



# Annual Review

April 1st 2022 – March 31st 2023



**Brent Centre  
for Young People**

healthy minds, brighter futures.

# The Brent Centre for Young People

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# WELCOME



The Brent Centre continues to see promising growth, building on our mission to support the young people who need it the most.

Many of the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic had on adolescent mental health are still ongoing, so we are pleased that a return to regular face-to-face sessions will contribute to their recovery. Over the past year, we saw a surge in referrals and cases of increased complexity in the aftermath of the pandemic's disruptions. To meet this heightened demand, we are continuously

improving the delivery of our services and projects to meet the needs of young people.

We are witnessing an exciting expansion of the Centre's services, extending our reach well beyond the Borough of Brent. This expansion not only showcases the expertise of our exceptional psychoanalytic therapists but also demonstrates our commitment to supporting young people in diverse communities. The Westminster Centre for Young People (WCYP), and the Brent Centre Highlands for Young People are both actively realising their vision, embodying the core tenets of our mission to provide vital support to the youth.

The Highlands project, under the leadership of Sarah Fielding, Head of Service at Brent Centre Highlands, has been particularly exciting. The Centre is forging strong connections within the community, driven by a clear demand for such services. We are optimistic that these robust connections, coupled with the need for effective mental health support, will foster the project's growth. More importantly, it ensures that young people in the Highlands have access to the essential services they require. We are already teaching at the Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy Training in Glasgow.

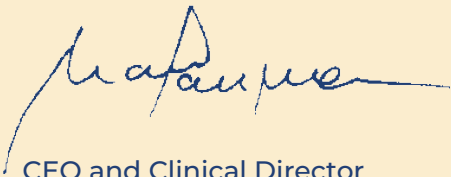
In recent years, our capacity to host events has been restricted. However, I am delighted that the Brent Centre is now expanding the scope of both in-person and online events in the foreseeable future. We eagerly anticipate a diverse array of events, from conferences and seminars on adolescent mental health training to vital fundraising activities. Events serve as a platform for the Centre to share our expertise globally and foster connections with stakeholders and local communities.

In 2023, the Brent Centre and Westminster School co-hosted a conference titled Therapeutic work in Schools. The event examined how the traditional child psychotherapy frame has been adapted to school settings and highlight both the opportunities and challenges this can create clinically. Following the conference's success, I am excited to announce a similar event is planned for 2024.

I commend the courage and commitment of all the young people we've had the privilege of working with over the past year. It is an honour to support you through your challenges, and your active engagement and bravery in every session are crucial elements in building a brighter future for yourself.

I extend my sincere gratitude to our staff, trustees, supporters, partners, and funders. Your tireless support and generous efforts are indispensable in enabling us to provide young people with the dedicated, tailored support they truly need and value. As the Centre progresses with new clinics and additional projects, I eagerly anticipate the possibilities that this year holds for us.

With thanks and best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maxim de Sauma', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

CEO and Clinical Director  
Dr Maxim de Sauma MD, F. Inst. Psychoanal

# INTRODUCING

# THE BRENT CENTRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Founded in 1967, the Brent Centre for Young People is one of the UK's first mental health services specifically for young people (11-24 years), reaching those who otherwise may not receive help. We provide a vital space for young people to reflect on, and explore, their worries in a safe environment. The Centre works with young people struggling with suicidality, depression, anxiety, self-harm and other mental health challenges.

As the primary adolescent psychotherapy service in North London, the Centre has developed bespoke talking therapies and programmes, boosting the accessibility of our range of services. Led by some of the sector's leading clinicians, we reach young people throughout eight schools, the Youth Offending Service (YOS), in-house at our sites in the London boroughs of Brent and Westminster, and other projects.

