

Seeing the bigger picture



Part of a bigger picture

482

children came to Longsight and Slade Lane nurseries 100%

of parents think their child is making good progress 20 4

people volunteered in our Longsight services

87%

of parents have attended stay-and-play sessions

67%

of pupils take part in an after-school club

Attendance at the school is

95.7%



00%

of parents at Longsight Nursery were satisfied with the service There were

3,744

visits to Longsight and Ardwick children's centres At our children's centres,

1,403

children improved their quality of life

315

adults attended a children's centre run course 214

children attend Longsight Community Primary Longsight pupils speak

22

different languages

Longsight Community Primary is a hub for children and families offering high-quality education through imagination, creativity and play in a safe, fun space, including:

- Longsight Community Primary School
- Longsight and Slade Lane Nurseries
- Longsight and Ardwick children's centres

Andrew, Longsight Community Primary School pupil

School hasn't always been easy for Andrew – he found that he was often having angry outbursts in school, and his mum, Hannah, found it hard to manage his behaviour at home.

Instead of just leaving Hannah to it, the school worked hard to build a relationship with her. We discovered that she was facing a lot of different issues at home, and felt unsupported in dealing with them. She was a young mum, largely on her own with four children, two of whom had additional needs.

So, we put in place a package of family support. Andrew was diagnosed with autism, and Hannah was helped to complete an Early Help Assessment. Once Andrew's autism was diagnosed, we helped the family to access disability and special educational needs support, which gave funding for some respite care for Andrew and transport for him to attend out of school activities.

In school, Andrew was given one-to-one support around his behaviour, building a great relationship with a mentor and becoming much more able to ask for and accept help. He was then able to take part in one of our Friendship Intervention groups, where he built more positive relationships with his classmates.

"he has shown real strengths and is a positive role model"

He showed great improvement while he was at the group, and his class teacher found that he was more able to manage his emotions rather than lash out when he was upset. He has even been able to work with younger children, where he has shown real strengths and is a positive role model, which has further built his confidence.

Andrew will keep getting mentoring support to make sure he's able to manage his emotions and behaviour, and we'll do everything we can to make sure he's ready for his next step into high school.

As for Hannah, we helped her to access our Big Chance programme. By getting a personalised plan, which fitted around her childcare, she felt confident enough to return to college and volunteer at Longsight school, and she will eventually qualify as a Teaching Assistant.

Names have been changed in this story.



of children

aged five show

a good level of

development

Impact report 2017/18

Part of a bigger picture

The school has a real community feel, all the kids know each other and the head knows all kids by name and their parents too! My son is happy at school and his year 2 teacher was amazing!

Fatemah Raza – parent at Unity Community Primary

School attendance was

00%

of parents said local people volunteered through the Big Chance

250^B

children attend Unity school and nursery

32

different languages are spoken in the school

93%

of parents attended parents' evening

29

local people accessed Big Talk, learning basic English Unity Community Primary is a hub in Cheetwood, Manchester, developed in response to parents and children wanting high-quality education and support on their doorstep, including:

- Unity Community Primary School
- Unity Nursery

Tala's story

I've lived here for about two years, but I'm from Syria. I go to Unity school and I'm in year four. We left because of the war. We didn't have food or anything. I was confused – I didn't know what was going on, and I thought I was going to die.

At my school in Syria, on my first day, we were playing and a bomb dropped right next to my sister. I ran to her and got her, and we just ran. We started singing songs to cheer us up. Afterwards, I got used to it. I didn't really think about dying, because it was too scary. I thought about coming to the United Kingdom, and what my life would be there.

My dad went to the UK before we did. I used to always ask my mum when we were going. When my dad came back to get us, I screamed and hugged him at the station – it was so embarrassing!

Unity is a brand new school. The teachers are nice and teach you well. If you don't understand something, they don't say 'sort it out yourself', they help you. The teachers support me a lot. When I'm upset, they help you – in Syria they just say 'speak to your parents about it'.

When I came here, the head teacher helped my dad with everything – she helped him to apply and come to the school, she helped him with his English too.

When I came here, the head teacher helped my dad with everything – she helped him to apply and come to the school, she helped him with his English too.

At first, I felt a bit left out because everyone would speak English. I spoke a bit – just how to say 'thank you' and 'please' – but not properly like I do now. But then when I noticed people just like me, I felt happy and like I could talk about how I feel. At Unity, I've got friends from everywhere – Jamaica, Pakistan, Lithuania – I've got so many friends, even though when I first came I only had one at first.

I do miss Syria, but my life is over here. This is a good place, I think this is where I should live. Now I can think about the future – I want to be a teacher or a head teacher, because I like teaching, but my dad wants me to be a doctor!



Part of a bigger picture

children went to our nurseries in Stockton

100%

of parents were satisfied with the service at the nurseries

96

people volunteered through A Fairer Start Stockton



Our Stockton children's centres worked with

785

27

students gained experience in our Stockton services

Be 65%

of children leaving the nurseries were at or above their expected level of development Big Life's Stockton children and family services ran from 2012 to 2018, giving children the chance to learn through imagination, creativity and play in a safe, fun space.

