

Better You

Improving mental health
in partnership with
young people



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Publishing information

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First names and testimony of the young people in this report are used with permission.



#Connection #Kindness

To be connected is to be empathetic
And supportive
Of your peers
This is the foundation
to building
strong
and resilient
relationships
Which can achieve anything
We set our minds to
Connection is heartfelt
near or far
overseas
in other lands
It's a knowing
a feeling
a moment of remembering
There may be barriers
obstacles even
you can connect
by eyes
by touch
by the internet
by a smile to a stranger
and kindness
oh kindness is simple
harder to be kind
when your heart is broken
my heart is shattered
but I will still be kind
every little moment of kindness
stitches a scar back together
Connection is kindness
And to be kind
is to be connected

POEM CREATED BY PEERS AT BETTER YOU

Summary

This is a report on the progress of Better You—an innovative peer support service developed in partnership with young people with mental health problems run by PFG Doncaster. In summary this report makes the following observations:

- Mental illness is a severe and growing problem for young people in Doncaster and there is a need for new community-based solutions.
- Better You is making a transformative difference in the lives of young people.
- Between the start of 2023 and October 2024 Better You supported 300 young people who have presented with complex mental health needs and there is a referral rate of about 15 young people every month.
- The Better You model combines peer support with personalised practical assistance that focuses on pressing issues to help people move into recovery.
- Young people have converted an unattractive and derelict building into a welcoming space for young people across Doncaster—Grove Park Hub.
- The young people at Better You have been improving the environment at Grove Park and, in the face of initial resistance, are transforming local people's attitudes.
- Better You is a collaborative project which connects young people, on their own terms, to a range of community organisation, associations and local businesses.
- There is growing confidence in the model with agencies across the City with referrals from Care Leavers Team, DWP, RDASH, CAMHS, Social Care and others.
- Young people are growing in resilience and confidence and many young peer supporters who are now supporting each other actively contributing to the community.
- The cost of the service is very low, equivalent to 66% of the cost of one young person placed in a private hospital or treatment unit.
- Peer support by young people at Better You adds an additional 200% of social value to the initial investment by the NHS.
- Better You has created a vital platform for transforming lives and enabling young people to co-design better solutions for all young people in Doncaster.

1. The mental health crisis for young people

PFG Doncaster is a peer support organisation founded in 2010. Today PFG has 3,500 members from communities across all the neighbourhoods of Doncaster and it is known internationally for its ground-breaking work in mutual support and community development (Duffy, 2012; 2021). In 2022 the group was awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award any voluntary organisation can receive.

From their earliest days PFG has used mutual support to help people overcome the practical and emotional challenges they face and begin to live life with joy, friendship and a sense of meaning. This work is ongoing and constantly evolving. At the same time PFG has been working with the City of Doncaster, statutory services and many community groups and organisations to try and bring about reform and systems change. This has led to important innovations, like the development of peer-led crisis support (Safe Space), community wardens, the hosting of bumping spaces and many more initiatives.

A central ambition for PFG is to improve the support available to young people who are experiencing poor mental health or crisis. PFG knows that peer support can really help, but age also matters. The ground-breaking work of Safe Space has demonstrated that there are many young people in desperate need of support—but existing options do not always suit the needs of young people.

Young people need to connect with other people of a similar age and the support they need has to be tailored to reflect the distinct interests and transitions faced by young people. The social pressures on young people between the ages of 16 and 25 in England today are intense:

- People are expected to make significant life choices about education, work and relationships at a time of local, national and global insecurity.
- Poverty, economic insecurity and pressures on family have worsened, particularly over the last 15 years.
- The COVID pandemic ripped away the routines of school and the securities of regular peer groups and many young people are still affected by this.
- Public services are under pressure as austerity has weakened the ability of professional services to respond to growing problems.
- New technology and social norms are leaving children more disconnected from other people and less able to form meaningful relationships.

The negative impact of these stresses and social changes is significant. The data for England shows strikingly high levels of mental distress for young people.

For example NHS England research suggests the following percentages of young people have a probable mental disorder in 2023 (NHS England, 2014):

- 20.3% of 8-16 year olds
- 23.3% of 17-19 year olds
- 21.7% of 20-25 year olds

The Doncaster Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (Team Doncaster, 2022) describes rapidly increasing pressures on acute mental health services, with increasing incidents of self-harm, eating disorder and overdose. For example, urgent referrals to Doncaster's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) increased from 48 to 72 between 2020 and 2021, an increase of 50%. Non-urgent referrals also increased significantly with over 300 referrals in 2021.

Recent analysis of data from the Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) has demonstrated an enormous level of need, particularly for young women, which is being met by ambulance services (Tapper, 2024):

"The analysis showed that 55% of all calls relating to mental health were for under-40s, with almost a quarter for under-25s. People in the poorest fifth of society were five times more likely to call an ambulance for a mental health concern."

National data shows similar upward trends in mental distress, reduced wellbeing and severe outcomes, like self-harm (Government Social Research, 2023). The COVID pandemic may still be a factor in some of this data, but there is good reason to think that the underlying causes are more systemic and are due to a growing sense of hopelessness and alienation for many (Potts, 2020).

The on-going impacts of austerity, growing levels of poverty and destitution and the additional stresses placed on families and young people by policies driven by central government are unlikely to change in the short-run. The geographic inequalities for people in Doncaster and the North are also likely to play a part in this problem and reflect social policy problems that are at least 50 years old (Pidd, 2019).

It is also worth noting that the level of mental distress faced by young people in the UK certainly seems to be higher than the global averages identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2021).

There are particular challenges for young people and their families going through the transition from children services to adult services:

- Changes in treatment and appointments
- Changes in professionals and support workers
- New systems and expectations (e.g. college, employers, DWP)
- Loss of old securities, schools supports
- New economic or family pressures
- Loss of support for care leavers

Many young people find themselves placed in hospital services, often far from home, at great emotional cost to themselves and their family and also at greater economic costs (NHS England, 2023). However, the local community support system is struggling, restricted by lack of resources and limited options. Growing demand and limited supply of support is creating a sense of crisis.

Mental illness is not only associated with increased levels of demands for mental health services. Young people in crisis are more likely to need support from police, ambulance, accident & emergency services, social services, housing, education, drug and alcohol services and others. There is also an increasing risk that young people will self-harm or even take their own lives (Marsh, 2021).

Peer support has been widely tested in educational settings with children and adolescents, therefore there are many reasons to think that peer support will work for young people. For the challenges each person faces are reduced when faced alongside others going through the same challenges, and by connecting with those who have already started to overcome these challenges:

- Young people are on a journey of discovery from childhood to the greater, but more uncertain, possibilities of adult life.
- The patterns of employment, recreation, citizen action and community life that may seem normal and valuable to an adult are often not part of a young person's life.
- Alternative patterns, such as gaming and using social media, insulate the young person from older patterns of human community and wellbeing.

Michèle Beck, the first project leader for Better You observed some of the differences that existed when developing peer support for young people:

“Young people may not even know where to begin when seeking help and may not approach community organisations for help with food, hygiene, clothes etc. and this means they lack the starting point for seeking deeper forms of help. They often prefer text support and don’t feel comfortable accessing telephone calls and or face to face support. The basic costs of travel make it harder for people to and many lack help to get the right benefits and so face extreme poverty.”

The challenge is to both tackle the underlying causes of mental distress for young people, by challenging educational, economic and community systems that are not nurturing young people. At the same time, as people experience mental distress, young people should have the chance to benefit from peer support—but in a way that make sense of their specific needs and the challenges faced by their age group.

2. The Better You model

On review of the national evidence and looking at the local implications, Doncaster City and their NHS partners prioritised health and wellbeing for young people and they came together to support community-based solutions to address the gaps between health and social care. This commitment was further underlined by the *Doncaster Place Plan*, which recognised that the reputation of young people in the community was often poor, and that people from poorer communities were often stigmatised and left without proper support. Many neighbourhoods have seen local resources and opportunities diminish and this leaves young people feeling like their opportunities are reducing.

