



Our Strategy

2026-2029



This document is for anyone who is interested in the mental health of people living in Buckinghamshire and East Berkshire. It sets out our plans for the future and shows how we will improve people's lives.

Welcome

We are pleased to share our strategy for 2026 to 2029. We believe that our plans will enable us to build on our achievements and make an even bigger impact in the years to come. We are incredibly proud of what we have achieved already, but we know that we need to do more.

In creating our new strategy, we spoke to the people we support, to our team of Experts by Experience, volunteers, staff and a wide range of other important stakeholders. They all talked about how things feel especially tough right now. They told us how growing levels of poverty have put a great strain on many people across our community, and how NHS mental health services are overwhelmed; unable to cope with the number and complexity of people in need.

In this challenging environment, our determination to advocate for our community, our leadership and our unique ability to provide impactful services where people feel listened to, respected and supported is needed now more than ever.

Over the next three years, we will all be focusing our efforts on increasing the impact we make in people's lives. We will do this by ensuring that our services remain of the highest quality, adapting quickly, reaching more people through our partnership work and by using insights and experience to shape statutory services and play a leading role in developing best practice.

We are incredibly fortunate to have a passionate and committed team of Trustees, colleagues, volunteers and Experts by Experience. They enable us to do so much for our community. It is their continued dedication that will empower us to deliver on our plans for the future and ensure that no mind is left behind.



Joel Rose
Chief Executive



Lesley Michaelis
Chair



Mind in Berkshire, established in 2021, is a collaboration between Buckinghamshire Mind (covering the East of Berkshire) and Oxfordshire Mind (covering the West of Berkshire). We're working together to increase mental health support across Berkshire.

“Being part of shaping this strategy has been a deeply meaningful experience for me. It felt like a space where lived experiences were truly valued, including those that are often less visible - such as the impact of life transitions, cultural adjustment and isolation. For me, it's about creating something rooted in compassion, inclusion and real understanding.”

Namrata, Expert by Experience

Vision, mission, purpose and values

Vision

We're fighting for a future where no mind is left behind.



Mission

We want to create a mentally healthy society. Through our information, services and campaigns, we tackle stigma, barriers and isolation so that everyone can access mental health support when they need it.



Our purpose

We deliver mental health services in Buckinghamshire and East Berkshire, are affiliated to national Mind and are proud to play our part in the local Mind network. Together we are Mind.

We are at the heart of our local communities - promoting wellbeing and recovery; preventing mental ill-health; offering talking therapies and providing support in times of crisis.

Our values

Our values underpin everything that we do, they are what makes us special, what enables us to make a real impact and the reason that the people we support turn to us for help.

We put people first



We're stronger together



We speak up for what's right



We never stop learning



We demand better for mental health



The Difference that We Make

The people we support tell us the difference that we have made in their lives. In 2024/5:



Tackling Isolation

Our Friends in Need peer support groups in East Berkshire help people to manage their mental health through uplifting and fun activities. There are two groups available; FiN, supporting anyone 18 years and above, and Peers2Pals, supporting 17-25 year olds.

“I have struggled with severe depression and anxiety all my life and have frequently searched for local support groups. Somewhere with people with similar problems who totally ‘get it’ and who realise that mental health issues are not always logical and cannot be ‘fixed’ by logic.

In 2019 I had a breakdown, which was exacerbated by the Covid crisis in 2020. My employer exhibited little understanding of my mental health issues and I had no choice but to give up employment to care for my elderly, disabled parents. The experience with my employer knocked my confidence and I had feelings of inadequacy. I wanted to retreat from the world but, at the same time, spending 24 hours a day with my nonagenarian parents was challenging and I felt terribly isolated.

Friends in Need was my saviour. At first, due to lockdown, it was just online quizzes and chats, but it was so good to see some friendly, younger faces. Later I joined walks; I always feel better outside, but being with others stopped me dwelling on my own negative thoughts. It was and still is good to know that if I am struggling, feeling overwhelmed and need time out, I can find a group to join most days where I know I will not be judged and will receive support. I have also made some good friends and have a larger network than at any time in my life of people I can reach out to for a chat, a walk, or a coffee. All thanks to Friends in Need.

Now, I also volunteer with Friends in Need. I enjoy sharing my favourite places with other people. It is so gratifying when you know people are enjoying themselves and when they thank you for organising the event. It is also particularly rewarding when someone says they would not have been brave enough to do something before and you can see them growing in confidence. Volunteering helps my own mental health; I always get such a ‘buzz’ from helping people and it increases my feeling of self-worth.”

