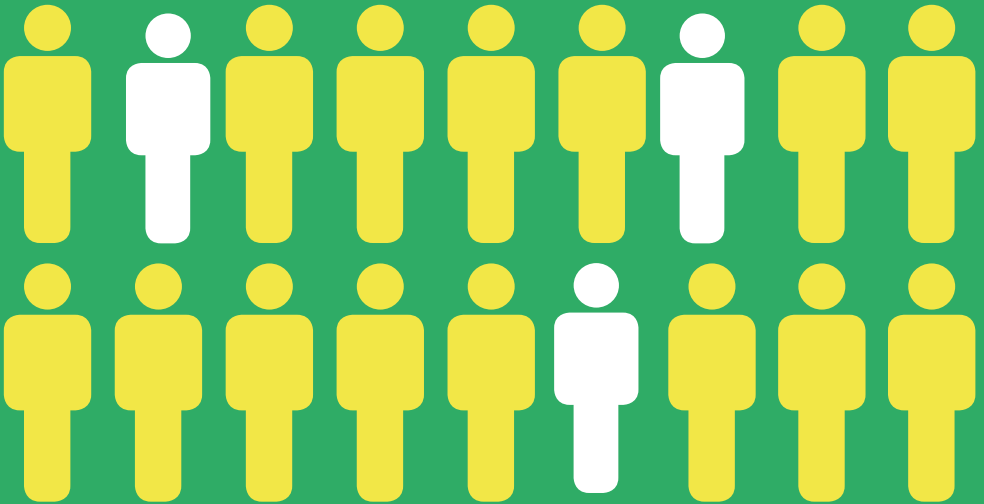




Southmead Project

Counselling and support for
survivors of abuse and addiction
across Bristol and surrounding areas



Foreword

Imogen McCabe, CEO



We welcomed many changes to our staff team this year following a review of our organisational staff structure so that we could expand the support offered to clients.

Emma Bull became our Head of Therapeutic Services and Rachel Morse became our Counselling Lead. The increase in clinical oversight and management time has made it possible to support a broader therapeutic team and provide 2,758 counselling sessions for 214 clients. Our counselling team welcomed Una Tracey and Kieta Bennetts, and Ros Vitkovitch joined as our Admin Assistant.

Our waiting list grew over the pandemic so we introduced pre-counselling groups to support clients all year round from January 2023. We usually run two groups a week for eight sessions each, which are facilitated by two trauma-informed therapists: Hayley Davies and Sue Santi.

Our Active Recovery Project has been running weekly activities for groups of up to 12 people. We recruited an Active Recovery Practitioner, Victoria Christodoulides, to better support our Project Manager and our growing community of over 60 Active Recovery members.

In September, we held a whole team strategy day for staff and trustees and consequently developed a Strategic Plan for April 2023 to March 2025. The key strategic aims are to increase the number of long-term counselling sessions offered so that people have a more meaningful chance of recovery from past abuse; to diversify our staff team and Board of Trustees so that we are more representative of the broad range of communities that we serve; and to progress our Survivor Voice work so that our clients are at the heart of our decision-making and involved at every level of the organisation.

The Board of Trustees has formed working groups to cover three key specialisms. The operational, clinical and finance sub-groups meet every two months to develop specific areas of work and complete key tasks, while meeting as a whole board every other month.

We have been working closely with local specialist organisations (SARSAS, Womankind, Kinergy and The Bridge SARC) to establish a Sexual Violence Alliance to work in partnership together. We are developing the Pathfinder Project, which is changing the way in which the sexual violence sector operates across Avon and Somerset. It aims to improve therapeutic provision for adult survivors who have experienced complex trauma and to provide more timely and appropriate support.

We are extremely thankful to our dedicated staff team, Board of Trustees and partner organisations for enabling us to provide these support services over the last year, and to the many survivors who have entrusted us to work alongside them.

We would like to thank our generous funders for making this work possible, including the larger trusts and foundations and personal donations we have received.

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Trustee Report

Simon Craker, Chairman of the Board of Trustees



Following the tumultuous events of the pandemic, during which we had managed to develop the services offered, 2022-23 became a year of consolidation and provided the opportunity to develop our team and strengthen not only our work but also to attain greater involvement of the Trustees. The onset of difficult economic conditions also meant that the Trustees had several challenges to overcome.

