



Centre for Better Health  
Annual Report 2022



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**“ Trauma is not what happens to you, it’s what happens inside you as a result of what happened to you. Trauma is that scarring that makes you less flexible, more rigid, less feeling and more defended.**

**Imagine a trauma-informed world. Imagine your own family and community. Might the teachers act differently in your schools? How about the doctors seeking to help you heal? The judges responsible for deciding sentences? The policy makers who define our collective structures and the leaders we appoint to represent our voice? We hold the vision of a world that breaks free of cycles of trauma and becomes more open and inclusive. It all starts with us, truly. It starts when we allow our wounds to teach us about listening, self-love and compassion and to remind us of the preciousness of life. Then truth opens our hearts and our innate wisdom begins to shine through our wounds.”**

Gabor Mate

# Introduction

**The Centre for Better Health is a registered charity that supports wellbeing and recovery from mental ill health. We provide a range of services in a trusted, community-based, non-clinical setting: low-cost counselling; low-cost creative, movement and therapeutic groups; as well as work-skills training placements to help provide in-roads into employment for those who are out of work and struggle with their mental health.**

In each of our services we place an emphasis on developing supportive and therapeutic relationships with clients, in order to effectively support wellbeing and recovery from long-term mental ill health. Through our services, we support individuals to achieve personal growth, improve wellbeing and quality of life, and make employment progression where relevant. Our vision is for individuals to lead satisfying and hopeful lives in a society without any stigma around mental ill health.



The photos in this annual report are of a variety of staff, volunteers and clients and do not necessarily relate to the stories or case studies they are next to.

# Chair and Director's Statement

**The past year has followed on from the previous one in being disrupted by the pandemic and the charity of course has not been immune to this. Everyone involved has tried to ensure that the services and support offered provided some continuity. We see the fruits of that labour in the pages of this annual report. The statistics, feedback and case studies are a testament to the commitment of all the staff, volunteers and clients that make CBH the place that it is.**

Our counselling service was again online for most of the year and was in much demand, with clients applying from much further afield. We continue to provide a highly regarded model of work which comes under a person-centered umbrella. This complements provision for those who may fall below or higher than other service thresholds and that are seeking longer term work. Our counsellors and counselling team showed a deep commitment to providing this service in challenging circumstances.

The Hub came into its own over these last two years by being online and providing an invaluable connection to activities and other people in isolated times. The team and our coordinator have done an admirable job of providing support where needed.

Our social enterprises have been affected and disrupted over this period and it has been difficult to see a vibrant and valuable training placement for

individuals curtailed. Restrictions of course have now been lifted and everyone is very much looking forward to building back. The development of an 18-25 year old outreach project is an example of this. Again, the teams in these businesses have been resilient and adaptable with changing circumstances and we thank them for their commitment to the project and the challenge of building our commercial base again.

We want to acknowledge the loss of some key colleagues from the governance of the charity. Firstly, the resignation of the previous chair Paul Sheils from the board of trustees in December. This was after more than 30 years of dedicated service to the charity and whose wise counsel will be sorely missed. Secondly, we are sorry to have lost this year, our founder John Wilder who passed away peacefully in March. John was a visionary who touched many lives and leaves a legacy that will long endure. Finally, we also were saddened to hear of the passing of Dr Ed Meltzer in March of this year. Ed was a kind and committed trustee and will be missed.

The world around us continues to be in turmoil and the effects of this on our collective wellbeing undoubtedly takes its toll. As a locally based charity there are limits as to what we can affect. However, we also know that the work that we do is vitally important.

In reading this report we hope that you agree!

**Rab McNeill** Chair  
**Ashwin Mathews** Director

# Better Health Counselling

Our counselling service aims to help individuals make sense of difficult experiences, deal with negative thoughts and feelings and make positive changes in their lives. Our counsellors come from a range of therapeutic approaches, but broadly speaking offer therapy under the umbrella of humanistic counselling. This approach focuses on the individual as a whole, encourages people to think about their feelings, and promotes self-development.

