durham mental wellbeing alliance

WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING ACROSS COUNTY DURHAM

25-26 ANNUAL REPORT

This report reflects our progress, challenges, and achievements throughout The Last 12 Months.



Prepared For:

The Residents & Partners of County Durham

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Foreward

From the Alliance Manager



Over the past year, the Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance has continued to support people across County Durham with their mental health and wellbeing. By working together, Alliance partners have helped people access support early, recover from difficult experiences, and improve their wellbeing. Our services help people build confidence, stay connected to their communities, and make positive changes in their lives.

This year has brought both successes and challenges. Demand for support remains high, and many people are facing a range of issues, including housing problems, money worries, relationship difficulties, loneliness, poor physical health, and bereavement. In response, the Alliance has continued to develop services and strengthen partnerships to make sure people can get the right help when they need it.

The Single Point of Access (SPoA) has continued to improve access to support by helping people find the services that best meet their needs. Across County Durham, Alliance partners and subcontracted organisations have provided a wide range of support, including housing services, employment support, volunteering opportunities, social activities, counselling, bereavement support, relationship support, welfare advice, and support following suicide bereavement. Together, these services have helped people become more independent, reduce loneliness, gain confidence, and improve their overall wellbeing.

Working in partnership remains one of the Alliance's greatest strengths. Our shared approach allows organisations to work together, share knowledge, and focus on what is best for the people we support. Throughout the year, partners have worked closely to review performance, improve services, respond to changing needs, and strengthen communication across the Alliance. We have also continued to play an active role in wider mental health and wellbeing discussions across County Durham, helping to ensure community-based support remains available, easy to access, and connected to other services.

This year also saw the completion of an independent review of the Alliance. The review recognised the positive impact of partnership working and highlighted opportunities for further improvement. We welcome this feedback and will use it to continue developing our services and strengthening support for local people.

As we look ahead, our focus remains on providing high-quality support that helps people improve their mental health, build resilience, and live healthier, more connected lives. We would like to thank all staff, volunteers, partners, commissioners, and people with lived experience for their continued commitment and support. Together, we are making a real difference to the wellbeing of people across County Durham.

An important achievement this year was the completion of an independent review of the Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance. The review highlighted the strengths of the Alliance and recognised the positive impact of the Single Point of Access in helping people access support more easily. It also showed the benefits that Alliance services are having for people across County Durham. The review identified areas where we can continue to improve, including governance, data collection, communication, equality of access, and partnership working. We welcome this feedback and will use it to help shape our priorities for the year ahead.

We have also continued to improve and develop our services. This has included reviewing demand and service capacity, improving systems and reporting processes, strengthening annual service reviews, and exploring new ways to support local people. We have worked to improve how we collect information about outcomes, feedback, and service impact. This will help us better understand the difference our services make and show the value they bring to individuals, communities, and the wider health and care system.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the hard work and commitment of our staff, volunteers, managers, partners, commissioners, and people with lived experience. Their dedication helps ensure that people across County Durham can access practical, personalised support when they need it most. Their knowledge, compassion, and commitment continue to make a positive difference to the lives of thousands of people every year.

As we move forward, we remain committed to working together, listening to feedback, and improving our services. By building on what works well and learning from experience, we will continue to provide support that helps people improve their wellbeing, increase their independence, and live healthier, more connected lives.

As we look to the future, we will continue to build on what works well and learn from our experiences. We will use feedback, evidence, and the lessons we have learned to make our services even better. By working together, we can continue to improve support for people across County Durham

The Alliance remains committed to providing inclusive, accessible, and high-quality services that meet the needs of local communities. We will continue to strengthen our partnerships, improve the way we work together, and focus on achieving positive outcomes for the people we support.

Our shared goal remains clear: to help people build resilience, improve their mental health and wellbeing, and live healthier, more connected lives. By working together, we can create stronger communities where people feel supported, valued, and able to thrive.



Julie Cane

About Us

DMWA provides services that support people with their mental health and wellbeing needs across County Durham. Launched in April 2022 following a new contract model offered by Durham County Council 7 providers came together to form an alliance. The foundation of the alliance is built on our principles and values defining how we will deliver on our commitment to the County Durham Vision 2035.

Principles & Values

Aim: To build resilience, supporting people to thrive

Vision: To connect communities, drive innovation and empower people

Mission: To work together to improve mental health and wellbeing across County Durham

Empowerment: We will help people to be more confident and resilient

Accountability: Together we share responsibility for delivering the best possible mental health services in Durham

Connection: We're connected with each other, service users and with local communities

Innovation: We'll change the way we work and transform our services

DMWA Providers:

DurhamMentalWellbeingAlliance

DMWA Providers

Alliance Partners

Creative Support is a not-for-profit organisation promoting the independence, inclusion and wellbeing of people with care and support needs.

Home Group is a social enterprise that supports some of the most vulnerable in society, including people with mental and physical health issues.

If U Care Share Foundation provides bespoke practical and emotional support to those impacted by suicide in County Durham.

Mental Health Matters (MHM) is a national charity with over 35 years of experience in delivering high-quality mental health and social care services.

St Margaret's Centre (SMC) is a community hub for adults in County Durham who need support with their mental health. Within the Alliance SMC provides activities, social groups, training, and structured volunteering to help people build self-confidence, learn new skills, and meet new friends.

Waddington Street Centre (WSC) is a mental health charity based in Durham City. Within the Alliance, Waddington Street Centre (or Waddy to our friends) provides a place-based service supporting recovery from mental illness through social groups, education and physical/sports activities.

Waythrough is a national mental health charity Making Recovery Reality for thousands of people every year

DMWA Providers

Subcontractors

Aspire is a Personal Development Service for Women – offering women a range of educational, vocational, social and preventative services including counselling, advocacy, befriending and drop in facilities. The service operates as a drop in – venue based group/peer support with no appointment required and an open door policy.

Cruse Bereavement Support is the leading national charity for bereaved people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Their vision is that all bereaved people have somewhere to turn when someone dies. They offer support, guidance and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies, and work to enhance society's care of bereaved people. Their highly trained and dedicated Bereavement Volunteers offer a blended approach to delivering support. Currently we offer telephone, zoom and in-person sessions.

Relate provides a Relationship Support service across County Durham which aims to improve relationship skills and support individuals and groups to improve their relationships across a range of topic areas including psycho-sexual therapy.

Think Positive – PACT House offers a drop-in service providing Group Based support services to support and promote recovery and positive emotional wellbeing. Counselling sessions are available to individuals referred.

Welfare Rights delivers a specialist and client-centred welfare rights advice service providing people with a mental health need with support around tribunals, mandatory reconsiderations and assessment support.

DMWA Leadership and Management Framework

ALT

The Alliance Leadership Team (ALT) comprises representatives from all the aliance partner organisations, a representative from Durham County Council, a representative from Public Health, and an Independent Chair.
The ALT provides strategic leadership and governance for the Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance (DMWA), supporting the Alliance Management Team in the effective operation of the Alliance. The ALT is responsible for overseeing performance, making key decisions on the Alliance's current direction, and shaping its future development to ensure it continues to meet the needs of local communities and stakeholders across County Durham.

AMT

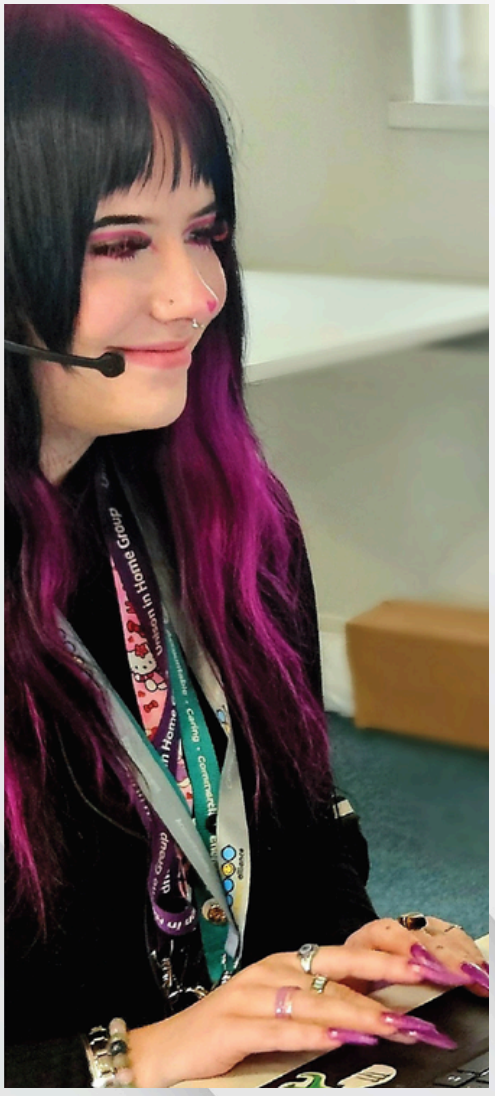
The Alliance Management Team (AMT) is responsible for the day-to-day management, coordination, and leadership of the Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance (DMWA), ensuring the effective delivery of services and achievement of the Alliance Objectives. The team is made up of the Alliance Manager, Assistant Alliance Manager, and Alliance Performance Coordinator, who work together to oversee operational performance, manage risks, and implement the plans and strategies agreed by the Alliance Leadership Team (ALT). The AMT is also responsible for the management and operation of the Single Point of Access (SPoA), ensuring that referrals are received, assessed, and directed to the most appropriate services in a timely and effective manner. Through its work, the AMT promotes the Alliance's purpose, principles, values, and behaviours, ensuring that services are delivered efficiently and continue to meet the needs of local communities.

Single Point of Access

TThe Single Point of Access (SPoA) is the main entry point for all Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance services. The team helps people access the support that best meets their needs and can also provide information, advice, and signposting to other organisations when appropriate.
We take a person-centred approach, recognising that everyone's circumstances and support needs are different. Referrals can be made online through our website or by telephone. Once a referral is received, the SPoA team reviews the information and may contact the individual or referrer for further details. This helps ensure people are connected to the most suitable service as quickly as possible.

