

THE CENTRE FOR BETTER HEALTH



REGISTERED CHARITY NO: 292944

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23



CONTENTS



ABOUT US	2
INTRODUCTION	3
BETTER HEALTH COUNSELLING	4
BETTER HEALTH HUB	6
BETTER HEALTH TRAINING	8
PATHWAYS TO BETTER HEALTH	11
ACCOUNTS	13
WITH THANKS	
PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS	14
VOLUNTEERS	15
STAFF	16

“I HAVE TRIED FOR YEARS TO GET ME TO A PLACE THAT NOW I AM THANKS TO THIS SERVICE. I LEAVE KNOWING THAT I HAVE EVOLVED SO MUCH, REGAINED MY TRUST, SELF CONFIDENCE AND IDENTITY WHICH I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I LOST. ”

ABOUT US



The Centre for Better Health is a registered charity that supports wellbeing and recovery from mental ill health. We provide a range of services in a trusted, community-based, non-clinical setting: low-cost counselling; low-cost creative, movement and therapeutic groups; a practical support service for young adults; and work-skills training placements to help provide in-roads into employment for those who are out of work and struggle with their mental health.

In each of our services we place an emphasis on developing supportive and therapeutic relationships with clients, in order to effectively support wellbeing and recovery from long-term mental ill health. Through our services, we support individuals to achieve personal growth, improve wellbeing and quality of life, and make employment progression where relevant. Our vision is for individuals to lead satisfying and hopeful lives in a society without any stigma around mental ill health.

**'COMPETITIVE INDIVIDUALISM
MILITATES AGAINST THE EXPERIENCE
OF COMMUNITY AND THAT LACK OF
COMMUNITY IS A CENTRALLY
IMPORTANT FACTOR IN
CONTEMPORANEOUS ANXIETY.'**

Rollo May

INTRODUCTION



We are very pleased to introduce the 2023 Annual Report to celebrate the work delivered through the organisation over the past year. Inevitably, as public service budgets are squeezed and we have a cost of living crisis, the demand for mental health services increases. A recent report by the Mental Health Foundation and the London School of Economics, estimated that mental health problems cost the UK economy at least £117.9 billion annually. The report makes the case for a prevention-based approach to mental health which would both improve mental wellbeing while reducing the economic costs of poor mental health. As a local organisation, we see the effects on individual lives when systems are placed under increasing strain. At times, our work can feel like a drop in the ocean, but the positive feedback received, suggests it means the world to the person affected. The following pages highlight the valuable service that the organisation, the staff team and volunteers continue to provide in this challenging environment and we want to thank everyone for their contribution.

Rab McNeill – Chair

Ashwin Mathews – Director

BETTER HEALTH COUNSELLING

Our counselling service supported 373 clients last year with weekly counselling. While most clients are local to Hackney, our service continues to attract individuals London-wide and is sought after both for being low-cost and relatively long-term.

The start of the year saw our transition from a remote to an in-person service post COVID, with clients who had not been able to join our online service being offered to return once we were back at the Centre. As a result of returning to a face-to-face service, we were able to increase our capacity and support 30% (88) more clients than the previous year.

- 373 people accessed weekly counselling
- 88% reported an improvement in quality of life
- 91% were satisfied or very satisfied with the service
- 100% would recommend the service to others



“ [MY COUNSELLOR] HAS MADE SO MUCH DIFFERENCE TO MY LIFE. [...] THE LOW COST MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO DO WEEKLY THERAPY, AND THE SUPPORT I HAVE RECEIVED MEANS I CAN HAVE A MORE POSITIVE FUTURE, WHICH IMPACTS ON MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS AS WELL. ”



“

THIS WAS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AND LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCES IN MY LIFE. [MY COUNSELLOR] IS AN AMAZING THERAPIST AND HELPED ME GET TO KNOW MYSELF MUCH MORE. SHE HELPED ME WORK THROUGH MY TRAUMAS AND WITHOUT YOUR HELP AND HERS PROVIDING THERAPY SESSIONS THAT ARE AFFORDABLE, I WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO WORK ON MYSELF DURING THIS CRUCIAL TIME IN MY LIFE.