The service is offered on a self-referral basis, in order to enable clients to have autonomy over the support they want. A significant number of our clients are signposted from statutory and voluntary sector organisations, but the main source of referrals are through word of mouth from ex clients. To increase accessibility, we are committed to ensuring that our service is low-cost. We offer daytime counselling sessions on a sliding scale, with concession rates for those that have low or no income.

“A step it took me a long time to take, but after a few months I really started seeing the benefits of the sessions. Trusting my judgement better, being kinder on myself, understanding better the harms that were done to me in the past and how they affected my relationships to others as well as myself, learning to rewire my ways of thinking which had been damaged by traumatic experiences or emotional abuse/neglect.”

## A look back at the past year:

**285** individuals accessed counselling

**4,474** sessions were attended

**93%** would recommend the service to others

**93%** agreed that their counsellor fostered a safe and trusting environment

**93%** agreed that their counsellor did not judge them

**88%** accessing counselling for anxiety felt their issue had improved

**84%** accessing counselling for relationship problems felt their issue had improved

**83%** accessing counselling for depression felt their issue had improved



For most of the year, we continued to deliver our service remotely – offering sessions by Zoom and by telephone. In March 2022, we were pleased to re-open our doors and once again offer in-person counselling, after almost two years online. The impact of COVID-19 on people’s mental health continued to be seen; half (52%) of all applications to the service were related, or partly related, to the pandemic. In comparison to the previous year, we reduced our average waiting time from the point of applying to starting counselling from four months to three.

“[My counsellor] was a warm, kind and caring counsellor. He listened and gave feedback in a sensitive and helpful way. He created a space full of trust and respect. I am very grateful to him and the Centre for my treatment. There have been ups and downs throughout the time I have been accessing treatment however my baseline of happiness, optimism and hope has definitely increased.”

“I started counselling with very little hope of anyone being able to help me. A double bereavement had left me crushed and unable to cope with the way I was treated by my mum and my brother, whose cruelty I will never comprehend. I couldn’t bear what had happened and what was happening but there was nothing I could do about it. The counselling made me feel very understood. It also made me understand myself better, and to see myself as a good enough person.”

# Better Health Hub

Our Hub offers a range of creative, movement and therapeutic groups and courses, delivered in a supportive and inclusive environment. Our Hub activities are designed and delivered with the aim of improving wellbeing. We believe that by feeling included and listened to, meeting new people, overcoming set-backs and experiencing a sense of achievement, participants will feel better connected and more confident in their own abilities.

During the year, we ran groups focusing on loss, grief and bereavement as well as anxiety and stress management for the LGBTQI+ community. These groups provided participants with a safe space to explore these topics, with a blend of psycho-education, peer support and guided discussions. We also ran mindfulness and self-compassion courses. Through guided meditations, an exploration of mindfulness principles, and an opportunity to share, participants learned essential skills to steady and care for themselves, and build their inner resources.

Other courses ranged from ceramics (throwing; Japanese techniques and decorations; home ornaments; pottery wheel; hand building; and surface decoration), watercolours, drawing, photography and herbal craft – learning how to make use of herbs for self-care and relaxation.

In September, we started to offer a blend of online and in-person courses. We found that some courses lent themselves really well to an online format, and were aware that not everyone felt ready to join an in-person course after such a long period of restrictions and isolation. At this time, we also ceased to restrict our courses to members of the City and Hackney Wellbeing Network, and re-opened our courses to all with a new fee scale, which aims to provide greater accessibility to courses for those with no or low-income.

