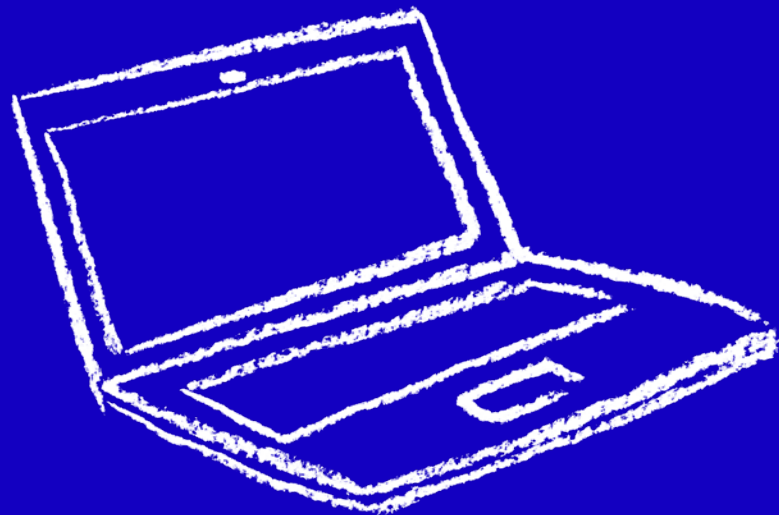


Annual Review 2020-21: The Pandemic Year



Contents

Our Year of Living Differently Elizabeth Simpson, CEO	3
Turning Round a Place-Based Organisation Clare Abbott, Operations Director	6
“You’re On Mute” Ruth Rosselson, Resilience Co-ordinator	8
Covid-19, Confusion and Communication Sam Harwood, Marketing and Communications Manager	10
Food For All: The End of an Era Sharon Kelly, Dionne Gbasai and Darren Ranasinghe	12
Peer Support Groups: A Journey through the Pandemic Shamin Malik and the Peer Support Volunteer Team	17
Starting Work..... Martin Gaved, Community Engagement Team Manager	19
Working with Families through Lockdown Kerry Evans, Big Manchester Family Intervention Worker	21
Delivering Advice during a Time of Change Giles Elliot, Advice Manager	23
Mums Matter, even in a Pandemic Carrie Pheasey, Mums Matter Co-ordinator	25
What Happens when the Fundraising Stops? Joanna Huddart and Aashni Shah	27
The Beauty of Our Outdoor Space Tara Kinsella, Food For All Volunteer Co-ordinator	29
All that Work..... Danielle Partington, Training Manager	31
My Lived Experience - Twelve Months Dealing with a Global Pandemic	33
Supporting our Children and Young People (CYP) Suzanne Holmes, CYP Service Manager	35
The Finances Rachael Lyster, Finance Manager	37
Thank you!	39



Our Year of Living Differently

This was the year no one expected. Plans completely derailed, lives turned upside down. People feeling abandoned. So much uncertainty. Unprecedented became the most overused but probably the most accurate word in the dictionary. In the immediate run up to the start of the year we are reporting on – April 2020 to March 2021 we had a taste of what Covid-19 could do. We had moved quickly, like many others, to remote working and like many others **marvelled at the way staff and volunteers responded to the challenges of completely changing the way we did things**; whilst still focusing on creating as many accessible routes into our support as we could. We learnt quickly and adapted remarkably smoothly to the strangeness of seeing colleagues in boxes on screens. We knew this ‘new way’ was not great for everyone and inevitably people were going to be left behind.

By April we were relatively settled but had no idea how long we would be in this situation, which caused so much anxiety and disconnection for so many people. There were some of us thinking that we were probably here to the end of the year, but by the autumn probably realised even this was optimistic.

It is quite hard to truly encapsulate the past year – we could talk about what were, in the circumstances, the many positives that we found through having different ways of working thrust upon us... but that does not feel comfortable when we also know that this was a period that saw inequality front and centre and **for people digitally**

excluded, access was quite frankly a nightmare.

We know from subsequent research that there are key groups who have been significantly affected by the pandemic; whether that was due to increased poverty from loss of work, loneliness exacerbated to an unprecedented level or lack of access to the basics, such as food and to the services that have often been the lifeline for people. We know that young people, people with existing mental health problems, people in racialised communities and those with low incomes and insecure housing fared worst of all. The removal, so suddenly, of the things people knew and relied on was for some hugely damaging.

There was undoubtedly a huge community response to support our friends, families, neighbours and communities – looking out for each other and coming together, which was incredibly uplifting and important.

Some of the key positives for Manchester Mind were that moving to delivery by telephone and other remote means, increased our accessibility. No longer did someone have to travel across town to access an advice drop-in, we were there at the end of the phone. Many people who attended training or groups online reported that it was easier for them. Good Mood Food (our social catering business) initially went out of business, which was really sad to see, but staff and **volunteers responded brilliantly to provide over 45,000 meals to people who were isolated as part of the city-wide emergency response.** Our allotment (no safer space), absolutely blossomed and underlined the importance of outdoor growing and physical activity as a way of improving mental wellbeing. Our staff came together to volunteer to manage the phones and provide a new Listening Ear Service both for adults and young people.

The year, as we all know, was punctuated by the raising of and then reinstatement of restrictions and this in itself creates anxiety and uncertainty that has an impact on mental health. You can read in this report very personal accounts and experiences of the impact of this global pandemic and the distrust people had of others who seemingly were not following the rules. It was a minefield, for some lockdown eased anxiety, for others it increased. It was certainly not a case of everyone being in the same boat. More, as came to be coined, **everyone was in the same storm just in different boats, some of which were better protected than others.** To repeat another overused phrase but one that kind of sums things up, it was a roller coaster, both physically and emotionally. In this report there are accounts of how we coped both personally, practically and emotionally during this year of living differently.

We could not have done what we did over the past 12 months without a dedicated and committed staff and volunteer team – all also having to deal with the fall out of living through lockdown and the impact Covid-19 had on them, their family and friends.

Also thank you to our funders – many of who stepped in to give flexibility over current funding streams and with emergency funding that helped many of us get through the year when expected streams of income stopped. Also to those committed fundraisers who did not let a pandemic get in the way of still raising even more vital donations.

Thank you!

Elizabeth Simpson, CEO
Rachel Pearson, Chair of Trustees

Facts and Figures: 2020 - 2021

7,640

number of people seen
(over a thousand more
than the previous year)

Represented at 65
appeals with an

80%

success rate

155

people supported
through peer support

774.6kg

produce grown at
our allotment

1717

people accessed advice

38

people received support
from our Community
Engagement Team who
set up in October 2020

208

free training sessions were
delivered to 672 people

122

people supported
through our new
Listening Ear Service

£1.1m

was generated in
additional income
for advice clients

1,304

young people sought
support from our Children
and Young People's Service

744

people attended
employer training

2,500

people contacted us
through our telephone line

286

young people sought
advice and benefitted
from £309,270 in
additional income

Present in

8 schools

in Manchester with mental
health practitioners

2,794

volunteer hours
were contributed

387

people involved
in fundraising

46,863

meals produced

Turning Round a Place-Based Organisation: The Trials and Tribulations of Operations in a Pandemic

Clare Abbott, Operations Director

It is amazing what you can do when you have to. If we had been asked to plan to move all of our services to phone and video delivery, I would have drafted a project plan and looked at phasing them one by one over the quarter. I would have insisted I was given time to do it right. There would have been a focus on working with people who use our services, consulting staff and volunteers. **In February/March 2020 we went from chatting in the office saying “it probably won’t happen” to “it is happening” in the blink of an eye.**

We were, in March 2020, a firmly place-based organisation. Manchester Mind’s approach has been based on one thing and one thing only, the importance of building kind, trusting relationships, which encourage a sense of belonging. Through experience, we know that for people with poor mental health, the process of building this relationship over time is eased if we work with people face-to-face. We get to see the whole person, build trust, pick up on those cues, which can transform how we work with someone and make our service accessible and effective for them. It can also remove anxiety that comes with using the phone or limited internet access. Within a short timeframe, we were forced to step away from this preferred method of delivery, which we have followed for over 30 years.

Annual Review 2020-21



By May 2020, we were cooking with gas. Every area had adapted all services to be delivered remotely.

We had introduced a new telephone service responding to need and we pivoted our food delivery service to support the city's emergency response initiatives. We also had to think fast about finances and the smaller Covid-19 response funds that were rapidly becoming available.

How did we do it? We've always valued collaboration but the way staff jumped into remote working is still something I look back on with pride, fondness and minor palpitations. We broke it down into steps and got on with it. We shared out the work. We made sure we told people who use our services and volunteers what was going on. **Staff were going out and delivering IT equipment to colleagues. We helped each other.** We laughed rather than cried when staff would contact us to say their laptop screen was smaller than they expected. We did not overact when someone asked us what was happening with the post for the hundredth time. Quite an achievement given the amount of uncertainty in our world in spring 2020. But it felt good to belong to a team response, all of us working to the same end.

