



The Wellspring Annual Report 2015



The Wellspring would like to thank the following organisations for their invaluable support throughout 2015:



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Wellspring Chairman's Remarks

Mr Andrew Ayres

“The Wellspring now provides access to medical and dental advice; support in addressing drug or alcohol dependency; and help with life skills...”

Those closely involved with the Wellspring often say that our ambition should be to see the project become redundant, because the many services provided by the Wellspring provides are no longer needed.

Sadly, as each year goes by, it is apparent that this is an ambition that we are increasingly unlikely ever to see fulfilled.

In the last twelve months the numbers of homeless and vulnerable people accessing the Wellspring has risen significantly. Already, the indications are that changes to the benefit system, for example, will ensure that the demand on the project's services will continue to increase.

In last year's Annual Report I stressed how, over the quarter century of its existence, the Wellspring had developed. From being a place where food was provided for the homeless and hungry, visitors are now being supported in many different ways.

The Wellspring now provides access to medical and dental advice; support in addressing drug or alcohol dependency; and help with life skills, money management and surviving abuse.

The last year has seen work of the Wellspring reaching a wider audience, featuring in a number of television programmes highlighting the issues of homelessness and rough-sleeping. This exposure, allied to an active online presence, has helped to ensure that the number of the Wellspring's friends and supporters continues to grow. And the support of those friends and supporters, both practical and financial, is essential

It is an example of how the goodwill and hard work of a pool of volunteers, when blended with the professionalism and commitment of a small and loyal staff group, can provide a resource that, day in and day out, is meeting the needs of those amongst us who are most vulnerable.

As I have already said, the need for the Wellspring's services, and the costs of answering that need, are ever-growing. To ensure that we maintain those services, I would encourage everyone to continue to promote the good work of the Wellspring, and to encourage the generous people and businesses of Stockport to support the Wellspring financially.

Thank you for reading this. And, on behalf of the Wellspring's board of directors, can I thank Jonathan and his staff, and all volunteers and supporters, for their efforts.



Project Managers Report



10985 is a number I am extremely proud of. This is the number of positive outcomes achieved by The Wellspring staff team in 2015. That's around 30 outcomes a day for every day of 2015. Now some of these outcomes are small pieces of work, simple pieces of support and guidance which the long term effects of are difficult to measure. We find that homelessness can often be prevented or resolved by very simple things. Simple pieces of advice and support, interventions at the right time and giving professional guidance, but most of all, positive engagement with the client group. It is that positive engagement that has created 10985 positive outcomes. It is very much down to the skills and dedication of the project staff and volunteers to have such positive engagement with vulnerable people in Stockport. The Wellspring is without any doubt a very productive project.

“The number of people accessing The Wellspring on a daily basis continues to rise, on average approximately 120 people a day used the service in 2015.”

Contained in this Annual report for 2015 are reports from each member of project staff. I strongly feel that these reports bring to life the commitment and dedication of the staff team. In 2015 we have again documented an increase in homelessness and the number of people presenting as homeless. 392 people presented as homeless at The Wellspring in 2015. Wellspring gave over 1600 separate pieces of housing advice and housing related support to people in 2015. We will continue to build on our skills and knowledge in this area as it has proven time and time again to be very successful in changing vulnerable people's situations and ultimately their lives.

We have recorded quite a sharp rise in the number of people accessing the service for support with Drug and Alcohol issues. This rise is justified as Drugs and Alcohol worker Miss Kirstie Wood has been in post at The Wellspring for all of 2015 and has been dedicated to working solely on the issues associated with Drugs and Alcohol. It was a great achievement for Kirstie and The Wellspring to be featured in “Hidden and Homeless” a BBC documentary about youth homelessness with the rapper

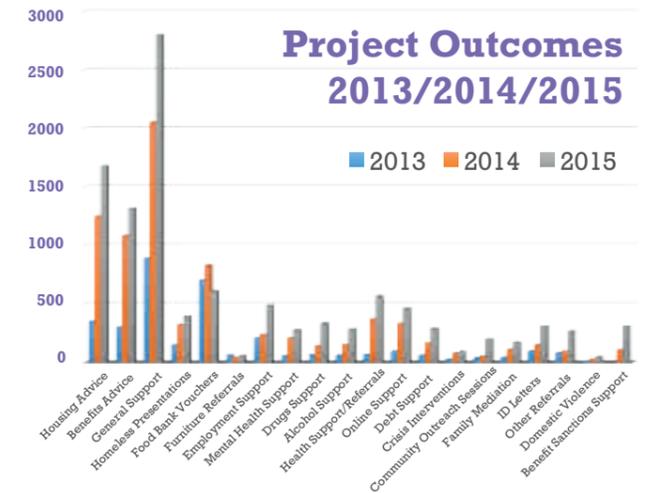
Professor Green. We received a tremendous amount of positive feedback from the programme and lots of people found it very informative and eye opening. Youth homelessness is an area of work that we are particularly interested in and determined to put as much resource as we possibly can in to. Tackling the issues of youth homelessness can again be very simple things, simple phone calls, mediation with parents, claiming the correct benefits, getting young people motivated to make positive changes to their lives. It is crucially important to do this work because if these low level issues of youth homelessness are not addressed then young people's lives can very often spiral out of all control very quickly and then they become entrenched with issues that are much more complicated to address.

