



## **Core Service Grant Annual Impact Report**

In 2017-18 Ben's Centre received £59,015 from Sheffield City Council as part of a three-year Core Service Grant to support us to continue our work with vulnerable adults in Sheffield.

Ben's Centre is the only damp day centre and outreach program in Sheffield that supports adults with substance misuse issues and the wide-array of issues this has upon their lives and the lives of those around them. We have been doing this work for the last 22 years in Sheffield and our service has evolved to suit the ever changing needs of our clients.

We help the wider community by providing volunteer opportunities and training to upskill our community. Every week our volunteers provide us with 75 hours of their time, if we equate that to the living wage of £8.75 per hour, 50 weeks per year this works out to a value of £32,812.50 of volunteer dividend every year.

In year one of our agreement we worked closely with Voluntary Action Sheffield in order to work identify our key outcomes and develop outcomes measures in order to show the difference we make across three key areas; i) Physical health, ii) Mental well-being and iii) Structured positive lives. In years two and three we will implement these new outcomes measures to better evidence the difference we're making to vulnerable adults in Sheffield.

## **Physical Health**

### ***Nutrition***

Evidence shows that eating regular healthy meals plays an important part of personal wellbeing and physical health. Many of our clients ONLY eat when they come to Ben's Centre.

*"I only ever eat when you're open, even at night me and Ben sit around eating your sandwiches" LA (April 2018)*

Over the last year we provided 4411 nutritious meals and 896 portions of fruit in the project and 1200 sandwiches' on outreach, each meal is accompanied with juice and hydration is always encouraged. We also deliver food and drink to clients on the street via our outreach worker. We have estimated the total financial contribution of the meals, fruit and drinks we provide to be approximately £7000.00.

Nutrition plays a significant part in helping stabilise moods and fight depression. As many of our clients drink or take drugs to block unwanted feelings or drink despite their conditions (such as diabetes) we are able to monitor their wellbeing and suggest techniques to improve their chances of improved quality of life. We encourage our clients to engage with mainstream services (including GP's and Drug Services), as this helps to avoid emergency treatment and unplanned medical intervention and therefore avoids the use of high cost public services.

### ***Basic needs***

We provide personal hygiene facilities and equipment to all our clients, this is often in the form of an intervention where key workers suggest and support activity such as showering, shaving or washing to increase self-worth and lower health risks around infection, during this year there were 334 of these interventions.

We give out or wash full sets of clothes for our clients, this year we have given out 120 full sets of clothes; these are worth an average of £60 which over the year becomes around £7200. We do not buy these clothes but rely on donations etc which involves using valuable staff hours on marketing and donation campaigns as well as picking up and washing/sorting donations. The result of this work is that any client that wishes to can be fully fitted out with clean and sturdy clothes. This leads to clients feeling better about themselves and can lead to increased self-esteem, a much better foundation for recovery or positive change.

*"So glad that Bens now has a shower as I have had my gas cut off for the last 18months and had to wash in cold water. I feel so buzzing after a shower at Ben's" PB (Dec 2017)*

PB's appearance completely changed once he started to shower at Ben's he took more pride in himself and his clothes.

Adherence to client's medication program is something our clients need help with due to their chaotic lifestyles; this helps the clients take the correct and appropriate medication and also saves the GP's time and saves funds regarding unused and wasted meds.

*"I have kept my toes because Ben's made sure I took my meds and attended my appointments they would take me if they thought I was going to miss my appointment  
NG (March 2018)*

### **Addiction support**

We support our clients with their addictions and encourage engagement with other appropriate services. Clients have very complex needs and chaotic lifestyles which can restrict their ability to engage with services. Our support is a huge benefit to our clients and has an impact across the city too. For example we build and maintain strong relationships with our clients who will often come to us often before making poor choices. This will often reduce the need to use high cost resources such as A&E, Police and other costly services. We are able to use our outreach service to support the hardest to reach clients on the street who refuse to engage with other services.

