



Bringing communities together to improve mental wellbeing

Partnership impact report

October 2023

in partnership with





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Charity Partners' Foreword

In 2019, we launched our award-winning partnership between the Co-op, Mind, SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health) and Inspire to bring communities together to improve mental wellbeing. Our ambition was to respond to the need for everyday support for mental wellbeing, providing community-based support to prevent people reaching crisis point.

Co-op's reach into local communities, the insights of its members and Mind, SAMH and Inspire's mental wellbeing expertise, made our partnership uniquely placed to deliver this support.

Before our partnership began, one in four of us in the UK were already struggling with our mental health. But soon after the launch of our partnership, an unprecedented global pandemic followed by a cost-of-living crisis applied even greater pressure to the nation's mental wellbeing.

At such a turbulent time, our partnership has been more important than ever. As part of our approach, we developed new services and information to support three audiences that were disproportionately affected by mental health problems: young people, people experiencing financial difficulty and communities experiencing racial inequality.

By drawing on the strength of local communities, including Co-op members, colleagues and customers, we have impacted the lives of thousands of people across the UK.

We have rolled out over 60 community resilience services (such as community cafes, mental wellbeing buses and sports and dance groups) that have supported over 30,000 people. Our evaluation shows that 81% of service users saw improvements in their wellbeing and 77% felt more closely connected to their community.

So far, we have distributed 1.7 million pieces of printed information in over 20,000 community spaces and places and supported 3,600 people through a new online learning course, Conversations in the Community. All helping to exceed Co-op's wider target to signpost 1.5 million people to information, activity and support for mental wellbeing.

Together we delivered Time to Talk Day, the nation's biggest mental health conversation. Co-op helped bring reach into communities and as a result we generated an astonishing extra five million conversations about mental health and wellbeing in 2022 and 2023. We are delighted that we will continue to partner together on Time to Talk Day in 2024, as it's needed more than ever due to the cost of living crisis.

Thank you to everyone who has supported our partnership, including our community partners and suppliers in all four nations. In

particular, a heartfelt thanks to Co-op colleagues, members, customers and suppliers who raised a staggering £8.45 million to enable our vital work.

As a result, we have funded research, services and information that have already had a huge impact on local communities – and will continue to do so in the future.

Shirine Khoury-Haq
Group Chief Executive
Co-op



Dr Sarah Hughes
Chief Executive
Mind

Billy Watson
Chief Executive
SAMH

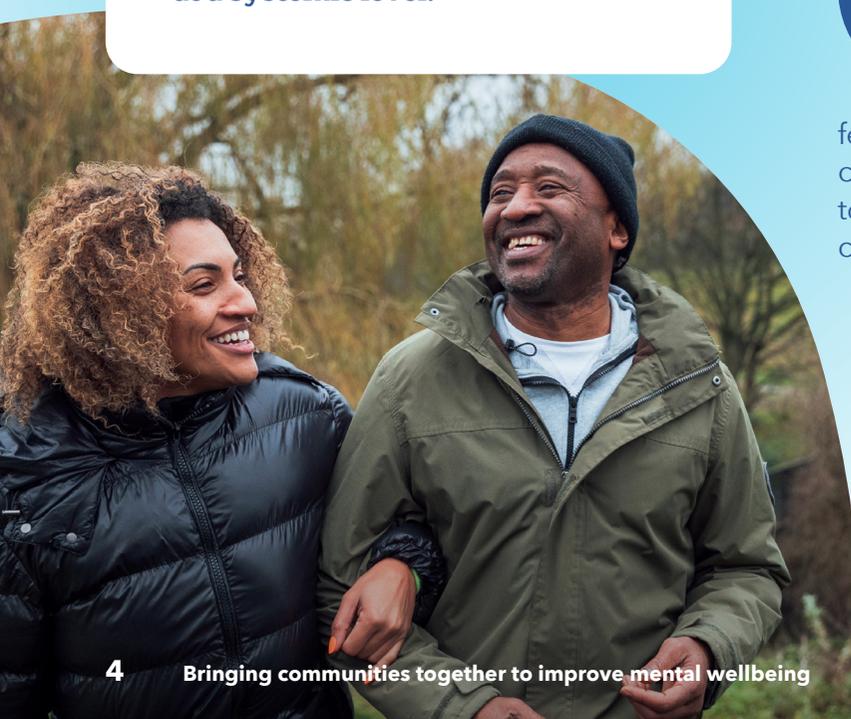


Kerry Anthony
Group Chief Executive
Inspire

Our partnership objectives



- **Providing** support to those of us experiencing or at risk of developing mental health problems, to help build resilience and wellbeing.
- **Empowering** people to support their own and others' mental health within our communities.
- **Creating** positive and lasting change through joint policy and campaigning work – considering the impact of policies and practice on mental health at a systemic level.



