

Southmead Project

Annual Report 2024-25

Counselling
and support for
survivors of abuse
and addiction
across Bristol and
surrounding
areas



southmeadproject

Healing is possible

www.southmeadproject.org

Foreword



Imogen McCabe, CEO

This year the charity saw an expansion of its unique services, alongside changes to its staff and volunteer team. Emma Bull was the Acting CEO while Imogen McCabe was on maternity leave, and we welcomed Clare Jones as the Head of Therapeutic Services. Our Active Recovery Project grew from offering one group a week to three, thanks to the support of NHS England alongside the National Lottery. This broadened our reach as two groups will be taking referrals from organisations in the Avon and Somerset Sexual Violence Alliance (SARSAS, Womankind, The Bridge and Kinergy), so that survivors of sexual abuse are supported across Bristol and Somerset. As part of this expansion, we welcomed Sadie Tizzard as our Active Recovery Lead for Somerset and Josh Weinstock as our Active Recovery Practitioner.

Our Nexus counselling service grew as we partnered with Ara to support survivors who have an addiction to drugs or alcohol who live in their supported accommodation. The service also continued to support people in-person at the Southmead Project, Hawkspring and Bristol Drugs Project (BDP), as well as online and by phone.

Our long-term counselling service has offered clients up to 30 sessions, giving people a meaningful opportunity to process and heal from past abuse. Ros Vitkovitch became a Volunteer Counsellor on placement, helping us to support additional clients.

In the past year we have collaborated with our partners within the Avon and Somerset Sexual Violence Alliance on the Pathfinder Project, which has focused on co-production work with Lived Experienced Leads who have accessed our services. This insight into clients' experiences has helped inform the practical changes that need to be made within the sector to improve access to services across Bristol. We are also grateful for the opportunity to train our counselling team in Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET) and Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) techniques, which are NICE guideline approved interventions for processing trauma.

In addition, we developed a Trauma-informed Workplace pack for employment settings to better support staff who have experienced abuse. The resource equips employers with the knowledge and tools they need to understand what trauma is and its impact, how to recognise the symptoms, and how to support employees with reasonable adjustments. In addition, it can be used by employees to advocate for the support they may need.

We were fortunate to be the charity of the year for Henbury Golf Club, who raised a significant amount of funding and went above and beyond to support us both financially and by helping to raise awareness of the charity's work.

We would like to thank our wonderful team of staff, volunteers and trustees for their ongoing efforts and dedication, which has provided such high-quality support over the last year. Thank you also to the many

survivors who have entrusted us to work alongside them, and our partner organisations for their tireless work and collaboration. We give a sincere thanks to our generous funders for making it possible to provide these crucial services, including the larger trusts and foundations and personal donations we received.

Trustee report

Simon Craker, Chair of the Board of Trustees

Following our excellent 30th Anniversary year, my first task is to thank all those that made it special in many different ways. Especial thanks go to the Senior Leadership Team whose diligence and hard work kept the Project on the right path at all times and saw services develop. Nicola Pender also did a sterling job in continually raising funds on our behalf. Also, special thanks must go to the Henbury Golf Club Captains who chose us as their charity of the year. Their support was outstanding, as was the huge amount of money that they and their members raised on our behalf. We cannot thank them enough. Of course, our staff were as ever outstanding and they continued to provide a fantastic service to our clients. Our relationship with Ara also developed well and will continue next year.

As well as the above, Emma Bull, (standing in as CEO for Imogen who was on maternity leave), developed our relationship with NHS England culminating in wonderful support for our Active Recovery Project. This is being led by Amy Derrick and means that two new groups have been set up. The funding has been granted to 2029, meaning that life changing support can be given to our clients. Furthermore, discussions with Turning Point have successfully progressed and we will be working in partnership with them next year.

Lastly, I would like to thank my co-trustees, who once again have supported and helped the Senior Leadership Team, including Imogen on her return from maternity leave. We continue to monitor and advise on the progression of this special charity and move its continued service to clients forward for a long while into the future.



Our team



Our support

"I find coming to the group a great comfort, talking to others [who have] similar problems as myself"

Family support group member

Long-term Counselling

We support survivors who have experienced any type of abuse (including sexual, physical, emotional and domestic abuse and neglect), aged 18 and above, of all genders, who live in Bristol, South Gloucestershire, BANES and North Somerset. This year we recruited a volunteer counsellor in training, adding to the number of counselling sessions offered and supporting the development of counsellors who specialise in this area. We continue to encourage the professional development of our counsellors and in the last year, as a result of our partnership with the Sexual Violence Alliance, two counsellors have qualified as EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing) therapists, a recommended trauma treatment in NICE guidelines. We offer counselling in person at the Southmead Project, online and by phone. This year we have offered 1,991 sessions to 131 clients within long-term counselling.

"I feel that my self-esteem has flourished and I have a much more positive view of myself. I no longer feel as much shame around past experiences."

Counselling client

"I'm extremely grateful for your service, I have had many years of counselling but this has by far been the most positive experience I've had."