”

BETTER HEALTH COUNSELLING CLIENT, 2022

BETTER HEALTH HUB

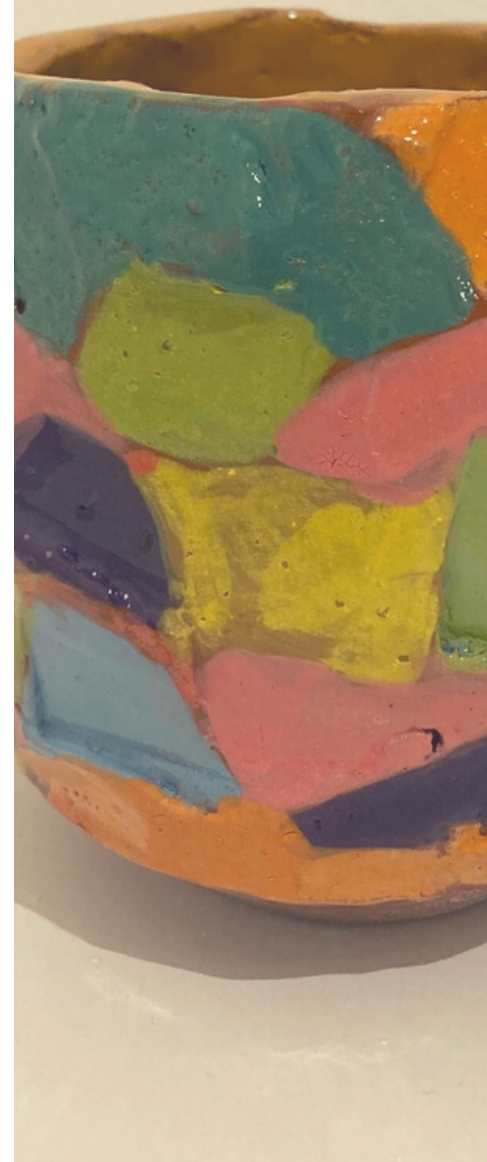


We ran 16 arts and crafts courses, including drawing, painting, collage, visual diaries, patchworking, photography and writing for wellbeing; 13 pottery courses, including hand building, throwing, tile decoration, decorative plant pots and mid-Winter decorations; two T'ai Chi courses; and nine mindfulness and therapeutic support groups, including loss and grief, LGBTQI+ relationships, managing depression and anxiety, mindfulness, create your own future and personal development.

- 40 groups and courses delivered
- 377 enrolments - 80% places funded by the City and Hackney Wellbeing Network
- 64% reported an improvement in quality of life
- 98% were satisfied or very satisfied with the service
- 100% would recommend the course or group they did

“THE COURSES ARE BRILLIANT - THEY HAVE GOT ME OUT OF THE HOUSE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS.”

“I LOOK FORWARD TO THE GROUP EACH WEEK. EVA IS AN AMAZING TEACHER: HER STYLE ALLOWS YOU TO BE WHO AND WHERE YOU ARE IN THAT WEEK AND CREATES A SAFE ENVIRONMENT. SO INSPIRED BY ALL THE OTHER GROUP MEMBERS AND ENJOY HEALING THROUGH CREATIVITY. REALLY LIFTS MY MOOD AND BEST ESCAPISM FROM CHALLENGES IN LIFE.”



“

I WAS REFERRED TO THE CENTRE FOR BETTER HEALTH IN FEBRUARY 2020. I HAD RECENTLY BEEN DISCHARGED FROM A DAY PATIENT SERVICE FOR MY EATING DISORDER AND WAS STRUGGLING WITH THE LACK OF STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT AFTER 6 MONTHS OF INTENSE TREATMENT.

