
Dover Counselling Centre

Press Release

26th February 2020

The biggest UK maritime disaster in peacetime since the sinking of the Titanic was on the night of 6th March 1997 when 193 passengers and crew perished off the coast of Zeebrugge when the Herald of Free Enterprise ferry capsized.

The many subsequent developments in corporate manslaughter legislation, maritime safety improvements and on-board technological advances are well documented. What is less well-known is the response at the time to the grief of the bereaved families, their friends and the survivors.

The anguished population living in and around Dover were directed towards the Herald Assistance Unit; heartbroken and stunned as they were by the sudden demise of their loved ones. This soon evolved into the Dover Counselling Centre providing therapeutic counselling to those most in need. Now a national charity with over 120 trained responders on call, Dover Counselling Centre has retained its local links by basing its UK headquarters at Horizon House in Whitfield, a few miles from Dover ferry port.

The experience and expertise gained from over thirty years of operations have enabled Dover Counselling Centre to respond to national emergencies with prompt and purposeful expertise. The charity is also a welcome resource for families, individuals and companies requiring speedy and experienced support.

Chairman of the trustees and one of the charity's founders Dr Bill Moses notes:

“There is much greater awareness these days of the importance of addressing mental health needs. We are grateful for the solid backing we receive from the NHS and GPs in referring cases to us. But, we should all be aware that most mental health conditions can be treated successfully and completely once they receive the appropriate help.”

As we approach the thirty-third anniversary of the Zeebrugge disaster, some people will have cause to be reminded again of a most miserable incident in the lives of their families and workmates. It may be of some consolation to them to know that the terrible losses sustained in the cold, dark waters of the English Channel all those years ago led to the birth of one of our leading mental health charities. As a result, many thousands of UK citizens from all sectors of society have made a successful return to healthy living; cold comfort perhaps but a community benefit that arose from a national tragedy.

(381 words)

Dover Counselling Centre (DCC) was established in the wake of the 1987 Herald of Free Enterprise ferry disaster in which 193 passengers and crew perished. DCC provides a professional and confidential service to individuals, groups and companies through its registered charity and company limited by guarantee. Any surpluses DCC generates are transferred to support free community counselling. Registered charity No. 800988. Registered company no. 02334448.

Information:

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