

THE BRICK

Social Impact Report

2020-2021

“They'll help you as much as you're willing to help yourself. They'll do the difficult parts with you, but they do encourage you to do stuff yourself”

THE BRICK PROJECT
SHOP
WORKS
GIVING
REUSE

QUEENS HALL ACTION ON POVERTY

The Brick, 10 Arcade Street, Wigan WN1 1LU
01942 236 953 enquiries@thebrick.org.uk
www.thebrick.org.uk



The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service



The Brick Social Impact Report 2020-2021

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1. Executive Summary

During the last year, **2,104** households in Wigan were assessed as owed prevention or relief housing duty. **1,434 (68%)** of those were assessed as having support needs. The Brick provided housing or homelessness support for **1,387** individuals during the 12-month period April 2020-March 2021, 97% of homeless households had support needs.

The last 12 months have been extremely difficult for everyone, but none more so than the people of Wigan and Leigh experiencing already tough times. Whilst most organisations sent their staff to work from home, the many people we support don't even have a home, and instead we carried on as frontline care workers. The Brick not only continued services during the pandemic, but increased services in order to meet demand. We followed Government Public Health Guidance relating to Social Community Care Settings and adhered to the working safely guidance during Coronavirus. This has helped to deliver and develop our good practice working arrangements.

We altered our food provision from a pick-up service to a delivery only service ensuring that people could continue to isolate and to minimise the need for people to leave their homes unnecessarily.

Our crisis services refocused to a placed based offer ensuring those who were homeless, or needing advice were seen by us going to them and not forcing them to attend our centre, again minimising unnecessary travel.

Our response to keeping services open has been rewarded by funders who awarded emergency COVID Grants, including Homeless Link, GM Mayors Charity, Crisis and the National Lottery.

We continued throughout, remaining open and accessible providing valuable services throughout each lockdown and we are so proud of all our staff and volunteers, who have shown an unprecedented commitment, bravery and true dedication to ensuring the support to transition people from hardship is available.

Highlights for year April 2020 – March 2021:

- Moved all residents from shelter accommodation into self-contained and accommodated **653** different people throughout the 12 months
- Provided **19,135** beds in emergency access or supported accommodation across the 12 months
- Supported **531** people on street outreach
- Received **17,638** volunteer hours and increased number of volunteers to 144
- Supported **694** homeless presentations
- Distributed **11,064** food parcels



2. Scope and stakeholders

This is an evaluative social impact report, looking at the last year's work. This is our first social impact report, and we believe it shows our commitment to increased evidencing of the impact we know we make. The intention from this report is to create opportunities to complete a fully assured SROI and social impact report for the following year.

The Brick is about...

Building Love

As a charity founded on Christian value it is our ethos that we should always act in love, to build up people and communities, enabling them to reach their full potential.

The Brick, works to prevent and relieve the impact of poverty in Wigan and Leigh, by providing practical and emotional support to people transitioning through homelessness, poverty, crisis or social and economic exclusion.

Underpinning this ethos are our values, the building blocks of the charity (or the things that are important to us and what we stand for) One of the key values of the Brick is that we relinquish power/control back to the person, we enable them, give multiple chances, we never close a door for good, and we rejoice in a person's achievements. This is perfectly summarised in:

1 Corinthians 13 1

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

What we do?

The Brick has more than ten years' experience delivering effective homelessness services across the Wigan Borough. We are a trusted partner of Wigan Council, with a proven delivery track record, including our work as the current provider for the homelessness support and emergency accommodation services and outreach service for male and female adults. As well as emergency accommodation we provide wrap around support through coaches and Independent Living Mentors using an asset-based support model. We support people who are transitioning through services to make informed choices and take control of their lives. We provide vocational training and personal development in a social enterprise workspace for people experiencing homelessness at The Brickworks. We offer work experience, including wood-working catering, sales, van mate, admin, reception, peer mentoring, re-upholstery, bike mechanics, PAT testing etc. supporting people into employment.

We have three retail spaces providing unrestricted income alongside employment and volunteer opportunities, and the redistribution of low cost furniture and homewares that may otherwise be destined for landfill.

The Brick also operates the Final Finish contract for the Wigan borough, where a team goes into local authority managed properties that need decorating and finishing before people can move in.

We operate Wigan's largest food bank but have aspirations to develop our food project into a community model offering onsite support as well as dignity and choice and the right to food.



