



# TOGETHER ANNUAL REVIEW 2023



Registered Charity Number: 211091  
Registered Company Number: 463505



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## Preface with Hayley Lil, Senior Support Worker at Together's Norfolk Road Accommodation Service

I was asked to write this preface after I attended Together's Henry Hawkins Lecture in September of 2023 on the theme of art and mental health. I attended the event with a person that uses our Norfolk Road service and we both had a fantastic experience that we have taken back to Sheffield to our peers who use the service.

I've been working for Together for 2 years. One of the reasons I wanted to work for a charity providing mental health support was because I have lived experience of mental distress. I think that my experiences were seen as strengths in my job interview and I was delighted when I was offered a role at Together. Before long I was promoted to the Senior Support Worker role and love everything about my job.

I was interested in the Henry Hawkins Lecture and its theme of art and mental health and was therefore, thrilled when one of the Norfolk Road residents wanted to attend too.



The person who uses our service hadn't actually been to London before and was excited to travel there for the event.

At the lecture we heard about the impact activities like art therapy can have, the benefits of making art accessible and the different ways people can engage with their creativity which was inspiring. I was particularly taken by the poem delivered on the night by Tane Stevens called 'Watching Paint Dry' and have since felt inspired to read more poetry myself.

After the event I started hosting art classes and making them open to all of our residents at Norfolk Road. The classes went really well, and we all got so much from them.

We found different ways for people to share the work they'd done and participants chose themes that personally interested them, such as creating pictures of animals or working with black and white images. One of the best things about working for Together has been having the opportunity to bring a project like the art classes to life with the people who use the service.

My own lived experience means I really appreciate how important a 24 hour residential service like Norfolk Road is for the people who live there, particularly having staff on site to support them at all times.

I actually had to take some time off recently because of a deterioration in my own mental health which was difficult. During that time, my team and manager were amazing in supporting me to return to work. That experience is an asset that helps me empathise with people and that it is valued within Together. I'm looking forward to continuing all aspects of my role, including leading the art classes and continuing to help more people in the future.





## Introduction with Chief Executive, Linda Bryant

In 2023, we achieved many successes for the people we work alongside in our services and I am delighted to share some of those achievements in this annual review.

One highlight in the year was our celebrations of how Art, in its broadest sense, is a powerful enabler of mental wellbeing – this was a focus both for Mental Health Awareness Week and at our lecture event in the name of our founder, the Reverend Henry Hawkins, a partnership with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.



It was inspiring to explore the transformative effects art can have by providing hope both for the creator of the art and the person experiencing it.

Another celebratory moment during the year was the launch of our new website, a lively and interactive representation of all the wonderful work that happens across our organisation.

We now have the capability and capacity to more effectively promote all that we can offer to people in need of care and support, and to reflect the experiences of people who use our services as they journey on the lives they want to lead towards better mental wellbeing.

## The Henry H Lecture 2023

### 'Art and Mental He

Wednesday 13 September 20





It is the voices of people who use our services, and who have lived experience of mental distress, who can and should, shape and influence decision-makers. It is only through those voices that we can advocate for and hold the various public agencies and bodies accountable to provide the necessary investment in mental health social care that will make a difference in people's lives. This is embodied in Service User Leadership at Together and over the year we have continued working alongside people to ensure that their experiences, needs and wants are heard in order to promote the change that must happen to ensure good mental wellbeing for all.

This has also been another year of incredible commitment and dedication by the workforce of Together who are passionate about achieving the very best they can for the people we work alongside. The year has not been without challenges for many colleagues in the face of ongoing cost of living rises amongst other concerns. We remain focused on doing everything we can to recognise the value of our workforce in order to recruit and retain fantastic staff who reflect our organisational mission and values.



