



# Everyone has a story

Annual review 2021

 mind BLMK

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# About us

Mind BLMK works across our communities to support positive mental health and wellbeing. Working closely with a range of partners, we offer a number of activities from our wellbeing centres and local venues to make a difference to the mental health and wellbeing of people in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes. Our aim is to make sure that no-one has to face a mental health problem alone.



# Opening statement

For every one of us, the last year has been like no other. At Mind BLMK we experienced exciting highs in the form of the expansion of our work and mobilisation of new services, like our Crisis Cafés (page 7), and unparalleled challenges in finding alternative ways to continue delivering our work to people across Bedfordshire, Luton, and Milton Keynes.

Understandably, due to the struggles the last year presented, we have seen the levels of distress in the community rise, and it is with the upmost thanks to our staff and volunteers that we have been able to continue to meet the emerging and growing needs of those locally.

We are also hugely grateful to stakeholders who have continued to provide much needed support over the last year. It is thanks to you all that we have been able to focus on the essential needs of those who have needed us the most during this time.

As we continue to strive for excellence and to meet the needs of people locally, we understand that working in strategic partnership with the NHS and other charity partners is essential. Over the next year, we are excited to see and understand the impact the Transformation agenda can have on our work, and the added value and access this can have to our communities.

Thank you to our staff, volunteers, trustees, and supporters, for all you have done and continue to do, in aid of our work at Mind BLMK and for ensuring that we can continue to be there for people locally. Through testimonials and feedback (pages 8-10) we know the direct impact the charity has made to those in the community, and we continue to be most grateful to you all, for your hard work and dedication.

## Trustees

Steve Horner	Lesley Broughton
James Culling	Simon Clarke
Helen Donovan	Drew Gibson



**Simon Clarke**  
Chair



**Caroline Lewis**  
CEO

# 2020 - 2021 in numbers



**3,832**

People accessed our services (up from 3,049 the previous year)

**Crisis Café:**



**904**

cases of face-to-face or telephone support



**1,062**

Volunteer hours



**86%**

Would recommend our training or workshops to others (rating us 9 or 10, on a scale of 1-10)

# Our services

**“The sense of community is something that I cherish. This disorder is part of me, I am never going to be free of it, but I can maintain its management, and these groups support me to do so.”**

DBT Graduate survey feedback

## **Bereavement by Suicide Support Service**

Support for those who have lost a loved one to suicide during the grieving process, offering a safe and non-judgmental space for people to talk about how they feel, to ask questions, and to find a way forward.

## **Counselling**

Short-term counselling for a wide range of issues including life crisis, anger, self-esteem, relationships, depression, and anxiety, in partnership with local health services.

## **Crisis Support**

Open 365 days of the year, this evening drop-in service is for anyone (18 years old or above) who feels they're in crisis or are experiencing mental distress.

## **DBT Graduate Peer Support Groups**

Support groups specifically for those who have completed or who are about to graduate from a dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT) skills training course, as a form of continued support. DBT is a type of talking therapy for people who feel emotions very intensely.

## **Mentoring**

One-to-one support with a trained mentor to help people plan and carry out steps towards achieving goals. Mentoring aims to enhance their wellbeing or address a particular challenge they may be facing, such as improving social confidence, using public transport, accessing education, voluntary work, and employment.

## **Mind Matters**

Discussion groups covering topics relating to mental health including depression, anxiety, self-esteem, self-confidence, and goal setting. The group provides support in a safe, confidential, non-judgmental space to discuss mental wellbeing.

## **Peer Support**

These support groups bring people with a similar lived experience together to provide emotional, social or practical help to each other.

**“Peer support gives me a reason to go outside and interact with the outside world.”**

## **Hoarding Support**

Hoarding Support offers help to those who struggle with hoarding. It aims to improve their safety, quality of life and emotional wellbeing. The programme is delivered through weekly CBT based peer support groups, followed by six weeks further one-to-one support with a trained volunteer.

