

london
buddhist
centre

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Yearly Report

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Chairman's Report

New Order Members

We welcomed five new Order Members into the Mandala - Ajjavin, Bodhilila, Dayaruci, Tareshvari, and then most recently Samavahita who re-joined the Order and had her public ordination at the LBC. Many congratulations to all of them!

Vidyajyoti and Vijayatara

This year saw the sad deaths of two Dharmacharinis - Vidyajyoti and Vijayatara - within the space of just a few months. Both were very much looked after during their final illnesses by friends in the Sangha, and there were very moving and joyous funerals at the Centre celebrating their lives. Our Order and the LBC Mandala are poorer for the loss of these remarkable women.

Year of Positive Emotion

In January I launched the theme of the year at the LBC - Positive Emotion as the second stage in Bhante's teaching of the 5 Great Stages of the Path. Our teaching programme of classes, courses and retreats have been emphasising this theme. In my talk launching the year I was stressing the active nature of positive emotion and the importance of transforming the world around us. This was a call for us as a Sangha to find even more ways of making a positive difference in the world around us.

The Larder

The long-awaited Larder opened its doors in April. Business was initially slow but has been steadily building up. I am delighted that next to the Centre we once again have a place to eat and meet, and somewhere that promotes fine vegetarian food. The head chef - a man named King - was recently one of five finalists (from 600 entrants) for the Vegetarian Society's 'Chef of the Future' award. And what's even better is that he's a Buddhist and an enthusiastic Friend in our Sangha.

Viramandala community

The community of men living above the Larder who are doing a one-year Karuna appeal asked if they could extend their stay for another year from September 2011. The LBC Council was very happy to say 'yes'. In the 9 months they've been there, they have raised £258,865 for Karuna (the figure is calculated over 5 years). I am delighted to have such a project and community as part of our Mandala.

King Henry's Road

Two out of the five flats are now being rented at market rents. One of these we refurbished this year. With the remaining tenants we have negotiated staged increases from their previously very low rents, to bring them in line with market rents over 3 to 4 years. We have also paid around £50k owed by us to some beneficiaries of Mahananda's will. All this has been financed through an increase in our borrowings.

Flat at 83 Roman Road - above Lama's Pyjamas

We also borrowed around £50k to convert the space above Lama's Pyjamas into a flat that we are now renting out commercially.

Financial update

The LBC building project took the Centre onto a new level in terms of the dharma activities we can run. The project severely stretched our finances and of course there are increased on-going costs in running a larger, busier centre. In addition, we have taken up a number of opportunities to develop the scope and future stability of the Mandala, in the form of smaller building projects (for example at King Henry's Road, 83 Roman Road, and The Larder premises). We are also financially helping Bodywise, by agreeing to lend them £10k. And last year we absorbed the costs associated with the Wild Cherry and Friends Organic in their last phases.

Whilst the LBC has a number of valuable assets in the form of property, cashflow last year was at times particularly tight. To help ease this we had to refinance our existing borrowings by extending the repayment term to 20 years (from the 8 years that had been remaining on our mortgage), and also taken out a further loan. The recent booklet 'LBC Finances in a Nutshell', which you can find on our website at:

<http://www.lbc.org.uk/Events%20PDFs/LBCfinancial2011.pdf>

gives more detail of the structure of our finances, and Adam's 'Treasurer's report give's a more up-to-date picture with figures from 2010 to 2011.

Fundraising for Vajrasana

Vajrasana is now nearly 10 years old, and is a well-loved and precious resource for both the LBC and other Triratna centres in the South East and East Anglia. At the same time the facilities there are increasingly inadequate to cope with our needs and they are also showing increasing signs of wear and tear. The facilities need increased ongoing investment just to keep the retreat centre operational. For example this year we had to replace 3 of the boilers there. We are also very reliant on Abhayavajra living there as the care-taker. Over the past few years we have been using Vajrasana more and more fully, and now there is more work to do there than one person can reasonably manage. However currently there is only accommodation for one person to live there. We need to be planning accommodation for a community there.

