



# ANNUAL REPORT

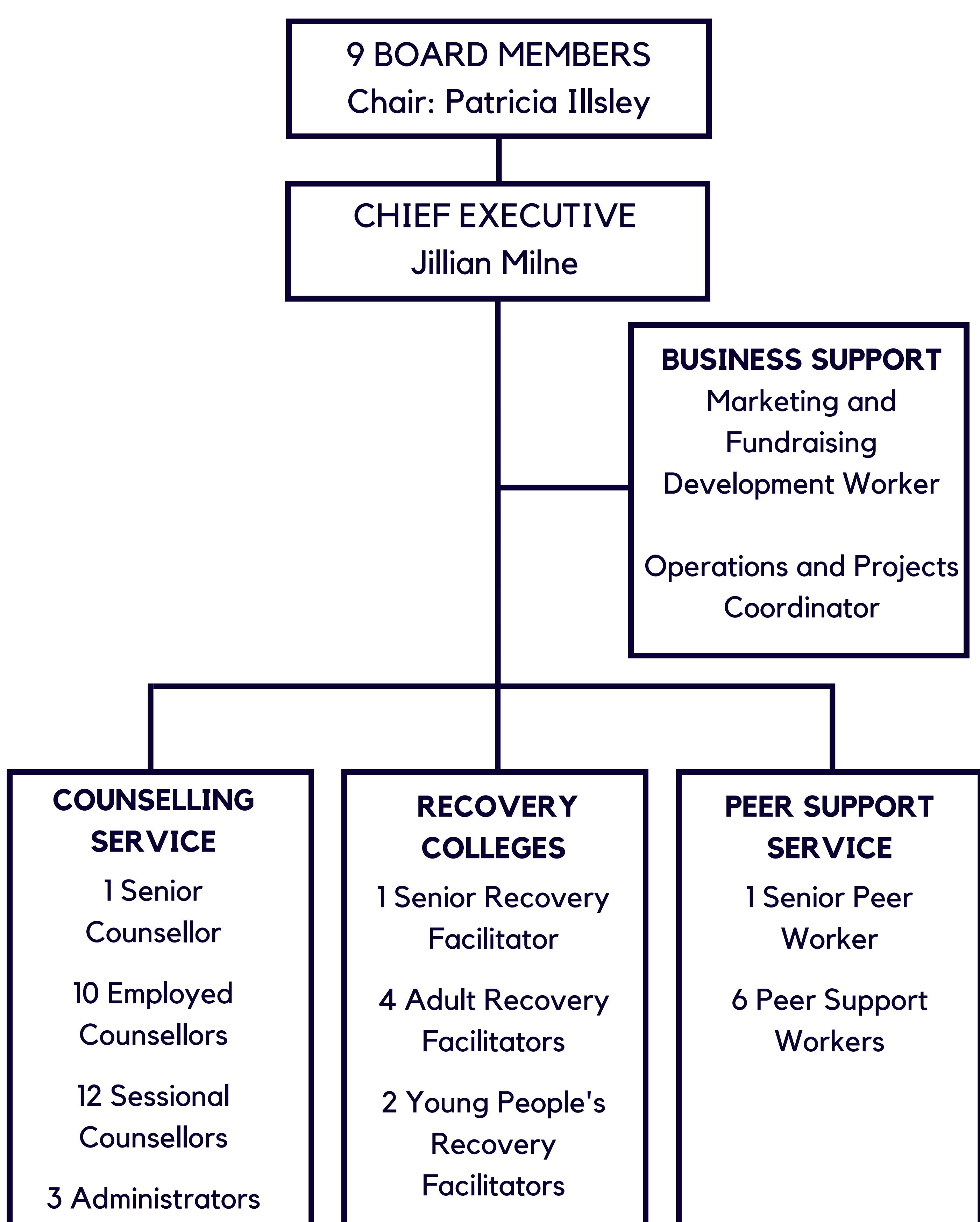
For the year ended  
31st March 2025

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# The Organisation



# Chair of the Board



It is my great pleasure to introduce this year's report by first thanking our volunteers, staff, and Chief Executive for their commitment, compassion, hard work, and flexibility over the past year. Despite the challenges of settling into our new home at the Gateway, Mindspace has continued to deliver a high-quality service to people experiencing mental health difficulties across Perth and Kinross through our Recovery College, Counselling and Peer Support services.

One of the most significant developments this year has been our move from York Place to The Gateway. While this has brought many opportunities, it has also presented challenges, including costs associated with leaving our former tenancy and carrying out essential repairs in our new building. The most substantial expense to date has been the installation of a new boiler, necessary to ensure business continuity. We continue to work closely with PKAVS and the Cathedral to prioritise and fund further essential repairs. Although these costs, combined with the ongoing need to secure service delivery funding, have created pressures on our reserves, our financial position remains stable and resilient. One of the most pressing issues we face is increasing demand. Each year we are forced to close our counselling waiting lists earlier, with serious consequences for those unable to afford private therapy. Mindspace is now the only provider of free counselling in Perth and Kinross, and we remain determined to maintain and expand this vital lifeline.