## **School Counselling**

Counselling for students when they are struggling. Our counsellors are fully trained, have regular ongoing professional development opportunities and are fully supervised and supported.

## **Training**

A range of training programmes focused around mental health intervention and wellbeing, including Mental Health First Aid and suicide prevention training.

“Mind BLMK has made me feel like someone does care about me, that someone is there. I have been given so much hope, so much so I feel like telling everyone else that there is hope out there.”

“Mind BLMK has always been there for me when I’ve needed help and support. They’ve given me confidence to try and help myself move forward in my life. Thank you.”

“It means so much to me that our company has made mental health the focus of this years corporate social responsibility effort.”

“If I hadn’t received the support from Mind BLMK when I did, I do not think I would be here now.”

“Thank you so much for all the help Mind BLMK has given me. I joined in 2020 and the Mind BLMK team have helped me so much, whilst I was in a dark place. Thank you again.”

“I look forward to having Zoom meetings with people from Mind BLMK. It gives us all a chance to have a discussion, have a laugh and stay connected to people who understand what we’re going through.”

## Celebration of our services

“Working as a Team Leader for Milton Keynes Crisis Café is one of the most fulfilling careers I have ever had. I am very lucky to lead and motivate a passionate and hardworking team of Crisis Recovery Support Workers, Crisis Peer Support Support Workers, and volunteers who all have a personal ethos to support people who are experiencing a mental health crisis. I feel very valued and trusted within Mind BLMK and feel privileged as a service to have remained open, supporting and improving the mental health of service users who have come to see us. We are a lifeline for service users and I couldn’t imagine working for another organisation that has this much of an impact to people locally.”

# Service spotlight: our crisis support, a year on

## Beth Timms, Crisis Café Manager

“The Crisis Café has seen many changes over the last year. We have now moved over from the phone line into face-to-face services starting initially with pre-booked appointments and now offering a drop-in service in Bedford, Luton and Milton Keynes. This has been really exciting for us as we are now able to deliver our service as it was originally intended - a place for people to come to when they're in need, with no criteria or having to go through a lengthy referral process.

As the Crisis Café Manager, I am so proud of the work we do and I am really looking forward to the next year to see what we can achieve now that we're back to where we need to be. This time next year it will also be very exciting to see the development of our new Central Beds Crisis Cafés in Flitwick and Biggleswade.”

### Crisis Café - statistics

- 94% of individuals reported a de-escalation of their feelings of being in crisis
- 93% felt less lonely and isolated
- 92% felt less likely to self-harm
- 90% of people felt less suicidal
- 91% felt able to resume a normal life

### Feedback

“Mind BLMK's Crisis Café is the most mental health support I have ever had. I feel like everyone listens and supports me.”

“The ambulance service signposted me to the Crisis Café after my overdose, I now find myself coming here instead and de-escalating, over going to A&E.”

“Thank you. You gave me brilliant advice, diffused tension between me and my dad and now we have agreed to sit down and talk in the future. The Crisis Café is great idea the crisis cafe and I am so grateful that I spoke to you.”



# Everyone has a story

## Marcus' Story - Mind BLMK service user

After a trip to the Doctor's, my GP mentioned contacting Mind BLMK as my mental health was declining rapidly. I knew about Mind as a charity but very little about local Mind's and what they did.

After a conversation or two, I was booked in for a Peer Support group the following week. What followed was well over a year of weekly sessions of what can only be described in my opinion as therapy. The sort of therapy I didn't even realise I was both looking for and needed.

The sessions allowed for caring but frank support from others who were having their own mental health battles. We worked together to help each other get through the week.

**For me, the foundations Mind BLMK gave me and platform for vocalising my thoughts was priceless in facilitating me to a mentally healthy state of mind. I couldn't be more complimentary to Lisa, the leader of the group, or the charity, for their support.**



## Dan's Story - Mind BLMK fundraiser

A few years ago I went through some hard times personally. I spoke with my GP, went through the procedures and also had counselling for a period of time. When I got myself into a better and happier place mentally I decided that I wanted to do whatever I could to stop others feeling the way I felt, and there's no better way to do that than to work with a local mental health charity.

