

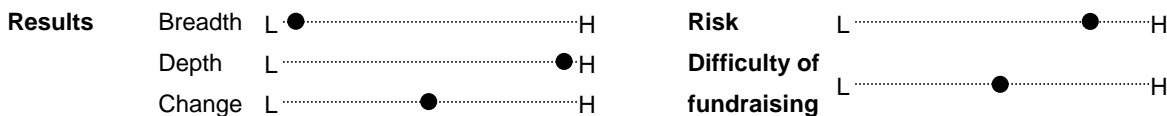
Maytree Respite Centre

Funding needed: £60,000 per annum for three years

November 2006



New
Philanthropy
Capital



- People in mental distress sometimes commit or attempt suicide
- Maytree provides a safe place for people to resolve suicidal feelings
- Guests leave Maytree feeling better supported and less suicidal
- NPC views Maytree as an important new option to help prevent suicide

Issue: People in mental distress sometimes commit or attempt suicide

More people commit suicide than die in traffic accidents; suicide is the leading cause of death for men under 35. For every completed suicide, there are 20-30 people who attempt it. Over a quarter of people in the UK know someone who has committed suicide. The human and economic costs of this are around £8bn.

Many suicides are avoidable. There has been a concerted effort to prevent suicide, for example: it is now harder to access large quantities of toxic drugs; barriers have been built on bridges; and household gas is less deadly. This has contributed to a fall in rates since 1996.

Sadly these measures do not reduce people's suffering. Many people attempt suicide because of the distress caused by a psychiatric condition. Others do so because of a crisis in their lives, eg, a bereavement, or relationship or employment difficulties. People in crisis often avoid mental health services because they fear psychiatric wards or being stigmatised. 75% of people do not contact mental health services in the year before they commit suicide.

Suicidal people need emotional support during crises. NHS staff rarely have the time to help distressed people. A nurse typically has only eight minutes to talk to each patient a day, according to a mental health trust. The Samaritans is well-known for its excellent telephone helpline and email support. However some distressed people need more than this: they need somewhere to go and someone to talk to face to face.



Nearly 6,000
people took their
own lives in the
UK in 2004

A guest at Maytree:

Jane is 51 with two sons. She recently separated from her husband of 23 years and felt worthless. One day she spent several hours on a station platform on the verge of 'throwing herself away.' Counselling and anti-depressants did not help Jane. She was deeply ashamed of wanting to kill herself. Fortunately she discovered Maytree.

Maytree's success was not immediately obvious as she found it hard to be cared for and to open up. However a month after Jane left, her GP emailed to say how impressed she (the GP) was with Maytree's effect, and to ask for more information.

A card with a donation from Jane followed. It read: 'to your wonderful team... very many thanks for your love and listening'. Jane has started therapeutic dance classes which she finds 'liberating'.

Response: Maytree provides a safe place for people to resolve suicidal feelings

Maytree is a sanctuary for the suicidal, providing face-to-face counselling and round-the-clock support. It is based in a typical North London house and opened in late 2002.

Maytree sleeps three to four guests at a time, who are welcomed from anywhere in the UK. Three quarters of guests are referred by professionals or other charities, the rest come of their own accord. Each guest is carefully assessed prior to his or her stay to determine whether Maytree can help. Maytree does not take guests who are violent, or with severe drug or alcohol addictions. It refers these people to organisations that are better equipped to support them. Guests can stay for a maximum of four nights. If Maytree's volunteers are unable to help a person within this time, then Maytree recognises that the guest may need a different service. Guests can stay at Maytree only once.

During their stay, guests have unlimited access to trained volunteers to talk through problems; to discuss ways to change their lives; or to explore how they feel. Volunteers are there to listen, befriend, or sit with a person over a cup of tea. Maytree tries to help guests find ways to overcome their difficulties outside Maytree.