The number of people accessing The Wellspring on a daily basis continues to rise, on average approximately 120 people a day used the service in 2015. Our dedicated army of volunteers have been outstanding in the service they have provided. The Wellspring has always been blessed with the support of so many passionate hard working volunteers. Over the years 100's of people have volunteered at the project. Without these people we would not be able to offer the services that we do today. We would not have developed as much as we have. In 2015, 4224 volunteer places were used, with each volunteer working around 5 hours, that's 21120 volunteer hours in 2015. If The Wellspring paid all our volunteers the national living wage it would have cost £152,000.

Our volunteers get involved in lots of different ways, from working in our kitchen preparing, cooking and serving a nutritious meal to over 120 people per day to befriending people who use the project offering advice and support to people who need it. The Wellspring has a real diverse mix of volunteers with people from just about every background you could think of. I am always impressed by the selflessness of our volunteers, they work so hard and to such a brilliant standard. In 2014 The Wellspring was awarded The Queens Award of Voluntary Service. This was such a deserved award for all the volunteers at The Wellspring.

Many makeshift campsites have popped up around Manchester and Stockport over the last 12 months. Visiting these places is high on my agenda as I feel strongly that engagement with services is the key to changing people's circumstances and ultimately their lives. For the last few years The Wellspring has been involved in running The Rucksack project in Stockport which encourages people to donate practical items to homeless people in order to make that experience of rough sleeping a little easier. It's a joy to be able to give these items out to homeless people on the streets. The donations make a massive difference to people's lives.

One thing that I have always found surprising is that when someone who is homeless makes that first contact with our service, they have usually been homeless for several months and in some cases years before they have accessed any support. Homelessness is very rarely reported right away. It makes me wonder exactly how many people are currently sleeping rough or sofa surfing and are yet to engage with any service. I fear that this is a very high number. Homelessness services across Stockport are already at saturation point. The cuts in funding that the government have made to essential services are impacting hard on some of the most vulnerable people in our society. The problem is going to get worse as more cuts to services are made. Wellspring is fortunate to have such fantastic support from the community of Stockport, we very much hope that this support continues.



Project outcomes completed by the Project staff team at Wellspring in 2013/2014/2015.

	2013	2014	2015
Housing Advice	350	1253	1679
Benefits Advice	300	1085	1314
General Support	889	2053	2800
Homeless presentations	149	324	392
Food Bank Vouchers	701	832	612
Furniture referrals	64	43	59
Employment Support	209	239	487
Mental Health Support	57	206	279
Drugs support	71	142	338
Alcohol Support	62	156	286
Health Support/Referrals	71	371	572
Online support	96	333	465
Debt support	62	171	291
Crisis Interventions	32	77	92
Community Outreach Sessions	40	55	202
Family Mediation	45	111	174
ID Letters and Support	95	150	312
Other referrals	80	169	271
Domestic Violence Support	15	29	48
Benefit Sanctions Support	0	109	312
Total Outcomes:	3386	7908	10985

The Wellspring is already a very productive project however I strongly feel that it could be more so. In 2016 we have begun to trial longer opening times in an attempt to increase engagement with the people who use the service. It is my ultimate aim to open The Wellspring 7 days and 7 nights a week.

We have received some fantastic support from local businesses and organisations in 2015. We have been blessed with support from both Stockport County Football Club and the Stockport County Fan's Cooperative. Big Yellow Storage in Stockport have continued to provide the charity with free storage for all our Rucksack Project donations. Cardinal Maritime and Worley Parsons have been brilliant in running fundraising events and volunteering at the project. Many other organisations have got involved and without this fantastic support we would not be able to achieve so many positive outcomes with homeless and disadvantaged people in Stockport. Thank you to everyone who has supported The Wellspring in 2015. We very much look forward to both a successful & productive 2016.



Alex Knight Project Worker

How many people are lucky enough to say they look forward to going into work every day? Fortunately for me, I am one of those people. Every day is different- you just never know who is going to walk through the doors and what challenges are faced. Working in such a diverse environment is emotional and inspiring. The Wellspring, for those who access the service, can become a sanctuary, somewhere to feel accepted and safe regardless of an individual's situation. The ethos of The Wellspring, our no eligibility criteria and open door policy means, if someone needs our help, time and time again they can walk through the door and access the service- it is as simple as that. Our amazing volunteers continue to provide a vital aspect of our service; the volunteer teams are stronger than ever and the support we as staff and the members receive from them is incredible and inspiring.