To tackle these problems People Focused Group Doncaster (PFG) with support from the South Yorkshire NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Doncaster City Council created Better You to be the first peer support programme for young people with mental health problems. The aim of the Better You is not to simply improve access to mental health services, instead Better You is designed around six principles:

1. **Peer leadership** - support young people to shape the solutions they need.
2. **Safe space** - give young people an accessible and secure place to make their own.
3. **Peer support** - encourage young people to support each other.
4. **Holistic** - focus on integrating mental and physical health and wellbeing.
5. **Community-based** - connect people to local community organisations.
6. **Developmental** - help young people resolve practical problems and find work.

In addition to the effectiveness of PFG, as noted in earlier research, there is good reason to think that peer support is an effective methodology for improving the lives of young people and for reducing negative consequences, such as hospitalisation (Duffy, 2021). A recent systematic review of peer support work concluded:

“Therefore, peer support is a strong candidate intervention for young people with depression and anxiety, as people in this age group experience high rates of such concerns, and they are likely to be more receptive to seeking help from peers before or during engagement with formal clinical services.”

SIMMONS M B ET AL. (2023) THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PEER SUPPORT FROM A PERSON WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW. BMC PSYCHIATRY. 23.194

It is also worth mentioning in passing that this academic review also points to the challenges created when peer supporters are situated inside professional service systems and suggests that this can quickly undermine their effectiveness. This research underlines the importance of distinguishing genuine peer support from a professional version which can leave peer workers at a systematic disadvantage within professionalised systems (Duffy, 2021). An agreement was reached with PFG to pilot Better You, focusing on the following groups of young people:

- Young people experiencing emotional crises and overwhelmed with life issues.
- Young people who have just received a mental health diagnosis.
- Young people in transition from the children's mental health services (CAMHS) into adult mental health services to prevent longer term use of mental health services.
- Young people leaving care.
- Young people already connected to statutory services but who were not motivated to work with existing systems of support.
- Working with the Youth Offending Service to support young people who have come to the attention of the criminal justice system.

The challenge was then to develop a model and practical plan to make these ideas real. Better You was developed to take some of the best features of PFG's peer support work and to adapt those features to be more fitting for young people and the particular circumstances of adolescence and the transition into adult life. The goals of the work are to:

- **Prevent** escalation of mental health crises by an early intervention and engagement using a peer to peer approach.
- **Reduce** the demand on statutory services by building resilience, helping young people to thrive and live independently in their communities.
- **Build** strong relationships with existing community groups and with those who are just beginning to focus on helping young people and families.

Working with young people themselves six key elements of the Better You support model were defined as follows:

1. **Peer support** - let young people help each other using solution focused discussions.
2. **Individual counselling** - give young people get the time and space to express their feelings, thoughts and views
3. **Community action** - enable a mixture of support from other partners to provide guidance expertise and personalised activities to enhance mental wellbeing.

4. **Assistance** - provide practical personalised support to advance recovery and independence and to help people solve pressing life problems.
5. **Encourage** - build relationships with young people and enable them to become stronger, more confident young adults.
6. **Advocacy** - give young people a voice that can inform future services based on their lived experience.

The service is hosted by PFG Doncaster to ensure that it would be rooted in the same values that have been so successful in its peer support work: a commitment to the essential value and potential of every person. However, it is also a collaborative project. Other partners offer specific activities, such as sports, recreational activities, creative or artistic work or counselling. Better You also provides a welcoming space for young people to meet with professionals.

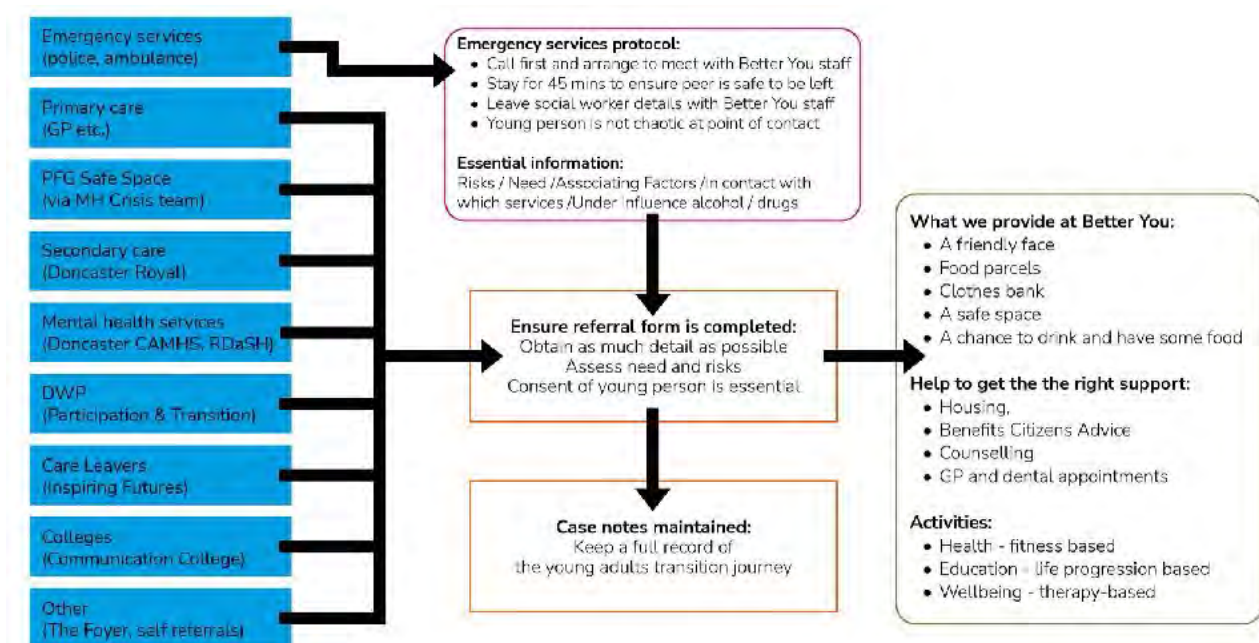


FIGURE 1 THE REFERRAL PATHWAY FOR BETTER YOU

As a researcher I was able to examine a random sample of caseload data (n121). It was possible to then code the work of Better You to examine how young people experienced the model in practice. The work of Better You has many variables, but it seems to me that it could, at its simplest be broken down into three broad stages:

1. **Initial outreach**, which may or may not succeed in engaging the young person
2. **One-to-one support**, either by phone, text or in person
3. **Regular involvement** with the peer support group, with additional support

I have taken the view that people who have attended the Hub regularly or who have engaged fully in the social activities established by Better You can be treated as regular attendees, while those who are engaged primarily by one-to-one support are only getting regular support. There are also a significant minority who are contacted, perhaps receive minimal support, but who don't really form a meaningful relationship with Better You. There were even a very few people where no contact could be established.

Code		N	%
NO	No response	4	3%
LO	Sporadic contact	27	22%
SP	Regular support	43	36%
RG	Regular attendee	47	39%

TABLE 1 ANALYSIS OF WORK OF BETTER YOU

It is important to note that this is not an analysis of the quantity of support. Some people may quickly engage, join Better You and be fully engaged, but others may move on quite quickly. On the other hand someone who has never attended the centre or engaged in peer support community activities may take up a large amount of support time. It is clear that there is significant variability in the amount of support people need and the level of engagement at the Hub or in associated activities.

What this analysis does seem to indicate is both the value and limitations of peer support for young people with mental health problems. Some people can find their way into social connection and use collective activity to make progress; some people are very resistant and prefer to keep social interaction to a minimum. This is very much as the designers of Better You had predicted—the needs of young people are different and it typically takes more work to help people engage and benefit from peer support.

At one extreme PFG is providing vital support to acute services. For example, one young woman is getting support from the team, and peers at Better You, to leave hospital. Other young people are being referred by the DWP to Better You because they are struggling with confidence, social skills and so cannot begin to seek training or find work.

A third key group are care leavers, who are being referred to Better You as they begin adult life, but who often lack significant family or community support. The physical resource of the Hub can be very important to this group, helping people learning independent living skills (washing, cooking and ironing) and getting support with housing and work. This group are often some of the most engaged and often get involved in contributing back to Better You and the wider community.

Others come from the crisis team, perhaps struggling with addictions and in a mental health crisis. For this group Better You offers one-to-one support, a chance to get some good advice and support and the chance to engage in group work where they can unwind, play games, do crafts or connect into some of the other organised community activities. Many people come as a 'self-referral', encouraged by a friend.

