The uncertain and chaotic climate of the last year has brought its challenges, but we are proud to have stayed true to our aim of supporting people to move away from distress to be who they truly are. Whichever of our services they use, our ultimate goal is to support people to take positive steps that bring them progressively closer to living an independent life in their community, at a pace that is right for them.

By putting people at the centre of the support they receive, listening to their wants and needs and adapting our approaches to fit with a new and changing environment, we have been able to work alongside more people than ever on their journey to better wellbeing.

Our successes this year have been testimony to our resilience and resourcefulness, and we feel ready for whatever challenges and opportunities the next year has in store for us. Thank you to everyone who has helped us achieve our goals this year.

Liz Felton
CEO

I am both delighted and privileged to take up the position of Chair of Together at this important time. I have worked within and campaigned for better services for people experiencing mental ill health or distress for the past 20 years. I was particularly attracted to Together because of its very solid service user engagement and involvement activities, and the strong focus on recovery and wellbeing.

There is little doubt that with the challenging external environment, funding issues will remain a strong priority in this coming year. If Together is to thrive – and it can – then we need to make sure we continue to do what we do well and shout loudly about it. Together is well respected where it is known locally, and we need to build upon that, whilst also strengthening our reputation and services in parts of the country where we are not so well known. During all of this we must of course ensure continuity in the lives of the individuals we support. We will all need to dig deep this coming year, but I have no doubt that everyone working with and alongside Together will continue to give their very best and make our work the very best it can be.

Sue Turner
Chair

About Together
Together is a national charity working alongside people with mental health issues on their journey to leading fulfilling and independent lives.

We aspire to a world where each individual can play their part in breaking down the barriers that exist around mental health through ignorance and lack of understanding.

We believe that people with mental health issues benefit from leading their own lives and shaping the services they receive.

We promote our conviction that the best mental health services are delivered in partnership with the people we work alongside.

2013/14 priorities
We will continue to:
• Reach more people
• Evaluate our Your Way services and further embed the model in our community support sites
  • Embed high-quality peer support in our services
  • Support people with complex needs to move on with their lives and achieve independence
  • Maximise the choice and control available to people in our accommodation services
  • Determine a financial plan to enable short-term investment in key areas while enabling longer term financial sustainability
• We will underpin these aims with sound quality systems, excellence in housing management, high-quality skills development and sound financial management.

The staff encourage me to take as much responsibility for myself as possible

Together service user

2012/13 IN NUMBERS
Every month we supported:

245 people through our criminal justice services
4,000 people in all our services
335 people through our accommodation services
2,114 people through our community support services
1,453 people through our advocacy services

65% of people who left our services met their objectives or moved on to greater independence

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Together service user
The criminal justice system

There are significant numbers of people with mental health needs in the criminal justice system. Mental health support in these settings is often inadequate or inappropriate, which can create a cycle of mental health issues, offending and re-offending. We work with Court and Probation Services to improve people’s mental health and reduce re-offending.

We carry out mental health assessments and provide support for defendants to ensure that they get the right support and that community services are used instead of custodial sentences where appropriate.

We have expanded these services this year, including establishing joint projects with local NHS Trusts to deliver three dedicated women’s court liaison services and housing support. The services are being independently evaluated to support the Department of Health’s National Diversion Programme.

In collaboration with our partners, we aim to reach more people in the criminal justice system over the coming years.

A place to live

We recognise that having a suitable place to live is an extremely important factor in recovery from mental distress, so we provide a range of services that support individuals to live in the right accommodation for them.

We offer residential care placements, crisis beds, supported housing and a wide range of support for people who are maintaining independent tenancies.

Our accommodation services offer as much individual choice as possible as well as opportunities to engage actively with the local community.

Some of our services offer support to people with complex needs and our new care model, Progression Together, puts people at the centre of their own care and supports them towards independence. We have been awarded funding from the Department of Health for a formal evaluation of Progression Together, which will be carried out by the Mental Health Foundation over the next three years.

Support in the community: Your Way

For many people with mental health needs, life can be lonely and unfulfilling. They may lack the confidence to get involved with ordinary life activities, including employment, hobbies or social networks.

Our Your Way model is a flexible and individual approach to supporting people in the community, putting them at the centre of their journey to better wellbeing. This year, we rolled Your Way out to 19 sites in England. Your Way services are easy to access, respond promptly to requests for support, provide maximum choice and offer the chance to support others.

Projects that have been transformed to Your Way sites this year include previous day, community and floating support services in Rochdale, St Helens, Southwark, Shropshire, Bedford, Suffolk and Northamptonshire. More people are choosing to purchase Your Way support using personal social care budgets.

