

IMPACT REPORT



2023

STRIDES

JUDE MCKEE CEO



It is my honour and privilege to be Chief Executive Officer of Strides, formerly WLM.

The year that has just past has been one the most challenging I have experienced in my (many) years of service to the voluntary sector.

Our organisation is still navigating a change in our governance and we are currently working with the WLM Circuit and our shadow Board to ensure the organisation has what it needs to flourish. We are extremely grateful for their support, and to the WLM Circuit in particular for enabling and resourcing Strides to continue our valuable community and housing services.

I am very proud of our team who during two years of uncertainty have continued to provide high quality services with integrity and care. The pandemic had a huge impact on us and our third sector partners. Both personally and professionally we have weathered many storms.

We have navigated the closure and restructure of three of our services due to the pandemic and our commitment to providing safe and quality services that reflect our values.

One positive outcome of the pandemic was the change in working practices. Flexibility has improved across the sector and partnerships and collaborations have blossomed. We are stronger together, sharing resources rather than competing. We are delighted to partner with the Star project, DePaul and St Mungo's and support their amazing work.

Our impact report demonstrates how despite these unprecedented challenges we have developed, consolidated and improved our services. The focus is squarely on our people, those using our services and in our team, to provide spaces that are catalysts for change, safe, professional and welcoming, and I hope that shines through.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jude McKee', written over a horizontal line.

COACHING SPACES

We're able to support 6 people every single night in London choose a safe space to help them maintain stability in their employment.



COACHING SPACES

Through our partnership with Westminster City Council (funded through the Rough Sleepers Initiative grant) we offer people in work but experiencing homelessness their choice of an Airbnb, homestay or similar for up to 3 months, anywhere in London, alongside professional coaching.

Our coaches work with people in a strengths-based, person-centred way to help them make sense of what's happening in their life. With the opportunity to talk and to create goals for themselves, they can start taking the steps to achieving them.

Coaching gives people the chance to talk about what's important to them. For most people this is about their plans for when the hotel space ends, or hopes and plans they have for employment or learning. But there's no set agenda, no right or wrong and no enforced direction.

It's the chance to talk about what matters most, with someone they can trust.

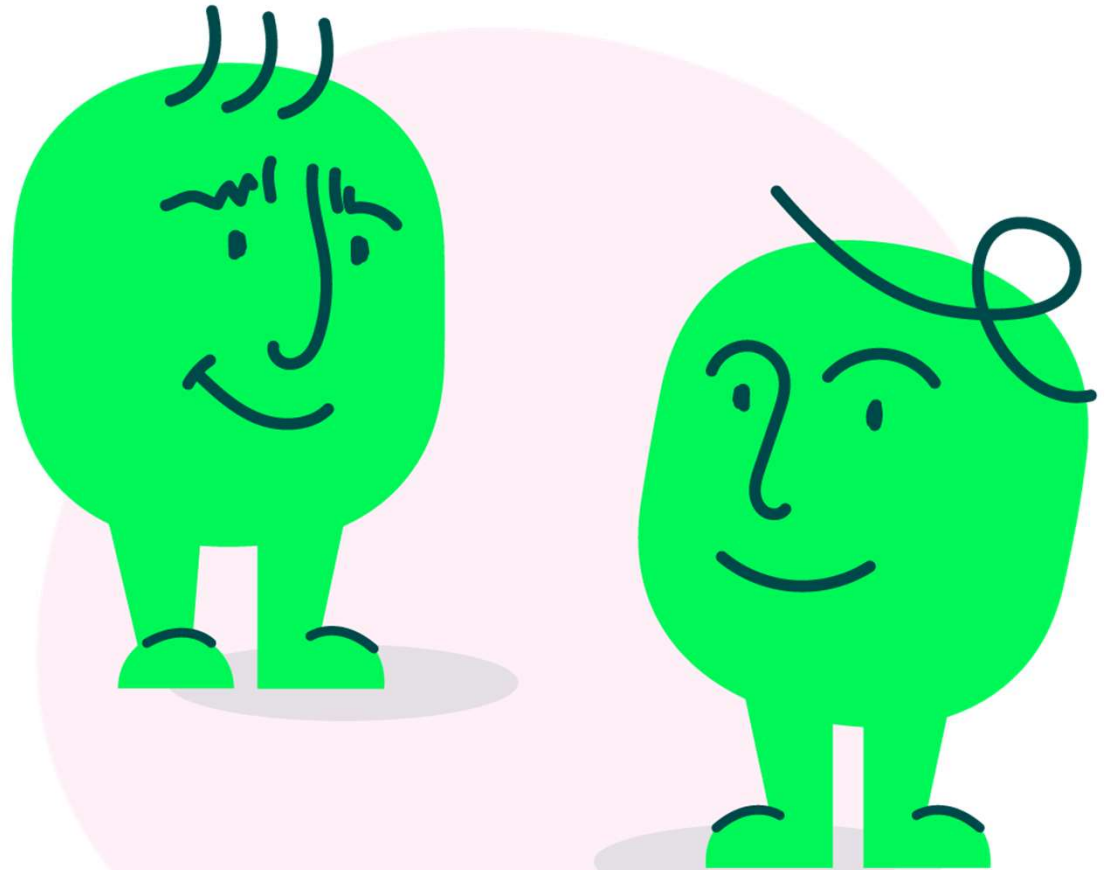
Coaching helps people identify their own strengths and the opportunities available for them to connect with their interests and goals.