- Frederick Nattrass, Newtown and Ragworth nurseries
- · The Star and Frederick Nattrass children's centres

Nergz, Olive Branch group leader

I came to the UK from Kurdistan in 2005, I had got married and arrived on a visa. I was in Leeds for a week, then moved to Stockton, where we had some family. It was a very hard time. I couldn't speak English and I didn't know anyone. I was with my husband though – and he took me to college and helped me to learn a little bit about English culture.

I had my first child a year later, and a health visitor suggested I joined a playgroup, so I came to The Olive Branch – a session for asylum seekers and refugee families in Stockton – at The Star Children's Centre.

Because I was going out more, the language came more easily to me. I was also studying English as a Second Language, and volunteering.

"As long as I'm helping people who have been in the same situation as me, I'll be happy!"

One day, I came into the Star for playgroup, and saw a poster advertising a job for bank staff. I talked to the staff and they said you need to have the right childcare qualifications.

So off I went, and got my qualifications. In January 2013, I got a job with Big Life. I'd come here to go to a playgroup, and slowly, I'd got myself a job. I did a few hours, as a crèche worker, and that's how everything started. Now, I've got level a three childcare qualification, and I'm doing a leadership and management course!

I lead the Olive Branch group now! Around 50 and 60 families come, and I put them down for ESOL courses. Many of these families go on to become volunteers, just like I did. That's a great experience and the best way to learn the language and culture.

And I can tell them about my life. When I arrived, it was so difficult – I didn't know anyone, and couldn't speak a word of English. But that experience is so useful. Now I meet families in my situation, and I can say 'look at me – don't sit at home! Go out and learn things, no one is born knowing everything, you have to try, and never give up'.

Big Life looked at what I could offer people, not just what I needed for myself. The team here are amazing, they support me and make me believe that I can do anything. As long as I'm helping people who have been in the same situation as me, I'll be happy!



Part of a bigger picture

parents took part in the Incredible Years parenting course

Our outreach team helped Gorton children's centres to support

1,856 children

902



children accessed our Stay and Play service

98%

of people were satisfied with our Stay and Play service We ran

168

events across
Manchester,
including family
fun days

100%

of parents on the Incredible Years course said they had relieved stress

Big Life's family support services provide support to families in Manchester, focusing on the social, emotional and physical development of children and the wellbeing of the whole family. They include:

- Child and Parent Services (CAPS)
- Family outreach
- Stay and Play sessions and crèches

Rachel's story

Like many parents, Rachel was finding that managing her child's behaviour wasn't easy. So, she was encouraged to come to a course delivered by the Child and Parent Services team at Big Life – the Incredible Years Parenting Programme.

The course lasts 14 weeks, and is run by two group leaders, who teach parents of children aged 2 to 4 to learn how to treat behavioural problems when they happen – and techniques to prevent them happening again.

Rachel said: "I was offered a place on the course because my daughter was displaying unacceptable behaviour at nursery and at home.

"I was encouraged to give the advice a try and I opened my mind and, surprisingly, I saw little changes. As the weeks went on I saw drastic and beneficial changes."

"Julie and Leanne were both outstanding teachers. In our group sessions they explained techniques clearly. In every session, they both allowed every parent to express themselves, and talk about their issues and the achievements they were proud of.

"At the beginning of the programme I was a bit uncertain about the techniques being taught. I was encouraged to give the advice a try and I opened my mind and, surprisingly, I saw little changes. As the weeks went on I saw drastic and beneficial changes."

The Incredible Years Parenting Programme offers telephone catch-ups as well as group face-to-face sessions. "At times when I felt defeated it helped to speak to Julie or Leanne via our weekly telephone catch up sessions and they encouraged me to keep going. I greatly benefited from this course. The strategies that I have developed have made great changes in my everyday life and I know it will be extremely beneficial in the future to me and my children."

And it's not just Rachel who has felt the benefit of the courses. She has a young son, who was also suffering from the impact of his sister's behaviour. Rachel said: "Following the course, I have seen a stronger bond develop between my daughter and my baby son. I cannot express enough how much attending the course has made my parenting much easier and enjoyable."

Names have been changed in this story



Part of a bigger picture

140,981

Visits to centres

49

Services, activities and campaigns

Volunteers

94%

of people asked say services and activities in centres meet their needs

"I am now able to cultivate a mindset where I see participants as people with potential, who hold the solutions to their own health problems."

Person Partner Place course participant

"Having somebody
checking up on me made
me get the weight down.
It wasn't that I felt like
they could force me, but
I had someone to check
up on me and encourage
me to keep to it. I don't
want to diet this time,
I want to change my
whole eating habits."

You First client

20

People seen by YouFirst Wellbeing Coaches

161

Health and care practitioners attended Person Partner Place training on assetbased approaches to care

Big Life offers wide-ranging health and wellbeing services in Manchester, offering one-to-one and group support that help people to make positive changes. They include:

- Zion and Kath Locke Centres primary care and community services tailored to local communities
- YouFirst working with people in community locations to take steps to better wellbeing

Donald, Massage therapist at the Zion Centre

Donald's dreams of making a making a living as a massage therapist seemed to be in tatters a few years ago after he was made redundant. He'd successfully completed a wide range of accredited therapy courses. But that didn't count for much at the Job Centre, where he had to declare he was available to work or be sanctioned and have his benefits taken away.