We are committed to responding promptly to all referrals. Accommodation referrals are reviewed within 24 hours of being received. The team also provides support for people who may struggle to complete referral forms themselves, including advice and telephone-based referrals.
Strong partnerships with Alliance services and external organisations help us guide people to the right support. This means individuals can access a wide range of services, whether through the Alliance or other local providers.

The SPoA also managed referrals for Durham County Council Accommodation Services through a separate contract. This arrangement ended in March 2026 and was not renewed. As a result, the number of referrals received by the SPoA is expected to reduce during 2026/27.



Top 5 Services SPoA made Referrals To	
1	Cruse - Bereavement Support
2	SMC - Wellbeing Activities & Social Groups
3	WSC - Social Groups, Activities, Support
4	Creative Support - Floating Support
5	DASH - Orion



SPoA dealt with 2746 Referrals an increase of 53% Compared to the previous Year

User Engagement and Co-Creation



Our quarterly focus groups give people who use our services the chance to share their experiences, ideas, and feedback. These sessions take place in different locations across County Durham to make them as accessible as possible and to encourage people from a range of backgrounds to take part.

Although attendance varies, we understand that work, family commitments, health issues, and other personal circumstances can make it difficult for some people to get involved. Even so, the feedback we receive is valuable and helps us understand what is working well and where improvements can be made.

Over the coming year, we will look at new ways to hear from a wider range of service users. This may include online feedback, surveys, community events, and other opportunities for people to share their views.

We are committed to putting lived experience at the centre of everything we do. By listening to the people who use our services, we can continue to improve support and make sure the Alliance meets the needs of local communities.

As part of Time to Talk Day in February, we worked with people who use our services and Stamp It Out Ambassadors to create a resource based on lived experience.

Time to Talk Day is a national campaign that encourages people to have open conversations about mental health. By talking more openly, we can help reduce stigma and make it easier for people to seek support when they need it.

The resource was designed to help people start meaningful conversations about mental health and feel more confident sharing their experiences in a safe and supportive way. The information and advice included were shaped by the experiences and ideas of those involved in its development.

The completed resource was shared with all Alliance partners to support their Time to Talk Day activities and events across County Durham. It is also available to download from our website, allowing more people to access the information and use it to support conversations about mental health.

This project highlights the importance of involving people with lived experience in the development of resources and services. By working together, we can create information that is practical, relevant, and useful for local communities.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET INVOLVED? WHY NOT GET IN CONTACT

0300 304 5527

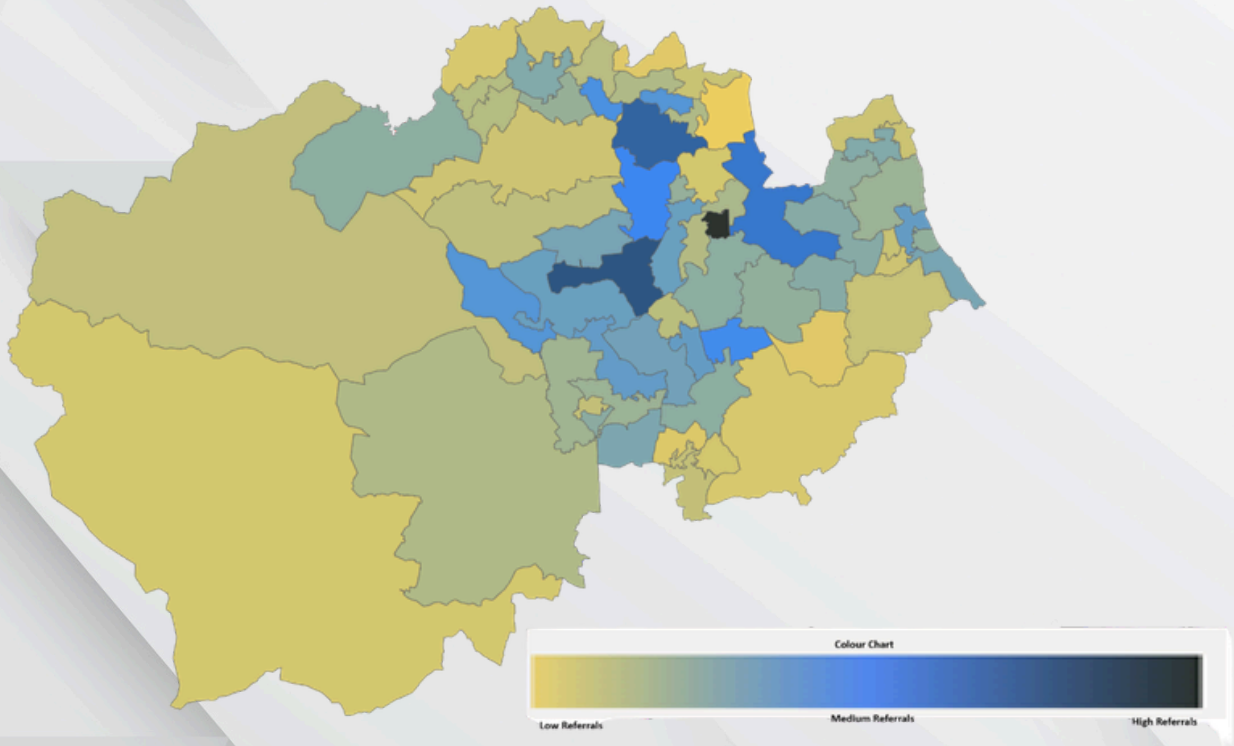
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Referral
Areas of County Durham

DMWA Referral Heat Map of County Durham



Top 10 Referral Areas	
1	Gilesgate Moor
2	Brandon
3	Sacriston and Waldridge
4	Sherburn and West Rainton
5	Bearpark and Witton Gilbert
6	Cornforth and Ferryhill
7	Craghead and South Stanley
8	Chester Le-Street and Pelton Fell
9	Crook North, Howden-le-Wear and Tow Law
10	Coundon and Willington South

Durham City Referral Hotspot

Five of the six areas with the highest number of referrals are in or around Durham City. This shows that Durham City continues to be a key area where people are accessing Alliance services.

Strong Demand in Former Mining Communities

Many of the areas with high referral numbers are former mining communities. These areas often face greater health, social, and economic challenges, which can increase the need for mental health and wellbeing support.

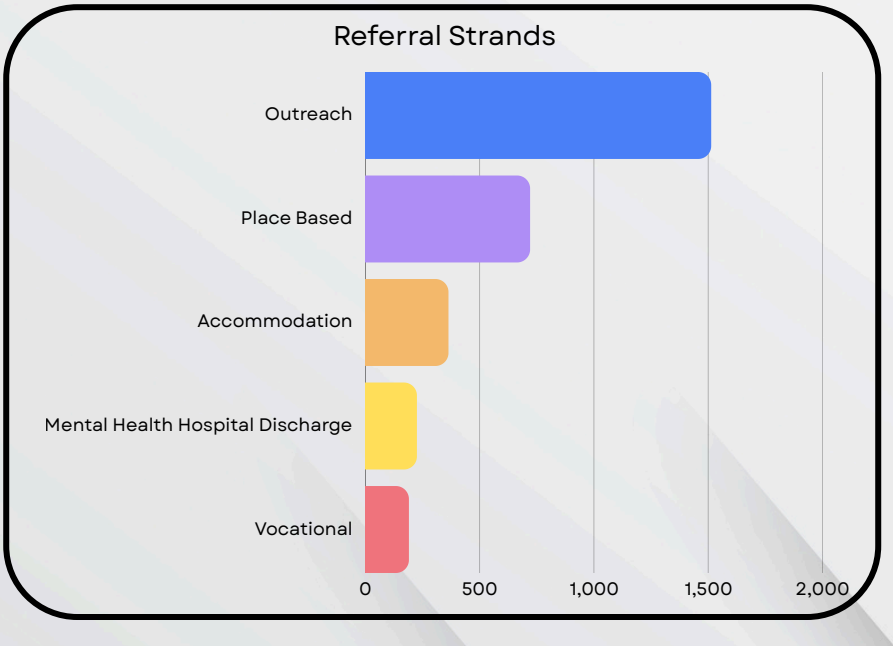
Deprivation Has an Impact

Around 65% of referrals came from areas of higher deprivation in County Durham. This shows that people living in more disadvantaged communities are more likely to need support and highlights the importance of ensuring services remain accessible to those who need them most.

Referral
Stats

Top 10 DMWA Services Referred Into	
1	Cruse - Bereavement Support
2	Waddington Street - Social Groups, Activities, Support
3	St Margaret's Centre - Wellbeing Activities & Social Groups
4	Creative Support - Floating Support
5	If U Care Share - Support After Suicide
6	DCC Welfare Rights
7	Home Group - Mental Health Hospital Discharge - Inpatient
8	Relate - Relationship Support Service
9	Waddington Street Centre - Physical Wellbeing Support
10	Mental Health Matters - Brighter Futures Pathway To Employment Service

3241 Referrals made into our DMWA Services



2202 Individuals had referrals into our DMWA Services

13% Increase in individuals being referred into DMWA Services compared to previous Year

Referral
Support Needs

Top 10 Support Needs from Referrals	
1	Mental health Problems
2	Emotional Support
3	Health and Wellbeing
4	Socially Inclusive Activities/Groups
5	Supported Accommodation
6	Finding Suitable Accommodation
7	Claiming Benefits or Maximising Income
8	Filling in Forms/Making Phone Calls
9	Bereavement
10	Homelessness Issues

Mental Health Is the Main Reason for Referral

Mental health and emotional wellbeing are the main reasons people access Alliance services. Many referrals are linked to anxiety, depression, stress, low mood, and loneliness. People also seek support to improve their wellbeing and build confidence in managing everyday challenges. Common reasons for referral include:

- Anxiety and depression
- Low mood and stress
- Mental health and wellbeing concerns
- Social isolation and loneliness
- Difficulty coping with daily challenges