Maytree has two full-time staff: the founding director (who was a volunteer with the Samaritans for 30 years), and a second director who is being recruited. The founding chair of trustees (a qualified psychotherapist and another former Samaritan) also provides intensive support. 40 active volunteers, following selection and training, do shifts of at least 3.5 hours each week. Coverage is round-the-clock: two people sleep on the premises whenever guests are staying.

Results: Guests leave Maytree feeling better supported and less suicidal

During 2003-2005, Maytree provided support to 160 suicidal people. As it becomes better known, the demand for Maytree is increasing: 85 guests stayed at Maytree between January and September 2006. On average ten stay each month.

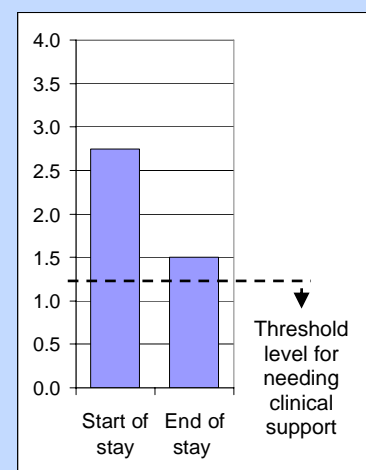
An evaluation completed by experts from the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust in April 2006 was extremely positive. Guests were asked, via a questionnaire, about their state of mind at the beginning and end of their stay. Overall, 'scores' improved by 45% (see figure on right). In some areas, guests had improved so much that their state of mind was on par with the general population. Guests contacted three months later had continued to improve further. This illustrates how Maytree sets guests on a positive path, rather than providing just temporary relief.

The evaluation also analysed guests' feedback. Overall guests experienced 'deeply significant benefits' during their stay. They felt better, less distressed and less suicidal. They left feeling more hopeful. They also felt better equipped to deal with their relationships, and were more likely to seek help in future, if needed.

The professionals and charities that referred guests to Maytree were positive about its impact. Some spoke of 'deep and transformational change' in clients; others admitted that clients who are disillusioned, frightened or stigmatised by psychiatric services might do better at Maytree.

Maytree is a new model for supporting desperate people. Mental health professionals recognise that Maytree is an important option in preventing suicide, and are learning from its success. Maytree could be replicated in other areas if the right leadership could be found.

Guests' self assessment of their state of mind before and after staying at Maytree:



0 = Good. 4 = Bad.

Taken from an evaluation report by Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust (April 2006).

Geographical coverage

Local National

●-----

Focus of approach

Indiv- Comm- Services Society
idual- unity

●-----

Life stage

Innovation Established
or pilot approach

●-----

Replicability or scalability

Little Considerable
scope scope

●-----

Annual income (£'000s)

2004	2005	2006E
299	170	200

Staff

Full-time	Part-time	Volunteer
2	0	60*

Recommendation: NPC views Maytree as an important new option to help prevent suicide

Maytree represents a new, non-medical option for helping people at risk of suicide. The cost per guest currently averages £1,150 each stay—a small price to pay for saving a life. Maytree has been positively evaluated by a team of mental health professionals.

Maytree bought its house in 2001 using a combination of donations, loans from supporters, and bank loans. A bank loan for £170,000 repayable over 15 years is still outstanding and this costs about £18,000 a year to service. The management and staffing of Maytree is thin, which makes it cost effective, but when Maytree operates at full capacity it may become overstretched. Maytree needs to hire two members of staff. Maytree could use private funding for the following:

- £170,000 could repay the loan so eliminate cost of servicing the debt;
- £30,000 could pay for the second director, freeing up the founding director's time to recruit, train and supervise more volunteers, and work with guests.
- £30,000 could pay for a new post to help with administration, fundraising and publicising Maytree's service.

70% of Maytree's guests have attempted suicide before coming to Maytree and 17% have tried at least three times. With a caseload of this severity, the main risk to Maytree is a suicide on the premises. To date there have been four suicide attempts, but none completed. Maytree's volunteers are trained to deal with attempted suicides, and to minimise the risk of one occurring.

