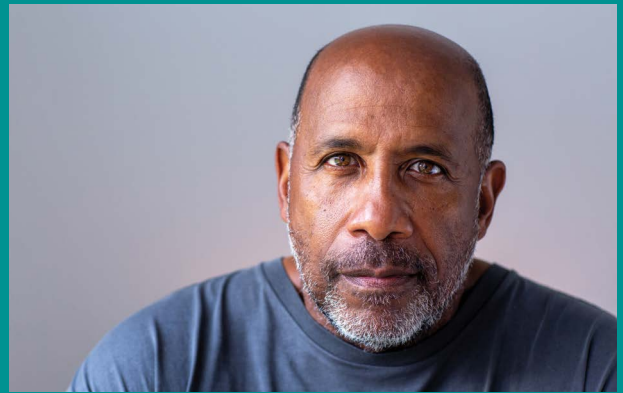




# FIRST BASE DAY CENTRE



# IMPACT REPORT

# About First Base

First Base Day Centre, located in Brighton, provides open access sessions each weekday morning for people who are experiencing street homelessness. It provides practical essentials such as hot food, showers, laundry facilities and clothes, alongside in-depth advice and support to move people away from homelessness for good. It is the only day centre of its kind in the Brighton and Hove area.

**Anyone who is sleeping rough can visit First Base or be directed to us by other services**

**We work in partnership with clients to ensure they understand the housing options that are available to them, and to create a co-produced housing and support plan. As well as helping clients find suitable accommodation, we can support them to secure benefits, and access qualifications and employment.**

Our dedicated staff team work closely with a range of partners across the city, including with addiction, health, and housing support services, so that clients can address the root causes of their homelessness and have access to all the support available to them.

In partnership with several healthcare providers, we offer onsite clinics with nurses,

mental health practitioners, podiatrists, optometrists, and dental hygienists. People who are experiencing homelessness often struggle to access these important services. We also provide a range of activities throughout the day, such as cooking groups, community outings, and table tennis.

It can be difficult to access certain essential services without having a permanent address, or without access to the internet and a phone. First Base provides a 'care of' address, as well as computers, fast Wi-Fi, charging facilities and SIM cards with credit to those who need them. This helps further break down barriers between people who are homeless and the services they need.



**We believe that, in one of the richest countries in the world, no one should have to sleep rough. We are committed to preventing homelessness, challenging its causes, and empowering people to overcome barriers to housing and employment.**



# Facts and Stats

➡ The most recent UK government rough sleeping snapshot survey showed a 26% increase in people sleeping rough nationally compared to the previous year.<sup>1</sup> We are seeing this trend reflected locally, where soaring rents and living costs are pushing more people into homelessness.

616 people accessed First Base Day Centre last year - an increase from the previous year - and demand for the service continues to rise. 6,856 visits were made to the Centre last year.



➡ The most recent figures from Shelter identified Brighton and Hove as the worst place for homelessness rates in Southeast England, with one in 78 people in the city without a home.<sup>2</sup>

Last year, First Base supported 366 people to move away from rough sleeping and into accommodation.

➡ With many charities struggling to survive given the squeeze on public funding, the cost of living increase, and reductions in donations, community hubs like First Base that share space and resources with partners are more important than ever.

Last year, First Base provided 800 hours of meeting and training space to partner agencies. 10 different partner organisations ran clinics or sessions at the centre.

➡ Recent research by Homeless Link into the health needs of people experiencing homelessness found that a third of those surveyed ate on average only one meal a day.<sup>3</sup>

Last year, First Base served approximately 7,000 meals to clients. Clients also benefit from healthy eating advice and free cookery classes.



➡ People who experience homelessness can struggle to access quality health care. Shockingly the average age of death for people experiencing homelessness is just 45 for men and 43 for women<sup>4</sup>, and they are more likely to be affected by health conditions such as Hepatitis C, tuberculosis, and epilepsy.

First Base offers clients regular access to a nurse and other specialised health services. Last year, 105 people attended specialist homeless health clinics delivered at the centre.

➡ Research shows that people with lived experience have a huge amount to offer to employers, but still face numerous barriers to entering the work force<sup>5</sup>.