Working in this environment means we get to know people, really know people; building relationships like we do means that sometimes people tell us things they may never have disclosed before. You get to learn about someone's past, sometimes revealing the reasons why they've found themselves in a difficult situation. Greeting someone by name, giving them a friendly smile can make a huge difference to their day.

A member who had been accommodated following a period of homelessness once said The Wellspring would always be to them "a home away from home."

When asked to put together an annual report I had a look back at my records and it made me realise that, the longer I am here, the more I see people trapped in a cycle whether it be a cycle of addiction, depression or just in a cycle of life that does not seem to allow progression. People face many barriers, with constant government changes and a fragmented, complicated system. It can take years to support people into independence. Quite often with 'payment by results' or unrealistic time scales for support, people are continuously falling through the net of other services.

Some people may access our service just the once for a small, simple piece of advice and we never see them again, others come in, move on and then sometimes return. Some people I could set my watch by and tell you exactly where they will sit in the main room. There are so many reasons why people access our service and so many things we do it can be difficult to put into words. I hope that by giving some examples of the work I have done over the past year, I can somehow give the reader and small glimpse into The Wellspring.

'Rupert's' Story

I first supported Rupert whilst I was a social work student nearly 6 years ago. During one of our outreach visits we found him sleeping under a bridge. He came to The Wellspring and I supported him to apply for, and eventually move into, his own accommodation. When I returned around a year later Rupert had been evicted from his property and was rough sleeping again. We started the long process of re-applying for housing and he again moved into his own accommodation. Rupert suffers from depression and, during his darker days, drinks heavily, disengages from all services, and becomes at risk of eviction. During the past 4 years I have taken the time to learn his pattern of behaviour, identify his triggers and from this support him to prevent any further evictions. This can involve anything from outreach, practical support, such as new benefit claim, and emotional support. Rupert is currently in employment; becoming more independent and has recently saved up and bought a car- a prime of example of how long term intervention can break the 'cycle'.

'Tom's' Story

Tom found himself homeless following a relationship breakdown. He accessed The Wellspring and was referred to hostel accommodation. An incident occurred, Tom was evicted and he set up a tent next to the canal. Tom accepted responsibility for his actions that led to the eviction and was extremely remorseful. Tom was also excluded from the housing register. Everything, to him, seemed hopeless. I felt quite strongly that the decision to exclude him from the housing register had been made without a full overview of the facts. There was also an element of inequality as others involved in the incident had since been given a second chance. Tom saw no point in appealing, he was in completed despair, his tent was repeatedly slashed and his belongings stolen. With nothing to lose Tom decided appealing was his only option, I supported him to write a letter and liaised with housing. His case was heard by a panel, his appeal was accepted and his housing application reactivated. Two weeks later Tom successfully bid and signed for his own flat. Tom has now moved in and is currently in the process of decorating his new home.

'Luke's' Story

The legal high 'Spice' has been a particularly prevalent drug used by our client group over the past 12 months. Many report using it as a substitute for class A substances such as heroin. Spice is potent, addictive and can have an extremely adverse impact on an individual's behaviour. Following a period of homelessness after eviction from his property Luke was finally supported into temporary accommodation. This was massive step forward for him as he had spent a long time sleeping in a shed like structure in some woods, during this time he had used spice to cope with his situation. Luke settled well into his accommodation and engaged with staff. One night he used spice, his behaviour became bizarre and erratic, and he was immediately asked to leave. Luke was dismayed at how he had behaved, having no recollection of his actions and realising that potentially he could lose everything. I had known Luke for four years and knew this behaviour was very out of character and he wanted so desperately to change. I phoned the accommodation and advocated on his behalf, pleading his case to the manager. The housing manager agreed to give Luke a second chance, moving him to a different site. He progressed well there and didn't smoke spice again. Luke told me he never felt himself again after the spice episode. It's frightening that something that can be bought legally in a shop can have such a prolonged, and potentially devastating effect on someone

An update from 'Jon'

Last year I talked about Jon, who was stuck in a cycle of homelessness, drug use and many other complex issues. After being in temporary accommodation over 10 times we facilitated a move to his sister's out of area. With the support of his sister and The Wellspring, Jon completed a home detox off methadone. 2015 for him was a challenging and proactive year, Jon passed his driving test and signed for his first ever independent flat. Jon still faces challenges and struggled emotionally to deal with the transition but support from the Wellspring continues and he is progressing well.