Strong Demand for Wellbeing and Social Connection

Many people are looking for support to improve their quality of life and feel more connected to others. Loneliness and social isolation continue to be common issues for people accessing services. Common factors include:

- Social isolation and loneliness
- Limited involvement in community activities
- Reduced confidence and self-esteem
- A need for peer support and social connections
- A lack of suitable activities within the community

Housing Issues Continue to Affect Many People

Housing-related problems remain a significant reason for referral. Safe and stable housing can have a major impact on a person's wellbeing and mental health. Common issues include:

- **Rising housing costs**
- **Problems maintaining tenancies**
- **A shortage of suitable supported housing**
- **Homelessness or the risk of becoming homeless**

Financial Difficulties Remain a Challenge

Many people accessing support are experiencing financial difficulties. The rising cost of living continues to affect many households and can have a negative impact on wellbeing. Common concerns include:

- Cost of living pressures
- Difficulties understanding or accessing benefits
- Low household income
- Financial insecurity and debt

Practical Support Is Still Important

Many people need help accessing services and understanding the support available to them. Person-centred support workers play an important role in helping people overcome barriers and access the right help. People may need support because they:

- Lack confidence when accessing services
- Face literacy or digital access challenges
- Experience mental health difficulties that make engagement harder
- Need practical support or someone to speak on their behalf

Demand for Bereavement Support Remains High

Bereavement continues to be a common reason for people seeking support. Losing someone important can have a significant impact on mental health and wellbeing. People are often seeking help with:

- Grief and loss
- Managing emotions following a bereavement
- Adjusting to life after losing a loved one

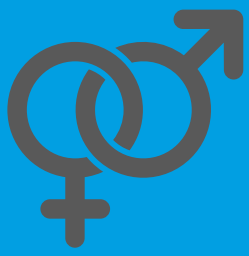
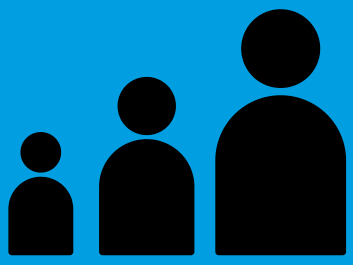
These findings show the wide range of challenges people face and highlight the importance of providing flexible, person-centred support across County Durham.

Clients on DMWA Services

Who Uses Our Services?

The largest group of people accessing Alliance services are **White British women aged 55 to 64.** Many people using our services also report having a mental health condition. Most service users are aged between **25 and 64,** with particularly high demand among people approaching retirement age. This highlights the ongoing need for mental health and wellbeing support for middle-aged and older adults across County Durham.



Supporting Communities Across County Durham

The Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance continues to support people from all parts of County Durham, showing the wide reach and accessibility of our services.

The highest numbers of service users come from:

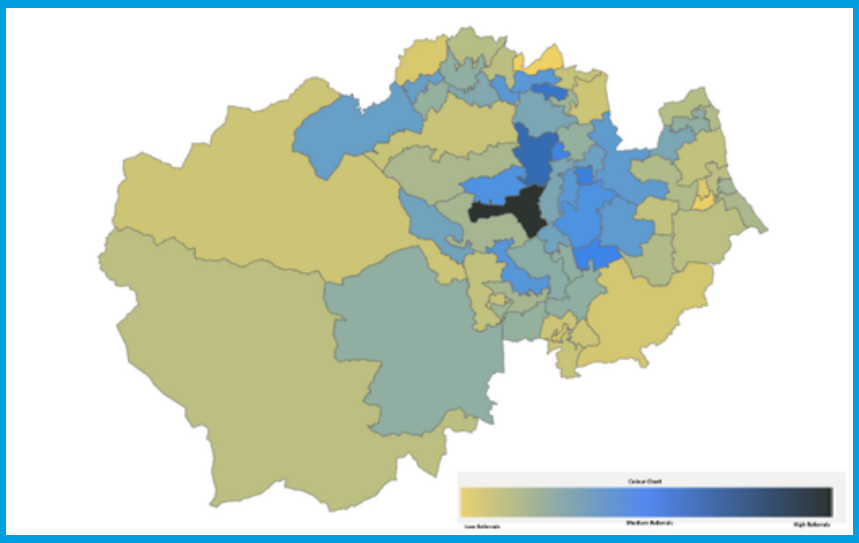
- Brandon, Bearpark and Witton Gilbert
- Chester-le-Street West and Pelton Fell

Strong demand is also seen in and around Durham City, including:

- Gilesgate Moor
- Framwellgate Moor
- Belmont
- Langley Moor

The spread of service users across the county shows that the Alliance is successfully reaching people in both urban and rural communities. It also demonstrates the importance of community-based mental health and wellbeing services in areas where people may face greater health, social, or economic challenges.

These findings show that Alliance services are reaching a broad range of communities and helping ensure support is available where it is needed most.



TOP 5	County Durham Area
1	Brandon
2	Bearpark and Witton Gilbert
3	Chester-le-Street West and Pelton Fell
4	Gilesgate Moor
5	Cornforth and Ferryhill

Clients on DMWA Services

Length of Support Across Services

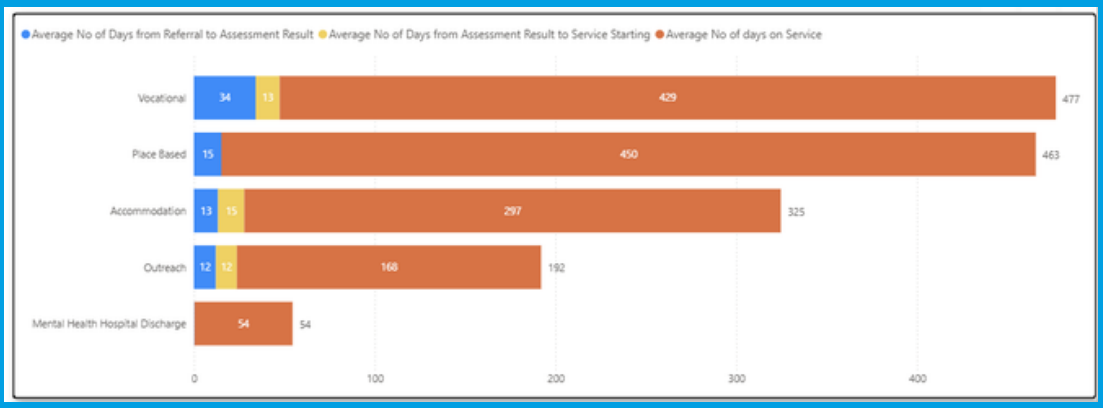
The amount of time people receive support from the Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance varies depending on their needs and the type of service they access.

Vocational and Place Based services tend to provide the longest periods of support, with many people receiving help for more than a year. This longer-term support gives individuals time to build confidence, improve their wellbeing, develop new skills, and work towards education, volunteering, or employment goals.

Accommodation services also provide support over a longer period, helping people find suitable housing and maintain stable accommodation. This support is often important in helping people achieve greater independence and improve their overall wellbeing.

In comparison, Outreach and Mental Health Hospital Discharge services usually provide shorter-term support. These services focus on helping people achieve specific goals, overcome immediate challenges, and move on to the next stage of their recovery journey.

Across all services, assessment and onboarding times remain low. This means people can access support quickly and begin receiving help when they need it most.



Supporting People to Achieve Their Goals

During the reporting period, 2,019 people completed their support with the Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance, with 81% leaving through a planned move-on. This shows that most people were able to achieve their goals and move forward with greater confidence and independence.

Outreach services supported the highest number of move-ons, helping 914 people complete their support. This was followed by Place Based services, which supported 501 people, and Mental Health Hospital Discharge services, which supported 330 people to move on successfully.

On average, people received support for 236 days, although the length of support varied depending on individual needs and circumstances. This reflects the Alliance's commitment to providing personalised support that gives people the time they need to achieve positive and lasting outcomes.

These figures demonstrate the positive impact of Alliance services in supporting people to improve their wellbeing, overcome challenges, and take the next steps towards greater independence and recovery.

Client Outcomes

Be Healthy & Stay Safe

Improving people's health and wellbeing continued to be a key focus for the Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance. More than 5,000 outcomes were achieved in areas such as physical activity, health promotion, and health checks.

The most common outcome was supporting people to take part in health promotion activities, with 2,299 individuals receiving support to improve their health and wellbeing. This highlights the importance of providing people with information, advice, and opportunities to make positive lifestyle changes.

A further 1,902 individuals were supported to become more physically active or start regular exercise. This reflects the strong link between physical activity, mental wellbeing, and overall health.

The Alliance also delivered 1,701 interventions that helped prevent people's mental health and emotional wellbeing from getting worse. These figures demonstrate the important role Alliance services play in providing early support and helping people access help before problems become more serious.

Alongside this, services supported people to improve their personal safety, build social connections, reduce isolation, and access healthcare services when needed. Together, these outcomes show the positive impact the Alliance has in helping people lead healthier, more connected, and more independent lives.



Client Outcomes

Economic Wellbeing

Financial support continued to be an important part of the help provided by the Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance. Many people accessing services were experiencing money worries, low income, or financial difficulties that were affecting their wellbeing.

The most common financial outcome was income maximisation, with 1,282 people receiving support to increase their income and improve their financial stability. This included help to access benefits, grants, and other forms of financial support. The Alliance also provided significant support to people experiencing debt problems. A total of 933 individuals received help with debt management or reducing debt, helping them improve their financial situation and reduce money-related stress.

These outcomes highlight the important link between financial wellbeing and mental health. By helping people improve their income, manage debt, and access the support they are entitled to, Alliance services are helping people build greater financial security and improve their overall wellbeing.

Client Outcomes

Participation & Positive Contribution

Supporting people to develop new skills, gain qualifications, and increase their confidence remains an important part of the support provided by the Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance.

A total of 2,523 people were offered education or training opportunities, helping them to develop new skills, improve their confidence, and work towards their personal goals.