Coaching Spaces is more than just a bed for the night – by providing an Airbnb or homestay, people have the space for the deep thinking they need for coaching.

COACHING SPACES

Through Coaching Spaces, we provide 2190 nights of accommodation every year with coaching support. We're able to support 6 people every single night in London choose a safe space to help them maintain stability in their employment, find secure long-term accommodation, and give them the time and space to focus on the things that matter to them.

In 2023 we provided 60 people a safe space and coaching.



SUPPORTING KEYWORKERS

We support 25
keyworkers at any one
time. Typically 60% of
these work for the
NHS.



SUPPORTING KEYWORKERS



At Wincott Street Residential in Kennington, we provide affordable accommodation for keyworkers.

Keyworkers play a vital role in society, and became the forefront of public attention during the pandemic when it was highlighted how significant and important their roles are in order for the functioning and sustainability of necessary services. Roles vary widely, from those working within health and social care, such as nurses, to those working in education, such as teachers, to those ensuring public safety, such as police officers.

Though working patterns have changed post-covid with a large majority of people being able to work remotely, the role of keyworkers often has not, with most being required in their place of work, and therefore living within a commutable distance is vital.

However, with most keyworkers being low-paid or often on minimum wage, and rents, especially in London, increasing exponentially, this is becoming more and more difficult. One of our residents, a 33 year old man working for the NHS, received an annual wage of £25,000. By contrast the 2023 average wage for a worker in Britain was between £28,000 and £36,000 – whilst the average rent in London is £2119 a month, up 6.4% from last year – far exceeding the monthly take-home pay of our residents.

Our recognition of this is obviously worthwhile in itself, but more significant when remembering that rent being a higher proportion of income in this area of London was one of the reasons that Katherine and Hugh Price-Hughes set up West London Mission in the first place, 137 years ago.

SUPPORTING KEYWORKERS



At our premises at Wincott Street in Lambeth we can support 25 keyworkers at any one time. Typically 60% of these work for the NHS. About two thirds of those are nurses though we have also supported a radiographer and hospital pharmacy worker during 2023. 30% are police officers and the 10% work in education. The average age of our residents is 35-40.

Whilst we don't stipulate a maximum length of stay, the majority of our residents move on after about 18 months into more long term rented accommodation. And we know that in 2023 at least 3 of the people who moved on from us were able to use their time with us saving, enabling them to purchase their own shared-ownership accommodation.

"WLM has been a safe place for me over the past 2 years and I am really grateful for it." - 2023 resident.

During their time with us, we ask our residents to complete a Tenancy Perception Survey, which is a set of questions is devised by central Government to ensure that Housing Associations are providing an appropriate standard of accommodation and the support around it. The questions inquire for instance whether a resident feels that we maintain our properties well, for example whether repairs are carried out swiftly and to a high standard, does the resident feel safe with us, and how well do we handle complaints, etc? The questionnaire is anonymous, voluntary and available throughout their stay.

The first question is "Overall how satisfied were you with the service you received from Strides?" The average response score naturally changes over time, but at the end of 2023 it was resting on 8.2/10.



LISTENING TO THE COMMUNITY

At our Wincott Street Community Hub, various forms of educational and community-help workshops provide local residents with opportunities to learn and engage. In 2023 we had over 500 local residents attend a workshop or event with us.