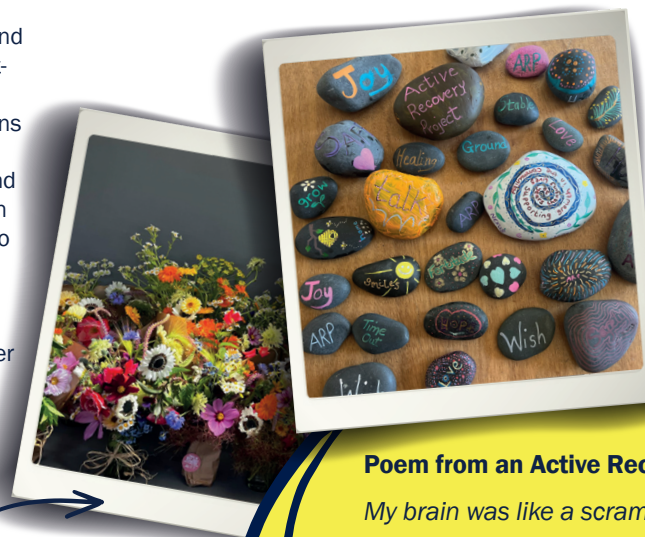
Counselling client

Nexus Counselling

Our Nexus counselling service provides up to 12 sessions of counselling for clients who have experienced abuse and who currently have an addiction to drugs or alcohol. Referrals are made by drug and alcohol treatment agencies, combining support around an individual's substance misuse and the impact of trauma, as we understand that survivors of abuse will often use drugs or alcohol to help them to cope with their trauma symptoms. Sessions provide support and practical strategies to enable clients to deal with anxiety, depression, flashbacks and other symptoms of trauma. Psycho-education is used to explain how the brain processes trauma and supports clients to better understand post-traumatic stress disorder and associated feelings and emotions. Counselling sessions take place at the Southmead Project, Bristol Drugs Project, Hawkspring (Drug and Alcohol Support) in Hartcliffe and at ARA in Bristol City Centre. Nexus sessions are also held remotely to ensure we are accessible to as many clients as possible. We will be able to support more clients next year as we will be working collaboratively with other agencies, including Turning Point, BDP, Hawkspring, One25 and the Nelson Trust.

Family Support Group

We run a Family Support Group every week for people who support someone with an addiction to drugs or alcohol, or for anyone who is affected by someone else's addiction. This unique group provides support like no other in the city and has been running for 17 years. It is facilitated by Emma Summerill, who is a qualified substance misuse specialist. It provides a confidential and non-judgmental space for people to share their experiences, and they can attend as many sessions as they wish. It takes place every Wednesday evening at the Southmead Project at 7-9pm.



Active Recovery Project creative workshops

Active Recovery Project

This has been a big year for Active Recovery. We were successful in gaining NHS funding to expand the project to support clients from our partners within the Sexual Violence Alliance. We now run Active Recovery sessions on Wednesdays and Thursdays in Bristol and are soon to launch a weekly session in Somerset. We were delighted to welcome Sadie and Josh as Active Recovery Lead and Practitioner, doubling our Active Recovery staff team. The aims of the project remain the same - to listen to and provide choice for our fantastic members to experience joy, connection and safety, in the company of others who share a sense of comradeship and compassion. Active Recovery members continue to astound us with their abilities and sheer courage to widen their windows of tolerance. This year we have tried many new activities and some old favourites, such as canoeing, foraging, surfing, axe throwing, high ropes, willow weaving, boxing, pottery painting, woodworking and more, working with our partners in the community. At sessions

members can practice many other skills, such as self-compassion and grounding techniques, that they can use outside of Active Recovery, to empower them to experience life in new ways.

Poem from an Active Recovery member:

*My brain was like a scrambled egg
And then it gradually fried
My soft boiled got hard boiled
No matter how I tried
I learned to show myself some love and affection
And now thanks to AR I'm poached to perfection*

our impact

In 2024-25 we delivered the following support...

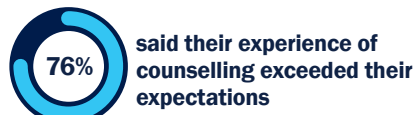
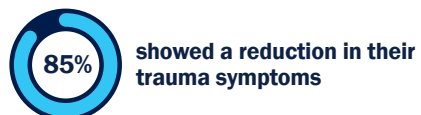
2,728 counselling sessions offered

208 clients received counselling

80 Active Recovery members were supported across 44 activities

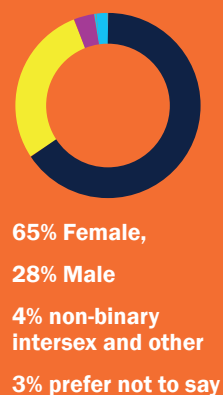
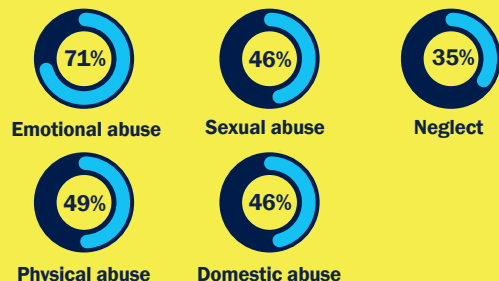
17 people attended the Family Support Group

As a result, our counselling service had the following impact on clients...



Who we supported

In 2024-25, on average each counselling client had experienced three abuse types. Here is how many had experienced each one:



Our accounts

Income

Grants	£347,242
Donations	£67,249
Total Income	£414,491

Expenditure

Charitable activities	£454,916
Raising funds	£14,818
Total expenditure	£469,734

Surplus/deficit

	£55,243
Funds brought forward	£310,065
Funds carried forward	£254,822
Consisting of:	
Restricted funds	£7,143
Unrestricted funds	£247,679

"I would say having suffered all my life with depression and mental health problems this service has kept me alive now. Without the Southmead Project... I'm not sure I would still be here so Thank You."

Counselling client

A heartfelt
thank you

to all our supporters
who help make our
work possible.

Southmead Project

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