Our partnership achievements

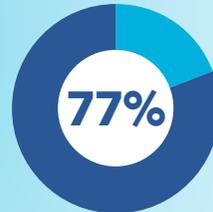
£8.45 million

raised by Co-op colleagues, customers, members and suppliers

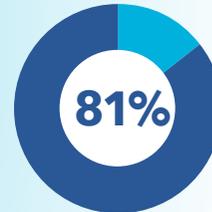


30,590 people

supported through community resilience services across the UK



feel more connected to their community



report improved mental wellbeing after accessing community resilience services



5 million people reached

through the launch of our Together Through Tough Times research



35

parliamentary events and service visits held reaching 322 political stakeholders

6.5m people reached



through our story about the cost-of-living crisis and its impact on our mental health and wellbeing

1.7 million

printed information resources distributed in communities



20,000 community hubs and spaces hold printed information resources

5m

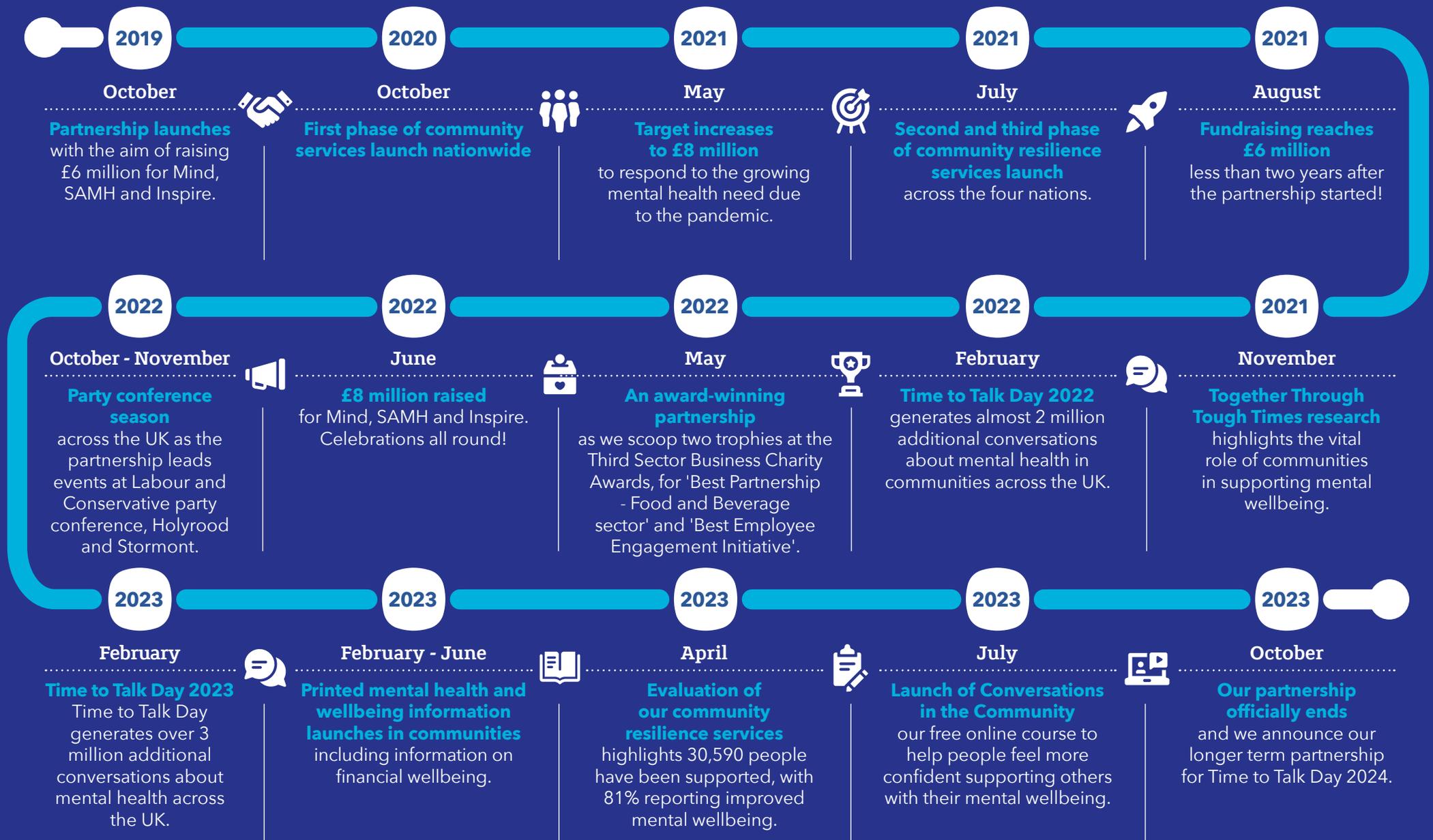
additional mental health and wellbeing conversations generated through Time to Talk Day 2022 and 2023



Partnership wins two awards at the Third Sector Business Charity Awards (May 2022)



Our partnership milestones





Fundraising

Raising £8.45 million to bring communities together to improve mental wellbeing

The fundraising story for our partnership is extraordinary. Despite the interruption of a global pandemic and a cost of living crisis, Co-op colleagues, customers, members and suppliers successfully raised an incredible £8.45 million, £2.45 million above our original target.

These funds enabled us to carry out research, roll out resilience services in local communities across the four nations, share mental health information in communities and partner on Time to Talk Day.

Through our fundraising, we also helped to raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing. We empowered Co-op colleagues, members, customers and the public to talk about their mental wellbeing.



Covid shifts our fundraising goals

We launched our fundraising campaign in October 2019 on World Mental Health Day. Initially, we aimed to raise £6 million through local and national fundraising activities.

As we moved into the second year of fundraising, the pandemic resulted in an even greater demand for mental health support. According to Mind research, almost two thirds (65%) of adults and more than two thirds (68%) of young people said their mental health had worsened since the first national lockdown.

In May 2021, we increased our fundraising target to £8 million, to respond to the growing mental health need.

We also realigned our fundraising messages to focus more on the mental health and wellbeing of Co-op colleagues.