"When I first got my flat, well, I remember walking to the housing office with Alex. I absolutely could not take it in, it was the best but most overwhelming thing I have ever experienced. I was scared but at the same time the happiest I have been in a long time, I cried. Alex reassured me and supported through signing

the tenancy and understanding it all. For the past 30 years I have been used to prisons, children's homes or hospitals, I felt safe there and in some ways at home. I have even been in the same hostel 10 times over. When I moved into my flat I had nothing. I wasn't liking the change, so I tried messing things up I didn't want the responsibility so it was easier just to sabotage it, I felt pressure. The flat on paper was perfect, out of area and just down the road from my sister's house but I just could not get my head round it, things were changing and I was frightened. I had nothing furniture wise and had no idea about bills and the responsibility but Alex helped with it all, setting up direct debits to make sure things were kept on top off and supporting me to collect things to make it into a home. I am now nearly one year on, I look back at my life now and it's all so different. Alex and The Wellspring helped me immensely emotionally and physically, truthfully I can't thank them enough, I could not have done it without them. My outlook on life is so different now, I have achieved things I never dreamed possible and I appreciate everything I've got. As for me now; I will always be involved with The Wellspring voluntary work but as I have achieved so much I can now start looking to pursue my dream job and start work. On my wall in my front room it says 'Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass. It's about learning to dance in the rain'. I look at it every day when I walk in the door, it's true, you have to take opportunities, no-one can change my life but me."

"The Wellspring, for those who access the service, can become a sanctuary, somewhere to feel accepted and safe regardless of an individual's situation."

At the latter end of 2015 tragically one of our service users passed away, the emotional impact this had on staff, volunteers and members was immense. I am thankful that the final interactions I had with him were positive, you just never know when that last moment might be, especially working with this client group. It really made me think about the work I do, such a tragedy stays with you for a long time after the event with people in such a sad situation. It makes me more determined to continue trying to support some of the most vulnerable people in society.

More than ever this past year I have experienced those feelings/questions that I am sure most working within the sector feel. Did I do enough? Am I doing too much? Am I creating dependency or encouraging independence? As with many of those I questions; I do not think there is a clear definitive answer. One thing I would say is that as a service and a staff team; collectively we try. Sometimes people aren't ready or don't want to change but we keep trying. Sooner or later something will give and whether it be eating a hot meal, having a shower or breaking that cycle- positive change can happen.



Alison Hunt

Project Worker

2015 was an amazing second year for me. I would like to introduce myself as Alison Hunt. I was successfully recruited for the position of a project worker for The Wellspring in March 2014 and I am currently in my second year.

My working background has been with Stockport MBC for 25 years in Adult social care, Services for Young People and Greater Manchester fire and rescue. All my previous experiences within these positions now provide a positive contribution to my role at The Wellspring.

I feel that I have dedicated myself to The Wellspring as a project worker to support vulnerable and disadvantaged people. This makes me feel privileged and proud to be part of the project. How wonderful to have the pleasure to work and support with such amazing people.

So proud to be part of such a diverse team.

Challenging, rewarding and emotional.

I'm passionate about changing people's lives.

The Wellspring is the place where it happens.

My role of project worker is supporting clients with a very diverse range of needs -these include homelessness, mental health, young people, the elderly with learning difficulties, people at risk of becoming homeless, people with very complex needs and who lead chaotic lives, people who have suffered domestic abuse or who have been sexually exploited and people who no longer know who they are any more.

I believe that everyone has the right to access all opportunities. Due to people's circumstances these opportunities are not available or as easily accessible to the clientele I am working with. The Wellspring has an open door policy and non-judgmental approach. We offer this safe environment to all who seek our help.

I meet many people who are at crisis point, who are in such a bad place. It is difficult for people to see light at the end of the tunnel.

Something the smallest personal interaction is the most significant in a person's life. Making a phone call can prevent someone being evicted and becoming homeless. Or it may just be being the only voice that is positive towards them.

I see my role as supporting individuals on their journey and support them practically and emotionally to be able to make positive change. One to one support goes a long way to making people understand their lives. It is important to take the time to get to know that person and build up trust, confidence and self-esteem showing them that you believe in them and you will not give up on them.

This is one thing The Wellspring and its staff and volunteers are good at.

Challenging discrimination by promoting equality and diversity is an essential skill and value held by my colleagues and I. This approach assists my colleagues and I to advocate and empower the Wellspring's members to successfully achieve their own goals, promoting self-determination while balancing risks and needs.

I believe in the phrase 'Learn by your past and look forward to the future'.

A highlight for me in 2015 was participating in the charity bike ride, which was 67 gruelling miles from Manchester to Blackpool. Without the encouragement of volunteer Andrew, I doubt if I would have entered. Alongside me I had Alex Knight project worker and three service users whom we had both supported. The lads' encouragement and enthusiasm was truly inspiring and gave us the opportunity to change roles. I was the vulnerable cyclist and they were my support. What an amazing experience to share with others! Also I would like to take this opportunity to say how wonderful and generous Stockport people are donating to the Wellspring

Names have been changed to protect identities

Alan's story

Three days after the bike ride I received a phone call that one of the males on the bike ride was critically ill in hospital. Alan was the victim of an attack which resulted in a stab wound which punctured his lung. Alan underwent surgery for this. The attack had a huge impact on him emotionally and physically. I supported him intensively with hospital visits on a daily basis, being advocate, accessing health, housing, clothing, food benefits and emotional support. Alan experienced flash backs and panic attacks. He was like a changed man. It was very sad to see the effects the attack had on him. During this time he was accessing his doctor regularly and was referred to the mental health team. Alan struggled being on his own after the attack.