UNFORTUNATELY, I ONLY HAD A COUPLE OF CLASSES BEFORE COVID SHUT IT DOWN. BUT IN THAT SHORT TIME, BRIDGET, THE TUTOR, MADE ME FEEL SAFE AND COMFORTABLE.

WHEN THE ONLINE CERAMICS CLASSES STARTED DURING LOCKDOWN, THEY WERE A LIFE SAVER. MY MENTAL HEALTH HAD DETERIORATED A LOT, MY NHS CARE WAS ABRUPTLY ENDED DUE TO COVID. SO, I WAS FORCED TO MOVE IN WITH MY DAD FOR LOCKDOWN. THE TWO HOURS A WEEK SPENT WITH MARIA LEARNING CERAMICS WAS THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK. MY DAD WOULD COMMENT THAT ON THOSE DAYS MY MOOD WOULD LIFT AND I WOULD HAVE A SENSE OF PURPOSE AGAIN.

MARIA WAS FANTASTIC, TEACHING SO MUCH REMOTELY AND MAKING US LAUGH TOO. THE PIECES I PRODUCED IN THIS TIME HELPED IMPROVE MY MOOD AND CONFIDENCE, AS I FELT I WAS ACHIEVING SOMETHING. I FEEL SO LUCKY I HAD THESE COURSES IN MY LIFE DURING THIS TIME.

SINCE THE CLASSES HAVE BEEN IN PERSON, I HAVE FOUND HAVING A SAFE SPACE TO GO AND LEARN AND CREATE LIFE-SAVING. I WAS REFERRED TO A SUICIDE PREVENTION CHARITY IN FEBRUARY AND ALONGSIDE THE WELLBEING COURSES I HAVE GOT THROUGH SOME OF THE HARDEST MONTHS OF RECENT YEARS. AND I HAVE MADE ARTWORK I CAN FEEL PROUD OF.

I CANNOT THANK OR RECOMMEND THE [CITY AND HACKNEY WELLBEING NETWORK] ENOUGH, BECAUSE WITHOUT IT I CAN HONESTLY SAY I WOULDN'T HAVE GOT THROUGH THE PANDEMIC AND THE AFTERMATH. I HOPE ONE DAY I CAN VOLUNTEER THERE TO HELP GIVE BACK. I HAVE ALSO RECOMMENDED IT TO MY FRIEND WHO SUFFERS FROM POOR MENTAL HEALTH AND ANXIETY AND HE RECENTLY STARTED SOME COURSES AND HAS THANKED ME SO MUCH FOR SUGGESTING IT TO HIM. THANK YOU SO MUCH. ”

BETTER HEALTH HUB PARTICIPANT, 2022

BETTER HEALTH TRAINING

Our training placements can be funded by a City and Hackney Personal Health Budget (PHB). This enabled us to apply for PHBs for individuals who were accessing secondary mental health services in the borough, as well as for individuals who were aged 18-25 and living in City or Hackney.

We improved the structure of our bakery placements to enable trainees the best opportunity for learning and development across a range of skills and tasks. We also introduced a buddy system, with volunteers providing informal support and guidance to trainees during the day. We developed links with a range of bakeries, bike shops and employability services to support trainees into meaningful opportunities after their placements.

Over the course of the year, we supported trainees to move on to work experience at E5 bakehouse and Dusty Knuckle, employability programmes Step Up and You Make It, City and Guilds Level 1 in Bike Mechanics (funded through a Personal Health Budget) and volunteering at Bike Works.

