

Social Impact Report 2019 – 2021

SUMMARY

Since Brain Health Breakthrough's inception in 2018 they have worked with over *100 people* of diverse ages and backgrounds, running *24 events and programmes; ranging from specialist courses for both professionals and lived experience alike, to peer support groups for a range of targeted audiences and innovative programmes*, working with unpaid carers, those living with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and those affected by 'Long Covid' enabling people to develop innovative coping mechanisms and wellbeing support from both a theoretical and practical perspective. In excess of £30k has been raised and invested in delivering impact to date.

Brain Health Breakthrough offers range of services which combine one to one and group development, experiential learning, training for professionals and those with wellbeing needs alike plus also offers individual counselling and wellbeing coaching. This results in holistic approaches to confidence and independence building alongside opportunities to develop new social circles, whilst connect to community and wider support services.

Brain Heath Breakthrough's services and interventions are a powerful tool enabling people from multiple backgrounds, with multiple needs to find or regain their *place and purpose*, as well as *build mental resilience, social connections and coping strategies* to positively *take control of their lives and fulfil their potential*. Previous clients and beneficiaries report *improved wellbeing* including *improved sleep, improved communications and relationships, increased productivity*, as well as *feeling more self-assured* and balanced to *improve decision making*.

The 24 support programmes and events have attracted people who are dealing with a wide range of difficulties recovering from injury, to substance misuse, also bereavement, domestic abuse, relationship breakdown, divorce, work place bullying and more. *44% of beneficiaries are living with TBI, 31% are carers and 14% have had COVID and are living with ongoing effects. Plus 63% of the 100 people supported to date report to having additional health needs*. In terms of diversity breakdown 73% of beneficiaries are women and 27% men, with 21% of people from BAME backgrounds.

From analysis across 100 clients and several partner agencies; including those spanning the Mental Health and Wellbeing Sectors, Traumatic Brain Injury and Community Support Sectors as well as newly developing work around Covid and Long-Covid and those facing barriers to mainstream support, the following key areas of impact were identified:

- *Improved belief in oneself and the ability to heal and make genuine progress*
- *Increased capacity to manage and reduce ones stress, anxiety and mood as well as consider how to positively frame experiences*
- *Increased communication skills and assertiveness*
- *Increased knowledge and skills development in self-care and mental health improvement*
- *Increased awareness of sources of support and Community Connections*
- *Empowered communities with lived experience*



Background & Context

Traumatic brain injury is the leading cause of death and disability in people aged 1 -40 in the UK (NICE) and for those that recover it a significant negative impact on people's lives, jobs, communities, families, and on society. People can acquire a brain injury through accidents and sports injuries however many people's injuries can go undetected, un-supported and undiagnosed as a result of childhood abuse, domestic abuse, homelessness, prison assault and other forms of attack or traumatic experience. The Centre for Mental Health reports traumatic brain injury costs a total of £15 billion nationally every year and puts young people at higher risk of poor mental health and offending. This figure includes the costs of lost work, of health and social care and of premature mortality, however does not include the human costs of head injury on people's wellbeing and quality of life.

According to Headway - brain injury association, there were [348,453 UK admissions to hospital with acquired brain injury in 2016-17](#). That is 531 admissions per 100,000 of the population and that equates to someone being admitted every 90 seconds.

A Senior Clinical representative of the UK Acquired Brain Injury Forum previously stated that the

["National Health Service does not focus on rehabilitation, or even consider it to be an important part of healthcare services."](#)

Given that the Office of Health Economics, suggest that early intensive rehabilitation after a brain injury can save as much as £1.6m over a patient's lifetime in reduced long-term support costs, this is an area which needs more attention and investment, plus why Brainhealth Breakthrough focus on this as one of their core target groups alongside Carers, Veterans and

those affected by long term chronic physical and mental health issues.

