

Alliance Progress Report

August 2021

**Lambeth Living Well
Network Alliance**



“The last year has been exceptionally difficult for the country and for the people of Lambeth. We have all needed to be flexible and innovative to make sure that our Alliance could continue to provide help to people who need it. As well as NHS, Social Care and Voluntary sector staff, we have been particularly impressed by – and grateful for – the response of the Lambeth community, who have worked tirelessly to make sure that people are safe and supported.

“We have continued to move forward with the transformation that is the Alliance’s job, and we need to learn the many lessons from the past 15 months to help us towards our ambition of mental health services that are accessible and which meet the needs of all Lambeth’s residents to stay well and recover, to make their own choices, and fully participate in society.”

Bill Tidnam, Chair of the Alliance Communications and Engagement Group



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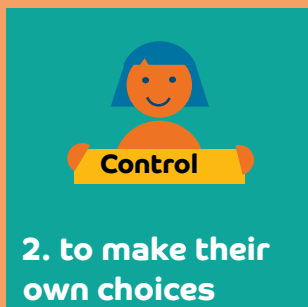
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Welcome and Introduction

This is our second Progress Report. Our first, published in November 2020, can be found [here](#)). This report covers April 2020 to March 2021, including updated figures showing how we performed, plus our plans to the end of March 2022 and our ambitions beyond that.

In July 2018 all signed a seven-year contract to provide mental health services for working age adults in Lambeth, together. This grew from the innovative Lambeth Living Well Collaborative, which shaped the 'Big 3 outcomes' with Lambeth groups and individuals.



The Alliance is part of Lambeth Together lambethtogether.net, bringing us together with other public and voluntary sector bodies for joined up health and care. These include [Healthwatch](#), the independent champion for people who use health services. All Alliance partners have equal roles and are responsible for the whole system, not just their part, ensuring we work together for the best interests of people we support.

The Alliance

The Alliance is a collaboration between five organisations: Certitude and Thames Reach (voluntary sector); NHS SEL Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) – transferring from previous NHS Lambeth CCG; South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM), and Lambeth Council.



Our priorities

Our aims remain delivering the Big 3 Outcomes (helping people recover and stay well, make their own choices, and participate in daily life on an equal footing) by focusing on six priorities:



- 1** Reduce numbers of people reaching crisis point and give prompt and appropriate support for people in crisis
- 2** Increase numbers of people able to live independently
- 3** Increase numbers of people living in stable and appropriate accommodation
- 4** Improve mental health outcomes for people from black communities in Lambeth
- 5** Improve physical health for people with mental health issues
- 6** Increase numbers of people in education, training, volunteering or employment

The chapters of this report reflect these six priorities.

Our main focus has been on keeping services running and dealing with increasing demand. We have also continued to develop our offer, including working with our partners Black Thrive and others from the Black community to develop our Culturally Appropriate Peer Support and Advocacy (CAPSA) service and with GPs and other 'primary care' colleagues to develop and pilot our Staying Well offer.



Photo: Sam Mellish

Our year in numbers

The Alliance's budget for 2020/21 was **£75.5m** to provide mental health services for an estimated working age population of **251,080¹**

 which is **£299** per person per year.

1. GLA Housing-Led mid-2021 Estimate

Lambeth GP records estimate there are around **4,000 people** with serious mental illness in the borough, the highest in the country and three times the national average.



Lambeth also has the **fifth highest levels** for diagnosed psychosis in the country, and is in the top **25%** for common mental illnesses.



Around **440** people a month were introduced to our new **Single Point of Access (SPA)** during the first half of the year under the COVID-19 lockdown. This rose to an average of **560** per month in the second half of the year.

Our new **Short Term Support** service received **2,288 introductions** in the financial year. The number increased by **7.6%** in the second half of the year.



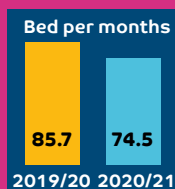
Our new **Focused Support** service received **613** introductions and discharged **359** people in its first 10 months.



The number of introductions fell by **12.5%** in the second half of the year.

 Our **Home Treatment Team** supported **896** in our third year compared with **778** in our second year. 

We helped more people to move on more quickly; reducing the number of in-patient beds used from an average of **85.7** beds per month in 2019/20 to **74.5** beds per month in 2020/21.



Our **Approved Mental Health Professionals** carried out **16%** more **Mental Health Act Assessments** in 2020/21 compared with 2019/20



Our **talking therapies** services supported **9,114** people this year, down only **1.7%** on the previous year despite COVID-19, with **57%** of people recovering this year compared to **52%** last year.



