



OUR COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN WEST SUSSEX





About BHT Sussex

We are a Sussex-based charity made up of interlinked projects and services that empower people to overcome homelessness, poverty, addiction and mental ill health, working in partnership across Sussex with local councils, the NHS and voluntary organisations.

We support more than 10,000 people each year.

As well as offering community based mental health services, which are the focus of this report, we provide supported accommodation for people with mental health needs, including care homes rated as 'Outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission.

To find out more visit bht.org.uk

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Introducing our community-based mental health services

In Mid Sussex and Crawley, BHT Sussex works alongside NHS Sussex and other voluntary sector partners to provide free and flexible mental health support in the community. Last year we helped 977 people through our Pathfinder and Be OK services, and 774 people through our Emotional Wellbeing Service.

Pathfinder and Be OK

Our Pathfinder and Be OK services provide information, advice, signposting, community groups, peer support and recovery-focused one-to-one sessions for people who are struggling with their mental health. Pathfinder is for anyone over 18 years of age, while Be OK is a specialised youth service specifically for 16–25 year-olds which also covers the Horsham area for 16–18 year-olds.

People can self-refer to both services for mental health recovery support or be referred to us by health and care workers. We offer one-off sessions for signposting, information and guidance or a series of one-to-one targeted support sessions.

Clients can also re-refer themselves to the service as often as they need and recover at their own pace. Alongside this, we offer access to a wide range of community support groups. All our support can take place face-to-face, over the phone or online; we are flexible and can do whatever works best for the individual.

Examples of what can be explored in support sessions include coping techniques, anxiety management, sleep support, self-esteem building, boundaries and healthy relationships, harm reduction, support to maintain or gain work, and improved holistic wellbeing.

We know that recovery is not linear, that people have ups and downs, and we offer ongoing support. Our year-round groups programme helps people to stay connected and maintain their wellbeing, often through fun activities such as tai chi, creative writing or conservation.

We work very closely with other organisations, particularly Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT), aiming to ease service pressures within the NHS whilst also improving patient care and experience. Our partnership approach improves communication between NHS and voluntary and community sector organisations, and we aim to provide a safety net that stops people falling through the gaps between different services.

“ The support and guidance Pathfinder has provided to me has helped me restore some normality and trust in the world.”

Pathfinder client



 Pathfinder and Be OK team

Pathfinder West Sussex Alliance

Pathfinder West Sussex is an alliance of ten organisations working together to enable people with mental health support needs, and their carers, to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

The member organisations are BHT Sussex, West Sussex Mind, United Response, Richmond Fellowship, CAPITAL, Mind in Brighton and Hove, Rethink Mental Illness, Stonepillow, Southdown and Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

Recovery services in this alliance are integrated into NHS Mental Health services and

work alongside specialist NHS Pathfinder clinicians to ensure people get the appropriate level of support according to their needs.

Scan the QR code below to watch a short video introducing Pathfinder West Sussex.



Emotional Wellbeing Service

Our Emotional Wellbeing Service (EWS) is a mental health support service embedded directly within Primary Care in GP surgeries across Mid-Sussex and Crawley. It comprises a team of Mental Health Support Coordinators who provide one-to-one mental health support, for example using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy tools, and work with individuals to create personalised support plans. Patients are offered up to six support sessions and access to workshops and groups as appropriate. We launched EWS in April 2022, and now work in 21 GP surgeries across Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill, East Grinstead and Crawley.

We deliver this service in collaboration with Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT) and work directly alongside Mental Health Practitioners who provide clinical support and guidance to staff as well as direct interventions to patients. We also signpost people to services specialising in areas such as bereavement support or substance misuse and link up with Pathfinder and other organisations to provide longer-term one-to-one or group support.



EWS Team day

At a time when GPs and NHS Mental Health services are severely stretched, the EWS provides people with much needed support, without the long wait – currently clients are typically assessed within 3 weeks of referral. The service can help people who previously would not have met the criteria for specialist mental health services, to access timely mental health support.

Having the service hosted within GP practices helps people to access it easily, as often their GP is the first place that people go to for mental health support. We help people learn techniques and coping mechanisms to manage their mental health and better understand the triggers that can cause it to deteriorate. This model of in-surgery practical mental health support, jointly staffed by BHT Sussex and NHS workers, eases pressure on GPs and benefits patients.

“ This support has been invaluable and not available anywhere else. You have shown me the paths that would help me, but let me choose if I wanted to go down them. I am so grateful for your support, thank you!