Nearly 1 in 5 staff at BHT Sussex have lived experience of the issues our support services address, and we recognise the enormous value they bring to the organisation.

1 UK Government Official Statistics, *Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England: Autumn 2022*. Published February 2023

2 Shelter, *Homelessness in England 2022*. Published January 2023

3 Homeless Link, *The Unhealthy State of Homelessness 2022*. Published October 2022

4 Office for National Statistics, *Deaths of Homeless People in England and Wales: 2021 registrations*. Published November 2022

5 CRE Research and the University of Sheffield with the Systems Change Action Network, *Involving people with lived experience in the workforce*. Published January 2021



## Jim's Story

Jim came to First Base after he lost his Supported Accommodation and had to sleep on the streets, despite having significant health support needs. This is his story.

“ I came to First Base, and one of their Case Workers asked me if I wanted to work with them to complete a support needs assessment so we could work out what help I needed. They were understanding and they listened to everything I had to say.

“Based on what I told them, they referred me to Housing Options at Brighton and Hove City Council. They said I was likely in Priority Need for Housing, which made me feel hopeful.

**“I have a lot of support needs, including an organic brain injury, chronic alcohol use, and epilepsy. Sometimes I can appear chaotic and drunk, which makes it hard for me to get help from other services.**

“The staff at First Base got to know me and they were able to help me talk to other people who could help me. They acted as a go-between and helped me to understand what I needed to do to get the help I wanted.

“First Base helped me to find a place in local authority Emergency Accommodation, although because of my brain injury and alcohol use, I kept forgetting where I was supposed to be staying. I would go back to First Base and say I was homeless, even though I wasn't. First Base helped me to get back to my accommodation safely each time, and they arranged for Welfare Officers at the Council and the Health Inclusion Team to check on me and make sure I was okay.

“While I was at First Base, I had a few epileptic seizures. The staff were well trained, and they were able to help me manage them safely. I could stay in their medical room whilst I recovered.

“I asked them to help me arrange for a nurse from the Health Inclusion Team to assess my health so we could work out what I needed to feel well.

“First Base helped me to follow up on a referral that had been made to Adult Social Care when I was in my last accommodation. They supported me to meet with my Social Worker and to do a Care Act Assessment. After this, social services were able to help me find accommodation that met my needs, with support in place to help me sustain it.

“First Base recognised that I had a lot of different support needs and that it was hard for me to get help from other services. They saw my strengths and I built a good relationship with the staff.

“They worked with lots of different services to make sure I got the help I needed, and they prevented me from ending up back on the streets.”

“

**The staff at First Base got to know me and they were able to help me talk to other people who could help me. They acted as a go-between and helped me to understand what I needed to do to get the help I wanted.**





## What do clients and staff say about First Base?

### CLIENTS

**“ I just wanted to provide positive feedback to you and the First Base Day Centre team who are amazing and fantastic and in my eyes heroes to the community, providing very much help and support much needed to people sleeping rough and homeless.**

“I can't thank you enough for the advice, guidance, support and assistance through my difficult period. When I was about to lose hope and faith, the First Base Day Centre was a place where I could find refuge, comfort and safety.

I was met with friendly and supportive staff on my first day and felt very welcomed, relaxed and comfortable.

“Living in Brighton for 25+ years made me realise life is full of unexpected events and there is always help out there and organisations giving their best to support vulnerable and disadvantaged people like myself. Please keep up the incredible good work and thanks a million again for what you have done for me. I will cherish the great memories of my time spent there.”

**Steve, First Base client**

**“ Firstly, I want to emphasise the importance of the service you provide. People who use it have certain things that they can rely on - such as warm food and drink, showers, laundry, some advice and friendship of people from both the staff and the clients all for free. Without all that, it would be extremely hard to maintain the right level of hygiene and carry on living a dignified life.**

“To find oneself in need can happen pretty much to anybody and sometimes we don't have anyone to ask for help or we feel too embarrassed or don't want to be a burden to the few we have. First Base helps people without asking too personal questions and treats everyone fairly and with respect.

“First Base also provides afternoon courses and activities such as cookery lessons, visits to museums or sport such as playing ping pong. The value of that is felt most on those cold rainy days. Every extra hot drink and every extra hour spent indoors is very welcome, not to mention the fact that it helps people to get to know each other even more.