Having strengthened the Senior Leadership Team with Emma joining as our Head of Therapeutic Services, the team expanded over the year with new counsellors Una and Kieta joining us and Victoria taking her role in the Active Recovery team. However, our waiting list had grown dramatically, and we had to take the sad decision to close it temporarily. This in turn meant that we had to be creative to help those waiting for counselling. Our solution was to increase the number of pre-counselling groups offered and in turn we welcomed Sue and Hayley to the roles of Pre-counselling Group Facilitators. Welcome all and thank you for the excellent job to date.

Financially, we had a number of challenges. Inflation was starting to rise and funding was becoming considerably more difficult to achieve. The Trustees felt we should support staff as best we could by providing upgraded salaries while at the same time trying to secure further funding. I am delighted to say that a number of our longer-term funders continued their support which was a great help. I would like to thank all our funders for sticking with us, in turn allowing us to see more clients in a very difficult year.

Sadly, our longest standing Trustee, Trevor Arnott, felt that he had to stand down. I cannot thank Trevor enough for the considerable time and help he has given to the charity. In view of Trevor's resignation the Trustees agreed that we should not only find a replacement in the Treasurer's role but also look to strengthen the Board of Trustees and to provide more diversity.

Lastly, I must thank my co-trustees for all their efforts this year, and of course, our Senior Leadership Team, whose efforts have been amazing not only in keeping Southmead Project moving forward but also in looking after our counsellors and staff so well.



Counselling & Support Services

Long-term counselling

We support survivors who have experienced any type of abuse (including sexual, physical, emotional and domestic abuse, and neglect), aged 18 and above, of all genders, who live in Bristol, South Gloucestershire, BANES and North Somerset.

We believe in giving people a meaningful chance of recovery from past abuse and therefore offer up to 24 sessions of long-term counselling. We support people face-to-face, online and by phone. To help people access in-person counselling, we have given clients free bus tickets to attend sessions at the Southmead Project. In April, we employed a Counselling Lead to manage our team of counsellors and to provide increased clinical support. Our team grew as we welcomed two new counsellors and offered 2,348 sessions.

Nexus counselling

This service provides up to 12 sessions of counselling for clients who have experienced abuse and use drugs or alcohol to help them cope with their trauma symptoms.

We take referrals from drug and alcohol treatment agencies and clients usually work with a drug/alcohol worker to reduce their reliance on substances. The sessions provide support and practical strategies to help clients deal with anxiety, depression and flashbacks. They can help clients to better understand post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms and other mental health difficulties, and explains how the brain processes trauma. The counselling sessions take place in-person at the Southmead Project, Bristol Drugs Project and Wick House, and also online and by phone. Sessions will start at Hawkspring (Drug and Alcohol Support) in Hartcliffe.

Pre-counselling groups

We have been running pre-counselling groups every week since January 2023 to support people on the waiting list for counselling.

They are facilitated by two experienced trauma-informed therapists and last for eight sessions each. The groups are structured to cover a wide range of content, including how trauma impacts the brain, body and mind, helping establish healthy boundaries, and identifying and managing trauma symptoms by finding new coping strategies. The group facilitators use a variety of creative and experiential methods to make the teaching as effective as possible for clients with different learning styles. Unlike group therapy, participants do not discuss individual experiences, but feel supported by others who have lived through similar experiences.

Family support group

We run a family support group every week for people who support someone with an addiction to drugs or alcohol, or for anyone who is affected by someone else's addiction.

This unique group provides support like no other in the city and has been running for 15 years. It is facilitated by Emma Summerill, a qualified substance misuse specialist, and provides a confidential and non-judgmental space for people to share their experiences. People can attend as many sessions as they wish. It takes place every Wednesday evening from 7-9pm at the Southmead Project.

Active Recovery Project

The Active Recovery Project offers weekly activities in the community for current and past counselling clients.