In the two years I was manager at Yardley Gobion FC we raised over £2,500 for Mind BLMK. We also included their logo on all match day materials and training clothing, and produced social media videos viewed by over 10,000 people.

When I left Yardley I was desperate to not completely detach from Charity Football. Which is why in June 2021 I formed a Charity Football Club, Men For Mind FC with the objective of raising money for Mind BLMK, National Mind and other mental health charities.

**“In the two years I was manager at Yardley Gobion FC we raised over £2,500 for Mind BLMK.”**

# Everyone has a story

## Karl's story - Mind BLMK service user

In May 2020, one of my best friends Tinkerbelle wasn't feeling very well, she was off her food and didn't seem herself. We took her to the out of hours vets. They advised that she had cancer and had to be put to sleep. I went with her into the room and held her in my arms to say a final goodbye.

I missed her companionship and having someone to talk to who didn't judge me and just allowed me to be myself. I honestly thought that I would never have the same companionship again.

At the end of that month my back went, and I had severe pains in my lower back and sciatica in my right leg. I went to local A&E to get checked over, six months previously I had my second back operation. I was back using my walking stick. I didn't like the fact that I couldn't control the pain. As a result of not being able to walk and do what I used to do, this had a massive impact on my mental health. I felt worthless, useless. I felt bad that my wife had to wash and dress me. I had lost a lot of my independence.

I was referred to Mind BLMK, and initially I thought I am beyond help, I didn't want to be talking to strangers, nor did I want to be explaining my medical history over and over.

## **My head was full of fog. I couldn't see any light at the end of the tunnel.**

One day I received a phone call and the person on the phone explained that they worked for Mind BLMK and that they were my Recovery Worker. We agreed that they would call me every week and we would chat about how my week is going.

**I met some wonderful people and feel privileged to be able to share our journeys together. I found inspiration within the group to keep going, to follow your dreams and never give up.**

At the end of last year, I lost my job due to medical reasons - I could no longer fulfil the role I was employed to do. I lost a huge part of my identity and I honestly thought I would never work again. What I did have was my Recovery Worker and my Zoom group to support me through this difficult time.

I joined a Men's Peer Support group, I was very cautious about doing this at first because I have no interest in sports or going to the pub, and felt that I might not have anything in common with anyone - how wrong I was.

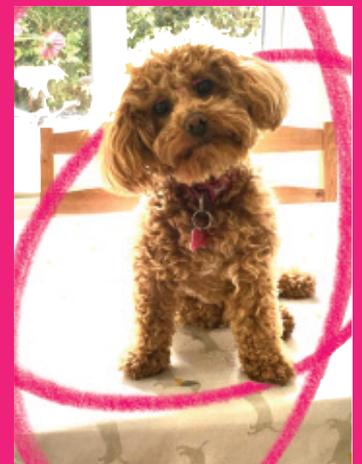
Over time Mind BLMK eventually gave me what I had lost, they gave me hope and I started to feel better within myself. I started to make myself laugh again, the funny side of me was starting to show again.

I enrolled at college to study counselling and completed an art therapy course and wellbeing course. I started to apply for various jobs and successfully received a role in July 2021. I've also become a volunteer for Mind BLMK and completed my training to be a Peer Support Mentor.

I still miss my lovely Tinkerbelle, but I now have Millie who looks just like a cuddly teddy bear and brings me joy each and every day.

It is my belief that my Recovery Worker gave me the inspiration and motivation to never to give up and for that I would like to say thank you.

**Every day I am a step closer to where I want to be.**



# Everyone has a story

## Alex's story - Mind BLMK Trustee

I was diagnosed with Severe Depression and anxiety many years ago and it was very hard to open up to anyone about what I was going through or reaching out for help.

