Annual Report
2025-26

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

Southmead Project



southmeadproject

Healing is possible

www.southmeadproject.org

Foreword



Imogen McCabe, CEO

The charity has had a productive and positive year, while continuing to provide its much-needed services for survivors of abuse and addiction. The **long-term counselling service** has been joined by volunteer counsellors Helen Thorn and Dylan Cox, who have been a fantastic addition to the team.The **Nexus counselling service** has formed part of the Horizons Drug and Alcohol Partnership, working alongside Turning Point, Bristol Drugs Project, One25, Hawkspring, the Southmead Development Trust, The Nelson Trust, Wellspring Settlement and Release. This has funded one of our Nexus counsellors, increasing our capacity to support survivors of abuse with an addiction.

Our **Active Recovery Project** welcomed two new Practitioners to the team this year, Josh Weinstock and Bex Hall. The service has considerably expanded, having already established two groups per week in Bristol, and now offers a third group each week in Somerset. This service supports people who have been clients of the Avon and Somerset Sexual Violence Alliance (the Southmead Project, SARSAS, Womankind and The Bridge SARC), and has developed referral pathways within Somerset, such as The YOU Trust (SIDAS and Paragon), Rethink Mental Illness, Somerset Open Mental Health and Somerset MIND. We give sincere thanks to NHS England and the National Lottery for their continued support of this service.

Our **Family Support Group** continued to offer its vital weekly evening group for its 18th year, for those who support someone with an addiction to drugs or alcohol, or anyone who is affected by someone else's addiction.

We developed our **survivor voice work** this year through Client Focus Groups, which brought together people who had accessed our services so that we could meaningfully understand what has been working well and the areas that we can improve upon. The Active Recovery Project also held Members' Voice sessions in both Bristol and Somerset to review the effectiveness of the service from the members' perspective.

This feedback was incorporated into our **Strategic Plan 2026-29**, which was formed through collaboration with our team of staff, volunteers, trustees, and an independent consultant. This aims to promote longer-term services (such as counselling for 30 sessions), to develop our climate of purposeful inclusion (such as diversifying the client group that we support and representation within our team), and developing our survivor voice work.

The charity is also transitioning to a **Charitable Incorporated Organisation** in order to create more stability and offer more protection to the Board of Trustees.

We continue to work with our partners in the **Avon and Somerset Sexual Violence Alliance** to take forward the recommendations that were made by the Lived Experience Leads during the Pathfinder Project. This year we have strengthened the position of the Alliance by developing its branding, and furthered



Our team

our EDI strategy to explore which marginalised groups are not being proportionately supported by the Alliance partners, so that we can become more accessible for those clients.

We give a tremendous and heartfelt **thank you** to our fantastic team for the support that they have given to their clients, and to each other, throughout the last year. This includes our Board of Trustees who have volunteered their time to advise and guide the Leadership Team. We give deep thanks to our clients who we have been trusted by, and privileged enough to work with, throughout their healing process. Thank you also to our partner organisations for sharing their ongoing support and expertise. Lastly, we give a huge thank you to our many funders, whose generosity makes our work possible, including the larger trusts and foundations and personal donations that we received.

Trustee report



Simon Craker, Chair of the Board of Trustees

After last year's celebrations and events, things returned to normal! As ever our fantastic counsellors continued their work with around 200 clients and this in turn helped the reduction of the waiting list. The trustees really appreciate the work and professionalism they bring to their jobs and I cannot thank them enough.

Following the support from the NHS, our Active Recovery Project started its third group a week, which has been taking place in Somerset. I must thank Amy Derrick for her sterling efforts in leading the Active Recovery team, and for all of the team's hard work, without which this may not have happened so successfully.

I am delighted to say that Turning Point are now funding a Nexus Counsellor, which has enabled the expansion of this service.

As ever I cannot thank our Senior Leadership Team, Imogen, Emma and Pete, enough for the huge efforts they make on behalf of the Southmead Project. Their dedication and expertise continue to mean that we are unique in what we offer and make a huge difference to the clients who access our services.

Lastly, I thank my co-trustees for their continued efforts in helping this special charity make a difference year on year and into the future.

Our support

> *"I absolutely love these sessions... It really is an incredibly supportive group ... I feel genuinely connected, understood and celebrated as a person which is just beautiful."*
>
> Active Recovery Member

Long-term Counselling

Our Long-term Counselling service offers up to 30 sessions of one-to-one counselling. We continue to 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. Our Strategic Plan for 2026 to 2029 emphasises the need to offer longer-term services, such as this one, as we recognise the importance of giving survivors a meaningful opportunity to heal from past trauma.

This year we recruited two volunteer counsellors in training, Helen Thorn and Dylan Cox, increasing our volunteer cohort to three. This has added to the number of counselling sessions offered and the support that we give to the professional development of counsellors who specialise in this area.