EWS client

Looking to the future - transforming community mental health services

As part of the NHS Long Term Plan, health and care systems throughout the country have been asked to transform their community mental health services and develop new, more joined-up ways of working. With mental health support in Sussex currently delivered by a number of different services, it can be difficult for people to know where to go to for help; the community mental health transformation aims to make this easier by bringing together all local health and care organisations to work collaboratively as one healthcare system.

Over the past two years, BHT Sussex has been directly working alongside NHS Sussex and

other Voluntary Care providers across Sussex to improve how we work together, using a lot of learning from the Pathfinder model. We are now beginning to bring together service providers into new ‘Neighbourhood Mental Health Teams’ (NMHT’s). Local Emotional Wellbeing Service (EWS) and Assessment and Treatment Service (ATS) teams have already started to meet regularly to discuss individual referrals and care plans as a team, but as the NMHTs develop this will include a whole host of other local aligned services. No longer will the terms ‘EWS’ and ‘ATS’ be used, these services will be known collectively as ‘NMHT’s’ across Sussex.

More information on the transformation can be found here: [Transforming Community Mental Health Services - Sussex Health & Care \(ics.nhs.uk\)](https://www.ics.nhs.uk/transforming-community-mental-health-services)

EWS team



Facts and Stats

➡ Demand for mental health services has significantly increased in recent years, resulting in long waiting times for support.¹

Our community mental health services have recently expanded and supported 1,751 people last year, a 44% increase on the previous year. Last year in our Pathfinder and Be OK services, 96% of all clients started support within 6 weeks of contacting us.

➡ An NHS study in 2022 revealed that more than half of 17–23 year-olds said they had experienced a deterioration in their mental health and wellbeing over the last five years.²

Our Be OK service offers specialist mental health support for young people aged 18-25 years old. Last year 213 young people were supported by the service and we are collaborating with partners to expand the support we offer.

➡ 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.³

We recruited five former clients into paid roles in the Pathfinder service last year, and they use their lived experience of mental health challenges to better support current clients.

➡ GP practices across the country are under huge strain, and GPs are seeing increasingly high numbers of patients with mental health problems.⁴

Our Emotional Wellbeing Service is now embedded within 21 GP surgeries in Sussex, easing pressure on overstretched GPs. 774 people received mental health support from our Emotional Wellbeing Service last year.



➡ Peer support can be very helpful in mental health recovery, and NHS England points out that it helps people to have more control over their health and wellbeing and increases individual and community resilience.⁵

Our Pathfinder service trained 21 people this year as peer mentors and community champions, and facilitates a Lived Experience Network which helps to keep us accountable to those accessing our services. Last year, 17 peer mentors and community champions gave 1296 hours of their time to Pathfinder.

➡ Things like fear, stigma and lack of culturally sensitive treatment can act as barriers to accessing mental health care for people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds in the UK.⁶

At Pathfinder we are working to reduce these barriers to accessing mental health care, with a dedicated Recovery Worker supporting under-represented groups, tailored training and various initiatives bringing people together to share ideas on addressing under-representation in mental health services.

¹ Sussex Health and Care/NHS Sussex, *FAQs: Sussex community mental health transformation for adults and older adults, Version 1*. Published May 2024. sussex.ics.nhs.uk

² NHS England Digital, *Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2022 - wave 3 follow up to the 2017 survey*. Published Nov 2022. digital.nhs.uk

³ CRE Research and the University of Sheffield with the Systems Change Action Network, *Involving people with lived experience in the workforce*. Published January 2021. tnlcommunityfund.org.uk

⁴ British Medical Association, *"It's broken" Doctors' experiences on the frontline of a failing mental healthcare system*. Published Jan 2024. bma.org.uk

⁵ NHS England, *Supported self management: Peer Support Guide*. Last updated Sept 2023. england.nhs.uk

⁶ Rethink Mental Illness, *Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) mental health*. Last updated August 2021. rethink.org

Making our services more inclusive

At Pathfinder, we have recently put a particular focus on reaching out to communities that face additional barriers to accessing mental health care, and who are under-represented within our services.

Of all the West Sussex districts and boroughs, Crawley was shown to be by far the most ethnically diverse in the last census.⁷ Equality and diversity monitoring data from Sussex Health and Care indicates that ethnically diverse communities and the male population in Crawley face some barriers to accessing mental health support.