## YEAR IN NUMBERS

Over the 2022/23 fiscal year BCYP:

Provided therapy to

**694**

Young people

Offered

**8592**

Sessions

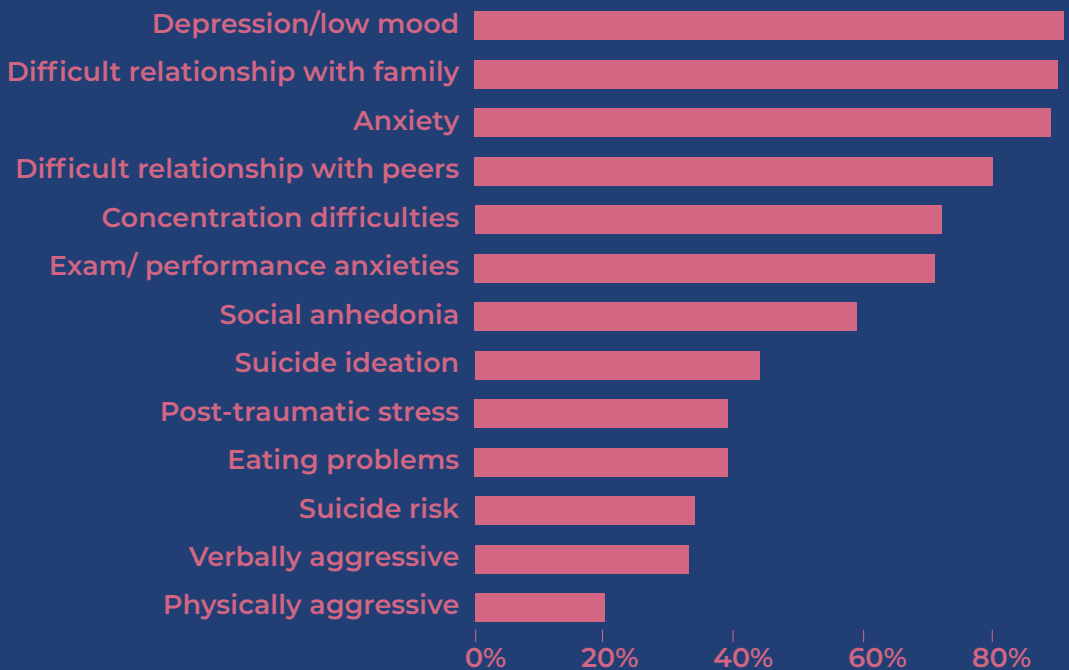
BCYP service gender breakdown

Female 67%

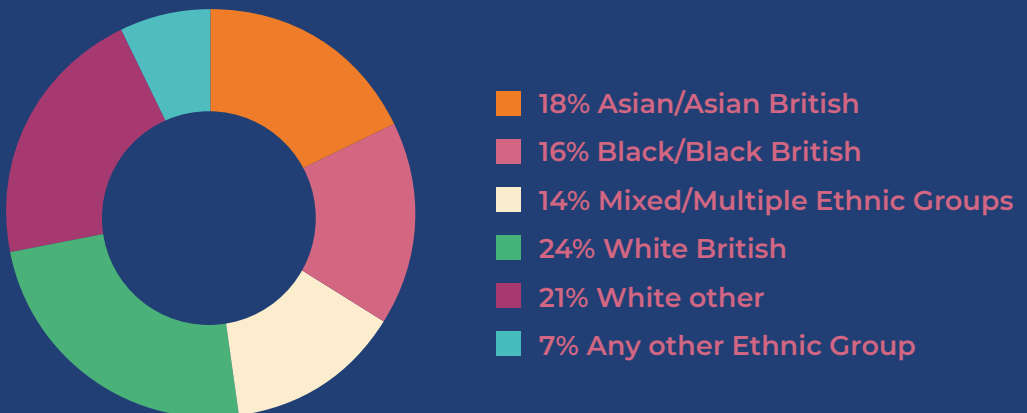
Male 33%



## We supported Young People facing the following challenges



## Ethnicity of BCYP service users





## IN-HOUSE SERVICES

This year our in-house service at the Brent Centre continued to receive a high level of referrals for young people in need of mental health support. Very long waiting lists and an overwhelming demand for mental health support from the NHS, and other statutory services, have resulted in the Centre supporting some of the borough's most vulnerable young people at risk of self-harm, suicide and other mental health concerns. The complexity of their needs often requires a longer-term intervention to help them get back on track.

Our experienced clinicians provide a safe, flexible, regular therapeutic space to 14-24 year olds. Sometimes, this involves working closely with schools, family members, statutory services and professionals to provide a network of support around the young person.