There are common threads across the groups Brainhealth Breakthrough support including; disadvantage, underachievement and unemployment, plus people who have faced personal, physical and emotional setbacks. 63% of the people supported to date identify as having additional health needs and in some cases need support to build their social and economic independence. Over a third of people they support are Carers as Brainhealth breakthrough recognize the importance of helping Unpaid Carers to prioritise their health, wellbeing and resilience given the [economic contribution by carers during 2020 through the pandemic was a staggering £530 million each day according to Carers UK](#) who have also identified that 1.2 million carers are living below the poverty line and the public expenditure costs of carers leaving paid work have been estimated to be £1.3 billion a year.

Additionally a significant aspect of the success of Brainhealth Breakthrough in terms of its team, approach and activities, is that the organisation puts people who are 'Experts with Lived Experience' at the heart of service design, plus the organisation is led by Karen Howarth who has lived with Traumatic Brain Injury for most of her life. The combination of professional training, empathy and aptitude for supporting those in a person centred way, alongside practical knowledge and lived experience, enables the team to achieve a high level of success with clients and beneficiaries who have often never engaged with or fallen through the cracks of statutory services.

Brain Health Breakthrough has been recognised locally, regionally and nationally in the following ways:

- ▼ UnLtd Award 2018
- ▼ Inspiring Women Changemakers shortlisted in 2019
- ▼ Awards for All in 2020
- ▼ National Lottery Local Connections Fund backed by DCMS 2021
- ▼ Hyndburn COVID Community Champion 2021

Organisational Vision & Thematic Priorities

Organisation

Formed in 2018 by Karen Howarth who is an expert with lived experience herself, Brain Health Breakthrough helps people take back control of their life by helping them to gain confidence, improve their outlook and their overall wellbeing.

The mission of the organisation is to provide social and emotional support for individuals with brain injury and their carers. As a progressive and innovative organisation Brain Health Breakthrough believes health is holistic and understands that each person's emotional, physical, social and spiritual needs must to be met in order for them to actualise their full health and potential. They support people with brain injuries, their carers, volunteers, and numerous professionals through talks, and workshops, as well as intensive wellbeing programmes and support.

Brain Health Breakthrough works closely with clients and partners, ensuring they are fully listened to, in order to understand their situations and unique needs.

Applications where Brainhealth Breakthrough services are having most impact are with communities including those affected by **Traumatic Brain Injury, Unpaid Carers**, those facing **relationship issues** or breakdown and those who have **barriers in the workplace.**

AIM

“To deliver high-quality training, one to one support and unique, tailored interventions to reduce isolation, improve mental health and wellbeing.”

Specialist Areas

Brain Health Breakthrough work with those in need of time, space and support to help develop themselves across a range of ways that have been identified as being vital for positive physical and mental health, creating a range of wider impacts spanning personal contentment and happiness, future direction and decision making to achieve success and being able positively engage in family life, the workplace and wider community and society. These are often people for whom statutory support and traditional methods have failed to meet the diverse needs of their community or take people seriously. Ways which Brainhealth Breakthrough are enabling this include:

- ▼ Coping strategies
- ▼ Communication
- ▼ Independence and resilience
- ▼ Goal Setting and taking action
- ▼ Physical and Mental Health improvement
- ▼ Healthy Relationships
- ▼ Overcoming Trauma

Programmes, Activities & Services

Brain Health Breakthrough runs a range of programmes and services which combine specialist expertise and theory based learning, with additional insights and compassion only achieved by having a delivery team with lived experience of the challenges they seek to support people through.

To date 100 clients and beneficiaries have collectively benefited from the following:

CONFIDENT BRAIN PROGRAMME & SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE AFFECTED BY TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)

The Confident Brain Programme was developed for people with Brain Injury who to build on self-confidence through positivity and valued contribution. Plus improve practical and emotional coping mechanisms to enable people to recover and rebuild their lives. Support combines improved theoretical understanding of their conditions, alongside peer support, practical strategies and mindfulness.

IMPACTED TO DATE: 44 people

UNPAID CARERS PROGRAMME & WIDER SUPPORT

This 4 week programme is designed to bring unpaid carers together to share experiences and give themselves time and space to rest and rejuvenate. The programme shares tools and strategies to cope more easily with their commitments and responsibilities and ways to enhance their lifestyle, health and wellbeing. The programme is also complemented by mindfulness and meditation to bring calm and resilience to address physical and emotional stress.

