



**We are Buckinghamshire Mind**  
**2021 - 2024**

# Welcome

As we emerge from multiple lockdowns, it is an opportunity for us to reflect on the amazing work that has taken place within Buckinghamshire Mind over the last 18 months. It is also the right time to look forwards and outline our ambitions for the next three years.

Our colleagues, volunteers and people accessing our services have all played an essential role in creating this document. It is truly incredible to see how far we have come since we last wrote about our strategy.

Covid has forced us all to adapt at great speed. This has required resilience and an ability to be creative and engage with change. It is this mindset that has enabled Buckinghamshire Mind to continue to provide extraordinary services to those in our community at this time of significant need. A big “thank you” goes out to colleagues and volunteers for all your hard work, courage and curiosity and also to the people who use our services, for helping us on this journey. Working together we will hold on to what we have learnt as we rise to the challenges ahead.

Three golden threads run through our new strategy – **Inclusive**, **Informed** and **Agile**. They provide us with clear focus at a time when the future is still uncertain and lay the foundations for continued success, ensuring that everyone with a mental health problem gets the support and respect they deserve.

Please read on to find out about the work that we do, our plans for the future and why our services are as important as ever. We hope that you will be inspired to stand-up for better mental health across our communities.



**Andrea McCubbin**  
Chief Executive



**Philip Bruce**  
Chair

August 2021

In 2019 our volunteers were awarded the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK, considered to be the MBE for such groups. Without the support of our volunteers we couldn’t deliver the range of services in the community that we do today. Their ongoing commitment will be a key factor in the successful delivery of this strategy to 2024.



**The Queen’s Award  
for Voluntary Service**

# Vision, purpose & values

## Our vision

**Everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets both support and respect.**

## Our purpose

**We are Buckinghamshire Mind** – affiliated to national Mind and proud to play our part in the local Mind network. Together we are Mind.

Open, caring, experienced, unstoppable, together.

**We connect. We support. We influence.**

We are at the heart of our local communities, in Buckinghamshire and East Berkshire. We promote wellbeing and recovery; we prevent mental ill-health; we offer talking therapies and we provide support in times of crisis.

**We stand up for mental health. Our services change lives. For support. For respect. For you.**

## Our values

**Open** - we reach out and welcome anyone with a mental health need

**Caring** - we treat everyone with compassion and kindness

**Experienced** - we stand shoulder to shoulder with people with lived experience, ensuring our services make a difference

**Unstoppable** - we speak out fearlessly and won't give up

**Together** - we are stronger in partnership and respect everyone's contribution and background

# Our Services

Our services adapt to meet the needs of local people. We are proud that we continue to develop our offering, where our expertise enables us to have a positive impact within local communities.

## Wellbeing

“I want support with my mental health so that I can live well and fulfil my potential.”

**Wellbeing and activity groups** – weekly sessions in a broad range of activities, to socialise and try new things.

**Employment service** – practical help and encouragement to enable people recovering from mental health problems to regain, or retain, voluntary or paid work.

**Outreach** – reach out and support those with an existing mental health problem in partnership with Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.

**Community Link Workers** – based in local GP surgeries, to empower people to take control of their health and wellbeing, with an individual, holistic approach.

**Community Connectors** – part of a specialist multi-disciplinary mental health team, supporting those experiencing serious and enduring mental health problems (East Berkshire).

### Champion the Change

**Buckinghamshire** – transforming attitudes to end mental health stigma.

**Befriending service** – partnerships developed with community volunteers, reducing loneliness and isolation in adults with a mental health problem.

**Peer Support in Schools** – train student peer ambassadors in mental health awareness to mentor younger students across primary and secondary schools.


**Education** – sessions and training days with children aged 4-18, building awareness of wellbeing and mental health resilience.

**Dementia** – advice, companionship and social activities for with those with moderate to severe dementia or memory loss, and their carers.

**Peer Support** – offer group activities, based on the Five Ways to Wellbeing, via our established peer support services, Friends in Need and Mind the Gap.

“I want to learn more about mental health so that I can stay well.”





“I want somewhere safe in times of crisis where I am understood and can focus on my wellbeing.”