As with many charities across Scotland, funding our mental health services on an annual basis is increasingly difficult. Service-level agreements do not reflect rising costs such as energy, and competition for grant funding continues to grow. Nevertheless, we are deeply grateful to our funders – including the Henry Smith Charity, Gannochy Trust, Robertson Trust, Northwood Charitable Trust, The Dunlossit and Islay Community Fund, and the Health and Social Care Partnership as well as local and central government – for their new and continued support. Particular thanks go to our CEO and staff team, whose tireless efforts in a highly competitive environment have enabled us to maintain and develop our services.

# Chair of the Board



Looking ahead, the Board is excited by the potential to develop a Mental Health Hub for Perth, made possible by our move to The Gateway. We believe Mindspace can play a leading role in building this hub, helping to improve access and referrals to local mental health services. The Board has also provided stability and strategic guidance throughout the year, and we were delighted to welcome John Jarvie as a new trustee, bringing valuable HR expertise. Our three-year strategy, supported by the introduction of a CRM system, is enabling us to monitor performance more effectively and set clear priorities.

Over the coming year, our strategic aims will include the increased promotion and expansion of key services and further exploration of the Mental Health Hub concept. Our services continue to make a lasting difference to people's lives, whether delivered from The Gateway, through partnerships across the region, or in local schools. Collaboration remains central to our approach, and we look forward to building on existing successful partnerships that have allowed us to reach new clients this year.

We are realistic about the challenges ahead, including further repairs at The Gateway, the impact of the cost of living crisis, and rising employment costs. Yet we remain committed to delivering accessible, high-quality mental health support to the people of Perth and Kinross with compassion and dedication.

*Patricia Illsley*

# Chief Executive



Moving from York Place to The Gateway, North Methven Street in Perth was the biggest event of 2024-25. In some sense, it was all-consuming. As well as staff continuing to dig deep and deliver amazing services yet again this year, they also had to pitch in to support the running of a bigger building including responding to demands not experienced previously. Tasks included cleaning, painting, furniture moving, as well as adapting to an open plan office environment. Such tasks and difficulties were met (mostly) with smiles and bonhomie.

Costs associated with the relocation have all fallen into the 24/25 financial year and these have been significantly more than predicted. Dilapidations from York Place and professional fees were slightly higher than expected. These costs included painting the whole building inside and out, replacement of all carpeting/flooring and legal and surveyors' fees. These all fell on us as the exiting tenant. However, the Gateway building has been a bigger challenge. Within the first month of relocation, we noted many additional concerns to those highlighted in the building survey carried out as part of due diligence. As a result, protracted lease negotiations followed, with 53 weeks passing between moving day and lease signing day. These negotiations obviously came at further financial cost alongside increased repair and maintenance costs encountered in the Gateway. As part of the move to bigger premises, we also took on other posts on a secondment basis alongside managing the needs of tenants already resident in the building.

It was agreed that Mindspace, PKAVS and St Ninians Cathedral would form a subgroup to consider the priority work required to bring the Gateway into a much improved state of repair. We still believe that the Gateway can become the hub we envision. This, however, will take investment from all parties.

Economically, times are tough, but we have survived these again in 24/25 and continue to provide fantastic services to the people of Perth and Kinross. Funding, however, persistently falls short of the relentless demand we face. The Counselling Service, yet again this year, had to close its waiting list to new referrals due to lengthy waiting times caused by demand. Recovery College courses are regularly oversubscribed and the Peer Hub often has a waiting list too.

# Chief Executive



This year we had to submit a higher number of funding applications than previously to maintain provision. Funders report receiving up to 8 times the value of the grant pot available. This has nothing to do with the quality of the application rather the sheer level of funding shortfall and need across the whole of the UK. Several current and previous funders are also changing their priorities and qualifying criteria.

This financial trend for 24/25 paints a challenging picture for the forthcoming year. There continues to be much talk of closer working and sharing of resources at the many strategic partnerships groups I attend, however, with so much money tied up in acute care, there seems little action towards shifting some of that finance into community care, and more importantly, into organisations like ours. Let's hope this changes soon.

We said goodbye to long-term staff member Alex Taylor who had filled our Marketing and Fundraising post in October 2024, but welcomed Alexandra Campbell to the organisation in December 2024 as his replacement. Keeping me afloat and motivated in this mire of gloom are the many marvellous people who give of themselves every day; the Senior Team has been incredible – stepping up and responding to unexpected daily challenges beyond their normal ones; and staff and sessional counsellors delivering fantastic work to support people who are struggling - as well as filling gaps here and there. Finally, my thanks to our Trustees who give selflessly and who have patiently and constructively responded to woes about boilers, toilets, doors, windows and anything else I've filled their cup with. Together, you make this organisation the amazing place it is.

Thank you all!

Jillian Milne

# Counselling Service



The Counselling Service has been available to the residents of Perth and Kinross for around 30 years. This year there has been a rise in the number of referrals to Mindspace. Some of this is linked to the closure of Harbour Counselling in October 2024, meaning we are now the only free umbrella counselling service available in Perth and Kinross.