Jane, FiN member and volunteer

Providing a Lifeline

Our Peer Support Bucks groups provide people recovering from or living with mental health challenges to access a range of activities and social opportunities with people who have shared or similar experiences. The groups provide a unique and safe environment of understanding and empathy.

“Aaron is very shy and found it hard mixing with people and making friends. Aaron did try some groups before Peer Support Bucks, but felt he didn’t fit in and wasn’t happy.

Then someone mentioned Peer Support Bucks, which met on a Thursday in a local Costa. Aaron went along but was too nervous to go in and meet people. The following week he went and was met by a member of staff, and he has never looked back.

Aaron lacked so much confidence with so many things, but this group made him feel so welcome. Since then, Aaron has made many friends and has become more confident and gets on really well with everyone and now attends three groups a week.

Peer Support Bucks has been amazing and it is truly his lifeline; he would not be the person he is today without it. The change in him has been fantastic, so many people have noticed it. My response is it is all down to the people who run the group and the people who turn up each week and make my boy happy.”

Mother of Aaron, Peer Support Bucks attendee



Planning for the Future

Our strategy has been created based on the insights, experience and knowledge of a range of stakeholders. Over a six-month period, we have gathered feedback from staff, volunteers, funders, NHS leaders, charity partners, Experts by Experience and the people we support.

We also used publicly available data to better understand the demographics of our community across Buckinghamshire and East Berkshire, as well as the range of challenges that people in the area face. Taking this approach means that our strategy truly reflects the needs of the people that we serve.

This document is designed to guide our activity over the next three years. As the social, political and mental health environment continues to change, and new opportunities and challenges emerge, our plans will need to be reviewed regularly to make sure that they are still the best means of achieving our ambitions.

Our Trustees are ultimately responsible for ensuring that we remain on track and work with the staff team to monitor progress. Trustees also work with staff to translate our strategic plan into annual operational plans and budgets that give specific targets and timeframes for each activity. We will keep all stakeholders up-to-date with our progress via our newsletter, impact report and regular communications.



“Bucks Mind is one of the few organisations that genuinely embraces co-production in the very real sense of the word. It is not an afterthought. It is not a small, tokenistic gesture. They strive to involve people with lived experience from the beginning of projects to the end. They listen, take things on board and act. They also share any impact we have had with us. This is what co-production is all about and this is what it has been with the development of the strategy.”

Amy, Expert by Experience

Meeting the Challenge



“Safe Haven is a wonderful service. They have helped me in my time of need. I always get a session booked in quickly on the evening.”

Person supported by Safe Haven

In order to continue to serve our community in a challenging environment, over the next three years we will need to focus on:

Extending our Impact

We will work to extend the impact that we make beyond the person we are supporting. We will do this by using our insights and expertise to play a leading role in shaping the statutory services that people in our community use and developing new services and approaches. We will also do more to demonstrate the individual and wider social impact we know that our work already has.

Reaching More People through Partnership

We will seek to work with a wider range of partners so that we can offer a holistic package of support to people facing multiple challenges, such as physical health problems, financial hardship and family breakdown.

We will focus on partnerships where we can make the most impact and reach more people who need us. We will ensure that we can welcome and support anyone who is facing stigma or prejudice and who come from underrepresented communities, including those who have experienced migration.

Responding Quickly

We will ensure that we can gather up-to-date information and insights from the people we support and our wider network and increase our adaptability so that we are better able to respond quickly to changing needs, new challenges and emerging opportunities.

Our Ambitions for 2026-29



Our ambitions for 2026-9 are set out below. All our work over the next three years will be focused on meeting these ambitions and it will be the main way in which we will measure our progress and success.

Impact

We improve people's lives by providing high quality support in a welcoming and empowering community, working with individuals to meet their needs and make the greatest impact.

Insight

We bring about meaningful change in our community by using lived experience, our leadership role and our insights to fight for people experiencing poor mental health and to support a mentally healthy society.

Sustainability

We are a strong, adaptable, trusted, safe and sustainable organisation able to support people in our community and help them to flourish.

People

We bring together a diverse team of staff and volunteers from across our community who have the values, passion, skills and insights needed to deliver on our plans.

