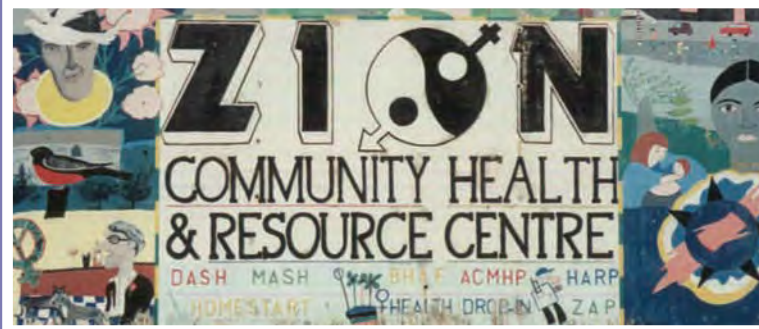


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The Zion Centre began twenty years ago, when local people decided they were fed up of waiting for public services to help them change things and decided to set up a well being centre to help them 'help themselves'. The Hulme and Moss Side area had a strong voluntary and community sector and four agencies moved into the back of the then half-derelict Zion Institute (next door to the current Zion Centre). With a £17,000 grant from the city council, we worked with the local community to tackle the problems of poor mental health, substance misuse, family stress and HIV.

In 1991, Hulme was about to undergo a major redevelopment and the Zion Institute was to be one of the few buildings preserved. Many people thought that the idea of a community well being centre developing in an area where everyone would be moving out was doomed to failure. On the contrary – numbers using the centre increased year on year.

**Now, twenty years later, the Zion Centre has had over a quarter of a million visitors and received over 270,000 phone enquiries.**

**The Zion Centre was the first initiative that led to the establishment of The Big Life group of social businesses and charities, which now has a turnover of £7m.**



# ZION MODEL

**The Zion Centre aims to work in a different way from traditional public services:**

**Access.** We aim to overcome barriers to access, such as fear of statutory services, travel and rigid appointment systems, and services not being seen by local people as appropriate or meeting their needs. As a result, we employ local people who are seen as part of the community, and create a warm friendly environment that encourages people to visit. We hold events which attract a wide range of people - over the years these have included Adult Learning Week, open days and well being events.

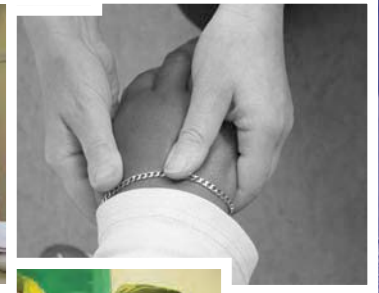
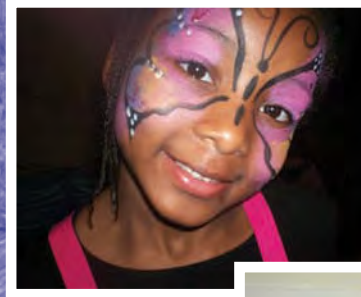
**Inclusive.** We want the centre to be inclusive to all and not stigmatise people who have substance misuse issues, HIV, or mental health difficulties. Everyone is seen as part of the community and deserving of the

same quality of care. We have one entrance to the centre and, at one time, ran a fee-paying nursery as well as a needle exchange service. Systems and processes aim to ensure that everyone is able to use the centre and receive the same level of respect. A community café is used by staff, volunteers, clients and the community at large.

**Interagency working.** We bring statutory and voluntary services together and encourage agencies to work together. As a result new services have developed such as the Manchester Specialist Midwifery Service. Agencies encourage their clients to access other services in the centre and take part in joint events. The centre aims to complement the work of the other agencies by offering training, relaxation and exercise classes, and creative art sessions such as Zion Art Paintbox, floristry, knitting, yoga, tai chi and an outdoor gym.

**Involvement and empowerment.** The Centre is based on an ethos of people helping themselves. We encourage people to set up self help initiatives and support groups, and offer a wide range of volunteer opportunities. We use the ladder of participation to ensure that local people are involved at all levels - they are informed, consulted, help deliver services, involved in planning events and in decision making. Over the years the Zion Management Committee has evolved into the Zion Advisory Board, bringing together agencies in the centre and local people.