## **Young Peoples Counselling**

We continue to offer 1-1 YP counselling (8-18) at our Perth office and in some rural areas (Kinross, Blairgowrie and Crieff) for those who do not wish to be seen in school or do not have a counsellor in their school. It is now a pre-requirement for any counsellor joining our organisation to be able to work with YPs. This is beginning to ease slightly with the additional YP module being taught at Abertay. We have 12 sessional counsellors and 9 employed counsellors. Most of the employed counsellors work in the 7 school clusters

There were 171 referrals for YP counselling, 122 had an initial assessment, 98 began counselling and 92 completed counselling. Average CORE scores were 18 (Moderately severe distress) at the start of counselling and 10.5 (Low-level problems) at the end of counselling.

## **Schools Counselling**

We continue to work in 7 of the high schools and their feeder schools. There have been increasing numbers of referrals coming from primary schools this year. On separate occasions we struggled (due to a shortage of specially trained YP counsellors) to engage counsellors for the Perth High and Auchterarder clusters. This has since been resolved. The service is embedded in the majority of schools with only recurring issue being around room availability in busy schools.

There were 401 school referrals, 362 initial assessments, 330 began counselling and 358 completed counselling. Average CORE scores at the start of counselling were 17.2 (Moderately severe distress) and at the end were 10.6 (Low-level problems).

# Counselling Service



## Adult Counselling

New referrals to our adult service rose to 1,099 - 708 adults received IAs, 596 began counselling and 541 completed counselling this year. We continue to see around 150-200 clients a week in our Perth office and in some rural areas. Most of our sessions are face-to-face but there are a few supported online when the client is unable to travel to the office or to one of our rural venues.

Demand consistently outstrips our financial ability to supply and again we had to close to new referrals for the adult service in March 2025 as clients were waiting up to 9 months for counselling to begin. At the point of closure there were 162 adults and YPs waiting for an initial assessment and 351 waiting to begin counselling. The waiting list was also closed for over two months between April 2024 and June 2024, again reflecting the sustained pressure on demand.

The average CORE score was 19.9 (Moderately severe distress) at the beginning of counselling and 10.2 (Low level problems) at the end of counselling.

## Couples Counselling

We started a new project (Couples Counselling) in January this year. It has been slow to get going as it is a paid for service. We had many enquiries but when potential clients realised it wasn't a free service, they were unable to begin sessions. We applied for funding for this service but have been unsuccessful so far. There is a steady stream of couples registering for counselling so hopefully that grows.