Challenges

Covid-19, including the intense winter 2020/21 wave, added to challenges we were already working on – equalities; increasingly complex mental health needs; staff turnover and financial pressures.

Covid-19

As we learn to live with Covid-19 and try to get back to 'normal', for some the impact of the virus has been profound and long lasting. All were affected – the tragic loss of loved ones, the impact of 'long covid' or the financial, emotional and physical effects of lockdown.

Lower numbers used Alliance services during most of 2020. Numbers started rising in December and accelerated from March 2021. We – like the rest of the UK – saw big increases in the number of people needing urgent mental health support in hospital beds.

Since opening in 2019 our Single Point of Access (SPA) had an average of 531 introductions per month. This dropped to just 284 in April 2020, then rose again to a peak of 686 in March 2021.

According to [Carers4Carers](#) the pandemic hit those caring for family or friends particularly hard, with extra stress, anxiety, depression and isolation, and some sharing suicidal thoughts. Many carers are grieving following the loss of the person they care for or family.

Living Well Centre (LWC) staff kept services going, temporarily closing one centre and pooling resources and workloads between Brixton and Streatham. We set up staff pods and duty rotas, and focused on urgent cases, necessary home visits (with PPE for all face-to-face contact), and medication management.



Living Well Centres

Centre Lead for Living Well Centre South West Anna says: "COVID brought big adjustments. To safeguard staff and others, we split into three working pods. Staff came into the office on set days and worked from home the rest – so if a staff member contracted COVID, only their pod would be impacted. Staff work closely with clients to ensure they have no COVID symptoms and haven't been around anyone with COVID.

"We offered virtual appointments wherever possible – especially for people at risk of COVID. Staff worked extremely hard to ensure we were able to talk about people's concerns. It took time to shift to online working but provided more options to stay connected.

"We saw caseloads and individual anxieties increase, but the teams maintained positivity and continue to provide excellent support – not only for the people we support but the compassion they show one another carried them through the year."

Inequality

Covid 19 has highlighted and, in many cases, worsened the inequalities in access, experience and outcomes in mental health felt by people from Black, Latinx, LGBTQ+, deprived, and other communities.

The Black Lives Matter movement, following the shocking murder of George Floyd, has prompted all of us to look at ourselves and our organisations to root out racism and other discrimination once and for all.

Staff turnover

Lambeth's Alliance continues to experience high staff vacancies and turnover in certain roles. We have more paid voluntary sector staff and peers (people with lived experience) providing care and support for example on medication, employment, housing and finances, so clinicians and social workers can focus on their areas of expertise. We continue to redesign roles to be more attractive and to introduce new development opportunities.



Photo: Sam Melish

Financial challenges

An increased demand for hospital beds following the early 2021 lockdown adds to underlying financial pressures in complex placements, community support and supported living. Welcome additional Government funding for mental health enables us to continue to develop services to best meet the needs of Lambeth residents.

As part of our legal Agreement, we are agreeing new Risk Share arrangements in 2021 to ensure that all five Alliance organisations continue to share

responsibility for the whole of the adult mental health system, whilst ensuring that money and other resources are focused on the things that will make the most difference to achieving our outcomes and improving the lives of the people we support.

While we continue to make sure that people get the right support for their needs and that all our services are cost-effective, we are working with service providers to redesign some services so they better meet today's increasingly complex needs. We are also exploring ways of investing more resources into our community services.

Crisis

PRIORITY OUTCOME (what we aim to deliver): Reduction in the number of people reaching crisis point. Prompt and appropriate support for people in crisis.



We can't always prevent someone who's getting mental health support from suffering a crisis – but the Alliance is developing new ways to help.

Too often, someone in a mental health crisis ends up in A&E or gets into situations where they're detained under the Mental Health Act for their own, or other people's safety.

Crisis outreach

Our innovative, community-based Crisis Outreach Service (COS) launched in September 2019 to provide rapid face-to-face clinical assessments for people not currently receiving mental health support. Over 300 people have been introduced to COS. Introductions come via the Single Point of Access (SPA), with nearly two thirds of these from GPs. Around 80% of them require an assessment.

Recent analysis shows that 86% of people were contacted within one hour and 50% of people were seen for an assessment within 24 hours (all were assessed within six days). 13% of those were admitted to an inpatient bed, the others went to our Short Term Support service, Home Treatment Team or were discharged to their GP.

COS are currently looking to employ a peer (with lived experience) to enhance the service, to work more closely with GPs to improve advice and minimize unnecessary introductions, and to extend their hours.





Carer Feedback

“Based on past experiences of South London and Maudsley, my expectations were low when I called in desperation for immediate help for my sister. By the next afternoon, you had visited and home visits started immediately. You also took the time to speak to me as a carer, patiently answering questions. Home visits have been truly amazing and everyone demonstrated high levels of empathy. Each person has clearly read the notes of previous visits, allowing conversations to flow smoothly and effectively.