The counselling sessions take place in person at the Southmead Project, online and by phone. This year we have offered 1,425 sessions to 95 clients within long-term counselling

> *"I think that this service was the absolute best thing I have done for myself... It's also introduced me to Art/Play therapy which [sic] has been fantastic, something that I will enjoy and practice for myself... this whole experience has been life changing."*
>
> Counselling client

Nexus Counselling

Our Nexus Counselling service has been able to expand due to our collaboration with other agencies, including Turning Point, Bristol Drugs Project, One25, Hawkspring, the Southmead Development Trust, The Nelson Trust, Wellspring Settlement and Release. As part of the Horizons drug and alcohol service in Bristol we have received funding to have an extra counsellor, which has doubled the number of clients that we have supported in previous years. The Nexus Counselling service provides up to 12 sessions of one-to-one counselling for clients who have experienced trauma through abuse and also have an addiction to drugs and/or alcohol. Clients are referred by agencies that are working with them to reduce their substance use. We can provide support around the impact of the trauma and help them to cope with trauma symptoms that may resurface as they reduce their substance use. Sessions provide support and practical strategies to enable clients to deal with anxiety, depression, flashbacks and other symptoms of trauma. Psycho-education is used to explain how the brain processes trauma and supports clients to better understand post-traumatic stress disorder and associated feelings and emotions. Counselling sessions take place at the Southmead Project, Bristol Drugs Project and Hawkspring (Drug and Alcohol Support) in Hartcliffe. Nexus sessions are also held remotely to ensure we are accessible to as many clients as possible.

Family Support Group

The Family Support Group has been established for over 18 years and is facilitated by Emma Summerill (a Substance Misuse Practitioner). The group supports anyone who is dealing with a loved one's addiction to drugs or alcohol.

The sessions take place every week on Wednesday evenings between 7pm and 9pm. It is free and referrals are made by contacting the Southmead Project.

The group is a non-judgemental place to speak and seek comfort with others in similar situations. Everyone is made to feel welcome and people gain strength through identifying with one another.

> *"Without the support of this meeting. I wouldn't have been here today... It helped me get thru such dark times... I've cried and laughed with an amazing group of people. It's been my saviour."*
>
> Family Support Group member



Active Recovery Project workshops

Active Recovery Project

Active Recovery offers its members the opportunity to take part in community activities whilst having fun and becoming part of a community in itself. Trauma-informed groups allow members to practice the skills learnt in counselling, have new experiences and discover opportunities for connection and joy.

This year Activity Recovery has continued to grow and develop. Thanks to the NHS and continued National Lottery funding, we are now running three groups a week, comprising two in Bristol and one in Somerset.

We have expanded our partnerships in Somerset; increasing referrals, raising awareness of Active Recovery and taking part in many new and exciting activities! Some of our favourite activities have included sheep trekking, a rage room and paddleboarding.

We were delighted to welcome Josh Weinstock and Bex Hall to the Active Recovery Team as Active Recovery Practitioners. Bex and Josh, along with Ros have supported Active Recovery at a time of staff shortages, allowing us to continue to run groups regularly and safely - thank you!

Our Members' Voice session took place in November, where members shared with us useful insights and feedback about our service. They also let us know what activities they would like us to look into next. Although we haven't been able to explore all of these options this year, we are excited to do this in the coming year as we continue to learn and develop to meet the needs of our amazing community.

Our impact

In 2025-26 we delivered the following support...

2,028 counselling sessions offered

161 clients received counselling

88 Active Recovery members were supported across 101 activities

15 people attended the Family Support Group

As a result, our Family Support Group has had the following impact on clients:

100% said their feelings of being connected to others and the community had increased

100% noticed the health of their relationships had improved

And our counselling service has resulted in:

85% of clients showing a reduction in their trauma symptoms

76% showing an increase in their overall wellbeing

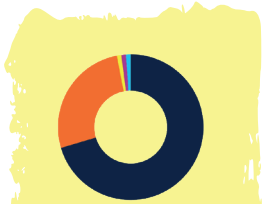
81% feeling better able to cope with aspects of everyday life

69% saying their experience of counselling exceeded their expectations

Who we supported

In 2025-26, on average each counselling client had experienced three abuse types. Here is how many had experienced each one:

- **70%** Emotional abuse
- **56%** Sexual abuse
- **36%** Neglect
- **47%** Physical abuse
- **41%** Domestic abuse



69% female
26% male
2% non-binary
1% intersex
1% other
1% prefer not to say

3% identified as trans

17% were from the LGBTQ+ community

1 in 8 clients (12%) were from an Asian, Black African, Black British, Black Caribbean or mixed ethnicity background

50% clients identified as having a disability

Our accounts

Income

Grants	£554,754
Donations	£36,613
Total Income	**£591,367**

Expenditure

Charitable activities	£497,250
Raising funds	£8,750
Total expenditure	**£506,000**

Surplus/deficit	**£85,367**
Funds brought forward	£254,822
Funds carried forward	**£340,189**
Consisting of:	
Restricted funds	£66,203
Unrestricted funds	£273,986

"I am so grateful for this group. I have slowly learnt many valuable things about myself and my place in this life."

Active Recovery Member

A heartfelt

thank you

to all our supporters who help make our work possible.

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