Our current strategy is built around three arms; Relief, Restoration and Reformation

Relief

Meeting immediate
felt needs

Providing a safe place through
emergency and supported
accommodation

Provision of support attached to
accommodation – Independent
Living Mentors, Asset Coaches,
Counsellors, Engagement Workers

Creating a Food Community
providing access to food, together
with dignity of choice

Restoration

Tiered support offering a
pathway to increased
independence

Meaningful engagement with
successful outcomes in skills
and confidence building,
employability and team
working

Reducing unwanted furniture
going to waste

Providing furniture to people to
make their house a home at
low cost or even free

Reformation

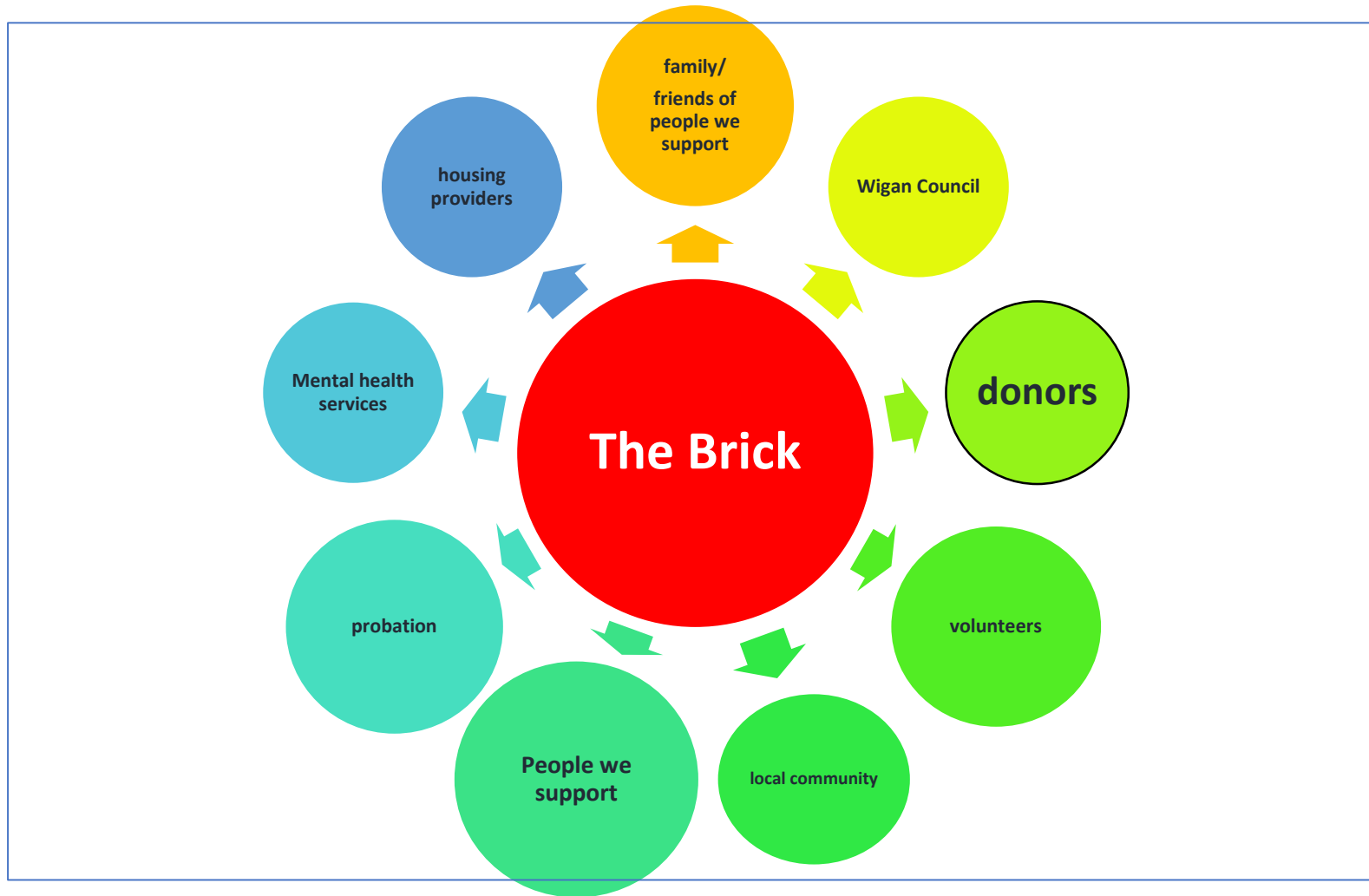
Speaking out and acting
against social injustice

Partnering with MayDay Trust
in offering an asset based
service, a radical alternative to
traditional service delivery

Engaging with research
opportunities, supporting the
voice of lived experience in
influencing strategy and policy
change

Engaging and influencing our
local community through
awareness raising and
relationship building

Our stakeholders



3. Covid - 19

Covid had a huge impact on the people we support across the Wigan borough, and our service provision.