As the lead provider for Crawley in the Pathfinder West Sussex alliance, BHT Sussex wants to ensure that our services are inclusive for everybody in the community. We have recruited a Recovery Worker with a special focus on developing culturally sensitive services and encouraging people from under-represented groups to seek and access support.

Recent initiatives include a weekly coffee morning in Crawley which brings together people of Black African and Caribbean origins to connect and share ideas on the various barriers that restrict participation in mental health services and how to overcome these. We have been active at several community events run by Community Interest Companies supporting marginalised communities.



Scan this QR code to watch a video made by Pathfinder West Sussex about men's mental health.



Promotional poster for our weekly coffee morning

We also run a weekly men's group, support awareness campaigns around male mental health, and are members of a Men's Mental Health Community of Interest alongside a variety of voluntary sector and NHS groups.

We have launched our first Peer Mentor and Community Champion training course to specifically support under-represented groups. We sought input from organisations such as Diverse Crawley and Today's Africa and developed the course content in collaboration with participants.

⁷ West Sussex County Council/JSNA, Census 2021: Ethnicity, Language and Religion. Published August 2023. jsna.westsussex.gov.uk

A cohort of 7 people, all from groups who are under-represented in our service, recently completed the first course, which incorporated reflections on stigma, cultural taboos and anti-racist practice into the usual course content. This cohort are embarking on a journey with us to reflect on how the service can improve its offer to those who may struggle to reach out for support.

The Emotional Wellbeing Service (EWS) is also looking at ways to develop the service to meet the needs of the different clients that we support. We have gained a better understanding of the demographics of each of the areas we work in through reviewing referral trends and collating quarterly equality and diversity data about our clients. In Crawley, we are involved in conversations around developing creative interventions and support for South Asian women, for example.

It has also been identified that people who are currently on a waiting list for an ADHD assessment under secondary care are struggling to access support from other services. These individuals can access one-to-one support from EWS and we are currently developing a workshop on coping strategies for people approaching the service for support with managing ADHD characteristics positively, in collaboration with our NHS partners. We are developing this in response to a high number of people with ADHD characteristics using the service.



Joseph Osei-Poku, our Recovery Worker with a focus on under-represented communities.

Members of the EWS team are from a mix of different ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, and we have a range of different languages spoken within the team. This has been particularly useful when supporting patients where English is not their first language. We are fortunate that we also have access to interpreters free of charge as this is a service already in place at GP surgeries, which allows more clients to access the service.

Future plans across the services include bringing key stakeholders and relevant service partners together for a new Festival of Wellbeing, as an opportunity to further promote health equity and encourage healthy active communities.

Members of the peer mentor training course for under-represented groups



Working in partnership

The Pathfinder model has effective partnership at his heart, and the Pathfinder West Sussex Alliance has won a Gold award for Partnership in Practice, from Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust⁸. Pathfinder has also been recognised on a national level and cited by NHS England as an example of good practice for our innovative ways of working⁹.

Through working very closely with other organisations, Pathfinder contributes to ensuring the efficient running of several NHS services involved with mental health care provision. We ensure that those who do not meet the threshold to access a service via a statutory partner are offered support to meet their recovery goals and protect their wellbeing. NHS Clinicians are integrated in the Pathfinder team, so that people with more complex needs can also access the best support for them. This model of escalation and de-escalation has proved effective and allows people to move flexibly between services to get well and stay well.

As part of the development of the Neighbourhood Mental Health Teams, Pathfinder are a member of the local Multi Agency Triage Hub (MATH), alongside statutory and non-statutory partners including Adult Social Care services, West Sussex NHS Talking Therapies, Change Grow Live, and the local NHS Assessment and Treatment Service (ATS). The hub is co-

facilitated by its members and meets twice a week to discuss clients whose needs may be better served by another organisation. Pathfinder works with many people who are not able to access support at other services due to not meeting their threshold requirements, and can support anyone who may benefit from motivation, validation and encouragement to improve their overall wellbeing. The fact that Pathfinder is easy to access but has clear routes of escalation for those who need it, means we can stop people falling through the gaps in services.

“ Pathfinder supports ATS via taking referrals for support from the ATS, easing service pressure and connecting clients with support via Pathfinder. I find Pathfinder to be an extremely supportive organisation, regularly agreeing to take referrals for assessments of patients with severe / enduring mental health difficulties who are struggling with social isolation or other issues related to their mental health. Their input to our Triage Hub is much appreciated.”