"I saw no point in looking for a job I didn't want to do but I couldn't convince the Job Centre I didn't need their help. I wanted to be self-sufficient and I didn't want to work for someone else."

It was after he was made redundant that Donald got in touch with the Zion Centre, who were offering a volunteer placement. As part of this placement Donald offered people low-cost therapy treatments and talked to people about what was on offer at the Zion Centre. "The volunteer placement at the Zion Centre convinced me that this was the work I wanted to do."

With support from the Zion Centre Donald gradually built-up a range of massage therapy sessions to suit all incomes. These sessions have now become a mainstay of health and wellbeing activities at the centre.

"Once I started, my confidence grew and I began to see a way out of signing on. This has allowed me to see past the spectre of losing my only source of income."

"Once I started, my confidence grew and I began to see a way out of signing on. This has allowed me to see past the spectre of losing my only source of income. I was still sanctioned off benefits but I just didn't go back."

"I've found something the community needs. Stress effects everyone – rich and poor – and I can give everyone access to massage therapy. Most people I see are just as badly off as me and it feels good to be paid to do something I am proud of and allows me to reach out to others."

Now Donald is looking to expand the offer of massage therapy to the residents of Trafford by building up sessions at the Limelight health and wellbeing hub.

Energise Centre & Willow Tree Centre

Impact report 2017/18

Part of a bigger picture

64,475
visits to the
Energise and
Willow Tree

groups and

activities delivered

people attended groups and activities

Centres

7,377 times

14

people volunteered for us

100%

of people asked say their lives have improved since using the centres

"I have smoked for 34 years and saw my mum and dad die of cancer...The Smoke Screen Group has given me the strength and support to quit."

Dave, Smoke Screen member

The Energise and Willow Tree centres are community centres in Salford, from which statutory, community and voluntary organisations deliver health and wellbeing services, including a GP surgery.

Sylvia, Energise and Willow Tree service user

Sylvia is the main carer for her husband who lives with dementia. She said: "I felt stuck and wanted to move myself on, I wanted to focus on something to help with my wellbeing."

She had only popped into the centre for a service guide for her sister but found the services on offer appealed to her too.

The chance to make changes as part of a group was especially attractive. "I love the structure of the group sessions, I always get something out of them, even if it is the smallest thing that can help, it's worth it."

Starting with a six week 'Hopes and Dreams' course at the Willow Tree Centre she set small exercise and healthy eating goals that gave her the confidence to make more dramatic improvements in her physical and mental health and wellbeing.

It led directly to health walks and chair based exercise classes at the Energise Centre. For someone with knee problems and limited mobility she found it was ideal exercise and a great way to get chatting with more people. We also encouraged her to give exercise sessions with Salford Council's Health Improvement Team a try.

"I've got into a healthier routine now and it feels really achievable, even at times that I would have found difficult before."

This success gave her the ambition to go even further. With the Energise Centre's new 'My Life Goals' goal-setting app, she lost 12lb in 12 weeks and reduced her BMI from 30.2 to 28.2.

Now physical activity is part of Sylvia's weekly routine and she's far more aware of what she's eating and drinking.

Sylvia said: "I've got into a routine now and it feels really achievable, even at times that I would have found difficult before, for example when I've been at the hospital with my husband I would have binged after. These sessions have given me focus and the app helps, knowing that I can keep in touch if I need you."



Part of a bigger picture

7,658

People used healthy lifestyle support services

4,470

Mini health MOTs and health chats delivered 2,012

People went on wellbeing training courses

3,163

People got support to set healthier lifestyle goals 81%

Of people who completed their lifestyle change support programme achieved their goals

2,286

People were supported to stop smoking

"I've lost a stone and a half since giving up smoking. I was worried about putting on weight at first. But a few weeks after giving up, Sabia got me walking so I started losing weight as well."

Mum who quit with support from our stop smoking in pregnancy project

1,879

Children received family-based support

Our Healthy Walk and Talks were attended

11,352 times AXA

347 People went or

People went on family walks



Volunteers and Community Champions

Living Well Rochdale enables people to improve their health and wellbeing, through oral health, smoking cessation, exercise and weight management, and a team of health trainers. It works from community settings to help people in Rochdale, Heywood, Middleton and the Pennines.

Mike and Jeanette Connolly, Living Well Rochdale service users

Mike and Jeanette both have back problems and demanding jobs – he works as a HGV driver and she works in a bank. Both struggle to exercise. Healthy eating is also harder as they prize their social life as a release from work demands. Mike's blood pressure and early signs of prediabetes were also long-term worries.

At an annual check-up a nurse was concerned about Mike's weight increase and suggested trying Living Well. Jeanette came with him just for support, at first. It was the friendly support of health trainers, Sharon and Megan that made the difference for them both.

Jeanette said: "The best part of it is the support. There is no pressure, you don't get shouted at if you put the weight on. We laugh and joke about it and then we deal with it.

