

Inspire North

Catalyst For Change

ANNUAL REVIEW 2022/2023
Creating a World Where Everyone Matters



Hello and welcome to our 2022/2023 Annual Review.

Another year of change, great successes and not insignificant challenges.

We welcome two new Acting Directors of Operations, Will Goode and Kira Moxon-Lumb. Will and Kira bring a wealth of experience and having managed multiple services across Foundation and Community Links previously they will ensure stability and continuity in our operations as they step up to join our Senior Leadership Team.

Our service portfolio has continued to grow, and we are delighted to be reaching new communities in West Yorkshire to provide more dementia information and mental health support to those who need it.

A massive achievement has been becoming the first organisation in Yorkshire to achieve the Social Value Quality Mark (SVQM) Level 1. This marks the start of our journey to measure the ultimate impact of our work to the individuals and communities we support.

New services and expansions include the launch of our dementia hub in Calderdale, offering advice and information to those affected by dementia. We also have a new crisis support service in Kirklees, REST Stop Service, which offers a therapeutic, person-centred alternative to hospital admission for people experiencing mental health crises.

Our NHS Hub has extended its eating disorder support, Link-ED is now an expansion of Connect, offering peer support to those living with an eating disorder. Our North Yorkshire Children's Therapeutic Service has had a revamp and been renamed 'Space to Share,' it worked with clients to coproduce a new logo too.

Once again, the biggest thank you to our colleagues who continue to inspire me every day with their commitment and determination to give the best possible service they can to our clients and tenants, to our volunteers and Trustees, thank you for all your time and expertise.

Here's to 2023-24.

Ruth Kettle, *Chief Executive*

WELCOME



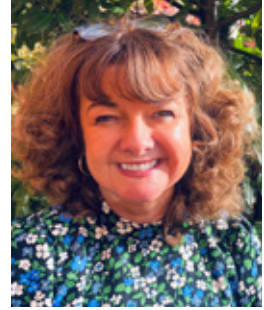
Ruth Kettle, Chief Executive

INTRODUCING

the Senior Leadership Team



Ruth Kettle
Chief Executive



Donna Gooby
Director of People and Culture



Adam Miller
Chief Finance Officer
(joined August 2023)



Sinéad Cregan
Director of Development and Innovation



Will Goode
Acting Group Director of Operations



Kira Moxon-Lumb
Acting Group Director of Operations

Board of Trustees

Claire Vilarrubi
Chair
Inspire North

Damian Pocknell
Vice Chair
Inspire North
(Retired 6th April 2023)

Karl Milner
Independent Trustee of
Community Links

Philip Turnpenny
Freedom to Speak Up and
Safeguarding Champion
Inspire North

Lisa Bradley
Treasurer and Value
for Money Champion
Inspire North

David Strachan
Compliance Champion
Inspire North
(Retired 30th March 2023)

Dave Roche
Housing Champion
Independent Trustee of
Foundation

David Powell
Independent Trustee of
Foundation
(Retired 23rd June 2023)

Vijay Assani
Independent Trustee of
Foundation

Cornelle Parker
Independent Trustee of
Community Links
(Retired 22nd Sept 2023)

Jacqueline Hallam
Independent Trustee of
Community Links
(Retired 30th April 2023)

OUR PURPOSE, VISION AND VALUES

Our purpose is to **Build Brighter Futures** with our clients, in pursuit of our vision, **Creating a World Where Everyone Matters.**

Our four values are:



People

We will always treat you as an individual



Integrity

We will always do the right thing



Collaboration

We will always achieve more together



Passion

We will always go the extra mile

WHAT'S NEW

Recruitment Video

In the summer of June 2022, we produced a new recruitment video, highlighting the various rewarding roles a support worker carries out in a day.

Coproduction was embedded throughout the process, with the video featuring clients and employees at multiple service sites including Community Links' mental health hostels and Scarborough's Young People's Pathway service. Clients of CLEAR's Men's Talk also used their digital skills to work alongside the professional videography team to capture footage and create their own behind the scenes film.

Our patron, Jamie Jones-Buchanan had a starring role in the video, helping to deliver our key message, that 'we are so much more than support workers, we are Inspire North'.



Social Value Quality Mark

In November 2022, we became the first organisation in Yorkshire to achieve the Social Value Quality Mark (SVQM) Level 1. The Quality Mark recognises distinction in values-led business that benefits clients, communities, and the environment.

Inspire North defines Social Value as "the worth of the difference we make to people's lives and our local communities."

To gain the Level 1 accreditation, we made a series of commitments to create, measure, and independently report on our impact. Pledges were made across key community themes including the cost savings for the public sector and the positive change in emotional, psychological, and physical wellbeing of clients, residents, and tenants.

Fundraising

We launched a new donation platform: Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) Donate, which has enabled us to fundraise online for Inspire North, Community Links and Foundation and process our donations more efficiently.

In January, The Yorkshire North and East District Methodist Youth Team raised £2000 for Inspire North by sleeping out in the cold January weather for its annual Sleep Out for Homelessness event. Members of the community gave up their beds for an evening under the stars to support those facing homelessness.