Stuart Marshall, who is the current leader of the Better You staff team described the importance of the Hub like this:

"Some of it is like a youth centre. The drop-in element is brilliant. People can come and go whenever they want. It provides some security from 9-4 and until 7 on a Thursday. There's nobody else offering that. To come and feel safe, and to be around such a diverse group of people. People are respectful to each other, and the flexibility is a real bonus. It's fine if people come for minutes, or for hours.

"We need to build on our multi-agency working, not just through emails and phone calls. We are meeting all the key agencies on a regular basis. Careers advisors, police, housing, RDaSH worker are dropping in and connecting to people. It would be good to get some of the other agencies attending our team meetings. It would be good to get more happening on employment. More people might be able to find work with the right support. It would be good to work more closely with Aspire to Be (employment agency)."

The balance of Better You is different to the kind of peer support found at PFG's Wellness Centre. More professional support is necessary and the paid staff team at Better You is made up of a team leader, a peer supporter and 2 peer support workers. All staff have the necessary checks and training to complete their role, including:

- Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) checks
- Induction training across the PFG services
- Training in food hygiene course
- Training adult and children safeguarding
- Disengagement training,

Sometimes additional training is required. For instance the team have worked with RDaSH (Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Trust) to get training on eating disorders, Bi-polar and Personality Disorders. Staff also receive counsellor-led supervision to get support and explore better solutions. The budget also allows for resources for training for peers, project activities and additional expenses for peers.

Better You has some qualities that can be found in services like WomenCentre where the case worker role and peer support work in close partnership (Duffy & Hyde, 2011). It is particularly important that the case worker can create a bond of trust. There should be no sign-posting or merely referring people on to other professionals. Instead peer workers arrange appointments and accompany the person to the meeting, event and appointments. This provides the basis for trust-building which is the essential first step in making real progress and helping people open up to new opportunities.

The original proposal assumed there would be 2 full time workers, however, to get better coverage and maximise knowledge, lived experience and expertise the model has increasingly included part time staff. Additionally peers from the wider PFG community peers with specialist knowledge and expertise have also provided support, especially to help young people who are part of smaller groups (e.g. the LGBTQ+ community or from one of the BAME communities). There are also 2 regular volunteers from PFG whose input adds further value to the team.

The original proposal the Better You model assumed an annual cost of just over £116,000, to be funded by the NHS ICB. However the high level of need, which involved much higher levels of one-to-one support required an additional member of staff. For this reason the Locality Team added a further £15,000 of income.

3. Grove Park - the Hub

One of the key factors when choosing a building to provide Better You, was that it was accessible, anonymous (in that it wasn't identified as a place where young people with mental health problems attend), it was a building that was adaptable, had a working and functional kitchen, Wifi and was attractive for young people to attend.

In 2022, PFG were approached by the City of Doncaster to see if they were interested in using a semi-derelict park pavilion in the centre of a Grove Park (or Grove Gardens) and on the main road near the Doncaster Royal Infirmary. Kelly Hicks, Director of PFG said:

"At the time, the Safe Space project, which is commissioned by the NHS, to provide an alternative to mental health crisis intervention service, was reporting an increase in 18-25 year olds being referred. However the service offer to this group, in terms of support, was inadequate and we felt that we could offer something more bespoke for people in this age range. We had in mind a young people's crisis prevention support service. So we applied for the lease for the building at Grove Park and the idea for Better You began to develop."

The setting of the Better You within Grove Park has provided numerous benefits, but also some severe challenges. Grove Park is an attractive area of parkland within the neighbourhood of Wheatley. It includes many useful facilities:

- Play areas
- Picnic areas
- Tennis courts
- Sports pitches
- Sheltered seating
- Woodland grove
- Walking routes

This means that Grove Park offers opportunities to be outdoors and to do fun and educational activities. There are significant mental health benefits that flow from time spent outside, in nature and in exercise. It is very close to the main hospital for Doncaster—a place where young people with mental problems often arrive in A&E, but from where they are assessed and then usually sent home. This location enables hospital staff to direct people over the road to Better You. In addition the peer support workers can visit A&E to connect and raise their profile. The building also has relatively good public transport links.

One of the most important aspects of the work of Better You is to establish good relationships with local people and local groups. One of its key ambitions is to change the perception of the local community about the young people as being disruptive, destructive and a threat to the park. This was not always easy. For instance, two young black men, just playing cricket in the park, were chased off the park area, with cries of “We don’t want your sort.” These people had assumed (wrongly) that these men were from Better You and exhibited multiple levels of prejudice and troubling behaviour. Another young man, with a complex mental health condition, was faced with people shouting, “We don’t want crazy people in our park.”

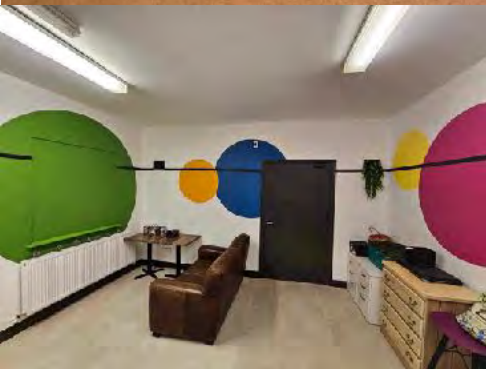
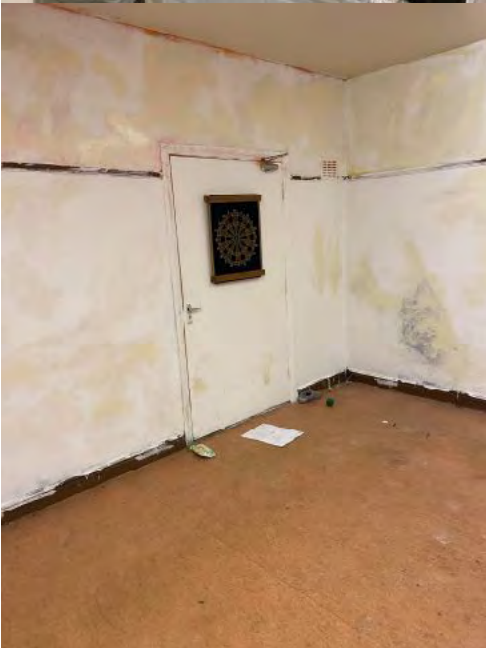
Very early in the development of the project, PFG contacted the Friends of Grove Gardens in order to establish a positive relationship with them so that Better You, and the peers who worked there, could include the members of Grove Park community group into the planning and discuss the intentions of the project, as well as reviewing what the plans of the Friends of Grove Park were throughout the calendar year, so that together they are consciously making a contribution to the wider wellbeing of the community.

Early into the delivery of the programme, there were some projects where activities took place in the park itself. This was delivered by the Wildlings Project which is outdoor forestry skills project. The activities caused considerable consternation with the local residents as they raised concerns about the young people being in the park, and that they appeared to be involved in making fires. Michéle Beck, noted:

“The residents who lived facing the park submitted a complaint to the local authority about what was happening. We learned from this incident that we needed to include the neighbours and Friends of Grove Park, in the planning of activities.”

Through the ongoing relationship with the Friends of Grove Park, in the Summer of 2023, the Peer Support workers and young people, took part in the annual summer fare they hold that raises money in memory of young people who died in a car accident. Peer workers, met with one of the parents who organised this event to help plan and support the day. Young people organised a litter pick with the Friends of Grove Park, on the day before and after the event to keep the park clean and the Pavilion was open for people to use the toilets and the kitchen to make teas and coffees.

There is still much work to be done to establish Better You within the part, but enormous progress has been made. A once derelict pavilion in the park, has now been given new life as the Better You hub. A community frightened and confused about mental illness has been given the chance to learn more and appreciate the positive role that young people can play.



4. Leadership by young people

One of the first actions of the project was to establish a Young People's Advisory Board to direct the activity, identify the outcomes and hold PFG to account for its delivery of the project. After a consultation the young people named the project Better You to give the project an identity that would invite young people to get involved. Better You was officially launched in February 2023 with an open day for the referral organisations.

