

A photograph of two women standing outdoors in a park-like setting. The woman on the left has short, bright red hair and is wearing a black jacket with a blue and white patterned scarf. The woman on the right has short, grey hair and is wearing a green shirt under a grey jacket. They are both smiling at the camera. The background shows green grass, trees, and a building.

# **7** steps to better mental health

Impact Report 2013

**2econdStep**  
Working for recovery and wellbeing

# SecondStep's 7 steps

Twenty years ago when I joined SecondStep, I was one of a handful of staff. We housed 27 people and worked out of one room in Easton.

A trained counsellor, I have always been concerned about people's wellbeing, mental health and social justice issues. At SecondStep I saw the opportunity to develop services to help people with mental health problems live well in the community.

At the time the work was new, ground-breaking even, and over the next few years we became a

leading light in the voluntary sector in Bristol and North Somerset.

We set up our community support services here in 1995, and then expanded by launching a Rough Sleepers Initiative two years later.

In 2003 we extended our community services further to Bath, North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire through the Supporting People programme.

Ten years on we are keen to embed our expertise further and diversify.

We want to push:

- the pioneering work we do with peer workers; employing people because of their personal experience of mental illness
- the concept of recovery; that people can discover ways of living with their mental health problems, improve their quality of life and achieve their dreams
- psychologically informed environments ensuring people receive services in a supportive, non-threatening way and at the right pace.

This report shows you the impact we have made over the last 12 months. Overleaf, our Chair, Chris Trowell, gives you an overview of our approach. We then look at what we call our **7 steps to mental health and wellbeing** – descriptions of how we work and some of our services.

While not a comprehensive list of everything we do, it clearly shows the difference we are making to people's lives in the west of England.

**Aileen Edwards**  
Chief Executive

The 7 steps listed below give a snapshot of the work we do, showing the powerful impact we have made during 2013.

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# 7 steps to better mental health

Real names are used unless otherwise stated.

# Why SecondStep matters in Bristol and beyond

SecondStep has a long history in the west of England. Our roots and head office are in Bristol but we work beyond the city, in South Gloucestershire, North Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset.

Together: staff, peers, volunteers, and the Board are passionate about what we do at SecondStep. Namely, helping people discover new ways to manage their mental health problems to enable them to live more fulfilling lives in communities that care.

This passion unites us and underlies the work we do, the approach we take and what we stand for. To put it simply, we support people who ask us for help, who are often desperate and who have often found it hard to find anyone to listen, let alone offer real sustained help.

While others may turn them away, we do our best to find supportive and thoughtful ways to respond. This may not always be possible, but because we don't work in

isolation – through our numerous partners on the ground we do our best to find a solution.

## Smart partnerships

As Chair of SecondStep's Board, I am acutely aware of the importance of strong partnerships between organisations, large and small, particularly at a time when budgets have been cut and everyone is looking for ways to do more for less.

It's smart to work together to find solutions and that's why, against the backdrop of a rapidly changing policy environment, we are keen to strengthen existing relationships and forge new ones.

Our North Somerset service Positive Step – delivering talking therapies with the Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Trust (AWP) – has seen a significant improvement in recovery rates over the last year, in line with national targets.

And we support many of Bristol's homeless people to find ways to face their challenges and move into a more stable lifestyle through our GP healthcare service, Compass Health, with Lawrence Hill Health Centre.

Our Wellbeing Service, which we run in partnership with St Mungo's in Bristol's Stokes Croft, also offers drop-in therapy sessions

for homeless clients and earlier this year won a national award for its unique – and successful – approach. Other partnerships include our short-term tenancy support work in Bristol, with Knightstone and Missing Link housing associations; and with Alliance Support in North Somerset.

We are also linking in with other community organisations, as well as the local NHS mental health trust AWP, to ensure our expertise and experience has the best chance of reaching the people who need us.

## **Energy, expertise, empathy**

I am constantly impressed by the energy, expertise and empathy shown by SecondStep's staff and know we have much more to give to people in Bristol and beyond.

As we look to expand the services we offer, I am convinced we will achieve our goals and help hundreds more achieve their dreams.

**Chris Trowell**  
Chair





# 100%

**of people we work with are making their own recovery\***

## 1 Believing in change

Too often mental health services have treated the diagnosis or the condition, rather than the person, leaving people feeling lost in a system where their voice is not heard let alone valued, and their strengths are ignored.