*Client A suffers massively with his Spice habit, he frequently finds himself awoken by paramedics but refuses to go with them to hospital. We have been able to encourage him use less and to spend more time with us, now when he suffers from a bad experience we are usually able to monitor him and keep him in a safe environment while he comes round, after the episode he is fine and refuses medical help but we have then been able to save the regular ambulance call out and the costs that go hand in hand with these episodes. Client A is one of many clients currently having these dangerous and concerning periods.*

One client that we engaged on outreach was completely intoxicated and lying in the street saying he wanted to die. The outreach worker talked to him and stayed with him until he felt better and stopped talking about wanting to die, he asked him to meet him the next day. They met and started his recovery journey, he now drinks less and is helping as a volunteer at Ben's

*"If you hadn't have stopped and talked to me I would have carried on drinking till I was dead, no one cared not even me" PJ (March 2018)*

This year we have accompanied three clients to the Tropical Disease Clinic for their treatment for Hep C. All three thought they may have Hep C as they had injected drugs and have shared equipment with other users. It was a very lengthy process to get them through each stage of the treatment; they were all frightened and anxious and were afraid of the treatment. Their mental health was very poor at the start of this process.

*"I would have never got treatment without Ben's, I was too frightened" LL (Feb 2018)*

*"I was in total shock when I was diagnosed. Ben's supported me every step of the way"  
NS (May 2018)*

## **Mental well-being**

### ***Resilience, confidence and self-worth***

Many of our clients have chaotic lifestyles and face a number of daily stresses that impact upon their wellbeing and confidence. In addition to this many of our clients face stigma and prejudice on a daily basis, have nowhere to go during the day that feels safe and do not feel confident or optimistic about the future.

We support all of our clients to develop resilience, build confidence and develop their own value and worth. One of the ways we do this is by giving our clients choice and control over their environment. For example they have a free choice of what music they listen to after lunch. This has started a lot of healthy talk around music and people have learnt to negotiate, take turns and to develop new tastes. This is one of the many ways that we facilitate our clients to develop new interests and build friendship groups. Many individuals tell us that they feel happy and uplifted after listening to music and that it's good to develop interests that are not drink or drug related.

We ensure that our clients can succeed and achieve at Ben's Centre and encourage people to learn new skills and express themselves. For example we have pool competitions that people can choose to take part in that give people who are not used to being on a team the chance to shine and work with others. We have regular trips away giving our clients something to look forward too and the chance to do meaningful activities. The clients look forward to these activities as it gives them chance to take part in everyday fun activities (for example we might play rounders on the beach or just have fish and chip) which gets them away from the stress of their daily lives and makes our clients feel worthwhile and see they have value. We have seen that their confidence has grown after each trip.

### ***Mental Health***

Many of our clients suffer from depression, paranoia and self-harm they often have suicidal thoughts. We are able to help them with their feelings by giving them a chance to talk and be listened too. We liaise closely with the Mental Health Teams because they self-harm and try to commit suicide or call an Ambulance if medical intervention is needed. We encourage all of our clients to access Primary and Secondary Mental Health Services where appropriate.

Mental health problems can stop clients engaging with services or communicating effectively. We have a large number of clients that often feel vulnerable and do not engage with other services as they feel threatened by their clients, we are able to maintain our clients and offer them a safe space where they cannot be preyed upon by other clients whilst they make their way on their journey to a better life.

*"Without you, I would be a homeless drunk on the street." JB May 2018*

Some of the work in this category involves escorting clients to medical appointments as well as supporting them to make the appointments in the first instance. We have found that without support clients will avoid these situations and problems can then spiral out

of control, we are able to keep them on track and reassure them that these interventions are essential for the well-being.

### ***Safety and community***

Our clients often feel unsafe and struggle to make connections or build positive relationships which can have a negative impact on their mental health. As clients begin to engage positively they are more likely to thrive in their own community, build positive relationships and reduce negative behaviours such as crime, violence, drug/alcohol and predatory behaviour toward each other. We subtly inspire and attempt to mould our clients into the people they want to become so they can be valued members of society.