“When my sister went missing for a weekend and the police were involved I can honestly say I’ve probably never experienced such amazing kindness, compassion and support at a time I needed it most. I am astounded by the lengths the team went to when they could have told me the service doesn’t extend to relatives. It was so important - people suffering with their mental health don’t always tell relatives the truth. This is what makes the difference in the service patients receive.”

- The South London and Maudsley 24-Hour Mental Health Support Line (**0800 731 286**) is a resource for anyone needing advice, help and assistance with their own mental health or the mental health of someone they support.
- Solidarity in a Crisis’ peer support line operates out of hours
Freephone: **0300 123 1922** - [Certitude website](https://www.certitude.org.uk/)
- Mosaic Clubhouse’s Evening Sanctuary helps people out of hours
<https://www.mosaic-clubhouse.org/sanctuary>

Despite these positive changes, the Alliance’s third year saw a 16% increase in the number of people assessed under the Mental Health Act², and a 10% increase in those detained (‘sectioned’). Although the proportion of people detained fell by 4% - see table below. Part of this rise is because two of Lambeth’s hospitals have Accident and Emergency departments. A significant number (often more than 50%) of Mental Health Act (MHA) Assessments are for people from outside Lambeth

Assessment and Detentions

| | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | | |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|--------|------------------|
| Assessments | 1,451 | 1,681 | 115.9% | 16% increase |
| Detentions | 1,144 | 1,254 | 109.6% | 10% increase |
| Detention rate % | 78.8% | 74.6% | -4.2% | 4 point decrease |

Independence

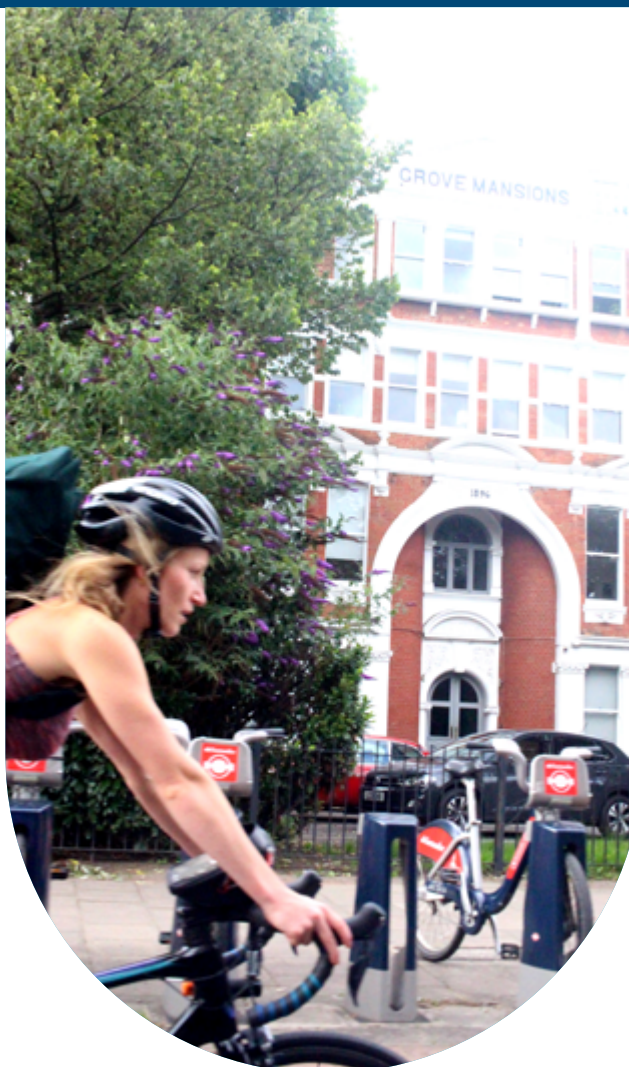


OUR PRIORITY OUTCOME: Increase in the number of people able to live independently.

Our approach is to support people to live in the community as independently as they are able. This means keeping down the time they are in hospital or places with full-time supervision to the minimum they need, and only when they really need this much support.

Our innovative Community Liaison and Support Service (CLASS) team has proven highly successful in minimizing the time people stay in hospital beds. The average length of stay fell from 35 days in 2019/20 to 27 in 2020/21. The Team is working with the whole system to tackle rising lengths of stay in recent months. Readmission rates also fell, with a 22% reduction in those readmitted within 30 days and a 34% reduction for those readmitted within 90 days (see table). Demonstrating that we are helping more people to avoid crisis and live independently. We have recently expanded the team to include peers to work with people in the wards, helping them to be ready to leave when they no longer need inpatient support.