**Linda Bryant**  
**Chief Executive**



# About Together

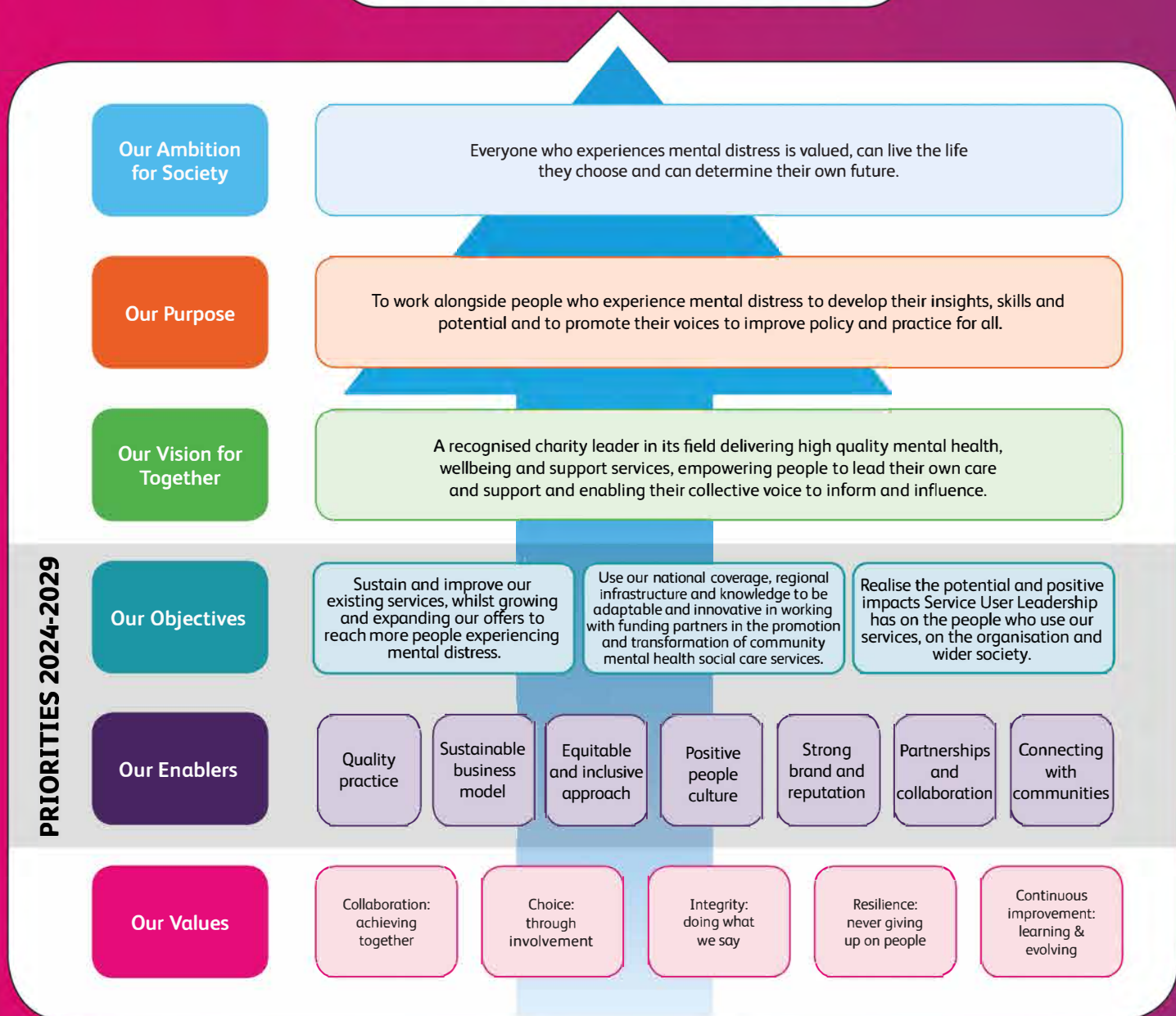
## Our strategy map 2024-2029

To effectively communicate our strategy, we have developed a strategy map which is our roadmap for the future, reflecting our ambition, purpose and vision. It is a new way of presenting our strategic and operational ambitions and clarifies the aims of the organisation. Within the map, Together staff and volunteers can see how their roles and responsibilities contribute to the vision for the organisation, and how they can support better outcomes for the people who use our services.

We designed the map to be read from the bottom up, starting at the foundation – our values, the key drivers of our behaviours and attitudes.



### Service User Leadership







### **Our ambition for society**

**Everyone who experiences mental distress is valued, can live the life they choose and determine their own future.**



### **Our purpose**

**To work alongside people with mental distress to develop their insights, skills and potential and to promote their voices to improve policy and practice for all.**



### **Our vision**

**A recognised charity leader in its field delivering high-quality mental health and support services. Empowering service users to lead their own care and support, and enabling their collective voice to inform and influence.**

## **Our value statement**

**We work together to facilitate choice through involvement, by doing what we say, never giving up on people, and looking to constantly improve how we work.**



# Our Values

## Collaboration: achieving together

- We utilise the knowledge, skills and experience of staff, volunteers and people who use our services to achieve the best outcomes.
- We actively raise awareness of mental wellbeing and the benefits of Service User Leadership, supporting people to participate in local society.

## Resilience: never giving up on people

- We care about empowering people to use their knowledge and experiences to lead their journeys to better wellbeing.
- We are passionate about everyone's access to better wellbeing and hold the hope for a better future.