*Recently a client who had become ill told us he wanted to contact his family despite having had no contact with them for over 15 years. After some research we were able to speak with his family and it turned out they had been looking for him for 10 years. They were over the moon they had found each other and were able to reconnect. When he recovered from his illness they would visit with each other every week.*

## **Structured, positive lives**

### ***Progression***

We work on a range of subtle yet positive structures to introduce our clients to responsible citizenship (for example set meal times, centre rules and IT/internet access) We aim to make sure that every client gets the opportunity to feel normal and not be left around by the world around them.

One of key strengths is the relationship we are able to form with our clients. We offer a non-judgemental ethos of care and support. Our clients can be challenging but we start each day fresh and people are given the chance to make mistakes and learn from these mistakes without fear of being judged.

*"I know you've had to ban me loads of times but you never hold it against me and I really appreciate that, rules are rules and you need them." NG (Feb 2018)*

Clients often report they feel less overwhelmed as a result of support and more able to move on and make more informed and positive live choices. Clients can volunteer with us when they are stable; we currently have 8 that help us with our service. We have also helped 22 people who were ready to gain work-related skills including a number who gained work based qualifications such as Level 2 in Cooking and Food Preparation. Other clients have attended Drug and Alcohol Awareness training which helps them make positive choices about their own lives.

## **Tenancy work**

We support clients in their own homes and support them to find, manage and maintain tenancies. This can be very challenging as clients will often have had a long history of failed tenancies and periods of homelessness. One client lived at the same flat for over 20 years and has refused to allow visitors to his flat for over 15 years as he was ashamed of his drinking and hoarding behaviours. He admitted to us that he needed a new kitchen and windows but was scared of letting people in. With our support he let the Housing Association staff enter his property and we were able to help him declutter his home. He now has a clean home, new windows and a new kitchen which leads to a more positive home life.

*"I am not sure how I got in this state but it took Ben's to give the chance to talk and I trust them to do right by me and they have" PB 2017*

## **Advocacy**

Our clients have very chaotic lifestyles and find it difficult to communicate or engage with services. Often our clients are considered as uncooperative or and this can result in them being banned from services. Because of this we offer a range of advocacy support to ensure our clients can engage with services. In the last year we helped 97 clients with this which including supporting people to engage with services such as DWP, Job Centre Plus, Fitzwilliam Centre, Sheffield City Council and Housing Associations.

*"I didn't have any cash for 6 months as they said I had attitude and banned me from the Job Centre. Ben's rang the DWP and started to sort it out, no one tried to help before." CH 2018*

## **Meaningful use of time**

As clients engage positively with our project this has a massive impact on their lives. We nurture a positive and progressive environment for our clients and feel this in itself is a productive outcome. We engage clients in a gentle and achievable volunteering program which helps them to begin to structure their lives, take responsibilities and develop self-worth.

*"I need to feel like I've got a reason not to drink, you see on the days I'm here working for you I don't even drink the day before!" JW (May 2018)*

Many of our clients are responsible for antisocial behaviour. As they engage with us and use their time in a more meaningful way they report that they are less likely to engage in negative behaviours across the city.

We take the clients out to the coast, theatres, and to parks as we try to provide everyday activities to help them lead more normalised lives. Our clients tell us that they like the outings the best because they feel like everyone else.

## **Summary**

Over the last year we have supported our community of vulnerable adults with support and practical help and also added back to the community a dividend cost of £45,596 through some of the basic services provided by Ben's Centre (such as food, fruit, clothes, showers, training and volunteering opportunities). This does not consider the wider impact of our work and the savings we make to the city as a whole (for example providing a safe place to go reduces the amount of begging, reduces call out rates for emergency services, reduces the amount of crime/anti-social behaviours and increases feelings of public safety within the city centre).

The Core Service Grant has helped us consider our work so we can focus upon three main areas. In year two we aim to streamline our monitoring systems and make better use of statistics so we can better evidence the difference we make in these areas and continue to support the most vulnerable Sheffield citizens.