We are also exploring the expansion of our successful Tree House offer, that offers **24/7 support** for those coming out of hospital who are not yet ready to return to the community.



Inpatient Readmissions

| | Number 19/20 | Number 19/20 | Number 20/21 | Number 20/21 |
|--------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | 30d | 90d | 30d | 90d |
| Apr | 5 | 6 | 5 | 1 |
| May | 5 | 7 | 2 | 1 |
| Jun | 1 | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| Jul | 6 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| Aug | 4 | 8 | 3 | 4 |
| Sep | 7 | 8 | 5 | 5 |
| Oct | 11 | 4 | 7 | 5 |
| Nov | 8 | 5 | 7 | 0 |
| Dec | 6 | 5 | 7 | 5 |
| Jan | 12 | 3 | 7 | 3 |
| Feb | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| Mar | 10 | 2 | 7 | 6 |
| Total | 77 | 56 | 60 | 37 |
| Change | | | -22% | -34% |

Case Study: Supported housing projects

Erin Stewart, Occupational Therapist with the Living Well Network Alliance Rehabilitation Team (ART), shares time between supported housing projects The Turrets and Lancaster Avenue.

“Coronavirus has brought new challenges, such as depriving clients of the few things they can engage in and highlighting how restricted one is without the latest smartphone, access to devices or the knowledge of how to use one. With a client group that already can be difficult to engage, I found teleworking really challenging. As the pandemic started to get real, I worked in 332 Brixton Road (Living Well Centre South East) twice a week as well as from home.

“Despite the pandemic we were able to work towards some very special goals. Lancaster Avenue Resident Jane is starting her first job as a cleaner with SRA (Southside Rehabilitation Association). When she first came to Lancaster she had difficulty maintaining her room and found criticism extremely frustrating. A year on, she takes great pride in her room: “It has to be nice, it’s my space”.

“Another special moment was supporting a client with planning and preparing healthy meals. We had done a shopping and cooking session and this day I asked what they were up to and with a beaming smile, showing the contents of their backpack, they answered “making these healthy wraps.”

“I look forward to restrictions easing and being able to support clients’ engaging with all the joys life has to offer.”

<https://www.lambethcollaborative.org.uk/16079>



Case Study: Extra care housing

“I’m really happy where I’m living (Lambeth extra-care housing)”, says Johnny
 “There’s two ponds nearby with ducks and tiny ducklings. I walk there with my three sisters - I haven’t been able to go out much because of Covid. Before this I was in hospital between 1986 and 1991. I was happy in the Turrets in Streatham (from 2016). I used to visit my mother, but sadly she passed away. Then I was helped to move to a flat at Railton Road (Certitude) with support workers. The Connect & Do hub was downstairs and a buddy group, which was good as I enjoy meeting people. My life is better now. I am able to do the things I like, to go on holiday to Kent and Ireland and see my family. I get my injection every month at 332 Brixton Road. I have more freedom, freedom to choose what I eat. I have a sweet tooth but good knowledge of what’s nutritious like fresh fruit and vegetables.”

Home

OUR PRIORITY OUTCOME: Increase in the number of people living in stable and appropriate accommodation

A home where you feel safe and happy is crucial to good mental health

A national lack of affordable homes to buy or rent leaves some well enough to leave hospital with nowhere to go, or waiting months, even years to move. Many people we work with need support at home; others need supported housing (full or part time). Over time, more people need our services, and the average amount of support they need increases.

The Alliance is working with providers and partners to develop new models of care, and to commission (buy) services that better meet the needs of those we support, with an emphasis on providing better support for those who need it in their homes. We are going to the market in 2021 to update around £3.5m worth of contracts with new services being delivered from 2022.

As well as our Tree House 24/7 supported accommodation to 'step forward' people from inpatient beds we have a range of services to increase the number of people in stable and appropriate homes. These include 17 BRiL (Brokerage and Resettlement in Lambeth) flats, sourced through Thames Reach, that provide a home for people to live independently with mental health support should they need it.





BRiL – a place for independent life

Fifty-six-year-old Ivor is thriving in the peace and quiet of his BRiL flat, following years in supported housing. With a rich and fulfilling younger life as a chef (and partygoer) in America, the Pacific islands and Europe before settling in London as a five-star hotel catering manager, his life ‘turned upside down’ around ten years ago. He reports suddenly one morning understanding that he woke up (as he calls it) ‘crazy’. Diagnosed with bipolar disorder, he remembers imprisonment for arson and hospital admissions for ‘psychotic’ episodes.