- 26 referrals received
- 6 trainees started placements in the bakery, 9 in the bike shop and 1 in our light industrial unit
- 13 trainees (81%) completed their placements
- 67% reported an improvement in quality of life
- 86% were satisfied or very satisfied with the service
- 86% would recommend the placement to others
- 6 placements were funded by PHBs, 1 by Southwark Council SEN team and 9 by the Centre for Better Health



Andrew knew of the Better Health Bakery from living locally; he had often walked past and, given his interest in baking, it had caught his eye. Andrew had been struggling with his mental health and had been in and out of employment for several years. He had been working on a self-employed basis and was often at home on his own. He dreaded going back into the workplace and was worried about how to manage relationships; he had often felt overwhelmed in environments where you have to deal with lots of people.

“I THOUGHT THAT DOING A TRAINING PLACEMENT AT THE BAKERY WOULD HELP EASE ME BACK INTO A WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT; IT SEEMED LIKE A SAFE PLACE TO DO THIS.”

Andrew started a 12-week placement in January 2019. He enjoyed the fact that everyone was working towards the same goal, and that there were very specific tasks to get on with each day. The combination of teamwork and having structured responsibility was really beneficial. Alongside the placement in the Bakery, Andrew had one to one check-in meetings with a member of the team.

“THE SESSIONS WERE REALLY HELPFUL – TALKING TO SOMEONE WHO WAS INTERESTED IN HOW I WAS DOING AND HOW I WAS DEALING WITH THE PLACEMENT EMOTIONALLY WAS REALLY GOOD.”

After the placement, Andrew applied for jobs and landed a role as an assistant editor at a tech start-up. It felt daunting at the time but he received really good feedback from his line manager. Unfortunately, he was made redundant at the start of the pandemic, which was a challenging and upsetting experience; all of his fears about the workplace had materialised and this set him back.

In his current role, also as an assistant editor but now for a large media company, Andrew has been able to overcome this past experience. Although he doesn't find the role itself hugely interesting, his main goal is to hold down a job and manage day-to-day, and in this sense he feels positive.

“THE PLACEMENT DEFINITELY HELPED – IT MEANT THAT I WASN'T DREADING THE NEXT STEP SO MUCH. A MASSIVE BARRIER FOR ME WAS THE FEAR OF RETURNING TO THE WORKPLACE, WHICH YOU HAVE HELPED ME TO OVERCOME.”

Better Health Bakery Trainee
Completed a placement in 2019 and reached back out to us in 2022

Better Health Bakery

Unfortunately, towards the end of June 2023 the charity took the difficult decision to close the Better Health Bakery. The bakery over the last 10 years was an innovative and dynamic mental health project and social enterprise recognised by various press articles and awards. In truth, for most of that time trying to make it financially sustainable was a challenge; however, what it did do, was provide transformative experiences for most of the trainees, volunteers and indeed staff who passed through its doors. An external evaluation conducted on the project between 2015 -2017 calculated a social return on investment of £7 for every £1 spent. The economic climate since the pandemic in terms of inflation and costs has however meant that the charity has had to call time. We have had many supporters and well wishers involved in the bakery over its life and want to express a sincere thank you to everyone who played a part to make it a unique space.

“AT THE START IT WAS HARD TO GET OUT OF MY OWN HEAD AND TO LEARN TO ASK FOR HELP, BUT MY MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL SKILLS HAVE IMPROVED MASSIVELY. ”

Better Health Bakery trainee, 2023



**NEW
RADICALS**

PATHWAYS TO BETTER HEALTH

In September 2022, we launched a new outreach and support service, which offers individualised, flexible support for 18–25-year-olds living in City and Hackney who are struggling with their wellbeing. Whilst not a counselling or therapy service, Pathways offers a supportive space to talk about how young adults are feeling and provides practical support to help. Our team works with each person to set and manage goals according to their needs and aspirations and offers support to identify and navigate services and opportunities.

Our support workers have facilitated activities such as vision boards, visual mapping, the tree of life, the stress bucket activity and values exercises to help young adults to focus on their strengths, achievements, resilience and goals. The main goals that we have supported young adults with are work, mental health, social connections, finance and housing.