There are also opportunities to develop and improve Vajrasana substantially in the longer term. Eventually we would like to see (in addition to community accommodation), a new 'catering-standard' kitchen, a dining room large enough for everybody to eat together, a new shrine-room with natural light and more space, and more and better accommodation for retreatants. To this end, we have launched a fundraising campaign towards both the ongoing running costs and the future development of Vajrasana. Please support this important initiative. Even if you can only give a small amount (ideally by standing order), it would be of real benefit.

You can give through our website: <http://www.lbc.org.uk/VajrasanaAppeal.htm>

Subhuti's Presidential Visits

One of the highlights for me in the year has been Subhuti's presidential visits. He came for a week at a time both in the Spring and the Autumn and explored in his rambles 'Right View' and 'The Imagination' - topics he subsequently wrote up in his papers 'Revering and Relying upon the Dharma' and 'Imagining the Buddha'. On his more recent visit he was emphasising the Buddha through his rambles on 'Buddhophany' as well as through a weekend retreat on the Tiratna Vandana that he did for men who have asked for ordination.

You can find his talks on the lbc website or on <http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/>

Dharma Activities

Dharma activities have continued to flourish this year. I have been delighted by the number and range of activities, and also by the many new initiatives. There are more people coming through the LBC doors than ever. I won't mention here any of the activities individually as Dhammadassin's report covers them comprehensively. I would however just like to say thank you to all who have been contributing to the life of the Centre and the wider Mandala in so many ways.

Yours in the Dharma,

Jnanavaca

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Secretary's Report

Very recently, this year has seen another two Order funeral at the LBC - Vidyajyoti's in January, and Vijayatara's in March. Friends and family came together from far and wide to mourn our loss and celebrate their lives of these remarkable women.

Overall, attendance at the Centre has continued to grow, and classes have also developed, with new initiatives at lunchtimes (with more days seeing both newcomers' and regulars' groups) and with Saturday opening. Jnanavaca began 2011 by launching the second theme in our five-year cycle 'The Five Chief Paths': Positive Emotion.

Regular Classes

Jnanavaca and Subhadramati spearheaded (alongside Lilamani, Silapiya and Sanghasiha) a new-look Monday evening Dharma night. Padmalila and Vidyadaka continued to run and develop the Tuesday evening class. The Wednesday day-time class was led by Sraddhapushpa, Achalapriya and Sudarshini, with Jyotismati a welcome addition. Maitreyabandhu continued to lead the Wednesday evening class, still alongside Subhadramati and Jnanavaca, with Jayaka and Sraddhagita. Another new development has been a Thursday women's class, the initiative of Shubha and Vanaraji, which began in January with an enthusiastic team in support. Also Mangala started a day-time Mens Class on Tuesdays. Nagarakshita and, more recently, Muditasri have left the Friday class, with Satyadaya and Bodhilila joining - they now lead the class with Manjusiha. Nandaketu left the Tuesday class team, and started activities on Saturdays at the LBC - the first time we have been regularly open to the public at the weekend, and it is proving a hugely popular step, with its own programme of events developing, alongside our ongoing days and weekends. Introductory and Regulars' Lunchtime classes continue to be taught every weekday and now on Saturdays too, with an impressively increased numbers of people attending, especially young people. And since Lilavati started our Sunday School, they've been getting even younger...

Dharma developments

The new-look Dharma night class now has two elements: ongoing introductory Buddhism and Meditation courses, and seminar-style Going Deeper Dharma themes, with the aim of presenting newcomers' Meditation more explicitly in the context of the Dharma. Increased numbers at lunchtimes have led to the Lunchtime Dharma experiment, with Maitreyabandhu and Vidyadaka running drop-in courses alongside our usual lunchtime meditation classes, and with more days seeing 'regular' as well as 'newcomer' meditation classes. We continued to offer a range of courses, including the now familiar Life with Full Attention, Cultivating Insight, and Who Hates the Metta Bhavana? courses.

Our men's and women's Intensive Meditation retreats were held 'at home' at Vajrasana this year for the first time, both with Order teams, and the women's retreat in particular proved extremely popular. Ongoing teachers' days have led to discussions around a coherent programme of material and training for teachers at the LBC, a project which will be moving forward in 2011.