The project building that houses Crisis Intervention was closed, as it couldn't be managed safely due to a lack of physical space. Our outreach team took on the role that would have been taken by Crisis Intervention – but by going out to meet people rather than people dropping in to us. The outreach team worked to engage people about keeping themselves safe during the pandemic, ensuring they were aware of the restrictions and changing risk – as well as being connected to services that had changed location and availability.

“When the first lockdown was happening, I ended up ringing the police because I didn't want to get fined for being out and about so I wanted to get information on what was allowed and that. It was an hour a day you was allowed outside but because I was living in the woods how would I self-isolate? Then I got put through to the Wigan housing team and then that's how I got in contact and found out about the Brick” (rough sleeper)

There was a seismic shift in the way people were provided emergency beds as part of 'Everyone In' – a national push to provide safe accommodation for anyone who didn't have somewhere to go. Effectively it was impossible to 'Stay Home, Stay Safe' for people with no home. Wigan Council worked with a hotel in central Wigan to merge accommodation that was previously located in 2 hubs in Wigan (Wigan Hub and St Georges), and 1 in Leigh (Leigh Hub). Those hubs could not be made Covid secure as they offered shared dormitory style accommodation without sufficient space to maintain social distancing. The hotel accommodation was developed further over the next 6 months becoming a multi-agency hub for Brick staff, housing and homelessness teams, Complex Dependency workers, health and We Are With You (formerly Addaction). The formerly community based Brick Personal Transitions Service and Independent Living Mentors based themselves in the hotel, offering day to day support via face to face contact and remotely to people they already worked with in the community.

For someone dependent on alcohol or substances, staying somewhere they aren't allowed to use, is near impossible. Staff were working closely with We Are With You (formerly Addaction) to ensure that people were being given monitored amounts of alcohol, being scripted for methadone and were able to pick prescriptions up from local pharmacies safely. Brick staff advocated for people living in the hotel, supporting other staff from different agencies to take a more trauma informed approach, and used their understanding of how intersectional homelessness is to push back against move ons that may have been too soon.

The hotel building provides its own challenge in its size. Brick staff were managing 50 beds, but in addition there was a floor for women escaping domestic violence, and a floor for people discharged from Covid wards but unable to return to their own homes. Ensuring the safety of so many people, managing the risk while maximising opportunities for choice and independence is not easy and has been one of our biggest challenges.

Covid-19 also affected our commercial trading activities, when our shops in Gidlow Lane, Wigan and Railway Road, Leigh, then the BrickWorks closed to the public completely. Government restrictions meant initially that our group activities were cancelled. The only thing that remained open in the Brickworks space was Gearing Up – where Simon experienced a huge rise in demand for bikes and bike maintenance.

The food bank moved from a small space in a vacant retail premises first to the otherwise closed BrickWorks building in order to cope with the expected increase in referrals. They stayed there until Christmas 2020, when they moved into St Georges Church – where the night shelter had previously been accommodated.

Final Finish service continued after an initial pause during the first lock down, becoming busier than ever as homes were required for people to move into. As this was always primarily working alone in empty homes, Covid risk was assessed and managed



Brick walking activity to support people to get outside and exercise safely and increase mental wellbeing

Many of our volunteers were told to stay home due to health, age or caring responsibilities. A new set of volunteers from people furloughed from their regular jobs came to support the food bank with home deliveries and sorting the additional numbers of food parcels.

A small number of staff were furloughed, where others worked through. Ensuring that people were safe was always the priority of the charity, but like everyone else, we were learning every day about ways to cope, ways to connect without our shared spaces, and ways to continue to support people who were experiencing homelessness and extreme poverty.



Example of art work produced by one of the residents of emergency accommodation during the lockdown

Working over Zoom and House Party was new for us (and we realised how out of date our digital awareness actually was) but the Personal Transition Coaches adapted to remote working quickly, continuing to support people to make the best of the situation. The ILM service worked directly with people accommodated in the hotel to ensure that they received the right support at the right time. By April 2020 we increased our web chat service to 24/7 ensuring that there was always a member of staff available to talk to people who were anxious, at risk of or experiencing homelessness or financial vulnerability even in the middle of the night. During 2020/21 our staff responded to **1,005** live web chats, dealing with a range of concerns from advice around budgeting, access to emergency food and benefits queries to concerns about rough sleepers and homeless prevention.

