



**Mental
Health**

Sustainability
Programme

Mental Health Sustainability Programme

**Final Evaluation
Quick Read Report**

March 2023



Introduction

The Mental Health Sustainability Programme (MHSP) was launched in May 2020 and was funded through a significant investment from several private sector partners including individual donors. It aimed to enhance the way that the VCSE sector works in partnership with the private sector in order to enable the delivery of mental health and wellbeing services. Private sector partners and large voluntary sector bodies have been invited to donate skills, resources and funding to VCSE mental health service providers; thus enabling them to sustain and develop services during and after the pandemic.

The project made some huge achievements in a very short space of time:

- Senior Programme Officer was recruited, with additional staff resource seconded from Linklaters to work with providers and build key relationships between sectors
- Seven VCSE organisations have been matched with private sector partners who have supported them through volunteering “minutes”
- 63 grants from the Mental Health Sustainability Fund have been awarded totalling £181,949.99
- 12 organisations were awarded funding of up to £5,000 each through the Helplines Fund
- 17 new creative projects for people with mental health needs have been funded by the programme through the community partner Creative Minds in Southwest Yorkshire

Organisations have benefited from many other learning and development opportunities too:

- Webinars delivered by private sector partners such as BUPA and Deloitte;
- Peer support virtual forum and fortnightly newsletter
- Toolkit and sounding board sessions, led and developed by industry experts;
- Mental Health First Aid Training;
- Interactive Learning Portal providing a collection of resources, some of which have been developed by private sector partners such as LawWorks, Shoosmiths, Deloitte
- BUPA supported the MHSP in developing brand values and identity. In addition, they have also volunteered their time, skills, and expertise by providing website development for Kids Inspire and for Anxiety UK. Further expertise has been provided to Anxiety UK on corporate partnership development.
- PWC volunteers from their marketing team have provided shared skills support to Mums Aid in order to help them strengthen their marketing and communications.
- LawWorks have provided Bazaar in Mind with GDPR guidance and support by way of LawWorks’ connections to their law firm partners.
- Salesforce supported Mashriq Challenge Resource Centre to create their website and support from Shoosmiths to implement their website’s privacy policy.

Charity Fundraising Ltd has undertaken a full evaluation of the project through detailed discussions and interviews with VCSE providers in the Programme, private sector partners and the project team. Charity Fundraising Ltd has also reviewed outcomes achieved by grant recipients, their feedback, as well as feedback from individuals who have participated in the learning and organisation development opportunities. This document is a Quick Read version of the full evaluation report.

Impact

Provider Organisations have better access to support to improve knowledge, systems and processes

This outcome was primarily delivered through the learning opportunities offered through the programme. Interviewees from the voluntary provider sector were complimentary about the resources the project had provided and felt that it had been incredibly impactful for them, supporting them at an incredibly challenging time for their organisations and the people they engage with. The feedback received through questionnaires and conversations with providers demonstrated that they felt the support had led to:

- Increased skills and ability to think strategically about their organisational direction;
- Improved ability of leaders to support and promote the wellbeing of staff within their organisations
- Having greater access to the knowledge from industry experts in both the private and voluntary sector
- Feeling better supported and listened to

Organisations told us that they felt these sessions had been really beneficial, particularly in relation to:

- Being able to talk to other service providers and learn from them;
- Having the chance to explore a range of different topics and ideas;
- Networking and building new connections with others outside of their own area;
- Increasing access to training opportunities;
- Feeling able to contribute to the sector;
- The forums creating a platform for collective voices; and
- Being able to meet people with similar experiences reduced feelings of isolation.

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“I left today's meeting feeling seen and heard and that means a lot to me. You both are amazing mentors...you encouraged me, understood my business values, and highlighted my strengths. Any doubts or uncertainties I had today have been removed all thanks to you.” – Donelle Grant, The Brave Project CIC

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Organisations are more able to achieve impact...

The money provided to grant recipients helped contribute to service equipment, online resources, telephone support system, CRM, service assessment materials, licences, training, online service redevelopment, accreditation costs, websites and accessible marketing.

As of 31st August 2022, 50 organisations had returned their grant reporting form, with one organisation being a recipient of a grant from the Helpline Fund. The remainder from the Helpline Fund, are still delivering their projects and will report on their achievements at the end of their 12 months funding period.

In reviewing the grant reporting forms, we have found that the Fund's impact has been significant. The MHSP was able to provide grants to small and medium sized organisations at a really pivotal time.

Funding enabled organisations to deliver:

- Counselling sessions
- Trauma informed services and support for vulnerable groups
- Wellbeing sessions and activities in schools and communities
- Peer mentoring programmes
- Targeted mental health support for children and young people
- Helpline support

Number of end beneficiaries experiencing positive impact on their mental health as a result of funding provided to voluntary sector providers ranged from 15,231 to 29,825

86% of recipients reported that the grant had significant impact in enabling them to provide greater access to opportunities for people with mental health needs

84% of recipients said that the grant had significant impact in enabling people with/at risk of mental health needs/conditions to have improved wellbeing and mental health.