Presidential Visits from Subhuti

2010 saw two visits from Subhuti, in which he explored material from his recent conversations with Bhante - publicly in the form of Rambles and an evening for the Order, and more intimately with time on retreat with the Council. He also met with volunteers, preceptors, the Centre team, and teachers, and will be visiting again in March for another wide range of activities.

Businesses

As stated in other reports, it is hoped that The Larder will be opening the new cafe in the old Wild Cherry premises before the end of the 2010-11 financial year. Lama's Pyjamas continues to go from strength to strength, increasing its team from two to three with Santavajri joining in July. Jambala continues to sell second-hand books, CDs, DVDs and other items, with Ambaranta increasingly involved alongside Hilary.

Vajrasana

Our fullest-ever programme of activities took place at Vajrasana, with another full year planned for 2011. Fundraising for ongoing support and improvements at Vajrasana was launched, to help keep your retreat centre viable for retreats at reasonable cost. Abhayavajra has unfortunately been ill for much of the last couple of months (happily improving now), which continues to point up our reliance on his heroic efforts to keep the retreat centre ongoingly functioning, and the need to find a more sustainable alternative.

Outreach & Website

Satyadaya continued to run outreach projects; Carers' retreats and Bodhi Tree continue to offer assistance in their own ways. A team of Web-wizards (Ed, Matt and Willie) has taken on to overhaul the LBC's internet presence and capabilities, with a new infrastructure, a new Newsletter and a new Website in development, to help bring our accessibility and user-friendliness into the 21st century.

Communities

Pabbajati community ended in the flat above the Wild Cherry premises, with the Karuna men's year-long fundraising team moving in, bringing a group of experienced and active Order members into another Dharma project in the mandala. The Communities' sub-group of the Council (Jnanavaca, Dhammadassin, Subhadramati and Jayaka) continued to work with the LBC communities to develop a 'legal and financial information' document to stand alongside the Communities' Ethos document already created, with the intention of their being ongoingly practically helpful for both new and existing community members.

The LBC Centre Support Team

Jonathan Wood left the Centre team, with Vidyadaka rejoining, and Bryan Hamilton also coming on board. The team was reshaped under two managers, Maitreyaraja and Vidyadaka, with Maitreyabandhu moving to a more consultative and Kalyanamitra role.

"Project LBC"

I would like to conclude my report by trying to give you a picture of the LBC from a different angle - from the angle of the huge variety and breadth of what we make available through the teaching activities of the Centre. So here is a list - and a long list it is! - of what has been happening at the LBC over the last year (with apologies to any I have forgotten). Many appreciative thanks to all those who have made it possible through your energy, your generosity of time and skills, and your love of the Dharma. No-one at the LBC is paid to teach; all those who contribute to classes, courses and retreats do so voluntarily, both leaders and teams. That's a remarkable record of generosity and kalyanamitratā, and perhaps it isn't widely enough known.

Introductory and regular evenings on Buddhism, Meditation, and both, on Monday and Tuesday, Wednesday evenings, led by Jnanavaca, Subhadramati, Lilamani, Silapiya, Sanghasiha, Padmalila, Vidyadaka, Maitreyabandhu, Sraddhagita, Jayaka...

Going Deeper Dharma courses on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, led by a variety of the class leaders...

A daytime men's class, led by Mangala,

The Wednesday morning Sangha meditation at 7am, led by Andy Stretton, Chris Truss and others,

The Wednesday daytime class + crèche, run by Sraddhapushpa, Sudarshini, Achalapriya, Jyotismati, Stavarha and team...

Thursday women's class, run by Shubha, Vanaraji and team,

The Friday evening ritual and meditation class, with Satyadaya, Manjusiha and Bodhilila

Daily weekday puja at 5.30pm led by Manjusiha

Saturday volunteers' study group with Satyadaya,

Saturday puja at 4pm with Nandaketu

Sunday school for parents and children, started by Lilavati and led by her and others

Lunchtime classes Monday-Saturday, with both introductory and regulars' groups on many days

Lunchtime Dharma course, led by Maitreyabandhu and then by Vidyadaka

Ongoing introductory Buddhism, Meditation, and Buddhism and Meditation courses

Monthly introductory meditation days

Monthly regulars' meditation days

Introductory weekend retreats (7 a year), and Regulars' weekend retreats (2 a year)