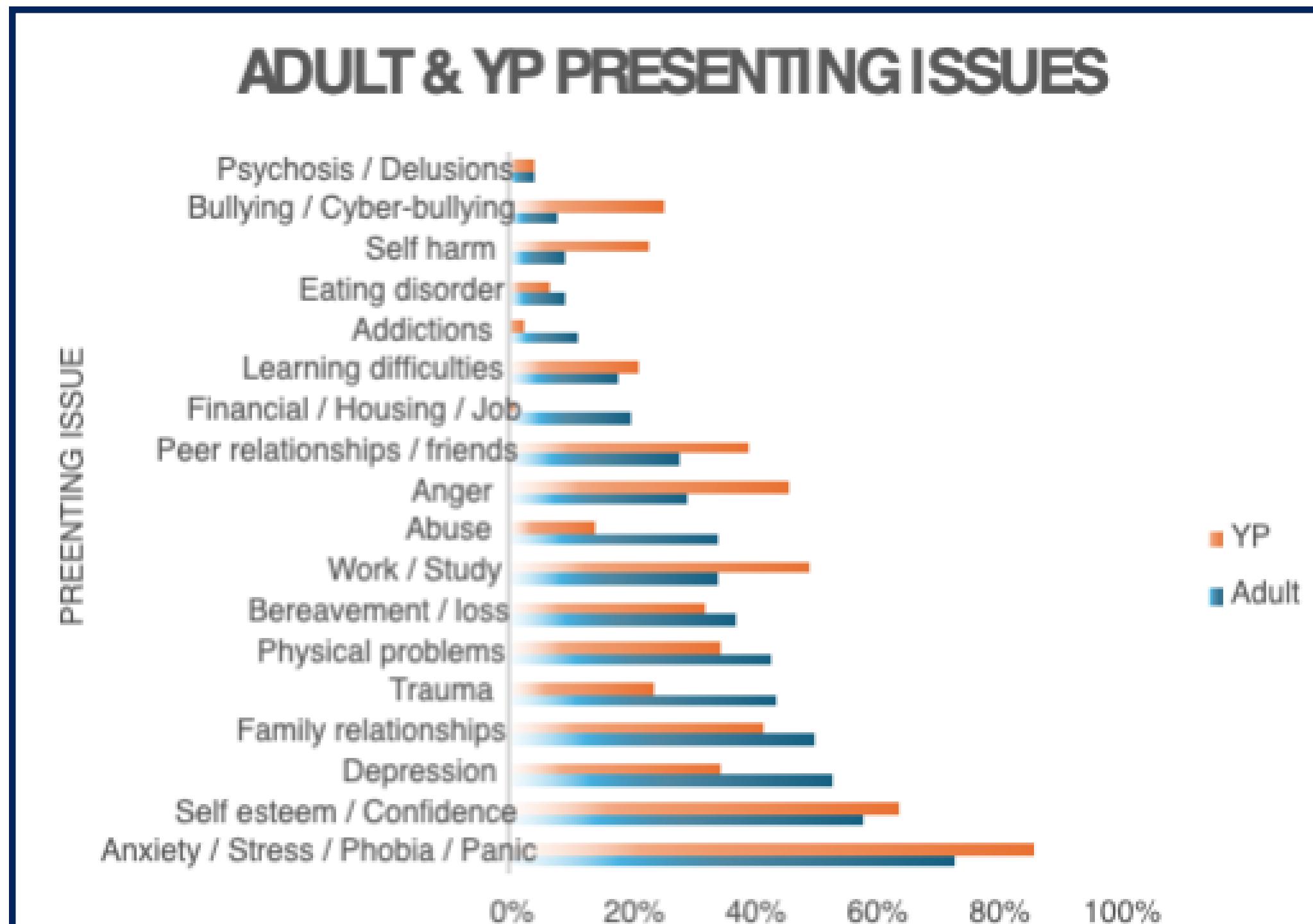
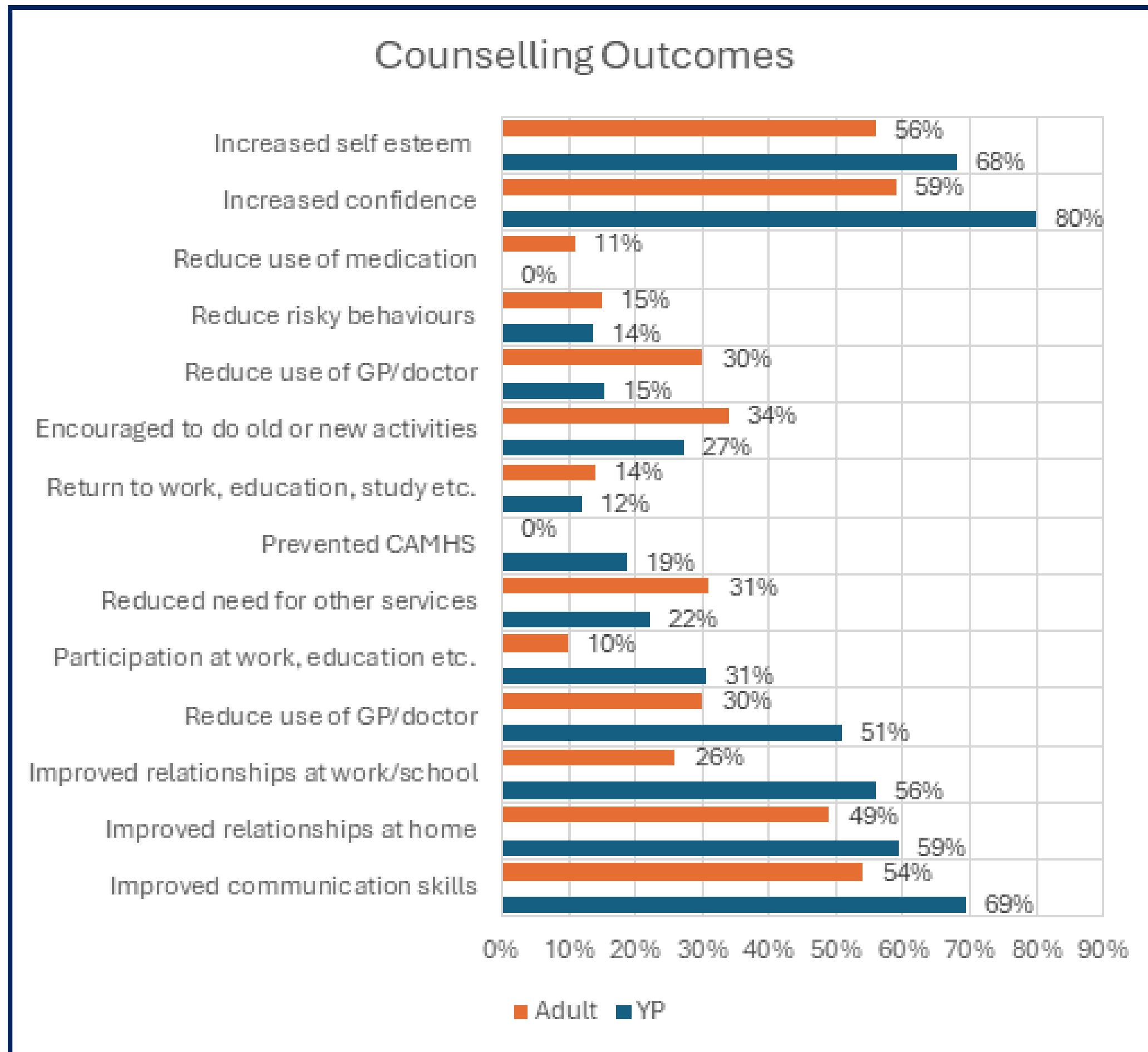
## Staffing

We have 8 employed counsellors, most of whom work in schools alongside 12 sessional counsellors. Two student counsellors who joined us last year completed their training and are both now working for the organisation.

# Counselling Service



The following tables show Presenting Issues and Outcomes for YPs and Adults combined:



# Adult Recovery College



This year marked a significant transition as we relocated to our new building, and we are now well into the settling-in period, creating a strong foundation for growth and future success.