Our Hub team engage with the local community, helping us and other local community groups and providers who run courses and workshops within our Hub determine what's needed. During 2023 we ran 15 different types of workshops.

Unsurprisingly, help with money issues, was needed the most, although the type of support required varied a great deal. This ranged from supporting 50 people who were struggling even to afford food for themselves and their families who we were able to refer to local food banks, to helping 62 people access and manage benefits such as Universal Credit.

LISTENING TO THE COMMUNITY

And of course now that benefits are now accessed through 'digital by default' which means you must apply for and manage them online, to do so you need basic IT skills as well as being able to understand and complete the application form. 145 people attended our drop in IT sessions, whether to be able to access benefit applications and information, understand their phone or just to keep in touch with friends and family via video link.

In the meantime, isolation is an underestimated menace. 114 people attended our community events often just to get themselves back in touch with the outside world.

Wincott Street Community Hub is also a 'warm space' where people can come to simply escape from the cold – and cost of turning on their heating.

Being designated a warm space enables us to partner Lambeth Council for the distribution of 'energy saving packs' which are intended to help people lower their fuel bills.

34 people were given one of these packs, which consists of:

- LED light bulbs which need less electricity compared with traditional filament light bulbs
- Reflective sheeting which sits between the radiator and the wall, re-directing the heat into the room rather than into the wall
- Draft excluders, which lower the loss of heat through gaps between frames and their windows or doors. They simultaneously prevent the entrance of cold air through the same.

This simple set of ideas is helping the people who come to our Community Hub combat their cost of living.



ANOTHER CHANCE

At Katherine Price Hughes House (KPH) we provide accommodation and support for men leaving prison, who in most cases have served long sentences. As well as providing intensive supervision during their initial months of freedom, we're able to help them on their first steps in reintegrating in society.

During 2023, we supported 128 men at KPH, with an average length of stay of 43 days, with the longest being 284 days.

The largest age group by far was those aged 30-39 which represents 43% of our residents.

Many of the men have become institutionalised during their time in prison, and are anxious about moving into KPH and what an approved premise is.

Here is what one of them had to say:



ANOTHER CHANCE

"Hello my name is S. I have recently been released from prison after serving 15 years. I am now in my mid 30's. As you can imagine, the world in 2023 is very different from the one I left in 2008. Mobile Phones are now incredible but everything is so expensive and more people seem to be struggling.

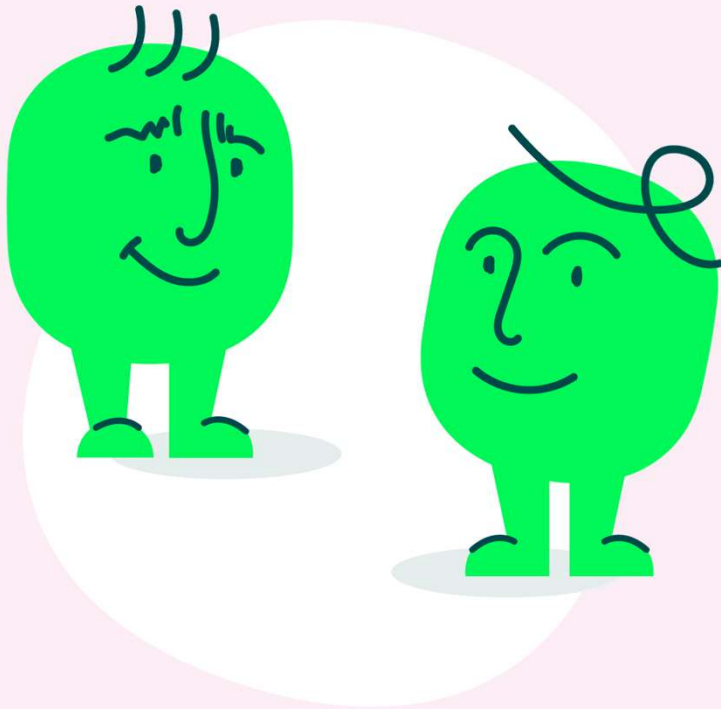
When my release date got close, I started to get anxious and worried. This was made worse by finding out that on leaving prison I would not be permitted to live at my family home or with friends. For the first six months I would have to live within 'approved premises'. I later discovered that this meant I would live subject to intensive supervision by a government approved organisation. At the time though I wondered: where would it be? What were the rules? Who would I work with? What if the workers were horrible?