The silver cloud to 2020-21 is that it forced us to test our assumptions – and we have learnt a lot as a result. One of our beliefs is that 'there is no right way' to deliver mental health support and I genuinely believe our service model is stronger now as people have a choice about how they work with us. Some people do not want to travel across Manchester, face the ring road, and navigate buses. For them, video and phone services have reduced their anxiety. For others, nothing can come close to face-to-face delivery. We will hold on to these new channels of service delivery and hope they allow us to reach more people as 2021 progresses.

Finally, a key lesson from this last year, it helps to stay focused on your purpose – there's only one thing we are interested in and that is providing a space where mental health comes first for Manchester residents. With all the other noise, fear and distraction of 2020, it was really important to focus on doing that and doing it as well as we could, whilst being open to learning along the way.

“All I had to do was make that one call rather than suffer the pain. I am shocked at the amount of support I have been linked to.”

Stewart was supported by the Listening Ear Service



“You’re on mute!” – Manchester Mind through the Zoom Lens

Ruth Rosselson, Resilience Co-ordinator

Before Covid-19 turned our world upside-down, most of us were unaware of Zoom and had only basic experience of video calls and online conferences. But in February 2020, our face-to-face services had to stop. By March we were all working from home and looking at adapting services so they could be delivered digitally or by telephone.

Trying to deliver a service through the screen is completely different to having someone in your physical space, and **for many of us, there were pre-conceptions that this could not possibly work and was a poor substitute for face-to-face work.** We were worried that we would be missing people who were digitally excluded – whether for financial reasons or because of the fear of technology, and we were right to be.

However, with no other choices, we had to go ahead and there were some positives which we did not predict. In the first few months of the first lockdown I led some open access drop-in sessions. These were short experiential sessions including calming techniques or mindful meditations, staff sessions, and drop-ins for mindfulness graduates. **I was pleased to find a sense of community building between regular attendees, and that people were often very open even to a bunch of strangers in rooms across the city.**

As confidence in the medium grew, there were more opportunities to deliver workshops and courses, and the first Building a Healthy Future course took place in June 2020. I was surprised that it was still possible to create a warm and inclusive atmosphere. Offering zoom training to those who had not used it before was crucial in ensuring we could help people join.

There are definitely some advantages to this aspect of delivery. Some people feel more confident and safe in their home surroundings, and are maybe even able to be more open with groups than they would have been otherwise. Others would have been prohibited from attending real life sessions, either due to mobility issues or location. I had at least a few participants with agoraphobia or severe social anxiety who would never have considered one of my courses before. **It's been heartening to see friendships grow; one of my groups is still meeting regularly since their course finished, and would never have been able to do this without Zoom.**

The disadvantages are obvious. **Technology can fail, batteries can drain, people can be distracted by pets, home deliveries, children or just whatever noises happen to be in their home or work environment.** Other people in the house might mean they are more inhibited about speaking honestly. Some people are viewing sessions on laptops, others on tablets, and many on phones. Laptops offer the best participant experience, using chats is easier, you can see more participants on gallery view, and any slides used are bigger and easier to read. But most people do not have laptops, so it's been important to try and ensure that those on phones do not end up getting less from the sessions.

When participants have their cameras off, communities are hard to build, interaction harder to encourage, and commercial workshops with a screen full of names but no faces is more tiring for the facilitator and less rewarding. It is also harder to draw quiet people out than if you were in the same room as them. If people are distressed, it's harder to comfort or calm them. However, I have seen a group rally round a distressed person (who has turned their camera off) and offer support and encouragement.

The breakout facility has both advantages and disadvantages. It's harder to eavesdrop on conversations, and it's not possible to know whether or not people are uncomfortable, not getting along, or sharing inappropriate or upsetting things. **Some of my participants have hated the breakouts, while others have loved them, and the time in smaller groups having private conversations has fostered supportive communities and friendships.**

What has been clear is that the future is neither wholly offline, nor online, but a combination of the two. I certainly plan to continue to offer online Building a Healthy Future courses to increase my reach. Potential participants living with severe fatigue, anxiety or mobility issues can still access the service, while for those who want to get out and who can, there will be real life courses.

Covid-19 has forced us to into new ways of working, and embracing the potential and opportunities that it offers. Hopefully going forward, this means our reach will be wider, and that no one who wants to access our services will be excluded.



“...thank you so much for offering these little spaces of calm and comfort to all of us, they absolutely light up my week at the moment and I feel deeply grateful for them.”

Drop-in participant

Covid-19, Confusion and Communication

Sam Harwood, Marketing and Communications Manager

If I try hard enough I can just about cast my mind back to early 2020 when we were having meetings about Covid-19 and expecting it would blow over quickly and without much disruption. Writing the Crisis Communications plan had been another task among many, in what was proving to be a busy and exciting year, not least because we were still marking the momentous occasion of our 30th Anniversary.

Of course it soon changed, and it suddenly got busier than I thought possible. We realised we were going to have to work from home and were thankful we had those meetings and those plans.

It is hard to put into words how I felt during the first lockdown. Working from home with three year old, in what had become a far from harmonious setting, was stressful to say the least. **I looked after my daughter in the mornings and worked in the afternoons and somehow managed to find focus.** Adrenaline, I guess, and a shared sense of purpose that now, more than ever, our services were needed and I had an important role to play in communicating that.

As is always the case **we first turned our attention inwards and ensured our communications to staff were timely and clear.** We reassured them they would be supported as necessary, given each individual's circumstances,



and we would support each other through what we expected to be a few weeks of disruption.

Luckily we had already made tentative steps to set up Zoom and took to regular meetings to ensure everyone knew what was happening and our expectations. While all of this was going on we had to ensure that anyone who used, or might want to use, our services was updated and reflected this across all our channels.

Staff moved swiftly to let those we were working with know our plans and set up our services remotely in rapid time. Keeping up to speed with all of this was made possible by regular discussions and **we were quickly able to state “We are still here”**.

“Overnight my role transformed and I was in awe of my colleagues as they almost seamlessly moved to remote working. Now more than ever they recognised the need to ensure our communications, particularly digital, were fully deployed to support those in the community who relied on us the most.”

First off the mark was Ruth with her online meditation sessions, which proved very popular. These were promoted alongside wellbeing tips to help people adjust to lockdown restrictions and working from home.

Our mental health practitioners worked on a series of information sheets for schools, including the **Five Ways to Wellbeing**.

There was a stream of requests for printed materials including promotion for our Universal Credit project and a printed pack to support our volunteers, while we were unable to engage with them face-to-face.

As we realised lockdown was not going to be a short stint, we ably continued to work remotely and even set up online focus groups for young people. We worked more closely with Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce to get the word out, and compiled a story for Manchester Community Central’s “No Going Back” report, about the crisis and our thoughts for the future. **Press enquiries at times felt relentless and proved quite time-consuming, but were a valuable experience and have influenced our approach going forward.**

Among all of this was the online **Headstock event for Mental Health Awareness Week, marking 30 years since the anniversary of Ian Curtis’ death**. A lot of work went into the event but raised £7500 and most importantly the collaboration with the fashion brand Size? set the stage for further partnership working in 2021. This led to a successful raffle, with proceeds coming to Manchester Mind.

We saw our digital engagement increase steadily on the website, with Twitter hitting 10K followers and Instagram 2K. No doubt having a more captive audience was part of this, coupled with the profile

gained from Headstock and our constant flow of communications. Our support was clearly needed and we turned our attention to monthly wellbeing themes, providing as much guidance as possible to help people to help themselves during this difficult time.

Our Emergency Food Project was another main focus and by the end of the year we reached £10,000. With so many other charities and worthy causes vying for people’s attention I feel proud that we were able to clearly demonstrate the impact of our work to achieve this result.





Food For All – The End of an Era

Sharon Kelly, Food For All Service Manager

The lead up to the pandemic was an odd one for me. I had been recovering from an accident where I had sustained a nasty head injury and the weeks leading up to lockdown were all very vague. I had not been well enough to pay much attention to how serious Covid-19 was becoming. I returned to work on the Thursday before lockdown to attend an emergency meeting. It felt like the opening scenes from an apocalypse movie!

Food For All (FFA) went from a thriving food-focused group of services to nothing almost instantly. Good Mood Food (GMF) customers began optimistically pushing back bookings for weeks, then months until it became apparent that we were not going to trade again, a realisation that was very devastating for us all. We had all worked so hard over the years, building a business that sat at the centre of all that we did and was our identity as a service.