## Continuous Improvement: learning and evolving

- We are curious and deeply inquisitive about people and our work.
- We actively seek and learn from feedback and make changes to deliver the best we can.

## Choice: through involvement

- We champion knowledge gained through lived experience and embrace the positive impact this brings on creating options and supporting choice.
- We work with compassion, respect and creativity to encourage people to solve problems and find solutions.

## Integrity: doing what we say

- We create trusting relationships and environments by considering the whole person, individual situations and not overpromising. We
- ensure that we always say what we mean.





# What We Do

## Community Support

We look to reach the most in need – including children and young people – who experience the greatest stigma in the community as a result of multiple disadvantages.

Our models of personalised community support provide person-centred, flexible services with an emphasis on ensuring that those accessing our services lead their own support.

Our blended approach of practical and emotional support creates opportunities that lead to likeminded people inspiring and empowering each other, building more resilient communities, and developing safe and responsive services.



***“Thanks again for all the support, like I said you have been amazing and made life that little better, don't know what I'd have done without your help and support.”***

**Person who used Northampton Intermediate Floating Support Service**

## Accommodation

Our registered accommodation services work alongside people experiencing severe mental distress by giving them the opportunity to live in communities with practical and emotional support, as part of a pathway from environments such as hospitals.

Our supported housing services focus on enabling people to manage their own tenancies, which means they can develop the confidence to maintain a home of their own in the future.

## Criminal Justice

We are highly regarded nationally as a provider of liaison and diversion services in court settings, and for our innovative approaches to supporting people under the sentence management of probation. We deliver services that aim to better identify and respond to the needs of people experiencing mental distress who come into contact with justice services.

Individuals often have circumstances and backgrounds that are highly complex and marginalising. As a result they can experience a range of vulnerabilities, such as homelessness and / or drug and alcohol dependencies.

We work in collaboration with a range of professionals to safely divert people away from custodial settings, which are often likely to be detrimental to their mental wellbeing. Consequently, these individuals are empowered to be able to make their own choices and access care and support in the community.

***I truly can't thank you and your organisation enough for how efficient and supporting and caring you have been!! My true God send!! Thank you!!***

**Person who uses NIHCSS Central Norfolk Community Support**

## Advocacy

We have a strong reputation in delivering statutory and community advocacy services including independent mental health, Care Act advocacy and end-of-life-care.

We have highly trained and experienced staff who are committed to representing people in a respectful, dignified and compassionate way to make their views heard and break down prejudice. Working closely with other agencies we are trusted to deliver advice and support that is in the person's best interest and ensure people feel safe and comfortable.



# Our Impact

## Our locations



We have  
**72**  
services  
around  
England



We have residential  
& CQC services in  
**11** locations

We offer supported  
accommodation in  
**13** homes

The average length of  
a stay in our  
accommodation was  
**1,535** days

We offer community  
support through  
**14** services

Our criminal justice  
staff work in courts in  
**19** locations

Our staff provide  
support through  
**14** forms of  
advocacy

We provide support  
through advocacy at  
**17** sites

Peer support is being  
provided across our  
services utilising people's  
lived experience by  
**30** individuals

We provide services in  
**57**  
Local Authority areas



# Our achievements in 2023

Figures refer to the period between January 2023 and December 2023

Our combined mental health services supported

**13,424**

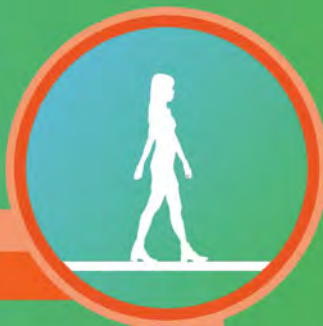
people, encouraging them to make their own choices towards living independent, fulfilling lives



Our accommodation services were used by

**360**

people, of which 13 of those moved on to live independently



Our criminal justice services supported

**3,276**

people in court settings

Our community support teams worked with

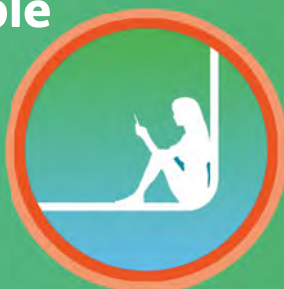
**4,795**

people, empowering them to make choices through involvement



We are the oldest community mental health charity in the country and have been supporting people for more than

**140 years**



We represented more than

**2,645**

people through our community advocacy







## Wavelly House Resident Curtis Jones on creating photography to benefit mental wellbeing

Together's theme for Mental Health Awareness Week 2023 was 'Art and Mental Health' in order to explore the benefits of art and creativity on our mental wellbeing. Curtis, a resident at Wavelly House accommodation service, spoke with us about how expressing himself through painting and photography has significantly helped his mental wellbeing. He explained that he wants to:

*"capture images that give a window into people's mental state and show difficult situations with powerful images."*

Curtis does not shy away from difficult topics. He experienced self-harm from a young age, in addition to spending 16 years in a secure mental health facility before moving into Wavelly House with Together.