The increasing rate of mental health difficulties, austerity, social, home, employment and educational challenges for young people in Brent means that their needs are increasingly complex. Providing practical support and helping young people by building strong relationships with our local schools, mental health and social services is all the more vital. Where the mental health needs and risks exceed what the Brent Centre can provide, we offer consultation, signposting and recommendations to our GP referrers and local services.



## THIS YEAR WE HAVE CONTINUED TO PROVIDE:

### Adolescent Exploratory Therapy (AET)

The Brent Centre's model of psychodynamic therapy aims to support young people struggling with their mental health during adolescence to understand their difficulties and get back on track with their development. Research demonstrates that AET has been successful in helping to treat depression, anxiety, low mood, emotional dysregulation linked to early and developmental trauma, self-harm and suicidal ideation.

### Adolescent Psychotherapy

Getting to know the young person's difficulties in AET and through a process of consultation over time with the clinical team, therapists may identify that a young person could benefit from more support: Once weekly or intensive psychotherapy is provided to some young people who continue to need more in-depth psychological support after AET.

### Parent Work

Sometimes the challenges young people are dealing with in AET indicate that it would be beneficial for parents to receive support to further the understanding of their child's mental health needs. Therapists at the Centre provide meetings with parents to support adolescents in AET.

### Practical Support

For the duration of their treatment at the Centre, young people can be referred for practical help in areas such as housing, education, training and employment.

**“It was a place of support and warmth. I am glad I was able to get a place there, it has really helped keep me stable.”**



## SCHOOLS SERVICE

The Brent Centre has provided support for students and school staff since 1999. We currently deliver mental health provision in eight schools in the borough of Brent, Harrow and Ealing, with services including:

### **Individual Therapy**

Young people are referred for one-to-one therapy for as long as needed.

### **Individual Assessments**

Helping schools and families think about the young person's needs and to support further referrals, if required.

### **Review Sessions**

Young people seen in the past, who might still need our input.

### **Short-term Therapy**

We often offer this clinical input to young people in sixth form and those undertaking GCSEs. During this short-term intervention the young person and therapist focus on specific difficulties.

### **Parent Appointments and Parent Consultation**

It is often necessary to work with parents/guardians to address key concerns relating to a patient and assist in delivering effective support.

### **Ad hoc Staff Consultations**

When a member of school staff is concerned about a young person, we often engage in consultation to support them through challenging situations.

The Schools Service has experienced a surge in referrals over the past few years, marked by increased complexity in both mental health and safeguarding concerns. Addressing these intricate cases, we collaborate closely with CAMHS, social care, and other services to ensure a tailored and effective response to the diverse needs of young individuals.

Recognising the mounting challenges faced by pastoral and safeguarding staff amid the pandemic and the cost of living crisis, we provide valuable support through Supervision and Work Discussion.



## **IMPACT**

**Students reached  
(including group work)**

**247**

**Individual sessions offered**

**3195**

# RESEARCH

The Research Team continues to build on the foundations of the Brent Centre, and the early work on adolescent breakdown by the Laufers and their colleagues.

Alongside these research studies, the Centre is developing its Archive, which contains historical material stretching back to the Centre's foundation in 1967, including correspondence between Anna Freud and Moses Laufer.

The Research Team also has a role in supporting the Centre to develop training and publications, and to support any member of staff in these activities.

## Research Projects

Our current research projects aim to address key clinical issues that will directly benefit young people in 4 key areas:

### 1 Understanding Adolescent Suicidality

The Adolescent Experiences Study, IRAS Project ID 28866 is now moving into the second year of data collection. This study is a mixed method, longitudinal study, combining clinical psychoanalytic research and grounded theory to create an in-depth understanding of adolescent suicidality, and related experiences such as self-harm. The study is half way through recruitment of participants, and we record our thanks to those young people taking part. Suicidality remains full of unknowns; it can be hard to risk assess and talk about, and we hope the sensitive design and work of this research will open up our understanding of the unique aspects of suicidality for young people.

### 2 Adolescent Engagement with Therapy

This study explores therapeutic endings – how do young people end an open-ended treatment? It focuses on young people who started Adolescent Exploratory Therapy with the Brent Centre for Young People between 2003 – 2022. 712 cases met the inclusion criteria for the study, and reasons for ending were derived from therapists' closing letters, and where possible cross checked with information provided by the young person. The various reasons for ending are now being categorised and analysed. We hope this study will inform the day-to-day clinical work of engaging young people in therapeutic work and ensure we can make services as relevant and accessible as possible.