## Crisis Support

**Safe Haven** – a welcoming and safe environment during a mental health crisis. We provide non-clinical support including safety planning, recognised tools for recovery, person-centred listening and short term therapeutic distraction.

**Safe Haven plus** – a partnership with other charities to help resolve non-medical life-issues that are potentially factors contributing to crisis. For example, drug and alcohol abuse; housing and homelessness; debt and benefits advice.

**Suicide Bereavement Support** – listen with empathy and provide practical and emotional support to close contacts following bereavement by suicide.

**Rough Sleeper Initiative** – a partnership offering comprehensive support to those sleeping rough. We provide counselling and advocacy to build the individual's resilience and connection.

## Training

**Workplace Wellbeing training** – raising awareness, enabling employees to stay well, to be supported effectively and to end the stigma related to mental health.

**Specialist training** – supporting people with the skills to adapt and thrive in the post Covid working environment. We also offer Mental Health First Aid and Suicide First Aid.

## Talking Therapies

**Counselling** – a menu of options to suit different needs and offer flexibility and choice. Our volunteer counsellors work with adults experiencing a range of mental health problems.

**Group therapy** – for people who have completed their counselling but who would like additional support and for those on our waiting list.

“I want someone that will listen, that won't judge, to enable me to make sense of things.”

# We've achieved great things

Developed **Employment FM** with Wycombe Sound – developing skills and helping people back to work.



Worked with 37 clients in the first 6 months of the **Rough Sleepers Initiative** aiding them to independence and preventing mental health problems being a barrier to long term housing solutions.

Counselling capacity increased by 80% and is now able to meet the increased requests for **male counsellors**.



450 RAF personnel joined monthly wellbeing sessions to **end Mental Health stigma**.



Our Dementia service won a '**Proud of Bucks**' Award.



On 224 occasions individuals attended **Safe Haven** when they would otherwise have presented in crisis at A&E.

Successfully employing **Link workers** in 4 separate Primary Care Networks across Buckinghamshire.



Mind the Gap extended **Peer Support** groups into North Bucks.

**Suicide Bereavement** successfully supported 47 clients and held up as the Gold Standard of service delivery by Bucks Public Health.

Reinforced **strong productive partnerships**, particularly with Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.



468 local volunteers trained in **Mental Health First Aid** and **Suicide Prevention First Aid** in our partnership with Public Health in the last 18 months since January 2020.



Friends in Need now supporting those with more **complex needs; younger adults** and those living in **East Berks**.



**We transformed services to enable us to remain in contact and to continue to provide services that were compliant with Covid restrictions. Our staff and volunteers showed incredible creativity and developed new skills.**

Befriending continued to support 170 residents by telephone, **reducing social isolation** and encouraging improved wellbeing.



Ran a programme of **online physical activities**, including twice weekly online yoga classes.



Launched new **Rapid Access counselling** service for clients who want appointments outside working hours with no waiting list.



Workplace wellbeing delivered by **live online sessions**. 2000 people trained – 75% more than in the previous year. 97% said their knowledge and skills improved as a result.



Created regular videos for our new **YouTube channel**. By Sept 2020 we had 1038 views.

Took advantage of **meeting outdoors** with our walking groups.



1169 children attended **virtual education sessions**, whilst at home during Jan-Feb 2021 lockdown.



1336 **Wellbeing calls** made by our Outreach workers.



Embraced new digital initiatives to enable **community fundraisers** to maintain momentum during lockdown.

Created a series of **volunteer wellbeing videos** in partnership with Community Impact Bucks on offer to every VCS organisation across Bucks.



50% of staff and volunteers now rank their **digital ability** as very confident compared with 17% in March 2020. Over 90% are confident.

# Local people need Bucks Mind more than ever

**We've come a long way.** Mental health is not hidden anymore. It's on the front pages. It's discussed at the dinner table. Mental health is now something to be honest about – not ashamed of. However, even before Covid fundamental challenges existed. National figures suggest only 1 in 3 people that needed mental health support received it.

The pandemic has **disrupted social support networks as well as formal mental health services**. Since March 2020 the number of people experiencing depressive symptoms doubled to 1 in 5.<sup>1</sup> However, the general public are showing resilience and despite dramatic initial impacts, average wellbeing levels are returning to pre-pandemic levels.