How things changed in our emergency accommodation services because of Covid

Pre Covid

Wigan Hub Open 24/7 with Brick staff on site. 20 beds, dormitory style, with a separate room for women. Food, activities and support provided

Leigh Hub Open 24/7 with Brick staff on site. dormitory style, with a separate room for women. Food, activities and support provided

St Georges Open 7pm to 7am, 14 beds in dormitory style. Brick staff on site 7pm-7am. Dinner and breakfast provided.

During Covid

ABEN is housed in Leigh, open 7pm – 2pm with Brick staff on site 7-7.30am, Wigan Council staff on site 7-2pm. Provides 17 beds in individual pods, dinner and breakfast provided. Support with housing from Wigan Council staff.

Hotel 24/ 7 service which includes 24-hour provision for 50 beds within self-contained accommodation. Brick staff are on site 24/7. All food provided. Individual rooms with own bathrooms.

Young Person's Provision housed in the Wigan Hub with 7 beds laid out in pods, with Brick staff on site 7am-7pm offering wrap around support, activities, support with life skills. Kitchen available for communal cooking with food budget provided.

4. People

The people at the heart of our work at The Brick are:

Independent Living Mentors - supporting people to live independently

PTS Coaches - staff approach people's strengths and base the process of transitioning through homeless services around them. We aim to focus on what they're good at, what their skills, knowledge and capabilities are and value them as assets which can be used to achieve positive, sustainable outcomes. Instead of making people recipients of services and try and fix them; we aim to support, empower, and encourage resilience and resourcefulness rather than dependency.

Food Community Co-ordinator - ensures smooth running of the service and forge external contacts with other food distributors

Outreach and Engagement Workers - front line contact with rough sleepers

Mentors - sharing valuable experience and skills with the people we work with

Activity Co-ordinators - delivering meaningful engagement sessions to the people we work with

Night Managers - working a waking overnight to ensure a safe and nurturing environment for people in emergency **accommodation**

Van drivers - collecting/delivering furniture and ensuring welfare packages are delivered swiftly

Finance and Admin Team - maintaining all areas of admin, finance and grant funding

Building and Properties Manager - ensuring health and safety of all properties

Final Finish Mentor - delivering a contracted service to the local council - painting and decorating properties and training

Retail Assistants - ensuring our shops are thriving community hubs, supporting people donating and buying upcycled and preloved items

Chaplain - providing spiritual support to all staff and volunteers and the people we work with

Business and Training Manager - building strong business partnerships, employability coaching and ensuring the Charity's training needs are met

Fundraising and Communications Co-ordinator – managing marketing and fundraising campaigns and relationships with donors

Insight and Evaluation Analyst - transforming the way The Brick uses data to drive decisions. Responsible for developing, managing and maintaining the implemented CRM databases

Senior Service Managers - leading a growing Charity, responsible for safeguarding and day to day operations

CEO – Louise Green

Finance and Commercial Director – Keely Dalfen

Operations Director – Kerri Pegg

The charity is women led, however we support both men and women to reach their full potential. We also encourage people with lived experience to be at the forefront of the design, development and delivery of the activities they are planning. 14 members of staff have **lived experience** of mental health or housing issues which represents **20%** of our workforce

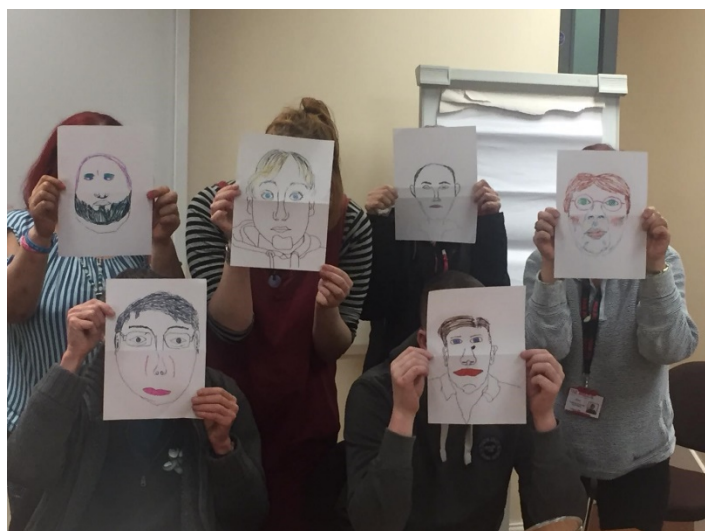
All staff and volunteers are DBS checked before they are inducted and risk is assessed according to context and job role. Staff who are out and about working with people are provided with a mobile phone using the Stay Safe app. The Brick is a Living Wage Employer.