Instantly, and with much resilience, we re-focused as a team at the catering unit and began to look for opportunities to help. In the beginning, we worked with various charities to make lunches for children who would have received school meals. Then, as the need for food support for shielding and vulnerable people increased, we joined the Manchester Food Hub and worked with local organisations cooking and providing ready-to-heat meals and food aid. **At some points, we were making several thousand meals per week.**

Looking back at this time is hard to re-imagine. It feels unreal now. Most of the country was working from home or on furlough, and we were busier than ever. We were in full PPE in the kitchen, following an hourly cleaning schedule, and we had no information about Covid-19 and how easily transmittable it was.

Tara pulled together an incredible team of volunteers to help with the meals at the unit. They all worked so hard and made all that we did possible. **They were an inspiring and committed group of people who gave their time so freely despite all that was happening.**

It was a big ask to have the team and volunteers there and I felt a lot of responsibility for their safety. Everyone at the unit was offered the option of furlough if they did not feel safe, but everyone chose to stay and adapted to every new challenge as it arose.

There was something extraordinary about being part of a group of people working together in such unique circumstances to support the food and mental health needs of our community. More than this, though, was the support that everyone gave to each other. Given that the GMF had lost all trading income and we faced our own job insecurity, the **team's focus was always on helping others and getting food and a kind word to the people who needed it. It makes me very proud to be part of FFA and to know such kind and generous people.**

Another casualty of the pandemic was the café at the Zion. We had believed that as soon as the pandemic ended, we would be able to re-open and begin working with volunteers again and get back to running Pay What You Can sessions. However, as lockdowns were extended and restrictions

continued to be in place, **we had to make a difficult decision and let go of the café.** With no income from GMF, we could not continue to pay for a space we did not know when we would be able to use again. This hit me harder than GMF. I think because this is where I began my career with Manchester Mind, 20 years ago, and where we all worked with so many lovely people. It felt like the end of an era and, sadly, a further move away from what FFA had been before the pandemic.

The allotment was the only space that we could offer supported volunteering to anyone throughout the pandemic. As a result, it has flourished into a beautiful space thanks to all the hard work of the team and a group of dedicated volunteers. In addition, **the allotment has been the source of lots of tasty produce that has contributed to all the meals and food boxes we have delivered.**

We have used this time working with partners and listening to feedback from the people we have been supplying food to, to find out what they need to begin putting their lives back together and started a major re-design of our service. Our emergency food provision, recipe boxes, movable feasts, and green social prescribing will all come with trauma-informed activities and interventions and support from our skilled team.

“Especially towards the middle and end of lockdown I started to become very low, I didn’t have reason to get out of bed or do anything so having the opportunity to go and help cook and prepare food with a lovely team really boosted my mood, and gave me energy for the rest of the day.”

Food For All Volunteer

“I don’t know how to express my gratitude. For your mental health support and help with the nice meals too. But the most of the all that I do not feel lonely. I had more visitors in this week than in last 3 months.”

Food recipient

Dionne – former Delivery Driver with Good Mood Food, now Kitchen Assistant for Food For All

I've been asked to write a piece for the Annual Report but am fearful that it won't translate correctly as everything has become historical and hazy now. Details blurred and I cannot recall many details or be sure that I have the timeline in the correct order.

All I can say is that Covid-19 without a doubt changed the world. It changed attitudes, opinions, daily working life, family dynamics and added a great deal of pressure and stress to many.

In my instance, my job description, job security and job title all changed.

All of a sudden we had to be swaddled in restrictive PPE, masks on, gloves on, hands washed and sanitiser applied every 20 minutes or so. Surfaces sprayed and wiped to the sound of the regular timer. Any goods that came into the unit had to be sprayed and wiped with anti-bac to minimise any risk of cross contamination. Spare clothes had to be brought in as we now had to have indoor and outdoor clothes. Coverings had to be worn on our shoes. I remember asking myself if this was actually going to be effective at stopping any of us from transporting this deadly airborne disease and **wondered if we would be any better off wearing hazmat suits to do our food prep!**

Our staff team has always been very professional, we have banter and common things to talk about, but now we were a team in one of the few sectors that was allowed to stay open and be operational while many businesses closed, either furloughing staff or letting them go.

I do remember feeling that something awful yet extraordinary was taking place and as much as I was unsure, **I was grateful that I still had purpose, a job to get up for and an income that was unaffected.**

The biggest part of the pandemic for me was those first few months – the sandwich bags we made for the boxing charity to distribute became **little lunches of hope, as simple as they were I tried to pack each one with a little bit of dignity and put a smile inside.** There was no way I wanted the recipient to feel any shame in having to eat one of the lunches due to themselves or their families experiencing food poverty.

As the weeks progressed and we started to make hot meals, this is when things really, literally and metaphorically heated up – the summer was arriving, pans were on the stove, food was roasting in the oven and the amount of volunteers we had joining us in the kitchen increased (kudos to Tara for excellent recruitment).

At this point, after a good few weeks of understanding our new purpose, **the kitchen had become a hub of hope, filled with an array of our brilliant staff team and amazing volunteers.** The volunteers who arrived were like an army of strong warriors, many of them were furloughed staff, or newly redundant or students who could no longer attend University, the energy, compassion and enthusiasm they brought into the kitchen and our daily working life was effervescent and I will always be humbled by their 'Can Do' and 'What's Next?' attitudes.





As the summer went on, some of the volunteers moved on due to their own changing Covid-affected circumstances and we got a new 'batch' in. Equally as impressive and willing to get the work done and I felt honoured to have been part of that and their experience; us all working towards **alleviating the stress and shame of people in the local and wider Manchester areas who were experiencing food poverty** by providing them with what was hopefully tasty, nutritious and healthy food.

At this point now, after the summer, things really start to get hazy for me – I think my mind had stopped placing flags onto key events as all of this was hugely important to me.

I am a stickler for resisting change and I was in mourning for the previous incarnation of my job. My Good Mood Food role before the pandemic was a really nice job! **I had the realisation that now my job was a necessary one and I had to step outside of my comfort zone and understand that my working life at Manchester Mind was never going to be the same again.**

Throughout the pandemic, I have seen my close colleagues, namely Jules, Nima and Jane shine, their determination to carry on each day, adapting and changing to the needs of our service users while juggling their own personal situations and circumstances has been absolutely brilliant. Their friendships, empathy and general all round existence has helped me to keep my mental health in check during the pandemic.

Darren also needs a special mention, his adaptations to the working day during the pandemic were tremendous! He took on many diverse roles with vigour and without complaint, he is a true and almost silent hero of our team.

Also knowing that the management team for our project, Sharon, Clare, Elizabeth have been doing all they can behind the scenes to ensure that our project can continue to run in new and changing formats has given me a sense of stability and security that I am able to assist the wider community and also receive a salary to keep my own family and home afloat.

My working life has changed dramatically and probably for the better as I have realised that I have been able to uncover some old skills that had been buried and discover some new skills that I can put to good use.

The pandemic has been a time of great uncertainty but one also of discovery, I have learnt that **there is no shame in asking for help**, I have learnt that there are many who need help and many more who needed help way before the pandemic.

And I also know that if there are any opportunities to help enrich someone else's life with empathy, knowledge or plain simple kindness, then this I will do, as this is what I am given and it is helping to enrich my own life.

Darren, Good Mood Food Administrator

Before the pandemic I was regularly office-based processing the admin for Good Mood Food. Once the news of the lockdown was announced I was told that I would be moved into the food production and delivery side of things as these were considered essential services.

I was very relieved that I would not have to stop working, and that I would have the opportunity to engage in meaningful and rewarding work providing food for those in need. That would also give structure to my days, at a time when we heard of others being told to work from home, or be furloughed, and when some jobs were in danger.

I immediately enjoyed the new role working with the team at the unit.

In many ways it felt like a return to something familiar and comfortable I had experienced in the past. My own journey with Manchester Mind had started in 2012 when I was a kitchen volunteer working with Jules and Sharon. As the lockdown developed we also added volunteers to our core team (some new volunteers often furloughed from their work, in addition to previous volunteers).

The work at the unit has been varied and very rewarding. While working as a delivery driver I got the opportunity to meet face-to-face and chat to people receiving our emergency food and I could see how much the food service meant to them as well as seeing another human at a time of relative isolation.

“We have been receiving food donations from yourselves which has massively helped some of our young people during these difficult times. We wanted to thank you for providing the lovely home cooked meals.”

Contact Hostel

There was also some sadness as Manchester Mind changed and a lot of cherished and long-standing services came to an end, such as Good Mood Food, and our community café. **I have hugely enjoyed the new challenge of working at the unit and I have to say it has been a great experience.** That period would seem to be now at an end as the end of lockdowns means I am back in the office and looking forward to the new challenges that will come as we look to develop our services in new directions afforded by the change.