Going for Refuge weekend retreats for men and for women who have asked for ordination

Open Introductory 10-day retreats in the Spring and Summer

The Sibford Winter retreat

Intensive meditation retreats for both men and women

Courses on: Buddhism and physics with Jnanavaca, Buddhism and poetry with Vishvantara and Dhammadassin, Chanting with Padmagita, Who hates the Metta Bhavana? with Jnanavaca, Life with Full Attention with Maitreyabandhu (and now Srivati, Satyadaya and others), Cultivating Insight with Dhammadassin and Maitrivajri, Focussing with Manjudeva

Day or evening events, which include Vajraghanta's Compassionate Communication days, Poetry East (Maitreyabandhu's brainchild), a day on Poetry with Manjusvara, ongoing Art film nights with Amitajyoti and Vidaydaka...

The Arts retreat, led by Saroja and Padmalila

Lesbians' meditation days, run by Shubha, Bodhilila and others

Under 35s ongoing monthly group, with their yearly weekend retreat and other events, led by Helen Burgess, Knut Wilmott, SuYen Tan, Jed Shamel and others

Days and a weekend retreat for people of African, Asian and Caribbean descent, led by Jayakara and Manjusiha

Regular Open days masterminded by Maitreyaraja

Regular Festivals, monthly full moon pujas, and the 108-year puja dedicated to Bhante on his birthday

Our biggest ever Urban Retreat, led by Subhadramati and Maitreyabandhu

Twice-yearly presidential visits by Subhuti, including his legendary Rambles around Reality, but also his meetings with groups and individuals, teams, the Order, the Council...

Weekly introductory and regular classes at St Martin's Lane in central London, run by experienced LBC Mitras including Phil Daly, Claudia, Fran, Sylvia, Andy Stretton, Jackie Clarke and others...

Courses in introductory meditation at St Martin's Lane, led by Sumana, Dharmasakhya, Nagarakshita, Sanghasiha, Kalyanavaca and others...

Last Autumn's series of public talks at St Martin's Lane, given by Jnanavaca, Maitreyabandhu, Subhadramati and Dhammadinna