“I live just around the corner and was having problems with my teenage children; I am a single parent and my daughter was getting out of control. When I came to the centre they talked to me about parenting techniques and a Parenting Course I could go on. When I came to the Zion Centre I was unemployed and not in a good place in my life. The Zion Centre helped me to come out of myself and feel more part of a community; I saw that people have similar problems too. Once I completed the course I went on to do facilitator training and began to volunteer at the Zion Centre and an organisation called DePaul UK. I have facilitated the Parenting Programme for about a year now and work for DePaul UK.” Grant





# VOLUNTEERS

**Over the last twenty years the Zion Centre has had hundreds of volunteers taking up a variety of roles including reception, administration, gardening, group facilitation, events organisation and distribution of presents to children at Christmas. Through these roles people have been able to develop their skills and move on into work or take up training. Some people have rebuilt their confidence and self esteem. For others, it has been an opportunity to feel part of the community and to build up their social networks.**

“Being a part of the centre has helped me a lot. In 1997 I had a major head injury and then had a breakdown, then in 2001 I got Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. I began volunteering in reception and with the help of the centre, especially the reception team who are like one big family, I managed to balance my life out again onto an even keel.

“This summer I joined a drama group and was part of a theatre group who put a production of ‘Hard Times’ on in town. I love volunteering at the centre, meeting people and watching people’s lives get better through the help of the centre. I expect to be round the centre for many more years to come.” **Donna**

“I heard about the centre from a member of my family, I was under a lot of stress and was having panic attacks. I was in limbo. A colleague had just made allegations against me which left me powerless, I felt like the allegations had dropped me in hot water, I was completely isolated from my other work colleagues and felt as though my life was over.

“Volunteering at the Zion made me feel positive about myself again. I was given hands on guidance – we sat and did a balance wheel and I was able to take a look at my life and set goals to get focused again. The staff are brilliant, they encouraged me to have assertive control over my life. One year on, my life has completely turned around, I have started my own business and recently got married.” **Anita**

# STAFFING

**Employment is a major opportunity the Zion Centre has to offer the local community. The first three employees were all local people and are still employed within The Big Life group, two of whom are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities and all three are female. The current staff team comprises of seven staff, of whom four are local, four are BME and four are female.**

**Wherever possible we use volunteering and work placements as a way of supporting local people to gain skills necessary to apply for jobs at the centre and we work with staff to develop their skills so that they can progress in their career. Our current Operational Manager was initially taken on for a year work placement under the Intermediate Labour Market scheme, and two of our receptionists were initially employed as cleaners.**

“I came to the Zion Centre in 1999 through the work programme ‘New Deal’ and was offered a place at the Centre or at a solicitor’s office in town. I decided to go with the Zion Centre as it was closer to home. My placement was initially for 12 months, I must have made a good impression as 13 years later I am still here! At the end of my placement I was taken on for a further 12 months part-time. When the Zion moved into its new building in 2001 I was taken on permanently as a full time receptionist and administrator, and in 2005 I was appointed as Team Leader.

“In 2010 I became the Operational Manager. I enjoy working at the centre, no two days are ever the same, there is always something going on, something to sort out. In the future, I am looking forward to moving to the Czech Republic with my long term partner and plan to open a guest house. It’s been part of the five year plan for the last six years but we will get there!” **Mark**

**“The staff are always helpful and very positive, which is so important for such a place...”**

*Centre User Feedback*





*Current staff and volunteers at the Zion Centre*



# THE BUILDING

For the first ten years the Zion Centre was based in the back of the old Zion Institute (next door to the current Zion Centre building). The Zion Institute was built by the United Reformed Church for the local community, but for a number of years it had only been used by the Probation Service and the Halle. The Zion Action Group lobbied the Council who agreed to lease the back of the building to establish the Zion Centre in 1991. Over the next ten years considerable refurbishment was undertaken to improve the facilities including a new Café and a new crèche with external play area. In 1997 the Zion Centre began working with Hulme Regeneration to develop a new purpose built centre on the plot adjacent to the Zion Institute.

The new Zion Centre building took four years to develop and was designed with extensive involvement of users, volunteers, staff and agencies based in it. As a result the Centre is a welcoming and thriving environment. It was funded by a mixture of ERDF, City Challenge and Regional Gap Funding. Tile making workshops were held at festivals and events to maintain community interest and belief that the Centre would be built. The individual tiles now form an impressive mosaic in the reception area, representing the hundreds of people who took part.

**“After 20 years the enthusiasm of the Zion Centre team is still exciting, infectious and continues to look for better ways of delivering. I am proud to still be thought of as one of the Zion Centre’s friends...”**

*Barbara McLoughlin (Hulme Regeneration)*

Zion Tile Mosaic



# AGENCIES

The Zion Centre has accommodated many statutory and voluntary agencies and supported them to grow and deliver first class services over the last 20 years. Current agencies in the centre include:

- **ASHA (Asylum Support and Housing Advice)**
- **Barnardos**
- **Anxiety UK**
- **Self Help Services**
- **HARP**
- **Pinnacle Projects**
- **Dyslexia Foundation**
- **SHARE (Self Harm and Recovery for Everyone)**
- **DASH Needle Exchange**
- **Manchester Specialist Midwifery Service**

## **ASHA (Asylum Support and Housing Advice)**

“ASHA works with homeless and destitute asylum seekers and used to be based down the road in the basement of a Home Office accommodation provider. When our contract expired we wanted to move to more suitable premises. In 2009 we moved into the Zion Centre as we believed our services would complement and add to the existing services there. Initially the centre seemed overwhelmed by the sheer volume of people turning up for help, we worked together to find ways of managing the queues, the Zion Centre supported us by putting in a bi-lingual interpreter to reduce stress and tension for the waiting clients.”