Peer Support Groups – A Journey through the Pandemic

Shamin Malik, Peer Support Development Worker and the Peer Support Volunteer Team


Our face-to-face peer support groups, in common with other services across the country, had a huge challenge in how to adjust to the lockdown restrictions in March 2020.

I had just started my role prior to lockdown and rapidly became aware that we had to maintain some level of contact, as well as find alternative ways to deliver the groups. A first priority was to make contact with the people involved in the groups to check in with them. The pandemic had left many people feeling anxious.

Volunteers initially felt left without a purpose as there was no delivery. However we worked as a team to explore ways in which we could still offer a service; do we just offer groups remotely or was there a possibility of offering one-to-one support? We eventually settled with offering groups over Zoom, once it was clear how we could do this safely. I checked who within our existing group members was interested in the online groups and in May 2020 we were able to start our online delivery.

The online delivery has been a journey of learning together, in which technical obstacles have been embraced and overcome. **New skills have been developed by all!** Some volunteers and members have moved on and new people have joined.





The Friday group has seen the demographics of the group transform. The face-to-face group run from No 93 in Harpurhey was well-established with a consistent number of people. The online session has seen a more varied group. More female, younger and more transient with people joining but then not staying for a variety of reasons. Recruitment has been a challenge, finding the right people that will most benefit from virtual peer support. However, the group has persevered throughout this time. The volunteer facilitators have turned up every week without fail, never really knowing who was going to turn up in the virtual room. **We have seen some strong relationships form and the group has flourished; the positive impact on the members is clearly evident. The engagement, interaction and sharing of support and ideas across the group from all members is such a positive thing to see.**

Whilst the transition resulted in difficulty offering support to all previous members, the movement to online has improved accessibility for others. Within

“I have been volunteering as a peer support volunteer for Manchester Mind for a few months now and it has quickly become an essential part of my week and something I really look forward to. The group is an important, safe space for people with mental health difficulties to meet and support each other with their mental wellbeing.”

Peer Support Volunteer

the Wednesday support session there have been many advantages. Individuals who have felt unwell, lacked sleep, or were in poor physical health may have been less likely to attend face-to-face sessions due to travel. Online meetings have combatted this issue by enabling them to attend in the comfort of their own home, be present for parts of the session, and leave if feeling unwell. Additionally, members who feel less comfortable within group situations have benefited from the options to mute, turn their video off, and communicate through the chat box. These choices have proven a large benefit, as some members have joined with their camera off and feeling less confident in contributing, to weeks later having their camera on and often sharing within the group. New members have also fed back that attending face-to-face meetings may be triggering for them, therefore online sessions have alleviated these risks. In these ways the online meetings have overcome multiple support barriers, and in effect, proven as extremely valuable for certain members.

Virtual meetings have also been extremely helpful through times of social isolation, disruptions, and uncertainty. **The weekly meetings have offered members consistency through periods where routines have been heavily disrupted.** Also, week by week strong relationships and networks have been formed in common with the Friday group, encouraging community through times of social isolation. Overall, the movement to an online platform has provided protective factors of consistency and community to our members during a period where mental health is most at risk.

Our experience in both groups is that peer support has not only been a lifeline for members, but for the volunteers too. The fact that we have been able to keep those connections week in, week out, has proved that these support groups are needed and they can work for a number of people.

Starting Work.....

Martin Gaved, Community Engagement Team (CET) Manager

Challenge number one was how to reconcile my new role, community engagement, with the new reality, community isolation. And what did I take for granted in previous jobs, regarding job induction, establishing a new team, networking with other professional partners and space to work?

So, what were the immediate benefits?

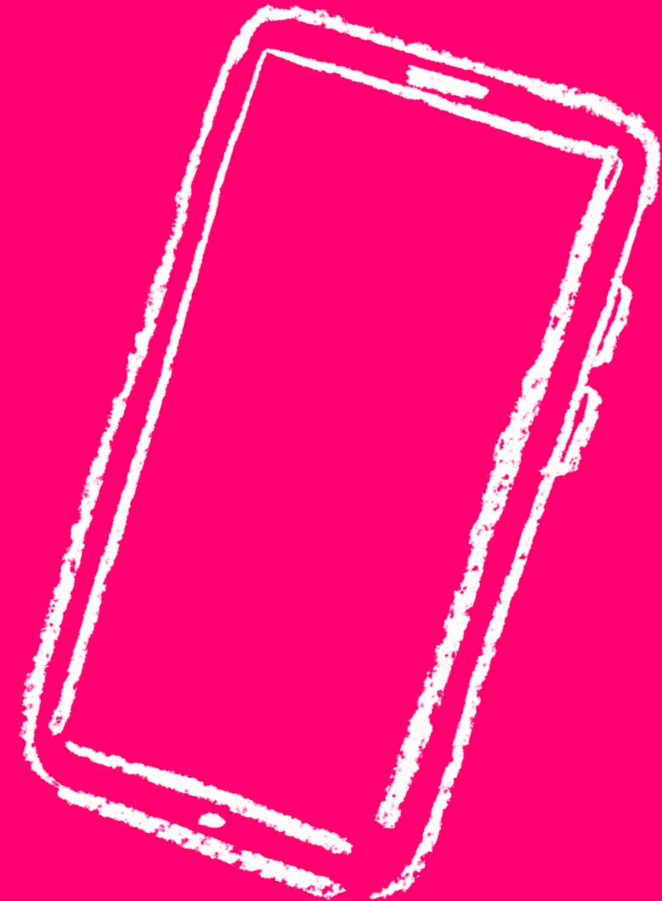
- No commute
- Personal time management
- Slippers

An office base supports your daily routine through the shared communal activities within a working day. This needed redefining for home working to make sure that a healthy separation between work and home life was maintained. First, I had to have a space to work. In my case, a spot of DIY created an office space. For others, claiming a corner of a shared space or booking the dining table between 9 and 5 was needed.

I found it important to establish my time routines throughout the day, just as we would in an office.

Tea breaks and lunch punctuated and fuelled productive work time.

However, all the good time management in the world was disrupted when work clashed with home-schooling. Creative use of time became essential to keep children on task, safe and fed. **My colleagues knew it was Wednesday when they could hear a flute lesson over the Teams meeting...**



The symbolic shutting down of the laptop and work phone at the end of the day gave separation from work. But what about the benefits of a commute? Time to decompress, listen to music or an audio book, change your head space to home life. In my case, I have found that ten minutes quiet wind down time before facing the family did the job, but it can be hard to step out of your work space straight into family chaos.

Before the lockdowns, we didn't even know what Zoom was and we would accept that a portion of our day would be lost to travelling to various locations to meet people. How could I be isolated at home but be connected with colleagues and the people that I support? **As with the rest of the world, I discovered what Teams and Zoom could add to my work.** Teams enabled me to create a virtual office for the CET to meet, share and collaborate. New skills were learnt. For example, video calls require a different way of interacting. You cannot interject, so you must listen and give spaces for other people to contribute. We have become more polite in our conversations, offering time to each person, apologising for talking over someone else.

