

**The
Big Life
group**

**Annual
Report
2003/2004**

**BUSINESS
CHANGING
LIVES**



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FUTURE

The
BigLife
group

social businesses
and charities



Introduction

The Big Life group are social businesses and charities working together to provide opportunities for people to change their lives for the better. Our mission is to change the world. Some people think this is a bit ambitious, but we believe that if we don't set out to make an impact, we may as well stay in bed in the morning. Too many people believe that we are powerless to change ourselves, or the communities in which we live. We want to challenge that view in all that we do.

We have set ourselves ambitious objectives for the first five years of The Big Life group and our progress towards achieving these is shown in the following report (p.10) As in previous years our biggest asset is still people – whether it be the people we work with, the people who volunteer their time, or the staff we employ. Their contribution is invaluable. This report is primarily about them and their stories.

The businesses and charities within
The Big Life group

**Big Life
Services**



The BigLife Company

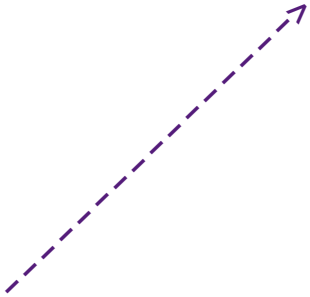
business changing lives

**Design
and Print**



**Big Life
Employment**

**The Big Issue
in the North Trust**



**The Big Issue
in the North**



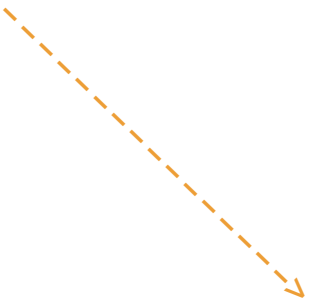
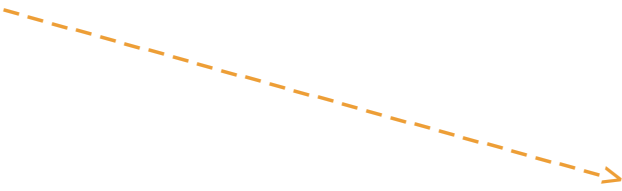
-> **Finance**

-> **HR**

-> **Developments**

-> **Communication**

**Aisha
Childcaring**



**Northern
Solutions**

Our Values

Our values are important to us. Each year every member of staff considers how they have demonstrated the values in their lives and work. Here are some of their stories.

Inspiring

This year a young homeless man from the North East represented England in the first ever Homeless World Cup, held in Graz, Austria. He was living in a hostel and wasn't in touch with his family. After he was selected for the team, he attracted a lot of press attention and as a result he was teased by other people in the hostel. However, the press coverage was also seen by his family, who made contact with him. He was invited back to a local club where his friends and family were waiting. A framed article picturing him at the Homeless World Cup and telling his story was hanging on the wall. He said this was the first time his family had a reason to be proud of him.

Creative

Surestart Longsight staff wanted the local community to play a large part in the look of their new centre, and so they held a consultation day at a local library. Parents and children who will be using the centre when it opens later this year, were invited to attend and take part in a number of activities including choosing the colour scheme of the new building and giving their ideas about the design of the reception and nursery areas. As part of the event, children were asked to paint bathroom tiles which will then be used inside the centre when it is completed.

Courageous

During October 2003, vendors were forced to stop selling in the city centre of Liverpool for five days, as they were threatened with arrest. The Big Issue in the North campaigned to establish the rights of vendors to legitimately sell the magazine, and the editor stood outside 'the cop shop' handing out copies to the public. Local and regional press covered the event, which highlighted the issue to thousands of people. We were relieved that the editor was not arrested, but it is the courage of people like him, who are prepared to stand up and be counted when vulnerable people are being picked on, that will help us change the world.

Thoughtful

The Community Health Action Partnership (CHAP) in Salford, celebrated the achievements of local people at a "Can Do - Lessons Learnt" event. Between September and December 2003, local people and service providers established nine projects to promote health and well-being in the area. Projects included swimming for the over 80's, baby massage, a Keeping in Touch course run by Therapeutic Services and a Saturday morning club for the children of refugees and asylum seekers.

After presentations to the board of CHAP about the projects, there were displays and photographs giving local people and service providers the chance to learn more about the projects and CHAP.

Valuing Difference

Aisha Childcaring decided to provide hot meals for the children in its day-care service, and in order to support another social business, they worked with HARP, a café providing training for people with mental health needs. The nursery manager organised consultations with parents, providing taster sessions which would input into the chosen menu. All seemed to be going well until one of the parents realised which agency was providing the meals, and objected on the grounds that 'they did not want those people cooking food for their children'. A number of other parents also joined in. Rather than cancel the contract and bend to the demands of the customers, the nursery manager asked parents to come in and explained to them that they were being discriminatory. As a result, opposition was dropped and the nursery has had its meals provided by HARP ever since. If we are to really value difference, we need to challenge other people's attitudes, even when it may risk losing them as customers.

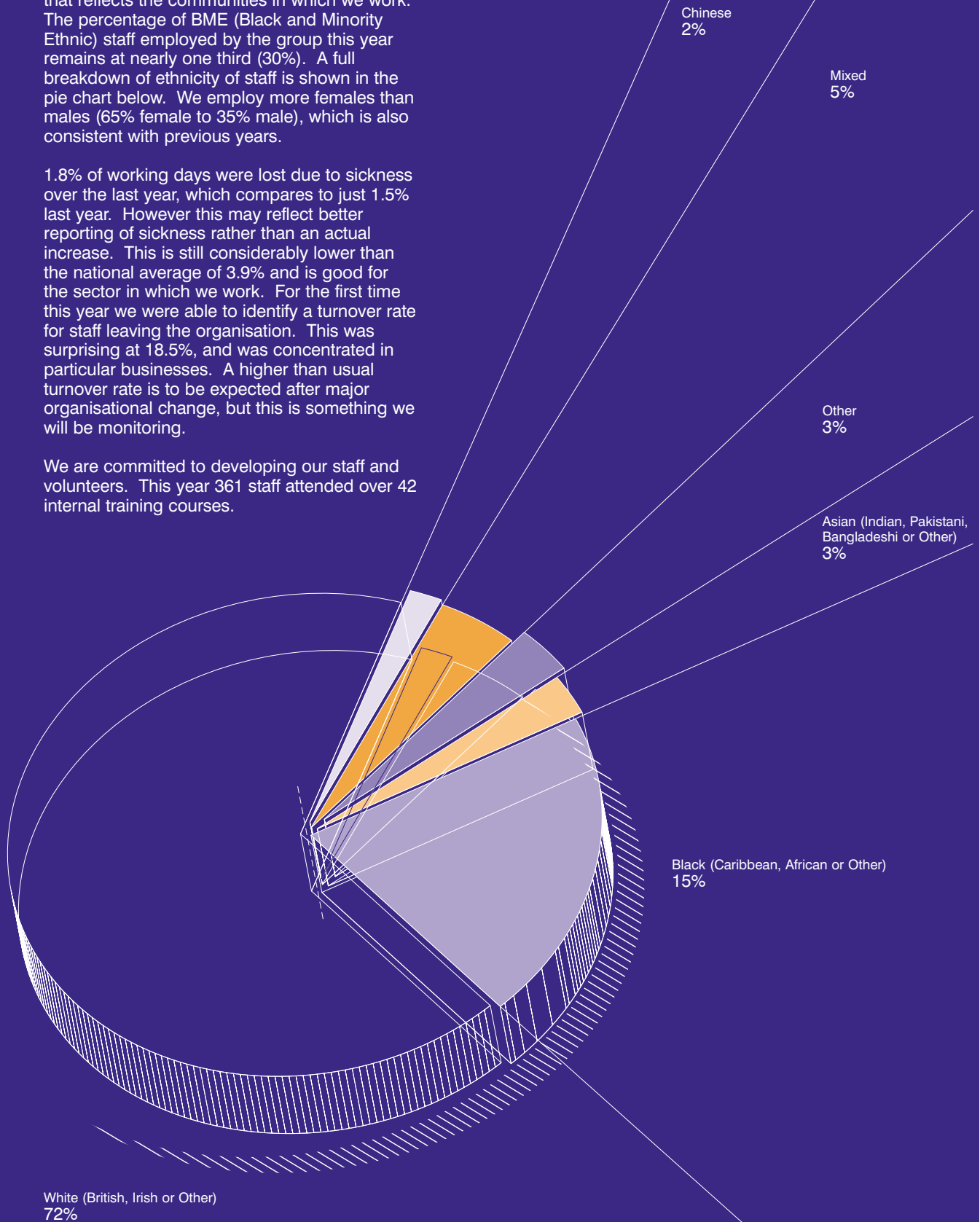
Our beliefs:

People are unique
 People have unlimited potential
 People have the capacity to change
 We celebrate achievement
 We demonstrate respect.

Across The Big Life group of social businesses and charities we employed 263 people this year (compared with 236 in 2002/03). We are committed to employing a diverse workforce that reflects the communities in which we work. The percentage of BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) staff employed by the group this year remains at nearly one third (30%). A full breakdown of ethnicity of staff is shown in the pie chart below. We employ more females than males (65% female to 35% male), which is also consistent with previous years.