Discharged to the care of his GP in 2018, supported accommodation began to feel restrictive. A more permanent residence has given him the confidence to volunteer in mental health while developing his talent as an artist. His new home includes Wi-Fi and a laptop. For the first time in a decade he feels able to plan for the future.

Equality

OUR PRIORITY OUTCOME: Improvement in mental health outcomes for people from Black communities in Lambeth

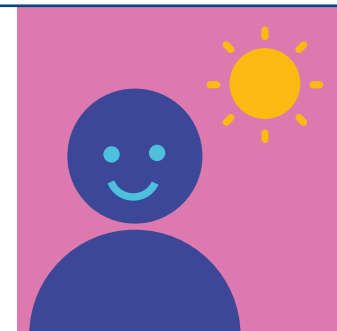
Inequalities in mental health support are a real challenge. We have long-term evidence that Black people in Lambeth are much less likely to seek support but in 2018 were nearly five times more likely than White British people to be detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act ('sectioned').

Photo courtesy Lambeth Black Men's Drama Project

Black and white residents are equally likely to ask for help themselves, and yet in 2020/21 three out of ten Alliance introductions were for people from Black communities, even though only two out of ten of Lambeth's community are Black.

Awareness raising

Alliance staff are developing our own understanding and awareness of discrimination, including a powerful anti-racism training course for staff. We are determined to find and root out discrimination, conscious and unconscious, that results in poorer mental health access, experience or outcomes for any of Lambeth's communities: whatever their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or other characteristic. As a core member of Lambeth Together's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group, and through the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework being pioneered by South London and Maudsley Trust we are working to put an end to racism and discrimination in Lambeth services.



Developing Culturally Appropriate Peer Support & Advocacy (CAPSA)

During the past year we have worked with Black Thrive and Black people who use our services to develop a new Culturally Appropriate Peer Support and Advocacy (CAPSA) service. Black Thrive will employ people from Black communities with lived experience of mental health issues to support and advocate (represent/speak up for) people from Black communities who need our support.

Keisha Swaby of Black Thrive says: "Co-design is more than a process, it's a social movement focused on challenging and changing inequitable power structures - designing with, not for people. For nine months Black Thrive has led on developing the Alliance's CAPSA offer. Our approach from the outset was to prioritise partnership with the community to ensure that the voices and lived experiences of Lambeth's Black communities are centred and embedded in CAPSA's co-design, development and delivery.

“Over 16 weekly co-design workshops via Zoom, the Service User Working Group (SUWG) - a dynamic group of service users with lived experience of Lambeth’s mental health services - worked to bring meaningful user participation and decision-making to this work:

- Focus Groups exploring what ‘culturally appropriate’ means – what Black communities want from mental health services, and to understand ‘culturally appropriate’ from a staff perspective.
- Developing a questionnaire and interviews to connect and gather insights.
- Creating the CAPSA Values Framework - identifying core values that must underpin this project and service – including Humanity, Empathy, Healing, Respect and Togetherness.
- Developing Job Descriptions for new Peer Support Workers, Peer Advocates and Service Manager roles.
- Helping to shape core elements of the CAPSA business case.
- Mapping and shaping every phase and touchpoint of the CAPSA service from eligibility to evaluation.

SUWG members thoughts on their work included: ‘This hasn’t been tokenistic. I haven’t been ‘used’ as a Black service user, I’ve used my Blackness and lived experience to give input’; ‘We had to think outside the box and think what the actual client would need’; ‘Not allowing what I was going through emotionally to overtake the purpose and what needed to be done’.

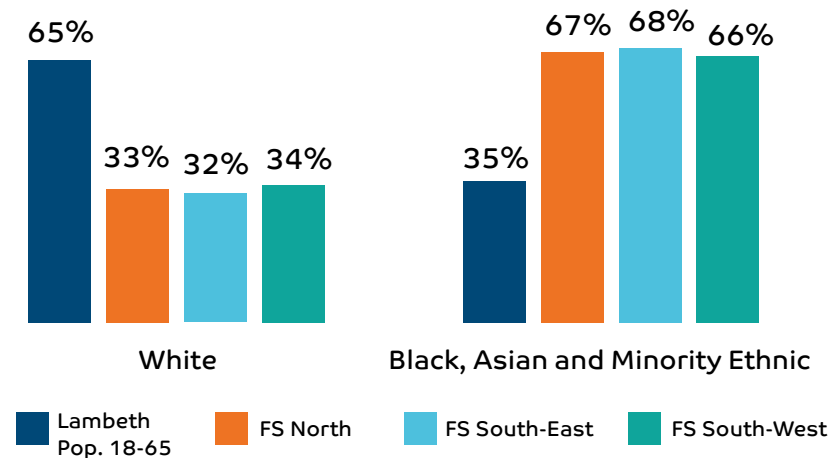
Black Thrive said: “On this co-design journey, we challenged mindsets, agreed, disagreed and compromised; maintaining a steadfast focus on our end goal to develop a service that meets the needs of Lambeth’s Black communities.”