# THE ARCHIVE

Formed two years ago, the archive has the potential to be a rich resource for researchers, containing a mix of historical and clinical material. We would like to record our thanks to Nick Laufer for the generous donation of material this year from Eglé Laufer.



The Research Team supported two doctoral researchers from the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust this year.

## 3 Adolescence and Delinquency

This small-scale qualitative research study, conducted within the Youth Offending Service from 2008 to 2015 was funded and supported by the International Psychoanalytic Association. The report is currently being developed.

## 4 Adolescent Exploratory Therapy

The study focuses on the unique approach the Brent Centre has in working with young people, from the beginnings of our Centre to our current practice. We would like to thank Dr Sally O'Keefe and Professor Michael Rustin for their help and support this year.

**“The service allowed me to express my feelings, thoughts and general beliefs. It was great to have someone listening to me and asking me questions to get to the problem.”**



## SPORT AND THOUGHT

Sport and Thought is a specialist model of group psychotherapy for adolescents that uses football as a means of engaging young people who find traditional talking therapy challenging. The model helps young people who struggle to regulate their emotions, find it difficult to secure a foothold in school, and those who live in deprived areas impacted by crime and may be vulnerable to exploitation.

## THE TASK OF SPORT AND THOUGHT IS DESCRIBED ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES:

Thinking deeper about our behaviour.

Thinking about how we feel and act in a group.

Being a part of the group and learning to work together.

Reflect on similarities in how we feel and react on the football pitch to other situations in our lives.

Working towards stopping and thinking, before acting.



## IMPACT

**75**

Young people reached

**108**

Group sessions

**6**

Referrals made for individual support

*“ I have really enjoyed talking in this group, I feel I was listened to and that was given great advice and I believe I have learned a lot. This group has helped me in many ways and I am grateful.”*

Scan the QR code to watch the Johns Lyons Charity Sport & Thought video



## OTHER PROJECTS

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# BRIEF INTERVENTION SERVICE

The Brief Intervention Service offers short-term psychodynamic counselling to young people between the ages of 11-18. The service meets the needs of young people who would benefit from a space to reflect on their emotional difficulties, giving them the opportunity to alleviate some of their issues and symptoms. As a project, it has successfully provided accessible one-to-one mental health support for young people experiencing mild to moderate difficulties since commencing in 2021. In 2022/23, the service operated across two secondary schools in Brent, and within the Centre's In-house Service.

In all settings, referrals are carefully triaged so that young people's difficulties are appropriate for such an intervention. Following a referral, the young person is offered an initial assessment to explore their presenting difficulties with a clinician and a further six sessions thereafter if it is felt these could be helpful.

Young people seen by the service present a broad array of problems, including anxiety, depression, problems with impulse control, social problems and family-based problems.

**“ Learning how to cope with things myself and allow myself to feel my feelings. I am able to be more independent. I'm able to use the tools used in counselling and the help from my counsellor to resolve my own problems.”**





# CAMHS WAITING LIST PROJECT

This NHS-funded project aims at tackling the waiting list at CAMHS. The CAMHS Waiting List Project allows a Brent Centre child psychotherapist to deliver up to twelve psychotherapy sessions to young people, ages 14-18, who are on the CAMHS waiting list for treatment. We are able to see young people, on average, within seven days from the referral.

The sessions give young people the chance to recognise their needs and identify how best they could be supported. Many of these young people have experienced severe trauma and abuse without any support to process it. This has understandably further exacerbated the multi-layered difficulties with relationships and capacities for independent living one naturally experiences at this pivotal stage in life. Having a regular safe space helps the young people to make sense of, and to manage the transition between being a child and adulthood. All of the participants in this project have said that for the first time they felt listened to and understood. They have also shared that the sessions have aided them to mobilise their internal resources and consolidate their positive relationships.

The psychoanalytic approach allows them to get in touch with, and develop, new ways of managing their anger and frustration. The participants reflect on the impact of their emotions on behaviour such as self-harm, suicidality, or reluctance to commit to education/employment. All the young people in this project seem to have only now discovered that they could take an active part in their relationships, to negotiate and navigate them in a safe way, rather than feeling a victim of circumstances.