We put wellbeing at the heart of our fundraising by promoting everyday wellbeing activities through the 5 Ways to Wellbeing:

- 1 **Connect with other people**
- 2 **Be physically active**
- 3 **Take notice and be mindful**
- 4 **Learn new skills**
- 5 **Give to others**

This approach resulted in a greater connection to the cause and motivated colleagues to continue fundraising.

In August 2021, less than two years after our partnership started, we reached our initial £6 million goal. In July 2022, there were celebrations all round as we hit our increased target of £8 million.



Washing cars and climbing mountains

Co-op colleagues took part in a huge variety of fundraising activities, from in-store raffles and roller skating marathons, to organising golf days, quiz nights, sponsored walks, football tournaments, charity days and car washes.

People participated in a host of different challenge events for the charity partnership - including a Kiltwalk, a Land's End to John O'Groats cycle ride, the Great Manchester Run, a Snowdon at Night hike, the London Marathon, sky dives and a trek to Everest Base Camp.

Co-op suppliers joined in the fundraising efforts, with 18 brands raising a massive £735,000. Thanks to Co-op members, £1.5 million was also donated from Co-op's Community Partnerships Fund.





Spotlight on fundraising



Paul Stephenson Co-op Large Store Manager

Paul Stephenson, a Co-op Large Store Manager, singlehandedly raised a phenomenal total of £3,500. He created a superhero, Mind Man, to raise awareness about mental health. Paul walked 15 miles with Co-op colleagues, and completed a 15,000 foot skydive and a Snowdon at Night hike.



Macaulay Road Co-op, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis

The team at the Macaulay Road Co-op stood out by embracing every national fundraising initiative. They raised over £40,000 with activities including car boot sales, bingo nights, charity football matches.



Wheley's Road, Edgbaston

The store in Edgbaston raised over £4,000 hosting bake sales, family fun days and other activities across the partnership.



Co-op Broughshane Street

Gillian O'Loughlin and the team at Co-op Broughshane Street raised £5,660 for the partnership, over £1,000 more than any other store in Northern Ireland. Gillian has now become a Co-op Member Pioneer and is determined to keep raising awareness about mental health.



Tavistock Co-op Funeralcare and Plymstock Co-op Funeralcare

Two intrepid Co-op Funeral Directors took to their roller skates to raise over £1,000 for our partnership. Sarah and Emma skated an impressive 17 miles from Tavistock to Plymstock in Devon.



Spotlight on fundraising



The Cardinal Depot

The Cardinal Depot team got competitive in May 2020 to raise £65 for Mind with their driving and truck handling competition. Anthony Perry, depot worker walked away with the Driving Competition cup!



Plymouth Depot

The Plymouth Depot team were brilliant fundraisers throughout the partnership and took on a variety of challenges including a "Dress up blue" day in May 2020. The team also raised money with a sponsored head shave and haircuts in the same month raising an incredible £1,800 for the partnership.



Property Team

In September 2021, nine cyclists from Co-op's Construction and Supply Chain team took up the Le Jog challenge - cycling 900 miles from Land's End to John O'Groats over eight days. They raised a phenomenal £27,500 for Mind, SAMH and Inspire.



Co-op Legal Services - Bristol

The legal team from the Bristol office hosted a charity quiz night in February 2020 raising over £850 to support our vital partnership work.



Partnership impact: research

How communities support mental wellbeing

We commissioned and carried out research at the start of the partnership to understand the role that communities play in supporting mental wellbeing. We used the results to shape every part of our partnership, from services through to our campaigning work.



Resilience: a key element of mental wellbeing

We defined resilience as not simply the ability for people and communities to 'bounce back', but the capacity to adapt in the face of challenging circumstances and find a new balance, while maintaining wellbeing.

“During tough times, the people around you can be there for you if you need.”

Resilience research participant

“It’s so important to feel part of the community. If you’ve got something to look forward to, you can feel your whole mood changing.”

Service practitioner



Investigating what makes communities resilient

To understand community resilience and its role in supporting mental health and wellbeing, our research partners, Traverse and Leeds Beckett University conducted quantitative research with 5,000 people across the four nations. They also undertook qualitative research in four locations across the UK.

We used the [Co-op Community Wellbeing Index](#) and national deprivation indices to choose the locations for our qualitative research. On paper, these four locations appeared to have good levels of wellbeing, despite being tough places to live economically. Our research aimed to understand the factors that were supporting mental wellbeing in those communities.

New evidence about communities and mental wellbeing

The resulting report, [Together Through Tough Times](#), shed new light on the vital role of communities in supporting mental wellbeing.

Our research identified four key factors that build individual and community resilience, particularly in communities that are facing challenges:

1. **Having places to go in your community where you can connect with other people**
2. **Feeling able to talk about your mental wellbeing with people in your community**
3. **Getting to know people in your community and taking part in activities together**
4. **Feeling a sense of belonging to your community.**





We found that:

- 1 in 3 people don't have the support or tools to cope with the ups and downs of life
- 81% said community support such as spaces to talk, activities and services would help their mental wellbeing.

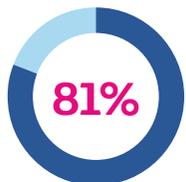
Small acts of kindness or volunteering in communities can go a long way to improving our mental wellbeing. When more of us are active in our communities, support networks become available to those who need them most.



Almost a quarter of people became isolated from their community due to the pandemic, and for 61% this affected their mental wellbeing



agree they don't have the support or tools to cope with stress, pressure or difficult circumstances, rising to almost half (47%) of 16- to 24-year-olds



of these said support in the community such as having spaces to talk, activities and services would help them.