80% of recipients thought that the grant had significant impact in enabling people with/at risk of mental health needs/conditions to feel more connected and included

70% of recipients felt that the grant had significant impact in enabling people with/at risk of mental health needs/conditions to have increased resilience

Organisations have been able to continue delivering services, grow, and sustain themselves...

The grant recipients clearly felt that the grants have made a significant difference to their organisation's resilience and sustainability. For example:

- 94% have reported that the grant enabled them to continue to meet the needs of people during the pandemic;
- 92% reported improved quality of services and support;
- 88% reported improved ability to adapt to delivering services online and to continue to deliver frontline services;
- 86% reported being better able to reach more and different groups of people
- 84% reported improved ability to implement new technology;

"Just a brief message to thank [facilitators] once again for the very helpful training you provided, and to let you know that I have submitted our organisation's application to join TrustLaw this afternoon" - Rosslyn Okumu, Rahab

Systemic Impact

It is also evident that the MHSP has had wider impact beyond its intended outcomes.

- The Association and private sector partners have improved their understanding about the needs of organisations led by minoritised communities and have taken proactive steps to embed inclusive design into their activities and CSR programmes
- The project has tested and developed the means for reaching out to smaller, grassroots organisations and providing accessible forms of cash and non-cash support
- The MHSP has enabled private sector partners and voluntary sector providers to develop new relationships and learn from one another
- The project has amplified the voice of smaller, voluntary sector providers, especially those from minoritised communities
- Organisations involved in the MHSP have been connected with wider strategic forums also seeking to address health inequalities too such as the VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance
- Taken together, the MHSP has worked with 106 organisations with the purpose of building their capacity and sustainability. Our consultation and review of data has shown that these organisations have been better able to manage the major challenges posed by the pandemic.
- The MHSP has created a new model which uses the influence and leverage of a large, national body like the Association to lobby for and secure corporate & voluntary support for the VCSE mental health sector.

In 2022, the Association worked with MHSP providers to submit a response to a consultation on a proposed Mental Health Plan to be developed by the Department of Health and Social Care. The Association was able to use the learning gained from its experience of delivering the MHSP to highlight:

- Inequalities and systemic challenges for providers and communities
- Best practice
- Unmet need within communities

Private Sector Partners

The private sector partners involved in the MHSP feel that they have been able to benefit too. They have referred to things such as:

- Their own increased understanding about the needs of small, grassroots organisations and the minoritised communities they lead;
- Increased ability to strengthen their own Corporate Social Responsibility programmes and offer more varied opportunities for their employees;
- Improved engagement with minority-led organisations;
- Opportunities to re-evaluate their own practice, particularly in relation to EDI;
- Increased ability for participating organisations to offer CSR opportunities related to the mental health sector;
- Improved learning and development within their own organisations. For example, one partner involved in developing and running a webinar session told us that this process has led to them re-evaluating their own messaging and amending their own approaches as a result.

Reflections

It is apparent that the MHSP provided significant interventions which contributed to providers' overall resilience and sustainability. The key outcomes for providers involved in the project have been met and this is a huge achievement given the speed at which the programme needed to be developed, the scale of demand and the very uncertain and challenging operating environment for the sector.

Discussions with the MHSP team has demonstrated the different ways in which the MHSP has evolved:

- Phase 1: Volunteering with some funding
- Phase 2: Funding and Learning support
- Phase 3: Toolkit and Peer Support

Although never originally intended, the MHSP delivered 3 rounds of grant funding very successfully, with £238k being distributed in total. All this funding has been provided to small, grassroots organisations, many of whom were led by people from Minoritised communities. A target of 100 VCSE organisations to be supported was established. At the time of publication, 106 organisations received volunteer, learning or grant funding support from the programme. Therefore, the target number of 100, has been exceeded by 6%.

In drawing together private sector and voluntary sector expertise and channelling this into communities that are under-represented and under-supported, the MHSP has developed a new model for infrastructure support. Furthermore, building in the peer support elements and opportunities for listening to and engaging members in the development of activity, practice and policy, further strengthens the model, creating an ecosystem of funding and support which is not delivered elsewhere in the sector.

Communities across England are still facing huge challenges in accessing mental health support, with demand outstripping supply and waiting times for statutory and voluntary services extensive. The current economic crisis is only likely to drive up demand further as people's mental health worsens in the face of poverty, unemployment and uncertainty. As further demands are placed

on mental health providers (and indeed as new organisations start up in response), there will continue to be a need to support the sustainability and development of these organisations. The MHSP has demonstrated that its alternative approach enables sustainability to be created at sector level rather than in just single organisations. As such, adopting the learning from this programme can be useful in the Association's continued work with smaller, grassroots organisations.

Acknowledgements

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This Quick Read document is based upon an external evaluation undertaken by



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Mental Health Sustainability Programme is delivered by

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