IMPACTED TO DATE: 31 people

LONG COVID SUPPORT GROUP

Given members of the delivery team have had COVID and are now living with side effects and ongoing symptoms, they have been able to create an innovative and needs led group to respond to their existing and new communities who have been affected by COVID. 63% of all beneficiaries to date have additional health needs, so this is providing a space to reflect, be taken seriously and manage longer term effects of COVID and the pandemic both physically and emotionally.

IMPACTED TO DATE: 20 People

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE SUPPORT

Several one day workshops and events have been designed and facilitated to share peer led and patient/ expert with lived experience approaches to look at innovative and complementary ways to complement the 'Medical Model' whilst support and empower people to take actively responsibility for their own health and progress.

ONE TO ONE SUPPORT

Brainhealth Breakthrough offers one to one counselling and coaching sessions within certain programmes and also as a stand alone service. They have supported people dealing with a range of difficulties from recovering from injury, to substance misuse, dealing with bereavement, domestic abuse, divorce, work place bullying and more.

IMPACTED TO DATE: 20 People

MEDITATION & MINDFULNESS PROGRAMMES, TOOLS & RESOURCES

A complementary and growing area of Brainhealth Breakthrough's work is providing Meditation and Mindfulness sessions, tools and resources.

IMPACTED TO DATE: 31 people benefitted from sessions

Online tools have had 192 listens

Referral mechanisms & partnerships

Receiving Health and Wellbeing support in a healing and supportive environment tailored to individual needs, experiences whilst offering both practical and emotional support is key to enabling people to recover, rebuild and achieve their potential. Brainhealth Breakthrough achieves this through combining theoretical models and enabling people to learn more about their circumstances and conditions, whilst harnessing the added value of peer support and varied tools and resources co-designed by people with a range of lived experience including Caring Responsibilities, living with Traumatic Brain Injury, living with Long Covid and other specific groups.

Core programmes such as The Confident Brain and Unpaid Carers Programmes comprise of individual and group sessions where people can reflect on their experiences, needs and devise their own goals, strategies and plans and set their own targeted actions to help them progress. Innovative concepts which may have been deemed non-traditional in approach, are now being rolled out and consistently run with diverse groups over multiple years, across a range of settings.

The programmes and experiences seek to balance physical, mental and emotional needs holistically and help people overcome setbacks, challenges or constraints to develop the skills, communication and confidence to live purposeful lives both at home, work and in their wider community.

Brainhealth Breakthrough has developed a number of trusted partnerships, which help to innovate wellbeing, personal growth and development and create empowerment opportunities for diverse groups across Lancashire, the North West and even reaching global clients through remote support and digital tools and resources.

These include referral pathways with the physical and mental health professionals, Carers' Networks and Vetran groups alongside a wider range of community partners spanning public sector teams and voluntary/community services.

Plus social media, events and word of mouth are other important ways in which people get to know about Brainhealth Breakthrough, the services they provide and the impact they are having across multiple and diverse communities across Lancashire and more widely across the North West of England.

Blackburn with Darwen Carers

Several Specialised Wellbeing and Self-care programmes were run including 2 wellness courses, 4 workshops, 1 counsellor practitioner course, plus a weekly meditation group. 31 unpaid carers from diverse backgrounds were involved.

"The programme was appropriate to the very diverse needs of our groups including older people, Asian carers and single parents. Their approach has been authentic and really makes people feel at ease.

I'd rather work with someone who has real experience like Karen – she has real understanding, empathy and insight."