This report showcases the progress we have made and the meaningful impact of our programmes and courses over the past year. To respond to the changing needs of our community, we introduced new courses and further developed our partnerships with local organisations. Spanning areas such as Mindfulness, Self-management, Creative Arts, and physical well-being, our courses are designed to give participants practical skills and strategies to support their ongoing recovery journey. Courses can be both short one-off introductory sessions through to 10 week courses with more in-depth learning opportunities.

The Recovery College has introduced new courses including: Creativity for Wellbeing; The Power of Now: A Holistic View of Mental Health; The Nature of the Mind; and Social Media Vs Reality - Who's Body is it?

The Recovery College partnership with Churches Action for the Homeless (CATH) has continued and the team have delivered sessions and a Taking Control course to their Positive Pathways cohort. Recovery College continues to work closely with Moveahead and delivered a series of workshops around developing confidence. We also worked with Moveahead and an independent artist to deliver some Art for Wellbeing sessions specifically targeted at the migrant, refugee population currently residing at a local hotel, to support their wellbeing and encourage community integration.

The team have been involved in the development and delivery of a guided journaling course for participants of Trauma Healing Together's Positive Pathways programme. The Recovery College continues to enjoy a close relationship with Letham4All and a member of the team attends the 'Butty and Blether' session each week to provide information and mental health support as well as facilitating a walking group in the local community for those that wish to take part in getting outdoors.

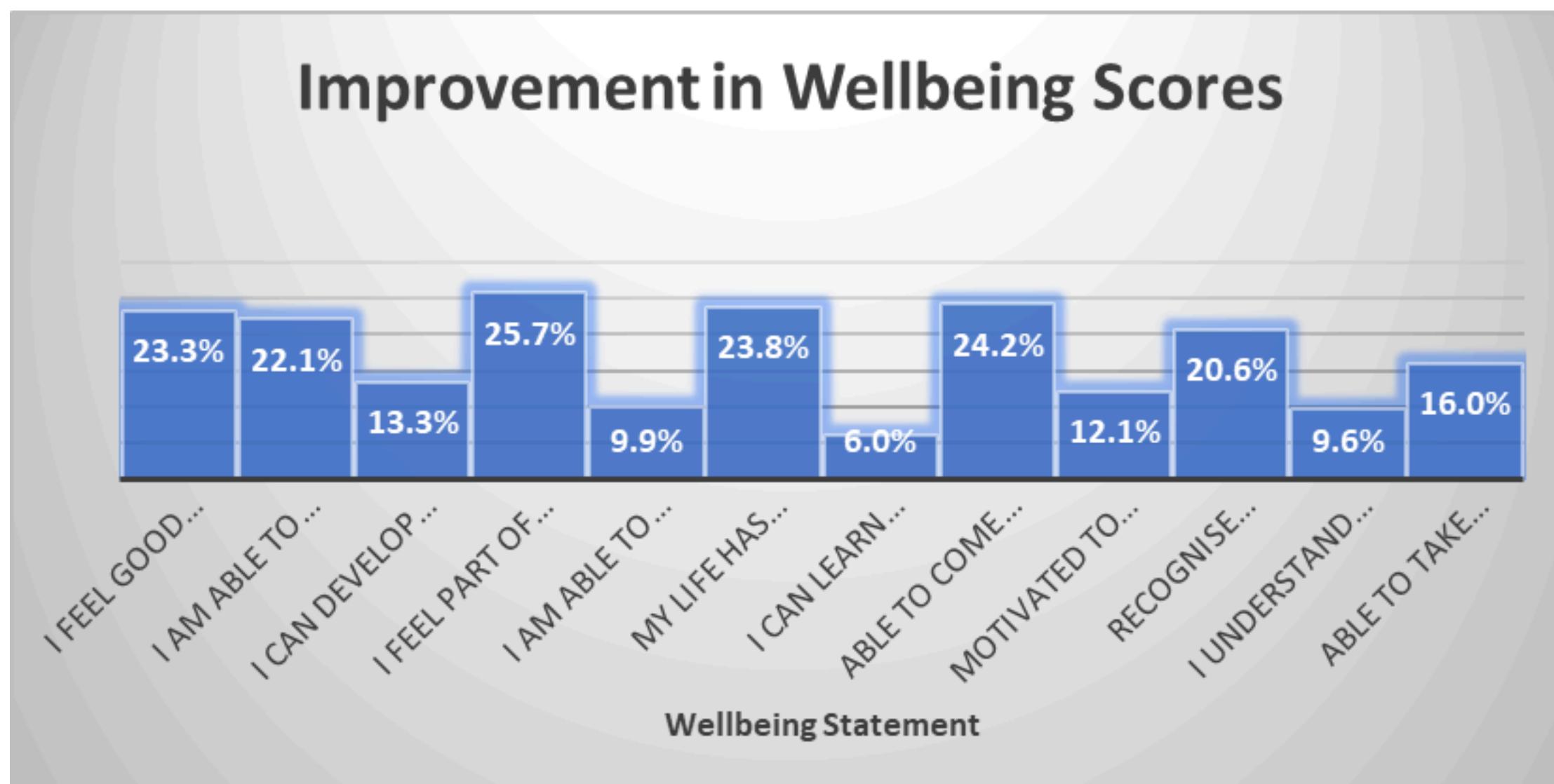
As part of our support to the Peer Hub PDA programme we support the induction of students by delivering a self-management course over two days prior to them the award.