We spoke to Victoria from the District Team who said:

"I hate this event, it is cold and unpleasant, and serves to remind me of just how privileged I am to only have to do this for one night. My hope is always that we can raise awareness of the challenges faced by people who find themselves homeless as well as some money to help support organisations like Inspire North."

The University of Huddersfield's Cheerleading team raised funds for Community Links Engagement and Recovery Service's Men's Talk Group this year. The team hosted their annual cheer showcase and donated £356.95 to Men's Talk.

Norman, a volunteer at Men's Talk is part of the Public Partnership Group at the University of Huddersfield and works with the healthcare students to carry out real-life scenarios they may experience when working.

The students were so moved by Norman and his work with Men's Talk. Ede, a third-year student and member of the Cheerleading Committee said:

"Hearing about Norman's involvement with Men's Talk resonated with me. We were more than happy to donate the profits of our showcase to Men's Talk - it is somewhere close to heart but also close to home."

The Bristol Cabaret Night donated a fantastic £2456 to Young Dementia Leeds! Ruth and Kay, who have received support from Young Dementia Leeds held a Cabaret show to raise money for the vital support Young Dementia Leeds provides to Ruth's Mum, Jayne, and her family.



Internal Grants Scheme

The Internal Grants Scheme offers an exciting opportunity for colleagues in services to coproduce projects with our clients. The aim of the scheme is to award funding to innovative projects and ideas that will improve service experience and help our clients reach their potential. The scheme is open to Foundation (the Acorns to Oaks Fund) and Community Links (the Bright Ideas Fund) and is a great opportunity for clients to be creative and coproduce innovative ideas.

Over the year, we have awarded £9,913 of grant funding to 22 projects across the organisation. We have seen some amazing examples of innovation and co-production and seen the fantastic impact these projects have had on our services. The projects funded include mindfulness spaces, garden projects, bikes for clients, and some amazing art workshops.

Some examples include:

Young Dementia Leeds received funding to host a bi-weekly Art Therapy Group. The group work with an Art Therapist in creative sessions that have been effective in improving concentration and self-expression.

Client feedback from a group:

"It's very good and educational. Sally is very clear in her guidance. I enjoy it very much - I liked making clay leaves to create a wind chime."

East Grange Drive were awarded funding to build a greenhouse in their garden and have used it to start growing some amazing fruit and vegetables. Clients have been involved in every step and have had the opportunity to learn about growing food and have benefited from mindfulness while being outdoors and nurturing the plants.



Becoming Trauma Informed

We have been working with West Yorkshire Health & Care Partnership (Adversity Trauma & Resilience Network) to pilot a project which aims to embed a Trauma Informed Approach across all areas of Inspire North.

For Inspire North, becoming trauma informed means recognising the widespread impact of trauma, stress, and adversity through viewing all aspects of our organisation through a trauma-informed lens.

We have completed the pilot scheme self-assessments; these were completed across the organisation to help understand what we are doing and what we need to do to be more trauma informed. We received positive feedback on the self-assessment, as it helped raise awareness within services of the specific areas to look at, supported with developing services and colleagues felt this supported them and clients.

The self-assessment tool will be rolled out organisation wide in due course. In readiness for this we have created workstreams, covering specific areas within the project to drive forward our goal. We want everyone to have a chance to have their voice heard.

We have also successfully launched our Trauma Informed Lead and Champion meetings. In these meetings, the team reviews, updates and discusses our progress, sharing key messages and ideas.

Inclusive Top 50

We are thrilled to announce that Inspire North has been featured in the Inclusive Top 50 UK Employers List for the third year running, ranking as the 2nd most inclusive charity in the UK.

The list recognises the outstanding efforts organisations have made to begin their journeys towards becoming inclusive; ensuring they are attracting, and retaining a truly diverse workforce and achieving equality, diversity, and inclusion, at all levels. The award recognises Inspire North's dedication to workplace diversity.



No Excuse for Abuse Campaign

Ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2022, we re-launched our #NoExcuseForAbuse campaign, as incidents of domestic abuse were expected to rise in line with the patterns of 2018's tournament.

We framed the campaign around the fact that abuse will not stop unless perpetrators stop abusing and shone a spotlight on our +Choices service which offers a perpetrator programme.

We achieved several radio interviews, regional news coverage, and television appearances, including a powerful piece on BBC Look North.

The combined daily reach of the platforms and publications we were featured in was over two million people and our efforts to raise awareness had a significant impact, with +Choices seeing a direct increase in referrals, going from just 6 in August to 24 in November.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



This year we launched our very first Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap Report. We know that improving inclusion and diversity begins with holding ourselves to account and this report has helped us to do just that. Although there is no obligation to report our ethnicity pay data, we believe reporting this is an important step on our journey towards greater equality, diversity and inclusion and effective anti-racism. The report will act as a benchmark to track the impact of our actions.

For Black History Month in October, we recorded and shared a podcast episode which was an honest and impactful conversation with black colleagues about what the month means to them and their experiences in and out of the workplace.

Race Equality Week in February was promoted across the organisation which included each member of the senior leadership team making a public pledge to be an ally in tackling race inequality. Race Equality Week is an annual UK-wide movement uniting us to address the barriers to race equality in the workplace. The theme for this year was race equality being everyone's business.