During the reporting period, 1,194 education or training courses were successfully completed by Alliance clients. This demonstrates strong engagement with learning opportunities and a commitment from individuals to improve their knowledge and skills.



A further 466 people remained actively involved in education or training, showing that many individuals continue to work towards longer-term learning and development goals.

Volunteering also played an important role in supporting wellbeing and personal development. The Alliance helped 263 people access or maintain volunteering opportunities. Volunteering can improve confidence, develop new skills, reduce social isolation, and provide valuable experience that may support future employment opportunities.
These outcomes show how Alliance services help people build confidence, develop skills, and take positive steps towards greater independence, education, volunteering, and employment.

Client Feedback Results





Reported they had a positive experience of the service(s) they had received



Reported that they would recommend the service(s) they had received to friends and family



Improvement in Client Wellbeing Reported whilst on Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance Services



Improvement in Quality of Life Reported by clients whilst on Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance Services

DurhamMentalWellbeingAlliance

Alliance Partner

Impact Statement

During 2025/26, Creative Support's Durham Floating Support Service made a positive difference to people across County Durham. The service provided practical, personalised support to help people improve their wellbeing, become more independent, and feel more connected to their communities.

The service received 212 referrals and supported 119 people during the year. Despite high demand, the team continued to provide support to those who needed it while managing caseloads effectively.

Many people receiving support were facing challenges with their mental health, finances, housing, or social isolation. The service helped individuals access benefits, grants, and financial support, including successful Personal Independence Payment (PIP) appeals and backdated payments. People also received help to improve their housing situation and access other essential services.

Community activities played an important role in reducing loneliness and building confidence. Activities such as swimming sessions, social groups, and local community groups helped people develop friendships, increase their confidence, and take part in activities that could continue after support had ended.

The service also focused on early intervention and prevention. By providing a safe, welcoming, and non-judgemental environment, people felt comfortable discussing their needs and seeking support before problems became more serious. Creative Support continued to work closely with Alliance partners and other organisations. This included joint assessments referrals, participation in meetings and working groups, and helping to deliver activities across the Alliance. These strong partnerships helped ensure people received the right support at the right time.



Despite staffing pressures during the year, the service continued to deliver positive outcomes, respond to individual needs, and manage risks effectively. Overall, the service has helped people improve their wellbeing, increase their independence, and make positive changes in their lives through practical support, emotional encouragement, and strong partnership working.

Case Study

Client J initially presented as uncertain, emotionally distressed, and physically impacted by cancer treatment, including fatigue and loss of feeling in her hands and feet. She was socially isolated, spending much of her time at home, eating mainly convenience foods, and struggling with motivation, confidence, and daily routines.

Through regular support, Client J was encouraged to talk openly about her diagnosis, family relationships, bereavement, loneliness, and hopes for the future. A key focus of support was improving her diet and wellbeing. A healthy eating plan, food guidance, recipes, and meal planning were introduced, which she embraced quickly. This led to significant improvements in her energy, mood, self-care, daily activity, and confidence.

Client J began cooking healthy meals, taking better care of her home, getting dressed each day, reconnecting with family, planning visits to her brother, and engaging more with the community. Support also helped address serious housing concerns linked to a rat infestation and her low immune system. Following advocacy with the council, she was offered a bungalow, where she settled well and continued to thrive.

Her physical and emotional wellbeing continued to improve. She went on a family holiday, began walking regularly, joined a swimming group, and later joined the gym. By July, she received very positive news that the cancer had gone from the lining of her stomach and lymph nodes, with only final checks outstanding.



Client Feedback

TM: I am thankful for the support, things would have been worse if not for Creative Support. I feel I am now better off than before.

AR: Thank you for your support. Feel much better that you are witnessing it all. The MP is still involved after your support letter to him or I would likely be back to square one.

CW: I don't know how I would have managed. I struggle with forms and if you hadn't helped me fill the PIP in I probably would have left it.

Alliance Partner

Accommodation Services

Impact Statement Sedgefield MH Accommodation

During 2025/26, Home Group's Sedgefield Accommodation Service made a positive difference to people with mental health and housing support needs. The service helped people build confidence, develop independent living skills, and improve their overall wellbeing

A key achievement was supporting people to move on from long-term support into their own homes. By providing personalised support and gradual transition planning, the service helped people become more independent and maintain their progress after moving into independent accommodation.

The service also had a positive impact on the local community. Staff worked closely with residents, local organisations, and community partners to address anti-social behaviour concerns and build positive relationships with neighbours. Strong links were developed with organisations such as West Cornforth Community Centre, local leisure facilities, and local support services. This helped service users feel more connected to their community and encouraged greater participation in local activities.

Service users reported significant improvements in their wellbeing, with customer surveys showing an overall wellbeing improvement of 39%. Outcome Stars, satisfaction surveys, and service-user feedback also showed positive progress in areas such as confidence, independence, and daily living skills.

The team worked hard to identify and respond to risks at an early stage through regular reviews, multi-agency discussions, and partnership meetings. This proactive approach helped prevent problems from becoming more serious and ensured people received the support they needed at the right time.

Overall, Sedgefield Accommodation provided a flexible, supportive, and recovery-focused service that helped people feel safer, more independent, and better connected to their communities. Through strong partnership working and a person-centred approach, the service has supported people to improve their wellbeing, maintain stable housing, and take positive steps towards independent living.

Case Study Sedgefield MH Accommodation

MB, aged 22, was referred to Home Groups Sedgefield Mental Health Supported Accommodation Service in March 2023 after experiencing homelessness following a breakdown in family relationships. As a result of housing instability and frequent moves between temporary accommodation, he was unable to complete his sixth form education and experienced a significant decline in his mental health.

Although never formally diagnosed with a mental health condition, MB had experienced suicidal thoughts, a suicide attempt, and episodes of self-harm. He also faced barriers to accessing healthcare due to having no fixed address and lacked experience of managing a tenancy or living independently.

Over the past three years, MB has engaged consistently with the service, attending regular support sessions and working closely with staff to develop his confidence and independence. Support focused on building daily living skills, accessing benefits, improving emotional wellbeing, and preparing for independent living.



As a result, MB successfully secured his own tenancy through Durham Key Options with Livin Housing and has moved into accommodation close to his support network and local services. He has developed the skills required to manage a home independently, increased his resilience, and built a positive network of friendships that will continue to support him beyond the service.

MB's journey demonstrates the significant impact of supported accommodation in helping vulnerable young people move from homelessness and poor mental health towards stability, independence, and improved quality of life.

Client Feedback

Date	Service	Satisfaction response	F&F response	Experience response	Please can you tell us why you gave your answer and tell us about anything that we could have done better?
04/04/2025	DMWA: Accommodation - Home Group - West Cornforth Supported Housing Service	I am extremely satisfied	Extremely likely	Very good	no everything is perfect.
18/09/2025	DMWA: Accommodation - Home Group - West Cornforth Supported Housing Service	I am extremely satisfied	Extremely likely	Very good	Cannot think of anything that you could have done better.
01/10/2025	DMWA: Accommodation - Home Group - West Cornforth Supported Housing Service	I am extremely satisfied	Extremely likely	Very good	It is great the way that it is.
01/10/2025	DMWA: Accommodation - Home Group - West Cornforth Supported Housing Service	I am extremely satisfied	Extremely likely	Very good	JUST fine the way it is

Alliance Partner

Accommodation Services

Impact Statement Durham & Chester Le-street MH Accommodation

During 2025/26, Home Group's Sherwood House supported people with mental health and housing needs to build safer, more stable, and more independent lives. Through personalised support and careful planning, the service helped people develop the skills and confidence needed to manage their wellbeing, housing, and day-to-day responsibilities.

During the year, the service supported 22 people, with 14 successfully moving on to the next stage of their journey. The average length of support was 389 days, giving people the time they needed to build confidence, achieve their goals, and prepare for independent living.

The service helped people find suitable accommodation, maintain their tenancies, and reduce the risk of homelessness or returning to hospital. Support was also provided to develop practical life skills such as budgeting, cooking, managing a tenancy, using public transport, and accessing education, volunteering, training, and employment opportunities.

A key strength of Sherwood House was its ability to bring different services together around each individual. Staff worked closely with hospital teams, Community Mental Health Teams, social workers, housing providers, and local authority services to make sure people received the right support at the right time. This partnership working helped people move safely from hospital or homelessness into supported or independent accommodation.

The impact of the service went beyond helping people secure a home. Many people developed greater confidence, independence, and resilience. They were supported to manage household tasks, arrange appointments, access healthcare, use public transport, take part in community activities, and prepare for future opportunities.

Overall, Sherwood House provided a supportive and recovery-focused service that helped people improve their wellbeing, maintain stable housing, and develop the skills needed to live more independently. Through strong partnership working and personalised support, the service has helped people build brighter and more secure futures.

Case Study Durham & Chester Le-street MH Accommodation

The client is a female in her late 50s who was born deaf and with a cleft palate. Throughout her childhood, she experienced significant emotional abuse and social isolation from her family due to her disabilities. She was made to eat meals alone and was not permitted to walk alongside her parents or siblings. These experiences contributed to feelings of rejection, low self-worth, and emotional trauma from an early age. eventually being pit into care at aged 9.

In adulthood, the client entered a long-term controlling and financially abusive relationship. During this relationship, she was not allowed to keep her own money and was expected to financially support her partner and provide for his demands. The client experienced ongoing coercive control and instability, resulting in frequent moves between properties, living in approximately 17 different homes over the years. Eventually, the client relocated to the North East. During this period, her partner was arrested in relation to child sexual offences. Following these events, the client experienced a severe mental health breakdown and required hospital admission for 28 days.

Upon discharge from hospital, the client was placed into a women's refuge with very limited possessions, as her former partner had taken all of her belongings, including her cats. This further impacted her emotional wellbeing and trust in others.

The client arrived at Home Group feeling extremely vulnerable, isolated, and unable to trust professionals or peers due to her previous experiences and trauma.
Since engaging with Home Group services, the client has made notable progress in several areas. She has gradually begun interacting positively with both staff and other customers, demonstrating increased confidence and social engagement.
Support workers have provided practical and emotional support to help the client regain independence and rebuild her identity.

