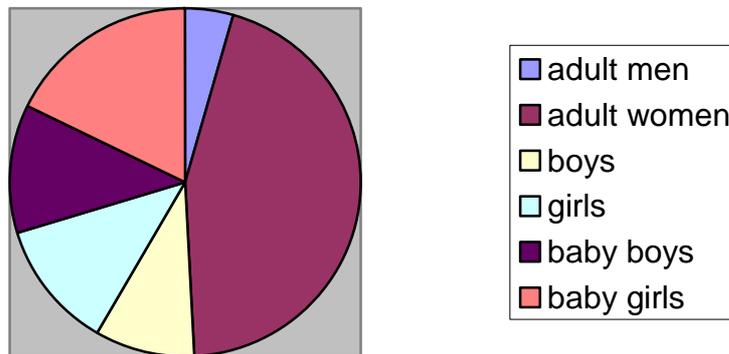


Figure 2: Pie chart showing breakdown of attenders by age group

Attenders



Presenting complaints

Table 1: Adult patients (33 patients, 30 women, of whom 12 were pregnant, and 3 men)

| | |
|---|----|
| Pregnancy or postnatal emotional problems | 17 |
| Breastfeeding problems | 11 |
| Phobias or panic attacks | 9 |
| Pregnancy or postnatal physical problems | 7 |
| Thrush | 6 |
| Stress | 5 |
| Wanting to use remedies in labour | 4 |
| Recurring infections | 4 |
| Eczema | 4 |
| Menstrual problems | 3 |
| Headaches | 3 |
| Depression (other than postnatal) | 3 |
| Anorexia | 2 |
| Intestinal problems | 2 |
| Asthma | 2 |
| Psychosis | 1 |
| Sinusitis | 1 |
| Hair loss | 1 |

Table 2: Children (14 patients, 8 girls and 6 boys)

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Tantrums/aggression | 10 |
| Sleep problems/night terrors | 6 |
| Sibling jealousy | 5 |
| Hyperactivity | 4 |
| Distress from marital conflict | 3 |
| Withdrawal | 3 |
| Recurring infections | 3 |
| Potty training | 3 |
| Eating problems | 3 |
| Ear infections | 2 |
| Eczema | 2 |
| Enuresis | 1 |
| Bowel problems | 1 |
| Obsessive Compulsive Disorder | 1 |
| Speech problems | 1 |
| Recovery from broken leg | 1 |

Table 3: Babies (20 patients, 12 girls and 8 boys)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Breastfeeding problems | 9 |
| Eczema | 7 |
| Poor weight gain | 7 |
| Colic | 5 |
| Teething | 5 |
| Thrush | 4 |
| Fever/convulsions | 3 |
| Problems relating to cleft palate/lip | 2 |
| Umbilical hernia | 2 |
| Cough | 1 |
| Separation anxiety | 1 |
| Post-surgery | 1 |

Evaluation Survey

Evaluation forms were sent out at the end of the project in May 2004. 20 forms were returned, giving a 30% return rate. The return rate was probably adversely affected by the fact that the evaluation forms were sent out once the clinic had ended, due to the fact that any patient could have made a further appointment at any time whilst it was running, and we wanted to evaluate their whole experience of the clinic and their treatment. This meant that 9 or 10 months had passed since some patients had last attended. This was probably a mistake in retrospect – earlier evaluation by the first patients should have been done closer in time to when they last attended.

10 (50%) patients were told about the homeopathy clinic by Sure Start staff, 4 (20%) by their health visitor, 4 (20%) by a midwife, and 2 (10%) by another parent.

12 (60%) found attending the clinic “very helpful”, 5 (25%) found it “helpful”, 2 (10%) found it “not very helpful” and one was unable to judge as treatment had been commenced too recently to allow judgement.

12 (60%) said they had visited the GP less often as a result of attendance at the homeopathy clinic, and 7 (35%) said they had visited “about the same” as usual. One was unable to comment due to only recently having commenced homeopathic treatment.

Many comments were added and all are quoted in full below:

“It’s a shame Di’s funding ran out because she’s a lot of help to people and children who can’t afford to see someone like Di privately.”

“A good service – helpful, polite, cheery and informative, but most of all – effective.”

“An excellent service, friendly and helpful. Affordable price.”

“Excellent, could not fault it. Maybe evening appointments for working parents? (Working parents often need more support as they have less time and more stress.)

“Visiting the homeopath helped my son in more ways than one. He stopped being as poorly to the point that he was better able to cope. I found that without the homeopath’s help my son’s ailments would have continued and the GPs were unable to assist. Thank you very much for your help.”

“The service was very useful and Di helped me after a very traumatic delivery.”

“Advice very helpful and was given lots of medicines for the price of one visit. Would recommend highly to others.”

“Very helpful – Di was great and full of useful tips and advice.”

“I would have liked to have seen the service continue and there will always be parents and children who could benefit from homeopathy.”

“I thought the homeopath was brilliant. I cannot recommend her enough.”

“All remedies did not have desired result.”

“I found talking very helpful. I don’t know if the tablets prescribed worked as I still suffer panic attacks.”

“The service was excellent and staff wonderful. Unfortunately, after trying several homeopathic remedies that were unsuccessful, we have decided to carry on with conventional medicines that are working.”

“Excellent! It was good to have the opportunity to talk to someone on a one-to-one basis. Remedies work and I am now prescribing for self and family at home.”

“Very impressive service.”

The Homeopath's View

- The briefings given at the start of the year set up good working relationships with a small group of health professionals. Referrals from about a half dozen health visitors/midwives & parent support workers produced a steady flow of work for the clinic throughout the year.
- Having the clinic on the same day as the Baby Café provided two excellent opportunities:
 1. Mothers attending the Café were able to access informal advice from the homeopath thus placing the homeopath amongst a group of health professionals giving support and advice.
 2. I was given the opportunity to consult with other health professionals immediately, so that the care offered was consistent. An example was a mother with mastitis about whom I consulted with a midwife. From this I understood that her mastitis was severe and accordingly gave her a higher and more frequent dose.
- The range of problems brought to the clinic covered both physical and psychological problems. This demonstrates the versatility of homeopathy, especially in pregnancy and infancy when medication may not be suitable and waiting lists for counselling and similar support are long. I was able to offer homeopathy to a number of women suffering depression both before and after birth.
- My only disappointment during the year was no contact or referrals from GPs. No doctors attended the briefings. A chance to see how homeopathy could contribute to lessening the load of local GPs in the care of pregnant women, new mothers and babies has been lost.

Conclusion

This was a popular and well-used initiative, which was highly acceptable to both patients and the referring staff. It enabled patients to experience a new approach to health care that they had not been able to access previously. Homeopathy can be effective for a wide range of health issues and treats both psychological and physical symptoms in a single prescription, and can help patients look at the relationship between their physical and mental health, rather than view them as discreet entities.

All referring staff have expressed regret at the ending of this service as it has left a gap in provision for some complex and long-standing health needs that conventional care struggles to provide for. We feel that homeopathy has a lot to offer communities like that served by Sure Start Elland, and hope that we may be able to re-establish a similar service in the future should funding allow.

This service was not about establishing the effectiveness or otherwise of homeopathy which is way beyond the remit of one small project, but to explore the acceptability and efficacy of a homeopathy service to one Sure Start population. We hope the success of this initiative leads other Sure Start projects to consider the provision of a complementary therapy service, and feel that homeopathy is a leading contender for such a service.

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