Curtis explained that whilst being creative helps him personally, this is something that he also shares with friends regularly, adding:

*"that's the beautiful thing about photography as it stays with people".*

Curtis feels images should make points, be intentional and show the bigger picture. He uses this as a way to highlight issues faced by other people, such as anorexia, to reduce the stigma.

Curtis plans to continue his artistic expression, with the hope that one day he can use this as an avenue to provide for his family.

Read more stories from our Mental Health Awareness Week coverage using the QR code below.





## NIHCSS celebrate property development of Astley Cooper Place Accommodation Service

On Tuesday 17th October 2023, Together's Norfolk Integrated Housing and Community Support Service (NIHCSS) celebrated World Mental Health Day with the launch of a new Portacabin at Astley Cooper Place, one of their supported-living sites in Great Yarmouth. This is a new communal space for people who use the service to interact with each other in a friendly and welcoming environment.

NIHCSS supports adults with enduring mental health needs, including individuals dealing with complex experiences. The service supports people across the whole of Norfolk in supported living and within the community and works in partnership with St Martins Housing Trust. The service works with individuals to identify and

make changes in a variety of areas of their lives in order to improve their wellbeing and to achieve their goals and to live as independently as possible in their local community. NIHCSS would like to thank all the supporters who helped put together this wonderful day.

The portacabin launch event featured animals for wellbeing, raffles, music, face painting and food. People who use the service, including the residents, took part in organising the day and have planned many exciting activities for their new communal space including cooking groups, movie nights, arts and crafts groups and more. The event was well attended by various professionals and officially opened by Jessica-Jane Applegate (2nd from left in top photo), a triple Paralympian, Double Paralympic Champion and World & European Champion. Jessica is an advocate for mental health, and it was such an honour for the team to have her at the event.





## Launch of new Integrated Offender Management Service in London

We were delighted to launch a new Mental Health Service for London Integrated Offender Management (IOM) in August 2023. The service works alongside people on probation and in IOM who've experienced mental distress to support them with needs that may have caused them to repeatedly come into contact with the criminal justice system. The service is commissioned by the Mayors Office of Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and His Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS).

The one-to-one support improves engagement with the IOM programme for people and also with their Probation Practitioner. This helps them understand how their mental health and other vulnerabilities like substance & alcohol misuse impact their wellbeing, and how that can relate to their risk of reoffending. It also helps prepare them for longer-term support such as, counselling with mental health services.

Referrals to a range of mental health services are made at the earliest opportunity to ensure access to timely ongoing support. The service also delivers mental health awareness workshops to IOM probation, police practitioners and local authority/charity partners. The workshops will aim to equip practitioners to identify, understand and signpost the people they work with to the mental health support they need.

## New specialist housing service opened to support people in drug and alcohol treatment

Our staff were excited to start delivering a new service as part of our Norfolk Integrated Housing and Community Support Service (NIHCSS) in June. The NIHCSS Specialist Housing Related Support Service is recovery focused for people who have a housing need and are also engaged in structured alcohol and drug treatment with Change Grow Live (CGL).

The service supports people to maintain a tenancy or to find affordable accommodation, improving recovery outcomes and avoiding rough sleeping. The specialist support provides safe and appropriate housing access for individuals, acknowledging the importance of stable accommodation in helping people live with a substance dependency.

The new service is a two-year pilot project funded by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Referrals to the service come directly from CGL and it is also run in collaboration with our long-term partner organisation in Norfolk, St. Martins.

The service works in a person-centered and strengths led way. Our team continually aims to improve quality through innovation, best practice and encourage peer support opportunities utilising community facilities.

The service is trauma informed and looks to understand people's experiences of mental distress with the aim of reducing unplanned discharge from treatment.





## Together deliver new Wellbeing Hub service in Lewisham

Together were thrilled to launch a new service providing free mental health support to people in Lewisham in July 2023. The Lewisham Wellbeing Hub is funded by the Lewisham Health and Care Partnership including Lewisham Council and the South East London Integrated Care System. The hub provides timely, targeted support to help people across diverse communities in Lewisham to manage their mental health.