"I hate diets. I can't stick to them. This is more changing your life. It's something that's gradual. I'm not bothered if it's a pound every two weeks because I know it's going to be coming off and staying off this way".

"I hate diets. I can't stick to them. This is more about changing your life"

Day to day Living Well has helped Mike and Jeanette to make a series of manageable changes – cutting out some

things, reducing portion sizes, more home cooked food, introducing different foods into their daily life. Even walks to get more exercise.

There have been setbacks – but they've not become barriers. Mike explained: "We went to Magaluf for a week. I put on 11½ lb and was absolutely gutted, if I'm honest. But eight days later by our next session I'd got rid of the lot."

After starting regular sessions at Living Well, Mike lost 22kg, while Jeanette reduced her weight from 89kg to 80kg. Mike said: "I've had to go out and buy new clothes – I look in the mirror and think, 'I can't go out in that'. It's not been difficult because we're still enjoying what we are eating and we're still enjoying our social life."

Jeanette said: "It's changed my life, I'm more positive and I know it's something I'm going to keep on doing in the future."



Part of a bigger picture

People came to

Pathways

to reduce drug or alcohol use

598

People received wraparound support for help with recovery, housing, mental health and harm minimisation

25



85% lik

Of people became alcohol or drug free or significantly reduced their use

50

People went on to volunteering, employment, education or traininig

17

Volunteers supported into employment or training

Pathways is a confidential and personalised alcohol and drug recovery service delivered by Big Life from 2013 to 2018. It worked from community settings with people in Rochdale, Heywood, Middleton and the Pennines.

Lisa Harding, Pathways service user

Lisa, aged 64, had battled with drug, alcohol addiction and self-harm for more than 40 years before she found Pathways. She'd lived through prison, local notoriety with the Police, two children taken into care and many close encounters with death.

Her road to alcohol addiction had started over 20 years ago when a friend invited her to try her first drink in the Highlander pub, Heywood. Social drinking turned into regular drinking sessions in local pubs and at home. "Life went pretty much downhill from there – shoplifting, fighting, Police, even prison. Everything in total chaos in my life and that's how it went for many years."

She heard about Pathways in hospital after self-harm had nearly killed her. When Lisa first started working with us she was covered in cigarette burns, had no self-confidence or esteem. Her anxiety was sky high and she couldn't even look at anyone in the face as she was so nervous with life.

"I'm going to be 65 in July and I've lived the best two and a half years of my life."

Lisa said: "A gentleman came to see me. He was called Sean. I was terrified because I'm having to think, something I hadn't done for thirty years. But he was so nice - he just listened and we talked."

Despite the initial fears, together they worked on emotional support, triggers and coping strategies and keeping motivated. Her fear subsided and her confidence grew.

"Months down the line, I started to think about changing my lifestyle and who I was. And slowly but surely people started to tell me I was changing."

One-to-one sessions led to group support and then to volunteering. Lisa is now a valued member of her local community, volunteering 5 days a week at the Recovery Republic in Heywood and helping others build better lives through her experiences and new found zest for life.



Part of a bigger picture

The Sanctuary helped 2214 people

we recieved

7867

2 people per day

may have attempted suicide or self harm without us

our sanctuaries were visited

735

753

visits to A&E or calls to emergency services were avoided 90%

of people said that their distress levels were reduced The Sanctuary provides 24-hour mental health crisis support, either over the phone across Greater Manchester or face-to-face in Bolton, Manchester, and Wigan and Leigh, to adults who are experiencing anxiety, panic attacks, depression, suicidal thoughts or are in crisis.

Richard Crewe, Sanctuary service user

I was angry, tense, edgy and would snap at anything and everyone. I would worry and stress about things I could not control. Then I moved house, spending thousands of pounds on renovations, having a mortgage and being a father gave me the sudden realisation of all this pressure on my shoulders.

At the top of a multi-story car park, I sat in the car thinking how easy it would be to get out, climb over the side and drop into oblivion – no one would miss me at all. I am insignificant and I would have no more worries in life.

Connecting with any sort of mental health support organisation was the hardest thing I have ever had to do. The medication was helping but that doesn't cure everything. Being able to help myself and understanding what was wrong with me is something I needed to do on my own.

It was during a session of CBT that I saw a poster for the Sanctuary. I didn't call for some time, but that voice in the night that told me "it's ok not to be ok" and to be able to tell people that was the start of the process of getting my mental health in check.

"the help from that one voice in the night, has helped me to understand that I am not alone - there is always help out there, no matter what you are dealing with."

Those simple few words "it is ok to not be ok." I have heard those so many times and probably spoke them so many times to myself and others but those are the only things I can remember from the calls. I don't know what else we spoke about, that has gone from my memories. It's amazing how something so simple can help change your life, your mindset, your outlook on life.

Knowing there is always a voice, someone to listen, is my safety blanket. With the help of the Sanctuary team I now have focus. I'm back in work, dealing with everything and anything that comes my way. Breaking things down in manageable bite size chunks.