Hyndburn Council

Brainhealth Breakthrough is a Hyndburn COVID Community Champion. This is a Hyndburn Borough Council initiative, backed by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government to deliver a specific range of initiatives to enhance communications and develop networks which will support those disproportionately affected by Covid. *"It is wonderful to see this 12 week program supporting those with long Covid helping those most in need in Hyndburn. We are really happy to support this work and collaborate with BHB as their knowledge and expert services are exactly what our communities need at this difficult time."*



Social Impact

Brainhealth Breakthrough have started to look at the impact of their work and are developing evaluation processes to build consistency into their impact and value measurement for the longer term. Here we start to analyse findings from this first combined evaluation and add additional feedback, insights and observations from a range of stakeholders who have seen value from and benefited from the programmes, events, one to one support and other activities. Brainhealth Breakthrough gather continuous feedback from participants, clients and wider partners to understanding the physical, emotional wellbeing improvements taking place through their work, as well as use findings directly to improve on service design. They are keen to co-design interventions that are fit for purpose and respond directly to the needs of their clients, partners and beneficiaries, recognising that they can only do this through two-way dialogue and through creating appropriate time and space. Plus they innovate through appreciating that the lived experience of their clients and beneficiaries provides unique insights and perspectives to create new solutions where statutory services may be struggling to achieve the best results or provide tailored ongoing support to people with ongoing chronic conditions.

Methodology

A mixed approach was used combining desk research, a review and analysis of feedback across 24 events and programmes, plus wider stakeholder consultation including of 6 telephone interviews.

We have started to quantify some basic value indicators and provided some concluding social impact data across a broad range of areas where social value is being created by the interventions and services Brainhealth Breakthrough are running. In order to attach impact and value to the outcomes that they have delivered, we have identified a range of Impact Statements from beneficiaries including: stress, anxiety, depression and pain management, positive mindset and relationship improvement overall improved wellbeing and increased self-care, plus independence, empowerment, skills development and employability There are also a series of impact case studies giving testimony to the quality and impact of Brainhealth Breakthrough's programmes and activities and highlighting beneficiaries' journeys as well as how people's lives and opportunities are changing and improving as a result.

Sample of People Interviewed

Several people from the Health Sector across the North West – spanning views from Clinicians, Mental Health Professionals and Legal Professionals

Individuals who have accesses services and support

Local Charities and Carer's Groups benefiting from Brain Health Breakthrough services

Wider funders and commissioners of programmes including UH Ltd, Hyndburn Council and Hyndburn CVS

Outcomes, Impact & Value

Evidence of Outcome	Impact	Value
<p><i>"I am humbled and in awe of the progress I have been able to make thanks to BHB, following a childhood brain injury. I can access my own inner resources and feel like an adult for the first time in my life!"</i></p> <p><i>"I never thought these results were possible."</i></p> <p><i>"I never believed my TBI symptoms would improve."</i></p>	<p>Improved belief in oneself and the ability to heal and make genuine progress</p>	<p>Increased potential for health, wellbeing and interventions seeking to tackle mental and physical health difficulties to actually work and be accessed / implemented</p> <p>Increased sense of identity, hope, positivity and trust in personal goals and aspirations leading to family, relationship, economic and wider personal achievements and improvements</p>
<p><i>"I am now much calmer."</i></p> <p><i>"I'm more outgoing and more positive on a lot of things in my life. I feel proud of myself because I've come so far."</i></p> <p><i>I'm learning to be kinder to myself and help put things into perspective more."</i></p> <p><i>"Complex caring needs are always going to bring me stress and anxiety but this support has made me work out what is best for me and put myself first sometimes in a no-win situation."</i></p>	<p>Increased capacity to manage and reduce ones stress, anxiety and mood as well as consider how to positively frame experiences</p>	<p>Improved mental health, resilience and patience levels results in less reliance on medication and statutory services</p> <p>People are better able to manage challenges, setbacks and frustrations, which might otherwise isolate or incapacitate them meaning they can remain active members of their family, workplace or community</p>
<p><i>"It's really so much better with my daughter now."</i></p> <p><i>"I stand up for myself a lot better than before".</i></p> <p><i>"I has helped me declutter what is in my head, make better decision, balance and prioritise."</i></p>	<p>Increased communication skills and assertiveness</p>	<p>Improved confidence, ability to take responsibility and action which in turn improves relationships, decision making and ability to communicate effectively and pro-actively have a voice in a range of home/life/work/settings</p>
<p><i>"From a scientific perspective it's helped me understand my brain, body and how to manage my thoughts and self, much better."</i></p> <p><i>"I have re-capped and improved on my self-care and given me new tools as well as revisit things I had forgotten!"</i></p> <p><i>"I have learned tools and coping strategies I will use for the rest of my life – thank you."</i></p>	<p>Increased knowledge and skills development in self-care and mental health improvement</p>	<p>Improved theoretical and physiological understanding of mental and physical health conditions, coupled with practical techniques, gives greater depth to skills/knowledge development, enhances the Medical model and gives constructive complementary tools which build independence and consistent periods of wellness and productivity with less reliance on statutory services</p>
<p><i>"For the first time in my life I was around people who understood my needs and situation and could make relevant suggestions for support and practical next steps."</i></p> <p><i>"Peer support takes away the sense of loneliness -people can share honestly with people who wouldn't judge them and understand what they're going through."</i></p>	<p>Increased awareness of sources of support and Community Connections</p>	<p>Increased independence and ability to take responsibility through an awareness of diversity of opportunities</p> <p>Reduced isolation, access to wider community opportunities and empowered families, workplaces and communities</p>
<p><i>"It has opened my thinking to brain injury and other ways of how to treat it – scientific rehab and the holistic approaches which also bring results."</i></p> <p><i>"It's great to know someone cares and is really listening and access relevant info."</i></p>	<p>Empowered communities with lived experience</p>	<p>Increased authentic contribution to service improvement and bring Expert with Lived Experience approaches to health and wellbeing improvement</p> <p>Effective and appropriate interventions, tools, resources and services</p>