This had a profound impact on me emotionally. This experience has made me value every contact I have, as you never know when you will see that person again.

Rachel's Case Study

"I have been rebuilding my life after being physically and mentally abused by a man who is now in prison for it".

Feeling in control and confident 18 months into my recovery, I was invited out last minute by two friends who I felt safe with that night. We went into Manchester but, after being out for only an hour I lost my friends. It left me feeling vulnerable and sad I was back on my own, feeling alone. I got a taxi to the pub, but after only being in the pub for a short period of time, I was taken outside and beaten, cut, kicked repeatedly and hit. I ended up being knocked unconscious. The next thing I remember is waking up in the police station in pain emotionally and physically, I was confused, disorientated, and full of fear as my memory was blank at the time. All I knew was I had been assaulted again.

I was offered a call by the police and I was too frightened to ring home and tell my mom, so I asked for Alison Hunt my project worker who has worked with me for now over 18 months not even thinking she'd be on duty on a Sunday afternoon to my huge relief she agreed to come into the station. This is something my parents couldn't do. Alison helped me to work through the ordeal and gave me confidence to tell the police I'd been beaten again after going through it only 18 months ago. I was broken at this point. Having Alison by my side, meant I had someone - a professional, that had the knowledge and experience to

back me up my life style changes and also my falls in recovery. Alison went out of her way for me that night at the police station. I truly believe that if she had no faith and trust in me she wouldn't have gone out her way to help. I would be lost without

"Learn by your past and look forward to the future."

Alison's expertise. Her ability to communicate with others in my life has been overwhelming. Without her support and The Wellspring too I'd be truly and deeply lost. They also inspire me to want to

help others and give back to society. I don't know how she does it, but Alison has an amazing ability to communicate with people especially with my Mom and step Dad, with her helping my parents to understand and make sense of the choices I've made in life and why and how it has left me feeling and coping. My relationship with my Mom is back on track thanks to Alison. My Mom has a better understanding than she has ever done, which gives me great pride, support and confidence that they believe in me. The support I have received from my mom and step dad has been overwhelming and it has helped me to gain inner strength, positive direction within my recovery and for us to be a family that all enjoy being together.

Legal Highs have had a huge impact on our service

I supported a male who had to deal with a lot of challenges in his life, He had a hard start in life and was having to survive on his own which at times was very difficult. He found himself in a bad place, He was accessing a legal highs, known as SPICE.

The effect was that John's mental health had deteriorated over time. I worked closely with another agency which also had concerns for John's health. John was using Legal highs more than ever. Myself and a colleague took him to Stepping Hill several times to get him assessed. However it's difficult to get a full assessment on someone when under the influence of substances.

We were hoping for him to be admitted. However that wasn't the case and this went on for several weeks. However the mental health team got involved in the community and went out to him, John's mental health was no better, A mental health assessment was done. John got sectioned under the Mental Health Act which means his behavior had become a danger to himself and the public, I found the whole experience distressing. John was diagnosed in hospital with Drug induced Psychosis. However without the drug he still can suffer with Psychosis.

I believe that working for The Wellspring allows me to give back to society and help people to change their lives if this is what they choose to do.

I have come to the understanding that you never know the last time to you will see someone.

This has given me a new outlook in life.



Kirstie Wood

Drug & Alcohol Support Worker

My name is Kirstie Wood. I am the drug and alcohol support worker at the Wellspring. I have been here since February 2015. My role varies from day to day and depends very much on the needs of the client on any given day. This could be something as simple as giving them a food bank voucher so they are able to eat, a housing benefit claim to stop homelessness or it could be more intensive. With the freedom of my role, I am able to put structured support plans in place and take as much time as it needs with a person until they reach their goals. Prior to working at the Wellspring I volunteered at another service working with people with substance misuse problem and when I gained employment at the Wellspring I was privileged to have already established a good working relationship with other services and also some of our members.

One male stands out for me. I first became aware of Luke when I was facilitating a group at the community drug and alcohol team. Luke had completed group therapy twice in the space of a year. He would engage well and was very open to suggestion. After completing group therapy I advised Luke to look at the possibility of going into an inpatient detox with an aftercare package of rehab due to him having some deep rooted dysfunctional behaviour issues. Luke responded well to this but unfortunately he wasn't able to secure funding as his key worker did not feel the time was right to apply for funding but I saw dedication within Luke. It did not matter how many mistakes he made he would always come back and was honest as he knew that I wasn't going to judge him.