“The findings of our research confirm that communities have a key role to play in providing good mental wellbeing, with networks of people and hubs creating strong community resilience.”

**Rebecca Birkbeck,
Director of Community and
Member Participation**



Partnership impact: services

New community resilience services

Thanks to the incredible fundraising efforts of Co-op colleagues, customers, suppliers and members, we delivered over 60 community services across the UK between October 2020 and March 2023. They've helped over 30,000 people so far to build their resilience and improve their mental wellbeing.

This included 12 pilot projects, where we tested our approach to building resilience based on the findings of our partnership research.

Many of our services were launched and delivered during the pandemic. At a time when two-thirds of us were struggling with our mental health and access to traditional services was limited through lockdown and social distancing, this support was more vital than ever.



Our services focused on early intervention and support for people with and without experience of mental health problems - including young people, adults and people experiencing bereavement - by strengthening existing community links and forging new connections. We created community spaces and hubs where people could meet, share their stories and offer each other support.

How our services made a difference

An independent evaluation led by Bright Purpose showed that among service users:



“Better than any medication I have ever been prescribed.”

Service user

“There is nothing in our local community that could help us like this project has. We sought help because we weren’t able to support those in the club. The Gain the Advantage service in Loch Lomond has helped us prioritise the importance of mental health. We’re not experts but we now have the tools and support to help our community.”

Project worker, Gain the Advantage service



Lynda's story

“My mental health has always been a problem. I was always reclusive,” says Lynda. For two years now, she has attended the Growing Chrysalis service in Dundee, which is supported by our partnership. It offers activities such as gardening, walking, yoga, mindfulness and environmental art.

“Coming every week keeps me in a routine and keeps me sane,” she says. “I can honestly say my mental health is the best it’s ever been and that’s down to this project.”



Delivering services across the UK

We delivered services in all four nations, in rural communities, small towns and large cities. We used the Co-op Community Wellbeing Index to identify the areas in greatest need of mental health support.

In England and Wales, services were delivered by local Minds, a network of independent mental health charities federated to Mind. In Scotland, services were delivered directly by SAMH and key community partner organisations. In Northern Ireland, Inspire oversaw the delivery of services.

Services included sports, arts, crafts, music and gardening. Working in partnership with other community organisations was central to service delivery, enabling projects to draw on established, trusted networks and people.

Some services were based in existing community spaces run by Mind, SAMH and Inspire or hosted by local community organisations. Some were offered remotely during the pandemic and other services took to the road to reach people directly in communities.

A bright yellow bus called Doris provided a mental wellbeing outreach service, supporting isolated communities in rural Wales. In Angus and Dundee, Wellbeing on Wheels provided a weekly mental health drop-in space on board a bus.

“It is hard walking about carrying all these issues, I’m struggling. It’s hard explaining it at the best of times. But this here (pointing to bus), it just makes sense. Thank you for telling me about this and letting me know when you are here.”

Community member,
Wellbeing on Wheels
service

“My doctor pointed me to social prescribing through Mind, and I managed to pick up the phone. [My support worker] was really good. She showed me where to go and how to do things. There’s more to me now... more to living than before.”

Service user, Doris on
tour service





Co-op Member Pioneers build community links

We connected services to the local community by involving Co-op colleagues and Co-op [Member Pioneers](#), who bring communities together to make good things happen locally.

"We're only as good as the community that the shops and our stores are in. The difference that our members and customers can make by shopping with us, can be seen here today at this service they have helped fund."

Co-op Member Pioneer



Supporting mental wellbeing in Tyne and Wear

Washington Mind's Life House centre runs craft, gardening and men's groups, among others, and is a vital resource for the local community. Bev, a service user, says: "This place has opened doors up to a lot of people that had no idea about mental health. It is a life saver."

Stephen, another service user, visits the centre three or four times a week. He says: "It's company for us. If I didn't come here, I'd have nowhere to go. It keeps us right."



Nurturing community connections in Fife

"The fact that we can be in our local community makes a huge difference for people to access the support they require," says Judith Deacons, SAMH Programme Manager. At The Sunflower Hub in Lochgelly, SAMH provides activities and games, offering a space where people can get to know each other and support each other's wellbeing. "We can speak to each other and understand problems and things like that. It's just so friendly, it's unbelievable," says service user, Dave.



Building young people's resilience in Llanelli

“There are so many ‘in between’ bits where you can catch people before they go into crisis. That can make a massive change in people’s lives,” says Ryan Stephens of Llanelli Mind. The Evolve project in Llanelli has been

supporting young people aged 11-24 with their mental wellbeing. They can feel part of the community through gym and team sports sessions and can express their feelings through arts and crafts activities. Alissa, a service user, says, “Coming here gives you motivation to do stuff and you know there’s someone who actually cares about you.”