Happy to Translate (HTT) was launched. HTT is a national scheme which enables organisations to engage effectively with customers who speak little or no English. HTT provide services with resources to identify any language and communication needs, filling the communication gap between first contact and arranging professional language services. We will be monitoring the use of HTT across our services and encourage sharing best practice to assess the efficiency of HTT to assess if it improves engagement with underrepresented communities.

In March, members of the People of Colour Network hosted an informative Ramadan session at head office about what this holy time means to our employees and advice on how to support fasting colleagues and clients.

We also launched a fasting challenge, where employees were invited to participate by fasting throughout the week, for however long suited them. They were supported by daily check-ins with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator. The group met daily to

share experiences and attended an Eid meal to celebrate.

There were 50 attendees to the Ramadan awareness session and 14 participants for the fasting challenge. We received positive feedback regarding finding the session and challenge informative and engaging. Due to the success of this and requests from employees we will be relaunching the fasting challenge next year and our employee networks will be hosting more lunch and learns.

All services have been reminded to complete their annual Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) in order that continuous improvement in relation to diversity and inclusion is part of our business as usual and any actions to be added to their Service Plans.

Benchmarking for KPI's on equal opportunities have been updated to reflect the recently published 2021 census. This helps determine if we are achieving our aspiration of reflecting the communities that we serve.



Pride at Inspire North

We were very busy for Pride and launched a dedicated webpage on the Inspire North website to share what our services are up to, along with local and national resources for the LGBTQI+ Community.

We celebrated Leeds Pride in style with Leeds Mind, touring the parade in a vintage bus decorated in a client-designed colourful banner.

Our services celebrated at various Pride events across the country including Durham, York and the first ever Kirklees Pride!

WHAT'S NEW

Foundation wins runner-up organisation of the year at the Howard League Awards

Foundation was awarded Runner-Up Organisation of the Year at The Howard League for Penal Reform for their amazing work with Directions, +Choices and The North Yorkshire Resettlement and Community Safety Scheme.

The Howard League Annual Community Awards celebrate the most successful community projects that encourage desistance from crime and offer unique support to help keep individuals out of the criminal justice system.

Respect

Accredited

+Choices achieves Respect Accreditation

+Choices has been accredited with the Respect Standard; a quality assurance framework issued by national domestic abuse charity Respect. This means that the service is now a recommended provision of Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme (DAPP) support.

Over the last two years, the +Choices team have worked hard to demonstrate how the service meets all the standards such as organisational management, safe service delivery and responding to diversity as well as ensuring that victim and survivor wellbeing is prioritised.

Foundation Durham supporting students

The service had a very successful student placement with three students in January.

This year it had a student counsellor volunteering placement in its Domestic Abuse Navigator service which went well.

Foundation Durham also has its annual internship focusing on social media and anti-racism.

SPACE TO SHARE

North Yorkshire Children's Therapeutic Service

Child Friendly Revamp of North Yorkshire Children's Therapeutic Service

Foundation's North Yorkshire Children's Therapeutic Service consulted the children it supports to produce a more child friendly brand.

The name Space to Share was chosen incorporating a rainbow in the logo – which was inspired by a client's drawing from an interactive session about how they feel about the therapy.

Foundation Wakefield-Working Collaboratively

Foundation Wakefield has a partnership with the Yorkshire CFO Activity Hub (Leeds Activity Hub). The Hub has been utilising the large and well-equipped space at Wakefield to deliver group sessions, such as mindfulness and arts and crafts.

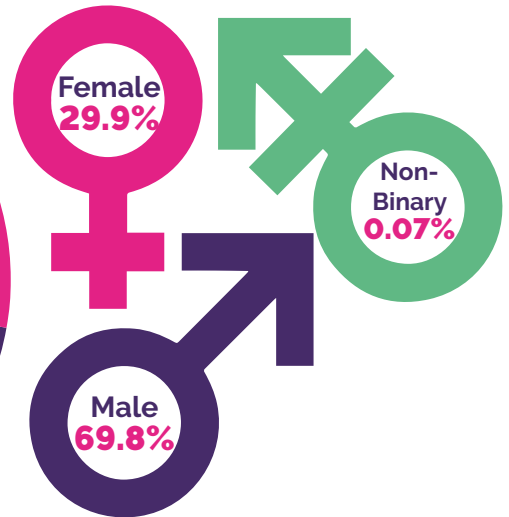
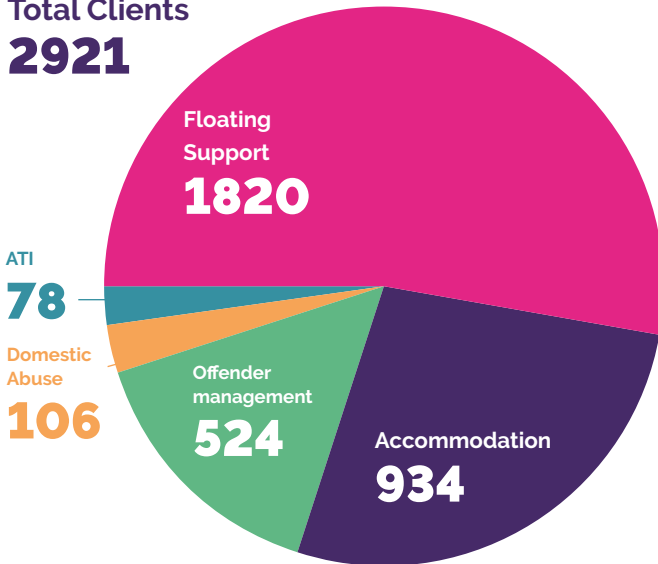
The sessions are open to both clients at the Hub and at Foundation. This has allowed the services to cross over, clients have built friendships and it has been an opportunity for peer mentoring to flourish.