When I secured my job Luke presented and signed up as a member. Luke would attend on a regular basis and was still using heroin, crack cocaine and drinking large amounts of alcohol. Luke was still accessing the community drug and alcohol team and I kept in close contact with his assigned key worker, updating him of any relevant changes. Luke and I came up with a structured plan as we figured out that he was able to get periods of stability when he was kept busy. This entailed 1 2 1 sessions, attendance at Narcotics Anonymous meetings, volunteering at the Wellspring and one to one sessions with our counsellor. Unfortunately, this wasn't enough and we felt that he needed something more intensive. After several very long winded conversations with his key worker Luke was eventually able to secure funding for rehab. It took a lot of planning as Luke was only given funding for his rehab so this meant that he had to reduce his heroin intake himself before going into rehab as Luke didn't want to go on a methadone programme as he felt that the detox from that would be more difficult. Luke has now completed his 12 weeks of primary treatment and is doing fantastically well. He has now moved on to the second stage of his treatment and is looking forward to a bright future ahead of him. It has been a massive privilege to be able to be part of his journey and watch him grow into a productive member of society and the change in him both mentally and physically has been overwhelming. Part of the treatment programme is a bridge to normal living so, if there have been no issues, they are allowed a home visit for a few hours. Due to Luke's family living so far away it wouldn't have been feasible for him to get there to see them so he asked if he was allowed to come and visit me. That was very touching.

“Kirstie became a very good friend, I didn't have anyone in my life and having someone who cared about me meant a lot.”

“I wasn't a very nice person. I had a habit that I thought I could control but in reality it was controlling me. I had tried several times to get clean and could sustain periods of abstinence but, unfortunately, I couldn't deal with my feelings and emotions so I would always revert back to crack and heroin because I didn't know any different. I used it as comfort blanket but it was a blanket of death killing me slowly. Kirstie tried everything she could for me to stay clean, attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings with me, 1 2 1 and volunteering at the Wellspring. It helped for a while but I was struggling to maintain my recovery. I didn't have a very good opinion of myself, I hated myself and had a low self-esteem and I thought I was going to be on heroin for the rest of my life.

Kirstie became a very good friend, I didn't have anyone in my life and having someone who cared about me meant a lot. Even when I tried to push her away she wouldn't go anywhere, she just wanted me to get better and if it wasn't for Kirstie I would be dead. She saw something in me that I didn't, showing that much care for a person that she should have a medal for that. When I got the funding for treatment I was happy and nervous. Kirstie talked me through it because I didn't know what to expect. When I walked into treatment I was broken but through this process I have been built back up. I don't hate myself anymore. I'm a nice person and can see that now.”

Other cases can be very different such as Barry. Barry was forced into change as he had been issued with an anti-social behaviour injunction order. This means that if he does not engage he could be given a custodial sentence. To try and ensure that this does not happen I work very closely with the police, probation, community drug team, positive engagement officer, Stockport Homes and the doctors. Barry cannot read and write and can become very aggravated when he doesn't understand something. I see Barry daily to go through this mail with him to ensure that things do not get too much for him and that things are kept in order such as his bills and appointments. After having a conversation with Barry one day, something really struck as cord with me. He said all of these workers I've got and none of them listen apart from you. So I asked him to elaborate and he explained to me that he feels that he is just spoken to and that he doesn't feel that people hear what he is saying. They all want to try and fix his problem but they are not taking into account what he wants. Over the past few months Barry has made some very positive changes and is now engaging and attending all of his appointments. He accesses the Wellspring every morning to check in and find out what appointments he has for the day as we find that this is what works best for Barry. He still has a long way to go but he has noticed that by working together he is starting to feel better about himself and ultimately this has been his choice to comply with what has been asked of him.

A Rough Insight

As a 19-year-old in South London I had my own experience of homelessness looking over my shoulder for dangers that are inevitably faced by our homeless daily in the UK. It may have only been for a few days, but, it was enough to bring about change in my life.

This insight into my life may have easily led towards a different number of paths so easily taken by homeless people, such as gangs, prison, drugs and alcohol, if I did not have access to a great support network, it might have been. The Wellspring Stockport is such a network.

As Project Worker in 2015 and during an uncertain funding environment, we continued to provide more care, support, advocacy and mentoring work in the last 12 months. We saw an increase in our growing membership database, mainly new homeless clients accessing services. One to one support sessions with clients and community outreach sessions continue to be just some of the essential key work done by project staff all year round.

Rehousing rough sleepers proved a challenge- this was mainly due to longer waiting lists, having no community connections to Stockport, landlords not willing to accept those on benefits, arrears, debts and so forth. However, some members have been very successful in being rehoused using various housing options supported by project staff.