John Garland, Risk and Referrals Manger for the Mid Sussex NHS ATS

⁸Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, *Annual Report and Accounts 2018–19*. england.nhs.uk
⁹NHS England and the National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health, *The Community Mental Health Framework for Adults and Older Adults*. Published Sept 2019. england.nhs.uk



I have worked as a Pathfinder Clinician for two years and really appreciate how the service has been set up. I see my role as a bridge between BHT Sussex (our Pathfinder ally) and secondary mental health services. I feel I am able to effectively help people who are moving away from NHS services to integrate with our Pathfinder allies in order to maintain their health, wellbeing and independence. Equally, if a client of our Pathfinder allies needs more support I would be able to offer clinical guidance and advice.

I really enjoy my job because I feel sure that when I tell clients about what is on offer, I know it is actually there for them."

Davinder Ghuman,
Pathfinder Clinician



Davinder Ghuman



BHT Sussex/ Pathfinder are an excellent resource for people struggling with their mental health issues in Mid Sussex and Crawley. It is a super inclusive service that will help people that struggle to access support elsewhere. I am very impressed with the Team and hope they continue to grow. Thank you, Pathfinder!"

J.Cripps, former Risk and Referrals Manager for West Sussex Talking Therapies.



As well as the partners we signpost to and receive referrals from, we work with a variety of other organisations to organise events, activities and workshops. For example, we deliver workshops in partnership with the Recovery College on topics like depression, resilience and self-esteem. We have collaborated with Crawley Wellbeing and Tennis England to put on a series of free weekly tennis sessions with recovery workers and tennis coaches, aimed at improving mental health and wellbeing.

We are also part of a new support and advice hub for young people aged 14–25 in West Sussex, i-Rock. This is a collaboration between different partners that work together to offer young people help with mental health, relationships, money and benefits, family problems, bullying, housing, education and employment. The i-Rock hub offers regular drop-in sessions and our Recovery Workers assist with these, offering young people a safe space to talk through their worries and the opportunity to access further support. We can refer them to our Be OK service if appropriate, or to a wide range of other services that we partner with. The i-Rock hub offers another way for our staff to get out into the community and reach more people.

The Emotional Wellbeing Service works in partnership with Pathfinder on many initiatives. For example, staff from the two services have co-facilitated 'Wellness Recovery Action Plan' workshops, which support clients to develop individual support plans to maintain wellness and avoid crisis. EWS also work with a variety of other local organisations and charities and benefit from their expertise. For example staff recently attended a Stress and Resilience workshop delivered by Mid-Sussex Wellbeing, and a Grief workshop held by Marie Curie.

The key partnership for EWS is with Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT); we deliver the service in collaboration with their Mental Health Practitioners (MHPs). As well as supporting the team with patients who have higher needs, MHPs also provide advice, supervision and training, for example in Trauma, Risk Assessment and ADHD.



The relationship that has been built between BHT Sussex and SPFT, is a positive invaluable relationship. The clinical team always speak so highly of their BHT colleagues, with true admiration of the work they do. Across the patch the teams work closely to support each other and the clients, with co-production at the heart of what they do"

*Leanne Hill, Clinical team lead
– SPFT (Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust)*



Volunteer Celebration with Pathfinder staff, peer mentors and SPFT clinicians

The role of volunteers and experts by experience



Celebrating Peer Support

Our services are hugely enriched by the contribution of our dedicated volunteers, who use their own lived experience of mental health challenges to support others who are struggling. We provide an eight-week internal training course for anyone interested in becoming a Peer Mentor or Community Champion with us. This aims to build confidence, support the learning of new skills and for some participants, help them to explore a potential new career.

Many of our staff were previously volunteers with the service. We are always looking for ways to embed the voices and skillsets of those who have lived experience of mental health challenges within the work that we do, and have developed a Lived Experience Network, which helps further with this.

Our Peer Mentor and Community Champion Skills Certificate is an eight-week course focusing on supporting people with lived experience to utilise their expertise in a safe and meaningful way, to support those at an earlier stage of recovery.

This broad course covers a diversity of subjects, including core aspects such

as safeguarding, professional boundaries and data protection, whilst also ensuring that participants continue to build an understanding of how to keep themselves well whilst helping others.

Participants are also given the opportunity to contextualise their learning by shadowing the service's community groups and one-to-one client sessions. As detailed earlier, recently a version of the course has also been created to focus on engaging under-represented groups within the Crawley area, and consequently modules on anti-racist practice and connecting with differences have become part of the course material.

We trained 21 people last year as peer mentors, and volunteers contribute approximately 180 hours to the Pathfinder and Be OK service each month.