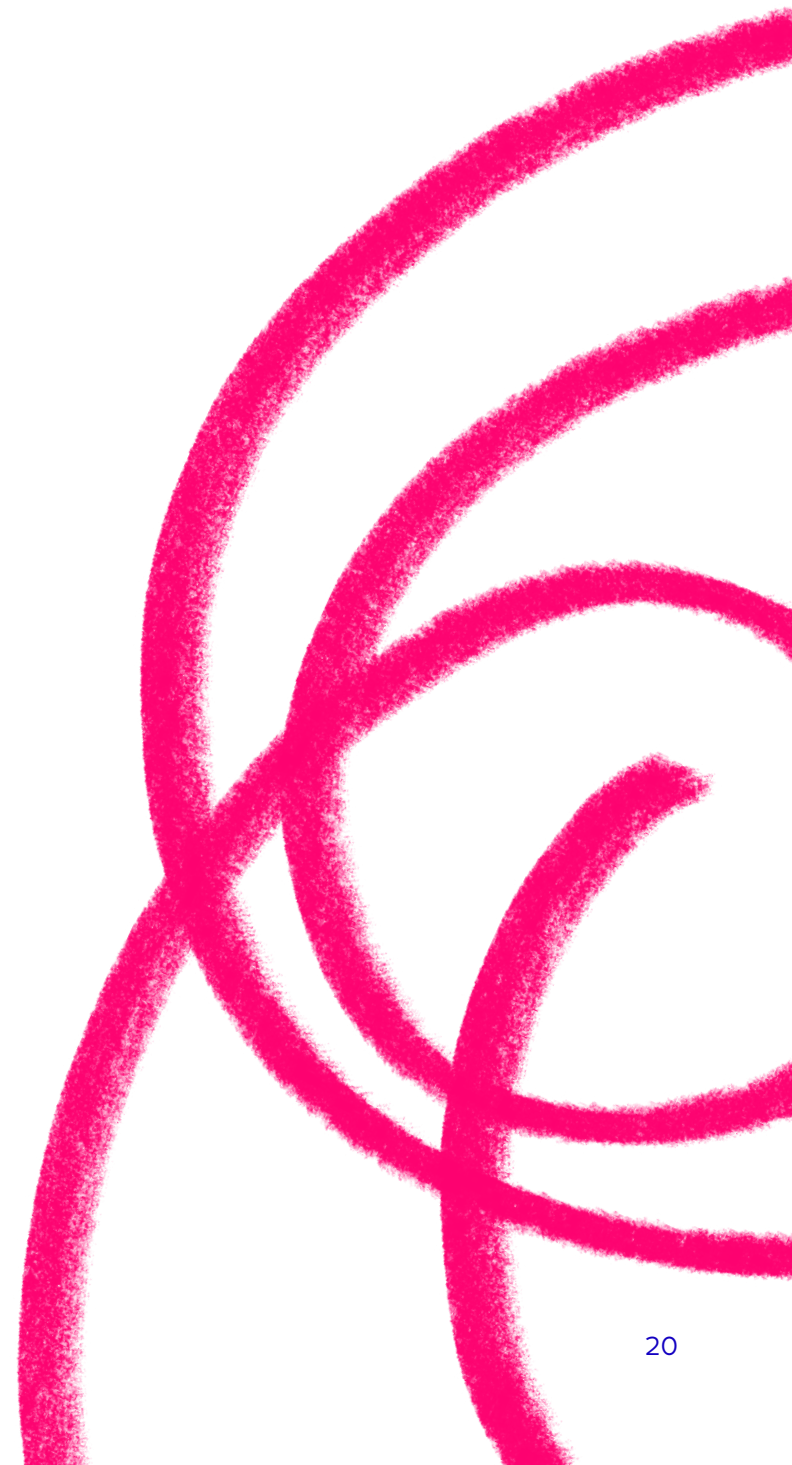
In addition to establishing my personal home working routine, a team routine was also essential. It was important to replicate the opportunities for incidental conversation, networking and reflection. Within the CET, we established daily morning check-in meetings and end of the day de-briefs. The time given to these supportive sessions ensures that our independent work time is efficient and focused. Meeting at the end of the day has proved especially important, because it provides us all with an opportunity for daily group supervision and the sharing of our successes. The use of a WhatsApp group means that we can informally

discuss tasks throughout the day. **We even set up a WhatsApp group for colleagues who were home schooling to share our experiences of impossible worksheets and tantrums. And the children sometimes struggled too.**

The social restrictions have made us re-evaluate our focus on the importance of face-to-face interactions. We had to look at the tools available, and make the best of what we had. We quickly realised the potential for immediate and accessible communication through the phone, WhatsApp and text, without the barriers and formality that a face-to-face meeting may pose.

Starting a new job during a pandemic raised the risks of isolation and disjointed communication. We have had to put extra effort into the most important commodity of our work: positive, enduring relationships. From my first day with Manchester Mind, colleagues have been generous with their time and their words of encouragement. **We have all lived through the same experience and so we have all seen the benefits of the extra effort given to maintain our communities.**

Our next challenge is to take the benefits of our experience of working, communicating and forging trusting relationships whilst physically isolated, and add these skills to our established creative approaches of engaging people in our communities.





Working with Families through Lockdown

Kerry Evans, Big Manchester Family Intervention Worker

I have been working with families referred to Big Manchester for the last five years and there is always layers of complexity that never comes to light immediately – the aim is to build a really trusting relationship and through this comes the story. **Covid-19 added a completely unexpected level of complexity to everyone's lives and for Sarah this was no different but had an unexpected positive outcome.**

Sarah is a single mother with two children, Emily aged 10 and Scott aged 6. The family were referred to Big Manchester as they had previously experienced domestic violence and the children's school were concerned about the impact of this on the family unit. In particular Scott's behaviour at school was becoming increasingly difficult to manage and Scott was frequently excluded from school.

Prior to the onset of the pandemic the family began work with Big Manchester. This involved a therapeutic intervention with Sarah to give her space and opportunity to discuss her own childhood, her previous and current mental health, the various traumas she had experienced in her own life, her experiences of being pregnant, of parenting and her hopes and fears regarding her family's future. This deep level of discussion and work with Sarah enabled her to identify past experiences that were causing her issues in the present and make a

plan that she was able maintain of how to address and work through these residual issues. Alongside this both Emily and Scott received weekly one-to-one therapeutic play sessions; these sessions enabled the children to have a consistent, safe space to explore their experiences and emotions through play.

Although at this point Sarah had made great progress in accessing support for her current mental health needs and her previous traumatic experiences, there had been little change in Scott's behaviour at school. Sarah and Scott have a close and loving relationship and **it was becoming clear that Scott was aware if he was excluded from school then he would be able to spend more time with his mother.** Scott was placed on a reduced timetable at school and school began to speak of permanently excluding Scott. When the pandemic started along with the first round of school closures, there was great concern that Sarah would not be able to manage having Scott at home full-time and that when school re-opened Scott would not be able to manage the return to school after a long period of being on a part-time timetable and the long period of being at home with his mother.

With support Sarah worked hard to create a structured but nurturing routine at home for both Scott and Emily. Sarah accessed resources **through Big Manchester and through her own research created a supportive home school environment where her children thrived** and Scott was able to catch up on some of the learning he had missed through the frequent exclusions from school. In particular, Sarah focused on improving Scott's language and communication skills. Scott and Emily's weekly therapeutic play sessions continued with the use of video.

When school was about to re-open they contacted Sarah to say school felt unable to manage Scott with the restrictions in place and to ask Sarah to keep Scott off school until further support for him was accessed. School were unable to say when this support would be in place. Sarah was able to speak with school to explain the home schooling routine she had created and maintained and to discuss the progress Scott had made, particularly with his communication skills. School agreed to trial Scott returning on a full-time basis when all the other children returned.

This trial went well and Scott returned to full-time school, Scott's improved language and communication skills meant he was able to speak with staff at school when he found things difficult and this brought an immediate reduction in his violent and aggressive behaviour. **Scott has not been excluded from school since the pandemic and regularly receives awards for his behaviour at school and progress with his school work.** Sarah's confidence and self-esteem were greatly improved by seeing the impact her home schooling had on Scott and by her ability to successfully advocate for Scott to return to school full-time and at the same time as all the other children.

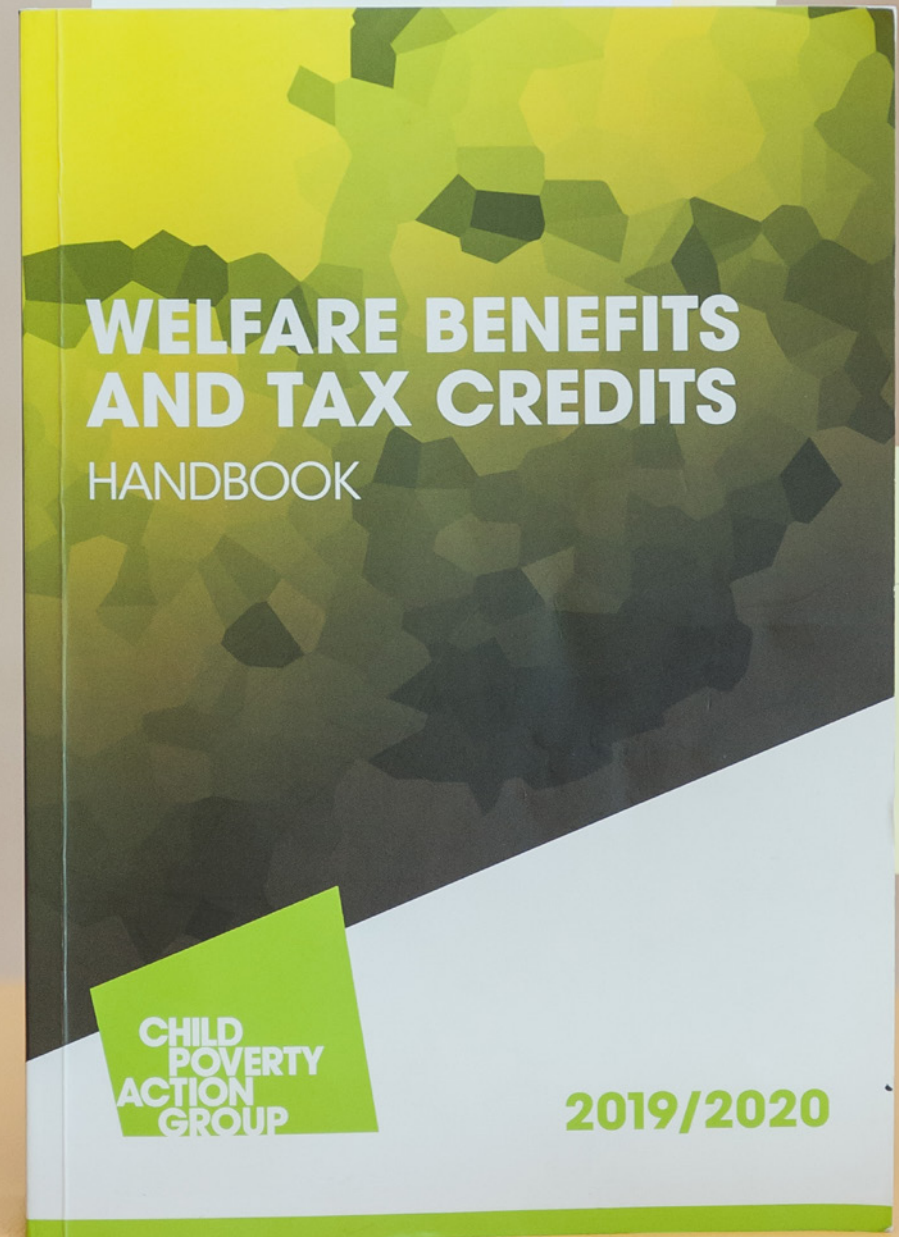
Delivering Advice during a Time of Change