During a workshop I attend at work I met a Mental Health First Aider from Mind UK and during a coffee chat I understood that I would not be able to overcome my Mental Health illness and be medication free until I accepted my reality, and decided to get support.

Years later, I was offered an opportunity to become a trained Mental Health First Aider at work and since then I have been committed to promoting wellbeing and eliminating the stigma associated with Mental Health illnesses.

I practice gratitude and mindfulness meditation daily, that allows me to be present in the moment, enjoy of the little things in life but also to quiet my mind at times of stress.

**I decided to get involved with Mind BLMK because their work is instrumental in order to enable many people to improve their Mental Health and protect lives!**

In September, I'll also be completing the London to Brighton Bike Ride and will be proudly wearing the Mind BLMK jersey to raise Mental Health awareness and to fundraise for the charity.

# Fundraising perspective

## Sofia's story - Mind BLMK fundraiser

I believe that everyone, in one way or another, will at some point in their life, experience mental health problems, no matter how small or big these may seem. I have suffered from mental health problems myself, which unfortunately caused me to have panic attacks. It was detrimental for my being - an outgoing person like myself, scared to even walk out the front door.

In Italy, where I grew up, we didn't have the support that we have nowadays and most of the time we would identify how we were feeling as 'a phase' that would soon pass. I had watched my mother suffer as a child and I didn't know what it was then, but soon learnt in later years. Back then, we were expected to find strength in ourselves to start again and carry on.

**Eventually I did start to feel a bit better, but the void never felt quite healed. It is important that despite whatever troubles we have, we find somebody ready to listen without any judgement.**

I chose to support Mind BLMK after attending an event a couple of years ago. There I was able to see the positive effects that the charity is having on the local community, thanks to the numerous testimonials. I am very pleased that I was able to support the charity myself through online events and also through the sales of my recent cookery book.



# How we spend our money

## Mind BLMK Figures 20/21

Income	%	Expenditure	%	Reserves	%
<b>Charitable Activities</b> £1,089,290	87	<b>Charitable Activities</b> £962,786	91	<b>Unrestricted</b> £618,101	84
<b>Donations and Legacies</b> £153,980	12	<b>Other</b> £10,770	1	<b>Restricted</b> £9,667	1
<b>Other</b> £2,908	1	<b>Business Development and Fundraising Costs</b> £84,158	8	<b>Designated</b> £111,735	15
<b>Total</b> <b>£1,246,178</b>	100	<b>Total</b> <b>£1,057,714</b>	100	<b>Total</b> <b>£739,503</b>	100

The charity made a surplus of £188,464 during the year ended 31 March 2021.

The surplus for the year benefited from the new Crisis Cafe contracts, the necessary changes to delivery owing to the restrictions over the last year, the continuing strong performance of the fundraising activities and action taken to curtail expenditure as appropriate to the changing circumstances.

Part of the review of the charity's strategy, on funding streams and the needs of community, plans to tackle mental health, will be to identify how a proportion of the surplus can be re-invested back into service provision.



## Thank you

This past year we have been overwhelmed by the generosity of our incredible supporters and want to express our sincerest thanks to each and every one of them for supporting our work here at Mind BLMK. It is through support such as this, that we are able to continue providing our key services to those who need us most across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes.

Here at Mind BLMK, we're here to make sure anyone with a mental health problem living in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes has somewhere to turn for advice and support.

With your support you can help to make sure that no-one has to face a mental health problem alone and that we're here to support them.

## Donate:

[mind-blmk.org.uk/donate](https://mind-blmk.org.uk/donate)



## Fundraise:

[mind-blmk.org.uk/fundraising](https://mind-blmk.org.uk/fundraising)

**Mind BLMK**  
**The Rufus Centre**  
**Steppingley Road**  
**Flitwick**  
**MK45 1AH**

**0300 330 0648**  
**hq@mind-blmk.org.uk**  
**www.mind-blmk.org.uk/fundraising**

 **@MindBLMK**

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Registered charity number: 1068724  
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