We have 6 trustees who meet together at least bi monthly, though more frequently depending on requirements. They provide governance and support to the CEO and directors, in addition to being a reflective forum in which to consider strategic direction.

Training and Development

The Brick's training and development coordinator has arranged a number of bespoke training courses, delivered virtually and face to face during the year. All staff and volunteers complete a safeguarding course as part of their induction. Staff are given 1:1 supervision on a four weekly basis, as well as access to external counselling. Staff are also given annual appraisals that identify development goals.

37 courses were delivered online or in small, socially distanced groups when possible, with **300** staff attendances.



Self portrait activity with residents

Volunteers have access to the same training as staff to support their development.

Courses included Modern Day Slavery, Trauma Informed Care, Motivational Interviewing, Conflict Resolution, FGM Awareness, Mental Health First Aid to name but a few.

A Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equalities (DICE) facilitation course was also completed, as for 21-22 a refreshed equalities strategy is being embedded across the Brick.

Staff and volunteer wellbeing

Chaplaincy has been a new project within the Brick, established at the beginning of 2020 with funding for the project from The Methodist Mission in Britain Fund, Liverpool Archdiocesan and local churches.

Caroline, the Brick's first chaplain offers non-denominational support to Brick staff, volunteers and people we support. Her goal is to set up a team of volunteer chaplains to increase the access to emotional and spiritual support available across the Brick sites for staff, volunteers and also people we support.

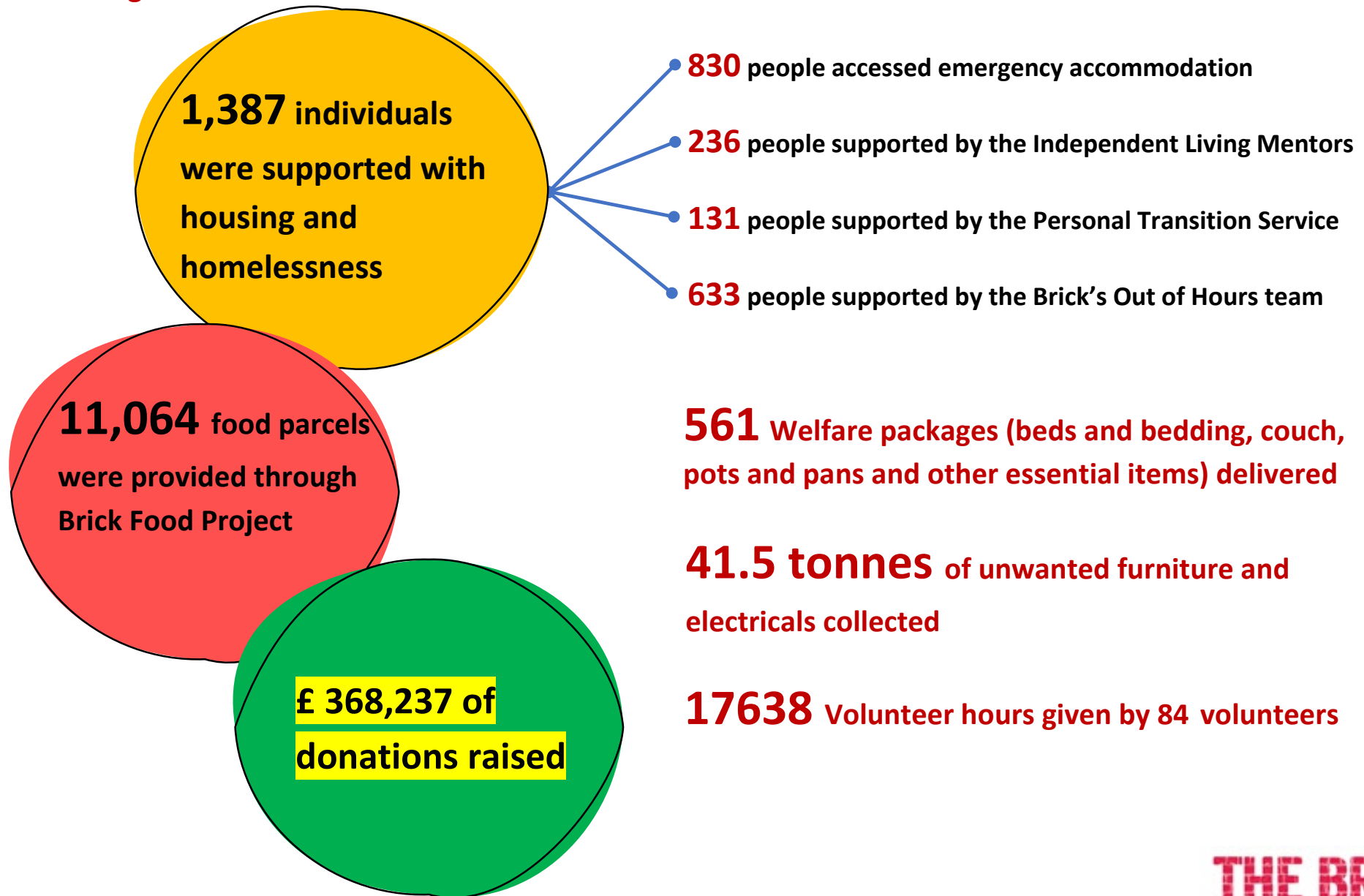
Our PTS coach Sam is a trained Connect 5 facilitator. Connect 5 is a mental health wellbeing programme that increases confidence and skills within frontline staff to support people to live well mentally, to better manage their mental health, and to ultimately improve their wellbeing. Sam offers Connect 5 to all new starters.