Giles Elliot, Advice Manager

The adult Advice Team provides advice and assistance about benefits, housing, and debt. At the time the pandemic arrived, this was how things looked:

- A core service, most of whose clients had initially come to one of our two weekly drop-in sessions
- A Universal Credit project, which acquired most of its clients via the drop-ins
- A service to people presenting as homeless at the Town Hall, which was staffed by advice supervisors and volunteers
- A service to in-patients at three wards of the residential mental health unit at North Manchester General Hospital. We had just expanded the project to cover the residential unit at Wythenshawe Hospital as well.

The Advice Team quickly adapted to the new, and ever-changing situation. By 17 March the Town Hall advice supervisors developed a contingency plan, and set up an online system for housing solutions staff to make referrals, that was in place before lockdown. By 24 March we had set up a general set of procedures, including a method for logging and responding to new queries, as well as a WhatsApp group, so that we could support each other and share information in a secure way.



The core team now received most of its new queries via phone and email. These were taken by members of staff from across Manchester Mind who volunteered their time. **We were able to provide on the phone most of what we had previously done face-to-face.** There were some challenges: for example, helping people complete benefit questionnaires, but we developed tools and systems to address this. More fundamentally, we and our clients missed out on all the non-verbal communication that occurs when people meet face-to-face. This sometimes meant that cases took longer, as more time was needed to be spent with people to enable a trusting relationship to be developed.

The hospital service is based on our workers being present on the wards and available to patients. Early in lockdown one of our hospital workers noted that he had a much better relationship with clients he was working with on the phone if they had met in person previously than with those he had not. Accordingly, we developed a risk assessment that allowed our staff to attend wards on a limited basis.

A different kind of problem related to our postal deliveries. For complicated reasons, and despite sterling efforts by Elizabeth, **we did not receive any of our mail for about the first three months of lockdown.** This, not surprisingly, caused significant difficulties: appeal hearings were missed, and other vital correspondence relating to clients was not dealt with in a timely fashion.

The numbers of people using our services have remained similar to numbers before the pandemic, except for the first few months: that temporary reduction seems to have been noticed throughout the sector. That we have been able to continue to help this number of people despite the extra complications is a testament to the hard work of team members.

“I would like to thank you for all the help and support. I wouldn’t be able to fight for it on my own.”

Advice Client

We have found that many clients are able to contact us by phone and email – some, especially those who do not live near the Zion Centre, have found it an advantage, although we remain concerned for those individuals who cannot. We are likely to reshape our ‘non-Covid’ service delivery in the light of what we have learned during this interesting time.





Mums Matter, even in a Pandemic

Carrie Pheasey, Mums Matter Co-ordinator

As the pandemic lockdown was looming on the horizon, I was facing the exciting prospect of starting a new role with Manchester Mind as the Mums Matter Co-ordinator, a role that really connected with me at a very personal level. The project is a two year partnership with Homestart supporting Mums experiencing a range of peri-natal mental health challenges with a child under the age of two. This was an opportunity to combine my lived experience, my knowledge of mental health wellbeing interventions with my experience of delivering manualised and evidence-based courses, to make a meaningful and tangible difference to families and children.

At first it felt like any other new job and project.

The nervous excitement the night before preparing the family for the new routine and mentally planning how I would approach the project, establishing contacts, setting up introduction meetings and establishing relationships with my new colleagues. The normal approach to project set up was not actually on the agenda though. **The getting to know you meetings and introductions all became conversations with an image on the screen, not the easiest way to establish strong and enduring relationships.**

There was still lots of excitement, networking with all the essential contacts and services in the area, sharing every detail and fielding interested questions from people who will soon be referred into the project. There was plenty to get on with,

whilst the announcements and information about the pandemic restrictions continued to become more real and longer-term. I consider myself quite fortunate as I had, for the past few years, been working from home 2-3 days per week and connecting with colleagues from different offices using Microsoft Teams on a daily basis.

The first lockdown originally felt quite familiar as far as working patterns were concerned. No commute, so more time to project plan and connect with the different services. Using virtual platforms we were able to connect with services and teams more easily and faster than we might otherwise have done if we were waiting to be invited to present at face-to-face meetings in rooms that might be limited for space. **The information we were sharing about the project was eagerly received and seemed to create hope in a world that was otherwise becoming full of disbelief with the additional and ever-changing updates and rules.**

The daily commute to the spare bedroom coupled with other domestic challenges, such as my husband not being able to work and daughter home-schooling, along with overnight enforced removal of all social and family support, were challenges that no one could have predicted and very quickly started to take their toll. I was lucky, I was able to access some coaching that helped me identify new tricks to use to switch between working and home and to find new ways to recreate the social connections that had previously supported my mental wellbeing before the pandemic.

Once we were linked with the networks and services, the project started to garner real and genuine interest, with a **flurry of referrals and enquiries from potential volunteers, which was really encouraging.** The whole world was adjusting to the restrictions and prioritising the

most important projects and next steps, which lead to some frustrating pauses to plans, waiting for information or confirmation.

The first delivery was a real indicator of the value of the course and the individual outcomes for the mums. Even though the numbers were lower than predicted, we also discovered that reduced referrals and attendance was something other projects were experiencing both across the region and with Mums Matter.

On reflection, I have realised that a big missing ingredient were the spontaneous conversations with colleagues, whilst making coffee, walking along the corridor or past an office, learning who the office IT guru is or being able to help with the wider organisation's work. These ad hoc conversations often contribute to enhancing projects or leading to stronger connections for the future. The solution across all sectors and a benefit to the organisation as a whole has been the overnight mass upskilling of staff in the use of technology and virtual platforms as a substitute for face-to-face meetings. **This was a real challenge for many and the organisation was able to support everyone to reach their potential and confidence in this method of communication and working.**

Another piece of learning taken from setting up a project during the pandemic is how we can, with support, trust and open communication adopt a more balanced work / life approach. These unprecedented times and enforced restrictions helped us all to work effectively without the usual limiting constraints of office-bound environments and work in ways that helped us to tap into our creativity. I for one have felt even more empowered to work to my strengths incorporating daily domestic tasks into moments away from the screen to process, plan and reflect.

“Before Mums Matter I felt like the only mother going through what I was feeling and I felt guilty thinking I couldn’t bond with my baby”

Course participant



What Happens when the Fundraising Stops?

Joanna Huddart and Aashni Shah

Seven years ago Manchester Mind embarked on a brave new journey, as we started fundraising for the first time. Due to the generous support of so many individuals, local businesses, community clubs, families and faith groups, donations sky rocketed year on year, reaching an annual total of £398,000 by March 2020.

We were proud of our large database of inspired donors, with a full calendar of sponsored challenges, seasonal fundraising events, city-centre collections, major celebrations and charity partnerships. For the year ahead, we also wanted to focus on new areas of income generation, including major donors, individual giving and legacy gifts. Our fundraising team had expanded to three people, with high hopes that our aspirations would flourish.

As news of the pandemic started to spread, we were forced to stop in our tracks. Charity fundraising came to a standstill, as the devastating impact hit our supporters. We were all facing anxieties and challenges never before anticipated, and Manchester Mind quickly adapted our services to be delivered remotely. **Our immediate fundraising response was to let everyone know we were still here for them – regardless of decisions to postpone or entirely cancel fundraising plans.**

The shockwave then started to hit our fundraising team, first with remote home working and then with the difficult decision to place our two new



staff on furlough for five months. **For our team this was a huge blow and we sought to find ways to maintain our sense of connection and purpose, despite being apart.**

At times it felt as if the hard work of the past seven years was being washed away, with activities and donations decreasing. We remained sensitive to the daily reality of our fundraisers' lives – loss, grief, frustration, anger, despair – placing no assumptions as to when we might engage again with their charity events, but keeping relationships alive through regular communications. Supporter loyalty gave us strength and hope over the long months that followed, making us realise just how solid the foundation was that we had forged over the years.