The Your Way evaluation project – funded by the Department of Health – is under way and over 100 people across 16 sites are taking part. The Mental Health Foundation will evaluate the impact of Your Way support on the lives of those choosing the service, and we will share our learning with other service providers.

Advocacy

We offer statutory Independent Mental Health Advocates, Independent Mental Capacity Advocates and generic advocacy services nationally, including at Ashworth and Rampton high secure hospitals. We have expanded our advocacy services again this year across all sectors, meaning we have provided invaluable support to more vulnerable people subject to the Mental Health Act or who lack capacity when faced with life-changing decisions.

We have also launched our Your Voice community-based volunteer advocacy scheme.

Each month, we support 4,000 people with mental health needs across England
When I first came to Your Way I had been through a breakdown following a very difficult relationship. I couldn’t function or go to work. I wanted to end my life. I didn’t know how to get support as I wasn’t a British citizen. I tried to get back to work but I had a really negative experience at the job centre. I was a psychologist in my home country but was told: You will never be a psychologist here. My Your Way worker came to my local cafe, as I was anxious about travelling. I told him I wanted to be a psychologist again one day. He didn’t question it – he just listened. I had ups and downs but I continued having weekly support. When I had a period in hospital, the Your Way team came to visit.

When I was better, they told me a volunteer role at the project could be a chance for me to use my psychology skills. I worked alongside other people who have mental health issues and organised activities. It really helped build my confidence. After six weeks I was asked if I wanted to work as a paid support worker. I applied, did the interview along with the other candidates, and got the job!

At Your Way we believe in what people want to do. We say: You tell me how to help you. I wasn’t pushed into having weekly support. When I had a period in hospital, the Your Way team came to visit.

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Many of our accommodation services for people with complex needs are now using our new care model: Progression Together. Individuals have a staged pathway and clear, tailored outcomes that encourage them to make step-by-step progress towards independent living.

Progression Together puts people in charge of their own care and gives them increasing responsibility for directing their own support and recovery. They have more choice and control to set goals, decide how they work towards them and with whom. This ‘self-directed’ support prepares people for using a personal budget for their care once living independently. A key component of the model is peer support – offering support to individuals from others who have been through similar experiences.

A clear staged pathway with less intensive support at each point on the journey.

More choice and control at each stage so people can gradually take charge of their recovery.

Appropriate provision of clinical care according to each individual’s needs.

Close joint working with any agencies involved in the individual’s care.

Comprehensive training for our staff to be able to manage even the most complex needs.

Peer support to help people take strides towards better mental wellbeing.

When I first came to York Road after several years in hospital I needed support to settle in. I had done some self-catering in hospital but the staff at York Road got me to go onto the cooking rota so I would take turns to cook for a small group. This helped me get to know the other residents and boosted my confidence. As I got more used to the place and staff gave me more independence with budgeting, I became fully self-catering and am really enjoying it. I have also moved from the main building into the annex where I have my own fridge in my room and can choose much more how I do things.

The staff encourage me to take as much responsibility for myself as possible, and so I am working on being self-medicating and getting used to working out when my repeat prescription is due.

I make appointments to see my key worker and make decisions for myself about how to plan my time. I have been using my recovery vouchers to book time with staff for some leisure activities I have wanted to get back to doing, particularly going fishing.

Service user from our accommodation service in York Road, Surrey

Introducing our Progression Together model in Hampshire

There have been huge developments in mental health support since we set up our six registered care homes in Hampshire in 1996 following the closure of a long standing mental health institution in Basingstoke.

Inspired by the principle of supporting people to design and lead their own support to progress to independent living, we worked with our commissioner, NHS Hampshire, to explore ways of implementing a model that would best help people to achieve this. NHS Hampshire gave us a lot of encouragement, supporting us in our plans and helping us to learn from what had happened in other services in the area.

“We are excited to be delivering a service that is more tailored than ever to the needs of the individuals we support, and which gives them more scope to lead and direct their progress towards independence.”

Elveta Bailey, Operations and Development Manager

Evaluating Progression Together

Following the success of the Your Way development and evaluation project, the Department of Health’s Innovation Fund awarded us £210,000 in February 2013 to carry out a three-year evaluation of Progression Together.

The grant will be used to further roll out the Progression Together model, as well as to learn about people’s experiences of the services and the best way to implement them across more of our sites. The Mental Health Foundation will carry out the independent evaluation.

Helen Van Ristell, a qualified occupational therapist with nine years’ experience working with people in high and low secure settings and rehabilitation hospitals, has joined us to manage the development and evaluation.

“This is a rare and exciting opportunity to gather really meaningful data about how Progression Together is working. Our view is that every individual is an expert in their own recovery, so by gathering evidence about their needs and experiences and using these as a basis for the development and delivery of our services, we can be sure we have a service model that lets each individual lead their own journey to wellbeing and independence.” Helen Van Ristell
Too many women pass through the criminal justice system without their mental health needs being recognised. Health and wellbeing issues are often neglected by women themselves and the services supporting them.