All staff and volunteers also have access to external counselling to support them – The Brick recognises that staff and volunteers are empathic individuals who are frequently supporting people in crisis and distress. Exposure to this distress takes a toll on anyone, and keeping staff and volunteers well is essential.

Staff and volunteers can also freely access Wigan Council's gyms across the borough.



5. At a glance:



6. Brick Projects

Personal Transitions Service

The Brick is an innovation of Mayday Trust, The Personal Transitions Service (PTS) remains at the forefront of our innovative approach to support. The PTS coaches work with people transitioning through homelessness whether they are accommodated within temporary accommodation or living in the community in their own tenancies. Within 20-21 the PTS service has matured from an asset coaching service to the PTS service – both person led, strength based and with a transitional focus.

During 20/21 the PTS coaches worked with 131 people

Coaches are able to access a small budget for each person they work with, which is spent cooperatively with the individual. Money was variously spent on jigsaws, fishing equipment, jewellery making materials and baking resources. These small things allow people to engage in activities they choose, independently, together with a coach or within the community.

People completed courses during their coaching support as varied as social care, warehouse management, teaching assistant qualifications and maths and English.

A number of people reduced or stopped drug or alcohol use. People reported different examples of achievements that they felt were important to them – such as reconnecting with a grandchild, sustaining a tenancy, applying for a job, getting a new pet, saving money to buy things for their home or starting a relationship.

Coaching activities are measured using WEBWMS surveys linked to asset based visualisation cards, a collaborative measure where people reflect on where they feel they are.

The coaches day to day work was particularly disrupted by the pandemic, as it was typical for meet ups between people and coaches to take place in a community setting of the person's choice. This was replaced by virtual meet ups using technology such as Zoom or House Party, and when possible, outdoor activities like taking a walk. This led to the coaches reflecting on how easy it can be to slip into a system that suits us, rather than the person being supported.

The asset coaches published a reflective blog on the Brick website to discuss this: **“Throughout lockdown I was met by new challenges in my role, the biggest for me, was not being able meet people face to face. But I learned, my coaching knowledge and skills developed. I realised for many people, virtual contact works better and I was able to continue meaningful conversations and experiences with people in a different way, it allowed me to recognise barriers to working alongside people, I had not noticed before”**

The PTS coaches work with individuals but also influence the organisation on both a day to day and broader level. For instance, they have input into how policies are reviewed and rewritten, how language is used on our social posts, and how recruitment adverts are written. The culture change brought about through engagement with Mayday Trust has been integral to how The Brick has developed.

The Brick recently undertook and passed an accreditation audit with Mayday Trust.

Taken from the report:

“we got [from the audit] a strong sense of a culture which encourages appropriate risk taking, communication and the default position of taking a person-led approach. Strong relationships allow for joint exploration and the sense that ‘everyone is in’ in terms of developing the culture. There was a feeling of community, cohesion, peer support and openness all based on shared values and a shared vision. There was a clear vision of what ‘a strength-based culture’ meant to The Brick.”