1.8% of working days were lost due to sickness over the last year, which compares to just 1.5% last year. However this may reflect better reporting of sickness rather than an actual increase. This is still considerably lower than the national average of 3.9% and is good for the sector in which we work. For the first time this year we were able to identify a turnover rate for staff leaving the organisation. This was surprising at 18.5%, and was concentrated in particular businesses. A higher than usual turnover rate is to be expected after major organisational change, but this is something we will be monitoring.

We are committed to developing our staff and volunteers. This year 361 staff attended over 42 internal training courses.



The Big Life group Objectives, Targets and Achievements this year

Target	Progress
<p>Creating opportunities for people to change their lives</p> <p>Create 150 new jobs, a minimum of 50 for people who have been excluded from the jobs market, for example through ill health, addictions, mental health, disability and discrimination.</p>	<p>The accumulative figure against the five-year target is 43. This represents 29% of our five-year target on posts created, and 66% of our target of employment for people who have been excluded from the jobs market.</p>
<p>Provide 1,000 supported employment places, for people who have been excluded from the jobs market, with 30% going onto mainstream employment.</p>	<p>Big Life Employment has provided 126 supported employment places this year. In 2002/3 we provided 93 supported employment placements making our cumulative total 219, or 22%, of our target.</p> <p>39% of people who completed supported employment placements with BLE have moved into permanent employment.</p>
<p>Offer training to 1500 people, from a menu of 100 courses/projects, with 1000 people achieving a recognised qualification.</p>	<p>562 people have taken part in either external or internal training. 244 have achieved a recognised qualification.</p>
<p>Create six new innovative centres for delivery of Big Life group activities in cities across the North of England; with at least one being outside Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool. Centres will be developed in partnership with other agencies.</p>	<p>Summergrove, the project for families whose parents have undergone a drug/alcohol detox programme, opened in Liverpool in July 2003. The Surestart Longsight family centre has started on site and is due for completion in summer 2004. Work has continued to develop a new Big Life Centre in Liverpool and it is hoped that we will be refurbishing a building next year. BLE has relocated into a new building in Manchester and are developing The Space: a life college for young people, in partnership with the Youth Contact Team. We have therefore achieved three of our six new centres, or 50% of our five-year target.</p>
<p>Develop a comprehensive menu of services and activities available through Big Life centres for people from excluded groups, using a 'change exchange' approach.</p>	<p>This year we have developed 8 new Self-help Services and 3 new Therapeutic Services. The Big Life Plan for Big Issue in the North vendors has been developed and will be launched next year. Big Life Services have developed an interactive "menu of services" which allows people to see what services and opportunities are available throughout The Big Life group. BLE started a Job Centre Plus 30 place supported employment programme in Leeds, as well as developing The Space in partnership with the Youth Contact Team. Summergrove increased the number of therapeutic services on offer, and worked in partnership with local groups to deliver parenting sessions. It also ran a programme of summer activities for children of the families living in Summergrove. This included cultural awareness sessions with children, arts, craft and play sessions, parties and picnics in Summergrove's garden and days out to Chester Zoo, Gullivers World and Camelot theme park. We have had 98 volunteers working across the group this year.</p>
<p>Develop and implement a model for measuring improvement in quality of life throughout The Big Life group.</p>	<p>We have reviewed a number of assessment tools and quality of life measures over the last year and have piloted a number of tools in different services. In the year ahead we will trial quality of life measures across the organisation, which will enable us to assess the overall impact of our work on people's lives.</p>

Target	Progress
<p>Doing Good Business</p> <p>Develop three new profitable businesses within The Big Life group.</p>	<p>Northern Solutions, Aisha Childcaring and Big Life Employment all made small profits this year.</p>
<p>Achieve a turnover of £10m (£5.5m trading, £3.5m contracts, £1m grants) with a 10% profit on each business.</p>	<p>Business trading (£5.6m) Contract (£2.3m) Grant (£0.4m)</p> <p>Business actual turnover (£8.3m)</p> <p>All businesses made a small profit except for The Big Issue in the North.</p>
<p>Support the development of 20 social enterprises, sharing expertise, practical support and providing incubator facilities for emerging businesses to assist them in becoming sustainable businesses.</p>	<p>This year we have supported Trade for Change (Leeds), Archer Project (Sheffield), and Betta Butties (Manchester), and three internal social enterprises – Aisha Childcaring, Northern Solutions and Big Life Employment. We have had input into a number of networks supporting the development of social enterprises including Liverpool Plus, Manchester Social Enterprise Network, Social Enterprise Coalition, and West Yorkshire Social Enterprise Link (WYSE Link). We have completed work on the study for managed workspace in Manchester and are working in partnership with Firmstart Ltd.</p>
<p>Create an asset base and sufficient cash reserves for The Big Life group.</p>	<p>A small contribution to the cash reserves of the group has been achieved this year. However, we need to continue to focus on achieving our targeted profit/surplus. Bank facilities have been provided this year, but this is not an efficient basis for developing the businesses.</p>
<p>No one customer to be responsible for more than 20% of each business.</p>	<p>No one customer is responsible for more than 20% of any of our businesses.</p>

Target

Improving what we do

Achieve two recognised quality standards.

Progress

BLE achieved a Matrix Quality Standard for its delivery of information, advice and guidance services.
We are working to achieve IIP (Investors in People) status and will be assessed next year.

Establish a comprehensive staff training programme, ensuring all staff are fully supported to achieve their responsibilities.

Training needs analysis and appraisal systems have been revised and implemented.
This year we ran 42 different training courses and 361 staff attended.

In 2002/03, training ran with 34 different courses. 136 staff attended.

Ensure all our activities undertake monitoring and evaluation. This will include establishing customer feedback systems.

We have reviewed monitoring methods across The Big Life group.
Service Level Agreements have been developed within the group for businesses to monitor their performance against.
Evaluations have begun on Therapeutic Services, bloom, Surestart, and Big Life Employment.
Video diary projects have begun in Leeds and Manchester to track a day in the life of service users.
We have prepared an audit of policies and procedures which will be carried out next year, and this will provide a useful baseline for measuring improvement in future years.

We will have Non Executive Director involvement in all our businesses, and user and community input into all services. We will have a network of ambassadors keeping us up to date with innovations and best practice.

Non Executive members are appointed in all businesses except Aisha Childcaring.
Big Life Services and The Big Issue in the North Trust Trustees have agreed a 'joining resolution' to enable them to oversee both charities within the group.
A review of governance arrangements has been undertaken and a plan approved at all Boards across the group.

Have a culture which reflects our organisational values and works towards achieving our objectives.

We have rolled out a programme of Vision and Values training this year, with 47 staff attending a one-day session.
Staff appraisals have been amended to focus on how staff have worked to achieve the values and objectives of the group.

Target

Changing the World

Launch three major campaigns which highlight and tackle issues of discrimination, disadvantage or poor quality/effectiveness and efficiency.

Progress

This year we have continued to highlight the difficulties faced by the people we work with. In particular, we have raised the need for joined up approaches to drug users and their families, citing the example of Summergrove, where funding streams are restricted to adults or children, but not allocated for whole-family work.
Through The Big Issue in the North magazine we raised awareness of the targeting of vulnerable people by credit agencies, when a number of vendors in Leeds were approached and offered credit cards. In Liverpool, we campaigned against an attempt to ban all vendors from the city following the actions of a small number of rogue vendors.

Work in partnership with external agencies, businesses and authorities to develop services and opportunities for excluded communities.

Following a successful partnership with Liverpool City Council and Maritime Housing Association we opened the Summergrove project. We have continued to manage the Surestart Longsight project and bloom Healthy Living Network.
Support work with the Community Health Action Partnership (CHAP) project in Salford has been intensified this year and Big Life Services has supported Salford Primary Care Trust and CHAP to develop ideas for community governance of their new health centres. BLE has worked closely with the Youth Contact Team to develop services for excluded young people. The Big Issue in the North Trust staff have begun to deliver training in prisons and work to support offenders returning to the community. The Kath Locke Centre has worked closely with the Primary Care Trust to develop services for refugees that can be delivered from the centre. In Leeds we have secured a Connexions contract to deliver support to young homeless people. We have taken three placements from the Police Commander Course: over a three month period the officers worked with us, they had unlimited access to staff and were able to produce a useful report on the organisational development needs of the group.

Publish research on three topics affecting the lives of people who are disadvantaged.

We have completed the annual audit of vendors of The Big Issue in the North.

Promote the brand of **The Big Life group**, its subsidiaries and associated charities, in order to improve the lives of the people we work with.

We won a National Training Award for the training delivered to vendors of The Big Issue in the North. We had 394 items of press/radio coverage reaching over 15m people, with 83% being positive. Main stories included the Homeless World Cup, the Big Difference Awards and the Liverpool Big Issue in the North campaign.
We produced a range of marketing material including brochures, postcards and information packs for Northern Solutions, Big Life Employment, Summergrove and Self-help Services. All our businesses and services now have marketing material. We are working on a website which we hope to launch next year.
We delivered three Big Difference Award events this year with over 24 award winners and 650 attendees at Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester events.





Big Life Businesses

We have five social businesses in the group, The Big Life Company, The Big Issue in the North, Aisha Childcaring, Big Life Employment and Northern Solutions.

