



Impact and Learning Report



Jan 23 - Jan 26



Missing Peace
Wellbeing + Support



Three years in review



When we launched the Mental Health Connect service, it began as a pilot within the national Mental Health Transformation programme. This gave us the flexibility to work closely with our partners and funders to design a service that truly supported colleagues in health. Our strong relationships with local PCNs were essential in making this possible.

Working alongside Social Prescribers and other referrers, we developed an innovative programme using a coaching approach to help clients engage with their communities and build meaning and structure in their lives.

We also offered Wellness Recovery Action Plans and specialist support for Asian women, as well as for clients using drugs or alcohol alongside their mental health challenges.

The service has been extremely well received, and Mental Health Connect is now recognised as a valuable resource in the area. We are excited to continue developing this work and to strengthen our links with secondary health services, so we can support colleagues in the Community Mental Health Team and work with clients who have more complex mental health needs.

Candy Squire-Watt, Project Manager

About Mental Health Transformation

Mental Health Transformation in Bradford is a large, collaborative effort to redesign community mental health services so that people with severe mental illness get faster, more personalised, and more joined-up support - closer to home and with fewer barriers.

As part of this effort, we were commissioned to deliver Mental Health Connect across Airedale and Wharfedale as a practical, on-the-ground example of what Mental Health Transformation is trying to achieve in Bradford: earlier help, stronger partnerships, community-based support, reduced inequalities, and better outcomes for people with complex mental health needs.



Community based mental health and wellbeing support.

Service Delivery

One-to-one Support

Mental Health and Wellbeing Coaches offer both in-person and telephone support, equipping individuals with practical tools and techniques that strengthen their ability to manage everyday challenges.

Group Support

Delivery of a diverse programme of group support sessions tailored to specific needs, including for individuals affected by substance misuse, coping with grief, or experiencing low mood. This also includes culturally sensitive support groups designed specifically for South Asian women.

Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)

A 12-week prevention and wellness programme to help those with mental health struggles to get well and stay well.

The WRAP programmes aim to help with the recognition of mental health triggers and teaches how to take action when needed.

Exercise Classes

Delivery of accessible community-based exercise classes, ranging from seated sessions to cardio workouts, designed to accommodate all abilities.



Missing Peace
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MHC in numbers

925

People have been supported through the programme

Our average response time is

1.26

weeks from point date of accepted referral

207

people completed Goals Based Outcomes

96.9%

of those people reported reliable change

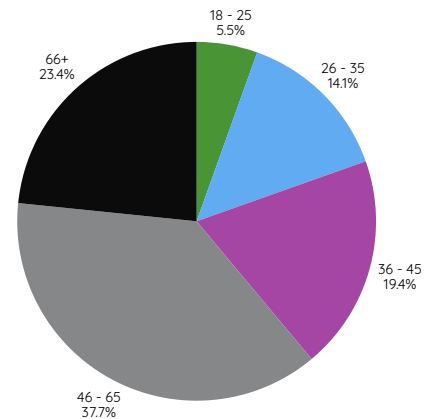
We have made
9374

meaningful contacts

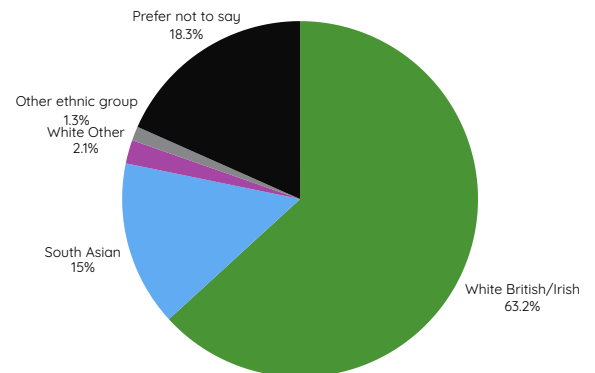
87

people attended a WRAP course

By Age



By Ethnicity



Key impact

Expanded access to mental health support:

Reached underserved and disengaged individuals through trusted, community-based delivery.