One client described the session as *"very calming and interesting and nurturing for my mind."*

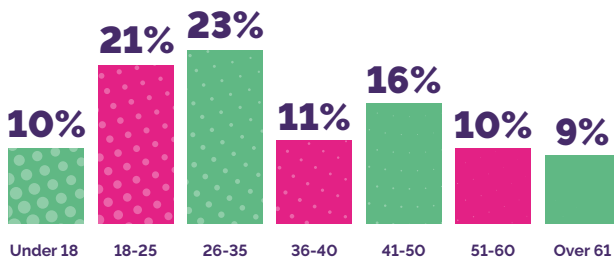
OUR CLIENTS, RESIDENTS AND TENANTS: An Overview

22/23 snapshot

Total Clients
2921



Age Breakdown



Sexuality

HETEROSEXUAL

91%

LGBTQ

5%

NOT ASKED

1%

NOT STATED

2%

OTHER

1%

Ethnicity

WHITE
92.0%

BLACK
2.2%

ASIAN
1.7%

DUAL HERITAGE
2.6%

OTHER
1.2%

NOT KNOWN
0.4%



25% of clients identified themselves as having a disability

Foundation Annual Satisfaction Questionnaire 22/23

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT US?

97%

I feel that my story is shared appropriately so I don't have to repeat myself

97%

I make my own choices and feel supported through the choices I make

92%

I believe that workers go the extra mile - no one gives up on me

96%

I value the relationship with my worker and feel listened to when I have ideas

99%

I am treated as a person and with dignity and respect

91% of clients said they were likely to recommend us to their friends and family.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR PROPERTY?



73%

My accommodation is at a high standard

59%

My repairs are done quickly

77%

I feel safe and secure where I live

55%

My accommodation is easy to heat

HOW DID WE DO?

86%

Overall satisfaction

Data based on 128 responses. Percentages based on positive responses ('Agree', 'Great', 'Good', 'OK', 'Extremely likely' and 'likely').

"Action Towards Inclusion (now RISE) has helped me pursue a dream that I didn't think was possible." - *ATI*

"The support and guidance I received from my support worker from day one was excellent, and this has allowed me to feel safe, confident, and helped transform the house into a home as well as helping me feel so much more settled." - *Foundation Darlington*

"I have a home and life has substantially got better since working with my support worker and Foundation (Durham). I had no one and nothing, now I feel like I have a life and everything I need." - *Foundation Durham*



CO-PRODUCTION

Foundation Young People's Pathway

The North Yorkshire Young People's Pathway offers young people the necessary support, advice, and mediation to enable them to stay in their present accommodation. Where this is not possible, there is a variety of accommodation options to suit their needs.

This year, clients and colleagues at our Scarborough hostel, Mercury House, worked with Professor Paul Cooke on a filming project as part of the Oxford University ATTUNE Research Project of which we are a partner.

Paul is from the Centre for World Cinemas and Digital Cultures, School of Languages, Cultures and Societies at the University of Leeds.

Clients produced a film in and around Scarborough, learning to use the cameras and editing the film themselves. The film was about life in Scarborough and the support the clients received in the hostel. The clients also interviewed staff for the film, to learn more about their work.

Feedback from Professor Paul Cooke was as follows:

"I just wanted to drop you a line to say thanks for all your support this week during our film training workshops, and for your enthusiasm to continue to support this work as we move to producing films reflecting on the ways young people can use the arts to improve their mental health.

I learnt a huge amount this week from the amazing young people we worked with. Their commitment to the project was inspiring. They arrived on time every day, keen to work together to produce the film. It was particularly wonderful to see the way they grew in confidence so quickly over the course of the week.

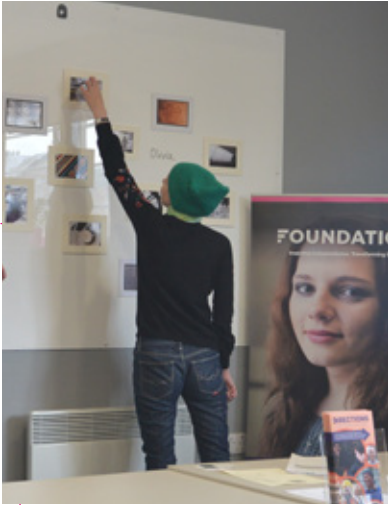
The clients were naturals in front of the camera. They were both so articulate and knowledgeable. It was fascinating hearing about the history of the Grand Hotel, for example. Colleagues were excellent behind the camera and clearly have a good eye for a shot.