## A look back at the past year:

**32** online groups and courses delivered

**75** members of the City and Hackney Wellbeing Network were supported by CBH

**294** clients from across the City and Hackney Wellbeing Network enrolled on our groups and courses

**78%** felt more confident as a result of completing the course/group

**67%** made friends and felt part of a community

**60%** of CBH-supported Network members improved their wellbeing



One of our participants shared with us how positive they found the online groups last year, in particular the Loss and Bereavement Group. The members have remained in contact since leaving the 8-week group, and have regular meet-ups to check-in on one another. They have even become good friends with some members, becoming a regular babysitter for one of the other members, and helping paint someone's garden fence. They don't feel they would have found this sense of community without the support from the group they attended.

“Just to say a big thank you! The mindfulness courses and self-care are super helpful. I do so much better when engaged with them, all the tutors are especially warm and calm and caring. Thank you so much for these free courses. I am super privileged and very grateful.”



“[The group has] been a godsend and during yet another time of deep anxiety as the world goes mad and the rising cost of just being alive. [...]”

“We became quite united and supportive of each other with [the tutor's] excellent guidance and we have made such great progress. I personally have found this course invaluable and it has been a life raft in supporting me.”

# Better Health Training

Our social enterprise, consisting of Better Health Bikes, Better Health Bakery and Better Health Products, offers 12-week work-skills training placements to help provide in-roads into employment for those who have been unable to work and struggle with their mental health.

The placements are therapeutic and supportive in nature. Employment is paramount in social inclusion, enabling the development of valued social roles, and contributing to increased self-confidence and self-esteem, developing a positive identity and supporting recovery.

The placements have a person-centred focus and are designed to build up soft skills such as routine, motivation and socialisation and can be seen as an initial step for people to engage in activities. We limit the number of trainees we take on and ask for a commitment of one day per week, so that they have 1:2:1 support from staff and volunteers. At the end of the placement, we work with trainees and look at next steps in training, volunteer roles or employment.

The trainee programme re-started in September, initially focusing on placements within Better Health Bikes for 18–25-year-olds living in City and Hackney, thanks to funding from the City and Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Trainees were also able to move on to a funded City and Guilds Level 1 course and qualification in Cycle Mechanics with Bikeworks.

While some individuals have been able to benefit from these placements, we identified a general lack of engagement in services among the 18-25 cohort. In response, we are launching a new outreach and support service for 18–25-year-olds that are struggling with low wellbeing or mental ill health.

## A look back at the past year:

**6** trainees started placements during the year;

**4** completed 12-week placements. of these:

**1** trained in the bakery

**2** in our bike shop

**1** in our light industrial unit

**2** completed / due to complete a Level 1 City and Guilds Cycle Mechanics course with Bikeworks

**50%** showed an improvement in their wellbeing and quality of life, based on the ReQoL-10 (Recovering Quality of Life)



## Haniya's experience

Haniya attended a trainee placement at Better Health Bikes from September to December 2021. During this time, she learnt about health and safety in the workshop, puncture repairs, rim brake and derailleur gear servicing, and how to perform a systematic bike safety check.

Haniya joined the programme to improve her mental health, learn something new and do more things that she finds enjoyable, as well as to develop her confidence in order to get a job.

In the beginning, Haniya found it challenging coming in, as it was a new experience getting up and out of the house twice a week for a 10am start. By the middle of her placement, she said that she was

growing in confidence bit by bit as well as using her new found skills to practice on her own bike. "Coming here, I'm feeling more confident. When I've been productive and had a good session, I feel great so that is helping my mental health."

At the end of her placement, she told us, "This was my first time being in a workplace on a regular basis. I now feel I would be more comfortable if I was going to work in a similar setting."

We supported Haniya to register with Bikeworks to do a City & Guild Level 1 certificate in Cycle Mechanics, which Haniya completed in March 2022. She also hopes to attend University to complete a degree in Film Studies.

# Better Health Bikes



Better Health Bikes is a Social Enterprise Bike Shop with a strong interest in keeping the local community moving on two wheels. We're just as thrilled fixing bikes as we are teaching trainees how to do so themselves.

Recycling helps keep usable parts and frames out of landfill, and allows us to make mechanically sound bikes for sale at affordable prices too.