# YOUR CHOICE

Your Choice is a London-wide project funded by the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) at the Greater London Authority. It addresses the reality that those young people most in need of therapeutic support are also those least likely to access it.

Your Choice equips frontline workers (e.g. social workers, youth justice caseworkers), who are already adept at engaging this cohort, with applied therapeutic skills that they can then weave into their existing approach over a targeted 12-week period.

The success of the pilot study in 2022 has led to the project being rolled out on a larger scale in 2023.

As the organisation overseeing Your Choice in the Brent borough, the Centre assumes the responsibility of training designated social care teams in essential skills and techniques. Additionally, we provide continuous clinical supervision throughout the duration of the project. This is in line with the Centre’s longstanding commitment to provide therapeutic support for young offenders, and more broadly, vulnerable young people – those in care or out of education who might not otherwise be picked up by therapy services or who struggle to engage in a typical clinical setting.

# WELLBEING GROUP

Since 2008, the Centre has run a service within Brent's Youth Justice Team offering therapeutic support to young people on youth offending orders. Over the past few years, we have also extended this project to work with Brent Accelerated Support Team which offers short-term intensive support to at-risk young people in or on the edge of care.

Many of the young people we see through these services have experienced exclusion from school, community and/or domestic violence, and have a low-level of trust in professionals. As such, they are amongst those least likely to access clinical services.

We offer:

- **Individual sessions for young people:** a confidential space to explore what is going on for them in their environment and how it is affecting their emotional experience.
- **Parent sessions:** where parents/carers are supported to consider the family dynamics and their relationship with the young person.
- **Advocacy:** having assessed the young person, we can facilitate links with other services to build the most appropriate support network.
- **Wellbeing Group:** a 4-week psychoeducation group for young people in YJS to explore different aspects of mental health and wellbeing.
- **Consultation for staff:** in these services so they can discuss a case from a mental health perspective.

# ADVICE AND ADVOCACY SERVICE

The Advice and Advocacy Service provides an opportunity for young people engaging with therapy through the Brent Centre to also benefit from specialist, tailored practical support to overcome the challenges that may be preventing them from effectively engaging, and making progress in, their therapy. Specialist youth support workers provide young people with advice and one-to-one support for a wide range of needs, including improving access to education and employment; resolving financial and welfare matters; reducing social isolation; and identifying appropriate accommodation and healthcare options.

Support workers at the Brent Centre serve as advocates for our young people, collaborating with various professionals and organisations to secure necessary support. This could include attending appointments with universities, the Department of Work & Pensions, and sexual health clinics, among others. Notable achievements include:

- **Improving CV's, cover letters, job applications and job interview techniques – and subsequently maintaining employment.**
- **Achieving Merit in a college course; achieving GCSE results which qualified them for A-Level study.**
- **Enrolling in an apprenticeship or Access course for young people who want to follow this career pathway.**
- **Successfully completing the UCAS application process.**
- **Completing applications for Disabled Students Allowance and Council Tax Support.**
- **Suspension of unaffordable debt recovery payments.**
- **Setting up their first independent bank account.**
- **Resolving a dispute with the Home Office regarding personal documentation.**

Advice and signposting are also provided to clinicians on a weekly basis to ensure they can provide informed and holistic support to young people – this also enables the service to greatly expand the number of young people who can benefit from practical support.



## THE IRISH PROJECT

The Irish Project advocates for inclusive and culturally informed support for young people of all Irish communities, including those who are Irish-born (from all parts of the island of Ireland); of Irish descent; Irish people of colour; and Irish Travellers. We primarily support young Irish people in Brent, however, we provide some support to young Irish people in, and bordering, the borough of Westminster and in some schools in Ealing.

The Brent Centre's Irish Project encompasses talking therapy offered to young individuals from our centres in Brent and Westminster, schools, and various outreach locations. Through our Irish Traveller Outreach Advocacy and Support Service, we provide flexible support, often in the community, or at the Lynton Close site, specifically tailored for young Irish Travellers. This service extends to offering advice, support, and training for professionals working with young Irish individuals and families. Our aim is to empower professionals to provide holistic, culturally informed, wraparound support, enhancing community engagement to raise awareness and understanding of adolescent and Irish mental health needs, both locally and nationally.