## **Barnardos**

“We have had our office base at the Zion Centre for over three years now, taking over the tenancy from another of our projects. It has genuinely been one of the best places I have worked in terms of the facilities and environment, which in turn is good for creating positive team working. Accessibility for the families who use our service is excellent and the centre staff provide a welcoming and friendly service in terms of ensuring they are looked after and able to find our rooms. We really value the co-location of a number of different services and, whilst we work citywide, have been able to link local families into these resources, hopefully to get them the support they need.”

## **Anxiety UK**

"I have been involved in the Zion Centre since 1995 and it has always been a very special place to me - a real home from home. The centre is a model of good practice; it allows for easy networking with other projects, is a friendly and non-stigmatising venue for our clients and allows the whole community to interact, share knowledge and expertise."

## **Self Help Services**

"The Zion Centre has always been an incredibly special place to me; it is so much more than a community centre - it is a way of life. It has been pivotal in providing a superb therapeutic backdrop for the many people who use the services, volunteer and/or work for Self Help Services."

"Many have joked with me over the years that the Zion is like my second home and they are not far wrong. The centre for me has been part of my life for so long and I can honestly say that there is never a day where I feel I don't want to come into work for it is an absolute pleasure to be part of something so special."



*Self Help Services*

## HARP

“HARP has been based at the Zion Centre for the last twenty years. We really appreciate sharing the centre with other organisations who, like us, want to help people reach their potential. Being in the busy Zion Centre means we are able to work closely with other organisations, staff, volunteers and service users as well as making some great friends and contacts.”

HARP



### **Pinnacle People**

“Pinnacle People chose the Zion Centre for many reasons. Firstly, because of its location, the centre is perfect in enabling Pinnacle People to engage with its customers from all over the Greater Manchester area due to the good public transport links available to Hulme.

“Another reason we chose to deliver from the Zion was the other organisations currently delivering from the centre such as Anxiety UK and Dyslexia Awareness, which we currently refer customers to.

“The centre itself has great amenities such as a well maintained garden which is lovely all year round and a canteen which serves cultural dishes made fresh daily.

“The Zion Centre has a real sense of community and diversity, bringing people together from all walks of life.”

### **Dyslexia Foundation**

“The Zion Centre is at the heart of the community. It's got a huge reputation in Manchester as being a focus for positive practices and support for many different types of organisation. We feel there is loads of synergy here and the staff that look after the building are brilliant!”

### **SHARE (Self Harm and Recovery for Everyone)**

“The Zion Centre offers a comfortable, safe setting for our group meetings. It is a really nice building with all amenities and access to lovely gardens. The room our group use has patio doors so members can take a break and sit outside at any time. The Zion's staff are friendly and caring and always make both our facilitators and members very welcome. SHARE would like to thank all at the Zion Centre for their continued support.”

### **DASH – Needle Exchange**

“DASH was formed in 1987 by local residents who had first hand experience of family members being addicted to Heroin. They were determined to create a service that was local to the Hulme area to cater for the needs of families and individuals being affected by drug misuse. We later expanded our service to include the residents of Moss Side and the surrounding areas.

“The Zion Centre has proved to be the ideal setting for DASH services to be delivered from. It has provided a safe, non-judgemental environment for our clients to access support from DASH staff and also access other agencies relevant to their additional needs, such as mental health support, benefit advice and volunteering opportunities. DASH has been working from the Zion Centre since its conception and we look forward to continuing to deliver a high quality service to our clients from here in the future.”

# PARTNERSHIPS

**The Zion Centre aimed to work with agencies and local people to develop new services to fill unmet need in the local community. Two examples of this are the Manchester Specialist Midwifery Service and the Zion Centre Garden Project.**

## **Manchester Specialist Midwifery Service**

In 1993, following the death of a service user's child from a Methadone overdose, an interagency working group was facilitated by the Centre, bringing together midwives, health visitors and drugs workers. The working group delivered training to Midwives on pain relief for opiate users, and led to the appointment of a Drug Liaison Midwife (DLM) at the local hospital. Over the next few years the steering group supported the DLM to improve awareness and revise protocols - for instance addicted babies no longer automatically detox in the Special Care Baby Unit and are kept with their

mothers after birth. Latterly the Centre bid for Health Action Zone funding to create a Consultant Midwife post and this has led to the establishment of a full Specialist Midwifery Service for mothers across Manchester. The service is still based within the centre.