A critical part of Better You is the role young people play in developing and delivering the project. The Young People's Advisory Board for Better You, has 4 members which includes 3 young people with experience of mental health problems, meets every month to discuss the project and plan actions. Some of the groups key achievement include:

- Designing the interior of Grove Park
- Developing innovative ideas for activities
- Creating new ideas for training for peers
- Advising on additional training for the team
- Training as peer supporters
- Becoming change agents by discussing topics related to services



5. Community partners

PFG Doncaster have a long history of well-established relationships with community partners and always seek to create solutions through partnerships with others. Partners who have supported the development of Better You include:

- **Friends of Grove Gardens** - Young people support the heritage project, litter-picking, local gritting and running a joint celebration party.
- **Blake Cairns Foundation** - Young people work to support the annual Gala.
- **Keepmoat Homes** – This business supplied equipment for the project hub.
- **Doncaster College** - The college sent apprentices for work experience to renovate the building at Grove Park.
- **Northern College** - The college provides a residential programme for young people to experience an academic course in a supportive environment.
- **Hearing Voices** - Young peers use this therapy-based approach, targeting early intervention to support young people who are hearing voices.
- **Wildlings Project** – This social enterprise teaches forestry skills and other skills to enjoy the natural world - forms of green therapy.
- **Club Doncaster** – Doncaster Rover's community foundation helps promote physical activity and involvement with match day tickets and player experiences.
- **FoodAware** – This local social enterprise provides food and support to help young people cook nutritious food. There are plans to set up a small community cafe.
- **South Yorkshire Police** – Better You are working closely with the police and local emergency services to help young people get the right support.. The project also received a Violence Reduction Unit funding to create a Domestic Violence safe space for young women.

As planned, Better You has also been an effective space for professionals who want to learn about the project. The space offers an appointment hub to allow young people to meet professionals away from a statutory setting and offer education sessions e.g. health, sexual health and substance misuse. There have also been three Open Days with over 150 people visiting Better You.

Table 2 shows the different types of support young people at Better You received. This is an analysis of the data from February to October 2023. This demonstrates the breadth of the work carried out by the Better You team and the necessity of being able to work flexibly to help solve urgent problems in order to help people create the foundations for building a

better life. This further reinforces the lessons of previous research which shows that when professional services become too narrowly defined the professional cannot build the trust necessary to help people solve deeper problems or address trauma (Duffy & Hyde, 2011).

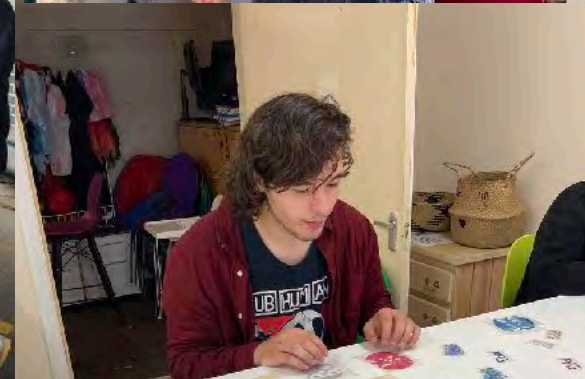
Types of support	Accessed by
Housing support - referral to Home Options (waiting list for council house), support setting up an account, attending meetings, helping with forms of ID, help to move (furniture), applications for white goods, finding furniture and soft furnishing for young people etc.	80%
Emergency accommodation for people who homeless and need a place to live as a matter of urgency - calling Home Options	35%
Benefit support, liaising with DWP workers for meetings, emails, phone calls, referring to and attending Citizen Advice meetings, supporting Personal Independent Payment calls	55%
Food Parcels - collection, delivery	68%
Hygiene Parcels	52%
Food, phone, Amazon vouchers	11%
Bus Passes (so they can attend the centre)	27%
Hospital appointments, GP appointments, mental health appointments, talking to, going with, advocating for, completing new patient forms	47%
In-house counselling (Wednesday and Fridays)	37%
Wellbeing sessions - Mental health boxing, Wildlings and Wellbeing, Art Therapy	86%

TABLE 2 TYPES OF SUPPORT ACCESSED

The team at Better You often help people access entitlement, public services or make other referrals. The vast majority of these referrals are highly developmental, focused on helping people find work, friendship, an income and getting active in their communities. Some of the different groups and organisations that Better You has helped young people connect to include:

- Citizens Advice
- Tenant Support at St Leger Homes
- Mindful Activities
- DWP
- Growing Together
- Creative Support
- Club Doncaster

- Mindful Activities
- Aspire
- Edlington Hilltop
- Amparo
- RDaSH LD Team
- DRASACS
- Dear Denise
- Ian Ogley Community Connector
- Blue Gym Sessions
- Open Minds



6. Young people's needs

When the project opened there was a rush of initial referrals as professionals directed young people they had been working with to Better You from their existing case loads when the project opened its doors. In the early days referrals came from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), from the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) and from the Care Leavers Team.

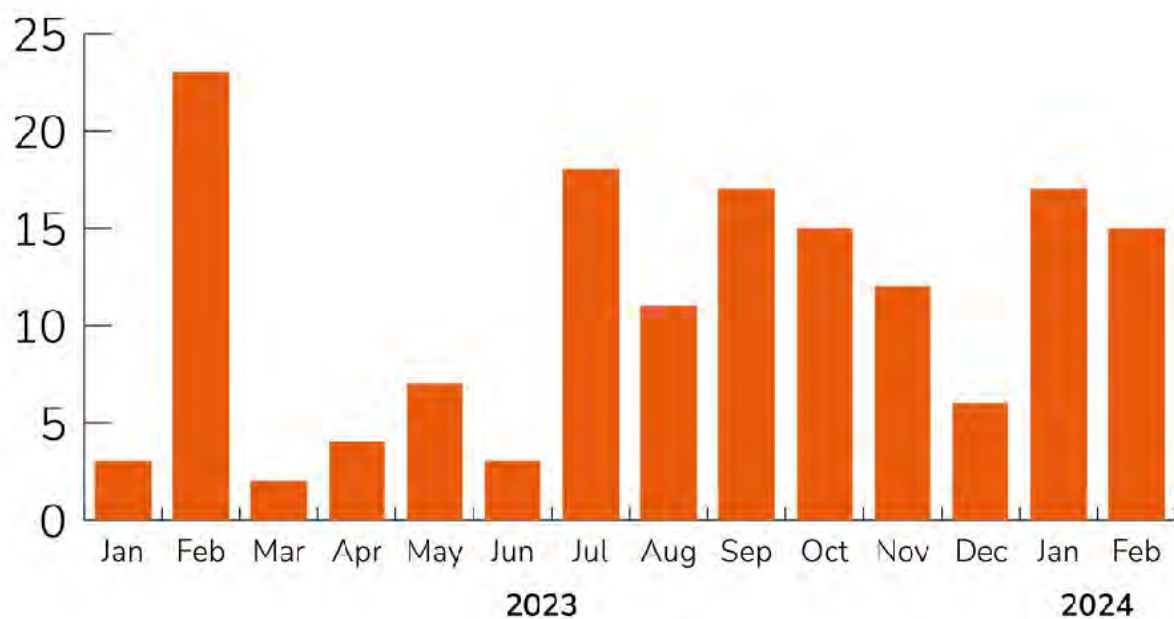


FIGURE 2 BETTER YOU REFERRALS 2023-24

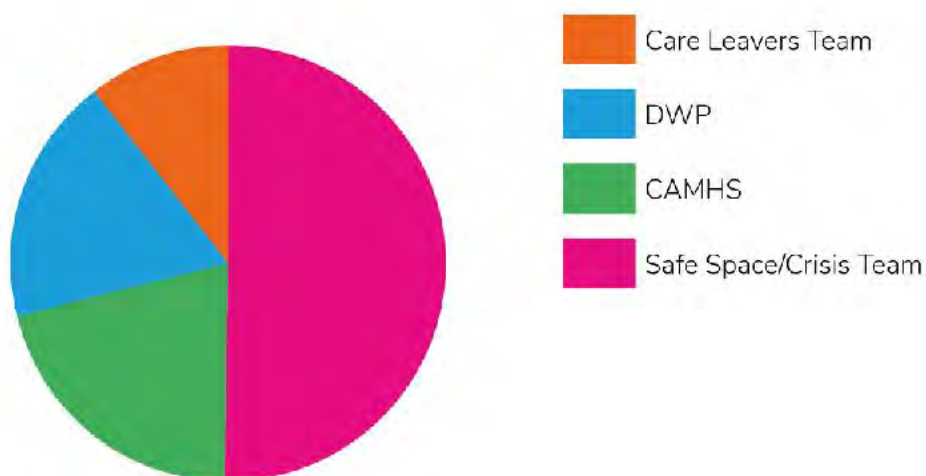


FIGURE 3 SOURCE OF BETTER YOU REFERRALS 2023-24

Over time other referrals have also come from other organisations like the Communication College and the Foyer. There have also been self-referrals, often inspired by the recommendations of peers.