A few days prior to my release I was told I would have a video call with the AP; specifically with my keyworker. He explained that though I would work with all the staff at the AP he would be the staff member who would take a special interest in my case and encouraging my progress. I was surprised to receive this call but very relieved. My keyworker answered my questions and further put me at ease by offering another call if I wanted one.

Upon my release I felt happy and calm. I actually looked forward to working with the AP to further my rehabilitation and keep me on the road to success."



ANOTHER CHANCE



At KPH, we recognise that if these men are not given 'another chance' then their options are a life on welfare, or a return to a life of crime. Through KPH we help them widen their options, and support to engage with referral agencies and pathways. Some pathways concern their physical and mental health whilst others look at how they are going to secure employment and housing.

Arguably the most valuable pathway is the one which looks at relationships. This support helps them improve their interpersonal skills and pro-social behaviour, which is important for helping them in future workplace environments. But often most striking is the contribution it makes to reconnecting the men with their families. Family support cannot be underestimated in helping men move on into a life free of crime.

During their time at KPH, with workshops and meaningful activities helping them reintegrate into community, our residents can move forward with their lives.

THE WRONG IDEA

At Strides Highbury Counselling Centre (HCC) our clinical team provide one year or longer of weekly psychotherapy sessions for adults, helping them to understand their symptoms and their suffering in the wider context of their lives. Contrary to short-term, medicalised, one-size-fits-all interventions that aim to eliminate symptoms quickly, our therapy recognises the importance of suffering.

HCC is an affordable, or means-tested, counselling service for people who would otherwise be excluded from talk based therapies. We have observed that this exclusion takes three forms.

The first is that some people do not meet the criteria for receiving counselling from other sources, like for instance they have been unable to register with a GP, or the waiting list for NHS services in their area is months long.

The second exclusion is that they can't afford to pay for private counselling. The average cost of seeing a private counsellor in London is between £90 and £120 per session.

At HCC the average we receive for a session is £30 pounds, and there is a sliding scale to meet the needs of all incomes with some people paying as little as £10 per session and others as much as £70. To sustain the service, we use our purpose –built building to rent rooms to private counsellors for their practice, bringing in an additional £4k – £5k a month.

The last form of exclusion is more subtle. Over the course of their lives, a person with struggling with their mental health will probably be subject to a changing diagnosis, but for many, their initial diagnosis labels them forever. So a person with depression caused by recent money worries, may instead have their case framed by depression they were treated for after a past bereavement, and can find themselves being treated for the wrong thing, with the therapy they receive consequently doing little to help relieve their symptoms.

Due to the nature of the service, all of our clients remain anonymous. However through analysis we're able to identify a series of themes...

STRIDES

THE WRONG IDEA

The first theme is that the trauma that the people we work present with is deep rooted. The second is that the way we work with people at HCC helps them to cope and live with this trauma, rather than trying to erase it.

Feedback about HCC:

"I learned it's ok to be sad sometimes."

"I don't need the numbing mechanisms (drugs and alcohol) anymore."

"I've stopped cutting my feet. That had been a problem for more than 20 years."

"I've learned to work through my feelings, not hide away and try and dismiss them by rationalising them".

HCC worked with 131 people in 2023. The youngest of these was aged 21 and the eldest 78. Two thirds of those cases were women.

We also recognise that it's not just adults who need meaningful connections and a space to speak, and so we host the space for Bubble and Speak, where little ones and their parents or carers are welcomed by trained psychoanalysts to a social space to play and speak with each other and with any member of the team.

In addition to providing excellent services to the community, HCC also provides training, supervision and mentoring to honorary counsellors who are working towards counselling qualifications through their placement with us. A placement at HCC is in high demand thanks to the quality of our clinical supervisors and management team.



AT STRIDES WE WORK WITH PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES TO PROGRESS.

We are striving to amplify the scale and impact of our work through deeply connected partnerships where working together means we can improve life outcomes for people and communities.

In 2023 we continued our ongoing partnerships with St Mungo's, DePaul UK and New Horizon, and saw new partnerships come to fruition with the STAR Project and Bounce Back.

In 2024 and beyond we will seek to continue strengthening our networks and developing opportunities to partner with organisations aligned with our purpose and promise, and expand our provision of registered social housing.