“Overall, my rating for First Base is 10 out of 10 and it is very important in times like these to have a place like that to turn to if need be.”

**Sam, First Base client**



**Overall, my rating for First Base is 10 out of 10 and it is very important in times like these to have a place like that to turn to if need be.”**

**Many staff throughout BHT Sussex have lived experienced of using similar support services to those provided by First Base and bring that knowledge and experience to their work. We are proud of this and recognise the huge value they bring to the organisation.**

**“ I would just like to say a massive THANK YOU to all the members at First Base Day Centre. Coming to First Base was the only thing I ever looked forward to on a daily basis.**

All the staff are amazing, kind and really caring. I will definitely come back to visit everyone here. Thank you for everything.”

**John, First Base client**





**The staff here are passionate and every Friday I always walk out of work with such passion and vigour for all that we've achieved together.**

## STAFF

**I've been employed at First Base Day Centre for nearly five years. So far, I can only describe the service as magical!! The team I work with are truly the best I've worked with, and we come with a varied mix of skills that complement the work we do here.**

The staff here are passionate and every Friday I always walk out of work with such passion and vigour for all that we've achieved together, there's been laughter and tears along the way. It still amazes me that I actually feel a

slight sense of sadness when I go on annual leave and also really excited to return back to work again, I still find this extremely novel.

The clients I meet are facing what can be the most difficult times of their lives, and to be able to support them whilst they are going through whatever trauma that faces them and see them come through the other side into accommodation is, and will never stop being, why I love my role so much."



Debbie Piper,  
Deputy Manager,  
First Base

## Working in partnership

A key strength of First Base is in the way it works in effective partnerships across the city of Brighton and Hove, as well as with other BHT Sussex projects. This means that clients have access to a wide range of support services and practical help.

### Coordinated care across the city

**A key partner for First Base is Change Grow Live (CGL), and we work closely with both their Street Outreach and their Recovery Service. CGL Outreach go out on the streets of Brighton and Hove and directly support people who are rough sleeping; we work on a shared case load basis with them, coordinating care with their case workers and working out shared goals. We benefit from support and advice around addiction issues from CGL Recovery and refer clients into this service.**

We have a co-working relationship with the **Housing Options Team** at Brighton and Hove City Council. We refer clients in priority need for housing to this team and liaise with their **Homelessness Prevention Officers** to help clients gather evidence and submit housing

applications. We also refer clients to **Changing Futures**, a multi-agency team with people from all different backgrounds and disciplines, who support people facing multiple disadvantage. To support clients in their transition to independent accommodation, we link them up with floating support services provided by **Southdown, Just Life**, and local authority Welfare Officers.

Often people who come to First Base have complex support needs, having experienced a combination of trauma, mental ill health and substance misuse issues. This can mean that they find it difficult to engage with available specialist services such as the **local NHS Mental Health Homelessness Team** or **CGL Recovery Service** right away. First Base provides a vital transition service; we use the practical resources at the Centre to help people feel safe, so the team can build trusting support relationships with clients and encourage them to engage with support services at a pace they find manageable. Without this support from First Base many people would 'fall through the cracks' and not get the help they need.

For people with experience of homelessness, First Base is often the first service they go to when they are in crisis, whether they are rough sleeping or in accommodation. We provide a safe space and a listening ear, and work flexibly in partnership with clients to understand what needs to be put in place so that they can choose to access the services they need. The staff team can draw on the expertise of our Mental Health Support Worker and facilitate client's transitions between services for continuity of care.

People can struggle to engage with services for multiple reasons, but First Base provides a unique space in the city where they can access regular and consistent support. Our staff often engage with people through other activities such as art or cooking to develop and maintain a relationship with them, and make sure that clients who are only able to engage with support sporadically are not 'forgotten' by other services.



## Partnership working during the Covid-19 pandemic

While many support services were forced to close their doors, First Base stayed open throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, with measures in place to keep everybody safe. When the government launched its 'Everyone In' initiative, which aimed to get everyone who was sleeping rough off the streets during the pandemic, First Base supported Brighton and Hove City Council in its work to accommodate rough sleepers, becoming the main hub in the city for the completion of Covid-19

related referrals to Emergency Accommodation.