We describe these as social businesses, because they have triple bottom lines. They aim to make profits, to have social outputs and to be ethical. This year we have begun to develop measures to assess how successful our social businesses are.

Most of our businesses are companies limited by guarantee, but some are share companies. We choose the organisational form most suited to the business.

The Big Life Company

Annual Turnover: £4,770,926

Company Registration Number: 04227431
 Board members: Fay Selvan (Chair), Donna Ngan (Finance Director), Kate Markey (Executive Director), Neil Turton (Executive Director), Kevin Wilson (Non Executive Director), Chris Binns (Non Executive Director), Hadas Altwag (Co-optee).

The Big Life Company provides all the core functions of finance, human resources, development, communications, research and corporate governance to all the social businesses and charities within the group. All staff are employed by The Big Life Company. Each business or charity within the group pays a 10% management fee for the services it receives from the company. This year, The Big Life Company made a small profit of £7k.

As a first stage to become Investors In People accredited, a staff survey was carried out across the group. It showed that 67% of staff were focussed on achieving the vision of the organisation and 77% were happy with the supervision they received. Following a concerted focus on internal training, 70% of staff felt that the development opportunities open to them were improving. Areas for further improvement were also highlighted, including the induction process for new staff and communication across the group.

There have been some exciting development opportunities this year. In July we opened Summergrove in Liverpool. This ground breaking project is a partnership with Maritime Housing Association and Liverpool City Council, and is the first of its kind in the country. The new Surestart Centre in Longsight, Manchester is now being built and will be completed next year. The building has been designed with the full involvement of local parents, children, staff

and volunteers. In March we began construction of a new 100 place Aisha Childcare nursery in Trafford.

This year a great deal of work on the corporate governance arrangements across the group has been undertaken. A plan for achieving best practice based on the Combined Code and the Higgs Review (which tightened regulation regarding corporate governance) was approved by the Boards in April and has been rolled out over the year. New Standing Orders and Standing Financial Instructions were adopted and the finance team completed an overhaul of existing financial procedures. A full audit of policies and procedures is planned for early next year.

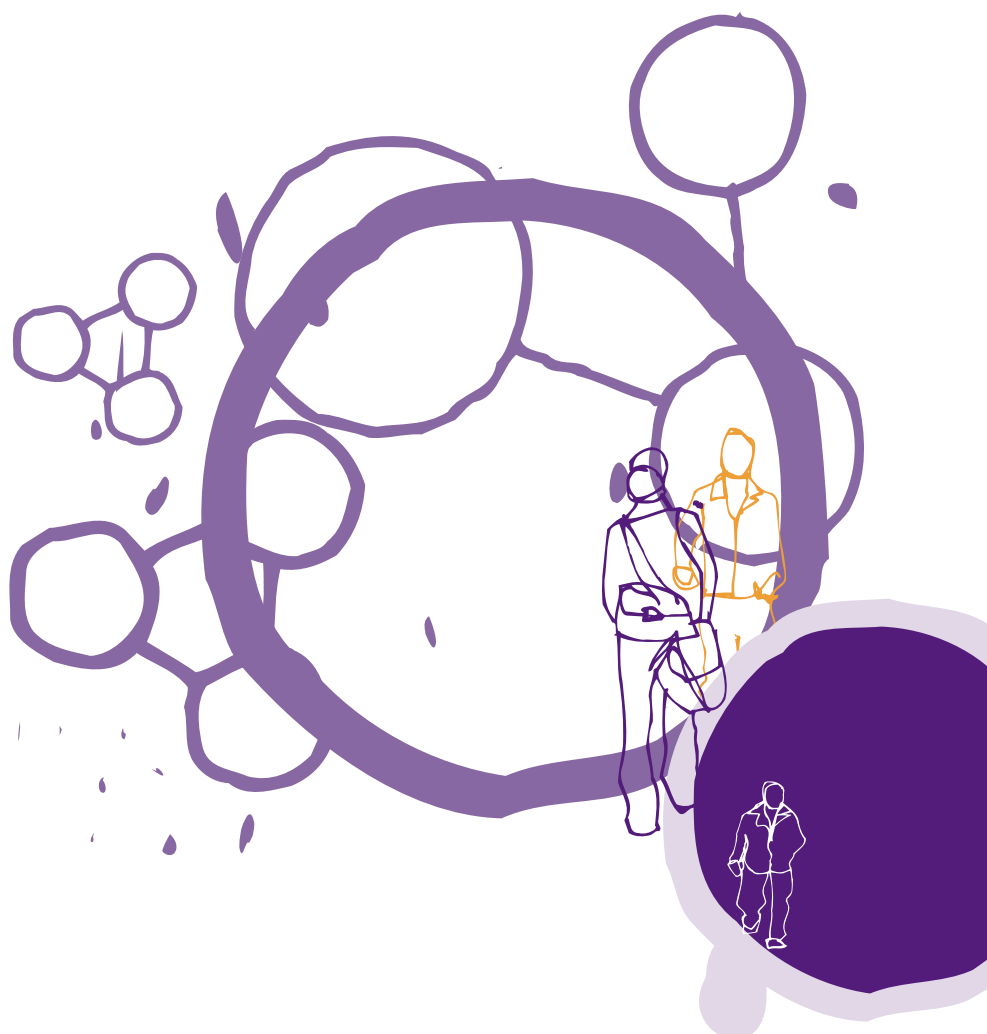
The communications team launched an internal newsletter 'The Big News' and research continued the production of 'The Big Source', an update of research and policy changes. An annual report of the first year of The Big Life group and a number of promotional brochures for businesses and services were developed. A Trading Directory of all the contract work that the businesses within the group could offer has been developed and will be launched next year.

For the second year The Big Life Company ran The Big Difference Awards. Following the success of last year's awards, three ceremonies were held this year in Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds to ensure the achievements of people from across the North of England were recognised.

The Big Difference Awards attracted over 650 people to the three events and awarded 24 people and projects for their work. It was supported by the Northwest Development Agency and Yorkshire Forward.

Dr Brian Boffey, from Horsforth, Leeds, won the Lifetime Difference Award at the Leeds Big Difference Awards, for the support he has provided over the last 35 years to disabled people through the national charity PHAB, and for his work as a full-time volunteer mini-bus driver and carer, providing services for the disabled, elderly and hospital patients.

He said, "It was the most wonderful night of my life. There are lots of volunteers who are background workers who don't always get recognised. These awards are a great way of celebrating people's achievements and encouraging other people to volunteer."



The Big Issue in the North

Annual Turnover: £1,811,272

"Playing for Hendon is a fantastic opportunity and it's opened the door for me into professional football. I'm taking each training session a step at a time. It's hard work but I'm enjoying it very much. All the time I'm learning new football skills and different coaching methods."

Mo, England team member for Homeless World Cup, who was signed by Hendon FC

Company Number:03026628
Board members: Fay Selvan (Chair), Donna Ngan (Finance Director), Richard Brown (Executive Director), Kate Markey (Executive Director), Kevin Wilson (Non Executive Director), Alan Beswick (Co-optee).

The Big Issue in the North magazine is in its 11th Year. It provides homeless people from across the North of England with the means to earn a legitimate income. Vendors buy the magazine for 50 pence and sell it for £1.20, keeping the 70 pence profit they make.

Editorial

Following extensive consultation with stakeholders, the magazine underwent a major redesign and a new look was launched. The deputy editor was appointed as editor, while the former editor took on responsibilities as executive director for The Big Life Company. News coverage was reinvigorated with the appointment of a new member in the editorial team.

Key highlights this year included joining with sister Big Issues across the UK to focus on the problems faced by ex-offenders in the 'Out for Good' campaign, which exposed the plight of many people who, through lack of support and opportunity, end up in a cycle of crime and prison. Many vendors, for example, are affected by the lack of support to find accommodation or a job after spending time in jail. The campaign was highlighted in Parliament by the Liberal Democrats who raised some of the issues

covered by the magazine.

News and entertainment stories this year included a revealing world exclusive interview with George Michael, and exclusive use of soap star Shane Richie's 40th birthday photographs, after he sold them to the London Big Issue for £1.20. One of the highest profile news stories concerned vendors who had been approached by credit card sales representatives and persuaded to sign up for a Barclaycard. The story received massive coverage nationally and regionally, as it coincided with national news concern about the nation's debt.

Advertising

Recruitment advertising sales remained the strongest section, bringing in £238,504. New advertisers included City of York Council, the University of Huddersfield, CDS Housing, Rotherham NHS and Making Space.

In September, 'Northern Souls' was introduced to the classified advertising pages. These telecom-dating pages, which offer a dating service, generated a revenue stream and proved to be an excellent tool for reader interaction.

This year a partnership was cemented with Publicis Blueprint, part of the French Media House, Publicis La Difference, the 3rd largest media business in the world. Publicis took over responsibility for display advertising in the magazine. This partnership allowed us to increase revenue and build up stronger relationships with



Orig



the larger advertising agencies who we have had difficulty doing business with in the past, so bringing in £161,314.

The advertising team continued working with Liverpool City Council's 'City Magazine', selling external advertising on their behalf. This generated a total revenue of £44,963 for Liverpool City Council.