The age of the young people referred to Better You varied between 15 and 25 (with two outliers). There are significant peaks of young people at 18 and 21 which reinforce the view that transitions from schools and college are often periods of increased stress.

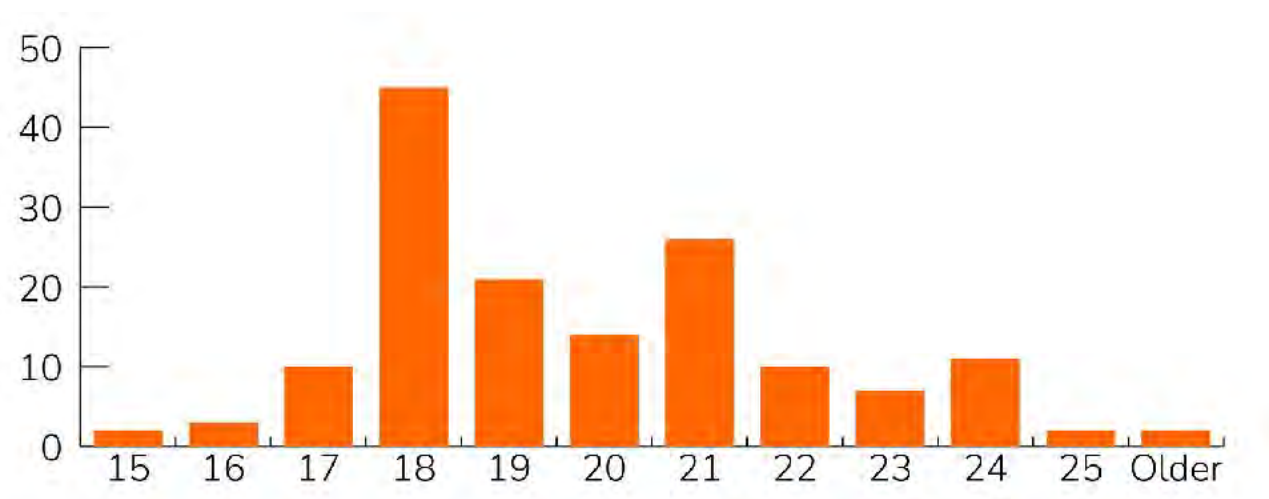


FIGURE 4 AGE OF BETTER YOU REFERRALS 2023-24

Using the large sample of caseload data I was able to further analyse people's needs (n = 121). The case load information included:

- Information at referral
- Work done with the person
- Outcome and Impact assessment

Obviously each individual is different and the range of responses by Better You are wide-ranging, so in order to get some overview of this information I set about coding this information in order to identify the needs of the of the young person, both as the person was referred to Better You and as a relationship developed.

I think the subsequent findings are a useful way of understand the work of Better You. However there are important caveats to bear in mind. Probably all these young people could be said to have mental health problems and a series of underlying personal, socio-economic problems. The is an analysis of the presenting needs, not an analysis of real needs or a mental health diagnosis.

Code		N	%
AL	Alcohol dependency	4	3%
AN	Anxiety	13	11%
AS	Asylum seeker	1	1%
BE	Behaviour or anger problems	12	10%
CA	Criminal activity	8	7%
CL	Care leaver	18	15%
DV	Suffering domestic violence	4	3%
FI	Financial problems	7	6%
HO	Housing problems	15	12%
LC	Lack of confidence	10	8%
MH	Other unspecified mental health	29	24%
PA	Parenting problems	7	6%
SH	Risk of self harm	16	13%
RE	Family or relationship problems	16	13%
SA	Sexually abused	4	3%
SB	Substance abuse	7	6%
SC	Self care and health problems	13	11%
SI	Isolation and social skills	41	34%
SX	Sexual identity	11	9%
TR	Trauma and bereavement	12	10%
VU	Vulnerability, unspecified	12	10%
WK	Problems finding work	17	14%
XX	Uncertain	11	9%
	Average per person	2.4	

TABLE 3 ANALYSIS OF NEED IN BETTER YOU CASELOAD

Moreover this data here is likely to significantly understate need and the complexity of need. It was clear from the details that many people only revealed their real needs over time and it's quite possible many important needs were never identified.

However, despite these limitations, this data seems useful. It is clear that people's needs are complex, with people identified as having 2.4 significant needs on average. This data

underlines the fact that young people are going through significant crises of transition at a time of profound uncertainty.

This analysis also corresponds well with an earlier survey of 10 young people accessing Better You who described their own need. In this initial sample of 10 people, there were people from 7 (of a possible 13) postcodes in Doncaster, and clearly the service seems to be reaching people from across the whole community. 8 out of 10 described themselves as having a mental health condition, broken down as follows:

- Anxiety = 5
- Autism = 2
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) = 1
- Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) = 1
- Depression = 6
- Dyslexia = 1
- Eating Disorder = 1
- Gender Dysphoria = 1
- Psychotic Disorder = 1
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) = 2

4 out of 10 were taking prescribed medication for these conditions.

Also, when I asked the staff at Better You to describe the pattern of needs for those who are referred to Better You, they described them as:

- Anxiety
- Depression or a low mood
- Severe housing problems
- Benefit problems and debt
- Relationship problems (family, partner, friendships)
- Victim of bullying or hate crime
- Poor lifestyle choices
- Poor personal management (e.g. care leavers struggling to live independently)
- Loneliness and low self-esteem

Michèle Beck described the needs of those who join Better You like this:

"I think Better You has been an essential lifeline for some of our peers. 80% of the young people who have been referred into Better You are in crisis, many need immediate support such as food parcels and hygiene parcels, many are sofa surfing or living in chaotic home environments coming from broken relationships or family dynamics. Many of them are on long waiting lists for diagnoses or counselling. Many don't feel like they are on the right medication, and are living with depression, anxiety, PTSD, BPB, Autism, ADHD, ADD, learning disabilities and chronic pain.

"After COVID many feel like they have lost essential social skills which in turn acts as a barrier getting into employment. It also creates social anxiety around socialising and making friends and many are completely isolated from society which impacts wellness and can lead to mental health. Some are in debt and or are not on the correct benefits or had PIP forms refused. We are supporting people to use Citizen Advice regularly.

"Approximately 40% of our young people have drug and alcohol dependency problems, sometimes due to trauma (child sexual abuse, physical abuse and broken families) or are using drugs and alcohol to self-medicate through physical, mental and emotional trauma. 35% of our young people are care leavers and have no family to support them navigate difficult life choices, compounded by the cost of living crisis, raising housing costs, lack of social housing, before we even consider living with mental health issues."

It seems clear that Better You is reaching a large number of young people with significant mental health needs, and that as we might expect these needs are entangled with both social and economic disadvantage and behavioural responses that are usually dangerous to the person themselves and which sometimes become anti-social or criminal. This reinforces the value of practical support and peer support as approaches for helping people to find a better path at a particular difficulty and stressful moment in life.

7. Impact of Better You

I also used the same caseload data to analyse the impact of Better You. Using caseload data in this way is not straightforward and this analysis should be treated as a very rough and ready description that tries to get some sense of the journey people are on and whether Better You has played a part in any improvements. A much more rigorous analysis, with data from multiple perspectives would be needed to get a more objective sense of the progress achieved. Nevertheless, especially when we look at people's stories and some of the subjective data provided by Better You members there seems to be a very positive and highly consistent story emerging.

Code		N	%
UC	Uncertain outcome	26	21%
IN	Informed	13	11%
EX	External support required	8	7%
PO	Postive progress	49	40%
HI	Moved on in recovery	25	21%
	TOTAL	121	
WK	Found work	9	7%
TR	Started training	4	3%
TH	Started therapy	7	6%
HO	Found housing	4	3%
CO	Joined in community life	8	7%
SK	Positive skill development	40	33%

TABLE 4 ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF BETTER YOU

This coding needs some explanation. everyone was given one of the first 5 codes:

1. There were some people who never engaged at all or where other factors took over and the team at Better You simply have no sense of the outcome (UC).
2. There were others, who were engaged to some degree, but who chose not get involved and where a minimal impact is that they are now better informed of their options (IN).
3. There was a small group where Better You had to get more support from an external agency and so Better You stopped supporting the young person (EX).
4. There was a large group of people making positive progress and who continue to be engaged to some degree (PO).