This has included:

- Supporting applications for a passport and driving licence.
- Successfully tracking down and recovering her Deed Poll documentation.
- Encouraging community involvement and confidence-building activities.

The client is now attending badminton classes on a regular basis, which has helped improve her social confidence, physical wellbeing, and routine. She is also exploring opportunities to attend IT and computer classes to further develop her skills and independence.

Ongoing support remains important to help the client maintain confidence, develop life skills, and continue engaging positively within the community.

Client Feedback

I have enjoyed my time at Sherwood and have made friends with someone that I would say is a good friend now. I wish I could stay as I have felt safe here, but looking forward to the future and visiting my friend once I have had my baby boy.

Alliance Partner

Accommodation Services

Impact Statement Transitional Housing Accommodation

During 2025/26, Home Group's Transitional Housing Service made a significant difference to people leaving mental health inpatient care who had complex housing and support needs.

The service supported 28 people during the year and successfully prevented hospital readmission for all 28 individuals. In addition, 17 people moved on to independent accommodation, helping them take positive steps towards greater independence and long-term recovery.

Through personalised, recovery-focused support, people were helped to maintain their tenancies, avoid homelessness, and build the confidence needed to manage their mental health, finances, housing, and daily responsibilities. This support provided a stable foundation for people as they adjusted to living independently within their communities.

A key strength of the service was its close partnership working. Staff worked alongside inpatient wards, Community Mental Health Teams, local authorities, housing providers, and Alliance partners to ensure people received joined-up support. This helped remove barriers to hospital discharge and supported safer transitions back into the community.

The service also helped people access opportunities that support long-term recovery, including education, training, volunteering, and employment. These opportunities enabled individuals to develop new skills, increase their confidence, and improve their social connections.

Overall, the Transitional Housing Service helped people build stable and independent lives following discharge from hospital. By reducing the risk of homelessness and hospital readmission, the service has supported lasting recovery, improved wellbeing, and reduced pressure on acute health services.

Case Study Transitional Housing Accommodation

In October 2024, we were introduced to a gentleman who was homeless and due to be discharged from a mental health hospital. Earlier that year, in January, he had suffered the devastating loss of his long-term partner — the person who had always managed their home and finances. With no remaining family support and no close friends, he suddenly found himself grieving, vulnerable, and homeless.

We accepted him into our service, and he moved in later that month. In the beginning, daily life felt unfamiliar and overwhelming. He was on basic benefits, unsure of how to manage practical tasks, and was trying to cope with a huge emotional loss. Working closely with him, we supported him to increase his income and helped him gain confidence in managing his own affairs for the first time.
Over the months, he has shown remarkable progress — not only emotionally and socially, but also in taking pride in his home. He has kept his property in lovely condition and has completed work in the garden, creating a space he enjoys and is proud of.

His transformation continues well beyond his front door. He has built strong, genuine connections within the community and now has many supportive friends in the neighbourhood. He has developed a wonderful bond with an elderly neighbour who cooks his Sunday lunch each week, and he has become known for his kindness and helpfulness, often doing odd jobs for others and contributing positively to the street.
His confidence has grown so much that he has signed up for a college course — something he never imagined he'd do. He also completed a charity skydive to raise money for a mental health charity, showing both courage and a desire to give something back.

Today, he is well-thought-of in his community, socially connected, and looking forward with a sense of purpose. From having no support network at all, he now has meaningful friendships, local roots, and a positive outlook on his future.

Client Feedback

If it was not for Home Group staff I don't feel I would be where I am now - they supported to enroll on a voluntary placement which I have since left, they managed to secure a bike as transport for me & I have now been able to secure & move on to independent living accommodation. The staff are polite, helpful & acknowledge other peoples issues without judgement.

I have had a positive experience with Home Group - staff have been excellent & easy going from start to finish & I wish everyone a happy future & all the best wishes for the years ahead. Personally I cant fault the service or the staff.

Alliance Partner

Mental Health Hospital Discharge Services

Impact Statement

During 2025/26, Home Group's MHHD service made a real difference in helping people leave hospital and return safely to their communities. The service increased the number of supported accommodation places available and improved housing support for people preparing to leave hospital. By taking part in the DTR Gold workshop, the team also helped improve the quality of homelessness applications and reduce delays caused by housing problems.

The service has also helped improve the wider system. Staff supported the development of the Transfer of Care Hub and attended daily TOCH meetings. These meetings help identify problems early, make sure urgent issues are dealt with quickly, and bring professionals together to find solutions for people with complex needs. This teamwork has strengthened links between hospital wards, community services, and partner organisations, making discharge planning safer, smoother, and better coordinated.

Working in partnership has been another important achievement. The service has taken part in suicide prevention groups, supported service improvement projects, and worked with an external provider to create a communications passport. This tool helps people access the right support more easily and means they do not have to repeat their story to different services. It also improves signposting to the Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance. By sharing learning across the Alliance, the service has helped improve communication, access to support, and joined-up working across organisations.

The team's recognition as a top-performing team reflects its hard work, resilience, and positive approach. Even with growing demand and larger caseloads, staff have worked flexibly, supported one another, and remained focused on achieving positive outcomes for the people they support.

Looking ahead, the service is in a strong position to build on this success. Priorities will include improving how outcomes are recorded, showing the value of additional support provided outside of planned activities, and exploring new opportunities to support people through developments such as the proposed mental health A&E pathway.



Case Study

- Alliance Mental Health Hospital Discharge Service supported a man in his 50s with suspected Lewy bodies dementia after a lengthy hospital stay.
- Initial support focused on benefit applications following a work-related accident and changes in his ability to return to employment.
- His family and professionals identified that returning to live with his elderly mother was not safe or suitable, so the service helped explore alternative housing.
- The team worked with the ward, MDT, family, Durham Key Options and Karbon Homes to secure appropriate sheltered accommodation in his local area, close to his support network.
- The service also supported his discharge, tenancy set-up, benefits, housing benefit and ongoing coordination with family, social care and other providers.
- The key outcome was a safe, stable move from hospital into suitable independent accommodation, improving his wellbeing, security and independence

Quote from family member - "This has been such a difficult time for our family, but the support has made it so much easier. We couldn't have done this without the help."

Client Feedback

Date	Service	Satisfaction response	F&F response	Experience response	Please can you tell us why you gave your answer and tell us about anything that we could have done better?
06/11/2025	DMWA: Hospital Discharge - Home Group - Mental Health Hospital Discharge Service	I am extremely satisfied	Extremely likely	Very good	How good you have been with me and always kept in touch which is good when you feel like there's none there for you. Always felt comfortable with you and been able to talk properly. Had help with pip forms that has really helped
12/11/2025	DMWA: Hospital Discharge - Home Group - Mental Health Hospital Discharge Service	I am extremely satisfied	Extremely likely	Very good	Everything has been good. The staff helped me with everything I needed help with.
19/11/2025	DMWA: Hospital Discharge - Home Group - Mental Health Hospital Discharge Service	I am extremely satisfied	Extremely likely	Very good	There is nothing you could do better. You have given me the all the building blocks I need to start getting my life back on track and I cant thank you enough for everything you have done.
24/11/2025	DMWA: Hospital Discharge - Home Group - Mental Health Hospital Discharge Service	I am extremely satisfied	Extremely likely	Very good	There is nothing you could have done better. Thank you for all the work that you have done with me.
27/11/2025	DMWA: Hospital Discharge - Home Group - Mental Health Hospital Discharge Service	I am extremely satisfied	Extremely likely	Very good	Nothing could have done better - you have always supported me in whatever I have needed.
08/01/2026	DMWA: Hospital Discharge - Home Group - Mental Health Hospital Discharge Service	I am extremely satisfied	Extremely likely	Very good	i found homegroup to be flexible and worked around my working hours as sometimes i had to change appointments. I would recommend this service to other people
13/01/2026	DMWA: Hospital Discharge - Home Group - Mental Health Hospital Discharge Service	I am extremely satisfied	Extremely likely	Very good	You gave me support when no one else believed in me and helped me to get my own place.
26/01/2026	DMWA: Hospital Discharge - Home Group - Mental Health Hospital Discharge Service	I am extremely satisfied	Extremely likely	Very good	I have been supported well by homegroup and would recommend to others in my situation

Alliance Partner

Wellbeing & Recovery Services

Impact statement

During 2025/26, Home Group's Wellbeing & Recovery Service made a strong contribution to improving mental health, wellbeing, and community connections across County Durham. This was achieved through the Wellbeing & Recovery Service (WRS), Healthy and Active Programme (HAP), Connector Service, and volunteering opportunities. Despite changes to management, staffing, and service delivery during the year, the team continued to adapt and respond to the needs of the people it supports.

The new Connector Service has improved one-to-one support by providing structured help focused on personal goals over a six-month period. This support has helped people build confidence, become more independent, and connect with their local communities. Customers achieved important milestones, including using public transport for the first time in years, leaving home independently, and taking part in group activities.

The service has also had a positive impact through regular group sessions, customer feedback meetings, and Out and About trips held three times each month. These trips included visits across County Durham and Northumberland, as well as destinations such as York, Holy Island, and Redcar. Many of these activities were made possible through fundraising. These opportunities helped reduce isolation, improve wellbeing, build confidence, and support recovery in a safe and welcoming environment.

HAP has expanded its reach across the Alliance, delivering programmes with people accessing support from partner organisations. The programme has helped customers develop skills linked to healthy eating, physical health, and overall wellbeing. Successful partnership work included football and badminton tournaments with Waddington Street, support for the Healthy Eating Course through HAP sessions, delivery of programmes with St Margaret's and Aspire, and a weekly HAP group at the Waythrough Hub.

Partnerships with organisations such as Wellbeing for Life, Durham Learn, Groundwork North East, and North East Dance have further improved the support available. These organisations have brought specialist knowledge, learning opportunities, and new activities that have enriched group sessions and widened the range of support offered to customers.