Gardening weekends at Vajrasana led by Paramabandhu

Working retreats led by Abhayavajra and Maitreyaraja

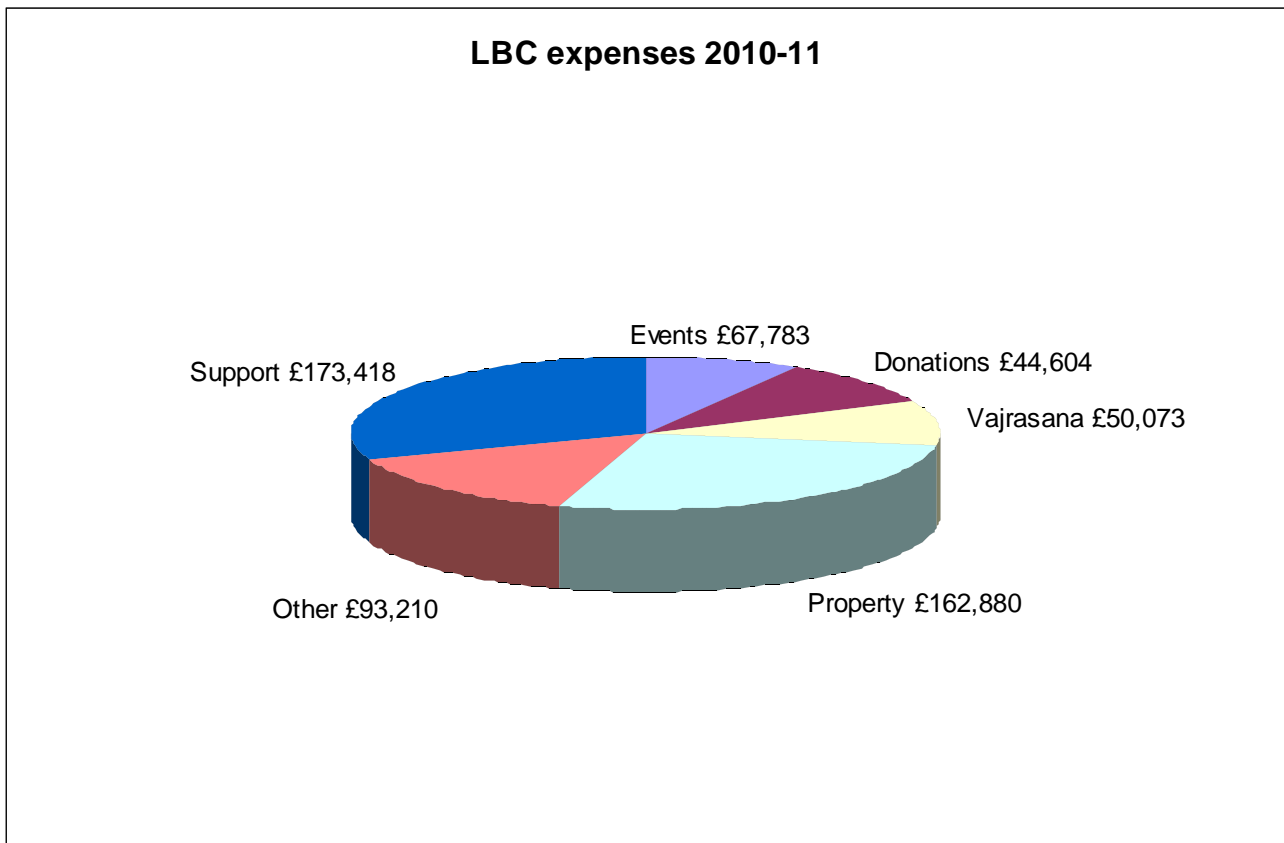
Annual early summer Parents and Children's retreat led by Jayakara, Devapriya and others (with a second retreat in the autumn this year, to be led by Lilavati and Jyotismati)

A writer's retreat at Vajrasana, made possible by Vishvantara, Padmacandra and others (then there's all that's done at Breathing Space...)

Dhammadassin

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Treasurer's Report



LBC income was £791,783 in 2010-11. The largest proportion of this was rental income from property. We own residential properties in Roman Road and Approach Road which accommodate around fifty tenants in three men's and three women's communities.

We also own commercial property in Roman Road and Globe Road. They accommodate our two charity shops and the Larder restaurant. We also own six flats; one in Bethnal Green and five in Primrose Hill.

Our property income provides a relatively stable financial footing for our main activities and enables us to keep them well priced; running classes, courses and retreats. Other sources of income include the charity shops; donations from individuals and organisations; our retreat centre Vajrasana; and income and grants for Breathing Space.

LBC expenses were £757,732 in 2010-11. One of our main expenses is supporting for our employees. There are currently 20 full-time people employed by the LBC engaged in various roles in the office, reception, bookshop, charity shops and Vajrasana retreat centre. The LBC supports people according to their individual needs and circumstances as opposed to paying traditional wages or salaries. The average cost of supporting someone for a year is £8,670.

The other main expense is maintenance on all the properties mentioned under income; capital and interest re-payments on loans and mortgages; and all the utilities. There are also expenses incurred related to running classes, courses and events which include everything from tea and biscuits to publicity to hiring other venues.

There are also expenses running the retreat centre Vajrasana which includes items from food and utilities to the septic tank to looking after and maintaining the buildings, pond and garden. Other expenses include everything from auditor's fees to training and staff retreats to the LBC car expenses.

Finally we make donations to individuals and organisations including centralised Triratna projects in the UK and India.

For further details on our finances please see The Finances of the LBC in a Nutshell at <http://www.lbc.org.uk/Events%20PDFs/LBCfinancial2011.pdf>

Adam Berrisford

Treasurer

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Women's Mitra Convenor's Report

As I write this report Vidyajyoti's picture smiles down from the shrine that Dhammadassin, Maitrivajri and I have in our office. It is only a few weeks since her funeral where she was widely rejoiced in. As well as her other qualities and contributions, Vidyajyoti was a committed leader of mitra study. No sooner had she 'graduated' one group (complete with a special, wacky, ceremony!) she undertook a new group and when this group finished the course she continued Dharma study with some of them. The deep connections that were forged with her group were evident at her funeral and the group themselves adorned her coffin with beautiful pink lotuses. I'd like to rejoice again in all those who lead mitra study - two new groups started up this year so now 13 dharmacarinis and one mitra are involved (all on a voluntary basis) in leading 6 groups for 49 mitras!