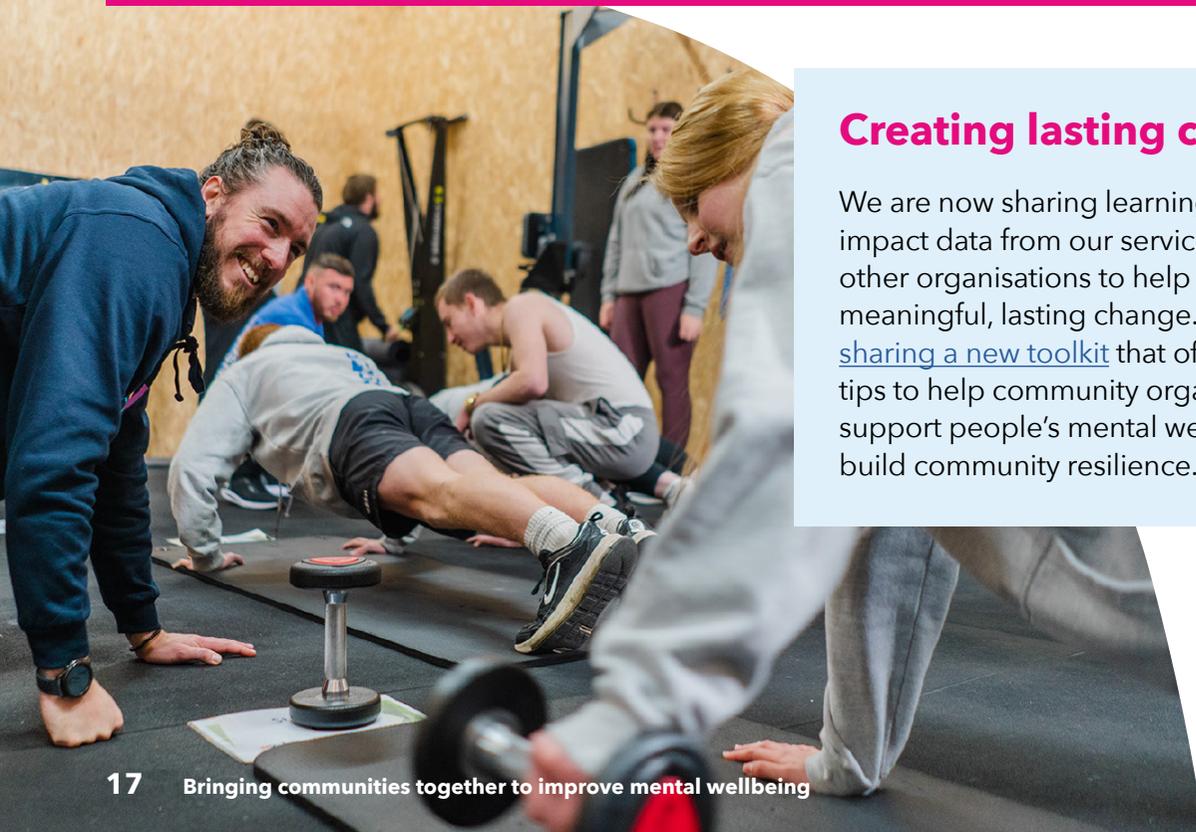
Promoting wellbeing in Northern Ireland

Inspire ran a four-week ‘Healthy Restart’ programme across Northern Ireland based on the 5 Ways to Wellbeing. Participants followed their own bespoke programme supported by a Healthy Restart facilitator. Classes focused on topics such as sleep, health anxieties, coping with emotions, mindfulness, healthy eating, mental health awareness and healthy relationships.

The programme was promoted by community partners, which increased its visibility and accessibility within local communities. One participant commented: “I have enjoyed my four weeks with Inspire and got lots of information that I can use in my day-to-day life.”

Creating lasting change

We are now sharing learnings and impact data from our services with other organisations to help bring about meaningful, lasting change. This includes [sharing a new toolkit](#) that offers practical tips to help community organisations support people’s mental wellbeing and build community resilience.





Innovative projects address systems change

We designed and delivered five innovative 'systems change' projects to improve the strength of community support for young people's mental wellbeing and resilience.

Local Minds and SAMH explored the needs of young people relating to a specific issue they had identified. Project leads empowered local communities by working with community stakeholders and young people to co-produce, design, pilot and refine solutions.

It takes time to change systems, but these projects sparked valuable ideas about how to seed wider changes to support the mental wellbeing and resilience of young people in their communities. The relationships built through the projects have formed a foundation for more inclusive, community-focused work in the future.



“You have done more for [my daughter] than any mental health service. You have listened to her and given her an outlet. It has made everything they have experienced and been through worthwhile.”

Parent/Carer

“It was great to see our young people engage and feel safe to openly speak about topics that can be sensitive. I hope that, over time, that knowledge will benefit them and even more young people.”

Service practitioner

“I had dropped out of college and struggled seeing how I could contribute to society with my physical and mental health struggles. But working with the System Change project I have been able to manage my condition and build my self-esteem. I have now returned to college and see a future.”

Young person



Partnership impact: campaigning

Influencing local
and national
government: getting
mental wellbeing
in communities
on the agenda

We influenced national public and policy conversations about mental wellbeing and community resilience by engaging with politicians in all four nations.

We influenced decision makers to prioritise mental wellbeing and community resilience in relevant strategies and funding settlements.



Our post-pandemic message: how community resilience can support recovery

The pandemic demonstrated the importance of community and social connections in building and maintaining good mental health. Along with our research findings, this gave us the opportunity to lobby governments across the UK to recognise the importance of community resilience in post-pandemic recovery policy making, and beyond.



Public launch of our campaigning programme

The development of policy recommendations for governments in the four nations and the publication of Together Through Tough Times marked the public launch of our campaigning programme.

We shared the research findings with political and community stakeholders through an event chaired by Mind Chairman and Co-op Non-Executive Director, Stevie Spring, in November 2021. This provided a strong launch to our campaigning programme.

We placed lived experience at the centre of the event, hearing from Saadia, a young person who talked about her mental health and the impact of the support she had received.