# Adult Recovery College



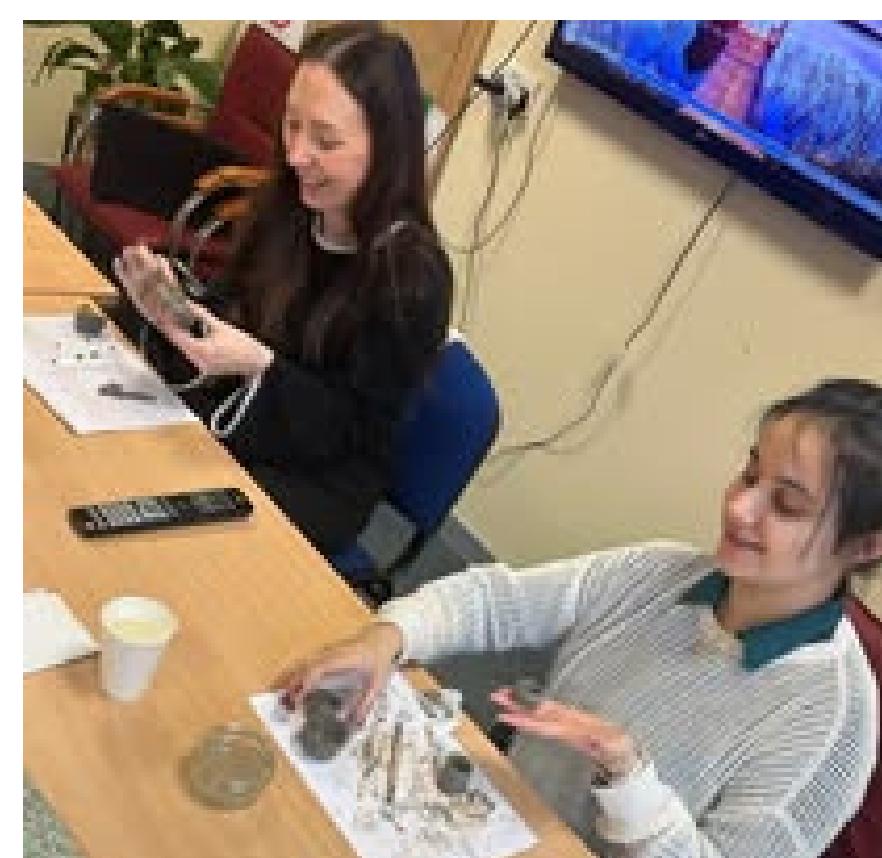
The team also supported a 3rd year Dundee University social work student for an 80 day placement.

Through structured courses and workshop the Recovery College supported 156 unique individuals. The Recovery College continues to develop and deliver engaging courses and sessions that supports participants to gain confident and build their self-worth whilst gaining tools that support them to self-manage their mental health and wellbeing.



**From the participants that completed the pre and post course Recovery and Wellbeing Questionnaire:**

- There was a 23% improvement on the average wellbeing scores for those participants that responded to the statement '1. I feel good about myself'.
- There was a 22% improvement on the average wellbeing scores for those participants that responded to the statement '2. I feel able to try new things'.
- There was a 10% improvement on the average wellbeing scores for those participants that responded to the statement '5. I am able to stand up for myself'.
- There was an 16% improvement on the average wellbeing scores for those participants that responded to the statement '12. I can take charge of my life and participate in things I enjoy'



## Comments from recent participants

- *"I feel there's been a shift in my mind. I honestly think this is the best class I have been in" (Participant on block 3 of Creativity for Wellbeing)*
- *"Very interesting indeed. A lovely way to express thoughts. Pitched at the right level, gave insight and I found it relaxing, thought provoking and manageable" (Participant on block 1 of Creativity for Wellbeing)*
- *"Fantastic, Awesome, Amazing" (Participant on block 2 of Creativity for Wellbeing)*
- *"Other points of view are always interesting and add to the experience of what you are learning. The variety of the course leaders was a bonus" (Learn to Live Well Participant)*
- *"Informal and relaxed atmosphere, I think we all shared experiences and sign posted to other agencies and groups" (Attendee at the Feel-Good Friday sessions)*
- *"Like-minded people and similar feelings. Friendly and welcoming staff and surroundings" (Attendee at the Feel-Good Friday sessions)*
- *"The course was very educational, guided through everything and very knowledgeable facilitators" (Relaxation Group Participant)*

# Young People's Recovery College



The Young People's Recovery College have seen some staffing changes with Eilidh Gillies leaving the team in August 2024 to take up a role in a local secondary school. Louise Laing, who had previously supported the YP team on a limited-hours basis, has now increased her commitment to help address this gap.

Over the past year, the team has continued to deliver a diverse range of programmes aimed at supporting the wellbeing, creativity, and resilience of children and young people across Perth and Kinross. Our work has reached primary and secondary schools, as well as community settings, with a strong focus on prevention, early intervention, and providing safe spaces for young people to explore their feelings and build positive coping strategies.