Our Peer Mentors normally work with clients for up to six months and help them set personal goals linked to their recovery, build their confidence to attend new groups and activities, and when applicable, signpost them to specialised support services. Some choose to run community groups instead, and some do both.

Our Community Champions provide social support to clients who may find themselves isolated, facilitating social interaction to help ease isolation and providing a 'listening ear' to those who may need it most. This role came about after the Covid pandemic, when levels of loneliness and isolation increased for many people.

A Lived Experience Network run by current and former clients has been created called Pathfinder Journey. Members of this network are Experts by Experience and guide us with the direction of the service. They meet every month and discuss what is going well within the service as well as what they feel could be improved. They also review our communications and give their views on planned new initiatives. Members have recently designed and produced a newsletter, 'Pathfinder and You', for Pathfinder clients, which shares information, celebrates what is going on in the service, and aims to further develop the sense of community between Pathfinder clients. Ultimately the Lived Experience Network helps to keep us accountable to those accessing our services.

Our Engagement Officer **Emily Rawlinson**, who leads our work with volunteers, had this to say about her role:

“My role is a varied one, and daily tasks can include anything from supporting the induction of a new Peer Mentor, collaborating with statutory or voluntary sector colleagues on a piece of systems change work, or facilitating our internal training course to leading the service's own Lived Experience Network, Pathfinder Journey. No matter the activity, everything within this job aims to broadcast the voices of those with lived experience and support them to have growing influence over support services.”



Emily Rawlinson



Celebrating Peer Support



We were delighted when one of our dedicated Peer Mentors, Kelvin Meek, won the **Volunteer of the Year** award at this year's Mid Sussex Applauds. People like Kelvin show great courage in sharing their experiences of adversity in order to connect with and benefit others. This is his story:

“ I first started considering volunteering, when I was receiving support from Pathfinder. I needed a lot of support to help start my recovery from a mental health crisis after many years of stress, anxiety and depression, which led to suicidal thoughts.

As I came to the end of the support from a recovery worker and was still in a relaxation group, Emily mentioned that she was trying to start a course to train Peer Mentors. I said yes, and when the course became available, I joined. The course was excellent, and on meeting the other trainees on the course, I realised that I had made the right decision.

The reason I first thought about becoming a peer mentor, was that I wished to help others through mental health issues and if I could help even one person get through the terrible feelings of being lost and unable to cope, that I had, then I would be doing something good.

I enjoy every part of volunteering. Speaking and supporting clients and giving them someone to talk to that understands some of what they are going through is very important and rewarding.

Another aspect of volunteering that I really enjoy is the conservation groups. Meeting, talking to and supporting others in the group and seeing their enjoyment at being able to go to the groups, with no expectations is fantastic. When they say they have had a good time and want to come back to the next group, it is very pleasing."

Keely Holland, who joined us as a Peer Mentor and then became a Recovery Worker with Be OK, had this to say about working with the service:

“ I started off in the service as a peer mentor, using my lived experience to support others. I am now working as a Recovery Worker in the service and absolutely love my role. The transition was quite scary at first, but I felt really supported by my managers and the team. Everyone has been so kind and will offer up their time to help you if you need it, even if you just need space to talk things through. My confidence has grown a lot, and I love being able to continue to support people with their mental health. I like that I can provide a space for people when they are at a low point in their lives, to be heard and understood. I enjoy giving them the encouragement and empathy that I knew I needed when I was struggling. It can be challenging, but highly rewarding, especially when you see clients make real change. I consider myself very lucky to be able to do this job, and to do it alongside a great team of people."



I want to help others through hard times with their mental health, it is very rewarding and helps me be stronger in myself.

Working alongside the wonderful Pathfinder team is a pleasure and privilege."

Kelvin Meek, *Pathfinder Peer Mentor*

Our Mental Health Support Groups programme

We have an extensive programme of mental health support groups which run year-round and are free to attend. The groups programme is a point of pride for the service and is run by a combination of staff and volunteers. The larger groups regularly have up to 25 people in attendance. Our groups support our communities to stay connected, build confidence and encourage each other – often whilst learning a new skill or just maintaining wellbeing through a fun activity such as tai chi, creative writing or music. Last year we ran 22 different groups, ranging from art to exercise to relaxation.