5. There was another group, who may have been intensely involved with Better You for some time but who have now moved on having made significant progress (H1).

In addition I also included codes for those where there were clear examples of positive outcomes achieved, although again, this data is likely to understate progress as the caseload data does not track all the details of someone's life.

All of this is consistent with an earlier small-scale analysis that asked people to self-report their state of mental health (n=14.) There are early signs of significant mental health improvements after being part of Better You. As Figure 5 shows the progress reported here is very significant indeed.

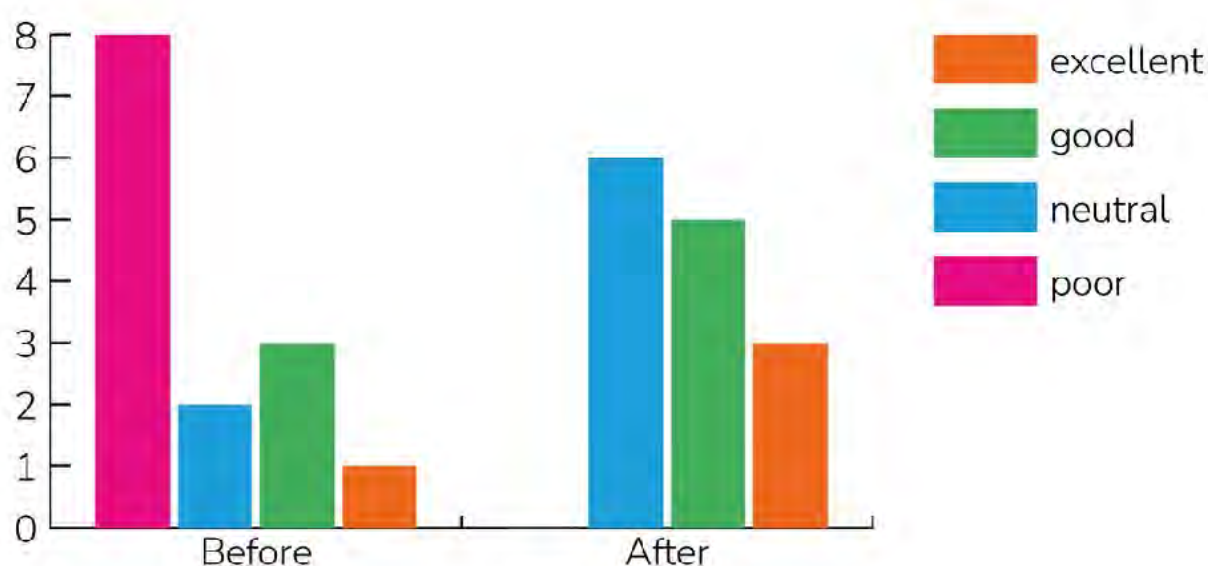


FIGURE 5 OUTCOME DATA 2023 (N=14)

Overall the data indicates a large number of people have had contact with Better You (300) and that a large percentage 75% have engaged either at the level of receiving regular support outside the hub (36%) or as regular attendees and peer supporters (39%). Of these 61% have either made good progress and moved on from Better You or are staying engaged and also making some progress. If we extend the data from the 121 sample to the whole group then the positive impact of Better You might reasonably be expected to be about:

- 183 having made real improvements in their life or mental health
- 63 young people benefited from Better You and moved on in their lives
- 21 young people supported to find paid work
- 12 young people supported to start training or further education

- 12 young people supported to find a better housing situation
- 21 young people who became more involved in their community life
- 100 young people who got new skills and confidence

It is worth noting that while this data is extrapolation it is likely to be an understatement given that the caseload data tends to under describe outcomes for young people and is limited to the more immediate changes in life and mental health.

Also it should be underlined that these are the achievements of people who standard services struggle to engage with and where not only is there often no progress there will those in this group who would likely have harmed themselves, committed suicide or become even more mentally unwell.

8. Testimony of peers

Of course a better sense of the real impact of Better You can be found by listening to the voices of the peers who have experienced Better You. These include Rae, Milly and Grace, three young people who inspired and led much of the development of Better You. For instance Rae describes some of the vulnerability experienced by young people who don't have somewhere safe to call their own:

"My name is Rae and I am 20 years of age. Becoming a Youth Peer Supporter in a way has saved me from myself it has given me a reason to go out and has allowed me to help people going through situations I have faced, for instance being preyed on by an older man who I didn't really know but told me things about his personal life that he shouldn't have really been telling a 14 year old high school girl. I want to make this project happen because I have come face to face with this adult male in support environments. I really believe that young people need a space of their own. I have begun my training in Safe Space and am determined to make this count for the young people.

"I've suffered with mental health issues and sometimes I still do, but having a group that feels like a family there to support me, as I try to do them, helps in more ways than I can ever imagine. I couldn't be more grateful for Safe Space and the PFG group. I think that it will mean a lot to help other people 18-25 as I've found that this age is the hardest yet, as we've just left education and are starting adult life and really there isn't much support in the system (minus the odd few people like liaison nurses and Crisis House), so having PFG there is a great way of reaching out for support and having it there.

"I love everything I'm doing with them, yes I'm sick right now, but I can't wait to get back and see everyone! It really is a family away from 'home' and has become like my second home."

Molly, like many others who have joined Better You has experienced the profound failures of our care system. A system which often seems careless (Hyde, 2018):

"My name is Molly and I am 20 years old. I have been in care most of my life in Doncaster. When I first met PFG I was sleeping in a park, frightened, alone and didn't have much hope for my future. This was two years ago and I now have my own home and a job. Peer Support literally saved my life. They put me in a hotel and helped me to get my workers to do what they should. It felt like I was written off when I hit 18 with no one on my side. I am passionate about making sure this doesn't happen to any more young people in care. We need to make kids in care to actually be cared for. I want to advocate and help more young people make it to

being adults. I am not perfect and have a long way to go myself but I am getting there.

"I often make rap songs about my life and feelings. It has helped me over the years. I want to make sure that other people have relationships where they are really cared for. I have moved to Rotherham but PFG is still where I go to who I need help because I know they care about me."

Grace is like many young people who are struggling with their mental health and who discover that the shift from children to adult services leaves them adrift:

"My name is Grace and I am 18 years old. It feels like I have struggled with my mental health all of my life. I have had CAMHS involved but then I got to 18 and adult services said I didn't need them. I do need support. I still have very bad days and go to hospital. I have been involved with PFG for a couple of years now. I do creative writing sessions and support with lots of stuff. I am currently getting ready to be on the Peer Panel to interview staff for mental health services. I am excited that we are working to get support right for young people. There is nothing out there like what we are going to build."

Many of the young people who join Better You are also taking on the enormous challenge of parenthood, but without the support they need. Beth tells a little of her story here.

How were you before you joined Better You?

"I was just basically doing the school run, coming back laying on the sofa, maybe crying, probably crying. That was it, not really socialising or going anywhere. I was really lonely. That wasn't helping me mentally because I'd moved away from all my friends. I don't really have much to do with my family so it was just me and kids constantly."

What has happened since joining Better You?

"Since I started coming to Better You, my confidence has gone through the roof. I see something and I want to get it. I have set out and done my own parent and toddler support group. Which is absolutely amazing for me; I would never have dreamed about doing something like this. I now know I want to be a support worker for children and teens with mental health problems; I am also interested in working with homeless people too. I want to get Doncaster's homeless people off the street, obviously this is a goal for five years."

How did Better You help?

"Having the team there and knowing that I've got backup and support, it's like we are one big family, I've never ever had a network of people around me like this."

Obviously, I didn't do well in school or college. I have never had people who believed in me and supported me and wanted me to do better, they've always just been like 'Oh well, she can't do it, she won't push herself.' But the team made me realise, wow...I can do it, I can go out and help people."

What are your dreams for the future?

"I want to be a support worker, and work with the homeless and runaways, I just want to better myself. I hope I can do it, I really doubt myself, but you guys help me believe in me. Help me think that I can do it."