Reduced barriers to support-seeking:

Flexible, non-clinical approaches helped overcome stigma, fear, and practical access barriers.

Earlier intervention and prevention:

Supported individuals to recognise early warning signs and seek help before reaching crisis point.

Improved mental wellbeing and self-management:

Participants reported increased confidence, emotional regulation, and ability to manage their mental health.

Stronger community reach and cultural relevance:

Effectively engaged diverse and marginalised groups, including South Asian communities, refugees, and those facing inequality.

Increased community capacity and long-term outcomes:

Enabled local organisations to deliver tailored support, with participants progressing into volunteering, education, and employment.

Service journey

2023 | Laying the Foundations

Launch & Infrastructure

- Mental Health Connect launched across Airedale & Wharfedale
- Four delivery partners mobilised
- Website and promotional toolkit launched to support referrals and awareness

Early Access & Engagement

- Soft launch with Social Prescribers & Health Coaches
- Referral pathways established (primary care and VCS)
- First exercise classes and wellbeing groups delivered

Targeted & Inclusive Support

- South Asian Women's and Men's wellbeing groups established
- First 1:1 emotional support sessions delivered
- Bereavement support introduced (monthly)

Early Outcomes

- Steady increase in referrals
- First WRAP programme delivered
 - Increased self-management
 - Pathways into volunteering and peer support

2024 | Scaling & Strengthening

Growth in Reach

- Over 200-270 individuals supported per quarter
- Expansion of support in Wharfedale (addressing rural isolation)
- Increased staff capacity, including dual diagnosis support

Data & Quality

- Transition to MYMUP, improving:
 - Consistency
 - Transparency
 - Impact reporting

Innovation & Equity

- First South Asian WRAP delivered
 - Adapted for language, literacy and cultural needs
- Multiple WRAPs delivered simultaneously (weekday & weekend)

Community Capacity

- Small Grants Programme launched
 - 7 organisations funded
 - New mental health support delivered hyper-locally
- Workforce development:
 - Trauma-Informed Practice

Emerging Impact

- Return to work and education
- Growth in peer leadership and volunteering
- Reduced pressure on GP and statutory services

2025 | Maturity & System Integration

Strategic Alignment

- Service refocused to support:
 - Diagnosed mental health conditions
 - Severe Mental Illness (SMI)
- Formalised pathways with CMHT
 - Mental Health Connect established as a step-down service

Depth & Complexity

- Highest demand to date:
 - 361 clients in one quarter
- Dual diagnosis art group launched
- Bereavement support expanded following district-wide service closures

Sustainability & Leadership

- All staff trained as WRAP Facilitators
 - Long-term local delivery capacity created
- Stakeholder planning for continuation and evolution of the model

Recognition

KHL named as GSK/King's Fund IMPACT Award winners



Keith's story

Name altered for confidentiality purposes.

Keith was referred to the Positive Vibes Group by the MAST Team during a hospital admission, where he was undergoing treatment for cancer. At the time, he was dealing with severe physical symptoms - frailty, weight loss, and hair loss - and navigating a deep sense of isolation and low self-worth. As an only child with mild learning disabilities and no close relatives, Keith had spent most of his time at home, caring for his father. Prior to his diagnosis, he wasn't engaged in work or study and had very limited social connections.

After being discharged from hospital, Keith began attending the group weekly with unwavering dedication. The group quickly became a lifeline, offering not just physical and emotional support, but a sense of belonging. As Keith entered remission, he struggled with a new feeling of loss - his previous routines vanished, and he began reaching out to hospitals and organisations in unhelpful ways, seeking the comfort he'd grown used to.

It was clear that Keith had never formed friendships with peers his own age and found it difficult to engage as an equal. Recognising this, the group environment gradually shifted. Instead of viewing Keith as someone to care for, the focus became celebrating his potential. Small victories were uplifted, and Keith began to take steps toward independence—learning new skills, expressing choice, and setting personal goals.