Referrals to our Brent and Westminster centres are facilitated by local GPs, while organisations overseeing our schools counseling and outreach services manage their respective referrals.

The types of difficulties commonly identified among our young Irish people include transgenerational trauma, involving the descendants of survivors of institutional abuse and the Northern Ireland conflict. Suicidality is another concern, with our young Irish individuals being more likely to experience suicidal ideation and face an increased risk of suicide due to heightened impulsivity, self-harm, and/or having known someone who has died by suicide. Additionally, shame is a prevailing trend in the emotional experiences of our young Irish people, arising from factors such as sexuality and/or achievements.

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH

We work closely with partners throughout Brent and statutory agencies such as the NHS. The Brent Centre is a central and founding member of a number of local decision-making partnerships including Brent Children and Young People Wellbeing Alliance; Brent Mental Health Partnership; Children and Young People Mental Health and Wellbeing Group; Brent Children and Young People's Wellbeing Group; Gypsy, Roma, Travellers Advice Workers Forum; Brent's Community of Practice; and Brent Young Adult Partnership. Additionally, we engage in fortnightly meetings with Central and North West London NHS and monthly sessions with CAMHS to discuss holistic support arrangements for the most vulnerable young people in the borough. When the mental health needs and risks surpass what the Brent Centre can provide, we offer consultation, signposting, and recommendations to our GP referrers and local services.

To enhance understanding, awareness, and access to specialised mental health support for young people, the Brent Centre actively participates in community events throughout the year. We engage with local young people, parents, and professionals by attending health and community fairs in local schools, housing estates, youth clubs, churches, theatres, civic centres, and other community settings. Additionally, we provide presentations, workshops, and training on adolescent mental health to young people, parents, and professionals in the community. Through these efforts, we have connected with over 350 people.

## YOUTH ADVISORY PANEL

The Brent Centre's Youth Panel is an advisory group for the Centre. In September 2022, we recruited four new young people from a local youth club to the panel. The new panel members, aged 15-18, are passionate about improving mental health outcomes for young people, including the Centre's community-based projects. The panel has been supported to develop their skills and their own work programme, informed by the panel member's own priorities and areas the Centre has identified as in need of development. In 2022/23, the panel members reviewed and evaluated how feedback was sought from young people at the end of their sessions with the Brent Centre. The panel have advised the Brent Centre's Monitoring and Evaluation team on a range of new arrangements to maximise and support young people's ability to engage with the process and to share genuine, relevant feedback on their experience of therapy.

# SATELLITE PROJECTS

The Brent Centre for Young People's commitment to advancing exceptional mental health services for young people has resulted in the opportunity to expand our services outside the borough of Brent. By doing this, we can broaden the reach of our specialised knowledge and skill set in psychodynamic therapy to the communities that need it most. Brent Centre Highlands and the Westminster Centre for Young People projects bear witness to the organisation's ability to expand our services.

## BRENT CENTRE HIGHLANDS

This is a new project, and our first in Scotland, aiming to support young people aged 14 – 21 years in the Scottish Highlands. The area has high need, with few services able to help.

The Highlands has a significantly higher rate of suicide – 18 per 100,000 compared to the Scottish average of 14.5, and the London average of 8.1. Suicide is the leading cause of death amongst young people in Highland aged between 15-24 years. For young people those added risk factors include; LGBT, suicide related internet use, bereavement, academic pressure, NEET, physical health problems, and alcohol/ drug use.

The reality of Highland life can include the further risks of social isolation, stigma, smaller and less diverse communities, reduced anonymity in seeking help, reduced physical access to services, cultural ideals of stoicism and method availability. These factors combine to provide a diverse range of barriers for young people seeking help, including confidentiality within smaller communities where anonymity can feel more precarious. Using the Brent Centre's model of adolescent therapy and engagement, with a capacity to run services at times when teenagers are most likely to engage , alongside using central locations which have protected entrances to help with privacy and close to public transport – another key issue for young people in the Highlands – we hope to develop an accessible and clinically-robust service for young people.