Our Plans: Impact



“I feel the service was extremely person-centred, which I appreciated as it opened up a safe space to be vulnerable without judgement. I felt that each individual session was strongly catered to my struggles that week. I felt that it was both informative and compassionate and I won’t hesitate to look here in the future if necessary.”

Person supported by Counselling for Adults

We improve people’s lives by providing high quality support in a welcoming and empowering community, working with individuals to meet their needs and make the greatest impact.

Service Delivery

We will continue to deliver our prevention, wellbeing, training and crisis services across the community. We will work according to our values and adapt to changing needs and new opportunities so that we provide high quality support where we can make the most difference.

Outcome and Quality Monitoring

We will further refine our outcome monitoring processes to better understand the impact that our services have on the wider community and aim to achieve the outcomes that are important to the individuals that we support.

Raising Awareness

We will be visible in our community, both online and on the ground, and be a recognisable presence across Buckinghamshire and East Berkshire. We will continue to champion improved understanding of the experience of people with mental health problems and demonstrate the positive role that we play in the community.

Reaching all Communities

We will make more use of data to understand the health inequalities that exist across our community and, where there are gaps in our service provision, we will target efforts to address this.

Our Plans: Insight



We bring about meaningful change in our community by using lived experience, our leadership role and our insights to fight for people experiencing poor mental health and to support a mentally healthy society.

Experts by Experience

We will grow our team of Experts by Experience and seek opportunities to use their insights to shape and influence statutory services as well as our own work.

Engaging with Research

We will work with academic and research organisations to ensure that the voices of people with lived experience of mental health challenges are used to shape their work and develop new approaches in service design and delivery.

Shaping Best Practice

We will use our expertise and the insights of people with lived experience to play a leading role in developing new approaches to supporting people's mental wellbeing and shaping best practice.

“I love coming to the groups. They are what I get up for each day, they give me purpose.”

Person supported by our Wellbeing Service

“The support I have been offered is so much more than I ever expected. In the last year the support has meant everything to my confidence and self-worth.”

Person supported by Community Based Support

Our Plans: Sustainability

We are a strong, adaptable, safe and sustainable organisation able to support people in our community and help them to flourish.

Income Generation

We will continue to diversify our income so that more individuals, companies and charitable organisations support our work.

Responding Quickly

We will establish networks to gather real-time information on the experience of using mental health services and to quickly identify unmet needs. We will invest in the training and development of our team so that we can be more agile and able to quickly respond to a changing environment to meet needs.

Partnership

We will seek out new partnerships that will enable us to offer impactful mental health support to people facing multiple issues and reach more people who are from underrepresented communities.

We will further deepen our partnership with Oxfordshire Mind to realise new opportunities to share resources, expertise and insights and to deliver high quality support to people across Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire.

Data

We will continue to improve the collection, reporting and analysis of the data that we collect, including from the people we support and our Experts by Experience. We will use data to closely monitor progress and make evidence-based and informed decisions.

Technology

We will use new technologies safely and securely to improve our efficiency, sustainability, reach and ability to communicate.

Resources

We will seek ways to maximise our efficiency, make full use of our resources and reduce costs so that more funds can be used directly to provide support to our community.



“Mental health matters because it affects every part of our lives; at work, at home and beyond. Supporting each other creates stronger, healthier communities for everyone. Together we stand with Bucks Mind.”

Monodraught, corporate supporter

Our Plans: People



We bring together a diverse team of staff and volunteers from across our community who have the values, passion, skills and insights needed to deliver our plans.

Building a Strong Team

We will develop our recruitment, training and development processes to ensure that we can welcome people from across our community and help them to flourish as part of our team of staff, volunteers and Experts by Experience.

Volunteers

We will increase the support that we can provide to our volunteers and work to ensure that they reflect a diverse range of skills and experiences.

Values

We will continue to ensure that our values are central to all the work that we do, and that the whole team understands how they impact their day-to-day work.

“Participation is so important to me, because it allows me to shape the future I needed at my lowest. One full of hope, compassion and promise, so every person has the opportunity to live and flourish as individuals.”

Expert by Experience

How We can Help You



Our range of services is designed to meet the needs of our community, always putting people at the heart of what we do. We are proud that we continue to develop the support that we provide and that our work makes a meaningful impact.

Wellbeing

Community Based Support: Our team work in partnership with Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust to reach out to people with mental health problems in the community and provide one-to-one support and signposting.

Community Connectors: Our Community Connectors are part of a multidisciplinary team of mental health specialists, working with our colleagues employed by Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to support adults who are experiencing significant mental health problems.