Overall, Home Group's work during 2025/26 shows a strong commitment to helping people improve their wellbeing and live more connected, independent lives. Despite a year of significant change, the service has continued to innovate and put people at the centre of its work. Strong foundations have been created for future growth, including plans to develop new groups in Crook and expand support in areas where demand is highest.

Case Study & Client Comments

Festive Day Trip to York Christmas Markets

On Friday, 5 December, 33 customers from the East Durham and Sedgefield & Dales Wellbeing Groups travelled to the York Christmas Markets, supported by six staff members and volunteers. For some, this was a big step outside their usual routine.

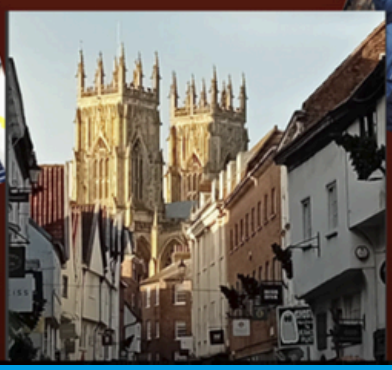
Many of our customers live with mental health challenges or physical disabilities, which can make trips like this difficult and often feel out of reach without support. Being able to go, even just for the day, gave people the chance to experience something new, enjoy the festive atmosphere, and feel part of a shared outing.

The markets were busy, and at times the crowds were overwhelming. Staff stayed close, offering calm reassurance, space when needed, and time to pause. This meant everyone could take the day at their own pace and still feel safe and supported.

What stood out most was not the shopping, but the moments in between. Quiet conversations, shared laughter, and the confidence that grew as the day went on. For some, simply being there was an achievement in itself.

With support from the Happiness Hub fund, the trip was made possible. It was a meaningful use of funding that helped our customers feel included, valued, and part of something positive during the festive season.







Client Feedback

Staff have supported me in many ways with my mental health and wellbeing, with caring and welcoming groups, and the opportunities offered are fantastic for me and other customers. My way is to help raise funds as a way of giving back to the groups.

Alliance Partner

if u care share







Impact statement

During 2025/26, If U Care Share Foundation provided an important service for people, families, and communities affected by suicide across County Durham. The service received 228 referrals during the year, which was much higher than its funded capacity of 67. This shows the high level of need within local communities and the important role the service plays within the Alliance.

The service offered timely, compassionate, and person-centred support to help people cope with the impact of suicide bereavement. Support included one-to-one emotional and practical help, community support following suspected suicides, peer support through the CARES group, guidance to other health and community services, and awareness-raising work with schools and partner organisations. This support helped improve emotional wellbeing, reduce feelings of isolation, build resilience, and provide help before difficulties became more serious.

The service has also made a positive contribution to the wider Alliance. Staff regularly attended Alliance meetings, took part in performance reviews, supported Social Value activities, and worked closely with the Single Point of Access, St Margaret's, statutory services, schools, coroners, and community organisations. The service has continued to improve the way it measures and delivers support by reviewing its postvention model, involving people with lived experience, and introducing outcome measures that better show the difference the service makes.

Feedback from people who have used the service highlights its lasting impact. Many described the service as an "anchor" or "a rock" during a very difficult time. Others said it provided a safe space where they could talk openly and feel listened to. Despite continued high demand, the service has maintained a high standard of compassionate and effective support.

Overall, If U Care Share Foundation has made a significant contribution to supporting people affected by suicide, helping individuals and families cope with loss, improve wellbeing, and access the support they need when they need it most..

Case Study

The supported person, based in DH1, re-referred to If U Care Share Foundation in March 2026 following the loss of her sister to suicide. She had previously received practical and emotional support from IUCSF, including support through the inquest process, After Action Review, liaison with TEWV and the coroner's office, and obtaining medical records.

Ten months after disengaging from support, she reconnected with IUCSF due to concerns about the impact of grief on her emotions and behaviour. Having focused heavily on practical responsibilities after the bereavement, she recognised that she had not had the space to grieve. She described persistent anxiety, emotional overwhelm, anger, despair, and difficulty coping with disappointment or changes in routine.
IUCSF provided telephone-based listening support, helping her to understand these responses as part of complex grief and trauma following a suicide bereavement. Support has focused on normalising her emotions, exploring the long-term impact of caring for her sister, and helping her recognise when her nervous system remains in a heightened state of alert.

The supported person also has strong protective support in place, including her GP, private therapy, medication, a supportive husband and family, and continued supplementary support from IUCSF. She scored moderate for depression but confirmed she does not self-harm, misuse substances, engage in high-risk behaviours, or experience suicidal thoughts.
The support has enabled her to talk openly about anger, guilt, anxiety and changes in temperament without judgement. She is gradually processing her grief, better understanding her emotional reactions, and being encouraged to recognise her limits, particularly as she has returned to full-time work and continues to manage a business.

Client Feedback

'To all concerned, can I take this opportunity to thank you all for the care and devotion shown towards myself and my grandchildren and for the kindness shown, special thanks to XX for her support and hours of listening to my grief time and time again. XX went on our grief journey with us and her support was tremendous. I applaud you all for you dedication to this amazing organisation'

'I honestly cannot thank you enough for all you have done and all you continue to do for me. Honestly, I can't thank you enough for all your help, you don't realise how special you are to me from the first time I spoke with you until now. You truly are a very very special person'

'Thank you so much for your help and support. You've helped me more than you will ever know'

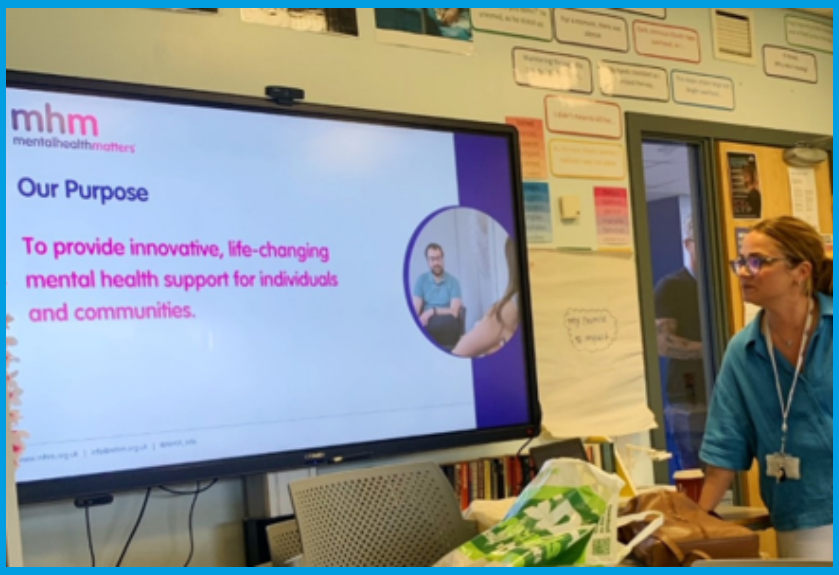
Alliance Partner

mhm mentalhealthmatters

durham mental wellbeing alliance

Impact Statement

During 2025/26, MHM's Brighter Futures service made a positive difference to people's mental wellbeing, employment opportunities, and community connections across County Durham. Through personalised employment support, volunteering opportunities, training courses, workshops, anti-stigma campaigns, and partnership working, the service helped people build confidence, develop new skills, and take important steps towards more independent and fulfilling lives.



The impact of the service can be seen in its strong employment, volunteering, and training outcomes. During the year, 26 people moved into paid employment, while 14 returned to work after a period of unemployment. An average of 13 people each month were supported to stay in work. The service also helped achieve 54 volunteering outcomes, supported 78 people to complete training, and enabled 84 training courses to be accessed.

Long-term employment outcomes were also encouraging. Nineteen people remained in employment for at least 13 weeks, while 48 sustained employment for 26 weeks or more. These achievements show how the service helps people overcome barriers to work, learning, and participation, while supporting recovery, stability, and personal progress.

The service also created wider benefits for local communities. Staff and volunteers worked with young people to increase awareness of careers and mental health, raised more than £1,500 through fundraising activities, volunteered within community spaces, supported wellbeing events, and contributed to campaigns such as Stamp It Out and Time to Talk Day. These activities helped reduce stigma around mental health, encourage open conversations, strengthen community relationships, and create welcoming spaces where people felt included and valued.



Feedback from people using the service highlights the difference this support has made. Individuals reported feeling listened to and understood, receiving help through difficult periods in their lives, gaining confidence in interviews, and feeling better able to make decisions about their future. Many also reported making progress towards goals linked to employment, volunteering, housing stability, and recovery.

Overall, MHM's Brighter Futures service has played an important role in helping people improve their wellbeing, build skills, and access opportunities that support long-term independence and positive life changes.

Case Study

A 52-year-old female with complex mental health needs, including BPD, C-PTSD, anxiety, depression, and a spinal injury, was referred to Mental Health Matters Brighter Futures after a period of poor mental health, social isolation, and low self-confidence. Having been out of work for several years, she felt disconnected from her community and lacked a support network outside of her partner.

Brighter Futures provided tailored support focused on confidence building, benefits advice, volunteering, training, and physical wellbeing. Through regular one-to-one support, the client completed a Digital Essential Skills course, enrolled on a Level 2 qualification in Understanding Domestic Abuse, and successfully returned to a previous volunteering role. She has also been accepted onto a waiting list to volunteer with a local women's charity.

The service referred her to Welfare Rights, enabling her to make informed decisions about moving in with her partner without significantly affecting her benefits. Additionally, support to access physical activity opportunities has helped improve the management of her chronic pain, while engagement with smoking cessation services has reduced her cigarette use.

As a result of the support received, the client has significantly improved her confidence, expanded her support network, re-engaged with her community, and taken positive steps towards her long-term goal of working within the domestic abuse sector.

Client Comments

“Extremely helpful and encouraging always pushing me to do better and constantly helping me research to improve my education skills and or mental health to get me back into work and functioning properly again.”