Phase one of the project has focused on building community networks, fundraising and ensuring local consultation and referral pathways are in place. In January 2022, the Brent Centre for Young People was formally registered as a



**healthy minds, brighter futures.**  
**inntinnean fallain, soillse roimhainn.**

charity in Scotland. Between January and March 2023, Brent Centre Highlands were delighted to work with the NHS Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy training programme, run by Human Development Scotland in Glasgow, offering teaching on working with adolescents to their current cohort of trainees, working across Scotland.

We are also grateful for the working links with the Suicide Cultures project at The University of Edinburgh, whose anthropologist is currently investigating suicidality in the Highlands.

## **WESTMINSTER CENTRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Westminster Centre for Young People (WCYP) opened its doors in late 2021 to extend the reach of the Brent Centre's services into the London Borough of Westminster, addressing the clear need for mental health services for children and young people in the area. WCYP accepts referrals for young people aged 11 to 21. WCYP uses the same psychotherapy model as the Brent Centre, albeit to a slightly different age range. The clinic is located at the Institute of Psychoanalysis, which offers a relaxing setting and comfortable rooms for our therapists to support their patients.



## **Westminster Centre for Young People**

healthy minds, brighter futures.

As an extension of the Brent Centre, WCYP is continually growing and establishing itself as an essential mental health service in the Borough of Westminster. By expanding our unique services and expertise to new locations, we can reach more young people and reinforce our commitment to supporting adolescent mental health.



**63**

Young people seen

**30**

Parents seen

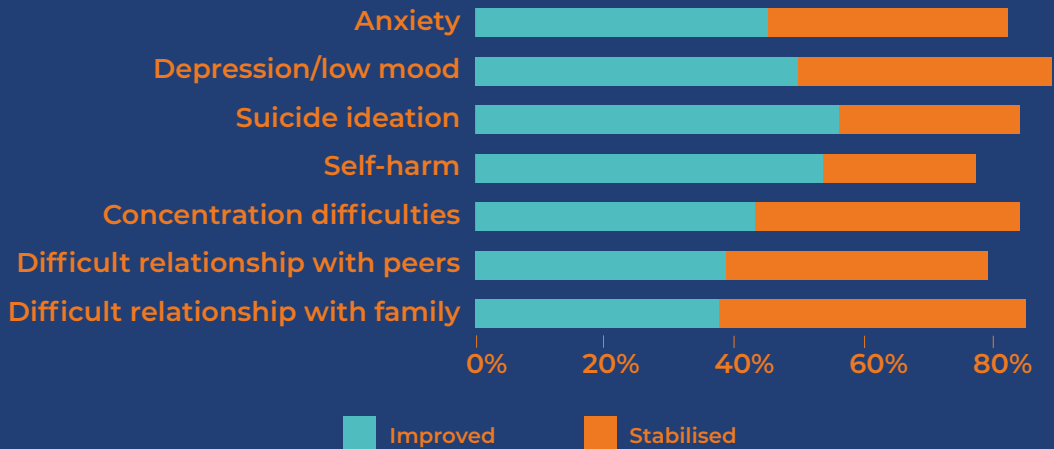
**456**

Sessions

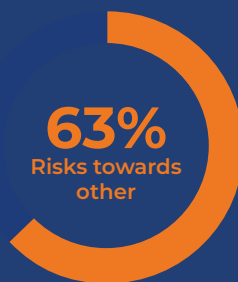


# OUTCOMES

This year we are pleased to report that across all the young people we worked, they experienced:



We also observed improvements in the following areas:



# CASE STUDIES

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## IN-HOUSE SERVICES

**ANNA**'s mother was worried about her aggressive outbursts, the strained relationship between them, Anna's sadness about not having contact with her father and a concern that Anna did not want to talk about her feelings. Anna's mother received therapy in the past which she found helpful and wanted her daughter to have the same opportunity to have a space in which she could talk about her feelings and worries. When Anna was invited to attend an initial assessment, she was able to express that she struggled with her relationship with her parents; and she was curious about the help she might receive. She was offered AET. Over the weeks that followed, she attended her sessions and initially found relief in having a space for herself, but she soon expressed how she was not ready to make further use of this space and that the wish to have therapy was not hers, but her mother's. The therapist continued to explore with her what this may mean and how difficult it was for her to receive help from someone else. Eventually it was clear that Anna felt forced to attend the therapy and the therapist made it clear that Anna had a choice to attend or to end the sessions.