Education: We work with children aged 4 to 18 years old in various settings, such as primary and secondary schools, colleges, youth clubs and sports clubs. We deliver assemblies, workshops and full training days.

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

Peer Support Groups: Our peer support groups offer the opportunity to make friends, share experiences and enjoy a social life. In East Berkshire, we also offer a group for young adults (17 to 25 year-olds) called Peers2Pals.

Wellbeing Services: Our groups provide social contact, structure and a chance to try new activities with people who have similar experiences. The groups offer activities such as arts and crafts, cooking, interactive games and gentle exercise.

Support in a crisis

Mental Health Safety Planning Service: We provide support for those who have attended A&E or the Mental Health Integrated Community Service (MHICS) because they are at risk of self-harm or have had thoughts about ending their own life.

Safe Haven: A mental health crisis support service, operating from 6pm to 11.30pm, for anyone living in Buckinghamshire aged 18 years or over. We provide listening support and signposting. We also work with people to create safety plans if they are struggling to keep themselves safe due to thoughts of self-harm or of ending their own life.

Safe Haven Plus: We partner with other charities to help resolve non-medical life issues that are potentially factors contributing to a crisis. For example, drug and alcohol abuse, housing and homelessness or debt and benefits advice.

Talking Therapies

Counselling for Adults: We work with adults experiencing a variety of mental health concerns and offer face-to-face and online counselling in a safe, non-judgemental space to explore any concerns that they may have.

Counselling for Young People: We offer compassionate and confidential counselling sessions to young people (aged 13-21) facing emotional and mental health challenges. Our professional counsellors provide a safe space to explore feelings, build coping strategies and foster personal growth.

Training

Workplace Wellbeing Training: We help to foster mentally healthy workplaces by raising awareness, supporting and empowering employers and employees to develop a culture of wellbeing, challenging stigma and signposting to support.

Specialist training: We deliver bespoke and responsive training designed to meet the unique needs of our community. By equipping people with the skills to adapt and thrive we empower them to look after their own mental wellbeing. We also offer Mental Health First Aid and Suicide First Aid training.

For more information on where we operate and how you can access our services, please visit www.bucksmind.org.uk/services or scan the QR code.



“It has restored my faith in the system that someone actually listens and works towards helping me in the best way for my needs, rather than just ticking boxes.”

Person supported by
Gateway Community Navigators



Photo by Lou Jasmine for The Unmistakables

Get Involved

Volunteers are essential to Buckinghamshire Mind's work, enabling us to provide services across Buckinghamshire and East Berkshire.

Our fantastic team of Experts by Experience provide lived experience insights to shape our work and help advocate for better mental health.

Our adult volunteers gave an incredible 6287 hours in 2024-25 and we simply could not achieve all that we do to support people's mental health without their huge contribution. We are so grateful to all our volunteers, who have made such a difference to the lives of the people we support. Thank you – you're amazing!

We continue to develop our capability to support and work with volunteers and always welcome new members to the team. To find out more about volunteering with Buckinghamshire Mind, please visit www.bucksmind.org.uk/volunteer or scan the QR code.



“Volunteering for Peer Support Bucks has been hugely transformational for me. I came to volunteering at the groups after a period of physical and mental ill-health, and volunteering provided me with the structure and purpose I'd been lacking. I love working alongside the group attendees, getting to know their stories and encouraging them. And, in so doing, I've also felt encouraged and supported by them and the staff at Bucks Mind. Volunteering for Peer Support Bucks has also opened up paid work for me in mental health, which I'm really enjoying.”

Claire, Peer Support Bucks volunteer

Support our Work



As a local Mind, we are responsible for delivering face-to-face mental health support within our community and for securing the funding that makes this possible.

We are incredibly grateful to all our funders, commissioners, statutory partners, donors and fundraisers for their remarkable commitment and generosity. Without their support, we simply could not provide the vital services our community relies on.

However, the need for our services continues to grow, and these are challenging times. Ongoing support is essential to ensure we can continue to meet our community's mental health needs, both now and in the future.

If you are considering taking on a personal challenge, hosting a fundraising event, or exploring a corporate partnership, we would be honoured for you to do so in support of our work. To find out more, please get in touch at fundraising@bucksmind.org.uk





We are Buckinghamshire Mind, the mental health charity.
We're fighting for a future where no mind is left behind.

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