The main substance that came to the forefront into our communities in 2015 was the “Legal High”, readily available and usually containing one or more chemicals which produce similar effects to other, illegal, drugs. This had an adverse effect on our client group and are not exclusively taken by young people but also mature adults especially those considered to be rough sleepers who we work with and still are.

More young men and women have been accessing services due to issues at the family home or in a relationship.

The role of a project worker at the Wellspring has become a complex one in different ways. The care, the support and the project elements of our work are so entwined and are at times difficult to keep apart. Some of our work involves working alongside or closely with other agencies which is essential in ensuring that the clients we worked with received the best possible outcomes.

We have seen more of our past members who used the services regularly returning due to hard times.

A percentage of our clients come from diverse ethnic backgrounds with various issues such as rehousing, benefits, working opportunities and some experiencing difficulties with communication but the wonderful thing about being at the Wellspring is the inclusion of this group at the centre.

By liaising with staff, the clients who are sometimes resistant to proactivity and are somewhat distressed regardless of their background or past, are then given the opportunity to become enabled, empowered, and are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves, this then naturally helps to produce “change”.

“Regular support sessions with my clients has given me the opportunity to not only build working relations with them but to indirectly influence them in making positive changes.”

Moreover, I also realised that certain clients that I worked with had issues with either reading or writing and required extra support from staff, for example, to be able to use a computer and access the internet to meet the requirements of the Benefits agency or to access the Universal jobmatch to job search. Failure to do so usually resulted in sanctions for certain lengthy periods especially when explaining things to them. This is one of the fundamental reasons for clients being aggressive at times when trying to be helped as they find it difficult to express themselves.

Regular support sessions with my clients has given me the opportunity to not only build working relations with them but to indirectly influence them in making positive changes. For example, some clients who were known for criminality have changed their lives around for the better, I can go one better and proclaim that during my 11 years as Project Worker overall I have seen plenty of progress with the majority of clients the staff or I have worked with but again, there are more new clients coming through the Wellspring doors.

The addition of a Drugs and Alcohol Worker has made differences to the staff team. Project staff can now refer clients directly to the worker who engages with the clients about their alcohol issues. Some mental health services cuts in the community have also had a severe effect on some of our client groups.

Several examples of outcomes achieved with clients include:

- A client with low self-esteem on the verge of homelessness supported emotionally and reunited with his children to whom he now has access. This client also found employment full time.
- A young man who was homeless, supported into temporary accommodation, mentored for a few months, participated in the member's support programme at the project and now has a flat and is training for work.
- An ex offender struggling to find employment until he was supported by introductions to agencies that work specifically with ex-offenders and now works on a full time basis.
- A client who attended my Goal planning course received one to one mentoring support. This provided the inspiration for him to acquire employment and he has since been promoted twice into management. His sibling a long term user of illegal substances also changed his life around and now working for the same company.
- A refugee client with no leave to remain to stay in the UK was supported whilst fighting his case to see his child and to stay in the country.
- A client being reunited with his family after rough sleeping for several months and having the opportunity to advocate on his behalf was reward in itself.

The low point for me in 2015 was the loss of several of our members. They will all be missed and our thoughts are with their families and friends.

A female client's child taken away from its mother which was quite distressing for me and resulted in me having to provide lots of emotional support simply because that individual had no one else to turn too and valued our working relationship.

This is my rough insight into the Wellspring in 2015, and to my knowledge it has the diverse staff team, the experience, and the temperament to work with varied client groups to achieve the best possible outcomes for the individual. If I was homeless, I would look no further than The Wellspring on Harvey Street for help.

Abdul
Deen
Project Worker

Treasurers Report

Simon Leigh

The financial year for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 showed a deficit for the year of £57,358 and net current assets of £212,288.

Costs rose again due to increasing demand for our services.

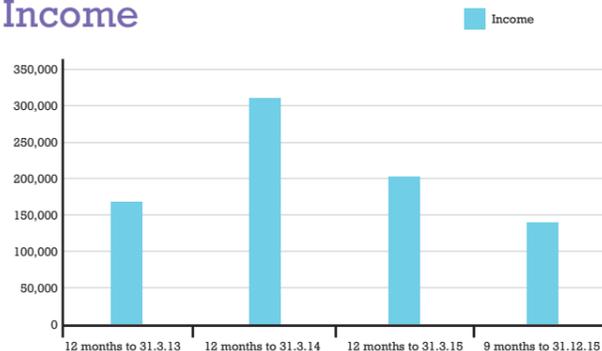
Since the March 2015 financial year end, costs have remained at this higher level (approx £20,000 per month) and income has struggled to keep up.

The management accounts for the 9 months to 31 December 2015 showed a deficit of £41,004 and net current assets of £176,071.

The project has managed to break even during January and February. To cover our costs is a constant challenge and we are very reliant on the generosity of the Stockport public.

