



### *St John Ambulance*

Our strategic vision for 2001 – 2006 is to build an attractive, vibrant, contemporary and inclusive organisation that grows its membership by 5% and that **cares for its members and facilitates their personal development.**



**Caring  
for Life**

About three years ago St John began to research into counselling services that were available to support their members who were involved in critical incidents. St John established a telephone service that operated for two years, but during that time we realised that something different was needed for members, as well as employees. We have established a “four point plan” to support people – internal debriefing and defusing in critical incidents - and needed a counselling service to be the “fourth point” for those times when an outside person was needed to counsel people.



When we first met Oasis we were impressed that the representative had done some research into our background and had some understanding of the problems facing us. We also liked her belief in the service she was explaining and her enthusiasm and genuine interest in our work. Another plus factor was that one of the Oasis staff has had a long-term involvement with St John in the Yorkshire region. We realised through the meeting that there would be benefits in extending the service so that people could use it for a wide range of issues – not just critical incidents.

A confidential counselling service for members and staff of St John was launched in July 2002. One of the challenges was to ensure as many members as possible knew about the service – given that St John has 35,000 members across the country. Information about the new service was available on the St John website.



We decided it would be useful to have an “Oasis presence” at conferences and workshops we ran at different points in the year to a range of different groups in St John. This was a good chance for us to meet other people from Oasis. Oasis have provided two presentations for us during 2001-2 – both have been very useful for those who didn’t know about the service. They have also written a piece to go in our members’ newsletter.

Our experience of the services is that in “customer service” terms Oasis staff have a good approach. Whatever Oasis says they will do, happens.

The Service has been well used from the start and has been recommended to members by individuals who have attended conferences and met the Oasis representatives. Our initial view that people would benefit from being able to access counselling for a range of issues – not just following critical incidents – has been borne out. People have realised that counselling would be helpful in many different circumstances.

If any problems have arisen with clients – for instance, people needing more than the four sessions allowed in the contract, a full explanation has been given without breaching confidentiality. In one or two situations, complex situations have arisen involving several people. We have been very grateful the service has been there and the counsellors went out of their way to be very helpful to the clients.



Individuals who have used the service put comments in the client questionnaires such as:

- *“anyone who sees this counsellor will improve not only their self-image, thoughts about themselves, their self-esteem and their life in general”*
- *“the sessions helped me to take control of my self and gain a clearer understanding of the situation”*
- *“it has been a tremendous aid”.*

The reports provided have been fantastic – giving us all the detail we wanted, but never breaching confidentiality. We have recommended the service to other organisations that face the same kinds of issues as we do.

**Linda Dominguez, Manager First Aid Services**