PTS case study:

Sam* started to work with a coach in 2018 and for the 2-year period has struggled with mental health and wellbeing. There have been as many as 10 hospital admissions and sections, due to intentional overdose in a 12-month period. Sam often does not meet his coach when arranged. Sam will reach out and contact his coach when he is feeling suicidal and tell them that he intends to end his life by taking an overdose, which leads to urgent intervention by his coach having to report to emergency services. He always apologises afterwards to his coach and expresses he wants to break his habit

There have been times when he has met with his coach and demonstrated short term improvements in mood and confidence. In 2019 he was accepted by Gender Clinic, diagnosed as having gender dysphoria and eligible for transition, however his mental health and hospital admissions continues to delay the treatment.

Sam was able to experience ice skating with his coach for the first time in 8 years, an old hobby with lots of meaning and positive associations for him. For a period of 2 weeks afterwards he was planning to go again, independently and was looking into transport routes and costs to get to the rink. He was also feeling happier and leaving his house more often to meet with a friend and go to the shops.

Sam has had difficulties accessing mental health support and is always discharged soon after his sections for 'non engagement' he also has on and off engagement with drug and alcohol services for use of cocaine and cannabis. He has worked with an ILM to address some debts and benefit difficulties.

During lockdown, We Are with You began offering online sessions/support and courses which he found more preferable as he often struggles to attend in person due to his agoraphobia and anxiety around leaving home. He has also interacted with his coach more frequently via online platforms such as FaceTime and house party, having frank and honest discussions about his anxiety and available services to work with him. Sam has recently been working consistently and well with Mental Health services, drug and alcohol services and has not been admitted to hospital for 6 months.

Sam said that **“You are the only person who I can trust because other services mess me around and sack me off the first chance they get but you have stuck by me and I’m glad you are honest with me; it’s made me realise that sometimes I don’t help myself when I tell mental health to **** off. I want the help and I will do my bit”.**

Accommodation: ABEN (A Bed Every Night)

291 people were referred to ABEN during 20-21.

143 people had an identified mental health support need at time of referral.

122 people had an identified drug support need

83 people had an identified alcohol support need

62 of people accommodated during 20-21 moved from ABEN into a tenancy of their own, or to further supported accommodation either within The Brick, or with a partner agency.

If someone chooses to leave ABEN then the outreach team is notified to ensure that people remain safe and engaged wherever they are.

ABEN is frequently used by people more than once. If someone has been rough sleeping or sofa surfing for some time, they may not feel able to stay in one place for too long. Being able to leave and return to ABEN on their own terms is important in order to establish a trusting and supportive relationship where different social, health and housing options can be explored.

Wigan Young Person's Hub

This new project emerged from a need to ensure that younger people weren't being negatively influenced by people who had been experiencing homelessness for longer periods. Staff observed that one of the biggest challenges of the Hotel accommodation provision was the mix of people with different experiences of homelessness – someone who has been street homeless for a number of years and through different services usually has a very different approach to managing their stay than someone who has more recently become homeless for the first time. This was a particular worry for staff when working with younger people who might lack resilience. In order to offer an alternative to younger people The Brick put together a bid to The Homeless Link Winter Transformation Grant to fund a three-month pilot of a young person's provision, hosted in the vacant Wigan Hub. This was successfully funded, and the pilot proved the positive impact of the smaller sized, dedicated space on the individuals accommodated. This project has since been commissioned by Wigan Council and funding extended to March 2022.

“What they were getting was a lot of care leavers, so you were getting a lot of young people being pushed together with seasoned drug users, seasoned criminals, and they were so vulnerable. So, they've developed now one of the things, this brand-new project; a young person's provision specifically for people under 25 - which I think is a brilliant... It was massively needed and it was something I identified as being an issue. I think it wasn't just that they knew about it but they've actually done something, so that for me was a big positive” (partner agency)

Craig, the service manager, felt it was essential to offer choice and participatory decision making to develop a truly person led provision. He was very determined to take the opportunity of a small space and small cohort to prove that quality support can make a critical difference in people's lives.



Some of the residents of YP Hub arrived with high levels of trauma from adverse childhood experiences. Support was organised from a variety of agencies including an eating disorder clinic, We Are With You, Think Wellbeing, IAPT and an EMDR therapist. This has led to residents succeeding in returning to work, moving on to more settled tenancies, and reducing their substance use.

Residents are encouraged to take part in daily decision making, including meal planning and shopping for food, laundry and cleaning. Craig holds daily discussions with them to develop open dialogue and solve problems. Activities are organised like bike rides and hikes.

“It offered him a place of safety amongst people his own age, where he could get his head down safe in the knowledge that him and his belongings would be safe. He said it allowed him a safe space to process his thoughts clearly and think of what he wanted to do in the future.” (Brick staff).