Finally, you've got to be chuffed at how warmly they spoke about Mercury House and in particular the support that you're giving them. You're so obviously doing a fantastic job."

This is amazing feedback to receive and the film itself is fabulous. We are very proud of the clients and the outcome of their filming.





CLIENT INTERVIEW

This is a client's experience working with Directions. Directions is a male-only service based in North Yorkshire. It offers a wide range of tailored support for individuals reportable to probation in the community or in custody. The service works to reduce the risk of individuals reoffending by helping them reconnect to the community.

How did you come to be supported by Foundation?

I received a sentence and it included 5 RAR days. I was introduced to my Directions Wellbeing Navigator by my probation officer.

What goals did you set when you first came to Foundation? Did you have any specific things that you wanted to achieve?

To improve my mental well-being and feelings of self-worth.

What does your support entail? Has anything really stood out to you/benefitted you?

I have had phone and face to face meetings with my Directions Wellbeing Navigator over the past weeks. I have really appreciated his concern for me and his willingness to find me things to get involved with which he thinks will interest and help me.

How have things changed for you?

I am more confident and more conscious of the world around me.

Do you feel things have improved since engaging with Foundation?

Yes definitely. I am calmer and more sympathetic to other people's issues.

What can you say about the mental health photography you have taken part in?

I really enjoy taking time to see the world around me, to slow things down to nature's speed and to take my mind off my issues. I will continue with it after the current course is finished.



DIRECTIONS
YOUR CHOICE FOR CHANGE

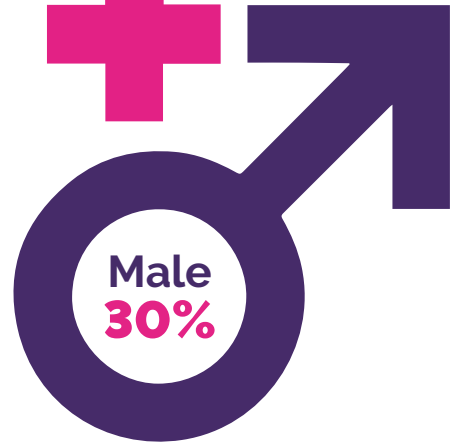
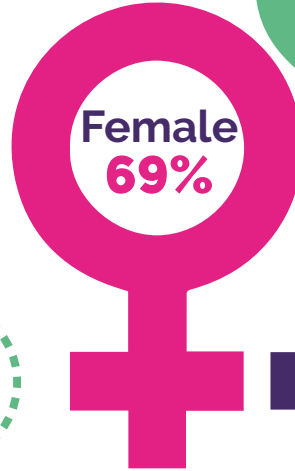
FOUNDATION EMPLOYEES OVERVIEW


NUMBER OF
EMPLOYEES

166

FULL
TIME
45%

PART
TIME
55%



Achievements



WHAT'S NEW



New dementia service launches in Calderdale

We saw growth in our dementia support services portfolio with a new service, Calderdale Dementia Hub.

Calderdale Dementia Hub is a partnership with Community Links and Age UK Calderdale and Kirklees and offers an information and advice service for people in Calderdale living with dementia and their loved ones and carers.

The new service joined Community Links' two successful dementia services, Kirklees Dementia Hub and Young Dementia Leeds, contributing to our goal to support local people to "live well with dementia".

The service has recruited, supported and celebrated its volunteers that have been a part the service during its first year. One volunteer said:

"I enjoy feeling like I have made a difference to someone's week" & "with Calderdale Dementia Hub the flexibility is good as is working in a relaxed environment".



Community Links client cohort wins Diversity Project of the Year at The Leeds Compassionate City Awards

A Community Links client group were awarded Diversity Project of the Year at the Leeds Compassionate City Awards – which celebrates the positive work that local people do to make their communities a great place to live, work and visit.

The nominated client cohort raised awareness around the challenges of inclusivity for themselves and have helped change perceptions in the surrounding community.

The group promoted well-being through fishing courses to help teach new skills, and celebrated religious and cultural diversity through hosting an Eid dinner, speaking about their Islamic faith to educate their peers.



New crisis support service launches in Kirklees

Community Links launched a new short-term crisis support service for people in Kirklees, REST Stop Service – which stands for respite, emergency support & time away.

REST Stop Service provides short-stay accommodation of up to a week for a maximum of four individuals. It offers a therapeutic, person-centred alternative to hospital admission for people experiencing mental health crises and who would benefit from some intensive support away from their usual place of residence.

NHS Hub expands its Eating Disorder Support Offering

Our NHS Hub's West Yorkshire adult eating disorder service, CONNECT, has expanded its offering to include Link-ED, a peer support service for people living with an eating disorder alongside a mental health diagnosis.

Peer Support Workers use their own lived experience to support clients with an empathetic, non-judgemental approach to navigate the challenging road to recovery.

A Peer Support Worker from Connect was successful in winning the Bright Idea Fund. A total of £501.96 will fund six cohorts of a 'Recovery Through Activity' group to support service users to focus on achieving personal goals within treatment.