Sales

After discussions with vendors, the price of the magazine increased to £1.20 in April 2003. This is the first price increase in six years, whilst the production costs have risen steadily. The knock-on effect of the price rise however, was that vendors could sell fewer magazines to earn the same income.

The end of the resettlement programme for vendors, introduced in 2000, meant that the length of time vendors stayed selling the magazine changed considerably. In 2001, 42% of vendors had sold The Big Issue in the North for over a year. In 2002 this reduced to just 25%. As a result of having less experienced sellers this year, we experienced a drop in weekly sales.

In line with national trends, the annual vendor audit shows a dramatic increase in crack cocaine use over the last year, from 37% in 2002 to 56% in 2003. This has also had a detrimental affect on the ability of vendors to consistently sell the magazine.

In October this year, The Big Issue in the North was affected by Operation Manton, an undercover investigation by Merseyside Police into drug use in the city centre. A number of vendors were arrested during the heavily publicised operation. Subsequently, only a small number of vendors were found to be involved. The magazine did all it could to ensue readers were fully informed about the situation and given every opportunity to support the vendors in Liverpool who had not engaged in any illegal activity. The response from readers, vendors and other members of The Big Issue movement was overwhelming and combined to get the magazine and its staff through that difficult time.

As a consequence of these factors, sales of the magazine have witnessed a drop for the 2nd year running. The ABC (Annual Bureau of Circulation) figure for the year was recorded at 38,842. The business therefore made a loss this year of £188k.

This year a sub office in Hull was opened to help alleviate the costs incurred to vendors having to travel into Leeds to buy magazines. The office is located within Hull Vineyard and is supplied rent-free.

Other work

Work with City Councils and Police forces has been strengthened in areas where The Big Issue in the North is sold, to help combat the problems facing city centres and to make the streets a safer place for everyone.

Action Plans for Liverpool and Leeds City Centres have been developed in partnership with these agencies, and will be rolled out to Manchester next year. The Big Issue in the North piloted stencilled pitches in Liverpool City Centre and have moved vendors onto pitches covered by CCTV surveillance to ensure that they are protected.

The Big Issue in the North is one of over 55 street papers around the world which are all part of the International Network of Street Papers (INSP). This year the INSP organised the Homeless World Cup. 26 countries took part in the event with teams of homeless people travelling to Graz, Austria. The Big Issue in the North managed the England team. Manchester United Football Club donated a team of experienced coaches and oversaw the selection and training of the team from an initial group of 80 homeless people. The England team came second to hosts Austria. Following the event, two players started football coaching courses, one was reunited with his family, and two players were 'signed up' to play semi-professional football at Hendon FC.

New Initiatives to be introduced next year include:

Introducing a uniform for vendors.

Relocating vendors to pitches that are monitored by CCTV cameras.

More pitches in the city centre will be marked with a stencil of The Big Issue in the North's logo.

Implementation of The Big Life Plan, a comprehensive resettlement programme tailored to each individual.

Big Life Employment

Annual Turnover: £1,113,687

Colin had been homeless for three years and had accessed various services, training and employment workshops. He was also active in The Big Issue in the North art group, creative writing group and the men's group. Colin wanted to get back into employment and in his assessment it was discovered that he had worked in the Far East for a number of years doing various things, including teaching English on an informal basis. BLE put Colin in touch with 'First English'. Following discussions with them they offered him a 12-month contract teaching English in China and at the same time supported him to complete his formal teaching qualification.

Company Registration Number: 04118653
Board of Directors: Fay Selvan (Chair),
Priti Butler (Executive Director),
Donna Ngan (Finance Director),
Barry Collins (Non Executive Director).

Big Life Employment (BLE) helps to improve the quality of life for disadvantaged people through equipping them with the skills they need to move into mainstream employment. It works throughout the North of England with individuals ranging from long term unemployed people, homeless people, ex-offenders, drug users, lone parents, people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups, asylum seekers and refugees. This year it has worked with 606 people. Big Life Employment made a profit of £13k this year.

Services are delivered within local communities and encourage empowerment and capacity building. People receive help through personal development, training, employment, advice and guidance.

BLE tailors its support to the individual rather than expecting people to fit in with general programmes, dealing with the whole person in the context of everything happening in their lives.

BLE, contrary to national trends, has an excellent track record for working with people from BME communities and helping them successfully gain employment. 70% of the people BLE worked with this year

were from an ethnic minority community. BLE provides short-term and ongoing longer courses to help people brush up on their skills, boost self confidence or to provide a platform for further training courses which can lead to qualifications or getting a job. This year BLE provided training to 562 people.

BLE provides supported employment for hundreds of people mainly by Intermediate Labour Markets (ILMs); short term jobs where people work whilst receiving training, assistance, support and encouragement. BLE operates a Government New Deal programme to support this work.

For many people, a placement is their first taste of work and it provides a useful experience, and is valued by employers. Often this work is within community settings or social businesses where people can see how their job is directly contributing to the work of the organisation. This year 126 people accessed supported employment placements. 39% of the people on ILMs went on to secure permanent employment.

BLE is also working with employers from the statutory, private and independent sector to provide employment for disadvantaged people. The purpose is to pass on the lessons that have been learned and to promote good practice and shared experience. This work is crucial for influencing and developing social policy as well as generating income for BLE's core activities of creating employment and

training opportunities for the target group. In December 2003, BLE relocated to Ducie House, into shared accommodation with the Manchester Youth Contact Team (YCT). The move has given BLE a 'shop window' to promote its services to a wide range of groups. The partnership with YCT created an opportunity for BLE to develop services specifically for excluded young people. 'The Space', a life college for young people, is a joint venture that will be launched in 2004.

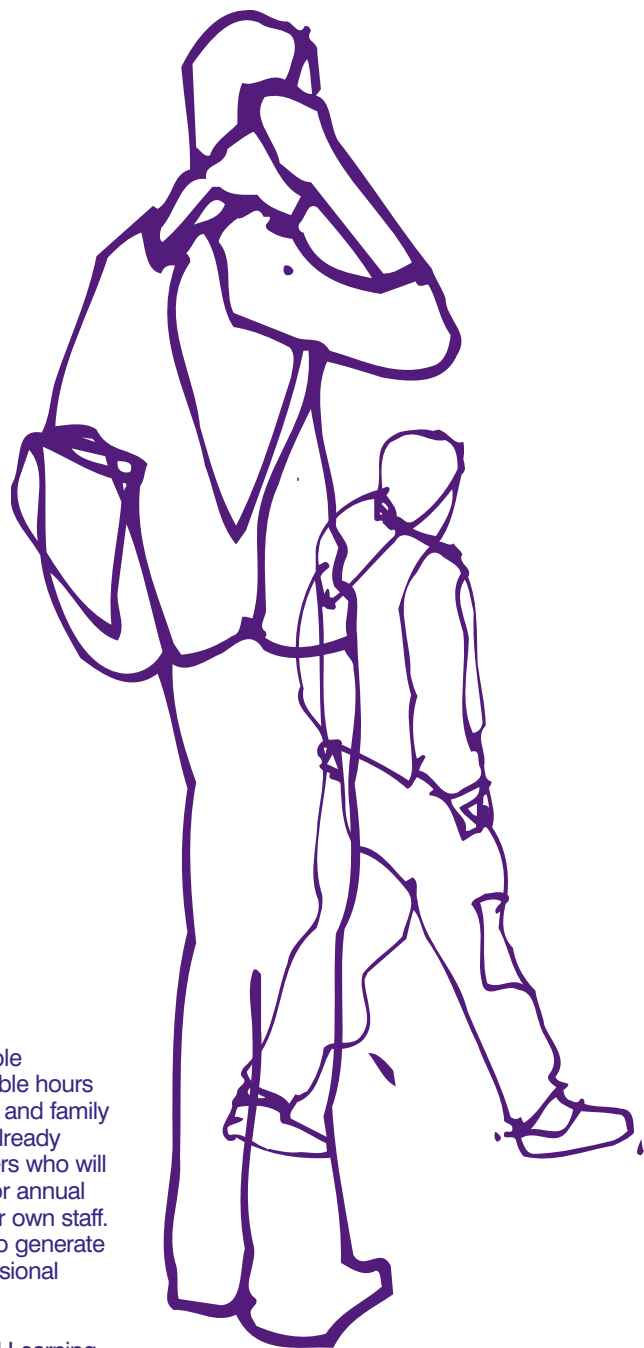
One of BLE's targets this year was to achieve a Quality Kite Mark for its Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) service. In March 2004 it successfully achieved this quality standard. This recognises that a quality service is being delivered and means that BLE is ring fenced for tendering on all information, advice and guidance services across Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool.

BLE has now secured funding to develop and launch a childcare staffing agency in partnership with Aisha Childcaring. The aim of the agency will be to offer flexible work options to people on a part time basis, moving into full time employment in the

childcare profession. This will enable individuals and carers to work flexible hours without impacting on their benefits and family tax credit allowances. Aisha has already established links with local providers who will use the agency to provide cover for annual leave, sickness and training of their own staff. Through the agency, Aisha will also generate employment by increasing the sessional crèche provision.

BLE has also successfully secured Learning Skills Council money to develop and launch the Zion Learning Centre. This will enable the Zion Community Resource and BLE to work with a wider group of people who face exclusion from mainstream learning. The centre will have its own ICT suite and will offer a range of accredited IT courses, as well as offering basic skills, projects and employment workshops.