Black Thrive is also developing a Culturally Appropriate Inpatient Service for Lambeth’s and the other boroughs’ wards across South London and Maudsley.

Alliance data

We have also started publishing our own data on the ethnicity of those we support. As the chart shows, although Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic communities make up around one third of Lambeth’s working age population, they represent around two thirds of the people supported by our Focused Support (long term support) service. Our focus is on understanding this and what we need to do to ensure that all our communities have good access, experience and outcomes from our services.

Ethnicity of Focused Support Caseloads mid-May 21



Physical health

OUR PRIORITY OUTCOME: Improvement in the physical health of people with mental health issues

Life expectancy for people with severe mental illness is 15–20 years lower than UK averages, mainly due to preventable physical illness.



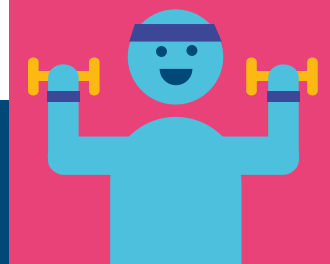
People living with severe mental illness (SMI) face one of the UK's greatest health inequality gaps. Factors can include side effects of anti-psychotic medication, lifestyle, and difficulties with mainstream health services. People with mental health needs are statistically less likely to have routine checks (blood pressure, weight and cholesterol) that might detect early symptoms of physical health conditions; and less likely to get help with giving up smoking, drinking less alcohol, or healthier diet and exercise.

The Alliance has developed two new offers to help:

- Since its launch in July 2020 our 'Consultant Connect' line for GPs and other clinicians to get advice from clinical colleagues received over 150 calls - and three times out of four we were able to avoid the need for a referral.



- 'Staying Well' involves regular meetings between GPs, practice nurses, social prescribers and Alliance psychiatrists, nurses, social workers and support workers to agree how best to support people's mental and physical health needs in the community. Feedback to pilot schemes in three GP surgeries was very positive, and we are now investing to roll out this work across Lambeth.



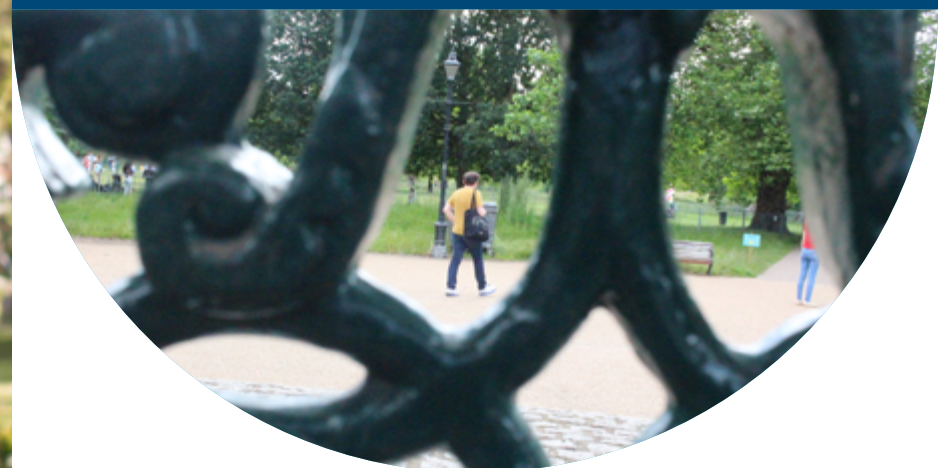
Community Champions

Archbishop's Park Community Trust offer local people dealing with mental health issues the positive open-air therapy of gardening. Helen Lees, Chief Trustee, says: "We work with social prescribers, Thames Reach and Mind. During the Pandemic we've carried on supporting students from Vauxhall City Farm's Roots and Shoots education programme who have barriers to learning - because closure would have meant letting vulnerable people down. The Mayor of London recognised our volunteering during COVID with a "Community Champion" award."



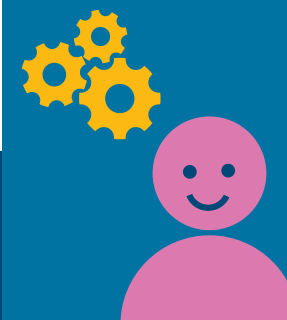
Health monitoring

We've invested in M8 Health Monitors for patients visiting Living Well Centres, Early Intervention Service and Lambeth Hospital Outpatient Service. The monitors measure blood pressure, height, weight, BMI and pulse. Matron Sara says: "Every service user we've asked described the monitors as 'easy and quick to use', and find it 'helpful to see results straight away' to help recognise physical health concerns. Staff agree the monitors also encourage them to check their own health, promoting role modelling."