“ I have found all the groups offered by BHT Sussex/ Pathfinder to be incredibly helpful. I’m stuck at home, so being able to access meditation, music, writing, and socialization online has been invaluable. My favorite group is Social Group. The unstructured time allows the flexibility for us to really interact naturally like a group of friends. Everyone is lovely and supportive. We talk about movies, films, gardening, society, philosophy – whatever comes to mind.

The leader of the group is a very intelligent, creative, and warm soul, setting the perfect environment for socializing. When one has a rough time, all the others are so supportive. I schedule my medical appointments around Social Group so as not to miss it because it does me such good mentally and emotionally. Even when I’m struggling with significant pain, I still sign in - it’s my weekly ritual and I know I’ll feel better about myself afterwards. I’m so glad I found BHT Sussex/ Pathfinder.”
Pathfinder client

Focus on: Conservation and Nature Group

One of the groups which is particularly well attended by our younger Be OK clients is the Conservation and Nature Group. This group meets weekly for a variety of different activities, such as clearing invasive plant species in woodlands, monitoring bats and butterflies, and growing food in the Community Garden at Macs Farm in Ditchling. Sometimes they will simply meet for a walk and a chat in the forest. The group enables members to connect with nature and learn coping strategies to improve their wellbeing.

The group recently worked with St Francis of Assisi church in Hassocks to clear their overgrown wooded area and build a pizza oven, so that their youth group could use the area for outdoors activities and socialising.



Dave Floud, BeOK Recovery Worker who coordinates the Conservation Group & Sue Milthorpe, a local landowner who supports the group.



Members of the group at Chailey Common nature reserve, making natural barriers to protect ground nesting birds.



A new group that is just starting up is a weekly photography group in Tilgate Park, Crawley, for young people who struggle with anxiety and depression. One of our Recovery Workers set it up in response to feedback from the young people she was supporting that they would like to attend more groups where they could meet people their own age. This allows them to do that, and to get out and about doing something creative to support their wellbeing.

Photos taken by members of the Photography group



Poster for photography group

“ The groups were lovely... I felt part of the group even though I was so scared of meeting new people. After a couple of weeks I didn't feel like a client I felt like part of the family... I am now a peer mentor to help others and hopefully now I can help clients how I was helped. I am now just about to start a cook and eat group. My motto is: if I can help just one person I have done my job.”
Clarissa, ex client and Peer Mentor



Cook and Eat group

“ The facilitation (of groups) is of an extremely high standard and establishes a very safe environment. I like the group because it is not about dwelling on participants problems as in other support groups I go to, but enables me to work through issues in a creative and interesting way which I find very therapeutic.”

Pathfinder client

“ It has been inspiring and empowering to be a Community Champion and Peer Mentor for community groups! Watching people with similar debilitating conditions to mine go on to recover and lead full lives, in part through my own efforts, has been extremely rewarding for me. That I can use my own experience and expertise, negative and positive, to help people has both amazed and humbled me. Thank you so much everyone who has helped me in this outstanding opportunity!”

Jenny, Peer Mentor: Community Groups & Community Champion



There is something uniquely beautiful about a person that grows from their struggles and uses the lessons from experiences to spread wisdom.

It doesn't matter what you've done or how far you fell. Be an example to show others that they can overcome the mountains too."

Harsha's story

“ In 2011, I was at my lowest in my life. I was alone, lonely and felt isolated from everyone and everything around me. I came as a client to Pathfinder in 2014.

My journey started with talking sessions with my support worker, where I worked on myself and slowly started to build my confidence. I joined support groups where I made friends, and I enjoyed crafts and sewing which I already had an interest in. It was here that I learnt that I had a talent to share with others.

I made one special friend who encouraged me throughout and was part of my life's journey. She met me in coffee shops and the library to encourage me to get out and about. During this time in my recovery, I did many short courses. I learnt through this that I wanted to give back and help my peers who were going through similar difficult challenges. To my surprise, an opportunity came up to do a peer mentoring course with Pathfinder. I accepted and completed the training.

Soon, I started using my peer mentoring skills and with two other peer mentors, I helped created the Chat and Craft group, not knowing what to expect. Today, 7 years later, it's still a very popular group. I also help at an Open Access group, offering a variety of craft skills: sewing, knitting, crochet, diamond art, cross-stitch, colouring and many more activities. Things made by clients have been sold at craft fairs and given to local charities and people experiencing homelessness, premature babies, the Crawley free shop, Langley Green hospital and refugees.