In the future, BLE will be looking at other opportunities for similar employment agencies where disadvantaged people, normally overlooked by mainstream employers, will have a real chance of finding a way into work.



Aisha Childcaring

Annual Turnover: £192,329

‘Our daughter has attended the nursery for over a year. In that time I have observed significant developments in her speech, social skills, painting and playing. She is increasingly confident and I feel that this is partly due to the warmth, support and affection she has received from the staff. They are clearly dedicated to improving the learning skills of the children in their care.’ **Yoni, local mother**

Company number:04713084
Board members: Fay Selvan (Chair), Donna Ngan (Finance Director), Priti Butler (Executive Director).

Aisha Childcaring is a social business which delivers a range of childcare services such as day-care, after-school clubs and mobile creches, through to developing new childcare initiatives targeted by the Department For Education and Skills.

Aisha works hard to ensure that the cultural diversity of the local population is reflected in its staff, and is celebrated in the nursery. Its success in attracting a wide range of Black and Minority Ethnic communities to use its services can be seen below:

White	27%
Black	26%
Black African	17%
Black other	19%
Asian	3%
Somalian	1%
Chinese	1%
Irish	2%
Other	4%

This year, Aisha has cared for 81 children in its day nursery, and 142 children in its play schemes. As a result of the childcare Aisha has provided, 91 parents have been able to maintain employment. Aisha has also provided the opportunity for ten people to undertake supported employment placements and 15 people to gain NVQs in Playwork and Childcare.

In line with changes to the national childcare standards, all Aisha staff completed training on the changes, while individual staff received training to take on specialist roles in special needs, behaviour management, child protection and equality, and key staff were trained to the new foundation stage in ICT. This has now been introduced as part of the early development programme.

Aisha made a small profit this year of £3k and it has developed its business plan and is exploring opportunities for franchising its business. The business model Aisha has adopted means that it is able to attract and retain experienced and qualified staff as it pays Local Authority equivalent salaries, ensuring it continues to offer a quality service. Aisha's portfolio includes the development of a 100 place childcare centre in Trafford, consultancy work for Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council for the development of the Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative and a feasibility study for the Women's Electronic Village Hall.

The year ahead looks to provide Aisha with a number of exciting opportunities. A new 100-place nursery in Trafford will be completed and it will be working with Surestart Longsight to deliver nursery provision in their new centre. In order to do this, Aisha will need to ensure that its procedures are as effective as possible. Next year Aisha plans to achieve Childcare Quality Kite Marks in Quality Counts, Quality Assurance and Investors in Children. It also aims to achieve stability in occupancy levels and improve current credit control procedures, and is particularly keen to establish an independent NVQ training programme in partnership with Big Life Employment and MANCAT (Manchester College of Arts and Technology).

Northern Solutions

Annual Turnover: £166,237

“Before I came to The Big Life Company I spent many years, I guess not knowing what I wanted to do. I got caught up in the wrong crowd and faced the consequences of that. I drifted from job to job not managing to get settled. I spent years being unemployable because my self-belief had been shattered. Low self-worth drove me to despair. I didn’t believe there was a way out of the poverty trap. Everything I touched turned brown and I began to wonder what it was like on the other side, after death.

My sister’s partner heard about a part-time maintenance vacancy at The Big Life Company. I decided to give it one last stab and I got the job. Despite being much worse off financially I got self-worth from working. Within no time I was offered full-time work for the company and my confidence and zeal for life escalated. I always give 110% in most things I do and recently that effort was rewarded when I was promoted. I am now manager for Northern Solutions maintenance department, an ambition I have had since being a child was to manage people in some capacity. I love my job and am ever grateful to the people that have shown faith in me when I could not find faith in myself. They know who they are. Thank you.”

Company Number:04118649
Board members: Fay Selvan (Chair), Donna Ngan (Finance Director), Andy Peers (Executive Director).

Northern Solutions is a buildings and environmental maintenance company, that offers a variety of services to help organisations, including the other businesses within The Big Life group, care for their property and physical environment. It also creates employment and training opportunities for people who have been excluded from the work place for many reasons, so that they might either build a future career with Northern Solutions or move on in their lives and successfully re-enter the employment market.

In addition to the work it does within the group, Northern Solutions has successfully renewed a number of contracts with external organisations this year, as well as securing a new contract at the newly opened Women’s Electronic Village Hall building in Manchester.

As a result, Northern Solutions was able to finish the financial year with a small profit and also achieve its target for creating employment opportunities. Northern Solutions now has a staff team of 19 people across the areas of cleaning and housekeeping, caretaking and maintenance and outdoor

works, working a blend of full and part-time hours.

This year’s focus has been on consolidating Northern Solutions’ progress to date and developing the internal operations and staffing structures that will allow for healthy growth over the coming years.

A series of internal service level agreements have been produced that now form the basis of the tendering and costing model for external contracts. Alongside this, a number of policies and procedures were developed in order to constantly improve the standards of service delivered to all customers.

The staffing structure was revised throughout the year to provide capacity for growth and improved support for the staff team.

For the 2004-05 financial year, Northern Solutions is deliberately seeking new contract opportunities across the Greater Manchester area whilst also focusing efforts to develop the staff teams in preparation for growth in the Merseyside and Leeds/West Yorkshire regions. To do this, Northern Solutions will be implementing the sales strategy included in its business plan. In addition to this, opportunities that could arise from local authority efforts to involve Social Enterprises in their public procurement plans will be sought.



Services in The Big Life group

The Big Issue in the North Trust

Company Number: 03164559
Charity Number: 1056041

Big Life Services

Company Number: 03311884
Charity Number: 1062333

This year Trustees from Big Life Services and The Big Issue in the North Trust worked with The Big Life group to plan the future of the services we provide to our diverse group of clients.

As in 2002/2003, most of the services continued to be delivered by The Big Life group overseen by the Trustees. Following a meeting with the Charity Commission, the Trustees of the two charities agreed to a 'joining resolution', allowing the two charities to continue to operate as separate organisations, but share one Board of Trustees. This was formally agreed at the Annual General Meetings of the two charities and implemented from January 2004.

Trustees:

Names and dates of appointments/resignations in year.

Big Life Services/The Big Issue in the North Trust

Name	Appointed
Laura Nuttall	20.1.04
William Anthony Harvey	20.1.04
Mumtaz Bashir	20.1.04
Fay Selvan	20.1.04
Bruce Learner	20.1.04
Angela Young	20.1.04
Barry Collins	20.1.04
Adrian Jennings	20.1.04
Chris Binns	20.1.04
Mark Fitzgibbon	20.1.04
Paul Goddard	20.1.04

The Big Issue in the North Trust

Name	Resigned
Tom Manion	20.1.04

Big Life Services

Name	Resigned
Matthew Harris	20.1.04

Kath Locke Centre

Muriel Palmer has been coming to the Kath Locke Centre since 2001 as a member of the Sugar Group, a group for local people who have diabetes. Having successfully completed a Keeping in Touch course, where she learnt the basics of massage and relaxation, Muriel volunteered this year at Kath Locke Centre health events, including the Breast Cancer Awareness day, where she gave hand massages to people coming to the centre.

"I enjoy coming to the Kath Locke and the Sugar Group because of the company and because of the useful information I get from health professionals, who have the time to explain to me about my diabetes. I also enjoy the visits and trips which are organised through the Sugar Group. I am always greeted with a warm welcome at the Kath Locke, and know that I can get helpful information and advice from the reception team."

The Kath Locke Centre opened in 1997 and was the first primary care centre in the country to be run by a non-statutory organisation. The centre offers a range of primary care and non-statutory services aimed at improving people's health and well-being.

The success of the centre can be seen in the number of people using it - In 2003/4 the centre had over 32,000 visitors and 23,000 phone enquiries.

Local people continue to be supported to develop services to meet their own needs. The Sugar Group, set-up by a local woman who wanted to see more services for people affected by diabetes in the community, now meets twice a week at the centre and invites health professionals to come along to their sessions. It regularly has over 40, mainly African Caribbean women, attend.

A number of agencies have teams based at the centre and deliver services from there, including the Community Mental Health Team, African and Caribbean Mental Health Services, Black Health Agency

young peoples' sexual health project, bloom Healthy Living Network, Therapeutic Services and the Dental Practice.

The Green Plate Café also opened this year, offering healthy organic foods, and supporting ethical worldwide trading. The café has brought a new buzz to the centre and is acting as a key attraction for visitors. In addition, the centre has worked closely with Central Manchester Primary Care Trust to oversee the development of city-wide health services for asylum seekers and refugees and the extension of two services for older people: Admiral Nurse clinics for people suffering from dementia and the Alpha service to improve physical activities.

The Kath Locke Centre holds a range of promotional events throughout the year. This year it has covered Black History month (working with local elders to promote the importance of black history), Breast Awareness day (bringing together a range of agencies and providing breast examination and a measuring service), and the Jeans for Genes Day, which raised money for charity.

Zion Community Resource

“What I like most about the Zion is that I get support and I have never felt patronised or looked down upon. The staff are always friendly, approachable and down to earth. I just love coming to the centre, as I feel safe and comfortable, the people are genuine and friendly, it’s more like a family to me and I feel that I belong here. I have been approached about becoming a volunteer, which was really great but I think it’s something I could do at a later date.”