At SecondStep we take the time to listen and hear what people are saying to us. By really hearing what an individual says, we can offer the right kind of help. We shape our services through offering the right kind of help in a timely way and at a pace that suits the individual. Step by step, we see change together.

And central to this approach is our belief in the power of recovery. Recovery is different for everyone, it is a very personal journey but in essence it is

about believing things can get better with or without the symptoms of mental illness, particularly if there are real choices about how to shape your recovery. It is also about accepting your problems and discovering ways to move forward.

By ensuring the people who count – those that use our services – are leading their own recovery then together we see real change.

Everyone we work with has their own recovery plan. By stepping outside the diagnosis and stepping away from the label of being mentally ill, we can say hand on heart that everyone we work with sees positive change, however small to those on the outside.

\*Since 2010 every person who uses our service has their own recovery plan.









**100%**

**of people we work with are  
making their own recovery**

## 2 Listening, really listening

A survey of people using our services in 2011 has shown 91% are very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the support they receive from SecondStep. This is 7% higher than the previous survey carried out in 2008.

This high percentage – and we are working to make it even higher – is testament to the approach we take to everyone who uses our services. We listen, really listen to what we are being told in order to find the best way to help.

Yammy is a young woman with a history of eating disorders. Diagnosed at just eight years old, Yammy's weight plummeted to just over five stones

when she was in her late teens. Told she would never be able to have children, Yammy's future didn't look bright.

But then she met SecondStep in the shape of support workers Ann and Sam.

"They cared for me in a professional way, they didn't push me. I never felt under pressure.

"They gave me space so if I was slipping and not committing, they would make it feel as if it was part of the process, not that I had failed.

"I had become a recluse, I couldn't eat in public. I was a mess. But they took

me out and gently, carefully, helped me learn to eat properly again."

Out and about again, Yammy met Chris, fell in love and married too. When earlier this year she discovered she was pregnant, she was delighted:

**"I had defied the doctors and my diagnosis. I have never felt so positive."**



\*From SecondStep's Service User Satisfaction Survey 2011.

# 91%

of people using our services like what we do\*



### 3 The power of peers

SecondStep has recognised the power of peer workers and peer volunteers for many years. Leading the way among mental health organisations in the UK, we decided four years ago to set a deliberate policy to recruit people with lived experience as paid peer staff.

Currently, we are proud that 15% of our frontline staff are peer workers, employed as peer support workers or peer support assistants.

We also have a good proportion of our staff who have experienced mental health problems. It is up to them to what extent they formerly share this experience – and we work hard to impress upon all staff the value of having experienced mental health services first hand. But for our peer workers – whether staff or volunteers – it is this personal experience which informs every aspect of their work.

One peer worker said she was struck by something her psychiatrist said to her during the early years of her recovery.

“He said how he could never know what it was like to be 17 with anorexia. I thought then how great it would be to be helped by someone who really did know what it was like. Now, I am that person.”