Maytree saves lives, and changes them, through intensive emotional support in a friendly residential setting.

*40 of the volunteers are active counsellors.

New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) is a charity that advises all types of donors on how to ensure their money has high impact.

This document describes one of the charities recommended by NPC in its report on adults with mental health problems in the UK. For more information see our report Don't mind me at www.philanthropycapital.org.

To discuss this or any of our other recommendations, please contact Harry Charlton on 020 7785 6309.

Last revised on 30/11/2006. Iona Joy

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Glossary

Page 1

Funding needed	amount or range of funding required
Results	impact of this charity's work on people's lives – NPC looks at results in terms of three dimensions: Breadth – number of people affected Depth – intensity of results for each individual affected (greatest depth means a life-saving intervention; lowest means a minor interaction) Change – degree of systemic change brought about by this work; equivalently whether it tackles causes (high) or treats symptoms (low)
Risk	level of risk threatening the delivery of specified results
Difficulty of fundraising	level of difficulty associated with fundraising for this charity (may be due to unpopularity of field of work or lack of fundraising capacity)

Page 2

Geographical coverage	charity's area of work – local, regional or national – or a number of these levels
Focus of approach	main groups with which the charity works: Individual – working directly with individuals, providing services and support to improve their quality of life Community – working with communities and/or families, providing activities to strengthen community life Services – working with organisations, funders and policymakers to improve services Society – working at a national level to change attitudes and tackle causes
Life stage	organisation's developmental stage – from pilot/start-up to mature, established organisation
Replicability or scalability	potential for replication of the charity's model, or growth of the charity itself

Good giving principles

- **Pro-active selection of charities based on results:** Donors should support charities that are achieving excellent results for the people that they serve, rather than charities that have the most effective and professional fundraising teams or the lowest administrative costs (all organisations need administrative costs in order to be effective; low admin costs may in fact be a sign of an inefficient organisation).
 - **'Light touch' engagement with charities:** In most instances we recommend that donors minimise the demands on the time and resources of the charities they fund. In practice, this means not imposing arduous reporting requirements and limiting visits and contact with charities.
 - **Funding organisations, not projects:** As a donor, it is tempting to stipulate that a grant can only be used for a particular project, because this makes it much easier to see the direct charitable impact of the donation. However, we believe that this practice can limit the impact of the donation. Firstly, it may cause charities to propose projects that meet the donor's objectives but which stray from their core mission. Secondly, if circumstances change then charities are unable to respond. We believe that the charities we recommend can and should be trusted to make decisions in the best interests of the people they serve, and so in general we recommend that donors fund organisations, not projects. Practically, this means giving unrestricted funding.
 - **'Just right' donations - not too big, not too small:** Judging the right size for a donation to a charity is an art, not a science. If a donation is too big, there is a risk that rapid growth will create significant organisational problems, particularly when the donation runs out. At the other end of the scale, if a donor makes a small donation and requires a charity to go through application and reporting processes then the administrative burden may outweigh the benefit of the donation. Of course, small donations with no strings attached are always welcomed by charities. Our researchers work with charities to understand their financial needs, and recommend a suitable size for a donation. In general, we work on an assumption that contributing more than a third of an organisation's annual income may create problems. However, if a charity is looking to grow significantly and it has a robust strategy for growth, a larger grant may be entirely appropriate.
 - **Multi-year support:** We recommend that donors should provide multi-year support for charities, rather than giving them a lump sum in a single year. Choosing the right length for a grant depends on the specific case – as a guide, grant-making trusts often give three-year grants. Multi-year support gives charity leaders the opportunity to make long term plans to improve their organisations and build projects that will create and sustain improvements in the lives of the people they serve. It also allows donors to build longer-term relationships with the charities, if they wish.
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