Keith was encouraged to broaden his horizons by joining other peer and creative groups, particularly through KHL, and was connected with agencies specialising in financial and vocational support. One pivotal moment came when he began volunteering at the hospital - not as a patient, but as a contributor. This reframed his relationship with that environment, giving him a renewed sense of purpose and community. His impact was felt immediately, and he was soon seen as a trusted and responsible team member.

Today, Keith has applied for paid roles at the hospital, is training for a 10K Cancer Research run, and has built a life full of meaningful commitments. His attendance at the Positive Vibes Group is less frequent now, not due to disengagement, but because his world has expanded so beautifully. His story is a powerful reminder of what can happen when someone is genuinely seen—not just for where they've been, but for all they're capable of becoming.

Key Learning

1 Access is created through trust, visibility and cultural relevance – not just service availability

What we learned

Access depends on trusted relationships, local visibility and cultural relevance, not just provision.

Early engagement with Social Prescribers and health professionals was critical to legitimise the service and embed it within pathways.

Communities experiencing stigma engage only when support feels safe, familiar and grounded in lived experience.

What this demonstrated

Grassroots launch activity and soft entry engagement are essential infrastructure.

Culturally specific provision successfully engaged people who had not previously accessed mental health support or would not engage with mainstream or clinical services

Flexible delivery models (groups, physical activity and 1:1 support) reduced fear and resistance by allowing people to engage at their own pace.

What changed as a result

Relationship-led delivery was prioritised over volume-driven targets.

Early investment in outreach, promotion and workforce roles reduced barriers to access.

Learning from uneven early uptake informed future location choice, promotion and service design.



2 Scaling impact requires adaptation, partnership and shared community ownership

What we learned

Growing referrals and increasing complexity showed one-size-fits-all delivery does not work at scale.

Supporting people with overlapping needs requires:

- Specialist roles
- Strong partnership working
- Empowered community organisations

Robust data and shared monitoring are essential for credibility and sustainability.

What this demonstrated

Adapted models (e.g. translated, visual WRAP delivery) achieved outcomes where traditional approaches did not.

Investment in delivery partners and small community organisations:

- Multiplied reach
- Extended provision into marginalised communities
- Reduced pressure on statutory services

Participants increasingly progressed into volunteering, education, employment and peer leadership, indicating a shift toward recovery and resilience.

What changed as a result

Continuous learning-led iteration became embedded across delivery.

A Small Grants Programme created a distributed mental health ecosystem, extending capacity beyond the core team.

Workforce development became a priority to safely manage rising complexity and safeguarding risk.





Community services are most effective when embedded within the mental health system

What we learned

As the service matured, need shifted toward:

- Greater diagnostic complexity
- Increased demand for step-down and recovery support

Clear boundaries and alignment with statutory services became essential.

Community provision delivers prevention and recovery only when recognised, resourced and integrated.

What this demonstrated

Positioning the service as step-down support improved continuity and reduced re-presentation to crisis services.

WRAP facilitator training strengthened sustainability and local leadership.

Sustained high demand, despite funding pressures, highlighted significant unmet need.

What changed as a result

Strategic refocus toward people with diagnosed mental health conditions and SMI, while retaining community accessibility.

Formal CMHT pathways improved referral appropriateness and mutual confidence.

Sustainability planning progressed from aspiration to system-level commitment.

Partner comments



"Having Mental Health Connect in place has been invaluable for our teams. It has provided a responsive, person-centred source of support for individuals who might otherwise struggle to access help, and it has eased pressure on Primary Care frontline staff by offering timely, skilled mental health input. The service has helped us bridge gaps, improve engagement, and ensure people receive the right support at the right time."

- Emma Taylor, WACA

'Your understanding of Partnership working has been exemplary; you've proved it can be done! Well done!'

- Keighley and Worth Valley Community Partnership

Liam's story

Name altered for confidentiality purposes.



Liam arrived at Mental Health Connect carrying a long history of substance use, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts. Alongside these challenges, he had been diagnosed with non-medical reactive schizophrenia. The voices and visions he experienced were often intense and distressing, and over the years they had contributed to several attempts on his life.