**15%** of frontline staff are peer workers\*

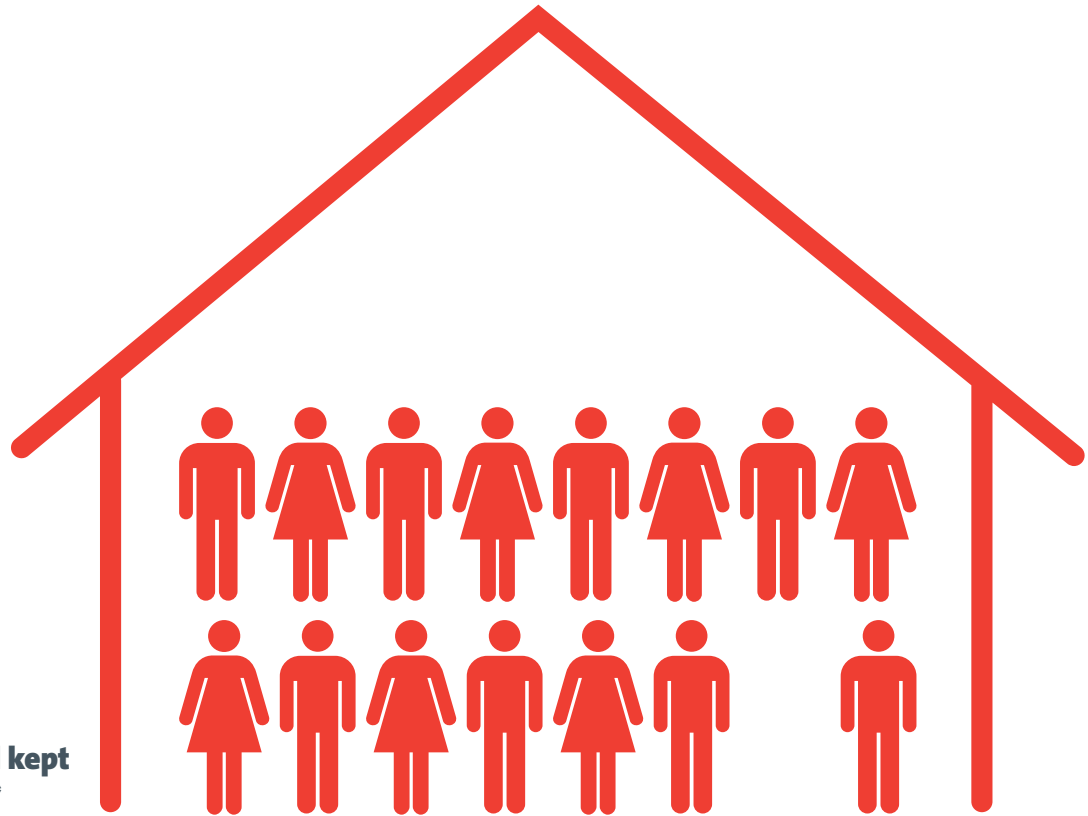


\*From a SecondStep review of employed peer workers in November 2013.



**96%**

**of people we mentored kept  
a roof over their heads\***



\*Analysis of Horizons data showed that between 2009 and 2013, 96% of mentees maintained their accommodation, or moved positively.



## 4 Doing something of value

Horizons is a successful and long-running mentoring project which helps people under threat of homelessness, or who have experienced homelessness, remain in their own homes.

All our mentors are trained volunteers and provide a high quality and innovative service. Without our volunteers at Horizons, and in other SecondStep services, some of our most important and effective services would not be able to operate.

Volunteers can get involved with a wide range of services, from helping deliver our psychological therapies to supervising and supporting our service users to get more involved in their community.

We welcome volunteers who have experience of mental health problems, drug and/or alcohol dependency, offending behaviour and homelessness.

We understand people who are recovering from these experiences have a lot to offer and can also gain much from becoming a volunteer with SecondStep.

One Horizons volunteer said: “I had spent 15 years hooked on getting my drug, taking my drug and living for my drug. My life as I knew it disappeared, to the point that I even began to lose interest in my children.

“Somehow I managed to get my act together and was strong enough to look for something meaningful to do. I found Horizons.

**“My experiences of drug dependency and the resulting chaos have been endlessly useful in my work as a volunteer mentor.**

“I am able to really understand the holes people find themselves in and am able to offer some real life advice.”



## 5 Stepping in early

Thousands of people go to their doctor with depression, low mood or anxiety problems every year. And it is estimated that one in six people of working age suffer with depression or chronic anxiety. However, just one quarter of them receive any help.

Services such as Positive Step based in Weston offer psychological therapies through one to one counselling, group therapy or psycho-educational courses to try and help people find a way to cope and to get back to work.

We work with 2,500 people in North Somerset who access Positive Step themselves or are referred by their GP. According to the latest analysis of our services, nearly 50% of the people we work with are making a good recovery.

This exceeds Government targets and is a significant achievement in an area where many people can feel stuck and unable to move on positively.

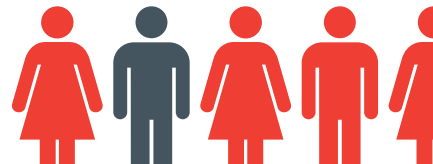
Working in partnership with Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership (AWP), Positive Step has a small team of qualified therapists supported by a 40-strong team of volunteers. Our therapists build strong relationships with their clients concentrating on what they want to achieve and do, listening to what is being said and helping to put realistic plans in place.

By stepping in early to tackle people's problems through a variety of talking therapies, we are confident we can help more people get their lives back on track.

**Analysis of our therapy shows**

**50%**  
**of clients are making a good recovery\***

\*Analysis of Positive Step data showed recovery rates fluctuated between 48% and 50% in quarter three of 2013.