The aim of the hub is to improve access to support for individuals who are struggling or have concerns with regards to their mental wellbeing. The team offer information, guidance, advocacy and advice, including one-to-one support with a particular focus on empowering individuals to learn ways to self-manage. This includes a Community Directory which signposts people to specialist support in the area.

Specifically, the hub also runs wellbeing workshops, drop-in support sessions, as well as providing advice and navigation on income maximisation. Services can be accessed in a variety of ways, including through a central hub on in Lewisham as well as through pop-ups in community venues across the borough. People are also accessing Peer Support Workers who have experienced their own mental distress, via one-to-one or group peer support.

Local partners for the Wellbeing Hub include Sydenham Garden, who allow access to their gardens, nature reserve and activity rooms to help people in their recovery from mental and physical ill-health in Lewisham.



On the new Lewisham Wellbeing Hub, Emma Edwards, Director of Operations & Quality, commented:

***"We're thrilled to have been commissioned by Lewisham Council to provide community mental health support with our Lewisham Wellbeing Hub. As the UK's oldest mental health charity, having been established in 1879, we have a huge amount of expertise and experience."***

***We look forward to working alongside people living in Lewisham in a way that aligns to our core principle of Service User Leadership and commitment to valuing lived experience. As we have successfully run a similar Wellbeing Hub service in the borough of Southwark, we are excited to apply the knowledge gained from this experience, in addition to collaborating with people who use the service and other professions, to provide holistic, person-centred support."***





## Together launch new website design

In 2023 Together were proud to launch a new website, one that better represents the mental health services we provide and the people who use them. People who use Together services are at the heart of everything we do; they influence and shape the support we provide and the way our services are run. They were therefore central to the re-design of our website sharing their views on content and style.

Through updating the website we were able to make significant improvements to the navigation, how information is accessed and displayed, whilst providing an opportunity to refresh the language and terminology to more accurately reflect our values and the views of the people who use our services.

Our partner in this project was Reason Digital and we were grateful for their high level of technical expertise and constant enthusiasm. Reason Digital are an award-winning social enterprise that partners with organisations that care, to create digital tools alongside people with lived experience.

On the relaunched website, Together Chief Executive Linda Bryant said:

***"We are thrilled to have relaunched our website, a new and modern style that represents the way we work as a charity and the people who use our services."***

***The lived experiences of the people who use our services is central to everything we do and we're hugely grateful to everyone, including colleagues across the organisation, who provided us with feedback during the process - of designing the website and the way that is structured and laid out."***







## Looking Ahead with Chair of Trustees Dr Carol Cole

Reflecting on 2023 at Together, we have been proud as a Board of Trustees to support several significant developments for our charity. These include the successful delivery of our inaugural Henry Hawkins Lecture, the launch of our digital transformation, comprising a redesigned website in a more modern and accessible style, plus a new internal intranet for staff. In all these projects there was a focus on showcasing the lived experiences of people that use Together services and people who live with mental distress. Seeing the positive impact the staff and volunteers in our services have on people's lives is a constant inspiration for my fellow trustees and myself.

By hosting our Henry Hawkins Lecture we wanted to create a space where there could be an exchange of ideas and to celebrate successes within mental health social care and I believe the Lecture did just that. Planning is already underway for our next event in 2024, whose theme will be around community and connection, given the benefit that a sense of belonging and independence can bring.

Having invested in the re-launch of the Together website, trustees have been pleased with its new look and feel, with how more it conveys the work we do and how much easier it is to navigate. It is an exciting new chapter for the charity. Another part of the digital transformation has been the creation of the new intranet for Together to connect our services around the country.

In terms of our planning for 2024 and beyond, a refreshed five year strategy for 2024-29 is being developed by the Board, our Executive Leadership Team and key

stakeholders. Much thought has gone into truly understanding the impact of the external environment on the charity and to prioritise the activities over the next five years that will help us all realise our ambitions for Together by building on our strong foundations, developing the business, and growing in the future, so as to ensure the sustainability and success of the charity. This will also involve working alongside existing people using our services to learn from their lived experience and to stretch our ambitions to reach more people.

As a Board, our last meeting of 2023 was in mid-December and throughout the year we hear personal stories from those who use our services. Trustees and the ELT also go out and visit services and are always welcomed on these visits and are humbled by the incredible work going on across the organisation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our staff, volunteers and the Board of trustees for their hard work and commitment on behalf of Together. A special thanks also to some trustees who came to the end of their period volunteering with us including Louise Bushby, Kathy Pierce and Vicky Johnson, whose expertise and insights were hugely valuable to us. As we look ahead, we aim to build on the successes of the past year and strengthen our determination to grow and develop as a charity.







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