Money raised for Young Dementia Leeds

The Bristol Cabaret Night raised money for the vital support Young Dementia Leeds provides to Ruth's Mum, Jayne, and her family.

They hosted a Cabaret night in February and put on all of the performances themselves.

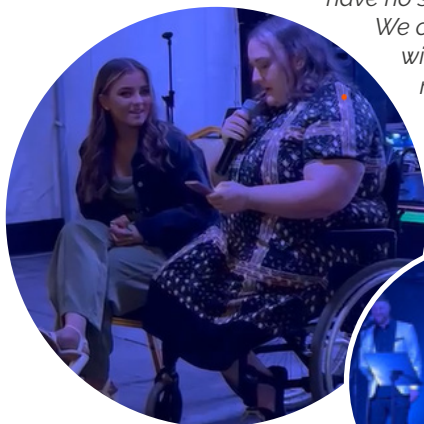
They donated a fantastic £2456 to the service.

Ruth spoke about the support she and her family have received from Young Dementia Leeds:

"Me and my father are so grateful for the Young Dementia Hub in Leeds, they offer respite for younger people living with dementia. This is much needed respite for us and means my father can continue to work.

The hub is a lifeline and without it we would have no support at all.

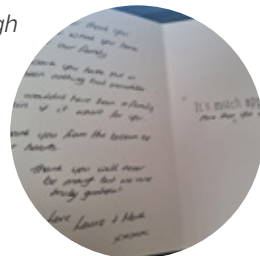
We could not do this without them. It is monumental and life-changing and allows us to keep our loved ones at home."



York Families Wellbeing Service success!

This year the service has had some great successes. One family managed to get rehoused against all odds and they were supported with some safeguarding issues. The family were so grateful for the support, they sent a card to their support worker and said:

"We can never thank you enough for what you have done for our family. The work you have put in has been nothing but incredible. We wouldn't have been a family again if it wasn't for you. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts."



Kirklees Dementia Hub in the community

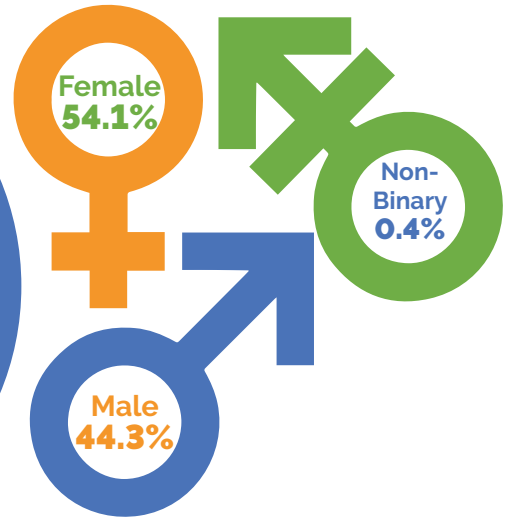
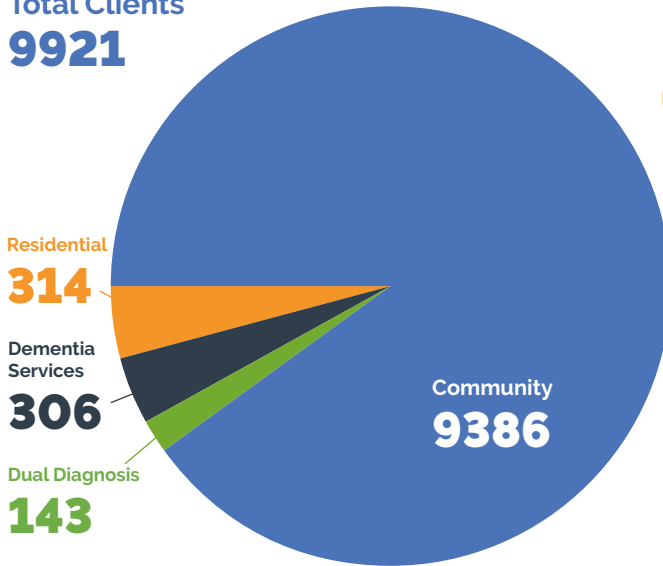
The Dementia Support Co-ordinators have made links with the Dementia Ambassador for West Yorkshire Police. They have shared resources with the local dementia leads within the force and requested the hub's posters to be displayed.

The service has continued its work to support John's Campaign at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary and Acre Mills. It has also been working alongside the Kirklees support services and has seen referrals into Kirklees Dementia Hub from these services due to this work.