# 94%

**of people we help become more independent and need less support\***



\*From a Supporting People outcome of short-term services which measures people's increased confidence and ability to have greater choice and control. The result was 94% in 2012/13.

## 6 Making sense in every way

Michael was a heroin and crack addict for close on 20 years.

His addiction led to him losing his wife, his seven children, his home and his respect. In and out of prison for all kinds of crimes, some of them violent, he eventually decided to try and kick his habit.

He took his chance with SecondStep and worked with his support worker for six months before he was ready to cope with a home of his own.

Now, he no longer uses drugs, works hard to deal with his mental health problems, is living in a flat on his own and planning a future.

Michael's story is typical. He found a way to stop taking the drugs and to start believing in himself and becoming more independent.

In fact, 94% of the people we work with need less support as time goes on. This is the important emotional and economic fact about what we do. Careful, tailored support up front works because over time the people we support need us less. Together we can find ways for people to take more control and become happier.

Through our housing support services we help hundreds of people like Michael.

Sometimes we work with people for longer than six months, others need just six months of our time.

Each time the goal is the same – to help people find resilience and strength at a time in their lives when things can look very bleak.

**“I worked with SecondStep for six months. They found me a flat of my own. It is the first time I have had a place of my own for years. It means a lot to me and gives me so much hope for the future.”**

## 7 Moving on

To some 40% may not seem a very high figure. But when you consider the chaotic lives of the people we work with, you will understand that this statistic represents considerable success.

In fact, it is one of the reasons our therapy service for homeless people in Bristol won a national best practice award.

The Wellbeing Service, which we run in partnership with St Mungo's, offers different talking therapies in a relaxed and informal setting. The way we work is important.

There is less form-filling and less structure than in most therapy services. Therapists and engagement

workers approach sessions flexibly, working with the clients that turn up in a positive and careful way.

Our approach has got results with a client group that typically doesn't use mainstream services, and a client group that is really hard to reach.

A recent survey of the homeless people who use our service showed that 77% of them had experienced two or more traumatic events in their lives.

A Wellbeing Service client, Steve, said: "I've been having one to one sessions with a psychologist. It was difficult at first and I had to face a few home truths.

"But it got easier and it certainly sorted me out. I was suffering from depression and had been a recluse for six years.

"Now I volunteer as a carpenter three times a week and socialise with friends regularly. I plan to take a qualification so I can teach carpentry to others."

# 40%

**of our clients are hard to reach homeless who typically don't use mainstream services\***



\* From Wellbeing Service Snapshot Report June 2013.



# Our aims and values

SecondStep aims to provide excellent services for people with mental health and other support needs, to enable everyone to achieve their dreams and live life to the full.

Everyone at SecondStep works with a shared desire and determination to achieve our aims. Importantly, we share the same values in everything we do.

We are passionate, supportive, people-focused, respectful and inclusive and always act with the utmost integrity and professionalism. Hope is central to our work.

We want to deliver services which build on people's strengths, courage, resilience and dreams. Through this, we encourage empowerment, independence and responsibility.

## The Board

Chris Trowell – Chair

Liz Hine – Vice-Chair

Andy Howarth

Gerry Monaghan

Paddy Cooney

Gerry Scott

Aileen Edwards – Chief Executive

Paul Siddal – Director of Services

Mike Forrest – Director of Resources



# Who we are

SecondStep is a leading mental health charity based in the west of England, with offices in Bristol, Bath and Weston-super-Mare. We work across the region offering housing, support and hope to hundreds of people with many kinds of mental health problems.

Our roots are in Bristol and we have worked in the city for over 26 years, supporting more than 600 people at any one time. We form strong, collaborative relationships with the people who use our services, supporting them through difficult times and helping them

discover new ways to become more independent and resilient.

We have a strong track record of helping people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Our award-winning Wellbeing Service is a unique drop-in psychological therapy and advice service to homeless people in an informal setting at the Compass Centre in Stokes Croft.

We also help people to manage low mood, anxiety and depression by providing psychological therapies and specialist courses in Bristol,

South Gloucestershire and in Weston-super-Mare through PositiveStep.

We pride ourselves on our innovative approach, based on the principle of recovery.

We work in partnership with many other organisations and community groups, and we always make sure that the people who use our services are at the heart of everything we do.



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