The pandemic showed that **with political will, proper resourcing and joined-up working, it is possible to move large numbers of people away from rough sleeping.** Providing long-term, affordable accommodation is a much greater challenge, however **we believe there is hope that rough sleeping can be significantly reduced through partnership work and proper investment.**

Support work  
at First Base

## Health clinics and drop-in services

**People who experience homelessness can struggle to access quality health and social care. Working with partners, we have introduced a range of clinics that run during our open access sessions to address this, meaning that clients who come to First Base for food, showers or advice can also address their health needs.**

We currently host a weekly on-site nurse clinic, provided by the **Homeless Health Inclusion Team of Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust (SCFT)**, who also provide monthly physiotherapy clinics. Nurses treat wounds and minor ailments, advise when further medical attention is needed and communicate with GP and hospital services on behalf of clients. **SCFT** also run a dental health clinic at First Base, and occasional GP Services are provided by **Arch Healthcare**. Podiatry and optometry services are offered weekly by **St John Ambulance** and **Vision Care for Homeless People** respectively.

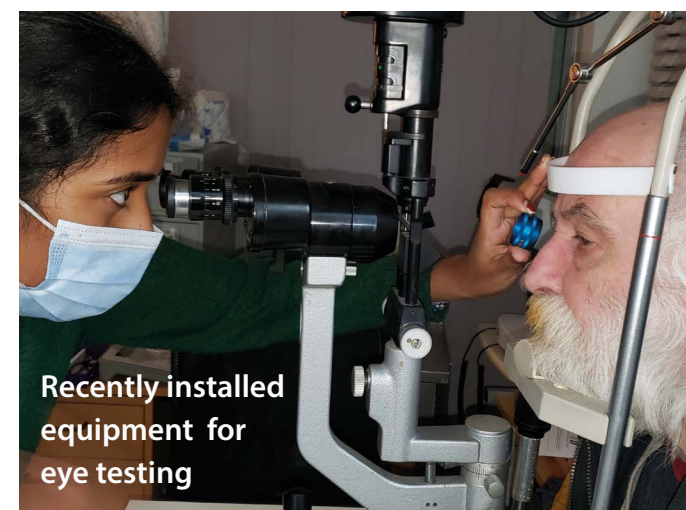
**Vision Care** has recently installed new equipment for eye testing at their First Base clinic worth £18,000, donated by **Keeler and Birmingham Optical**. The new equipment will help the opticians' service screen for conditions such as diabetes, as well as providing eye tests and prescriptions free of charge.

The **Mental Health Homeless Team** from **Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT)** staff a fortnightly clinic at First Base. They meet with clients who have mental health concerns and support them by making sure they are on the right medication, managing risk where people present in crisis or psychosis and offering ongoing support where it is needed.

We are planning to launch a pilot "Mental Health Self-Management" group to support clients' wellbeing, in partnership with **SPFT** and the **Homeless Health Inclusion Team**. The groups will cover areas such as



Community  
Staff Nurse



Recently installed  
equipment for  
eye testing

managing low mood, anger and anxiety and have been designed with the input of psychologists to help clients to develop strategies that help them to sustain accommodation in the long term.

We offer other drop-in services from specialist providers to address health issues which disproportionately affect people experiencing street homelessness. For example Hepatitis C screening services are provided by the **Hepatitis C Trust**. Testing for this virus is important as, without treatment, it can cause serious and potentially life-threatening liver damage.



## Feedback from one of our partners

“I would like to give you some feedback on the brilliant work all of you do at First Base Day Centre. **We are very lucky to have a health clinic once a week on a Wednesday at First Base and our physiotherapist supports patients there monthly.**

“It feels like a very safe space for all people who attend the day centre. **The keyworkers at First Base work in a very trauma informed way and help support the needs of our patients brilliantly, really understanding their behaviours, de-escalating any potential conflict when people feel triggered** and providing a beautiful psychologically informed environment where our patients feel safe, and we can engage them with their health concerns.

“This is invaluable as for many it may be a long time (if ever) since they have seen someone clinically. The team at First Base work very closely with us identifying concerns immediately and sharing those concerns with us with the person's permission.