- 27 young adults supported
- 114 1:1 support sessions delivered
- 88 signposts and referrals to other services made; 53% led to the young adult accessing the service or opportunity
- 28 outreach activities and 3 mental health awareness events delivered in community spaces to promote Pathways

“THE ONLY TRUE SUPPORT I GOT WHILE LIVING IN LONDON WAS FROM [MY PATHWAYS SUPPORT WORKER] AND THE CENTRE FOR BETTER HEALTH. I FELT SO COMFORTABLE FROM THE FIRST SESSION AND LISTENED TO AND TAKEN SERIOUSLY FOR THE FIRST TIME. ”



One of the young adults we worked with set goals to make more male friends, access mental health support and improve their routine. By the end of our support, they had accessed therapy and an arts course funded through the Wellbeing Network. They had also started going to their local boxing club, registered with a local GP, begun volunteering, started online shopping to enable them to cook more creative meals, created positive work boundaries, and had made a plan to move out of their current housing. Over the course of the service, their quality of life, as measured by the ReQoL-20, increased by 32 points.

“AFTER I FINISHED UNIVERSITY IN LONDON AND AFTER THE PANDEMIC, I FELT AT A LOSS ON HOW TO START MY LIFE AND FIND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SECTORS I WANTED TO WORK IN. LONDON CAN BE QUITE AN OVERWHELMING CITY, ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. IT’S HARD TO FIND YOUR PLACE.”

Tom* started accessing Pathways in September 2022 after hearing about the service from a friend. He was struggling with depression and anxiety, and with addictive behaviours. He had unstable housing and had been couch surfing for several months, and described himself as feeling lost and overwhelmed since leaving University. He was picking up some freelance work in copy writing, but lacked structure and a stable income.

“PATHWAYS HAS ALLOWED ME TO TALK THROUGH MY GOALS, BREAK THEM UP AND TO BE ABLE TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THEM. ONE OF THE GOALS I HAD WAS TO START LONG-TERM THERAPY, AND [MY PATHWAYS SUPPORT WORKER] SHOWED ME THE OPTIONS THAT I HAD AND HELPED ME TO FIND THE BEST ONE FOR ME. I’VE BEEN IN THERAPY FOR A FEW MONTHS.”

Initially we spoke about what had helped Tom in the past with his mental health, which he identified as developing a supportive, longer-term relationship with a counsellor through his University’s wellbeing service. We spoke about available statutory services, including IAPT and Turning Point, as well as private low-cost counselling options, and helped him to access talking therapy at an affordable rate. Tom’s other goals were around having a more stable income and routine, and being able to work in music. We connected Tom with a mentoring service for young creatives, which, alongside our conversations, helped him clarify his next steps and improve his confidence. By our fourth session, Tom shared how much progress he felt he had made and how useful it had been to break down his goals and learn where he could turn for specialist support.

“I’M ALSO A MUSICIAN AND WAS LOOKING FOR MORE CREATIVE OPPORTUNITIES. ANDY INTRODUCED ME TO A LOT OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE, SOME OF WHOM I’M NOW WORKING WITH. IT HAS BEEN REALLY HELPFUL FOR MY CONFIDENCE.”

Through the 16+ network, we set up a meeting between Tom and the manager of a local music studio, who was looking to on-board young adults to support with the running of the organization. Tom did a trial at the studios, which included managing the studio time and music engineering.

Pathways client (*name changed), 2022

ACCOUNTS



	2022-23	2021-22
INCOME		
Voluntary	£535,868	£505,871
Investment	£22	£1
Charitable activities	£202,582	£165,799
Total income	£738,472	£671,671
EXPENDITURE		
Charitable activities	£737,758	£671,688
Total expenditure	£737,758	£671,688
Net movement in funds	£714	£3
Total funds carried forward at 31 March 23	£36,003	