Social Value Proposition – Future Commitment

Key Impact Indicator 1: *Improved Self-belief, self-confidence and trust in the ability to heal mentally and physically, to enable personal and/or professional progress*

If people don't believe change is possible, they have written themselves off or they are engaging in services they are not ready for, they hit a brick wall, spiraling into a vicious circle. Brain Health Breakthrough's approach can break that cycle making them ready to access treatment, support or self-care, so investments in mental and physical health become more impactful with more individuals ready to engage and prevention/ early intervention becomes possible through self-care and increased independence.

"I was never able to find the right therapy to help me before accessing /RTT therapy/ NLP/CBT/hypnosis /psychotherapy and nothing worked. I had a mistrust and negative view of therapies. Brain Health Breakthrough changed my perceptions and helped me in a relaxed way to go into deep rooted issues to help things I'd not been able to see and reach."

Key Impact Indicator 2: *Increased ability to manage and reduce stress, anxiety, pain and negative thoughts and experiences, to improve mental/physical health and wellbeing and live more independently.*

Deep intensive support, confidence building and workable strategies create both simple and life changing results.

"I can now hear in my left ear, when I couldn't before."

"I'm enjoying walking a lot more now. I've got more confidence going up and down stairs, where before I didn't."

"I have the patience and communication skills to better handle my relationship with my children and they are happier."

Key Impact Indicator 3: *Increased skills, knowledge and ability to apply these, to effect positive health and wellbeing at home, at work or in the wider community*

Brainhealth Breakthrough not only unlocks innate knowledge, skills and latent resilience, it brings service user led tools and resources which are current and delivers them in ways which make them easy to apply.

"Brainhealth Breakthrough have real understanding, empathy and insight and have been able to support our employees, carers and community members. People who had been suffering for a long time are now making real progress in their home life and at work. The change is clear to see."

Key Impact Indicator 4: *Improved access to wider services and community connection to increase lifestyle opportunities and aspirations*

The tools, resources and networks Brainhealth Breakthrough cultivates enables people to believe, aspire and actively evolve the sense of possibility, purpose and direction in their lives.

"Being around people who understand my needs in a non-judgemental way has been refreshing. I am now able to do things I didn't believe possible this time last year."

"Through Brainhealth Breakthrough I have come into contact with a wider range of relevant techniques, support options and people who can help me."