The Zion Community Resource opened in 1991 and relocated into a purpose built centre designed by users, staff and volunteers in 2001. The centre provides a base for a range of statutory and community organisations to provide holistic services and training for the local community.

This year 16,592 people phoned the centre and over 24,000 people visited it.

Services in the centre include: HARP (Hulme Action Resource Project) who provide benefit, housing and disability advice to local people with mental health needs. They also run a café as a training opportunity for service-users.

African Caribbean Mental Health Services work with black service users experiencing mental health problems and provide a range of support including drop-in sessions, case work, advocacy and advice.

Manchester Drug Service is a statutory agency providing care and treatment to substance users.

The Specialist Midwifery service is for women drug users, and offers a range of support services.

National Phobics operates a national helpline giving support and advice to people suffering from mental health problems.

Black Health Agency (BHA) offers a range of support services to Black Minority Ethnic communities across Manchester, including support for people affected by HIV and Aids, and a cancer support network. BHA also supports the Race and Health Forum, which meet in the centre.

Barnardo’s ‘Making it Work’, a new service to the centre this year, engages with and supports young people leaving care.

Self-help Services run 21 weekly groups that cover a range of issues from anxiety, a gay men’s group, and the food and mood group.

Voices and Choices promote well-being and healthy lifestyles to local women through a weekly drop in session.

Aisha Childcaring operates a day nursery providing childcare to the local community and training opportunities through the NVQ Child Care and Play Work.

Therapeutic Services provide a range of therapeutic massage and counselling services at the Zion aimed at people suffering mental distress.

This year also saw the development of a number of new services provided by external agencies: a ‘falls clinic’ delivered through central Manchester Primary Care Trust for people who have had falls and are undergoing physiotherapy has been opened. And a new specialist education service for children awaiting school placements after exclusion, relocation or other circumstances has been offered.

The Zion garden has undergone extensive landscaping and looks spectacular. Work is expected to finish in the summer of 2004. The garden has provided an excellent opportunity for people to develop new skills and undertake a structured training programme.

In January of this year the centre was successful in securing a contract to develop the centre as a learning zone, offering local people training and education opportunities, alongside job search. This project will be developed with Big Life Employment.

Self-help Services

Self-help Services is the user-led mental health branch of Big Life Services. It operates an extensive range of client-led, mental health (and other condition-specific) support groups across the North West. The ethos of Self-help Services is the belief that people can help themselves through helping others.

This year Self-help Services developed considerably in terms of the number of groups and services it offers. There are now 26 support groups in operation, an extensive range of computerised self-management packages and a seasonal affective disorder (SAD) light box therapy service.

- On average, each support group has 8 attendees a week.
- 10,816 clients have used Self-help Services this year.

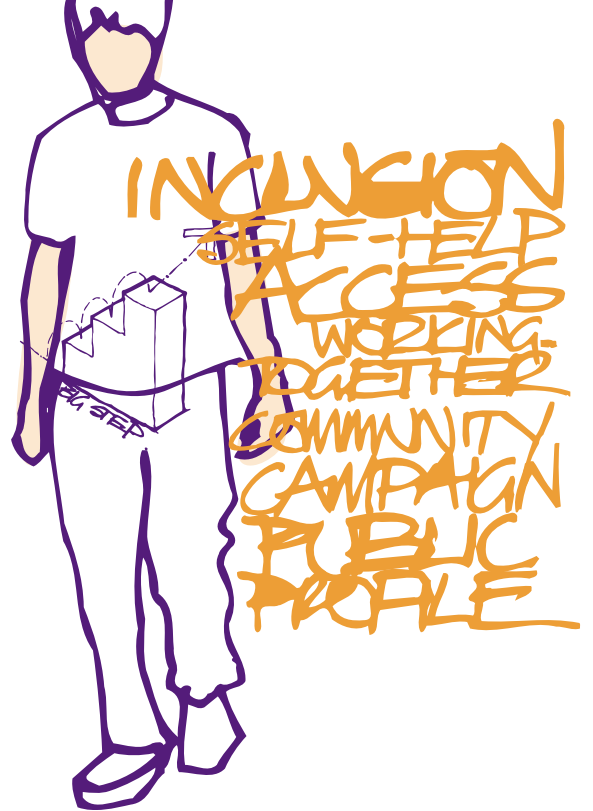
New groups and services this year include two support groups for those living with, and affected by, borderline personality disorder, a structured food and mood support group which investigates the link between what we eat and how we feel and two new groups launched in north Manchester around eating disorders and depression.

SHS has extended the range of support on offer to women from Asian communities and has two vibrant support groups operating in the Longsight and Old Trafford areas of Manchester. Another development has been the expansion of the support services on offer to those who have suffered any form of abuse. It now has two separate survivors groups running for men and women.

This year, many of the department's respective support groups have attracted funding from Manchester's Community Chest. This enabled the groups to meet on a weekly basis and in doing so, offer support to many vulnerable and isolated individuals. SHS has also been very fortunate in securing space at the headquarters of Manchester Mental Health & Social Care NHS Trust, a central location, which has allowed several new groups to meet during the evenings.

Continued funding from the Active Community Unit of the Home Office enabled the Self-help co-ordinator to start a number of new developments, extending the geographical area of its services. Mainstream funding from Manchester Mental Health Joint Commissioning Executive has funded the core elements of the department and ensured its future viability.

Plans for 2004-2005 include establishing new support groups in Leeds and Liverpool, and offering similar services as those already set up in Manchester in other areas of the North West. Other imminent developments include establishing a support group for sufferers of post-traumatic stress disorder as a direct response to the large numbers of individuals now living in Manchester who have suffered torture in their previous place of residence. A further anxiety support group is also planned for Manchester to meet in the evening, enabling those who work to access support.



S joined the Self-help team in 2001 as facilitator of the Longsight Asian women's group as a result of her personal experience of a number of issues including isolation and low self-esteem. She was very keen to prevent other women from experiencing the types of problems that she had and built a strong support network for Asian women in the Longsight area of Manchester. Through facilitating a weekly support group, attending a range of training events including courses on building self-esteem, S was able to considerably develop her own self-confidence to the extent that she applied for a full time position in an Asian women's refuge. She was offered the position and has been in post as a support worker ever since. S is now able to put all her experience (both personal and professional) to good use helping other women going through difficult times in their lives.

Vendor Services

"My name is Rob and I have been homeless for just over a year. I had heard of The Big Issue in the North before I was homeless, I knew that it was a magazine, but I had no idea of the kind of support I would receive over these difficult months.

I am now selling the magazine as much as I can, and taking part in lots of different courses including basic computer skills. I had never touched a computer before coming here, and this has enabled me to work on my C.V.

I am also in a group which is doing a research project for the Arts Council of England. We run workshops in other Manchester-based homeless organisations to find out about the barriers that homeless people face when they go to places like the theatre or cinema. I had never run a workshop in my life before, but the training we had was brilliant.

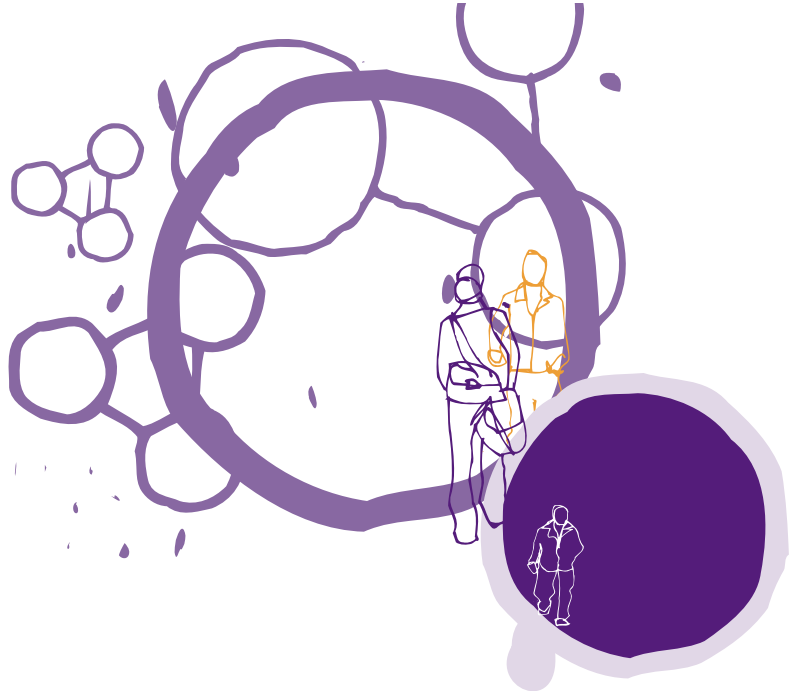
At the moment I am staying in temporary shared homeless accommodation. My future goals are to get a flat of my own and a job. I am a mechanical engineer by trade, I studied for 4 year's for this, and I am going to get my life back on track."

This year vendor services helped:

41 people into employment
233 people into temporary accommodation
88 people into permanent accommodation
45 people onto external training courses
101 people into detox

Vendor services teams across the region have continued to deliver quality services to vendors of The Big Issue in the North. Following on from the review of the old resettlement programme, staff pressed

ahead with designing a new revised programme, The Big Life Plan. The main difference being that vendors will no longer have a fixed time limit of two years to sell, but will have an individualised programme of care tailored to their particular circumstances. Vendors are able to continue to sell the magazine, so long as they are demonstrating progress with their plan. Consultations internally and externally have continued throughout the year and the new programme will be rolled out next year.