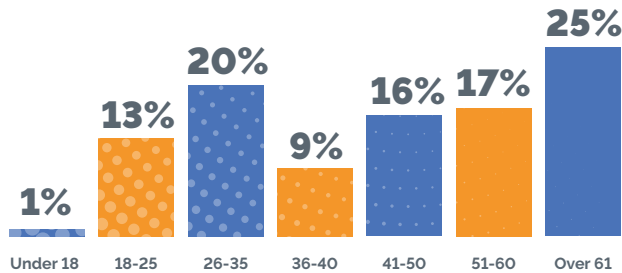
OUR CLIENTS, RESIDENTS AND TENANTS: An Overview

22/23 snapshot

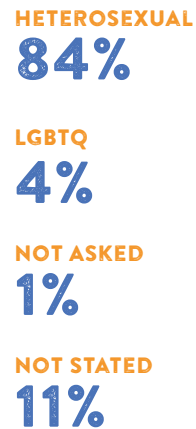
Total Clients
9921



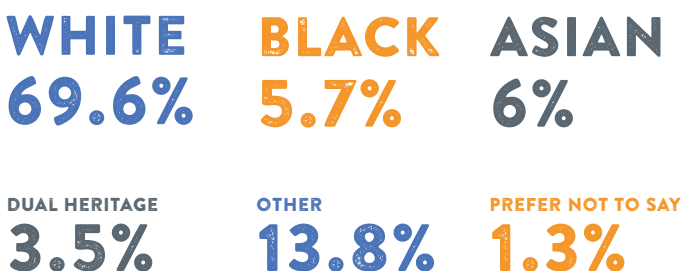
Age Breakdown



Sexuality



Ethnicity



Community Links Annual Satisfaction Questionnaire 22/23

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT US?

87%

I feel that my story is shared appropriately so I don't have to repeat myself

93%

I make my own choices and feel supported through the choices I make

93%

I believe that workers go the extra mile - no one gives up on me

95%

I value the relationship with my worker and feel listened to when I have ideas

98%

I am treated as a person and with dignity and respect

"A massive impact, support worker has given me confidence and boost needed to get back on track and make sure tenancy is supported, settled and not at risk and avoid need of having to go back in to hostel, shared and go through resettlement again as I would not be physically and mentally able to do that again." - York Housing Wellbeing Service

"I am so happy and grateful. It is great that I have someone who understands the changes in my life, thank you for that." - Kirklees Dementia Hub

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR PROPERTY?



95%

My accommodation is at a high standard

67%

My repairs are done quickly

92%

I feel safe and secure where I live

85%

My accommodation is easy to heat

HOW DID WE DO?

94%

Overall satisfaction

Data based on 622 responses. Percentages based on positive responses ('Agree', 'Great', 'Good', 'OK', 'Extremely likely' and 'likely').

94% of clients said they were likely to recommend us to their friends and family.

CO-PRODUCTION



Men's Talk Performance

Men's Talk, part of Community Links Engagement and Recovery, is a creative advocacy project for men who have experienced mental health issues.

This year, the group coproduced a creative performance exploring their experiences of mental health and journeys towards recovery.

The 40-minute production was premiered to an audience of over 50 people at Connect Housing in Dewsbury, before being performed at various local theatres, conferences and council events.

The piece explored themes including depression, suicide, social isolation, and self-harm and delved into societal attitudes towards men's mental health and how these can begin at a young age.

Stuart Hawkes, Community Engagement Lead for CLEAR Community Links Engagement and Recovery, said: "Using theatre has been a very effective way to engage men who had experienced mental health issues.

"The play has been written and coproduced by members of Men's Talk; with the men acting out the experiences of different members of the group. By coming together as a cast, they were a support system for one another.

We hope the piece helps raise awareness of the issues that anyone can face and encourages people who need it to seek support."

Asked if being involved in making a performance had been good for their own mental health, participant, David, said "It gave me a reason to get out of bed."

Another participant, Andrew, said: "Men's Talk has become an important part of my week. We have a goal and something to look forward to."

Audience members shared some powerful words when asked what message they took away from the performance:

"I will think about the way people are treated and how so much is hidden behind a person's exterior."

"No-one is the same, but we can relate to each other's stories and experiences."

CLIENT INTERVIEW

This is a client's experience working with Alexander House. Alexander House is one of Community Links' three Intermediate Support Hostels providing recovery-focused support in a therapeutic environment. The therapeutic community and emphasis on residents' personal responsibility offers residents opportunities to develop many skills and step outside their comfort zone in a safe environment.



How did you come to be supported by Community Links?

I started getting support from Community Links after my mental health started declining and I ended up on a Section 3 under the Mental Health Act. Once this had happened, I had lost hope that I would ever get off the section. However, there were talks about how supported living would be the best option for me at that time. I started having discussions with my care coordinator and staff at the hospital and we decided that this would benefit me, so a referral was made, and it just so happened that there was availability for me at a Community Links supported living service. I was then able to come off Section 3 within approximately a month, rather than the six months that I'd originally started with!

What goals did you set when you first came to Community Links? Was there anything specific you wanted to achieve?

I don't remember if I had any official goals when starting my support from Community Links, but I know that I wanted to be able to ease my anxiety when it came to going out, getting public transport and just general activities within day-to-day life. I also wanted to be able to learn better coping techniques when it came to my mental health symptoms, as well as learn how to cope when life was getting difficult. I wanted to achieve the skills needed to eventually move on from Community Links and then eventually to be able to cope with living independently.

What does your support entail? Has anything really stood out to you or benefited you?