Anna's mother was furious with both the therapist and Anna for not continuing with the work that she so much hoped would help Anna. The mother was then offered some parent work sessions to try and understand why it was so difficult for her to accept that Anna might not be ready to take up therapy at this point in time. What emerged over the time of the parent work was that mother's mother died when she was the same age that Anna was now. The mother felt that she did not know how to be a mother of an older adolescent. She wanted a better life for her daughter, but the trauma she suffered and the anxiety she had about her daughter's future, led her to control and pressure her daughter to such an extent that their relationship has suffered and that she did not feel able to parent Anna. Giving mother a space to talk about her past and to understand what Anna's adolescence has triggered in her, helped her to take a step back and give Anna more space to make her own decisions about what she wanted to do and what help she would like to take up. The mother reported that Anna received excellent grades in her exams after the intervention came to an end.

# SCHOOLS SERVICE



# HARRIET

was referred to our school service due to low mood, self-harm, and a history of neglect. She often felt left to manage her despair by herself, which mirrored her childhood experiences of neglect. She also struggled to allow herself to feel angry at the adults in her life, which resulted in her turning this anger in on herself. In the absence of a container for her distress, self-harm and suicidal ideation became methods of coping with the trauma of her past and the fear, anger, and distress of her present.

Over the first few months of therapy, Harriet slowly learned to trust her therapist, she stopped self-harming and, as time progressed, allowed herself to express her anger. In addition to seeing her therapist weekly, she attended regular check-ups with her GP, and the school were keeping a close eye on her. Near the summer break, Harriet began self-harming again, which was linked to her fear of losing the support of her school and therapy over the summer break. She presented to A&E where she was referred to CAMHS. Her therapist communicated with her GP and CAMHs and asked the GP to offer weekly check-in appointments during the break, which was offered, providing a holding space during the long summer break. This network of professionals came together again when Harriet self-harmed more significantly and was hospitalised in the autumn term. The mobilisation of the adults around her and the repeated experiences of adults coming together to think about her and attend to her needs proved invaluable to her recovery. This experience was something that she felt was lacking in her home environment. The organisations acted as a parental unit coming together to attend to Harriet's physical safety and importantly her emotional wellbeing.

In Harriet's sessions her therapist was able to bear witness and withstand the strength of her pain, hopelessness, and anger. The experience of a robust adult, who was able to manage and digest her pain and anger, allowed Harriet to slowly believe that she too could bare her feelings. She slowly learned to place boundaries in her relationships and built a stronger sense of herself. Exploring how her past was impacting her present, provided a different perspective on her challenges and she was able to see that the future has not been written, and that she has agency and choice in what happens to her. She was no longer hopeless and instead became hopeful.



## SPORT AND THOUGHT

Arriving every Tuesday with his head lowered and shoulders slumped,

**MOHAMMED** looked like he had a weight on his mind. Mohammed spoke about how he was unable to buy new football boots and how he did not come from an affluent socio-economic community. Immigrating from Ethiopia through France he shared how people like him were not respected in Europe. Clearly affected by racial inequality, bullying and academic struggles at school, this seemed a safe space for him to bring his thoughts. At times quiet and timid, Mohammed really appreciated the football drills and he felt included. He often remarked how he wanted to improve his shooting ability, but this felt only secondary to the benefits he was having from the social and therapeutic process.

Mohammed looked forward to the match against another school and he was happy to be travelling to a new part of London he had not yet explored. Feedback from his school head of year shared that “Mohammed talks highly of the group and is sure that it has helped him become more confident socially, more integrated in school life. Before he seemed more of an outcast. He now has an established group of friends”. Mohammed warmed to the adults and also built a good bond with other young people in the group. Although he felt sad that the group was finishing, towards the end, it was clear that Mohammed’s head was now held high, and he started walking around with a newfound vibrant yet humble confidence.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The effectiveness of the Brent Centre's services rests on collaboration, support, and a shared commitment to enhance the well-being and mental health outcomes of young people. The organisation expresses gratitude and extends acknowledgment to all individuals, organisations, foundations, and stakeholders who have supported us deliver this invaluable service.

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**Brent Centre  
for Young People**  
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