The audit of vendors of The Big Issue in the North again provided useful information. As a result of the previous resettlement programme coming to an end, the length of time vendors have been selling The Big Issue in the North for has changed considerably. In 2002, 28% of vendors had sold for more than two years compared to 7% in 2003 as many vendors reached the end of the 2 year period. The review of the programme highlighted that the fixed time limit had worked successfully for some individuals and motivated them to move on from the streets. For others it led to a decline back to begging and rough sleeping. The new programme offers the opportunity for some old vendors to return, and this is reflected in this year's survey with 21% of vendors having sold for more than two years.

Almost a third of vendors had been homeless for more than three years and are stuck in a cycle of temporary accommodation and rough sleeping, with 74% saying they had slept rough at some time during the last year. Nearly half of the vendors became homeless before they were 21, with a quarter having spent time in local authority care.

56% of vendors said they had a problem with drugs, 80% of these people said they had a drug problem prior to becoming homeless. As in previous years, 37% of vendors who identified as having a drug problem are not accessing any drug services. There was also an increase in the use of crack cocaine, which is consistent with national trends, (nearly 60% of drug using vendors said they had used it in the previous four weeks, and just over half of them had injected it).

In line with previous year, nearly 80% of vendors felt that selling the magazine gave them greater self-confidence, and 85% felt

that it motivated them to change their lives. Half of the drug using vendors said their drug use had decreased since selling the magazine and nearly 80% of vendors said that they had committed less crime since selling the magazine.

This year, the Liverpool office worked with resettlement teams in local prisons and supported ex-offenders by intervening in the cycle of homelessness. Initially, staff entered prisons and offered housing support to people who were due for release, preventing them from becoming homeless. Access to services were also offered on release, regardless of whether the person sold the magazine.

New projects started last year in Liverpool, such as the theatre trips with Cardboard Citizens and drama workshops with Hope St Theatre. Music sessions are now held at the Liverpool centre three times a week.

In Manchester, vendors worked with Naked Subculture, the professional theatre company made up of homeless and ex-homeless people, to create 'House' a production which they performed at venues in Manchester, Sheffield and Liverpool.

Leeds' vendors worked on their artistic skills with creative writing sessions and the Willow project, where vendors created three dimensional lanterns made out of willow and paper in the style of mystical creatures.

This year The Big Issue in the North Trust raised £142k from individual donations, and £193K from charitable trusts and grants. It continued to receive support from the National Lottery Community Fund. This income has enabled it to carry out its work. In future years, contracts with the public sector will be developed to ensure that the work of the Trust is mainstreamed.

Therapeutic Services

Jason, a young male client, came to counselling after he had been released from prison. Jason had had a very turbulent and abusive background and came with many prejudices and a mistrust of counselling. It was a while before Jason could trust, but he did begin to with time.

Jason disclosed many accounts of sexual and drug abuse situations and also some horrific accounts of neglect. He struggled to form relationships as a result.

After many weeks, he disclosed how he had been inspired by counselling and felt that this was an area that he could be interested in. Some time later, Jason enrolled on a counselling course and found it really stimulating. Jason feels he has made huge progress in his counselling and the counsellor described him as ‘inspirational’.

This year Therapeutic Services offered over 3,500 counselling and complementary therapy sessions to 447 service users. Services offered were:

- > Counselling
- > Therapeutic Massage Clinics
- > Relaxation Drop-in Sessions
- > Keeping in Touch Courses
- > Therapeutic Groupwork
- > Reiki and Acupuncture Clinics
- > Homeopathy Clinics

For the first time, Therapeutic Services offered a range of complementary therapies to families living in Summergrove. It also continued to deliver services to vendors of The Big Issue in the North, further developed services to Surestart Longsight, and continued to work with the CHAP project in Salford to develop complementary therapies alongside primary care services. A new contract was secured to develop a specialist counselling service for Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Liverpool.

As in previous years, the therapeutic services on offer are accessed by a diverse range of people (see pie chart on following page).

Counselling

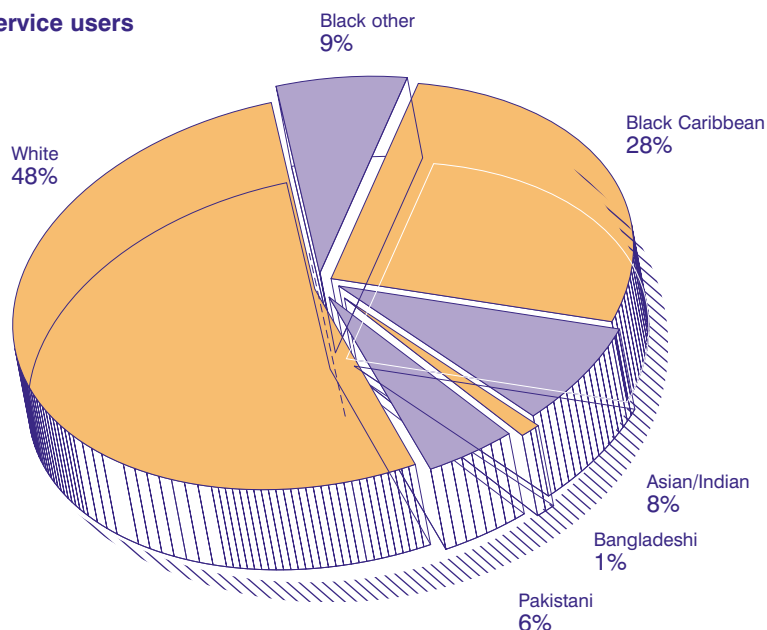
2,467 counselling sessions have been offered and 135 people have accessed the counselling sessions over the last year.

The counselling team have worked extensively with North Manchester Primary Care Trust to monitor and increase counselling provision. This resulted in the establishment of 2 new clinics in Cheetham Hill. There has been a significant squeeze on space in the Central Manchester area, with the move to re-locate and deliver NHS primary care services in community accommodation and, as a result, space for counselling services in primary care is under pressure.

A voluntary counselling service aimed at BME communities in central Liverpool has also been launched. A lot of success has been had working with local agencies, including the Social Inclusion Unit, Liverpool FSU and Jet South Central Employment Service that led to Central Liverpool Primary Care Trust awarding a contract for the service.

A new venture for Therapeutic Services this year has been developed through a relationship with Manchester City Council

Ethnic origin of service users



(MCC). In the last year, 200 referrals have been received for staff counselling. The success of the service has led to the provision of clinical supervision for members of MCC's Occupational Health staff team and a number of complementary therapy taster days for MCC staff. This is an area which will be developed in future years.

Massage

Therapeutic Services provided three massage clinics a week for people with mental health needs at the Kath Locke Centre and the Zion Community Resource in Manchester, as well as developing new services in Summergrove (Liverpool) and Surestart Longsight. As in previous years the profile of users shows that nearly half of the people are from BME communities and nearly a quarter aged over 65.

During the year the massage service ran a number of Keeping in Touch courses (basic hand massage and listening skills) for community groups, including a course for the bloom Health Living Network for the over 55's.

There has also been a successful bid to the Community Health Chest to provide Keeping in Touch courses for parents, asylum seekers and refugees in Liverpool.

Homeopathy

Although funding for homeopathy services ceased at the end of the 2002/3 financial year, Therapeutic Services have been able to provide six homeopathy clinics a month at the Kath Locke Centre and the Zion Community Resource, due to the support of a dedicated team of qualified volunteer homeopaths. The service has offered 95 people appointments and has a waiting list of 66 people.

In October 2003, a volunteer co-ordinator was appointed to support the team, fundraise and establish new policies and procedures for the service. New structures have been established and a fundraising strategy is now in place.

Salford Integrated Healthcare Pilot

In July, Therapeutic Services began working in partnership with Charlestown and Lower Kersal "New Deal for Communities" in the provision of an exciting new healthcare project. Working with the Community Health Action Project (CHAP), the project supports the introduction of a range of appropriate, natural complementary health treatments such as massage, reflexology, homeopathy and nutrition advice, alongside information and learning programmes. It offers local people alternative ways to care for their health whilst supporting medical services.





Partnerships

The Big Life group is committed to working in partnerships in our services and businesses. We believe this will ensure we harness the best expertise available, and help us influence other agencies. Models of good practice are more easily replicated when people can see examples of how they have already worked. We do not have one form of partnership. In some we are the lead agency, employing staff and accounting for finances. In others we are simply in an advisory capacity. We always ensure however, that we carry our values into the work we do with partners and that each piece of work contributes to The Big Life group's objectives.

bloom Healthy Living Network

'Imagine a big dark hotel with millions of rooms,' one client said, 'but all the lights are off so you can't see where you're going. Well, that's where I was. But now, since I've been working with bloom, it's like the lights have been turned on and I can go up to the rooms and I can see what's written on the door, and if I want to go in I can do, and if I want you to come with me, you'll come with me.'

bloom is the healthy living network for Hulme, Moss Side, Old Trafford and Whalley Range, in Greater Manchester. The project secured New Opportunities Funding and a team was appointed at the end of last year. Subsequently this year has been a year of action for bloom, with the Quality of Life and IT development services, and the delivery of an ambitious marketing programme, getting underway.