There are so many things that I get support with, and day to day I don't really notice or think about it. However, now looking back, I realise just how much support I receive. I'm prompted to make sure that I look after myself properly, which includes things such as eating, personal

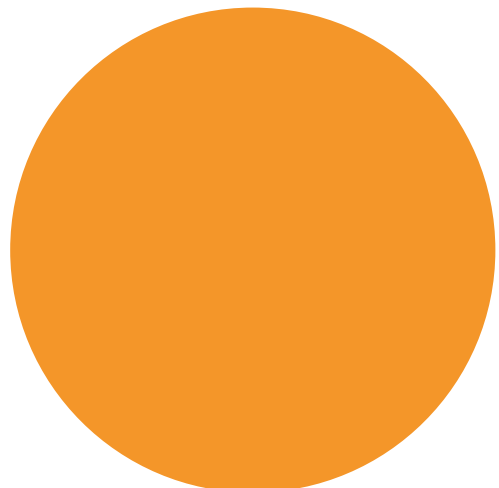
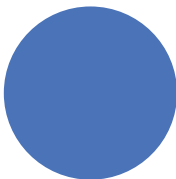
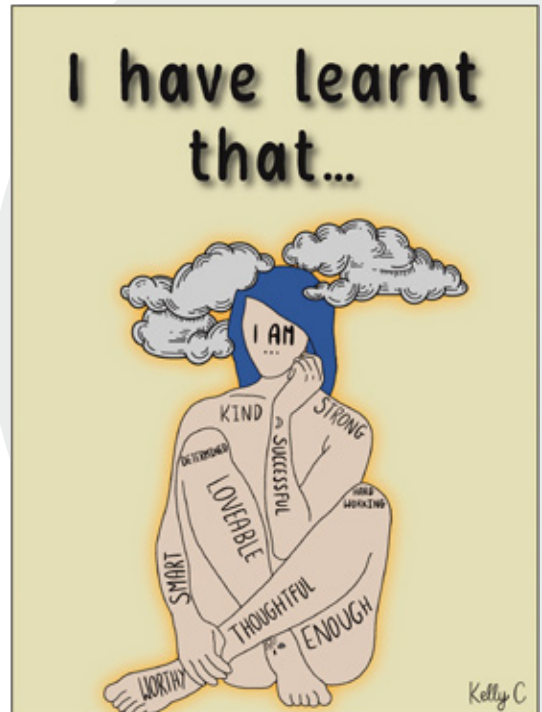
hygiene and environmental hygiene (cleaning my room, doing laundry etc). I am also given practical support when needed, such as help cleaning the house, support when leaving the house and getting on public transport, and support with appointments and budgeting.

During my time under Community Links, I have made a lot of progress and the staff I work with are constantly reminding me of this, even when I feel like I've not made any.

Do you feel things have improved since engaging with Community Links?

For me, things have improved immeasurably, I have come on leaps and bounds since being supported through Community Links. While I am not quite ready to live completely independently yet, I have acquired the skills I need to allow me to move on from Community Links to somewhere a bit less intense support wise. I still have difficult times, but support staff have been there, by my side through the bad and good, and supported me through the worst and most difficult challenges I have faced. They have helped me recognise that I have the coping skills I need to get through those difficult times and encourage me to use those when I am unable to think about them for myself.

As I have said before, being supported by Community Links, in collaboration with my care coordinator, has quite literally changed my life. My friends and family have both commented on how good this support has been for me, which is such a refreshing thing to hear, because it means that other people have noticed my progress too.

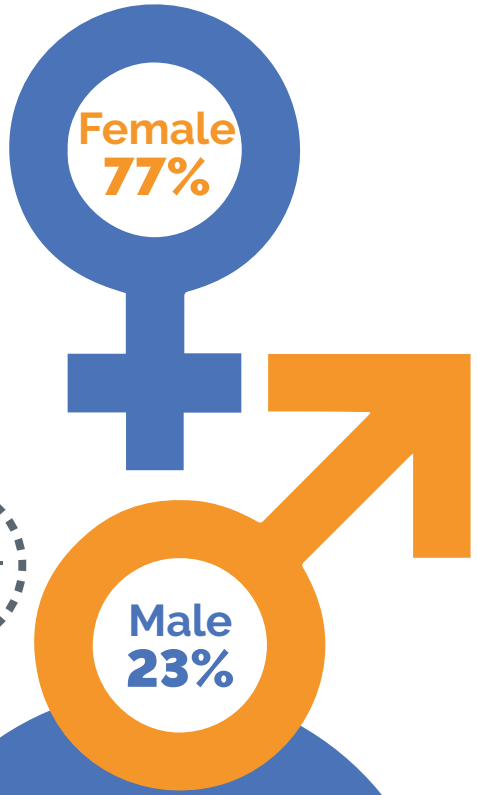


COMMUNITY LINKS EMPLOYEES OVERVIEW



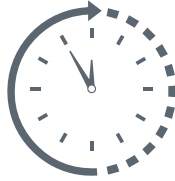
NUMBER OF
EMPLOYEES

289



FULL
TIME
73%

PART
TIME
27%



Achievements



Investing in Volunteers

We welcome and value volunteers, who attend training as part of their induction. Many of our volunteers are former clients. To find out more about volunteering with us visit www.commlinks.co.uk/volunteering.



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