**Unfortunately, this hides underlying trends.** Research from national Mind<sup>2</sup> highlights that those with pre-existing mental health conditions have experienced the greatest impact, reporting an increase in the severity of challenges they are facing along with concerns about the future. In addition, children and young people, those living in poverty or facing financial insecurity and

people experiencing racial inequality are being impacted disproportionately.

**People need more support that offers choice in how it can be accessed and received.** A lack of early intervention and timely access to services will result in more severe and more complex need in the future.

**Local data shows that 40% of residents were concerned about their mental wellbeing.**<sup>3</sup>

**23% were feeling lonely and isolated and this was more common in those with a mental health problem.**

**We support local strategies**, the Buckinghamshire all-age mental health and wellbeing strategy (2020 – 23) and the initiatives within the Community Mental Health Framework and Integrated Care Partnership Vision, both of which are aligned with the NHS Long Term Plan 2019.

**We will continue to work closely with local commissioners and to access data to inform our actions.**

## We are committed to national strategies

### Advancing Mental Health equalities strategy – 2020

- We will support the whole person
- We will reduce inequality of access, experience and outcomes
- We will take action to improve data which shines a light on inequality and use it as a catalyst for positive change

<sup>1</sup>ONS March 2021 <sup>2</sup>Mind, Coronavirus: the consequences for mental health, July 2021 <sup>3</sup>Public Health Buckinghamshire Post Lockdown Survey





# How we planned our future

**We listened to** staff and volunteers; people who use our services; commissioners and funders; national Mind and the Mind network. We used a formal consultation as well as group discussions and one to ones. We analysed feedback questionnaires and other internal surveys, including our hybrid working survey. We looked at the national data and recognised we needed more local data.

## We considered difficult questions

How can our services effectively respond to the pandemic?

What have we learnt from lockdown?

How can we reach those people with whom we can have greatest impact?

What are the barriers to people receiving support?

What do we need to do differently as a larger organisation?

What investment in additional resources do we require?

## You gave us clear priorities

Choice and flexibility in accessing services

Inclusive to diverse communities

Prioritise children and young people – intervene early

Partnerships to reach more people

More training and development opportunities

Expand our locations

Stand up for mental health

Develop services for greatest impact

# Golden threads

Our golden threads run through everything we do. They shape the ambitions for the organisation. They describe the mindset with which we approach our activities. They are areas in which we agree we must continue to do more.

## Inclusive

We will reach out and ensure we enable access to those where we know the need for our services is greatest and where we can have greatest impact.

We will improve inclusion and diversity within our own staff and volunteering opportunities.

We will work with partner organisations, building on their existing trusted relationships, to extend our reach.

## Informed

We will ensure that we have the right information to ask the right questions and make good decisions.

We will access information from a wide range of data sources so that we know who we are not seeing and we understand our impact.

We will use this knowledge to help shape our services and to influence the decisions of others.

## Agile

We will hold on to the amazing creative abilities that the organisation found during the lockdowns.

We will embrace our mantra of '**Listen, Learn, Adapt**', keeping people at the centre of all we do.

We will empower staff and volunteers to do things differently, acting quickly where we see benefits.



# Our digital commitment

Digital provides us with options. We embrace technology in all that we do. It empowers us to be Inclusive, Informed and Agile. It can improve the experience of those using our services and add choice; it can enable us to reach more people; it can make us more efficient in our operations and our training; it can improve our internal and external communication; it can build a rich picture of data and stories, enabling us to illustrate our impact to funders and access additional resources.

We acknowledge that technology can create barriers. We embrace national Mind's publication, 'Trying to Connect'<sup>4</sup> and through our digital strategy we will reduce the challenges to access as far as possible. Equally importantly, we will keep listening to the users of our services to evaluate what is working well and where we could be doing more.

<sup>4</sup>Mind (2021) - The importance of choice in remote mental health services



# Our ambitions for 2021 - 2024

We have written five statements that describe our ambition in each of the following key areas – people, impact, engagement, sustainability and resources.

As we face issues and opportunities we will ask ourselves how our decisions fulfil at least one of these ambitions and how they align with our golden threads.