This period in my life, with the help from that one voice in the night, has helped me to understand that I am not alone - there is always help out there, no matter what you are dealing with. Look for the right help and you will find it. I did and it helped me focus and it helped me to start cycling again. I'm now losing weight, getting fitter and on the verge or riding from Whitehaven to Tynemouth to give a little bit back so others can be helped.



Part of a bigger picture

We supported

people at **Talking Therapies** across Eastern Cheshire

We set up



community mental health hubs

51%

of people we supported went on to recover



We supported

of people within 6 weeks

My practitioner was fantastic. He made me feel comfortable and safe. In just six sessions, together, we changed my life.

Eastern Cheshire service user

Talking Therapies Eastern Cheshire helps people who are feeling distressed by difficult events in their lives as well as people with a mental health problem. Talking therapies involve talking to someone who is trained to help you deal with your negative feelings.

Pete. Talking Therapies Eastern Cheshire service user

I've struggled with anxiety and depression for about five years, where I have been in various stages of denial and remorse about my behaviour, which led to the breakdown of my marriage and relationships with my family.

Coming out as bisexual and as transgender to my family was very stressful, but it went well. However, I have been guite anxious at times and lacking in confidence. I have also been selfmedicating with hormones and blockers and was not prepared for the effect this would have on my energy levels and emotions.

"From the beginning,

patience, kindness and

of remorse and worries

support. They helped

me evaluate feelings

about the future."

Talking Therapies

My personality has changed for the better, but I am still coming to terms with all the changes. I lost friends and my relationship with my daughter was non-existent, resentful and fearful. This has treated me with improved slightly but there is a very long way to go.

My health and sleep patterns were disrupted and I felt depressed. Finally, after been signed off for stress for over two months, I made the decision to take early retirement and left work.

From the beginning, Talking Therapies treated me with patience, kindness and support. They helped me evaluate feelings of remorse and worries about the future. The 'worry time' allowed

me to record and shelve issues, so my day is not dragged down with negative thoughts. This has certainly helped me with my sleep.

The problem solving techniques allowed me to prepare for any new events that caused stress. I have known about many of these ideas, but had never applied them to a non-professional environment.

As for assertiveness, I used to be very anxious about what other people thought about me when they saw me with make-up on and when I appeared more feminine due to my hair style and breast development. I now feel stronger, confident and positive about myself I feel better able to cope with life. I know I can't undo the things I have done in the past, but I can be a better person in the future and this has improved my self-esteem considerably.



Part of a bigger picture

Over Thinking Ahead helped of people were supported within 6 weeks people 51.1% We set up **Our recovery** rate was above the national community mental benchmark health hubs

"My whole way of thinking has changed.

I feel positive about my future and the people around me. I'm now able to be open, honest and not embarrassed."

Alan, Thinking ahead service user Thinking Ahead provides support in the community alongside online support and professional therapists to help people in the Rochdale area deal with negative thoughts and feelings, and make positive changes.

Amelia, Thinking Ahead service user

I have suffered with mild depression on and off throughout my life, with a more serious episode taking place around 17 years ago when my husband left me. After many years of struggling, I finally admitted that I was not able to cope. I was offered counselling and medication by my GP.

Five years ago my supervisor realised I was succumbing to work-related stress and anxiety, and was amazingly supportive. Again, I went on a course of antidepressants and I signed myself up for counselling at a local 'well woman' clinic. I learned a lot about myself and was able to happily carry on working in my job for another four years.

Last year I retired and thought that because I was free from the anxiety of work stress that my mental health would be fine. Unfortunately, although the anxiety had gone, I realised I was feeling depressed. My GP thought eTherapy would be a good option for me, so referred me to Thinking Ahead.

When I started eTherapy, I was not really enjoying life. My sleep was poor, I didn't really enjoy the company of family and friends. I felt I was only being a poor shadow of the person I knew I could be. After a while, eTherapy helped me understand the cycle of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that can fuel my descent into depression. But even better, it has given me the belief that I can control important aspects of this.

It has given me strategies to influence this negative cycle. In worst case scenarios, when sadness and depression are the appropriate response to a situation, it has given me mindfulness techniques to help me get through it without sinking under the weight. It has given me labels to help spot unhelpful thoughts and possible ways to react to them.

eTherapy has allowed me to enjoy the opportunities of my retired life and given me confidence to handle my own wellbeing

Talking to my practitioner has helped me clarify the symptoms I experience that show whether my latest malaise is due to depression or anxiety, which allows me to consider how to react accordingly. It has also allowed me to keep a record of and assess what lifestyle changes help me the most, so I can incorporate them into my life.

eTherapy has allowed me to enjoy the opportunities of my retired life and given me confidence to handle my own wellbeing, that I can continue to improve. After a lifetime of depression, with a few extreme crises, I now feel I have hope for the future.

Names have been changed in this story



Part of a bigger picture

people were supported at

Talking Therapies

in Manchester

of people were supported within six weeks

of attendees said that Peer Support increased their confidence

Peer Support groups were attended 2,430 times across Manchester

80.4%

said their mental health had improved from one-to-one peer support

Big Life offers a range of mental health services in Manchester, helping people deal with negative thoughts and feelings and make positive changes. These include:

- eTherapy online self-help and professional support
- Talking Therapies professional therapists
- Peer Support from a person who's had a similar experience

Holly, Talking Therapies Manchester service user

I'd been struggling to cope with the death of a friend, who was murdered. I felt very much in denial about it, so much so I almost convinced myself it hadn't happened as I wasn't ready to deal with the grief. I think I was in shock for a long time, which then turned into complete suppression of grieving – or any feeling for that matter. I carried on in denial, which eventually took a toll on me and I felt hopeless, anxious and depressed.