Katerina Giakoumi works in our liaison and outreach project for women at Westminster Magistrates’ court.

“I interview women who come to court, to establish their mental wellbeing needs. I screen prison and police escort reports for indications of mental health issues. Around two thirds of the women I see have wellbeing issues. Many also have significant physical health needs like diabetes, gynaecological problems or HIV. About half have drug and alcohol issues, while others are homeless or experiencing domestic abuse. Some of the most common offences are pick pocketing, shoplifting or breaching an ASBO, and many are related to substance misuse. Occasionally I see more serious cases – such as common assault or criminal damage – often related to severe mental health issues like psychosis.

The vast majority of women I see have experienced trauma and abuse, including sexual violence and rape. In many cases this has led to drug and alcohol misuse, which can cause them to lose their home or children. Signs I look out for are guarded or withdrawn body language, bizarre or odd remarks and lack of concentration. I also look out for signs of self-neglect, self-harm or harm by others. The women I meet can be wary and mistrustful. Gaining their trust is about taking a friendly approach and being open: I tell them I’m here for them. It might take five or six approaches before a woman will talk to me about her problems. Once I understand a woman’s circumstances and needs, I write a report for the court outlining the community support available and how she will be supported to access it. Most women I see are not in contact with services, so I establish links and initiate referrals. This can help inform the decision to give a community sentence, making it much easier to address the things that contribute to the woman’s offending.”

A common sense approach to working with women with health and wellbeing needs in the criminal justice system was launched at a seminar hosted by London Probation Trust. The event presented the need for women-specific provision, and for health and wellbeing services for women in the criminal justice system. Discussion of the issues was promoted in a production by Clean Break, a theatre company that dramatises women’s experiences of crime and punishment.

We have shared the guide with organisations including the British Transport Police, Probation and London courts, and are developing training based on its principles.

“Thank you. It was great to see women’s issues getting such a close focus, and to hear from others involved in this area of work.” Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation

Practical guidance for professionals

In February 2013, we published a guide that gives professionals practical tools to recognise and respond to the mental health needs of women in custody, probation, at court or at risk of arrest.

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Solving the accommodation conundrum

Our liaison and outreach project for women at Thames Magistrates’ Court identified a need for urgent accommodation for women to avoid them going to prison on remand. Existing provision meant the women would often get housed outside the borough, far from their family and support network.

We developed a partnership with St Mungo’s and secured funding from the Department of Health to provide five dedicated placements in good-quality supported accommodation in Hackney. The project builds on our current practice and our existing strong partnership with local probation and the judiciary at the court. If a woman appearing at the court has no stable address, she now has access to a place and round-the-clock support in a hostel. This makes it easier to organise longer term accommodation and provides the stability needed to start addressing health and social care needs. St Mungo’s supports residents and provides housing advice.

Many women I see at court are homeless or have unstable accommodation, so even if they have committed a non-imprisonable offence, they are at risk of being taken into custody.

The partnership is particularly effective for women in this position who have complex, high support needs. These women have chaotic lives, meaning that they find it hard to engage with criminal justice and support services and may have previously breached bail conditions. Having access to the local St Mungo’s hostel and close contact with a housing officer helps us to demonstrate to the court that a woman will have support to engage whilst being based in the community.

Matina Marougka, Women’s Forensic Mental Health Practitioner, Thames Magistrates’ Court

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WOMEN PER MONTH ARE SUPPORTED BY TOGETHER’S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES

TOGETHER’S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES

MATINA MAROUGKA, WOMEN’S FORENSIC MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER, THAMES MAGISTRATES’ COURT
Our advocacy services help people with mental health issues make their voices heard and break down the prejudice they can encounter. This year, we increased our independent advocacy in a number of areas, including taking on Independent Mental Health Advocacy in Merseyside for Merseycare NHS, setting up a new service in Essex and expanding our services in Southend to cover all types of advocacy. We also set up our first community-based voluntary advocacy service.

The power of voluntary advocacy
In June 2012, Together won a contract to run all general advocacy in Rochdale Borough, supporting 154,000 adults with a wide range of needs. Tracy Hudson, who manages the service in Rochdale, has been forming a vision for a model using volunteer advocates since she started working in advocacy 30 years ago.

"Voluntary advocacy lends itself well to supporting people to gain independence and eventually be in a position to advocate for themselves, which should always be our goal. The focus is on ‘individual outcomes’ rather than ‘service outcomes’, so the support is really focussed on the individual and equipping them to use their own personal resources. This naturally fosters an ethos of ‘service user leadership’, as we encourage people with experience of mental distress to be trained as volunteers themselves.”