Work and training

OUR PRIORITY OUTCOME: Increase in the number of people in education, training, volunteering or employment



A sense of purpose is central to good mental health. Many get theirs from studying, work or volunteering. The Alliance works with partners to employ, support and develop people.

We've developed an employment strategy to assist the people we support into meaningful employment. However, there's much to do. According to Government figures² in 2020, 23% of Lambeth working age adults (16-64) were not in employment, compared to 50% unemployed of those with mental health issues³- more than double.

Sadly, 91% of adults in contact with secondary mental health services were unemployed⁴ in 2019/20.

Volunteering and job opportunities with First Step Trust, Southside Rehabilitation Association (<https://www.sra-ltd.co.uk/>) and Mosaic Clubhouse (<https://www.mosaic-clubhouse.org/>) continue to illustrate collaborative working.



First Step peer support

First Step Trust (FST) Chief Executive Ronnie Wilson, MBE said: "The Alliance continues to provide exciting opportunities for good practice and new and innovative approaches, such as new ways of using technology (e.g. virtual reality training programmes) to help eliminate some barriers to learning."

Learning Development Worker Harriet, started as an FST volunteer in 2016 after her own mental health crisis. Now she delivers IT training to some of Lambeth's most disadvantaged residents. "I learnt that there are always others that will believe in you even if you do not believe in yourself" she says.

<https://www.lambethcollaborative.org.uk/16106>



No Wrong Door

Black Thrive Lambeth established the No Wrong Door Partnership (**promoted by Lambeth Council**) to help Black and Disabled residents into employment. No Wrong Door aims to build a collaborative, co-ordinated and coherent system between employment support providers in Lambeth, who will work together to support our Black and Disabled residents to find meaningful employment. The partnership is set on working collaboratively – sharing data, resources, and referrals, as well as learning and best practice. The No Wrong Door Partnership brings together five Lambeth voluntary sector organisations offering employment support – including three who work directly with people when the barrier to work is mental health.

- **Mosaic Clubhouse** support individuals socially or vocationally displaced by mental illness to regain the confidence and skills to improve life chances.
- **Status Employment** helps those with serious mental health illness find employment, as well as providing education, training, and volunteering opportunities to help individuals move closer to work.
- **Vocation Matters** is a user-led project integrated within South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. They provide time-unlimited, vocational information and support for people who use mental health services in Lambeth.

2. <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157253/printable.aspx>

3. <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-outcomes-framework/february-2021/domain-2-enhancing-quality-of-life-for-people-with-long-term-conditions-nof/2.5.i-employment-of-people-with-mental-illness-formerly-indicator-2.5>

4. <https://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/chart/what-proportion-of-adults-in-contact-with-secondary-mental-health-services-are-employed>

Involving people

Co-production - involving people with an equal say in the design, development and, increasingly, delivery of services - is at the heart of the Alliance's way of working.

We're exploring how to create more opportunities to include the people we support in decision-making and using their experiences of services in shaping how we work.

Lived experience

People we support say they value talking to someone with lived mental health experience—we call them 'peers'. The Alliance has significantly increased the number of peers working in Lambeth.

Lambeth Service User & Carer Advisory Group

A network of around 15 people with lived experience as service users or carers bring their own perspective to the South London and Maudsley management team's plans and developments. They have joined Alliance staff in working groups and workshops to develop new ways of doing things, meeting every month via Teams.

In 2020/21 we introduced peers into wards to help inpatients move on.

CAPSA user group

A Service User Working Group worked alongside Black Thrive to develop a new Culturally Appropriate Peer Support and Advocacy (CAPSA) service. CAPSA will employ people with lived experience from local Black communities to build trust support communities to come forward earlier about their mental health.



Photo: Sam Wellish



Living Well Centre: Peer support

Holly, Peer Support Worker at the Living Well Centre, Brixton says:
“I’m currently talking to people on the phone and the main reason for introductions is isolation and loneliness. The aim is that at the end of the sessions the person will be discharged to their GP. I feel I understand where clients are coming from. I was diagnosed bipolar in 2012 and moved back to live with my parents having daily visits from the Home Treatment Team. Familiar surroundings with people I trust enabled my recovery.”

<https://www.lambethcollaborative.org.uk/16072>

Carers

Carers have had a particularly hard time during the pandemic. The family, friends and neighbours who care for those with mental health needs are often the most important part of their support network. In most cases, carers know the people they support far better than we ever can.