In my personal life, I was unable to relate to friends who were grieving. I pushed thoughts to the back of my mind and kept myself busy with mundane tasks, such as cleaning the house, just to keep myself from confronting the emotions. I used all my energy to push thoughts away, but I just couldn't do it anymore. I finally decided to visit my GP, who referred me to Self Help. After six weeks, I was able to access counselling.

The support I received really turned my life around. I dread to think where I would be now if I hadn't reached out for help. My counsellor and I agreed that I was in a state of post-traumatic stress, and this helped me to come to terms with the root cause of my problems. Just knowing what it was that I was experiencing was empowering. I could then plan a path to recovery.

The support I received really turned my life around. I dread to think where I would be now if I hadn't reached out

My counsellor was great at identifying my needs and didn't just throw a prescription for medication at me. She helped to break down the wall that I had put up, which allowed me to grieve. She offered practical tools and advice that allowed me to start living my life again.

I am now much calmer and my mind is less cluttered. I can identify negative patterns in my own behaviour and thinking, rather than getting swallowed up in them I respond positively. I am better at asking for help, rather than putting on a brave face.

Counselling has been incredible for me! It was challenging at times, due to my own defensiveness, but it gave me a time and space to think about things and figure everything out. It has been such an amazing help.

Names have been changed in this story

For full information on the impact of Big Life's services during 2017/18, visit www.thebiglifegroup.com/impact.

Our recovery rate was above the national benchmark



Part of a bigger picture

I'm feeling much better now that I can control my anxiety in ways that I previously couldn't. I'm no longer worried about the future and what it holds. Instead, I feel excited about what's to come.

Talking Therapies Stockport service user

we supported
490
people with
eTherapy in
Salford, Trafford
and Liverpool

of people said they

were satisfied with

our Peer Support

groups in Trafford

Our recovery rate in Trafford was above the national benchmark

69.5%

95%

of attendees said that Peer Support increased their confidence Talking Therapies

Stockport supported

2,900 people

We supported

56

children and young people across
Stockport

Peer
Support
groups were
attended

1,035 times across Trafford

99%

of people referred in Salford were supported within six weeks Big Life delivers a number of mental health services across the north west. All these services help people deal with negative thoughts and feelings and make positive changes:

- · eTherapy provides online self-help modules in Liverpool
- Talking Therapies Stockport provides professional therapy
- Peer Support provides support from someone who has lived experience of a similar difficulty in Trafford.

Victoria, eTherapy service user

I became aware that I was struggling with anxiety and depression in January 2016, but on reflection I think I'd been struggling for much longer.

It has affected most areas of my life. From my relationships, which have broken down due to my low moods and anxiety, to my health, which has suffered continuously. The condition has had a much stronger physical effect on my body then I ever thought imaginable.

The only area that hasn't suffered is my work life, as I have used my work over the past year as some sort of escapism to forget about my personal life. However, consuming yourself in your job is not always for the best, as I never took time off, which meant I always felt wired and exhausted. Overall, that's the best word I can use to describe my condition. Exhausting.

I heard about eTherapy through my GP, and I started to use the service from May 2017. By this time I'd already had 4 months of private treatment.

The role of the person supporting me in the service was crucial in discussing each module, and fleshing out any parts I felt I didn't understand

I had high hopes for the service, as the online modules allow you to fit the treatment around your life. I was really conscious that I didn't want the treatment to interrupt my work. The service did just this. I could visit whenever I wanted or needed to.

I was worried that I would lack motivation to complete the modules, however the interactive nature of the programme was so engaging that it actively required you to think about your condition. Given this, I found that I stuck with the service and enjoyed the challenge.

The role of the person supporting me in the service was crucial in discussing each module, and fleshing out any parts I felt I didn't understand or I felt was extremely relevant.

Since accessing therapy, my relationships are stronger and healthier. I'm a lot calmer than I was a year ago, and happier to talk and discuss my feelings and stresses with my partner.

BIGISSUE NORTH THE INDEPENDENT STREET PAPER | WORKING NOT BEGGING

Impact report 2017/18

Part of a bigger picture

people sold
BIG ISSUE NORTH
last year

Our staff provided health and wellbeing support

80 times

S27

vendors were supported into education

members of the public sold the magazine for

an hour for the

Big Sell

11,947
magazines

magazines were sold by vendors each week

Our staff provided finance support

236 times

23

vendors were supported into employment

Vendors sold

1,370

Big Issue North calendars

Our staff provided crisis support

1,912

times

1049

vendors were supported into accommodation

We reached

800,000

people on Twitter

1,500

people came to our first Street Noise event

Big Issue North provides people with no alternative a means to earn an income and develop skills to improve their lives, by selling a weekly street paper. Vendors get support from Big Issue North Trust, a charity that provides signposting and advice, help getting ID, home furnishing packages, projects such as breakfast clubs and much more.