By the end of August 2020, the creativity and resilience of our supporters had really gathered momentum, with hundreds of virtual fundraising events, activities and challenges.

For example, online community events, virtual marathons, even a virtual choir performance. We were amazed to see the commitment of our kind fundraisers who recognised the importance of our services, now more than ever. We were proud to still be there for each and every fundraiser, humbled by their resilience, commitment and solidarity. By March 2021, with the help of countless charity champions, £285,000 had been raised for our services, bringing the fundraising year to an emotional end filled with gratitude.

Thank you from everyone at Manchester Mind for helping to ensure we can be there for anyone who needs support, advice or guidance, now or in the future.

“It was a privilege to run for a charity that means so much to me. Your work means the world, and really it should be me thanking you. I hope you can continue doing amazing work in 2021.”

Fundraiser





The Beauty of Our Outdoor Space

Tara Kinsella, Food For All Volunteer Co-ordinator

This year highlighted the important role green space plays in our lives and the benefits to mental health, which result from spending time outside in nature. The Allotment Project has proven invaluable during these difficult times as a sanctuary for people to reconnect with nature, themselves and each other. **Allotment activity was allowed during all restrictions when other projects had to adapt to remote activity.** So it felt particularly important to invest time and resources into guaranteeing the experience we offered was safe and supportive.

Staff and volunteers worked together to ensure as many people as possible could benefit from the garden, which has served to strengthen and sustain our local community throughout the pandemic. People who had become even more isolated than before, as well as having much less opportunity to be active, were given the opportunity to spend time in the safety of our garden. **All the food grown ensured the emergency meals provided by the Food For All catering team were rich in nutrients and we also managed to distribute flowers with these deliveries.**

Relationships have flourished at the plot whilst people have been unable to see family, colleagues, friends or their support network. People have learned new skills and built confidence with some securing their own allotments with plans to support their communities.



Networks have formed with other green organisations in Manchester and businesses and individuals have donated time, money and energy towards our growth. We are now not only a fully functioning vegetable garden, but recognised and supported as a refuge from life's struggles; an enriching and therapeutic opportunity for people to take care of themselves.

Gardening is an inclusive activity. Prejudices and stigma are easily broken down as people work together. The mindful activity and the peer support enables therapeutic management of health conditions and it really is a positive space for growth. In many ways the pandemic allowed this project to flourish; the space has transformed and our network has grown. We will not say we are grateful for the year that has passed, but we are proud of what we have been able to provide, and we are delighted that the benefits of green activity have been more widely recognised.



All that Work.....

Danielle Partington, Training Manager

I firstly want to acknowledge what a rollercoaster 2020 was, from a business point of view, but also on a personal level. Having started 2020 with a new booking system and a strong core set of training courses, the bookings were starting to come in thick and fast, and it was an exciting time. There was definitely a buzz about the team as we started to strategise the next 12 months looking at marketing and even capacity with a view to a quick growth.

Then overnight it just stopped. Nothing but cancellations.

Having a strong value for adaptability/flexibility, I actually found that first week of cancellations an opportunity to think quickly and creatively, researching ways to deliver training online (we had only just heard of “Zoom”), and quickly rounding up trainers to discuss experience. We contacted organisations – some wanted to re-book the training face-to-face for in two weeks’ time, some expected it might be two months. **No one expected it to be over a year.**

What came next was a gruelling few weeks of contacting organisations and individuals to survey whether they wanted to wait for face-to-face or whether they wanted online training. **The biggest response was that no one knew, everything went to a standstill.** People were worried about job security, worried about too much screen time, worried about quality of training, worried about juggling other responsibilities at home – children,



partners, pets – it was a world we had never experienced before and we did not know when it would end and return to “normal”.

It was a hard decision but we had to accept that there would not be any bookings for the foreseeable, the tone was not right to ask for organisations to pay for services when they were also experiencing the unknown. **I took a step back and decided it would be best to be furloughed. This was hard for me, I am not a sit-back-and-wait type of person, but I knew it was the right decision.** Working from home on a garden table in my kitchen, juggling kids, and a whole new experience of isolation was difficult, and the breather allowed me to re-assess.

The team had started to adapt some free online wellbeing sessions to support the community and this allowed us to learn and grow. On my return from furlough, we had space to really dig down into our training offer, opportunity to adapt, update, and create. **We asked again what organisations and individuals wanted, and we were able to deliver based on their needs. What we know is our trainers show openness and belonging throughout all of our training, and that kindness shines through in our online delivery.**

Those values are embedded in everything we do, you cannot teach it, it's natural, and it's what makes us unique. **The training we have developed is not just a blank screen of information, it's experiential, it's knowledgeable, it's powerful, it's kind, it's adaptable.** We have come a long way on our journey this year and what has been most important is how we have all pulled together to deliver what we do best, from building kind relationships, to allowing people to explore themselves and keep learning.

“The great sense of relaxed engagement and high level of extended warmth and understanding came across, even on Zoom!”

Finding a Healthy Balance participant.

Although the rollercoaster has had its ups and downs, I am proud to say we are now on steady ground. We have stayed strong, adapting to our surroundings but without changing our beliefs and who we are at Manchester Mind. We ended 2020/21 training over 700 participants on supporting their own wellbeing and supporting others in the workplace.





My Lived Experience - Twelve Months Dealing with a Global Pandemic

The tautological statement ‘we don’t know what we don’t know’ summed up my early experience of the pandemic. I did not envisage the year 2020 to have such an askew vision. After the shock and realisation sunk in, I was struck quite violently by the reaction that was displayed in the media of how the general public were reacting. The pandemic became a slightly infinitesimally secondary concern compared to the hysteria displayed through the panic-buying that ensued. The imposed quarantine combined with the news of escalation in cases and deaths, and the fear that I experienced whenever someone got too close while coughing with no mask, quickly eroded my mental state. I became fearful of other people and agoraphobic. I was afraid of people shirking the restrictions and I was afraid of people getting too close. I experienced a complete self-disintegration. **I contacted Manchester Mind with no expectations. I just needed someone to talk to. I never envisaged the amount of support that was there.** The support from Manchester Mind definitely footed the bill owed by NHS services.

I was having therapy through the NHS but that stopped. The compassion focused therapy and Eye Movement Desensitisation Reprogramming (EMDR) I was having was then quickly adapted to be delivered online, but I struggled with it because **the complexity of EMDR could not be delivered properly via a digital interface** and I could not connect with it. I felt too detached from the therapy and too self-conscious.

To talk to someone on a screen felt too synthetic and there was a definite disconnect and loss in the subtleties of communication. I also felt overexposed talking about sensitive details online. I feel you need that face-to-face interaction in a neutral space to fully relax and engage in the therapy to get the most out of it.

Therapy rooms provide a neutrality and escape from a home environment which for me removes any stagnation in thought or any negative ruminations. Travel to and from that neutral space allows for a certain amount of relaxation or decompression.

Unfortunately my experience of screen therapy was counterproductive. I am now back on a waiting list for the therapy to be done face-to-face when it is safe to do so. I became and remain feeling disconnected from life and people. I feel that any hope of me getting back on track is utterly extinct.

However, when I contacted Manchester Mind I was surprised by the response. I was offered a lot of help through a service called the 'listening ear'.

I was able to talk about troubling issues, I was offered the chance to participate in a peer support group, a meditation class, I was told about the support that could be on offer by referral to an art class that I had not been told about, even though this was a service the NHS provided, it was Manchester Mind that pointed me towards it. I have attended online workshops to do with mental health as well. I do still struggle with video conferencing. I am unfortunately experiencing a lot of ingrained overshadowing within the NHS.

I have a good GP, which I am lucky to have found but it should not be like that. Every GP or doctor you see should treat you with a certain amount of dignity, but that is not my experience. I do not want special or preferential treatment; I just want to be treated normally like anyone else.

I experience a lot of misconceived and ignorant approaches to my status quo. I often get dismissed and experience inappropriate behaviour. **I have had more support and I have been treated like a 'normal' person from the people at Manchester Mind.**

Sometimes I feel like I have lost all hope. However, logically and objectively there is always the possibility of its return. Nothing is certain in life, just because I have lost something, doesn't mean it can't return. You don't know what you don't know. Anything is possible, even recovery and equality. There is a semblance of hope in that.