He was already engaged with New Vision Bradford, receiving buprenorphine as part of his opiate-substitute treatment. This medication had previously limited the possibility of prescribing antipsychotics due to contraindications. Despite this, Liam had built a positive working relationship with his recovery coordinator, and communication between services remained cooperative and consistent.

When Liam entered the service, his life was in a period of upheaval. An arson attack on his flat in Kirklees had forced him to relocate to Keighley, and he was awaiting surgery. Even during this instability, he maintained contact with his worker, sometimes erratic but always making an effort to stay connected. He often concealed the full extent of what he was experiencing, but over time he acknowledged how persistent and overpowering the voices and visions could be.

During the summer, Liam became a victim of cuckooing. The intrusion into his home deeply unsettled both his mental and physical health, adding another layer of vulnerability to an already difficult situation.

Over the following months, he received regular emotional support and psycho-social interventions. This included signposting to housing and benefits support, as well as peer groups such as SOBS, the KHL Bereavement Group, and the dual-diagnosis art group. He was accompanied to meetings with his CMHT care coordinator and psychiatrist, who oversaw changes to his medication. Throughout the titration period, Liam stayed in close contact and remained engaged with the process.

Recently, Liam made the decision to leave the Keighley area temporarily. He planned to stay with someone in stable recovery, giving himself space to recuperate in a safer and more supportive environment. Phone contact will continue during this period, and depending on how his situation develops, his relocation may eventually lead to the closure of his referral.

During this episode, two safeguarding alerts were raised in response to the cuckooing, and police involvement followed concerns were raised by his housing provider and other residents. These steps were taken to ensure Liam's safety and to address the risks he was facing.

Liam's journey remains ongoing, but throughout his time with Mental Health Connect he has shown resilience, openness, and a determination to keep moving toward stability, even in the face of significant challenges.



Impact and achievement

Impact	Summary
Expanded Access to Mental Health Support	Mental Health Connect widened access to support for people underserved or disengaged from traditional services. Delivery through trusted community organisations and non-clinical, familiar settings enabled earlier and more confident help-seeking. People accessed support for a range of needs, including anxiety, depression, bereavement, trauma, substance use and social isolation. Flexible entry points (groups, physical activity, peer support and 1:1 interventions) reduced barriers such as stigma, fear of clinical settings, literacy and language. Culturally responsive, hyper-local delivery, particularly for South Asian women and men, reached individuals who had never previously accessed mental health services.
Strengthened Mental Wellbeing and Recovery	Improved emotional regulation, confidence and reduced isolation reported by participants. Increased ability to recognise early warning signs of declining mental health. Person-centred approaches (WRAP, coaching and psychoeducation) supported active self-management rather than crisis response. WRAP participants developed practical wellness plans and coping strategies, with many progressing into volunteering, education or employment. Group-based physical, creative and peer-led activities strengthened routines, wellbeing and social connections beyond formal support.
Reaching Communities Experiencing Inequality	Mental Health Connect addressed inequality in access by engaging communities disproportionately affected by stigma, socioeconomic disadvantage and poor service access. The programme reached minoritised ethnic communities, people with dual diagnosis needs, refugees and asylum seekers, and those in rural areas with hidden deprivation. Delivery through trusted, community-based approaches reduced barriers to engagement and increased uptake. The Small Grants Programme enabled community organisations to deliver tailored mental health support to groups they already knew and served. This approach increased reach, trust and cultural relevance, while strengthening community capacity and leadership.