The finances for the last three and three quarter years are summarised in the graphs.

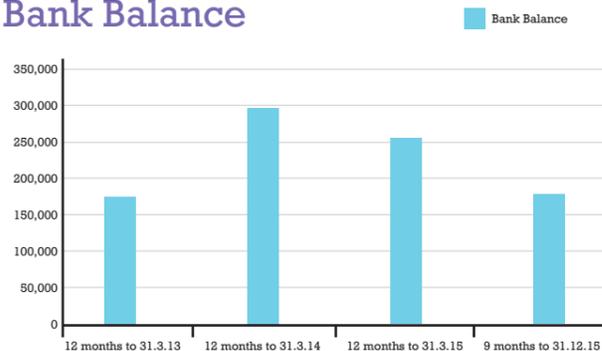
Income



Expenses Totals



Bank Balance



Women's Group Report

Jenny Went

Another year and we're still standing on our own feet, without any grants, but are so thankful for the generous donations and gifts we have received which enable us to continue to be self-sufficient.

We average in the region of 12/13 members each week plus 3/4 leaders. We appreciate the security of the upstairs Training Room, which offers us safe storage for the many items of equipment we have bought or have been given and a place where we can meet and not be interrupted by all the 'busyness' going on downstairs.

That said, we use the downstairs facilities for our Fitness Activities and recently had a very successful First Aid training session downstairs too. This was an excellent session when a Trainer from the Red Cross gave a presentation to the group which was at just the right level and depth for our members. We need to meet downstairs too when our friends from The Stockport Soroptimists meet with us, they are forging ahead, trying to make the group into successful knitters! Their sessions are welcomed, as the visitors bring Afternoon Tea with them! (even their personal china)

Following our successful attempts in 2014 to provide gifts and parcels for Operation Christmas Child, we ventured on under our own steam for Christmas 2015, when a friend of the group, who had visited Belarus herself with parcels, came, shared her slides and stories with us and helped us pack our own parcels. A very moving time, when folk who haven't always had happy experiences and don't always have much, were willing to share what they could. Sadly, the lady who joined us, was killed in a skiing accident in February this year.

We've enjoyed some special treats off site during the year; an outstanding memory was our visit to Simon Dunn's Chocolate Studio in High Lane. Who could forget designing a chocolate bar complete with fruits, nuts, marshmallows etc etc, all beautifully wrapped to bring home!! Lunch at a carvery restaurant is another treat which is always eagerly anticipated and enjoyed.

There have been some very special afternoons when our members have been enabled to speak after they were stimulated by triggers from special visitors, for example Kirstie (the Wellspring Drugs Worker) and our Nurse Sheila. These were very special occasions, when what was said, stayed in the room. But nevertheless were very moving moments.

Another memorable afternoon was when we talked about 'What my mother used to tell me/say!!' It's a delight to see members who are not always very vocal joining in and make such interesting and valuable contributions.

Food features frequently in our sessions. We held a 'Taste, Try and See' afternoon, when members brought items to share, which they felt would be new to other members. The offerings reflected the ethnic and cultural differences there are in the group, many new tastes were discovered. We shall repeat this session and hope to sample (in particular) fruits and vegetables which are new to us.



In all our planning we remember our 3 E's: Enabling, Encouraging and Equipping our members to experience life in all its fullness.

As in past years, special marker days throughout the year have been celebrated, displays made and taken home for Valentines' and Mothers' Day; special decorations were created for Easter, along with the usual Easter eggs in baskets etc. A new skill has been appreciated this year--that of Mindfulness Colouring. Without exception members have found this to be a very relaxing and calming activity. Of course the visits to our friends at the Marple Ridge Methodist Church are always such happy times, when our hostesses go out of their way to put on a special afternoon for us: in December

we came away with wonderful paper Christmas Decorations. There must have been some stunning displays in rooms around Stockport as a result!

As group leaders we celebrate the fact that our members are creating positive and lasting relationships with each other, the leaders and friends who come to or arrange 'special' meetings, visits and treats for us. Long may these friendships last.



How you can get involved:

- Adopt The Wellspring as your company's Charity of The Year and receive bespoke support to plan events and get members of staff involved in volunteering.
- Donations of clothing and food are always needed. These can be dropped off at the project any day of the year from 9am-4pm and until 8pm Mondays to Thursdays.
- Attend a Wellspring fundraising event, up to date list of events can be found at www.thewellspring.uk
- Become a volunteer at the project. Application forms can be found at www.thewellspring.uk or drop in to the project and collect one.
- Financial donations are always needed to make sure that the services continue to grow. Donations can be dropped off at the project, made online via www.thewellspring.uk or sent in the post to P.O. BOX 456, Stockport, SK11WZ
- Come and visit the project any day of the year and have a chat with the staff about how you can get involved.

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