Over the year our Young Peoples Recovery College has supported 197 young people between the ages of 8-18 years. The following provides a sample of the groupwork activities delivered over the past year.

**Creative Catalyst Partnership:** In July 2024, we ran a six-week expressive art programme through our Creative Catalyst group at the Creative Exchange. Four young people aged 14-18 took part, using creative expression as a way to explore identity, self-confidence, and emotional wellbeing.

**5 Steps to Wellbeing:** Also, in July, we delivered three separate six-week programmes at St Johns RC Academy. These sessions helped pupils develop practical strategies for improving mental health and everyday resilience through the evidence-based Five Ways to Wellbeing framework.

**Emotions Explorers:** Our Emotions Explorers programme was delivered three times during the autumn term. Across these groups, 21 young people engaged in playful, age-appropriate activities to better understand and manage their emotions.

## Anxiety Management Workshops

We supported primary pupils through short anxiety management interventions. These sessions provided practical coping strategies for managing worry, helping children feel more in control and supported.

# Young People's Recovery College



## Holiday Programme Activities

During the summer holidays, we partnered with local organisations to provide creative and wellbeing-focused activities. These included:

- A music workshop with Selkie Music.
- Two adventure afternoons with Willowgate Activity Centre.
- A Self-Care/Chill afternoon at Mindspace, where young people engaged in relaxing and wellbeing-focused activities.

## Goals for Growth

In October 2024, we launched the Goals for Growth programme in partnership with Saints in the Community. This 12-week intervention supports young people experiencing grief, loss, and change. This course supports young people in developing confidence, resilience, and emotional coping strategies through a mix of group work and physical activity.



Selkie Music Workshop



Goals For Growth



Willowgate Adventure Afternoon

### Comments from young people and Partners:

- *"It was easy to talk about my feelings"* (Anxiety management workshop participant)
- *"When it finishes in 4 weeks I want it to start again"* (Nature group participant)
- *"10 out of 10"* (Emotions Explorers Participant)
- *"This is amazing and really helped"* (Goals for Growth Participant)
- *"Give staff more pay cause they are the best!"* (Goals for Growth Participant)
- *"I got to meet new people and make new pals"* (Self-Care/Chill Afternoon Participant)

# Peer Support



## A Year of Hope, Resilience, and Growth

Another year has flown by, marked by hope, resilience, and meaningful progress. Despite the challenges of relocating our premises, Mindspace's Peer Support Hub continues to thrive—driven by our passion to welcome and support people who walk through our doors.

The Peer Support Hub provided one-to-one support to 176 individuals and welcomed an additional 36 through our weekly drop-in group across Perth and Kinross. Of the 176, 56 peers required significantly more support than the standard 12 sessions. These spaces offered people the chance to feel truly heard, valued, and connected. Through shared experiences and mutual understanding, participants developed greater self-awareness, built confidence to make positive choices, and gained practical tools to navigate life's challenges.

At the heart of this journey lies the power of active listening, empathy, and mutual support—an approach that inspires hope and belief. Our peer support model celebrates strengths over struggles, focusing on "what's strong, not what's wrong." This way of working is not only effective—it's often life-changing.

### Professional Development Award in Mental Health Peer Support

Mindspace remains one of a select few organisations in Scotland delivering the Professional Development Award (PDA) in Mental Health Peer Support, accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). This rigorous and highly respected qualification is delivered in partnership with the Recovery College and continues to be in high demand.



Across recent cohorts, seven candidates have completed the award, with two others close to completion. The most recent group started with nine candidates, though participation was reduced to five for various reasons.

To support future delivery, Mindspace invested in training two additional SQA assessors. This expansion strengthens our capacity to offer the PDA to more candidates and reinforces our commitment to safe, high-quality peer support. We remain strongly committed to the PDA, as it provides peer support workers with skills around active listening, boundary setting, managing relationships, and understanding recovery models. It also provides peers with confidence that are receiving support that is safe, effective, and appropriate.

# Peer Support



## Partnerships and Outreach

We welcomed a team from the Ayrshire Recovery College, who visited Mindspace to learn from our experience delivering the PDA and to explore the Recovery College's offerings. The visit sparked inspiring conversations, mutual learning, and sharing of best practices.

Our partnership with Perth College UHI continues to flourish. The peer worker is highly valued, and the college expressed its appreciation for the ongoing support. Feedback from students has been overwhelmingly positive, particularly due to the on-site presence of peer support.

We also delivered a bespoke peer support training programme to a group branching out from an East Lothian-based organisation called Changes. The training, delivered over two evenings to accommodate work commitments, was very well received and marked another successful collaboration.

## Adaptation and Growth

We withdrew Peer support in Auchterarder despite our best efforts to motivate community engagement. Those hours have been reallocated to Perth City, where demand remains high. Kinross has likewise experienced reduced engagement, and half of the allocated hours have also been redirected to Perth to maximise impact.

In January we welcomed a volunteer who had completed the PDA with us and, thanks to a small pot of funding, were able to offer her a three-month paid position. This reflects our commitment to nurturing talent and creating meaningful opportunities for those with lived experience.



Peer Support Workers continue to promote our services across the local area. We participate monthly in the Dunkeld Advice Hub, where we are warmly welcomed by staff at the local GP surgery. These opportunities to host information stands and deliver presentations have led to direct referrals—making our outreach efforts feel truly worthwhile.