WITH THANKS



Partners and supporters

Edmund Carr LLP
NatWest Bank
Mr NK Crace
Ms C Finney
Ms E Kemp
Mr F Whitbread
Robin Cavendish Memorial Fund
The Ericson Trust
JustGiving
Trigg Digital
Morgan Lewis and Bockius UK LLP
East London Foundation Trust
Hackney Local Authority
City and Hackney CCG
Psychological Therapies and Wellbeing Alliance
Hackney CVS
City and Hackney Wellbeing Network
The Association of Mental Health Providers
The Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association
Buckles LLP
Rocketseed
The Blue Lizard



FS 551024

Volunteers



- 61 volunteer counsellors delivered 4,866 hours counselling
- 8 bike volunteers and 8 bakery volunteers delivered an estimated 1,778 hours of volunteering in our social enterprise

“

I WANTED TO DO A PLACEMENT THAT OFFERED MORE THAN A COUNSELLING SERVICE. SINCE BEING AT THE CENTRE IN PERSON I HAVE REALLY FELT A SENSE OF BEING PART OF SOMETHING WIDER AND A COMMUNITY. I HAVE SIGNPOSTED MANY OF MY CLIENTS TO THE CENTRE'S HUB COURSES, INCLUDING T'AI CHI, MINDFULNESS AND ART COURSES. I WORKED WITH A CLIENT WITH DUAL DIAGNOSIS FOR WHOM T'AI CHI TRANSFORMED HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS BODY. I'VE ALSO SIGNPOSTED SOME OF MY CLIENTS TO PATHWAYS FOR BETTER HEALTH, THE CENTRE'S OUTREACH AND SUPPORT SERVICE FOR 18-25-YEAR-OLDS.

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT BEING MORE WIDELY CONNECTED AND THE HOLISTIC NATURE OF THE CENTRE, WHICH, AS A GESTALT PRACTITIONER, IS REALLY IMPORTANT TO ME. HAVING A CENTRE WHICH HAS SO MUCH MORE TO OFFER BROADENS WHAT COUNSELLING IS SEEN AS. I LOVE BEING SET WITHIN THAT.

IT'S AN EXTREMELY SUPPORTIVE PLACEMENT; I HAVE REALLY GROWN IN CONFIDENCE IN TERMS OF BEING ABLE TO ARTICULATE MY MODALITY. I LOVE SUPERVISION! THE CLIENTS I HAVE BEEN MATCHED WITH HAVE BEEN SO INTERESTING AND DIVERSE AND I'VE HAD GOOD SUPPORT WITH MORE COMPLEX CLIENTS. CBH HAS SET ME UP WELL FOR PRIVATE PRACTICE, WHICH NOW FEELS QUITE STRAIGHTFORWARD.

I WOULD WHOLEHEARTEDLY RECOMMEND OTHER COUNSELLORS IN TRAINING TO DO A PLACEMENT AT CBH. I WOULD ENCOURAGE NEW COUNSELLORS TO BE AS OPEN AS THEY CAN IN TERMS OF BRINGING EVERYTHING TO SUPERVISION – NOT JUST THE GOOD STUFF. BE WILLING TO BE HONEST AND OPEN WITH PEERS AND THEIR SUPERVISOR, AS WELL AS IN THEIR CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS. SUPERVISION HAS BEEN FAB AND VERY SUPPORTIVE, BUT IT TOOK ME A LITTLE WHILE TO KNOW HOW TO USE IT.

I RAVE ABOUT MY PLACEMENT AT CBH BECAUSE IT HAS ENABLED ME TO GROW. THERE'S SOMETHING SO IMPORTANT ABOUT THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN WHAT CAN TYPICALLY BE QUITE A LONELY PROFESSION. AT CBH, I HAVE FORMED SUPPORTIVE AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS AND A COMMUNITY. ”

TRAINEE COUNSELLOR, 2023



www.instagram.com/centreforbetterhealth/



www.facebook.com/thecentreforbetterhealth



twitter.com/betterhealthE9



www.centreforbetterhealth.org.uk