“Very supportive and has helped me massively, even if it was just a chat about the future. Rachel was supportive, approachable and easy to talk to. She knew who to contact for any outside help and came up with plenty of helpful advice and suggestions to improve myself and move forward.“

Alliance Partner

St. Margaret's Centre

Supporting people with mental health problems

durham mental wellbeing alliance

Impact Statement



During 2025/26, St Margaret's Centre continued to play an important role in supporting people across County Durham who were experiencing mental health difficulties, loneliness, financial hardship, or challenges with living independently. During the year, the Centre supported 412 people, including 216 new referrals. It provided a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment where people could build confidence, learn new skills, make social connections, and feel more hopeful about the future. he Centre offered a wide range of support, including wellbeing activities, training courses, volunteering opportunities, one-to-one support, peer support, and practical help. This support had a positive mpact on many people's lives. Feedback ishowed that 92% of attendees gained new skills and confidence, 88% felt more independent, and 82% felt more optimistic about their future.

The Centre also helped improve wider health and wellbeing outcomes. People reported needing fewer GP appointments, making less use of crisis services, experiencing fewer incidents of self-harm, having fewer thoughts of suicide, and taking part in more physical activity. These improvements show how the Centre supports people's recovery while also reducing pressure on health and support services.





The impact of St Margaret's Centre goes beyond the individuals who access its services. During the year, 93 volunteers contributed more than 8,000 hours of their time, creating a significant benefit for the local community. Volunteering opportunities helped people gain experience, develop skills, increase confidence, and move towards education, training, or employment. The Centre's café, meal token scheme, social days, and community hub also provided valuable support to people affected by the rising cost of living.

This year also showed the Centre's commitment to listening to the people who use its services. Through regular Attendee Voice sessions, attendees helped shape new developments, including Sunday Lunch sessions, better signposting to local services, improved hygiene support, and changes to make the Centre more accessible and inclusive. Alongside stronger partnerships and new outreach plans through COMPASS, the Centre is continuing to reach more people while maintaining its focus on compassion, respect, and person-centred support.

Overall, St Margaret's Centre has made a significant social, emotional, and practical impact during 2025/26. By helping people feel valued, supported, and connected, the Centre has played an important role in improving wellbeing, encouraging independence, reducing pressure on health and crisis services, and supporting people on their journey towards recovery.

Case Study

A 40-year-old male diagnosed with PTSD, severe anxiety, depression, and experiences of hallucinations was referred to the service by Homegroup Supported Accommodation. When he first attended, he was extremely anxious and almost turned back home on his first day due to a lack of confidence in social situations. His goals were to establish a routine, leave the house more regularly, and build friendships to reduce his social anxiety. The service provided gradual, person-centred support, introducing him to small groups and encouraging participation through his interest in art and drawing. Attendance increased from one day per week to 3 to 4 days per week, helping him develop a consistent routine and build confidence in social settings.

Since engaging with the service, he has formed meaningful friendships, including relationships that continue outside the centre. His confidence has grown significantly through art activities, and he now regularly shares his artwork with staff and friends. He has also joined the walking group and started attending the gym, leading to substantial weight loss and improvements in his physical health, including reversing his diabetes

The client also accessed therapy through the service, which helped him better manage past trauma and feel more confident expressing his needs and seeking support when required. Additionally, taking responsibility for caring for the centre's goldfish has given him a sense of purpose and responsibility, further strengthening his daily routine.

As a result, the client has moved from being highly isolated and anxious to becoming an active member of the centre community, with improved confidence, wellbeing, physical health, and social connections.

"Coming to the Centre makes me feel great! I actually look forward to getting up on a morning and get excited to come in and see my friends. I walk to the Centre, so it's great exercise too and keeps me on track."

Client Comments

" I strongly believe St Margarets Center and the staff here have made an incredibly positive impact on my life moving forward. I cannot thank them enough and will be eternally grateful. I feel overwhelmingly positive."

Alliance Partner

WADDINGTON STREET CENTRE

durham mental wellbeing alliance

Impact Statement



Waddington Street Centre provides more than just mental health support. It offers a welcoming community where people feel accepted, supported, and able to build confidence, develop new skills, and make social connections. Through the work of its staff, Trustees, Waddy Helpers, and 12 weekly volunteers, the Centre provides a safe and inclusive environment where members can access practical support, take part in meaningful activities, and improve both their mental and physical wellbeing.

The impact of the Centre can be seen through the experiences of its members. People describe the Centre as a place where “everyone is welcome” and where they have been able to make new friends and get help when needed. Others have said that learning new skills and taking part in activities has given them a positive focus and helped take their minds off worries and stress.

Services such as Waddy Social and the Waddy Feel Good Service help reduce loneliness, encourage healthier lifestyles, and improve confidence. Activities include walking groups, fitness sessions, sports, creative workshops, day trips, and social events. These opportunities help members stay active, connect with others, and improve their overall wellbeing.

Partnership working has further strengthened the support available. The Centre has worked closely with Alliance partners and local organisations to deliver activities such as sports tournaments, cookery sessions, and shared community events. These partnerships help create more opportunities for members and strengthen links across the community.

The story of Lee highlights the long-term impact of the Centre’s support. With encouragement, structure, and opportunities to develop his skills, Lee progressed from attending the Centre to completing training courses and volunteering in a hospital setting. He also received two TEWV awards for his achievements and is now planning to study nursing. His journey shows how Waddington Street Centre helps people increase their confidence, achieve personal goals, and build a positive future.

Overall, Waddington Street Centre continues to make a significant difference by providing a supportive community where people can improve their wellbeing, develop independence, and feel more connected to others. Through its welcoming approach and wide range of activities, the Centre helps people build hope, confidence, and a stronger sense of purpose.

WADDY FEEL GOOD SERVICE



Case Study

We are so proud of one of our members, Lee Hartmall. For the last year Lee has been studying on a Science Access Course at New College Durham. Lee is passionate about using his lived experience of addiction and mental health problems to help others in need. He plans to study nursing at Teeside University in the coming Autumn.

Lee started to attend WSC after completing the 12 steps program. It was important for him to have structure and support as a means of staying on track. He became interested in our Capacitar session. This Body Work therapy combines breath, movement and acupressure techniques to manage stress and anxiety. He liked it so much that he wanted to train to become a group facilitator. We helped him to apply for a grant from Point North which allowed him to complete his training in York.

Shortly after qualifying, Lee began to volunteer at Lanchester Rd Hospital. He mainly worked with the Bowes Lyon Unit, supporting patients with Dementia. He really enjoyed this work and quickly became a passionate and committed member of the volunteering team.

Last year Lee won two awards for his hard work, at an annual TEWV event. His commitment and enthusiasm were rightly rewarded and his friends at WSC could not be prouder or more pleased for him.
We are thrilled to have been part of his recovery journey but ultimately Lee has done the work himself.
We look forward to the next part of this wonderful adventure, and we'll be here, if needed, to support the next bit.



Client Feedback

This service has been a vital part of my life at a very detrimental time. The centre has given me opportunity to learn and socialise with people when I have found it hard to do so in my everyday life. It is the only centre that is open on a Saturday which is very important to a lot of people with mental health who live on their own when a weekend may feel so lonely and long. Also the staff are very helpful and supportive. The service gives us the service users something to look forward to and feel a part of.

Alliance Partner

Waythrough

durham mental wellbeing alliance

Subcontractor

aspire | learning support wellbeing

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Executive Summary of the Year

Partnership Working and Alliance Contribution

Case Study

Beth is a young woman in her late 20s who has lived with poor mental health since she was severely bullied at school. Beth self -referred and has been attending Aspire on and off for several years now.

Recently Beth has had a stay in a mental health hospital where she was an inpatient for several weeks. She admits herself that she came out of hospital too early but felt that she ought to, as her partner and parents were taking care of her daughter. She thought that she should be the one doing this and was feeling incredibly guilty about it. Since this episode Beth has needed extra support from Aspire and she has been attending 2 weekly support groups.

Beth identified that she needed to create some time for herself where she could focus on being herself and not only a mother, partner or daughter. She wanted to take some time to identify and make small changes for herself to benefit her slowly improving mental health. Beth takes care of her young daughter who is 3 years old and who is mid-way through a diagnosis of Autism. She also works part time in a hardware store over the weekend so she shares the care of her child with her partner.

Beth was given a creche place for her daughter for both of the support sessions. One group was focussed on building self-resilience and the other group was focussed on putting in place smart targets to create a stable future plan. Initially, Beth was very nervous about leaving her daughter in the creche but she loved it and Beth was able to relax and enjoy some time for herself.

Beth attended both support groups consistently where she had her own child-free time and where she worked on creating for herself a supportive friendship group and she has made a very strong friendship with another young mum and they meet up outside of session time for socialisation and mutual support. This has enabled Beth to become stronger and alter the way she reacts to external triggers which creates for her a stronger sense of self and much improved mental health and wellbeing.

Recently Beth has also achieved Level 2 qualifications in Childhood illnesses and also in Autism Awareness and is looking forward to going on to do more at Aspire.
Beth made the following comment in a post-course evaluation:
“I love the support offered by Aspire. It means I can be me with no stress because I know that Emmie is safe and enjoying herself in the creche, just like I am safe and enjoying time being me!”

Subcontractor

Cruse Bereavement Support

Impact Statement

During 2025/26, Cruse Bereavement Support made an important contribution to emotional wellbeing across County Durham by providing compassionate support to adults, children, and young people who had experienced bereavement. Through the work of trained volunteers and one-to-one support sessions, the service helped people feel less alone, understand their grief, and cope better with the challenges that can follow the loss of a loved one.

The service supported people to build emotional resilience, develop healthy coping skills, and regain the confidence to reconnect with family, friends, and their local communities. This support helped individuals manage difficult emotions, important anniversaries, and the challenges of daily life after a bereavement.

The positive impact of the service is shown in a case study where a client received six telephone support sessions. Over this period, their Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Score increased from 29 to 58, showing a significant improvement in their emotional wellbeing and ability to cope.