PARTNERSHIPS



St Mungo's

At our building in Seymour Place we host three teams from St Mungo's who work directly supporting people sleeping rough in Westminster.

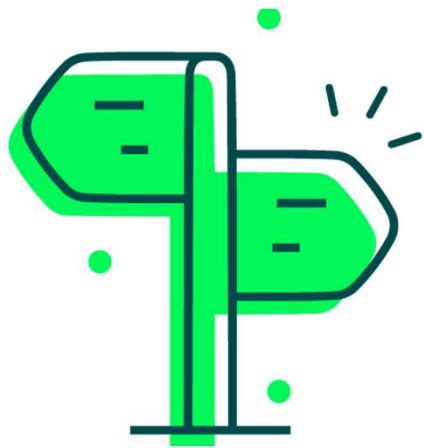
The North Westminster Outreach Team goes out at night looking for people sleeping rough to help them away from the streets, and supporting them into safe accommodation.

The St Mungo's London Navigator's team provides 'through-care casework', supporting people through emergency or temporary accommodation placements in to settled housing. They support people to navigate local support systems and access opportunities that assist their recovery. This work is underpinned by a psychologically informed approach and a personalisation budget that can be used flexibly to either access accommodation or bring them closer to accessing it.

Housing First is an internationally recognised approach to tackling homelessness for people who have been unable to sustain long-term accommodation. It provides a tenancy first as a platform for change, with intensive and flexible support to help clients address their needs at their pace. St Mungo's, based out of Seymour Place, is one of the largest providers of Housing First services in England, supporting 349 clients in different locations.

From Seymour Place, the St Mungo's team tackles one of the most difficult areas of rough sleeping in the country. Westminster has the largest number of people sleeping rough in the capital and there lots of people who have slept rough for a long time. They work in partnership with other homelessness charities to share expertise to find the best way to support people away from the streets.

PARTNERSHIPS



DePaul UK

DePaul UK and New Horizon run the first and only youth specific emergency accommodation of its kind in London from our Holly Park building.

The pan-London project is a 26-bed service providing single, en-suite rooms for 18-24 year olds who are currently or at imminent risk of sleeping rough. Young people from across nearly each of the London boroughs have benefitted from this essential provision.

Bounce Back

In December 2023, Bounce Back moved into some of our Community Hub space in Wincott Street.

Bounce Back is a Charity and Social Enterprise that works with people both inside and outside of prison who may be at risk of or have a history of offending and substance use. At Wincott Street we will be hosting some of their training workshops, providing the space for people who have left prison to learn new skills and be ready to apply for jobs.

PARTNERSHIPS

STAR SUPPORT

We're incredibly proud to partner with STAR Support, The UK's First by-and-for LGBTIQ+ Domestic Abuse Refuge. By-and-for means that over 80% of trustees, managers and staff reflect the protected characteristic(s) of the people the organisation aims to work with.

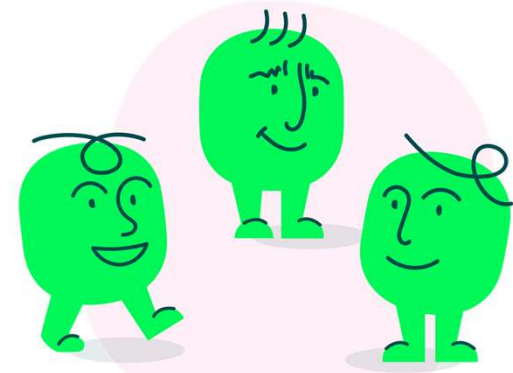
More than half of all LGBTIQ+ people have experienced over 20 incidents of domestic abuse, with the most common perpetrators being parents or partners or ex-partners of survivors.

The service, funded through MOPAC, provides a place of safety and recovery for survivors.

During the first 6 months of the service, we have seen:

- 9 survivors across 4 beds during a 6-month period
- Vastly oversubscribed 129 referrals received
- Over 20% trans survivors
- Large group of south Asian men (with added identity abuse in most cases).

The support provided includes income maximisation and financial resilience, meaningful activities including finding hobbies and interests, as well as support to stay safe.



STRIDES IS A COMMUNITY HOUSING ASSOCIATION THAT BELIEVES IN THE SOCIAL VALUE OF BUILDINGS TO HELP PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES.

If you're interested in partnering with us, get in touch:

Visit us at: strides.org.uk

Email us on: fundraising@strides.org.uk

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