This year we have delivered 40 sessions and have over 60 members in our Active Recovery community, providing survivors of abuse with joy, connection, grounding, compassion, safety and the opportunity to learn new skills. Our members are at the very heart of this project and their needs are key. Survivors of abuse have often been silenced and their needs ignored. That is why our motto is 'voice and choice'. Our members come up with the ideas for sessions, which results in a diverse range of activities on offer from paddleboarding and pottery painting to cooking and candle-making. Active recovery can be accessed while someone is in counselling and for 18 months post-counselling. The sessions are almost always fully booked, with reserve lists of people who want to attend and a steady flow of new referrals. We have recently employed a permanent Active Recovery Practitioner to better support the project. We are funded by the National Lottery Community Fund until July 2025 and will be continuing to offer Active Recovery as one of our core services.



What our clients say...

"The Southmead project is a very unassuming place but which has an enormous amount of safety at its heart."

"Everything was done very well. Really it couldn't have gone any better. I don't feel like I'm just out on my own anymore"

"I now go to [the] community centre... I'm able to meet strangers. I don't think I'd have done any of it without the confidence of Active Recovery... I've got my power back"

"The Family Support Group makes a huge difference to people's lives. A place to laugh and cry in safety knowing you are understood"

"I felt that the entire organisation as well as [the counsellor's] approach was incredibly positive, inclusive, welcoming and effective"

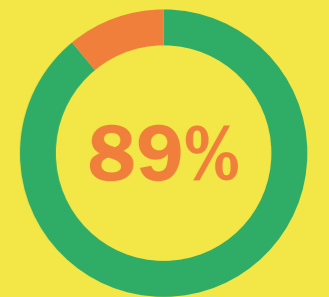
2,758

counselling sessions

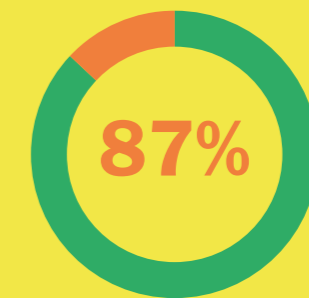
- 214 counselling clients
- 60 Active Recovery members
- 40 Active Recovery activities
- 21 pre-counselling group participants
- 21 Family Support Group participants



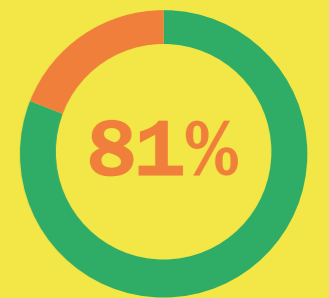
felt better informed about effects of trauma



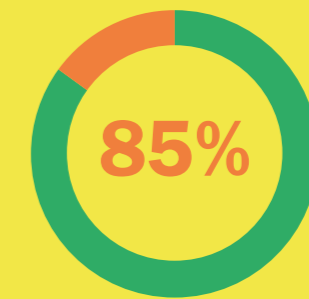
felt better able to cope with everyday life



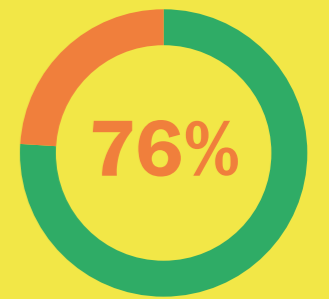
saw improvement in their level of connection with others



had more positive relationships with those closest to them



had healthier coping strategies



saw an improvement in their overall wellbeing

- 1 in 6 clients were from an Asian, Black African, Black Caribbean or mixed ethnicity background
- 1 in 4 clients described their gender as male, 2% as transgender and 1% as non-binary
- 1 in 5 clients were from the LGBTQ+ community

Southmead Project Accounts 2022-23

Income

Grants	350,186
Donations	37,667
Sale of services	21,224
Miscellaneous	898
Total income	409,975

Expenditure

Charitable activities	392,200
Raising funds	3,660
Total expenditure	395,860

Surplus/deficit **14,115**

Funds brought forward 443,284

Funds carried forward **457,399**

Consisting of:

Restricted funds 281,941

Unrestricted funds 175,458

Southmead Project

165 Greystoke Avenue, Southmead, Bristol, BS10 6AS

Tel: 0117 950 6022

Email: admin@southmeadproject.com

Nexus counselling: nexus@southmeadproject.com

Website: www.southmeadproject.org.uk

Twitter: @SouthmeadProj

A heartfelt thank you to all our supporters who help make our work possible.