1. We will ensure we are a great place for **people** to work, volunteer and experience our services.
2. We will target our services where we can have greatest **impact**.
3. We will build **engagement**, increase our influence and champion our vision for mental health.
4. We will improve **sustainability** at a time of unprecedented need, building collaborations and partnerships with other service providers.
5. We will invest in and maximise our **resources** to develop an organisation fit for the future.



👩🏫 **Bucks Mind is special to me because, from the beginning, I was made to feel welcome, involved and human. When I am not so well, I feel well cared for and supported, without being made to feel a nuisance and my dignity and respect is maintained at all times.** 🧡



# People

**We will ensure we are a great place for people to work, volunteer and experience services.**

- **Culture** – we will champion our culture of kindness, respect, empathy and understanding and will maintain the sense of a single team that was created in 2020. We will provide opportunities for everyone to strengthen relationships and share great ideas.
- **Workplace** – we will offer a workplace which enables flexibility, promotes wellbeing and makes people feel valued, enabling us to attract and retain staff and volunteers.
- **Training** – we will provide everyone with the training and development opportunities they need to build their confidence and skills to succeed in their role.
- **Capacity** – we will plan and recruit for growth and succession.
- **Diversity** – we will improve the breadth and depth of our understanding of our local community and aim to represent its diversity amongst our staff and volunteers, including at Board level.
- **Engagement** – we will expand the ways in which our service users can get involved and influence the shape of our services.

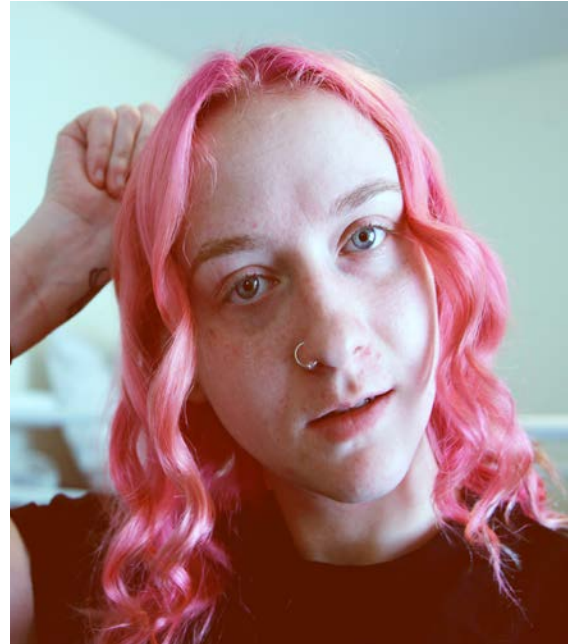


“Working at Bucks Mind in a service that I am so passionate about has given me hope, purpose and is helping to build my self esteem and confidence back up. My mental health is the best it has been in many, many years.”

# Impact

**We will target our services where we can have greatest impact.**

- **Prevention** – we will build awareness of wellbeing at a time when so many have experienced challenges with their mental health.
- **Need** – we will seek external data on local need as well as the experience of those using our services to develop a fuller understanding of how to prioritise expanded service delivery.
- **Access** – we will reach out and find new ways to make our services more accessible to those identified as having a need but who are currently under-represented in our services.
- **Choice** – we will embrace both digital and physical, recognising the value of choice and broadening the range of ways in which people can engage.
- **Feedback** – we will use the experience of those using our services as a measure of quality and to inform how we develop our services.
- **Physical health** – we will work with other organisations, providing opportunities to be active, developing the connection between mental and physical health, especially for those with existing mental health problems.
- **The difference we make** – we will develop more sophisticated ways to understand our reach and demonstrate both the short and long-term impact of our work.