A highlight event for me this year was the 'joint' men's and women's mitra day where about 60 of us came together to hear talks and then study together Subhuti's paper 'Revering and Relying on the Dharma'. It was great to be practising in such large numbers. On the theme of large numbers, the women's intensive retreat at Vajrasana last year was fully booked and I received several mitra and ordination requests afterwards - always an indication that a retreat has been inspiring. I'm delighted that these retreats look set to become a regular feature on our calendar. Another thing that I hope will become a regular feature are days led by Vajrasakhi and Amritamati - both originally from the LBC they now run retreats at Tiratanaloka. They led a day here last year and are programmed to do one this year too. We also had a weekend retreat for all mitras and another one for mitras who have asked for ordination.

I have been enjoying working more and more with Jayaka - the men's mitra convenor. As well as co-leading the Sibford retreat together and co-leading a 6-week seminar on Monday nights. We have run a few 'Going Deeper' evenings as part of the drop-in Wednesday class where we have explored what it means to become a mitra. These have been so successful that we're planning to do similar for the other drop-in classes.

Meeting women who wish to become mitras and then witnessing them take that step continues to be a delight and the heart of my role as mitra convenor. Since my last report 12 women have become mitras. Also since my last report 2 women have been ordained into the Triratna Buddhist Community - Bodhilila and Taresvari; and 3 more are set to go to the ordination retreat at Akasavana - Jo Bennett and Claudia McLoughlin and Val Witonska. Saddhu!

Subhadramati

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Men's Mitra Convenor's Report

It's nine years now since I joined the LBC team and I've been reflecting on how fortunate I've been to be part of a project that really does make a positive difference to people's lives, as it has mine. In the last year I have seen people changing because of deciding to make a decisive commitment to practise the Dharma either as a friend, becoming a Mitra, asking for Ordination or becoming Ordained (as did Dayaruci and Ajjavin). More men have gone out to Spain this year on the 16 week Ordination course: Phil Daly, David Waterston and Steve Hart. They will be fine additions to the Triratna Buddhist Order, and I really want to wish them well.

Mangala will start a new men's mitra group after the summer. Thank you Maitreyaraja, Maitreyabandhu, Nandaketu and Paramabandhu for leading their groups. We are fortunate to have very good study leaders at the LBC, and it's great to be able to offer Dharma training to the 12 new men Mitras who made the three declarations last year. I also lead study group, which is a highlight of my week. Studying in a group I find that I'm able to go deeper with the material and afterwards I feel in a positive state, as if I've been making the best use of my time (which of course I have).

The free Dharma Training Course for Mitras is a considerable resource and I want to make it available as widely as possible for Mitras so I'm pretty pro-active in looking out for those people who may benefit from it. I think it is very important that all who use the centre know that there is a path of progress, if that is wanted, that the Buddha taught. Dharma study helps us take on right view and feeds into our meditation practise to support the process of integration, and strengthen our emotional robustness so we are not an easy push over for the klesas, but creates a basis from which to see through them.

What has most inspired me recently is co-leading the large winter open retreat with Subhadramati and a great team. The theme was the Imagination. Towards the end of the retreat I felt that the retreat had a life of its own, and what we had been focusing on had come alive and was tangible to me. Everyone on the retreat seemed to have succeeded in changing their immediate experience, which has given me more confidence in the transformative effect the Dharma can have on the world. During the retreat, back in London, Vidyajyoti very sadly died and recently Vijyatara died in a short time after being diagnosed with cancer. I had known Vidyajyoti but not Vijyatara very much. I felt I'd got to know her a little more through the rejoicing of her friends at the funeral and I was left with a slight sense of regret in not having got to know her more when she was alive. Another reflection about the two recent funerals held at the LBC was that how positive they were and how the LBC Sangha can support someone's spiritual endeavors from the moment they walk into a beginners class, helping develop friendships, through to their spiritual and physical death. This reflection left me inspired and gives a strong sense of meaning to my life.