Crucially this engaging, hands-on work is a really great environment for trainees who are working with us on placement, and allows volunteers to gain valuable experience in a supportive environment too.



## A look back at the past year:

It has been good to welcome trainees and volunteers back into the space after such a long period in which we had to pause our programme owing to the pandemic. We all love the bikes of course but the trainee programme is really why the team are here!

We've spent time reworking the trainee programme to more closely align with the Cytech Level 1 Mechanic assessment requirements in order that trainees are ready to go and get that qualification once their placement is complete.

We've also focused more on refurbishing bikes, which has worked well as poor availability of new bikes and significant price rises have disrupted what we would normally have done with our bike suppliers. To make it work we've added a fourth work stand and brought volunteers into the bike workshop itself. This has also meant trainees in the training workshop getting more one-to-one time with the mechanic as well as increasing our production of refurbished bikes.

Like many businesses, Better Health Bikes has experienced some staffing challenges, whether as a result of changed market circumstances, illness itself, or team members moving to get out of the city or be closer to family. Happily, this has allowed us to bring in new team members with bags of experience and at the same time improving the gender balance of our workshop too.

# Better Health Bakery



Better Health Bakery is a social enterprise bakery based in Haggerston, East London. The bakery provides work skills training placements for those who have been distanced from employment due to mental ill health, while making and providing quality products and services for the local community.



## A look back at the past year:

Our key achievement from the past year was running nearly a full year of uninterrupted operation! We re-opened our doors part-time in April 2021, serving bread, cakes and lunches through a hatch. By mid-May, we were able to open five days a week and by July had re-established seven-day baking and trading. In the summer we introduced outside seating, with special dispensation for street-trading due to the pandemic.

We celebrated Sourdough September and Real Bread Week in February, by giving away sourdough starter, with recipes and care instructions so that customers could get started with their own dough wizardry at home.

We also catered for local businesses, with notable events for Headway East London and The Difference and consolidated our relationship with StreetBox. We now have shelves stocked with pickles and ferments made from surplus food, which helps to keep our costs down and use ingredients that would otherwise go to waste.

# Better Health Products



Better Health Products Ltd is a provider of polyurethane products. These products include bedding and wheelchair protection as well as vacuum casting bags, which are used in the production of special seating for wheelchairs, as well as to assist with the immobilisation of limbs, patient positioning in radiotherapy, and posture management.

The enterprise offers the opportunity to develop technical skills through ‘on the job’ training, including processing orders, manufacturing, dispatching and stock control. Other training includes quality standards and health and safety.

## A look back at the past year:

The enterprise continued to operate on a limited basis during the second lockdown in 2021, returning to full business hours in April that year. We also took on one trainee, who started their placement in February.



# Our volunteers

The Centre for Better Health works with a team of committed volunteers who contribute time, energy and skills to add value to our services. We provide a broad range of volunteering opportunities and aim to provide a supportive environment in which volunteers can learn transferable skills, meet other people, and give back to their community.

During the year, our counselling service was supported by 60 volunteer counsellors. Many of our counsellors are in training, and are enrolled on a recognised diploma counselling course. All of our counsellors receive clinical supervision at the Centre, as well as externally.

After a long pause owing to COVID-19, we started welcoming volunteers back into our social enterprises in January 2022. We were pleased to start working with five volunteers in the latter part of the year – four in our bike shop and one in our bakery.



“[My placement] has been incredible, actually, and I have grown so much as a therapist. First and foremost, the work I get to do with the clients has been amazing. It has been challenging, deep and meaningful work. The supervision has also been excellent; I can’t speak highly enough of my supervisor and also my peers, who have collectively created a safe and encouraging space for me to develop. CBH is also really organised – definitely on the top end of the scale when comparing with my peers at college! It has been really valuable to have such clear guidance about starting and contracting with clients. As a trainee, this has been a really important part of my training journey. I have learned to be myself and bring my whole self to sessions. You can only do that if you feel supported and encouraged.”