## **Zion Garden Project**

As with any building project, costs had to be saved, so when the new Zion Centre was first opened, the garden was not landscaped. This meant however that new volunteers and service users who had not been involved in the design of the building could get involved in designing the garden. Working with HARP, funding was secured to develop the garden as a training project and with the help of volunteers and trainees the garden was transformed. Raised beds, pebbled pathways and seating areas were created and a 20ft greenhouse erected. Over the last eight years a number of training

courses have used the garden to develop numeracy and literacy skills, build self esteem and confidence and gardening skills. As well as providing an oasis of calm, the garden also holds community workshops (such as 'make your own hanging basket') and sells produce to centre users.

**“I love the garden. People don't realise what a fantastic impact it has on staff wellbeing. I sit at my desk all day and the five minutes I get to sit outside is very renewing.”**

*Centre User Feedback*



“I started in the garden in 2003. I was already at the centre due to stress and anxiety and was going to the depression group. My friend was going to the garden group and said it would be a great idea for me to join up. We learnt about growing plants and it was very good for me to relax and unwind. I was with the garden group for about a year and learned loads, I now volunteer for the Hulme Garden Centre twice a week and have also enrolled on a horticultural course with the Manchester College. The Zion is a great place and helps lots of people with different needs, such as housing and mental health difficulties. If the centre had not been there for me, I think I would still be at home now watching daytime TV and feeling sorry for myself. I'd like to wish the Zion Centre happy birthday and may it continue for a further 20 years and more.” **David**

*Hanging Basket Workshop*



# SUPPORTING COMMUNITY AND SELF HELP INITIATIVES

**The Zion Centre aimed to support local people to help themselves. Over the last twenty years it has helped develop new social enterprises and voluntary agencies.**

In 1993 a local woman suffering from agoraphobia came to the centre to get support to establish a self help group for people with anxiety. The group ran successfully and supported the development of other self help groups such as a depression group and a self harm group, for example. In 1997 the groups received funding through the Centre from health commissioners and developed new groups across Manchester. Self Help Services is now established as an independent charity within The Big Life group, is commissioned by five Primary Care Trusts across Greater Manchester to provide primary mental health services and has a turnover of £1.3m.

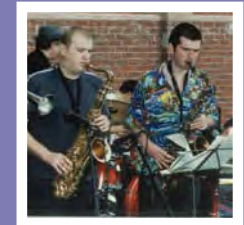
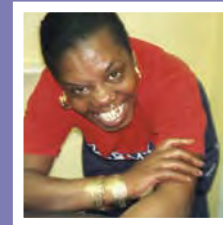
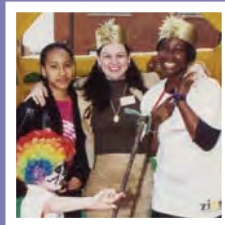
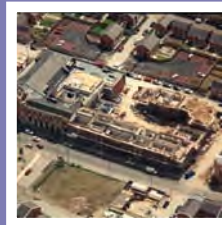
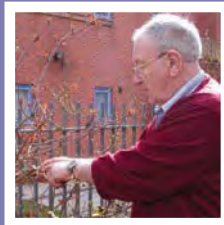
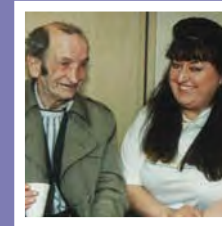
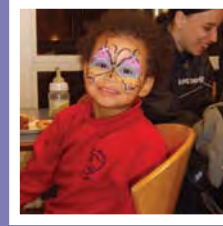
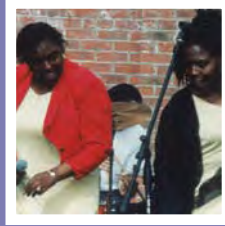
In 1992 a group of local parents came into the centre wanting to run a summer play scheme. At the end of a fun packed summer, they asked if the centre would help them run an after school club and provide access to NVQ training in Childcare and Education. The Zion Centre worked with Manchester College to train a volunteer to undertake NVQ assessment and secured funding from Manchester City Council to employ a childcare manager. From these early beginnings Aisha Childcare was established, which now manages two family centres, day nurseries, play groups and family intervention services, and has a turnover of £1.8m.



*Aisha Playscheme 1992*

“This building keeps me sane...”

*Centre User Feedback*



The Zion Centre is a Big Life Centre... a Big Life charity (no. 1062333)



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