Dave, Big Issue North Vendor

I've just started selling the magazine again. During the last 12 months I have been under a lot of pressure. I've had some financial problems and a lot of health problems, things like chest infections, which kept me off work and added to the stress. All of this led to me having a nervous breakdown just before Christmas. I don't remember much about the actual breakdown. I was at home when it happened. A friend of mine called the police because I was a danger to myself. I came close to committing suicide.

I knew that my mental health was deteriorating but I didn't let it show. A lot of my customers didn't realise what kind of stress I was under. People don't see it, what's inside, especially if you come across like I do as all happy and outgoing. I tried to cover it up and not show people by smiling all the time but inside it was killing me.

Recovery has been slow. I'm getting professional counselling, working with staff from Big Issue North and a friend of mine is also supporting me.

"I feel that I have a family now, not just in Big Issue North but in the broader circle of my customers who have all helped me out over the years."

I have had some very good support from Big Issue North. It was important for me to know that I could come back and sell again when I recovered, to see the people who know me from selling the magazine. I am 100 per cent pleased to be back selling the magazine properly, it's been a couple of difficult years but I have had such great support from a lot of people. It feels like "Manchester loves you".

I am hoping to get a permanent pitch re-established somewhere and I turned 60 on 6 May. That feels like a big milestone. I am hoping that my life will turn around. I feel like there's light at the end of the tunnel. My plan is to get that caravan that I have always wanted and to retire to North Wales in the next couple of years.

Life has been an uphill struggle ever since I was a child. But I feel that I have a family now, not just in Big Issue North but in the broader circle of my customers who have all helped me out over the years. I didn't have the family 60 years ago that I have got now.



Part of a bigger picture

volunteers got into employment or training monthly meetings engaged people

More than

service users
conducted evaluations
exploring drug and
alcohol services in
Liverpool

We carried out

5

commissioned reviews

- Wild

We reviewed pharmacies across Liverpool for the discarding of needles

We looked into the issue of persistent presentation by homeless people at A&E departments across Liverpool

Big Life's user involvement services give people in Liverpool with experience of a range of issues the chance to have their say on how services are run. They include:

- Community Voice, giving drug and alcohol users a voice regarding recovery services.
- Waves of Hope, for people with experience of mental health issues, homelessness, addiction and offending.

Glenda Browne, Waves of Hope Hub volunteer

Glenda started volunteering with Waves of Hope as a peer mentor and joined the Hub – the part of the service delivered by Big Life – in 2017 as a hub volunteer.

Like everyone at the hub, Glenda's got plenty of life experience. Everyone at the hub has found themselves facing homelessness, addiction, mental health issues or the criminal justice system.

So Glenda knew when she started to volunteer with us that she would need to be comfortable sharing her life experience with us, but she also understood that the rest of the team and other volunteers had been through similar things. It's important for service users at the Hub to know that people like Glenda have a real knowledge of their journey.

Pretty soon, Glenda established herself within the Hub's creative writing group, supporting service users to write short stories and poems about their lives. Glenda was a major contributor of an anthology of poetry created last autumn, which was released to the public, raising awareness of the issues faced by the Hub's service users and volunteers. Glenda's literary aspirations didn't end there though – she's just published her first novel!

It's important for service users at the Hub to know that people like Glenda have a real knowledge of their journey.

Glenda has been such an asset, that she's become something of a spokesperson for the Hub, and has got used to life in the spotlight, giving both radio interviews and TV interviews. Glenda is a well-respected volunteer and colleague and brings genuine care and kindness to the Hub's drop-in sessions.

While Glenda is lending her skills and dedication to Big Life, and to Waves of Hope Hub's service users, she knows that it's important that she keeps on looking after herself. Glenda is still receiving one-to-one support from Waves of Hope staff, and regularly has sessions that give her space to reflect, and help her to manage her emotional wellbeing.



Part of a bigger picture

This year,
people were helped by

Working Well

68%

of Working Well clients had not worked for six years or more "When you go home at night it feels like you've been to therapy with a group of people, chatting and sharing experiences. It's helped me completely change how I was."

Sue - out of work for 10 years before coming to Working Well

69

people found jobs through Working Well 85%

of Working Well clients had barriers to work due to poor health 40%

of Working Well clients had no previous qualifications

252

people took part in

Skills for Employment completed a qualification through Skills for Employment

24%

found least 16 hours of work a week through Skills for Employment Big Life's employment services help people overcome barriers to work, giving service users the tools and skills they need to flourish in training and employment.

- Working Well supports people who have been through two years of the Work Programme, and remain without employment.
- Skills for Employment provides training opportunities and work placements.

Zoe, Skills for Employment service user

Single mum Zoe had been unemployed for 14 months before she came to Skills for Employment. She'd also recently moved from Leeds – away from her mum and dad who played a major part in her daughter's life. It left her feeling very isolated at times and because she felt she lacked skills and qualifications, her confidence and motivation was really low.