Tracy Hudson, Project Coordinator for our advocacy services in Rochdale

Cases are often complex, so volunteers have supervision and support to deliver advocacy confidently. Sessions are usually in public venues such as cafes and community centres to encourage people to leave their homes and discover local facilities.

Volunteer advocates have a broader range of backgrounds and experiences than paid advocates, which reflects the range of circumstances of those needing our support. Volunteers we have recruited this year include people with a physical or learning disability, sensory impairment or mental health problem, while others are unpaid carers or retired.

Volunteering is a valuable and rewarding experience, and many Rochdale volunteers say they have learnt a lot during their first year. Volunteer advocates work alongside a paid staff member so they can learn and develop their confidence. The volunteers complement the service that the staff members provide – they do not replace them.

Who might need support from an advocate?

- Someone who is experiencing hate crime
- Someone who needs to appeal against changes to their benefits
- Someone who needs to complain about the care they are receiving
- Someone who has been discriminated against
- Someone who needs to complain about the care they are receiving

Advocating for parent carers in Rochdale
Parent carers in Rochdale were struggling to care for their children with mental health problems after the local authority changed the process for calculating care costs. Our advocates helped the parents to write letters and navigate the appeals process, which can be difficult to understand. They also supported them to voice their concerns that the changes had been made without any consultation with parents or those using the services.

This practical support helped parents to feel less anxious and confused by the complex situation and processes. It also made decision makers aware of the real-life impact of their actions on a group of vulnerable people.

"Being a volunteer advocate has opened up a whole new set of opportunities for me. I was stuck in a rut trying to manage my disabilities; now I am giving my time to others. This has given me a future and something worthwhile."

Together Volunteer

"It’s great to speak to someone who is not a ‘professional’ but has lived a life like mine and understands what it is like to have problems with care services."

User of the Rochdale advocacy service

Advocacy Services
Cases are managed every month by Rochdale Community Advocacy Service

- 50 cases are managed every month by Rochdale Community Advocacy Service
- 20 volunteers were recruited this year
Training the peer supporters of the future

This year we used our knowledge of good-quality peer support to develop and deliver a Peer Support Training Programme. The eight-day training programme equips people to use their experience of mental distress to support others through difficult times by developing their understanding, knowledge, skills and confidence. People with experience of mental distress have designed, produced and delivered the training, which covers areas such as positive communication, coaching, goal setting, focusing on people’s strengths and asking the right questions in the right way. The course is now accredited by Middlesex University, meaning trainees have the option of taking an assessment to receive 30 credits at level 4, roughly equivalent to a module of a university degree.

Connecting peers to peers

We open doors and make connections, and this year we have hosted and supported a range of networks and other forums that enable meaningful conversations and partnerships. A key example is the Peer2Peer network, which we have supported to grow this year, with a view to it eventually becoming independent of Together in 2014. More than 150 stakeholders, including user-led organisations, NHS Trusts, mental health commissioners, local government and academic bodies, are now developing innovative peer support models, sharing good practice, and building valuable, strong partnerships thanks to this networking.

Bring ‘lived experience’ to our trustee team

We want people who use mental health services to be active in using their own experience to shape our work. This year, our board welcomed two new trustees with experience of mental distress, including Lisa Goodwin.

I was using one of Together’s community support services when I became a volunteer – I’d wanted to volunteer for a while but needed some support to make it happen. My Your Way worker showed me the National Volunteering website and came to initial meetings and interviews with me. The hands-on support was really encouraging. I started volunteering at an advocacy project for people with learning disabilities. I also went to Together events and got involved in developing SUID’s Involvement to Leadership programme. Being involved in all these projects helped me get my confidence back and I started to feel like my old self.

When a trustee role came up at Together, my support worker suggested I apply. I was impressed by Together’s quality of service and staff and wanted to be part of their decision-making process. I applied and was invited to London for an interview. I was really nervous – it was the first time since 2004 that I’d had a formal interview. One question that stood out was: What does governance mean to you? For me, it meant responsibility, high standards for service users and using my voice, experiences and opinions to influence and collaborate on the future of Together’s services. Finding out that I’d got the job was really exciting – I felt that things were moving in the right direction for me.

Being a trustee makes me feel empowered, strong and hopeful about the future. I hope that the trustee position will help me to get paid employment in a similar field.
Thank you

We would like to thank all the local communities, individuals, trusts and foundations that have given generously to help us carry out our work.

We would especially like to thank the following organisations for their support:

- London Probation Trust
- Department of Health
- The Bromley Trust
- Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales
- The Pilgrim Trust
- Big Lottery Fund

Contacting Together

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