Where would you be if you hadn't joined Better You?

"Laying lonely and crying on my sofa still and comfort eating. Definitely wouldn't be running the parent and toddler group, I wouldn't be socialising, and I'd still be crying after the school run. It wasn't a good place I was in. I just want to positively impact others now, like you have with me. I'm really, really, really glad you guys have come into my life. Mine and my kid's life, you've just made it better."

Beth's story reinforces what we are learning about the power of peer support. People can move from crisis into playing a truly productive role in the community, inspiring others and improving life for many other people.

One of the biggest needs people face is to overcome social isolation—the most common need identified (34%). Katie explained her perception of how Better You has helped her reconnect to other people and break through the isolation which has become a problem for her and so many others:

"Before I joined Better You I was in a bad place mentally; I felt isolated and alone, that there was no hope for things to get better. Since joining Better You I know I'm not alone. They're there to support us all in any way they can, through the good and bad. While they can't take some of my problems away I know that they will be there to support me when I need it. Better You gives me the chance to step away from reality and find enjoyment in things again. It's given me the opportunity to meet and socialise with new people which I haven't been able to do and to bring me out of my comfort zone."

One of the working assumptions of Better You is that people can benefit mentally from becoming more physically active. Sean describes the benefits of activity and friendship in helping him change his mental state and raising his expectations for the future:

"I wasn't really in a good place, staying in a lot, not making friends. But since I started coming to Better You I got involved in the boxing, doing activities, walking in the park and making new friends. Playing football, socialising. I feel more

confident with myself, talking with people, making friends and being more independent. I am not sure what my dreams, but I want to get a job, not get bored, be happy about it."

Liam gives some insight into how poor mental health can lead to a damaging cycle where people feel suicidal, but can also become angry, fail to communicate and be unable to build positive relationships:

"Before Better You I was at a really bad stage in my life, quite suicidal, but PFG persuaded me to come here. I used to hide myself in my bedroom. Now I am feeling better and starting to deal with my life problems and my mental health and now I'm in a better place. I Started doing boxing, my anxiety has dropped a lot, I can get out of the house, if I rush out I can get dressed, I can get out of bed and I can get out."

"I can help my family, I'm not as aggressive as I used to be; I used to fight with my girlfriend (not physically, we used to have arguments). Now I can explain myself better. We had a fight last night, but now I can deal with it better, I can understand my emotions and I was able to go and say sorry. Before I'd blame her and get anxious and angry. Now I've stopped smoking cannabis and stopped taking any drugs."

Joshua, like many others, has a complex health condition and still he has to face all the other trials of a young person's life:

"It's a really lovely environment. My life was upside down and I didn't look forward to doing much, my epilepsy meant that I wasn't safe to work or drive, in hospital found I was kicked out of my home. Life is getting better, moving forward, achieve some goals. Really enjoyed the forestry skills; it's lovely to get away for a while."

Another young person who gets support at Better You is transgender. They lost their mum, were taken into the care system and their father has effectively abandoned them. In pain they have lost themselves in drink and drugs and they are regularly committing crimes or getting admitted to hospital. Now they have found a base at Better You, they have formed relationships and found work:

"I came to better you because my leaving care worker referred me. She dragged me into the centre. I have now been coming for 12 months. Coming to Better You has improved my confidence, I did not used to talk to anyone and now I don't shut up!"

"Better You staff have helped me to appear in court and Stuart has supported me several times, I have always been honest with staff about the good and the bad. I have had issues with name calling around transgender bullying and mistreatment, I have suffered hate crimes for being transgender. I feel that coming to Better You I can be myself. I feel comfortable being openly transgender at Better You, everyone

here knows about me and I feel accepted as part of the group. I have made friends at Better You that I socialise with outside of the centre. I attend social events with them and communicate regularly with them on social media."

Lara, another care leaver describes the benefits of getting the practical support and independent living skills that are essential for finding your feet:

"I was referred to Better You by CAMHS as I did not want to access adult mental health services. When I first started coming to Better You, I didn't really speak much and just used to sit and colour. I started to come more often and build relationships with the staff. I started to take part in more activities with the staff. Katy started working more days and she really helped me. She has helped me with my housing situation by working with DHYP. I am also able to talk to her about things. I now feel comfortable attending Better You and I attend the centre almost every day. The staff have done some work with me around life skills and are supporting me to be able to live independently. Beck has helped me learn to cook and bake and I can now make a cheesecake all by myself! I have learned how to use the oven, the hob, and the air fryer and how to safely chop vegetables. I have learnt how to keep the kitchen clean and tidy, and I am working on my food hygiene level 2 certificate. The staff at Better You have helped me with my benefits and supported me with budgeting.

"As a care leaver, the staff at better you have meetings with my PA and DWP worker regularly, so they can all work together to support me. I feel really happy at the moment, and my confidence has improved massively thanks to Better You. I have made new friends that I socialise with outside of the centre and I have moved to new supported lodgings that I really like. I have been provided with a bus pass, and I can now confidently make my own way to Better You on public transport, something that I would have struggled with before. If I had not started coming to Better You then I would still be stuck in the same place I have been for the last 10 years, but now I really feel like my life is coming together. Katy has helped me request a form to apply for some extra money and is currently helping me to complete the PIP form. I would like to save up some money and get a passport as one of my goals in life is to go travelling. I would also like to consider working in hospitality as I enjoy being in the kitchen. Better You staff are supporting me to look at apprenticeships in catering and further online courses."

Lydia describes how frustrating and angry you can become if you don't have the right opportunities or relationships around you:

"I started attending Better You with Emily. Emily was on telephone support and I would answer the phone for her as she was too nervous. Emily asked me to come to

Better You with her. I was nervous; I didn't want to speak to anyone. It takes time for me to come around and trust people

"I was a self-referral as the staff sensed I could benefit from Better You. I have been attending Better You for 4 months. It keeps me busy. Boredom is an issue for me. It makes me feel frustrated which leads to anger. I can be difficult to be around. If I can't find anything to do, it can quickly escalate at home. Being at Better You has given me something to do. It has given me a routine, but its not restricting as I can come and go as I like. I am not been forced to be here, I want to be here.

"There is plenty for me to do that the staff put on. Trips are also available to us. I didn't speak to many people before Better You, but now it has given me the confidence to do that.

"Staff have supported me through making and attending appointments that I need. I have supported Better You at the local jobs fair which I enjoyed. I was also asked to take part and be on the panel for the RDaSH awards and also attend."

Olivia is one of the many people referred to Better You by the DWP, because many young people need more support before they are ready to take on looking for work. Also, like others at Better You, Olivia is neurodiverse:

"I have been attending Better You for quite a while now, since I left college in 2023. I am currently out of work but I am doing everything that I can to achieve my goals of gaining employment. I was referred to better you by my DWP worker as I am on the autism spectrum. After I left college my parents were concerned I would become isolated due to college being my main area to interact with people. Many of my friends are in employment already and friends from college live in other areas of Doncaster which can be hard for travel as I don't drive, so rely on public transport a lot. I sometimes struggle with making friends outside of education as I am a shy and quiet person and am not a huge fan of going out around town to all the nightclubs. Due to my autism I am vulnerable to being took advantage of which has led to me having some trust issues in the past as some people have not been very kind towards me.

"By attending Better You I have met a lot of nice and friendly people that I have been able to socialise with and have gained a lot more confidence. Also I am very slowly learning how to trust people again. I have also been able to take part in many activities and courses to further expand my knowledge such as a sign language course and trips to the farm and the alpaca walk based in Balby and Tickhill. The staff at Better You are always very friendly and very easy to talk to whenever I have an issue or something is on my mind they have helped hugely in taking my mind off of my ongoing complex medical situation by getting out of the house and joining in

with activities, courses and socialising with people. This has taken my mind off the anxiety of the hospital appointments. I have also learnt new skills at Better You, such as cooking and prepping meals for everyone."

Sean is someone who has been with Better You since the beginning. He has benefited from Better You and now gives back in many ways:

"I have been coming to Better You since it opened in February 2023, I started to come through a referral from family. The service then was for 18-25 year olds. When we first started coming there was not much in the building. I helped with other volunteers to decorate the building and strip wood. I come to Better You to socialise and meet new people. I have made lots of new friends since coming to Better You.