## Engagement and Recognition

Our connection with the Scottish Recovery Network (SRN) remains strong. We are actively involved in several key initiatives, including Peer Support Evaluation, the Peer Support Framework, and Peer Leadership programmes.

# Peer Support

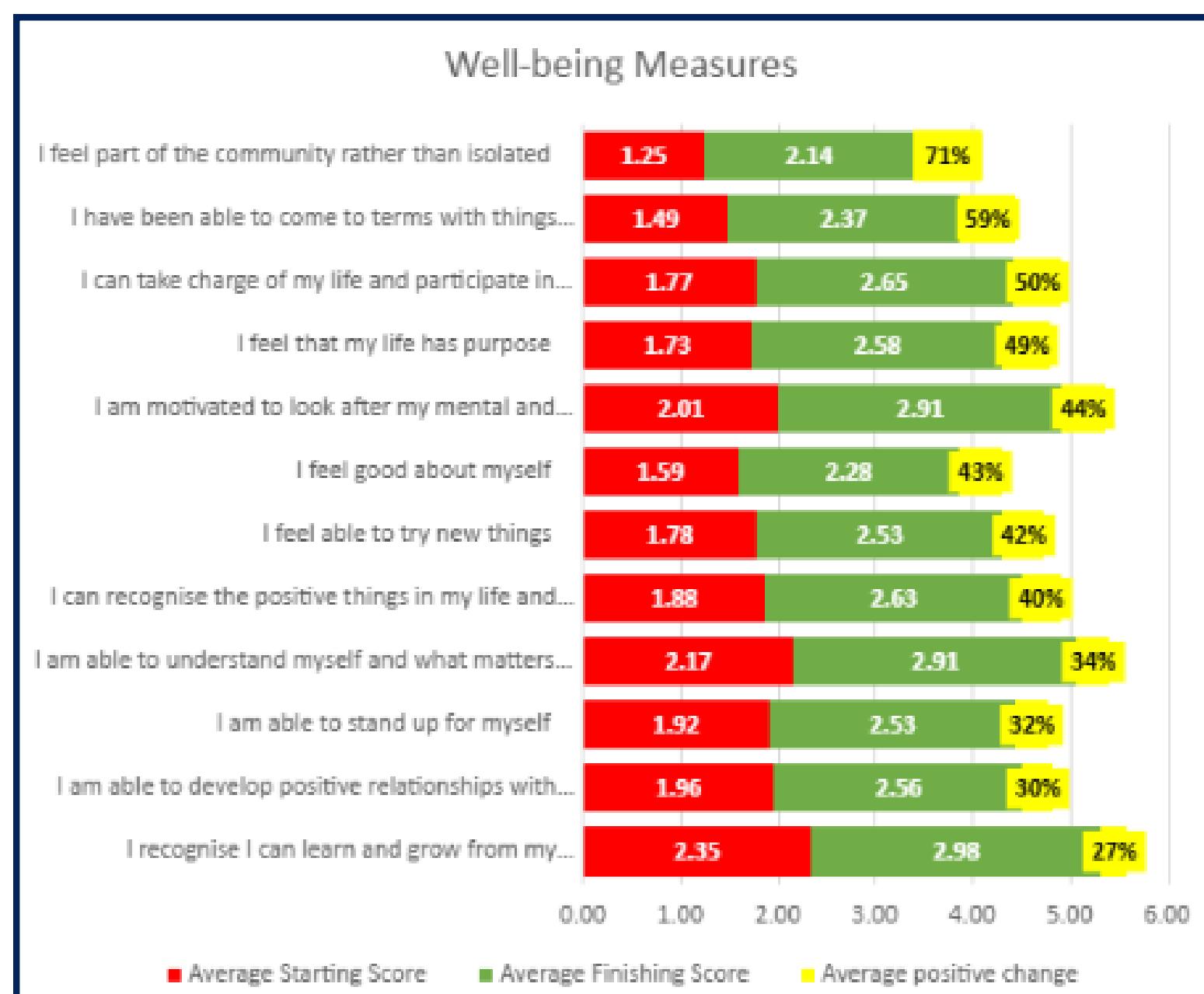


Our growing presence within SRN is vital—it keeps us aligned with the newest developments and strengthens the quality of our work.

The Peer Support Hub at Mindspace is recognised for the exceptional work it delivers. We are proud of the progress made and excited for what lies ahead.

## Impact Measurement

We continue to measure impact through a questionnaire completed at the first and final appointments. Once again, the results show the success of the project.



Celebration of an important achievement for a peer during a peer support relationship.

## Voices of Experience

- "Made me realise I am not alone. It has helped me with my confidence, giving me tips and coping strategies."
- "It helps me to be accompanied, therefore I looked forward to the sessions. I gained more confidence as prior to peer support I suffered extreme anxiety and fears."
- "It helped me verbalise thoughts, find a route around my trauma, and mitigate dark thoughts in a light and methodical way."
- "Being able to talk about personal issues in a safe environment. Some of these issues were quite traumatic to me but gradually I felt able to get them off my chest."



Registered Charity Number: SC002072

[www.mindspacepk.com](http://www.mindspacepk.com)