Key Impact Indicator 5: *Increased involvement and participation of people with Lived Experience shaping policy and leading services and activities which affect them*

An additional overarching value is being able to unlock talent of people with 'Lived Experience' to have them involved in designing and managing services in meaningful ways and in paid roles where possible making them more fit for purpose with increased engagement, usage and impact.

"I want to set up my own support group to do a better job of helping people 'grow in confidence and climb up that tree'. I'd want to see people involved in making decisions on how money is spent, what gets organised and run."

"I'd rather work with someone who has real experience like Karen – she has real understanding, empathy and insight. Some people had been suffering for a long time and she helped them make real progress" - Partner Organisation

Impact Case Studies

With 100 people to date taking part in Brainhealth Breakthrough programmes and activities, there are numerous examples and case studies outlining how diverse people who have faced a broad range of challenges and setbacks have been improving their confidence, motivation, wellbeing and attitudes to personal growth and development later in life, as well as their social skills, personal relationships and developing the tools and self-worth to take action. Below are a few stand out examples.....

An online client bringing up 3 children as a single parent whilst affected by TBI found Brainhealth Breakthrough via social media. As a result of a couple of head injuries including an accident in 2018 she noticed she was experiencing poor co-ordination and clumsiness, neck pain, memory problems, fatigue and found time keeping and focus a struggle. As a result she had to stop work as a teacher, would get upset about having the accident and having to cope with life with the loss of function. Plus felt frustrated at not being able to do things she used to and was finding it difficult to deal with her children. Following a period of one to one intensive sessions with Karen she noticed the pain in body had gone and a big difference to how she felt before, her memory improved, she was no longer upset about having the accident and was able to plan her return to work, plus develop better relationships with her children: *"I never believed my TBI symptoms would improve, however I can now see things much more positively and live life fully. Friends, family and colleagues have noticed a change and ask what I have been doing! Plus my children say I am more simple now and not stressed like before."*

An Asian Carer looking after elderly parents was initially referred by Blackburn with Darwen Carers, plus attended weekly mindfulness sessions throughout the pandemic in 2020. She had spent years managing difficult situations and this had got to the point where she was feeling suicidal, with overwhelming thoughts she couldn't find a way to subside. She had been relying on self-help, as although had tried several therapies to overcome her difficulties in the past including RTT therapy NLP and CBT, she found nothing has worked: *"I was never able to find the right therapy to help me before. Karen took me deeper into myself in a safe way, so I was able to go into deep rooted issues to uncover and address things I'd not been able to see and reach. . For the first time in decades I felt there was consistency and personalised support unlike some other clinical or medical model interventions – where you turn up offload and go home - this was different. It wasn't rushed, didn't feel clinical, it felt I had a connection and she really understood me. She has given me the tools to better manage pain, anxiety and step out of my comfort zone and I have stopped putting myself under unnecessary pressure."*

An Armed Forces Veteran affected by TBI and other mental health complications He met Karen through having TBI at a mutually beneficial conference and noticed the difference in approach and was interested to see how more 'Expert with lived experience' approaches could improve outcomes and support for the TBI community: *"I think some of the ways that Karen has supported has to remove some of the cobwebs and that has been positive. It has given me access and opportunity to meet and share my story and potentially inspire more people. We have all learned different ways and methods of dealing with things. I hope that being able to share my experiences and techniques and strategies this can help others."*

Partner Organisation with both staff and community needs After trialing a peer support group they realised the potential for wider organisational benefits: *"A staff member who was struggling has come back with a totally different outlook. You can see it in her body language, she is a carer as well within her role seeing support and getting access herself and getting massive impact and more confident in work. Connect better within team and*

feeling better and well in yourself you project that in the office. Rather than having the weight on shoulders she looks happy and productivity better. She's enjoying life now and actively referring others to BHB"

For further information

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About the authors of this report

This report has been undertaken by Nickala Torkington, Social Business development consultant and Social Value specialist with 20 years experience of working in the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector. Nickala is a co-founder of Flourish Together CIC a pay it forward consultancy and network of support for social entrepreneurs which invests its surplus resources in supporting women changemakers to create the change they see needed, whilst increase their economic independence.

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