Impact	Summary
Reducing Pressure on the Health System	Mental Health Connect provided preventative and recovery-focused alternatives to primary and secondary care. GPs, Social Prescribers and health professionals used the service as a safe and credible option for people below clinical thresholds but with clear mental health needs. Early intervention, guided triage and community engagement helped prevent escalation into crisis and reduced repeat GP appointments. As the service matured, it increasingly supported people with diagnosed mental health conditions and SMI through step-down pathways, improving continuity of care. Formalised working with Community Mental Health Teams strengthened system flow and reduced the risk of relapse or re-presentation to crisis services.
Supporting People with Complex and Multiple Needs	As demand and complexity increased, Mental Health Connect adapted to support people with overlapping needs, including mental health, substance use, housing instability, trauma and safeguarding concerns. Dedicated dual diagnosis provision improved continuity of care, preventing individuals from falling between mental health and substance use services. This enabled people to receive integrated emotional and therapeutic support alongside substance use treatment. Creative and arts-based approaches, including specialist groups, improved engagement for those who struggle with traditional talking therapies. These approaches supported expression, connection and emotional processing in accessible and inclusive ways.
Building Sustainable Community Capacity	Mental Health Connect invested in long-term sustainability through workforce development, peer leadership and organisational capacity building. Training in WRAP facilitation, trauma-informed practice, neurodiversity and coaching strengthened both the core team and partner organisations. WRAP facilitator training embedded local expertise, enabling self-management programmes to continue beyond individual funding cycles. The programme supported the development of volunteers and peer facilitators with lived experience. This has created a growing legacy of community-based leadership and resilience beyond direct service delivery.
Demonstrating Value and Impact	Mental Health Connect has supported growing numbers of people year on year, reflecting both unmet need and increasing confidence in the service. Sustained high demand and referrals from multiple pathways demonstrate the programme's relevance and accessibility. Recognition through the GSK / King's Fund IMPACT Award evidences effectiveness, credibility and value. The programme shows that well-designed, well-connected community mental health services deliver strong individual outcomes. Community mental health provision is essential to the wider health and care system, supporting prevention, recovery, inclusion and long-term resilience.

Client comments



It's been a gift to sit and talk freely about all sorts. I've warmed to you, you are really easy to talk to. I've unloaded a lot and got good advice in return. I feel very grateful as it has made a difference to me that I couldn't have got any other way. I don't know how I would be if it wasn't for this service, I would be in a heap somewhere. It's been lovely. To find this support has been a real blessing.

You have been very 'professional' and at the same time very easy to talk to. You have made things more approachable, even difficult subjects. KHL has offered a relaxed environment, and you have made me feel so much better about myself. It was nice to have Talking Therapies and KHL 1:1 alongside one another, it really helped.

I really got a lot from our last meeting, although I'm not convinced that I was as bad as people thought.

I have really stopped all the awful crying, thank goodness, and I found your advice about writing down three positives every day very useful and good fun to look back on. Even the simplest things become so important.

I had a follow-up call from the surgery and shared how positive it was that I had been referred into this support. I have your number and all the information, so I know I can make contact again if needed.

I'm so grateful that you were my coach. Even though it was brief, you really helped me because of how you were, how you treated me, dealt with me, and your compassionate understanding and reassuring insight towards me, my struggles, and vulnerabilities.

You made me feel seen, heard, safe, understood, accepted and acceptable, and that's what really helped me. You helped me to feel safe to open up more, and that you were a safe, trustworthy, and confidential person to be privy to my pain, grief, and issues.

That is the main key to helping people start releasing themselves from the prison of pain, shame, hurt, fear, grief, blame, and confusion that we find ourselves in when life gets too much.

I've had more negative experiences than good ones when seeking help, which have caused more wounds and damage, but thankfully this experience with you was a great, helpful, healing, and positive experience. So thank you very much.

Helpful, supportive, informative, suggestive not pushy, patient. The list goes on... basically your input has been wonderful and encouraged me to make subtle changes in my life.

This group has helped me grow in confidence so much so that I now volunteer and attend college which is a huge deal for me.



Mental Health Connect demonstrates the transformative impact of well-designed, community-led mental health support. By combining trust-based engagement, culturally responsive delivery, flexible pathways, and strong integration with the wider health system, the programme has reached people who might otherwise remain unsupported, achieved meaningful outcomes for individuals and communities, and reduced pressure on statutory services. The learning from this work clearly shows that community mental health provision is not an optional enhancement, but essential infrastructure for prevention, recovery, inclusion and system resilience. Continued investment will enable this impact to be sustained, deepened and shared, ensuring that support remains accessible to those who need it most.

With thanks...

to the partners, funders, volunteers and service users who have contributed to the success of this project.