Wishing you well for the year ahead,

Jayaka

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Breathing Space Report

2010-2011 has been a year of change as well as a year of growth for Breathing Space. The change has mainly consisted of former Breathing Space manager Tim Segaller handing over to interim-manager Anthony Wright in Spring 2010, who in turn handed over to new Breathing Space manager Mattias Herbertson in autumn of 2010. The transition has been smooth, and 2010-2011 has seen a strong growth in the number of people who have been helped through Breathing Space.

In 2010 the UK elected a new coalition government which has been introducing a tough financial reality for local authorities, bringing serious restrictions to the commissioning of contracts from service providers such as Breathing Space. Two smaller contracts with Waltham Forest and Newham, relating to the 'Caring for the Carers project', were not renewed in 2010-2011. However, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) and Hackney continued to fund the 'Caring for the Carers project', and a new three year contract was signed with the LBTH to provide free places on MBCT courses, MBRP courses and MBA retreats for Tower Hamlets residents on a low income. Overall, Breathing Space enjoyed continued public sector support.

To meet contract requirements Breathing Space has continued to conduct quarterly monitoring reports on quantitative outputs, outcomes, and equalities, and new for this year, by-quarterly monitoring meetings providing qualitative in-depth information to the LBTH.

Overall the monitoring statistics for 2010-2011 are very positive - The interest in courses and retreats continue to flourish and this year 69 places were awarded to local community residents on a low income. In total over 300 people with reaccrurant problems of depression or addiction were helped through attending a Breathing Space course, a 37% increase from 2009-2010. Among participants who finished a Breathing Space course in 2010-2011, 92% rated the course as 'helpful' or 'very helpful'.

In 2010-2011 we ran six Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) courses; two Mindfulness Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP) courses; two Mindfulness Based Approaches (MBA) retreats; six carers' retreats, 49 drop-in classes for carers, as well as two Kindness Behaviour Training (KBT) courses.

KBT is a new addition to the Breathing Space range of services, focusing on the development of kindness, developed by our clinical director Dr. Paramabandhu Groves. The course explores Buddhist psychology and meditation to help stay well from addiction and depression, as well as drawing on positive psychology and 'third wave' therapies such as acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) and compassion focused therapy. A six week pilot was successfully run as a follow-on course for people who had previously attended an MBCT or MBRP course, and an eight week course open to all followed in February 2011.

In relation to the KBT course a research project at University College London was launched, looking at how individuals experience and understand the role of kindness in their everyday life. The research study is another step towards establishing Breathing Space as a centre of excellence in East London, providing people with effective tools to manage their mental health.

One of the keys to continued success is the visability of Breathing Space and the awareness of our services in the local community, among health professionals, and beyond. To achieve this various marketing activities have taken place, such as advertisement in local press and GP surgery publications, postal mailouts to over 150 local organisations, targeted electronic mailouts, as well as presentations and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) sessions with local stakeholder groups and individuals.

Next year we aim to run five or six MBCT courses, two MBRP courses, one or two KBT courses, two MBA retreats and six carers retreats. One of the main challenges we are facing next year, potentially holding back growth in the number of people we can help, is the need for more teachers. In 2010-2011 I led four Breathing Space teacher training sessions introducing new teachers to the team.

However, this is an area which needs continued attention moving forward - ultimately it is a matter of being able to help the people who want our help.

With the start of the 2011-2012 financial year, we are facing a tough financial climate with limited opportunities for public sector funding. However, outreach projects leading MBSR sessions at hospital wards, parents advice centres and carers centres, potential joint projects with other organisations, as well as MBA introductory training days for health professionals, are examples of some initiatives explored at the outset of the year.

Breathing Space is entering a phase of reaching out and diversifying, and there is a strong sense of optimism for what lies ahead. We are creating new opportunities for Breathing Space to spread the benefits of Mindfulness Based Approaches, new opportunities for further growth in the amount of people we are able to help.

Maitreyabandhu

Breathing Space Director