Saadia's experience

"I first started struggling with my mental health at the age of 15. I couldn't handle the pressure of GCSEs. Fortunately, my school had a space where I could go for support and somebody would listen to me. They also brought in a psychologist to teach a small group of us about the importance of eating well, your sleeping pattern and your routine, and how this impacts your mental health and wellbeing.

People from my background, and from my community, don't usually do counselling. But I'm so glad I did because it's really helped me."





Campaign highlights cost-of-living crisis

In response to the cost-of-living crisis, in October 2022, we did some research that highlighted the increasing toll that rising household bills were taking on the nation’s wellbeing. Our research, based on a YouGov study, revealed that as a result of money worries, [over a fifth of people were seeing less of their support network](#), leading many to feel lonely, anxious or stressed.

The story highlighted the value of the community services delivered through our partnership, and reached 6.5 million people.



Influencing the Senedd in Wales to include communities in future mental health strategies

The Mind Cymru team shared copies of our Together Through Tough Times report with all 60 Members of the Senedd (MS). Jenny Rathbone MS, Labour MS for Cardiff Central, tabled a motion calling on the Welsh Government to include the role played by communities in any future mental health strategy. The motion gained unanimous support.

Arranging for politicians in Northern Ireland to visit Inspire services

Despite the political impasse in Northern Ireland, Inspire made significant progress by meeting with Assembly Members (MLAs) from across the five main parties. Twenty MLAs visited Inspire services, enabling them to see the impact of

services first-hand and to understand the importance of community resilience and wellbeing.

Inspire also staged its first ever Stormont Takeover. This was an opportunity for Inspire service users and staff to demonstrate the work being delivered in communities, including through the Co-op partnership, in the rooms of the Northern Ireland Assembly.



Raising awareness of the impact of our services in the Scottish Parliament

The summer of 2022 saw six Members of Scottish Parliament (MSP) and three Members of Parliament (MP) visit partnership community resilience services. Between June 2021 and October 2022, three motions were tabled in Holyrood raising awareness of our partnership and services.

In November 2022, SAMH held a parliamentary event hosted by Kevin Stewart, Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care. It was followed by a members’ business debate around the importance of community resilience in supporting people’s mental health and wellbeing and the success of the Co-op partnership in building community resilience.



Engaging with politicians in England to promote community resilience

We arranged visits to partnership community resilience services for four MPs, including a visit from former Shadow Mental Health Minister Rosena Allin-Khan MP to Mind in Croydon on World Mental Health Day in October 2022.

In Autumn 2022, we held events at both Labour and Conservative Party Conferences to discuss the importance of building resilient communities.

We also responded to consultations on resilience and mental health and wellbeing and contributed to the levelling up white paper. Overall, we made good progress in opening up discussions about the value of community resilience in England.



Rosena Allin-Khan

At Labour party conference, Dr Rosena Allin-Khan MP talked about being a doctor on the front line, the impact of mental ill health and the importance of resilient communities.



Justine Greening

At Conservative Party Conference, former Education Secretary Justine Greening shared her reflections on her work with Co-op and the importance of building resilient communities.





**Partnership impact:
Time to Talk Day**
Getting people talking
about mental health



Empowering more conversations about mental health

- Time to Talk Day generated over 5 million additional conversations about mental health and wellbeing in 2022 (almost 2 million) and 2023 (over 3 million).
- In 2023, 41% of those surveyed, recognised the Time to Talk Day campaign, the highest campaign recognition ever.

In 2023, we drove over 3 million conversations about mental health. Of the 3 million;

2,846,000
conversations happened in the community

137,000
conversations happened among 16-24 year olds

498,000
conversations happened among communities experiencing racial inequality

651,500
conversations happened among those experiencing poverty



Making space to talk about mental health

Time to Talk Day is the nation's biggest mental health conversation. It takes place in February each year and has been running since 2014.

The event is run by Mind and Rethink Mental Illness in England, in partnership with Co-op. The campaign runs UK-wide, with SAMH and See Me in Scotland, Inspire and Change Your Mind in Northern Ireland and Time to Change Wales.

The day is all about creating supportive communities by having conversations with family, friends or colleagues about mental health.

Conversations about mental health have the power to change lives. Talking about mental health reduces stigma, supporting people to speak openly about how they're feeling, and feel empowered to seek help when they need it. Through our partnership, we encouraged people to talk about mental health – not just on Time to Talk Day, but every day.

Co-op extends our community reach

In 2022 and 2023, Co-op became the sole non-charity partner of Time to Talk Day. This enabled us to significantly expand our reach into local communities and to connect with people who do not normally engage with mental health.

"It's been truly inspiring to witness people openly discussing mental health problems and feeling empowered to seek help. The Time to Talk Day campaign plays a crucial role in reducing stigma and increasing awareness about the significance of seeking support for mental health concerns."

Community mental wellbeing champion



Engaging political audiences with Time to Talk Day

We gained wider traction for Time to Talk Day in both 2022 and 2023 by engaging with political stakeholders in the four nations, including sharing briefings adapted for different audiences.

In 2022:

- Over 50 MPs tweeted about Time to Talk Day.
- 26 elected representatives in Northern Ireland took up the offer to visit Inspire services after receiving Time to Talk Day promotional materials.
- Time to Talk day was raised in the Scottish Parliament during First Minister's Questions, to encourage people across Scotland to get involved in the campaign.



On Time to Talk Day 2023, senior leaders from the Co-op visited Tameside, Oldham and Glossop Mind.