**"They provide a safe invaluable service in the city to help a marginalised group of people receive the support and care they need.** Your team helps us to engage our patients to start to look at their health needs."

**Caterina Speight**, Clinical Services Manager, Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust Homeless Team



## Nutrition and Health project

**First Base is the lead partner in a joint project with Brighton and Hove Food Partnership and FareShare to deliver better nutrition and improved physical and mental health outcomes for clients who are street homeless or living in emergency accommodation. This project is funded by Brighton and Hove City Council's Third Sector Investment Programme.**

FareShare co-facilitate popular free cooking groups run at First Base, which help clients to build skills, better understand nutrition, and improve their health and wellbeing. They also host meetings at First Base to encourage clients to volunteer and participate in their work and learning programme called 'Employability'.

Last year First Base served approximately 7,000 meals to clients. Meals are prepared by our staff, as well as volunteers and interns on placement with the team, who are all provided with training to work in a commercial kitchen. Most of the food we use is sourced through FareShare, from excess supermarket stock which would otherwise end up in landfill.

Brighton and Hove Food Partnership provides training to the First Base staff team to ensure that the food we prepare is healthy and nutritionally balanced. They supply printed materials for clients with recipes and healthy eating advice, which is particularly useful for those who are moving into accommodation.



**Last year First Base served approximately 7,000 meals to clients. Meals are prepared by our staff, as well as volunteers and interns on placement with the team, who are all provided with training to work in a commercial kitchen.**





**On 31st October 2022, I was eight years clean from drugs and alcohol and my life is one that I could only ever have dreamed of.**

Ross, former intern and staff member at First Base

## Partnership work within BHT Sussex

**First Base also works in partnership with other services and projects within BHT Sussex, including the Employability and Skills Placement Programme, Advice Centres, Immigration Legal Service, Choir with No Name and Accommodation for Work Project.**

First Base has benefited from several fantastic interns referred through the BHT Sussex Intern Programme, which has recently evolved into the Employability and Skills Placement Programme. Participants referred through these programmes, who have lived experience, are mentored on a one-to-one basis by an experienced case worker and gain hands-on experience in a professional setting as they consider a career in the social care sector. We provide them with formal training to support their development.

One previous intern was Ross who, following recovery from street homelessness and addiction, began an internship with First Base, subsequently becoming employed as a part time Project Worker, before going on to become a Mental Health Case Worker, and eventually working with First Base for eight years. He also lives in a BHT Sussex property.

“When I started my internship, I couldn’t even log onto a computer, and I had never worked in any job that held that kind of responsibility.

“BHT Sussex have not only provided me a platform to be able to work in a responsible job through training and learning with a career ahead of me, but they have also provided me with a beautiful home where I can relax after a hard day at work.

“On 31st October 2022, I was eight years clean from drugs and alcohol and my life is one that I could only ever have dreamed of.”

*Ross, former intern and staff member at First Base*



Ping pong at First Base



Computer and IT facilities at First Base

Despite the challenges they face by being homeless, some clients are actively engaged in work and learning activities. We support clients with this through providing access to IT facilities, advice on CV writing, and smart clothing for job interviews.

We refer clients who are homeless and working, or interested in doing so, to the BHT Sussex Accommodation for Work project, where they can access accommodation and support to remain in employment, or work towards securing employment.



# Spotlight on Reconnection Services

For clients who do not have a local connection to Brighton, the most effective way to support them to end their homelessness is to help them reconnect to a Local Authority where they do have a connection. We help these clients to establish whether there is accommodation still open to them anywhere, liaise with and make homelessness applications to different Local Authorities, and pay for transport to areas where clients have a confirmed offer of accommodation.

Two of these clients share their stories →

## Dave's story

“ I came to Brighton after being discharged from a mental health hospital in London and started sleeping rough at the station. “I had been provided with accommodation in London before I left hospital, but when I was discharged, I was confused about where it was or how to get there, and I'd lost my keys and wasn't sure how I would get in. “I was still quite confused when I came out of hospital

and wasn't sure what to do, and somehow I ended up on the train to Brighton as it was a place that was familiar to me. I trust the staff at First Base, so I went there for help. I spoke to a support worker there who listened to my story and helped me to contact the services that had been helping me in London. “He helped me to contact two different boroughs in London where I thought the accommodation might be and one of them got back to confirm that I did have accommodation there that was open to me. I was really happy because I did not want to be homeless. He also helped me to contact the accommodation provider and arrange to collect a new set of keys. “The team at First Base helped me to make a plan to get back to my accommodation.