I do one-to-one peer support, signpost clients, and assist clients to learn new skills such as using

a sewing machine to help with their mental health. I have helped with craft fairs as a group to raise funds for BHT Sussex.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, I was in isolation and needed to keep busy, and recognised the need for masks. I started making masks and sending them to care homes, hospitals, and adult learning centres. To my surprise, my friend called me to say I am getting a Queen's Award in recognition of my contributions and she had nominated me. This was the best I have achieved and I feel proud.

Throughout this period, we contacted clients via phone calls each week and soon I learnt a new skill with Zoom and figured out a way to host our group there. During these online sessions, myself and other peer mentors managed to do crafts, and used YouTube to go on craft trips in other countries to make the groups fun and engaging.

This was the short version of my journey in the past 10 years. I have come a long way, which I once thought not achievable for me. I recently received a certificate of appreciation called the Pathfinder's Platinum Award from BHT Sussex. To anyone reading this, I hope it will inspire you to keep working towards your goals. Please keep going and never give up.

I just want to end on this message:
There is something uniquely beautiful about a person that grows from their struggles and uses the lessons from experiences to spread wisdom. It doesn't matter what you've done or how far you fell. Be an example to show others that they can overcome the mountains too."

Staff Insight: Ambar Hussain from the Emotional Wellbeing Service

Ambar Hussain, a Mental Health Support Coordinator from the EWS, talks us through some of the practical ways in which she supported one of her recent clients.



A client was referred to us for support with anxiety and depression. During the initial assessment together we set the following goals:

- to develop coping strategies to better manage anxiety and low mood.
- to manage anxiety symptoms with the hope to allow space to focus on diet and weight management
- to know how and where to get support in a mental health crisis
- to engage in activities they used to enjoy
- to explore new interests and decrease time spent in negative thoughts.

Over the course of six one-to-one sessions, various tools, techniques and coping strategies were discussed.

The client was shown how to use journalling to help process and manage difficult emotions as well as an activity scheduling technique from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and a mood diary. We also looked at anxiety management skills, tools to improve sleep, self-care practices and the impact of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) on anxiety. The client created a Wellness Recovery Action Plan, which is a personalised plan, detailing what keeps you well and helpful strategies for days that may feel more difficult. This also includes a crisis plan.

The client was also given advice and information about other services that would help them in self-managing their health and wellbeing further. They were referred to Crawley Wellbeing and a GP dietician for support with diet and IBS, as well as to a supported appointment for tinnitus. They were referred to West Sussex Talking Therapies for therapy and to build on the skills covered within the sessions, and to Pathfinder for creative and social groups. Finally, they were signposted to a GP gym referral scheme and given information on accessible apps for meditation.

The client reported that their mental health had improved and they were able to spot when they were being self-critical which has helped build their confidence. They were also able to ask for help and implement boundaries with those around them.

The client managed to go out more often and socialise with their family, and better manage their anxiety around attending medical appointments using breathing exercises. They had improved from feeling suicidal to feeling more confident and positive in their ability to manage difficult times, and understood where to get support if they were in crisis.

The therapeutic relationship can be one of the most powerful tools we can use to support someone who is struggling. Helping the client to feel validated gives them the confidence to accept and regulate difficult emotions instead of shaming themselves. When they trust you as a professional, they are more likely to implement the resources given. It is also important to ensure the resources we give around self-care are purposeful. Our work is always person-centred; spending time getting to know the client and helping them to know themselves helps to identify what self-care practices they need.

Staff Profile:

Daniel Lewis

Deputy Manager, Pathfinder



My journey from being a client to working in mental health came about through engaging with a range of services to feel like my life was actually worth something.

My journey began with a Community Psychiatric Nurse who referred me onto the Pathfinder and Be OK service at BHT Sussex. This helped build my confidence to start stepping out and see the world again. I was able to meet people through Pathfinder in groups and engage with others who understood the challenges that can be had with mental health.

Through the counselling I was able to work through various issues holding me back. Through the one-to-one and group support I received through Pathfinder and the Recovery College I was able to learn new ways of managing my mental health and overcome the stigma and embarrassment I felt during most of my life.

Through engaging with these services, I was able to build myself up to attending the Peer Mentor course offered by Pathfinder. This has led to opportunities in support and care where I have been a Pathfinder Peer Mentor and Care/Support Worker for Learning Disabilities with Elysium Healthcare. I came back to Pathfinder as a Recovery Worker

in 2020 and since Spring 2023 have been Deputy Manager for the service.