Cruse has also played an active role within the wider Alliance through partnership working and collaboration. During the year, the service attended health and wellbeing events, supported activities linked to the Stamp It Out campaign, contributed to Service User Focus Groups, took part in subcontractor focus groups and If U Care Share training, and helped develop a peer-led bereavement drop-in session in Newton Aycliffe in response to local need.

These activities have helped raise awareness of bereavement support, reduce the stigma that can be associated with grief, strengthen referral pathways between services, and ensure that the experiences of people using services help shape future improvements.



Overall, Cruse Bereavement Support has provided valuable support to people affected by loss, helping them improve their wellbeing, build confidence, and move forward in their lives while continuing to remember and honour those they have lost.

Service User Quote

"I've been able to make peace with a lot of it. In a much better place than when we started. I am seeing the positives for myself. I'm not now having shutdowns, like I used to have, thanks to your help."

Case Study

A female client aged between 51 and 70 self-referred to the service following the death of her husband. At the time of referral, the cause of death was unknown as she was awaiting the coroner's report. The client was experiencing significant emotional distress and reported that her mental health had deteriorated following her bereavement.

Although initially offered an Understanding Your Bereavement session, the client chose not to attend and instead completed an initial assessment. Following this assessment, it was identified that she would benefit from prioritised one-to-one telephone support.

The client received 10 bereavement support sessions with a dedicated volunteer over a five-month period. Throughout this time, she was provided with a safe and supportive space to explore her grief, express her emotions, and develop coping strategies to manage her loss.

The client's wellbeing improved significantly during her engagement with the service. Her Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale score increased from 31 at her first session to 48 at her final session, demonstrating a substantial improvement in her overall wellbeing and ability to cope with her bereavement.

Reflecting on the support she received, the client said:
"Can I take this opportunity to thank you all for the support that you give to grieving people. I've never known pain like this. Also, can I thank my Bereavement Volunteer for sticking with me for so many weeks, as I didn't think I'd still be here after two weeks, never mind five months. You do an amazing job. Again, big thanks."

Subcontractor

Relate

Impact Statement

Between April 2025 and March 2026, Relate supported 121 people through 130 registrations and delivered 462 counselling sessions. Demand for the service remained steady throughout the year, with higher numbers of people accessing support in April, July, and March.

What Changed for People

Counselling made a positive difference for many people who used the service. Of those who provided feedback, 78% said their ability to cope and their mental wellbeing had improved, while 61% reported improvements in their physical wellbeing. Eighteen people said counselling had made things better or much better, with 14 describing the impact as much better.

More than nine in ten respondents would recommend or reuse Relate, and 18 rated the service at least 8 out of 10.

Relate supported people from a wide range of backgrounds, ages, and life experiences. People using the service included adults across different age groups, with the largest number aged between 35 and 64. Many were dealing with relationship difficulties, health concerns, or financial pressures. Thirteen people reported having a long-term health condition, showing that the service is reaching individuals who may face additional challenges in daily life.

One area for improvement is reducing waiting times for assessments. While 86% of referrals successfully entered the service, 76% received their initial assessment within 10 working days. Improving the speed of assessments and collecting more detailed evidence about the difference counselling makes will help Relate build on a year of strong engagement, positive outcomes, and high levels of satisfaction.

Overall, Relate has continued to provide valuable support to people across County Durham, helping individuals improve their wellbeing, develop coping skills, and navigate challenges in their relationships and everyday lives

Service User Quote

"My therapist was called Karen. Her help and support during my sessions has been invaluable to me. I've gone from considering suicide, to looking to a happier future. I've realised why I've reacted in ways that I have and understand why I've accepted poor behaviours, these were something I've struggled with. Unfortunately my husband wouldn't attend the sessions. If I'd had face to face sessions, I'd have bought flowers on my last session to show my appreciation to karen. Thank you relate. Karen's support has been invaluable."

Case Study

Presenting Issue : Client sought psychosexual therapy due to significant distress related to the appearance of his penis following corrective childhood surgery for a congenital abnormality. He presented with:

- Persistent negative body image, shame, and self-loathing centred on genital appearance
- Severe anxiety and avoidance of intimate situations and relationships
- Depressive symptoms, intrusive memories, and social withdrawal
- Fear of rejection and inability to communicate his concerns to potential partners
- Impact from early medical trauma and lack of psychological support post-surgery

Final Outcome:

Through a collaborative and trauma-informed therapeutic approach—including psychoeducation, cognitive-behavioural techniques, gradual exposure, and communication skills training—Client achieved notable progress:

- Reduced shame and increased acceptance and compassion toward his body
- Improved mood and reduced intrusive thoughts
- Ability to discuss his history with a supportive partner, leading to positive sexual experiences
- Renewed hope for future relationships and motivation to continue personal growth

Client's journey was non-linear, but the therapy provided him with tools and confidence to manage his distress, enhance self-image, and pursue healthier intimate connections.

Subcontractor

Think Positive

PACT House Stanley

Impact Statement

Think Positive PACT House provides a wide range of mental health and wellbeing support from its base in Stanley. The service helps people through counselling, Listening Ear support, wellbeing courses, mindfulness sessions, social and craft groups, therapeutic activities, holistic therapies, and community-based opportunities. Since opening during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2021, the service has continued to grow and remains focused on reducing loneliness, improving wellbeing, and providing accessible support that meets individual needs.

During 2025/26, Think Positive provided counselling support to 77 people and delivered 616 hours of therapy. Across all of its services, more than 1,400 people accessed information, advice, wellbeing activities, and support. The provider also delivered 776 hours of talking therapies through its Counselling and Listening Ear services, helping people improve their mental health and manage difficult life challenges.

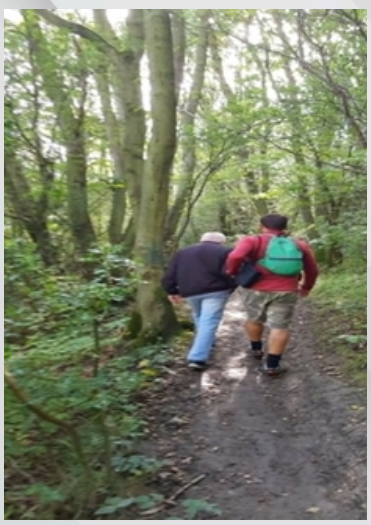
The service has made a positive impact through a variety of wellbeing activities that bring people together, reduce isolation, and encourage social connection. During the year:

- 23 people attended the Craft & Connect group.
- 276 people took part in Afternoon Tea sessions.
- 42 people completed wellbeing courses.

These activities provided opportunities for people to meet others, build confidence, learn new skills, and improve their overall wellbeing in a supportive environment.

By offering a mix of therapeutic support, practical help, and social activities, Think Positive has helped many people improve their mental health, increase their confidence, and feel more connected to their community. The service continues to provide an important source of support for people across County Durham, particularly for those experiencing loneliness, poor mental health, or barriers to accessing other services.

Overall, Think Positive PACT House has demonstrated a strong commitment to person-centred support, helping people improve their wellbeing, develop resilience, and take positive steps towards healthier and more fulfilling lives.







Service user quote

“From finding myself in a very deep, dark place with no hope, no help and no future, those at Think Positive offered me a lifeline that I didn’t know existed. Their help, dedication and support helped me find myself again and from that, find a future.

Case Study

A female client aged 44-49 self-referred to the service following a recent diagnosis of bipolar disorder. Having spent an extended period in Lanchester Road Hospital, she had returned home but was experiencing low mood, anxiety, and social isolation. She wanted to rebuild her confidence, increase her social interactions, and focus on her recovery while maintaining positive mental wellbeing.

The client was supported to attend the Social Access Group, Wellbeing Course, and a range of other activities provided by Think Positive. Although she initially appeared confident, she experienced significant anxiety and regularly accessed one-to-one support and listening sessions to help manage her worries and build confidence.

Over time, the client settled well into the groups, developed positive relationships with other attendees, and became an active participant. She gradually felt more comfortable socialising, contributing to activities, and informally helping with refreshments. Through both social engagement and wellbeing education, she developed a better understanding of her mental health, learned coping strategies, and increased her resilience.

As a result of her engagement with the service, the client reported feeling more connected to her community and better equipped to manage her wellbeing. Her Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) score increased from 28 to 58, demonstrating a significant improvement in her overall wellbeing and recovery.

Subcontractor

Welfare Rights

durham mental wellbeing alliance

Case Study

A 40-year-old male was referred to the Welfare Rights Service in May 2025 following a call from his mother. Previously employed as a paramedic, he had experienced several assaults while carrying out his role, which led to PTSD, depression, alcohol dependency, and a suicide attempt. At the point of referral, he was unemployed, experiencing severe mental health difficulties, and was unable to engage with support services or manage his financial affairs independently.

His mother contacted the service because he had no income and there was uncertainty regarding his benefit entitlement. The Welfare Rights Adviser liaised with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to confirm that his Universal Credit claim had been processed and that payments were due. Given the client's inability to engage directly, the adviser worked closely with his mother, helping her to complete the Universal Credit Capability for Work questionnaire (UC50) and discussing potential eligibility for Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

Over a four-month period, the adviser maintained regular contact with the client's mother, providing practical advice, reassurance, and emotional support during an extremely difficult time. This ensured the family had access to accurate information and guidance while the client focused on his immediate wellbeing.

As a result of this support, the client was awarded Limited Capability for Work, removing the requirement to actively seek employment and allowing him to focus on his recovery without additional pressures. Although he was not yet ready to pursue an appeal or submit a PIP application, he and his mother were aware of the options available when he felt able to engage further.

In December 2025, the client's mother wrote to thank the service, explaining that her son had been sober for two months and had begun accepting support. She described the adviser as a "much-needed lifeline" during a period when both she and her son felt broken, highlighting the value of consistent, compassionate support alongside practical welfare advice.

This case demonstrates how timely intervention and person-centred support can provide stability during a crisis, helping individuals and their families navigate complex benefit systems while supporting longer-term recovery and wellbeing.