But she still wanted to make a difference to her and her daughter's life. So, she became one of the first people to take advantage of a partnership between Skills for Employment programme and CASA Care, a Wythenshawe-based elderly and disabled care provider.

Under the partnership, everyone completing the pre-employment and work-based training through Skills for Employment was guaranteed an interview with CASA.

Zoe spent a week at Big Life and a week with CASA in the lead up to her interview. With us she got the know-how she needed to put together a good application form and a confident interview and added to her CV with a food hygiene qualification and a care certificate. The week she spent shadowing a CASA care worker fuelled her ambition to work in that sector.

"I've thoroughly enjoyed my journey with CASA Care and Big Life. I've made new friends, I'm more confident and I'm looking forward to a brighter, happier future."

Zoe became one of 14 trainees to get jobs with CASA during the programme. A further 10 went on to successfully find employment with other care providers or other work. With Skills for Employment continuing to offer support during her first 13 weeks in work, Zoe hasn't looked back since she started working for CASA Care.

Zoe said: "I've thoroughly enjoyed my journey with CASA Care and Big Life. I've made new friends, I'm more confident and I'm looking forward to a brighter, happier future."

BigLife Homes

Impact report 2017/18

Part of a bigger picture

14

People provided with independent housing and one-to-one support

13

Housing benefit problems sorted out successfully

Disability benefits support given

15 times 15

Requests for support with ESA and Universal Credit issues managed

Energy supplier issues sorted out on

10 occasions 9

occasions where we helped tenants to access mental health services

Big Life Homes provides high-quality accommodation at two sites in Liverpool, offering low-level support with housing-related issues such as money management, and practical advice on maintaining a tenancy.

Steve, Big Life Homes tenant

Before coming into Big Life Homes, I had separated from my partner who I had a child with, I was in denial that I had anything wrong with me, and I was living in a hostel after being homeless and terrified that I would end up back on the streets again.

In May 2015, a lady from Big Life came to the hostel where I was staying and asked me if I wanted to come and see a vacant flat at one of their properties in Kremlin Drive. A few days later I moved into my own flat, which included support from a Housing Outreach Worker.

Big Life Homes have helped me to live independently, accept that I did have mental health problems and signposted me to the relevant help that I needed.

The Housing Outreach Worker has helped me to make sure that I am in receipt of all the relevant benefits that I'm entitled to, including the Personal Independent Payment, and they've helped me to gain the ability to properly maintain my tenancy.

Last summer, I moved out of Kremlin Drive into my own house after two years with Big Life Homes. Through my time at the Kremlin, my life has changed in so many ways!

"Big Life Homes have helped me to be able to live independently, accept that I did have mental health problems and signposted me to the relevant help that I needed."

I now have improved social skills. I've recently met a new girlfriend and I am very happy. I can now talk and socialise with people without lacking in confidence, and I can now deal with my mental health issues without feeling ashamed about them. And most importantly, I am now able to have a healthy relationship with my kid.

Names have been changed in this story.



Part of a bigger picture

Across all its services, Big Life worked with

56,315

people

87%

of staff would recommend Big Life as an employer

95%

of staff feel their role makes a difference

545
people
volunteered

with Big Life

Big Life has

469

staff

27.5%

of staff are from BME communities

40%

of staff had personal experience of mental distress

30%

of staff live within two miles of their workplace

This has been the most supportive place I've worked in, and the relationships I have with my manager, my team, and my colleagues mean I enjoy coming into work every day.

Jess Healy, Big Life staff The Big Life group is in the business of changing lives for people who have the least. We start where people are at, and support them to get to where they want to be.

We know there might be all sorts of things stopping people from making changes. That's why we look at every aspect of a person's life, and work with them to remove obstacles on the journey to changing their life for the better.

Sarah O'Loughlin, Big Life staff member

I've worked at The Big Life group for nearly four years, working in a variety of different mental health services. My journey started at The Sanctuary, in Wigan, where I supported people overnight who were in crisis. It was a challenging role, but I gained lots of important skills and experience of working with people with mental health problems.

After a year, I decided to apply for a similar support worker role, but this time on the day time crisis line, which gave me the opportunity to develop my counselling skills over the phone.

About a year ago, I'd gained the valuable skills and experiences needed to take on a new challenge. So, I decided to apply for a role as an eTherapy Coordinator. In this role, I support people using one of our many eTherapy packages, which provide online therapy for anxiety and depression. I carry out assessments and monitor people's recovery and progress.

Working at Big Life has provided a lot of opportunities for me to progress my career in mental health. The knowledge and support of my colleagues is really invaluable. Everyone is friendly and supportive and working arrangements are flexible. It's a busy environment, so things change often. But I always have opportunities for case management and supervision, so I feel motivated and supported in my work.

"Working at Big Life has provided a lot of opportunities for me to progress my career in mental health. The knowledge and support of my colleagues is really invaluable. Everyone is friendly and supportive and working arrangements are flexible."

In the future, I'm interested in pursuing a traineeship as a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner. I'm also considering specialising in Personality Disorder, to help remove the stigma associated with it and provide specialist support. Given my past experience, I'm confident that working here will continue to give me the opportunities I need to develop.