In 2023:

- Rachel Hopkins MP raised Time to Talk Day in business questions with Penny Mordaunt MP.



- 84 MPs tweeted about Time to Talk Day, including Keir Starmer MP (Leader of the Opposition), Maria Caulfield MP (Mental Health Minister) and Daisy Cooper MP (Lib Dem Deputy Leader).
- In Scotland, Paul O'Kane MSP submitted a motion to raise awareness of Time to Talk day in Holyrood, which received cross party support from 33 MSPs.
- In Northern Ireland, elected representatives took to social media to support Time to Talk Day. Two MLAs recorded contributions for the Important Conversation videos, including Ulster Unionist Party leader Doug Beattie.

Co-op support centre initiates informal Time to Talk Days

After experiencing the success of Time to Talk Day, colleagues at the Co-op Operations Support Centre in Manchester decided they wanted to make it a regular event.

“Time to Talk gives people the courage to open up and seek help,” says Rebecca Taylor, Retail Operations Excellence Manager. “Colleagues can offer an ear to listen when needed, without making any judgements, just giving support.”

The 70 colleagues at the centre now hold a Time to Talk Day on the first Thursday of every month.

“We wanted to keep conversations going more regularly, so people would have a space where they could share what’s on their mind or just listen,” says Rebecca.

“Holding monthly sessions has had a good impact on colleagues and has helped to build psychological safety within the team.”



Partnership impact: Information in the Community

Through our Information in the Community project, we aimed to empower people across the UK to support their own and others' mental health and wellbeing, through information and signposting within their communities.



We focused on three audiences who are disproportionately affected by mental health problems: young people, people facing poverty and people from communities experiencing racial inequality.

We met the needs of our three priority audiences by:

- **Creating printed mental health and wellbeing information and sharing it in community spaces.**
- **Launching a free online course, *Conversations in the Community*, which increases confidence in talking about mental health and wellbeing.**



Tailoring information to the needs of priority audiences

Mind, SAMH and Inspire shared the same goal, but created different types of mental health information according to nation-specific insights and the needs of local communities.

We co-produced and co-designed the information with our priority audiences. This made sure the information would be relevant and meet their needs.

For example, Inspire worked with community leaders on the ground to reach people from communities experiencing racial inequality. They worked with interpreters who are in contact with newcomers to Northern Ireland. They also collaborated with Sure Start centres that are in touch with Polish and Portuguese communities.

From the beginning, Mind and SAMH involved their target audiences too. Before creating any new resources, the team took time to understand people's information needs, evaluate Mind and SAMH's existing information, and find out where new information would be most useful and accessible for them. Mind and SAMH conducted in-depth interviews, information reviews, questionnaires, workshops and tested new content with priority audiences. These insights drove decisions about the content and format of Mind and SAMH's new information.

Impact so far

Our Information in the Community project is ongoing, but an independent evaluation led by MEL shows that to date:

- **1.7 million people have accessed printed mental health and wellbeing information in communities.**
- **20,000 community hubs and spaces have hosted printed information resources.**
- **3,600 learners have accessed our *Conversations in the Community* course.**
- **97% of people accessing *Conversations in the Community* feel more confident when supporting the mental health and wellbeing of others.**

This work also helped exceed Co-op's target to signpost 1.5 million people to mental wellbeing support including information, services and community activity.



Supporting children and young people

It can be difficult for children and young people to access support for their mental wellbeing, especially those who are living in poverty or who come from communities experiencing racial inequality.

Insights from our research demonstrated that educational settings offered the best access to young people from our priority audiences. As a result, Mind, SAMH and Inspire developed and distributed leaflets in schools and colleges to reach these groups of young people in the most direct and effective way possible.

Together with parents and carers, SAMH co-developed a practical leaflet on how to open up conversations with children about their wellbeing. The booklet featured activities and images that would act as talking points.

Inspire used a similar method to produce a university campus campaign on mental wellbeing. The team carried out focus groups with students and faculty staff to understand the needs of these groups. Pocket cards with tips on listening to people when they talk about their mental health concerns were then designed, as well as posters with QR codes that led to Inspire's Student Hub, which offered further support.

“Adapting our approach to meet the needs of local communities is so important. We discovered that people in areas of deprivation in Scotland were most likely to download our online guides to mental health, anxiety and depression. But they were all too long. So we abridged them into short trifold leaflets and distributed them in shops, hairdressers, barbers, pharmacies and libraries so that they are more accessible.”

Sarah Greene, Project Manager, SAMH

Finding the words to talk about mental health

An important step in our process involved understanding what kind of information people wanted and the best way to communicate those messages.

“Through our insight gathering activities, we identified that people often don't have the vocabulary to talk about their mental health,” says Emily Shackley, Mind's project manager for Information in the Community.

Jenna Booth, Assistant Director of Insight and Engagement at Inspire, agrees, saying: “We broadened our approach so that we didn't just produce information about subjects like anxiety or depression. Our printed information also focused on the topics that were likely to be causing those issues, such as relationships, finances or loneliness.”





How we reached out

We promoted our new information through a range of community networks, partners and champions, including Co-op (Co-op Member Pioneers). Our locations included local Minds, SAMH services and Inspire services, GPs and pharmacies, food projects, sports clubs, community cafes, transport hubs and local buses.

For example, SAMH designed an advert to go inside Stagecoach buses that travel across the whole of Scotland, to encourage people to seek support for their mental wellbeing.