Two of the staff at First Base walked with me to the station and purchased a ticket for me and helped me work out when the next train was. “The next day one of the staff members from First Base phoned me to check I'd got back safely. They also called my Housing Officer and asked if I could get referred for floating support to check in how I was managing in the accommodation and make sure I was getting ongoing support with my mental health.” Dave now has a dedicated Support Worker and is settled in his accommodation.



I trust the staff at First Base, so I went there for help.



## Pete's story

“ I became homeless after losing my accommodation in Hastings. I had a friend in Brighton, so I came here to try and see if I could sleep at his place. I ended up rough sleeping as he wasn't able to have guests. I slept rough for three days and came to First Base after being told about it by the Outreach team.

“I came to First Base to get some food and have a shower, but while I was there I met with one of the Case Workers and agreed to do an assessment with her. She told me that because of my age (65) and health conditions, it was likely I would be found in Priority Need and the council would place me in Emergency Accommodation.

“Because Hastings is the area I've most recently been settled, this would be my area of Local Connection. I agreed for her to help me make a homeless application to Hastings Borough Council - she helped me complete the form online and First Base were even able to provide me with a phone so that the council could contact me.

“I didn't hear back from the Council that afternoon, and I had to spend another night rough sleeping. When I went into First Base the next morning, my Case Worker helped me to make contact with the Council and find out who had been assigned my case. I stayed on after the morning session had finished while I waited for my Homeless Prevention Officer from the Council to call back. When I got the

call through, my Case Worker was there with me to help advocate for me. They helped me to ask my GP surgery for a patient summary, to confirm my health conditions, and get this over to the Council.

“Eventually the Council agreed that I was likely in Priority Need and agreed to place me in Emergency Accommodation in Hastings. My Case Worker helped me to work out how to get there, and First Base were able to provide me with a train ticket. I'm really grateful for the support I received, and I don't think I would have been able to manage to find accommodation without it.”

**“ I'm really grateful for the support I received, and I don't think I would have been able to manage to find accommodation without it.”**

**Last year, 67 clients who were rough sleeping were supported to reconnect or self-relocate to another Local Authority area or abroad where they already have a connection.**



# Community support

In addition to funding from local authorities, First Base enjoys support from individuals, community groups, local businesses and many others whose generosity make the service possible.



**Every Christmas, people support our annual appeal for First Base, organising events and collecting donations.**

**Last Christmas we were delighted that several local schools and children's homes got involved, with staff and children putting together backpacks of essential items for clients (pictured left).**

Clients have access to clean clothing, towels, toiletries, backpacks, water bottles and flasks throughout the year, thanks to the donations we receive from individuals and local businesses. We also have a growing number of regular supporters and tireless fundraisers whose generous donations go towards the running costs of the centre.

First Base is well integrated into the local community, and organisations and businesses support us in lots of different ways. For example, Brighton and Hove Buses previously donated free bus passes so that clients could get to appointments and have donated a 'bus wrap' to help us promote our services (pictured right).

We also benefit from people generously giving us their time; last year volunteers gave 178 hours to First Base. Our volunteers are a huge asset, helping with day-to-day tasks and bringing their skills and experience to the team. They often help us provide additional support for clients, for example one of our volunteers is developing a reading group that is due to start soon. We have plans to recruit more volunteers this year.