The team set themselves the challenge of launching through not one but eight events, which began with a launch in January called Give and Take, and continued with a local road show. The launch was attended by 27 local groups who ran stalls or handed out literature, and it was a huge success. The road show gave bloom's team and volunteers the chance to talk to over 300 local people about the project - and to be seen by many more.

bloom's Quality of Life (QoL) workers came into post in spring 2003 and since then have been carving out a practice and defining what it is to be a QoL. They work one-to-one and in groups, helping people look at everything that's going on in their lives, providing tools and a space to think about what's going well and what's not, and what can be built on. They then link people into all the things going on locally, through bloom's network. The one-to-one work has grown steadily over the last year, as people have begun to hear about the new service and its positive effects.

The team have also launched a local food network, helped local groups with their IT issues, broadcast on community radio, developed a volunteering programme, run relaxation and Qi-gong groups and are in the process of developing a powerful new web presence. bloom's growing network is looking poised to change the way local people and professionals think about health in our communities.



Community Health Action Partnership (CHAP)

"Sink or Swim" was a project which came to light when an elderly lady 80 years young stated that she would love to learn to swim before she died. This chance comment was all that was needed to ignite the spark in a local resident and community activist. She applied to CHAP for a small grant to enable her to deliver a course of swimming lessons for the 50+ age group; she contacted the local arts and leisure department and secured a slot at the local swimming baths. With transport provided, there was no shortage of takers. Unfortunately numbers had to be restricted to 10 per class. The lessons lasted for a period of 10 weeks and had an attendance of 100%. The classes were so successful that the ladies themselves suggested this course could be followed on with a session in the gym. With the aid of CHAP's healthy living co-ordinator, a follow-on class delivering an exercise programme has been arranged. A further session of 10 swimming classes has been booked and is currently running. This project has now become a social activity that is an integral part of the programmes on offer at the Lower Kersal Activities Centre in conjunction with the Golden Years Group formed by a local resident.

CHAP is a New Deal for Communities (NDC) Regeneration Programme in Charlestown and Lower Kersal, Salford: an area that has seen a rapid decline in health services in previous years. The area has a population of 10,000 with higher than average incidence of Chronic Heart Disease, Asthma, Diabetes, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and childhood dental decay.

Formed by local residents back in 2000, CHAP has developed from a constituted group into a company limited by guarantee. They have at present a membership of seventy and a board of ten directors, with representatives from the local community and RAPAR (Refugee and Asylum Seekers Participatory Action Research).

Having secured funds from New Deal for Communities, CHAP now employ 7 local people and deliver services as part of the Health Regeneration Team. CHAP are currently working with The Big Life Company and Salford Primary Care Trust on a model of Community Governance that will enable them to manage, on behalf of the community, the services in the New (LIFT) Health and Wellbeing Centres planned for Charlestown and Lower Kersal.

CHAP has a bold vision to make Charlestown and Lower Kersal a happy healthy place to live. CHAP see a future where individuals are empowered to take

control of their own health, running their own health centres and services, and working side-by-side with local providers to improve services. The Big Life Company are supporting CHAP to make this future happen.

CHAP deliver a range of health and regeneration projects. These include the Expert Patient Programme, Health and Play Partnership, Healthy Living Project, Carers Support Project, Can Do projects, and the development of two new community health and resource centres in partnership with Salford PCT.

Through their small grants programme the "CHAP Can Do" projects have, over the last 3 years, reached in excess of 1000 local people, engaging them in identifying and delivering services that they themselves have designed. By cutting red tape and bureaucracy they have been able to produce some excellent results.

CHAP has funded 27 Can Do projects so far, with further funding being made available next year. Projects include:

- Fit Kidz Club
- Nit Wits (Head lice education sessions)
- Sculpture Classes at Duchy House Centre (Mental Health Service Provider)
- Post-natal Depression Art Sessions
- Baby Massage
- Clockwork Orange Food Co-operative
- Multi-cultural cooking classes

Surestart Longsight

“I have found all the team I have been in contact with at Surestart very helpful, nice, kind and very useful. I received lots of support, in particular from the midwife, and training and careers co-ordinator. I really enjoy going to the baby massage, and mums and toddlers group. These groups have helped me to communicate and helped my child learn to play with other children and get used to other people.

Through the training and careers co-ordinator I have received a lot of support around training and employment and have been able to secure a full-time job through interview support. Other services I access are the keep fit classes. Since I have had my child I haven't needed to go anywhere except Surestart as I receive all the support I need. The team are just so very helpful and very kind.” **Surestart Longsight Parent**

Surestart Longsight is a project dedicated to making life better for children, parents and communities. It offers a wide range of services to children and families living in the area, including:

- Play and childcare activities for 0 - 4 year olds
- Support for expectant parents
- Training, employment and volunteering opportunities
- Health advice and guidance
- Parent Support Groups
- Emotional and practical support
- Activities for babies

In the past year, Surestart has run 468 sessions at their Play Unit, offering 11,282 places for children throughout the year. They have run 336 Parent and Toddler sessions, offering 5,376 places for parents and children.

776 places were offered on a variety of training courses supported with childcare. 257 new families were registered, which meant that there were 722 individuals registered with the Surestart project. 100% of the new born babies in the Surestart Longsight area were visited within their first two months of life.

A new Surestart Centre is opening next year, which will extend services even more and will accommodate a 40 place day-care nursery, a community café, and more training and employment schemes for parents and family support groups. Building work for the new centre started on site this summer and will be completed in the autumn of 2004.

Summergrove

J and her partner had lived a chaotic lifestyle using street drugs, both spending time in prison. Two of J's children were adopted in 1998 and 1999, and a third was born in 2000, but removed by Social Services in March 2003. J then underwent a detox programme and stated her intention to stay drug free.

Summergrove was found to be a suitable place for J and her child to rebuild their relationship. J started her tenancy with the knowledge that this was her last chance to prove herself as her child's main carer. J grew into a strong, loving mother, balancing her own needs and those of her daughter's, and actively participating in the programme. She enrolled on a computer course at a local college while her daughter attended day nursery. J remained drug free throughout her stay and successfully left the project in January 2004.

Recent news that her child has been taken off a Social Services Care Order proves how successful J has been in overcoming her past history of drug use.

Summergrove is a ground breaking project for families affected in the past by parental substance misuse. The scheme, which opened in July this year, has been developed in partnership with Maritime Housing Association, Liverpool City Council and The Big Life Company. The concept of Summergrove grew out of focus groups with drug using parents, who designed the model for the project. The project met a gap identified by Liverpool City Council's Housing Strategy, which identified the need to provide a range of housing for vulnerable groups.

The project offers a six to twelve month structured programme of support services, tailored to individual needs to help families rebuild their lives emotionally, physically, socially and economically. Support includes one-to-one counselling for adults and children, therapeutic groups and employment training to help rebuild family relationships, self-confidence, and increase social and economic skills. Families are referred from a range of agencies across the Northwest, including Social Services and various drug services.

In the first eight months of Summergrove it has had considerable success. Two families have moved into independent accommodation and remain drug free (one of these people has been drug free for over a year). Two new babies have been born whilst families have been staying at Summergrove and over 20 children have been supported in the project. One child was reunited with their family during a stay at Summergrove, and a number of families have had children taken off the child protection register since living there.

The project works in partnership with a range of local agencies including Whitechapel, National Children's Home, Phoenix House and a number of Housing Associations. It also continues to work with local residents who had concerns about the development of the project.

Summergrove is applying for permanent planning permission early in the new year.

Funders List

Central Liverpool Primary Care Trust	Monument Trust
Central Manchester Primary Care Trust	National Lottery Charities Board
Children in Need	New Opportunities Fund
City of Salford	Northern Rock Foundation
Community Learning Chest (Leeds)	R M Burton Charitable Trust
Constance Green	Scurrah Wainwright
Department of Trade and Industry	Sue Hodgkiss Charitable Trust
Economic Regeneration Development Fund	The Beatrice Laing Trust
Employment Regeneration Partnership	The Dock Charitable Trust
Economic Social Fund	The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation
Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust	The Peter Kershaw Trust
Greater Manchester Community Foundation	The Prince of Wales Foundation
Greater Manchester Learning & Skills Council	Thomas Wade
Greater Merseyside Learning & Skills Council	Trafford North Primary Health Care Trust
Health Action Zone	Tudor Trust
Heartlands	The John Moores Foundation (Liverpool)
Hiley	The Children's Network Fund
Knowsley Drugs & Alcohol Action Team (DAT)	Sefton DAT
Brian Whittaker, Lankelly Foundation	Liverpool DAT
Leeds City Council	St Helen's DAT
Leeds Hospital Foundation	Wirral DAT
Lloyds TSB Foundation – Yorkshire	CAD (Communities Against Drugs) Liverpool
Lloyds TSB North-west	The Fairway Project (Liverpool)
Manchester City Council	The Pilgrim Trust
Manchester Early Years and Play	Liverpool City Council
Manchester Mental Health Joint Commissioning Executive	Surestart (Picton, Liverpool)