“Both myself and some of my patients sometimes struggle with the dark nights and the isolation on Fair Isle, as much as we love it here. I put your leaflets in my waiting room this morning and already two of the general mental health leaflets have been taken. Last night, I myself found all three of the leaflets a very interesting and useful read. Thank you for forwarding this information to me; we get overlooked so very often.”

NHS surgery, Fair Isle, Shetland

Supporting young people experiencing bereavement

As part of the Information in the Community project, we partnered with Cruse, the bereavement charity, to support children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing along their bereavement journey.

In response to insights from young people experiencing bereavement, Cruse developed printed resources to share in community settings such as schools, doctors’ surgeries, youth groups, Cruse branches and Co-op funeral homes.

By the end of December 2023, Cruse aims to reach 3,000 young people through information in at least 50 community locations across the UK.

Supporting community wellbeing through online learning

To give people the confidence to talk about mental wellbeing, we also developed a free online learning course.

“When you’re trying to open up a conversation with someone about their mental health, it can be challenging,” says Emily Shackley of Mind. “You might be worried about saying the wrong thing or making things worse.



“Our [Conversations in the Community course](#) helps people to find natural ways to talk about mental health, so that you support other people while looking after yourself too.”

In keeping with our commitment to co-production, the course was developed with people with lived experience of a range of mental health problems.

The course takes around 1.5 hours to complete and is mainly aimed at community leaders, with the idea that they will then be better equipped to start conversations about mental wellbeing with people they meet every day.



Legacy and sustainability

Our long-term impact

Our partnership has created meaningful change in communities. We've empowered people to support their own mental wellbeing, and the mental wellbeing of others around them.



Embedding partnership research

Our *Together Through Tough Times* research highlighted the power of communities to support mental health and wellbeing, including vital factors that help build resilience.

The partners will continue to use these findings to:

- **Advocate for community-based support at a national and local level**
- **Campaign for funding for local services rooted in the needs of the community**
- **Support the creation of community-based services.**

This will include engaging with politicians and think tanks to reinforce our message about the importance of communities in supporting mental wellbeing.

Services deepen community connections

During our partnership, we funded over 60 community services across the UK. These services supported the mental wellbeing and resilience of over 30,000 people.

Mind, SAMH and Inspire are already learning from the design and co-production process to inform future community-based and resilience-based services.

The process of delivering the community resilience services has enabled Co-op, Mind, SAMH and Inspire to extend and deepen their relationships within local communities. This will support better collaboration with communities in the future, and increase the number of people who will benefit from improved mental health and wellbeing.



Keeping the conversation going

A year on from its launch, York Mind's system change project is going from strength to strength. The Yormind website, co-designed with young people, offers information and support to anyone under the age of 25 who is worrying about their mental health. Over 4,000 young people have now accessed Yormind and it is proving an invaluable resource for young people seeking help.

Yormind also hosts the Chat Chit podcast which features a range of mental health stories and experiences to help young people know they are not alone. The team has released 35 episodes which have been listened to by young people in 311 cities around the world.

The York Mind team continues to spread the word about Yormind and Chat Chit during visits to schools and colleges.





A practical guide to community resilience

Our partnership is finalising a new toolkit - *How to: Build community resilience* - for launch to communities nationwide in February 2024.

The toolkit is designed for a diverse range of community and voluntary sector organisations. It contains practical tips and suggestions to support people's mental wellbeing and build community resilience. It is based on key findings from our partnership report, *Together Through Tough Times*, and learnings and insights from other partnership activity, including our services and community information-based work.

The toolkit includes a new 'Community Resilience Framework' which was developed and tested through the partnership services. The framework is a practical tool for community and voluntary sector organisations to plan, develop and evaluate community resilience projects.



Ongoing support for Time to Talk Day

We're committed to creating a culture where it's OK to talk about mental health. Our partnership's support for Time to Talk Day has been crucial in continuing to raise awareness about the importance of having conversations about mental health and wellbeing.

To maintain momentum, we will continue to partner together for Time to Talk Day 2024, encouraging even more people to speak out about their mental health in communities across the UK. This will include young people, people experiencing poverty and communities experiencing racial inequality.





Empowering people with information

Our Information in the Community project aimed to empower people to support their own and others' mental health and wellbeing. It focused on two main areas: providing information in community spaces and sharing a new online course, Conversations in the Community.

The mental health and wellbeing information developed by Mind, SAMH and Inspire will continue to be available digitally beyond the partnership, to ensure people can access the information and support they need. The insights gathered from communities as part of the Information in the Community project will support the development of future information resources too.

Mind and SAMH have embedded Conversations in the Community into their core charitable offer. This will allow us to continue to empower even more people to build their confidence in having conversations about mental health and wellbeing, and be there for others in their community. SAMH has also made their web chat (developed during the project) into a prominent feature of their Information Service.



Sharing expertise

This is the largest partner relationship to date for Mind, SAMH and Inspire. Throughout the partnership, the charities have pooled expertise, shared ideas and developed new ways of working across our staff teams and in communities. These ways of working will offer a model for future collective collaboration and partnerships across the UK.

Through the partnership, Mind, SAMH and Inspire have been able to share their mental health expertise with Co-op. In turn Co-op has shared its knowledge of engaging local communities to add significant value to Mind, SAMH and Inspire's work. This has included inputting its food poverty expertise to support the development of Mind's poverty strategy, sharing knowledge to support post-pandemic recruitment challenges and sharing news of community grant funding opportunities with local Minds, SAMH services and Inspire services.



in partnership with