# Financials

<b>INCOME £</b>
Grants and Donations
Investment Income
Income from Charitable Activities
<b>EXPENDITURE £</b>
Charitable Activities
Net Movement In Funds
Total Funds Carried Forward

	2022	2021
	505,871	495,786
	1	5
	165,799	179,297
	<b>671,671</b>	<b>675,088</b>
	671,668	674,346
	<b>671,668</b>	<b>674,346</b>
	3	742
	35,289	35,286



# Thank you



### Counselling volunteers

Adam  
Alexandra  
Alex  
Anika  
Ausra Karolina  
Ben  
Brigitta  
Candida  
Chris  
Colby  
Dan  
David  
David  
Dominic  
Elvira  
Emma  
Francesca  
Frank  
George  
Hasan  
Heather  
Helena  
Isabel  
Ivan  
James  
Joe  
Jonathan  
Karen  
Karen  
Kath  
Kellie  
Kryshna  
Lucas  
Lucy  
Maciek  
Mark  
Max  
Mel  
Michael  
Michelle  
Neville  
Olivia  
Ozen  
Rebecca  
Rebecca  
Reuben

### Rhiannon (Libby)

Robert  
Rosy  
Roxanne  
Sam  
Sammy  
Sarah  
Sarah  
Sasha  
Shyama  
Stefana  
Sushila  
Tom  
Yoni  
Zander

### Hub tutors

Amy Birtles  
Andrea Christelis  
Brigit Connolly  
Eva Bachmann  
Julio Cervantes  
Maria Alvarez Echenique  
Nat Mady  
Redmond Entwistle

### Bakery volunteers

Camilla Selmi

### Bike volunteers

Jamie Cradden  
Tom Kelly  
Marianna Laczkova  
Jaggers Padda

### Staff

Isobel Arnold – Baker  
Nigussie Asress – Products Coordinator  
Audrey Benson – Administrator  
Marlon Charles – Baker  
Penny Collier – Counselling Service Manager / Clinical Supervisor

Cirillo Costantino – Facilities Manager  
Lisa Donohue – Social Enterprise Manager  
Ade Egbetola – Finance Officer  
Jack Ellingham – Baker  
Sarah Fraser Steele – Bakery Commercial Lead  
Graham Harvey – Assistant Lead Mechanic  
Benjamin Hagger – Mechanic  
Alice Hansen – Lead Baker  
Jan Horvath – Baker  
Adam McDonald – Lead Baker  
Joe McDonald – Baker  
Greg Morter – Clinical Supervisor  
Ashwin Mathews – Director  
Sim Pereira-Madder – Bike Commercial Lead  
Shemiah Philip – Administrator  
Cara Ringwood – Administrator  
Nathan Roberts – Better Health Hub Coordinator  
Shirley Roach – Bakery Retail  
Pearl Spence – Cleaner  
Olivia Stewart – Assistant Director  
Naseema Sulliman – Office Manager  
Silvi Vargas – Mechanic  
Kyle Walker – Lead Mechanic

### Trustees

Dr Ed Meltzer (March 22)  
Linis Dolby  
Paul Sheils LLB, Chair (Dec 21)  
Rab McNeill, Chair  
Sarah Rushton LLB

### Partners and Supporters

The Gage Foundation  
Edmund Carr LLP  
NatWest Bank  
Mr NK Crace  
Ms C Finney  
Ms E Kemp  
Robin Cavendish Memorial Fund  
The Ericson Trust  
JustGiving  
Charities Aid Foundation  
East London Foundation Trust  
Hackney Community College  
Hackney Local Authority  
City & Hackney CCG  
Hackney CVS  
City & Hackney Wellbeing Network  
The Association of Mental Health Providers  
The Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association  
Buckles LLP  
Rocketseed  
The Blue Lizard



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