I feel the skills I have learnt through my lived experiences and the support I received while accessing services gave a great insight into what I do now. The support I have received since becoming a professional has helped me develop that much further where I have been able to support people on a one-to-one basis to learn to manage, maintain and in some cases overcome their own mental health issues. I have had the opportunity to host a few different groups, currently I facilitate a men's group looking to overcome some of the stigma faced with mental health challenges and offering a social space for people to enjoy others company. We share experiences of what people go through and offer a space to offload when they need to.

This has also given me the opportunity to facilitate courses with the Recovery College which has been a great opportunity to network and build new skills in facilitation and further

opportunities to see people grow and develop. The courses have been geared to subjects like depression, resilience and most recently self-esteem and confidence.

Since becoming Deputy Manager I have continued delivering the one-to-one and group work which I enjoy and have had the chance to see more aspects of management - one of my main roles is to support the team where I now line manage five Recovery Workers and two Peer Mentors. I have also overseen the induction process of 3 new Recovery Workers.

I enjoy being able to learn new skills in supporting people along with using my own lived experience to support and connect with people, to help them feel that their life has some meaning. I enjoy seeing people develop, whether this is a client overcoming daily struggles or a member of the team developing as a person or as a professional."



Feedback from our clients and staff

We regularly collect feedback in order to monitor, develop and improve the quality of the services we offer. Here are some highlights:

Pathfinder and Be OK clients:

“The one-to-one support I have received at Pathfinder has helped me beyond words.”

“It definitely felt amazing to be listened to when talking about my problems and worries. The support and advice I was given was really helpful to make beneficial decisions for improving my mental health.”

“I feel more able to ask for help when I need it as this was a very positive experience which can be rare to come by, so I have more faith within mental health support. In addition, I also have my own ways to cope and an understanding of my own wellbeing and its ups and down so therefore feel more able to manage self-sufficiently.”

“I felt very comfortable to talk and felt like I got what I came here to achieve which was stability in my day to day and how to manage with those thoughts and emotions, and I tried hard to do the work each day to help support myself.”

“I have seen a huge change from how I was until now. Couldn't be any more grateful... I didn't feel judged or really embarrassed. I will recommend this service to friends and family who are struggling.”

“I have struggled all my life following child abuse. Pathfinder has made me feel listened to and has built up my confidence.”

Emotional Wellbeing Service Clients:

“The guided self-help and coping strategies have given me a much better understanding of anxiety and how to stop it at base level before things deteriorate. Talking to somebody helps to make sense of my thoughts.”

“I feel that my sessions have enabled me to help myself in times when I would normally struggle. I have been given the mental tools within myself to realise when I am struggling and now know what I need to do to help myself.”

“What you have offered has been amazing and should be available to as many people as possible. It has made me see what I needed to do enabling me to move forwards positively.”

“I am so grateful to have had these sessions and someone independent to listen.”



I can finally see things moving forward and improving, thank you”

Staff:

“I've been a recovery worker for Pathfinder for 8 years and I can truly say it's a brilliant job and a real privilege to work with our clients and see positive outcomes, I wouldn't want to be doing anything else.”

“I love my job and I feel so lucky and proud to work for BHT Sussex. The role of MHSC is so unique and the

Emotional Wellbeing Service is such an incredible support service for individuals. It is truly person-centred and allows patients to find coping strategies that actually work for them and their needs. BHT Sussex and our management are so supportive and always looking for ways to help and support us and I feel really appreciated and supported in my role”

Our community-based mental health services are just one part of what BHT Sussex offers.

We work in the following six areas:



HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT

We provide practical help to rough sleepers as well as support to get off the streets, through our resource centre First Base. We also run a high support hostel for people facing homelessness, and a supported housing project for young people.



HOUSING SERVICES

We are a registered social landlord providing homes across East Sussex, offering affordable housing for people on low incomes and a tailored service at a local level.



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

We provide specialist support, accommodation, groups and counselling to adults and young people experiencing mental health issues, in Brighton and West Sussex.



RECOVERY FROM ADDICTION

Our Addiction Services support people throughout their detox and recovery journey, providing supported accommodation and a programme of support.



ADVICE - HOUSING, BENEFITS AND IMMIGRATION

Our advice centres in Eastbourne, Hastings and Brighton provide free specialist advice on a range of housing, immigration and welfare benefits related issues. We also provide floating support as the strategic partner with East Sussex County Council for homelessness prevention.



WORK, LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT

Our work and learning projects help people to access training, placements and employment.

Contact Us

www.bht.org.uk

01273 645400

enquiries@bht.org.uk

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