**Having survived multiple mental health crises and a lack of medical help, it fills me with hope to know that the staff at Bucks Mind are so focussed on the wellbeing of service users.**

# Engagement

**We will build engagement, increase our influence and champion our vision for mental health.**

- **Profile** – we will continue to increase our profile through high level engagement with the Integrated Care System, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Buckinghamshire Council, Berkshire Healthcare Trust, the local Mind network and national Mind.
- **Influence** – we will use our knowledge from delivering services and working collaboratively to influence high level decision makers and the shape of future commissioned services.
- **Inclusion** – we will adapt our services to be more accessible, with a specific focus on people experiencing racial inequality; facing financial hardship and financial insecurity; at risk of, or enduring homelessness and to LGBTQI+ identities.
- **Awareness** – we will increase understanding of the experience of people with mental health problems and keep mental health firmly on the agenda of those around us.
- **Information** – we will improve access to information about sources of mental health support.
- **Community and corporate fundraising** – we will ensure all our supporters feel valued and recognise the vital role they are playing in our future.



“As a volunteer and a service user, having so many activities available over the last year with Friends in Need has been amazing.”

# Sustainability

**We will improve sustainability at a time of unprecedented need, building collaborations and partnerships with other service providers.**

- **Responding to demand** – we will expand capacity in specific areas, mindful of the impact of the pandemic on people with existing mental health problems and children and young people.
- **Impact led** – we will create a funding strategy focused on impact – developing a rich picture of data and anecdotes to access new sources of funding.
- **Income generation** – we will develop services that enable self-funded expansion in both our counselling and training services.
- **Partnerships** – we will seek additional partners to enhance our existing services and develop new services, helping to bring organisations together to address the growing need. This focus allows us to target some of the non-health factors which impact mental health - financial insecurity, threatened homelessness and substance abuse.
- **Tackling the climate emergency** – we will reduce our environmental impact by minimising our operational carbon usage.



“I’ve been inspired by the whole team’s capacity to creatively adapt and try new things in pursuit of the unwavering goal to support our community.”



# Resources

**We will invest in and maximise our resources to develop an organisation fit for the future.**

- **Technology** – we will continue to invest in technology that improves our efficiency, sustainability, reach and ability to communicate. We will embrace digital and provide the right tools for the job.
- **Data** – we will implement a Customer Relationship Management system that improves management information and enables us to put evidence at the heart of our decision-making processes.
- **Premises** – we will review our requirements and ensure our accommodation is fit for our needs and our new ways of working and delivering services.
- **Funding** – we will diversify our sources of income to enable our ambition and build visibility and resilience.
- **Skills** – we will ensure we have the capabilities to respond to specific challenges - geographical expansion; increased reach; commissioning within the Integrated Care System and within the voluntary and community sector.
- **Assets** – we will ensure our investments are working hard for us.



**“I didn’t realise how valuable befriending would be, how much difference it would make to my quality of life. Being listened to helped me to feel valued, so that I could then value myself.”**

# Thank you

## Funding, donations and fundraising

Buckinghamshire Mind is run by local people for local people and we are responsible for our own funding. We would like to thank all of our funders, including local commissioners in Buckinghamshire and East Berkshire, charitable trusts and foundations and corporate partners. We also rely on donations and community fundraising to underpin our vital mental health services and ensure we support our community's mental health needs now and in the future. Thank you to each and every one of our donors and fundraisers that continue to provide us with this invaluable support.

To find out more about how you can support Buckinghamshire Mind as an individual, community group or corporate partner please get in touch [fundraising@bucksmind.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@bucksmind.org.uk)

A gift in your will is another way that you can secure the future of Buckinghamshire Mind and create a better future for local mental health. If you would like to know more then please email [legacy@bucksmind.org.uk](mailto:legacy@bucksmind.org.uk)

## Volunteer with us

Our volunteers are invaluable. Without them we could not do what we do and would not be a truly community based organisation. You can find out more at [www.bucksmind.org.uk/volunteering](http://www.bucksmind.org.uk/volunteering)







## Contact us

We are a team of over 70 employees, supported by a Board of Trustees and over 500 volunteers. Many of us have lived experience of mental health problems, either personally or by supporting family and friends. We are united in our passion. We'd love to hear from you.

**01494 463 364 [info@bucksmind.org.uk](mailto:info@bucksmind.org.uk)**

**We are Buckinghamshire Mind.**

**We connect. We support. We influence.**

**We stand up for mental health. Our services change lives.  
For support. For respect. For you.**



@bucksmind  
[www.bucksmind.org.uk](http://www.bucksmind.org.uk)  
01494 463 364



Registered Charity No - 1103063  
Registered Company No - 5000185