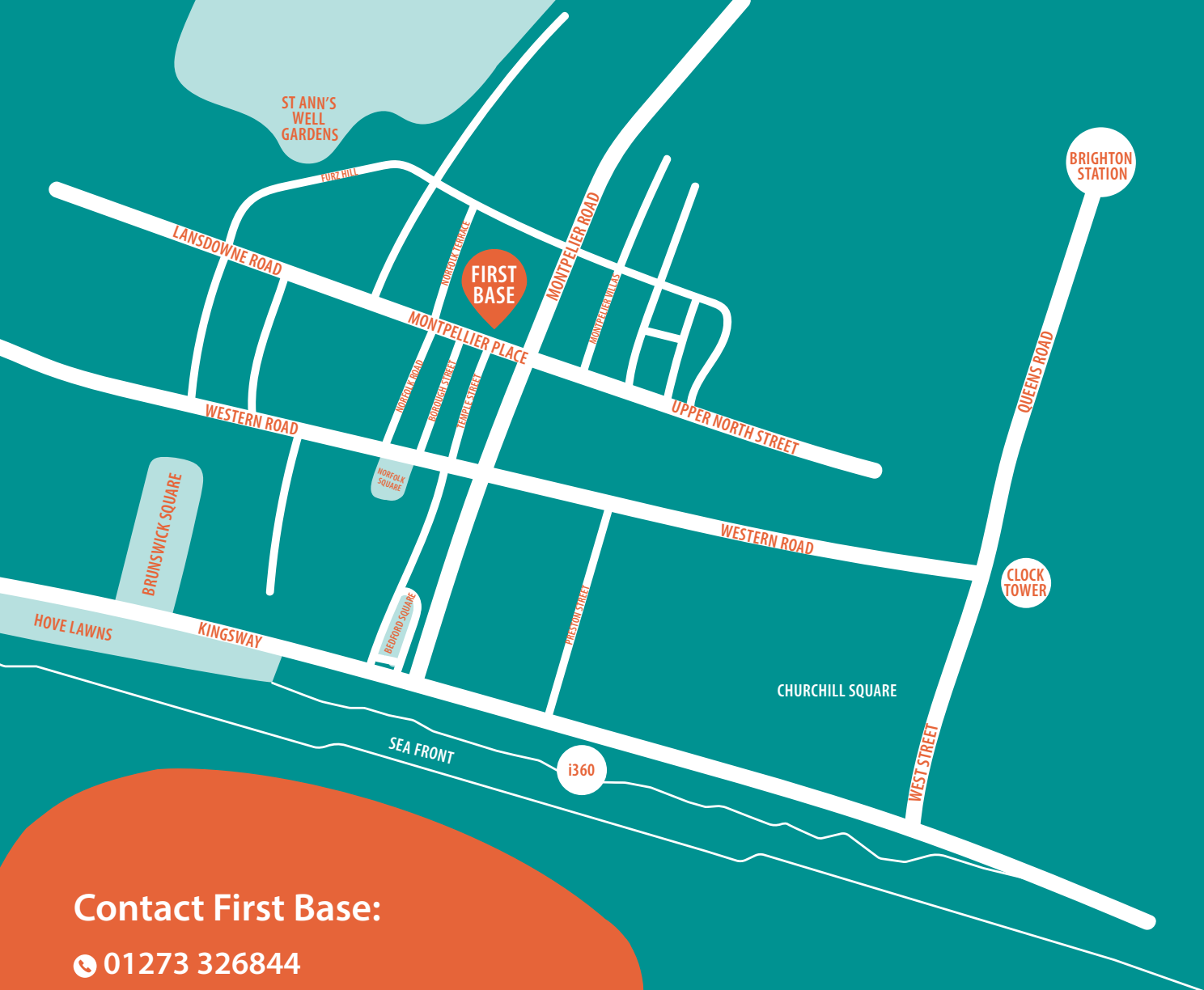
An area that we would like to develop in the future is peer support and peer mentoring programmes. By connecting people who have faced similar challenges, these programmes will offer understanding, empathy, and shared experiences. Peer mentors can provide guidance, practical advice, and inspiration based on their own journeys, fostering empowerment, resilience, and a sense of community. Our aim is to create a safe space for clients to share, connect, and build the skills needed to navigate their path towards a brighter future away from the streets.



**Well done all of you.  
My admiration and respect  
for First Base and its workers  
knows no bounds.**

Christmas appeal supporter on Just Giving page





## Contact First Base:

☎ 01273 326844

✉ [first.base@bht.org.uk](mailto:first.base@bht.org.uk)

📍 St Stephen's Hall, Montpelier Place,  
Brighton, BN1 3BF

## To find out more about BHT Sussex:

🌐 [www.bht.org.uk](http://www.bht.org.uk)

☎ 01273 645000

✉ [enquiries@bht.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bht.org.uk)

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