<https://www.carershub.org.uk/>



Looking forward

As the Alliance moves into year four, and we learn to live with Covid 19, we redouble our efforts to improve mental health support in Lambeth and tackle challenges.

Covid-19

We are increasing COVID-safe face to face support, but also offer the telephone or online choices many asked for. We are working with staff to ensure that those who have worked at home can return safely, with a mix of office, home and 'community' working likely to become the norm.

Equalities

The pandemic highlighted the inequalities felt by many in Lambeth. Top priorities are building trust and improving how we work so everyone, of any background, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, feels able to come forward, and receive, support tailored to their needs.

Finances

Recent Government investment in mental health, including £0.9m of Community Mental Health Transformation funding and £1m brought forward from future years is very welcome, but we have to balance investing in new and better services with historical budget pressures, and an increase in demand – especially following the pandemic. We are refreshing our agreement in which all partners covered their own costs. Sharing will help us make the best of our money and solve problems collectively and innovatively. We plan to retender (seek best offers from providers) for £1.8m of mental health support contracts and £1.7m of other mental health contracts – in order to offer people more independence, better meet their needs and deliver best value. We'll continue to integrate teams; making services more joined up and accessible. We'll continue pioneering new, better ways to support people while reducing overheads and costs.

Information Technology

One immediate priority is an IT system to manage introductions to our Single Point of Access. We are also looking to embed and build upon all the improvements in remote (away from an office) working, online and telephone meetings and assessments and other technological advances made during the pandemic. We continue to seek improvements in how partners can share information automatically and improve the quality and speed of support, while protecting personal data and security. We are working with our IT colleagues on making it easier for people to get information about services, book appointments and even receive support online.

New services

As well as Culturally Appropriate Peer Support and Advocacy (CAPSA) to improve the effectiveness of community support, we will roll out 'Staying Well' to join up support from GPs and local communities with Alliance staff to provide specialist support quickly and easily. Thanks to additional funding, we have created new roles based in (and jointly paid for by) GP surgeries to enhance Staying Well. They will support social prescribing and reablement (short-term support for those coming out of hospital or other intense mental health support).

Our new Transitions Lead will work across children and young people (CYP) and adult mental health. This is long overdue, with young people often facing a 'cliff edge' at 18 as they try to move from child to adult services. We are working with colleagues to improve communication and planning, and hope to develop a 'transition offer' for those aged 16 to 25.

The already high demand for personality disorder support (renamed 'complex needs' at the request of people the service supports) is growing. Those we support have worked to help us make the services more joined up and accessible. We're expanding our psychological therapy workforce to suit new levels of need. We'll deliver this from our Living Well Centres as part of our Staying Well offer.

Our workforce

We know that people who feel happy and cared for are better able to deliver care. We want to ensure that everyone working for the Alliance works in the 'Alliance Way' – a kind, caring and respectful approach that builds on the strengths and assets of the people we support, including their caring networks to meet their needs in the best, least restrictive way.

Early in 2020 we started working with experts to develop an innovative workforce development programme helping us to be more compassionate, culturally sensitive and confident in supporting Lambeth's diverse communities. We are now working with staff to develop the next phase of our workforce strategy.

Learning, innovating, sharing

A new monthly listening event for Single Point of Access users is part of improving how we gather feedback from staff and people we support, and use this feedback to improve services. We'll continue to use feedback, learning from our services, and the best mental health services across the UK and beyond, to develop new and better ways to support the people of Lambeth.

We'll continue to work quickly and flexibly, testing new ideas, shifting money to things that work and stopping those that don't.

We'll continue to share learning, including mistakes (from which we usually learn the most), with colleagues across the country and overseas.





“The last year has been a challenge for both the communities in Lambeth we care for and our staff that provide care. I have been impressed but not surprised by the resilience our staff and communities have shown during this time by adapting to the way we have had to provide care and to keep services open and accessible in light of the changes brought on by Coronavirus. I want to say thank you.

“During the last 15 months we continued to work with partners to develop our services in spite of the restrictions faced. There is still more to do and we will use the year’s learning to deliver a mental health service that is accessible to all, where those receiving care experience a compassionate service from those giving care and more importantly you achieve good outcomes.

“We will continue to work towards reducing the inequality gap in mental health care in Lambeth and as an Alliance we look forward to working with you to continue to transform the services we provide in Lambeth. I’d like to thank staff, service users and carers, and the Lambeth Community for their support to continue this important journey.”

Sabrina Phillips, Interim Alliance Director

We want to hear your thoughts and experiences of mental health services in Lambeth. Please email us: LWNA@lambethtogether.net