"I managed to get a job with guidance from Stuart and Ian, and I now work in the café at the library which I really enjoy. I still make the time to come to Better You on my day off and attend the centre once a week on a Tuesday. On a Tuesday I make food with Beck and she has shown me good practices in the kitchen, I always have my dinner here. The skills that I have learnt at Better You has helped me to transfer these skills into my current job.

"I am in the PFG all-ability football team. At Better You I have participated in Forest School, Farm Trips, pool competitions, sports and walking activities. There is always lots to do. I have also been to Northern College a couple of times and undertaken some training courses and was supported by Better You staff. If I could no longer come to Better You I would be sad as it is part of my routine and I enjoy meeting the people who work there and also the friends I have made."

As all this testimony indicates, Better You is offering coherent and holistic support to a wide range of different young people. It is clearly highly valued by many of the young people who make up this community. Its work overlaps with the work of all our public services: schools, colleges, health services, government, work programmes, housing agencies and the emergency services. However it meets the needs of so many young people who are either slipping through the cracks or emerging with needs that are too complex for those public services to meet on their own.

9. The value of Better You

There is an ongoing problem in capturing the value of prevention, community-based services and peer support. The pressure to fund institutional care, at great cost, often makes it difficult to invest in the supports that would reduce the pressure to place people in institutional services. However there is no disagreement that this is the only way to make progress. There are at least 6 reasons why it seems to make sense to continue supporting and developing Better You:

1. High impact and low cost

The primary costs are covered by the South Yorkshire ICB who provide £116,000 per year, £9,700 per month and - at a rate of 15 referrals per month - £650 per referral. To put this in perspective, the typical cost of placing one young person in a private hospital or assessment and treatment unit is £175,000. So the cost of Better You is 66% of the cost of one placement, or for the cost of one placement Better You supports 270 young people. This £650 per person seems very modest set against any of the likely consequences of failing to provide preventative peer support:

- Repeat usage of mental health service outpatients
- Stay in mental health beds
- Emergency responses by police or ambulance
- Use of many other public services

The odds of Better You radically reducing downstream costs are extremely high indeed.

2. Generating new income

In addition to the primary NHS funding there was a further grant of £15,000 from local commissioners. PFG has also raised further funds from:

- National Lottery (£9,000)
- Green Space Grant (£750)
- Club Doncaster (£13,000)
- Food Aware (£5,000)
- SY Violence Reduction Fund (£17,750)
- and added a further £13,000 of its own money

This means PFG has raised a total £55,500 of 50% of the annual investment in Better You by the ICB.

3. Proving support and expertise

In addition, Better You gets practical support from several volunteers, who come to help out at the Hub. Several young people now provide:

- Peer Support to each other
- Leadership for the LGBTQ+ group
- Leadership for arts and craft sessions
- Supporter each other through shared experience
- Working with mental health service, including sitting on interview panels for RDaSH
- Working on stalls and promoting Better You
- Speakers for events explaining what young people need
- Expertise on the care leavers experience
- Expertise on neurodiversity
- Support for younger people playing football, refreshments and role models

This is all wisdom, action and peer support that would be unavailable with our Better You.

4. Generating additional capacity

An estimate of the input of time by young people to each other or to the wider community is as follows:

10 young people give an average of 15 hours per week (150 hours)

10 young people give an average of 7 hours per week (70 hours)

25 young people give average of 5 hour per week (125 hours)

25 young people give less than 5 hours per week (lets assume 55 hours in total)

This is about 400 hours per week. Even if we use a very low rate, say the minimum wage, as a way of estimating the value of this time then this means Better You is generating at least £4,800 per week—that is £240,000 per year.

That is, the current NHS investment is creating a further 200% value in peer support.

5. Sustaining community infrastructure

The reclamation of the Grove Park Hub also has significant social value. Derelict buildings harm the community wellbeing, increase future costs and are associated with crime and other social risks. On the other hand a fully functioning community centre, which is well used by a community who need help creates immediate and long-term value.

6. Building on innovation

Better You is another important innovation in Doncaster. It is a unique and important service, driven by the demands and actions of young people themselves. It would be a significant loss to fail to build on its achievements and it would undermine trust, morale and the commitment of statutory agencies to deepening the necessary investment in social change and public service reform. Better You is a service, the ICB, Doncaster and all statutory partners can be very proud of having created.

Ideally Better You can be a launching pad for further changes:

- Helping young people thrive better in the education system
- Transforming neighbourhoods so young people feel safe and involved
- Creating new work and development opportunities for young people
- Ensuring young people are listened to by the City and society as a whole

Closing thoughts

Social innovations do not always succeed and they often take considerable time to prove themselves. The fact that Better You has been quickly established and is providing effective and impactful support to so many young people is astonishing. Perhaps it is because commissioners have worked so closely with established community organisations and young people to design and deliver something that people really want and need.

True partnership is the proper method for transforming our communities and tackling problems like mental illness and social isolation. We need to leave behind the consumerist approach to promoting social innovation which was established in the early 1990s but which has now run its course. It is now clear that you cannot buy or import social change, you need to grow it, and you grow it by backing local leaders and local communities.

The next stage of development is not just to protect and strengthen Better You, it is also to continue working closely with young people in Doncaster so that every single neighbourhood becomes a community where young people are safe, connected and nurtured. If the young people of Doncaster discover that they are valued, that they can make a real contribute and can build lives of meaning, then the future of Doncaster and all its citizens will be assured.

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Better You

Hurray, we're having an **Open Day**
And you are most welcome!

The People Focused Group are opening our doors to you lovely people on **Thursday the 8th of February from 10.30am to 4.00pm**
Calling young People, Organisation and Sector Professionals you are most welcome in. We will be there to give an overview of what we do and what 'Better You' can offer and how it can turn your 'life around'. Please contact us to confirm your attendance as we will be providing food and refreshments all day.

People Focused Group, Grove Park, Doncaster DN2 5PX

01302 578 629
stuart@peoplefocused.org.uk

We stay connected using social media:
Facebook Instagram X YouTube

Where your voice really counts



ANIMAL HANDLING SESSION

GROVE GARDENS, ARMTHORPE ROAD

TUESDAY 13 FEBRUARY
1.45 TO 2.45 PM

Come and meet the animals in this 1 hour animal handling session. Places are limited as this is a free handed session.

WILDLINGS



TICKHILL ALPACAS

Wellness Walk

8 places available to walk an Alpaca and have campfire snacks afterwards.

Wood Fired Pizza Making

Learn to make your own fakeaway pizza. Select your favourite toppings, make your own base and fire your own pizza in the wood fired pizza oven.




Sketching Master Class with Mel

Learn some basic drawing techniques from the talented artist Mel Bechem

Better You
Grove Gardens

Thursday 9th January 9-4pm




BETTER YOU

LGBTQ+ Drop in



Cricut T-Shirt Printing

Print your own



COOK AND EAT

AT BETTER YOU

healthy eating fresh food take home

EVERY TUESDAY 12-2

FIT ROVERS RAINBOW

FREE 8-Week LGBTQ+ Health & Wellbeing Course 18+




Next course Dates:
14/01/24 - 03/03/24

Part of the LGBTQ+ community? Need a

- Goal Setting
- Nutrition
- Peer Support
- Exercise
- Mental Health



BETTER YOU

Breaking Beats Street Art

Come and try this spray




LGBTQ+ History Month

'Recipe of Me' Creative Writing session
5-7pm at Foundation Fitness gym
Scan the QR Code to book your free tickets!

charlie.bonner@clubdoncaster
foundation.co.uk
05783 454602





Foundation Fitness, Eco Power Stadium, BN4 3JW

Skateboarding Sessions

with the legendary pro skater **Crazy Dan**

For all ability levels, totally beginner friendly or if you are picking back up your wheels!

Starting 31st January @ 11:30 am

NEW ADVENTURES CRAZYDAN SKATEBOARD COACH
100% INDEPENDENT SKATEBOARD COACH

GROVE PARK GAMES DAY

21ST OCTOBER 2023
12PM - 4PM

COME PLAY SOME GAMES, EAT PIZZA AND HAVE A LAUGH AMONG FRIENDS



Nail Salon

AT BETTER YOU
7TH FEBRUARY 2024



BOOK YOUR FREE 1 HOUR APPOINTMENT FOR BIAB GEL NAILS ON NATURAL NAILS



BOXING FOR BETTER MENTAL HEALTH