Two very understated words to Manchester Mind;

Thank you

Lee

Supporting our Children and Young People (CYP)

Suzanne Holmes, CYP Service Manager

As lockdown came and with it the need to shut down the CYP building we listened to and consulted with young people as to how we could adapt our service to offer remote delivery.

Despite young people being those whose mental health has been most impacted by the pandemic, surprisingly few referrals came in at the start of lockdown, something that was also seen across our Manchester partner services. As we developed our remote service we increased promotion and the number of referrals began to increase.

Listening Ear was launched in response to the pandemic, supporting people from the age of 15 to address both the symptoms and causes of loneliness. Young people could then be referred into complementary emotional services e.g. Peer Support, Counselling and our Wellbeing Café.

Our staff counsellors began providing a service via phone and Zoom. Our volunteer counsellors were temporarily paused whilst they undertook training to enable them to deliver sessions remotely, we also ensured that safeguarding and consent were appropriately managed. Remote delivery was received well by most young people; however, some chose to wait until face-to-face counselling resumed, meaning they would have a longer waiting time.



In the autumn the number of counselling referrals significantly increased as young people returned to university and school, and referrers recognised that our waiting times were not as long as those in other organisations. This combined with a reduced capacity resulted in us having to make the difficult decision to temporarily close to new referrals.

Our advice workers developed and implemented ways of providing advice remotely for vulnerable young people and their families, with drop-ins and home visits no longer an option. **Telephone appointments worked well for some young people who have social anxiety and most of our young people also appreciate WhatsApp** for sending letters and medical evidence.

Peer Led Services used the pandemic as an opportunity to develop our virtual offer – something that not only fits our world right now – but an offer that will engage more young people in the long term. We piloted e-mentoring and launched the Virtual Wellbeing Café and Peer Support Groups. Although volunteering had to temporarily pause, young people started to gain an interest in volunteering again and those who previously wanted to wait until we were able to provide face-to-face opportunities, became interested in volunteering virtually.

We had the opportunity to launch two new services this year through emergency Covid-19 funding. A Resilience Project for young people age 18-24 who are not in education, training or employment and a Community Mental Health Practitioner offering one-to-one emotional support for young people age 15-18.

During this year, our Schools Mental Health Practitioners became part of Manchester Thrive in Education, which brought together Child and

Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and other local mental health charities to provide a collaborative approach to mental health support in schools. **We now work in eight schools across Manchester providing psychosocial support to young people age 11-18.** Remote delivery through school closures has been challenging, however both the young people and staff have identified the difference the support has made to students mental health and wellbeing.

This year has been challenging with the need to develop new ways of working and respond to increasing mental health issues such as loneliness, social anxiety and bereavement in young people, exacerbated by an unprecedented pandemic. **There have, however, been some significant benefits from remote delivery and whilst we must not forget those who are digitally excluded we must take these benefits into a blended model of service delivery for next year.**

“I’d been on medication for years for depression as it was made out to be the best option when diagnosed at 18. However, the real cure is exploring your issues through therapy. These sessions improved my emotional intelligence ten-fold and gave me the opportunity to be honest and open about my feelings... I am now off my medication. Manchester Mind counselling is an invaluable, life-changing service.”

Young Person



Our Finances

Rachael Lyster, Finance Manager

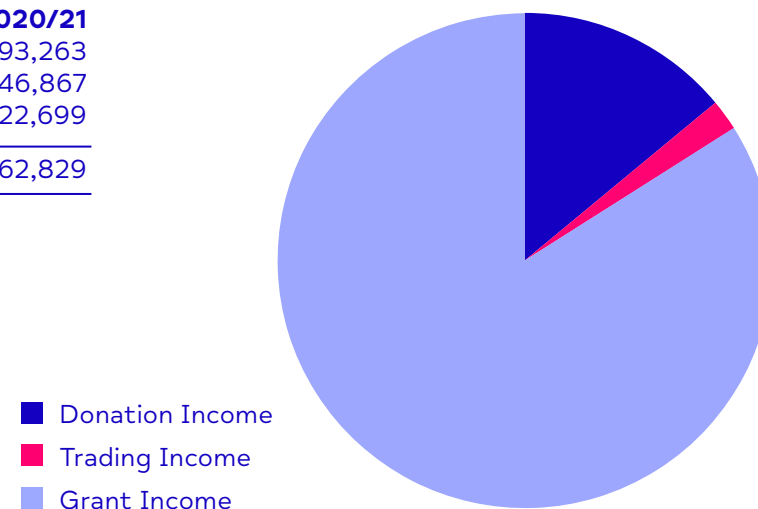
2020-21 is a year I'll never forget. The joy (and surprise!) of finding out I was pregnant in early March 2020 was a short lived experience, a couple of weeks later pregnant women were told to shield themselves at home as the Covid-19 pandemic hit. I quickly went from feelings of excitement and optimism of what 2020 could bring, to feelings of uncertainty and fear. This felt the same in my professional life too. We had just approved the 2020/21 financial budget, however it felt like this became void overnight. We set straight to work modelling various financial scenarios and contingency plans of what the financial position of the charity might look like, and what impact this could have on our services and staff.

Fortunately, we had very healthy financial reserves as a result of buoyant fundraising activities in previous years, this helped to shield us against the initial financial downturn. We worked incredibly hard to secure new funding streams and emergency government funding which supported us through such turbulent times. Thankfully we were able to weather the storm of financial uncertainty, income only dropped by £132k (6%) to £2.2m, and our unrestricted reserves actually increased by £43k (8%) to £579k. This enabled us to commit approx. £327k towards self-funded and matched-funded projects in 2021/22 so we can continue to provide and enhance our much valued services provision, whilst ensuring financial sustainability.

Change can be unsettling, but change can also bring about opportunity and positivity. Working remotely, although difficult at times, did bring about helpful change within in the Finance team as it forced us to look at new ways of working. As a result we significantly reduced paper based processes and switched to more efficient and environmentally friendly ways of working. In October 2020 there was more change as I left for maternity leave, my maternity leave cover and Finance Assistant did an amazing job for the remainder of the year. I'm very grateful for their support and hard work during such a difficult year.

Income Breakdown

Income	% Split	Total 2020/21
Donation Income	14%	293,263
Trading Income	2%	46,867
Grant Income	84%	1,822,699
	100%	2,162,829

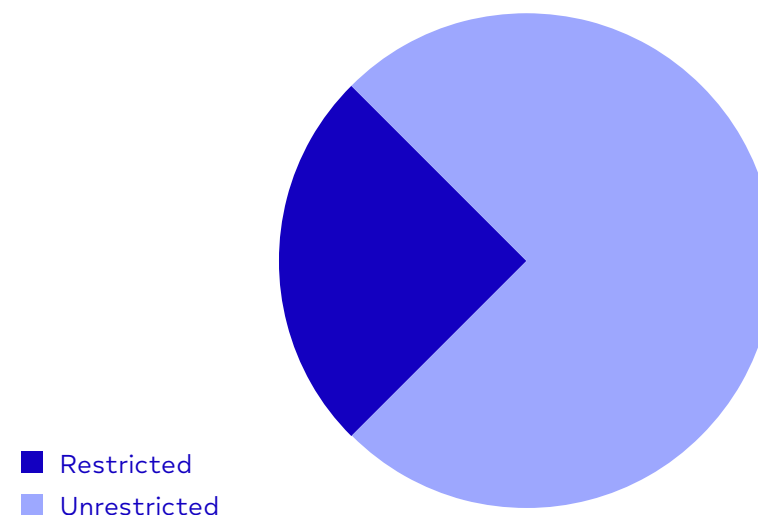


Reserves Breakdown

Reserves	
Restricted	189,801
Unrestricted	579,075
Total	768,876

Unrestricted Reserves

Redundancy Provision	124,712
Continsuance Provision	114,000
Investment Funds	326,625
Free Reserves	13,738
Total	579,075



Thank you !

This Annual Review brought up a lot for people – so many mixed emotions and those feelings continue to churn as we are still experiencing the impact of Covid-19. However, we will, like all our colleagues across the VCSE and the Health and Wellbeing Sector, continue to provide services to people within our communities **#nevermoreneeded**

So it is more important than ever to thank some really important people. Firstly those who work and volunteer for us – their ability to adapt and deliver has been impressive and the support they have given to the people we are working with, and to each other, has been invaluable.

To our funders who understood and provided flexibility:

The National Lottery Community Fund

Henry Smith Charitable Foundation

Manchester City Council

Greater Manchester Mental Health
and Social Care Trust

National Mind

We love Manchester

CAF

DCMS

Finally, but by no means least... we thank all those individuals who creatively continued to fundraise for us, using incredibly creative ways, and to the businesses, who during a period of great stress, still contributed

And finally again to Headstock, who put Manchester Mind at the centre of both their virtual events, raising not only money but awareness of the importance of taking care of our mental health.