During the 10-week pilot **7** young people at risk of homelessness were accommodated, with **4** successful move ons with 3 residents still accommodated at the project at the end of March 2021. 2 young people were in paid employment when they arrived at the hub which was sustained throughout, and another 2 young people with the assistance of our training manager gained employment during their stay.

Emergency Access Accommodation

Since the end of March 2020 A Wigan town centre hotel has housed the people the supported by the charity, alongside Wigan Council placements, together with Brick staff and Wigan Council teams such Complex Dependency, Homelessness Solutions and Commissioning.

Wrap around 24/7 support has been delivered by Brick staff, working to engage, actively support people to move on to stable accommodation that suits their needs. Some people are in paid or voluntary employment so are out during the day, so Brick staff meet with them in the evening to ensure that their needs are being met.

“They'll help you as much as you're willing to help yourself. They'll do the difficult parts with you, but they do encourage you to do stuff yourself” (person supported by The Brick)

We have supported **201** placements in the Hotel during 20/21 and **32%** of these people moved onto a tenancy. Some people returned to lodging arrangements with family, some have moved back to ABEN, some have gone to hospital. A number received the respite they needed and left of their own accord.

Placements within the hotel were divided up between Wigan Council teams and the Brick. Wigan Council placements were supported by council staff with housing and support during the day, but were able to access group activities run by The Brick, in addition to being supported by Brick staff during the evenings, nights and weekends. Women living at the hotel were all given housing support by Wigan Council, and a women's group was started by Brick staff to ensure that there was a safe space for women to build confidence and friendships while they were there. The division of placements has caused tension for staff working in the hotel as they have not been privy to background information about individuals which has made providing safe support difficult. The information sharing has improved and continues to be an area for improvement within the shared space.

Due to the nature of homelessness legislation, move ons have been a priority for council staff based within the Hotel setting, to ensure that people have an offer of move on accommodation within 56 days. Prioritised referrals were facilitated so people who otherwise might have been waiting longer, were moved on. There are both positives and negatives to a speedy move on. It's positive in that people are provided options for independence, are less institutionalised and their exposure to negative peer groups is minimised. The negative impact is the reduced opportunities for in depth support that may provide greater resilience for future crisis, such as trauma counselling, mindfulness,

practical life skills, settling down with medication, embedding relationships with other services such as drug and alcohol counselling. A number of people expressed concern over moving on from the hotel – anxiety about living by themselves, worries about not being able to cope without support or worries about falling into negative lifestyle choices. Pre Covid the ILM's were based in the community, and able to support people who had moved on from emergency accommodation into their own tenancies. Due to capacity, the ILM's have only been able to support people living in the hotel. The PTS coaches offer community support, so anyone moving on from the Hotel has been offered coaching support. Any change in relationship can be a break point for people who have potentially had previously poor relationships either personally or professionally, so this has created a barrier.

For some their circumstances have been complicated by immigration and residency issues that have taken some time to resolve. Staff have supported a number of individuals with contact with the Home Office to rectify mistakes, clarify and evidence residency in part due to Brexit and a change in residency legislation.

Some residents have had profound health and risk issues compounded by the pandemic, such as concurrent cancer and alcohol dependency. The hotel has also accommodated people who are high risk offenders who due to the nature of their offences are themselves at risk from other's who know their history. Staff have worked within very challenging circumstances to balance risk and keep people safe.

“It's not about... ‘you didn't engage this week so you're going to get a telling off’, it's... ‘you didn't engage, why didn't you engage? Is it something that you don't enjoy, or is it something that you're not interested in? If there isn't anything, what would you be interested in?’” (Brick staff)

The Brick's approach, despite the constraints of the hotel, the pandemic and surrounding system constraints, remains strength based, where the person is valued and placed at the heart of all our support.



Our activities coordinator has been based full time at the hotel throughout the last 12 months, organising daily activities including gardening, woodwork, reading, creative writing, film club.

148 individuals took part in activities at the hotel while staying there between 20/21.

Softer support such as helping someone navigate their new phone, or find a song to listen to is often part of activities, which is deliberately organised as a friendly and inclusive space.

People in activity groups said that they would describe The Brick as
'helping you do it for yourself'
'someone to trust'
'committed to community'

Usually, our training and development manager also runs a training programme for people supported within accommodation services. Much of this work was stopped due to Covid restrictions. She worked within the restrictions to offer as many meaningful opportunities to learn and develop as possible, including arranging the bike mentor who normally worked from The Brickworks to come up to the hotel. He delivered bike repair sessions as part of the activities calendar. These bikes were being fixed and given out to children who otherwise wouldn't have been able to access a bike.

A resident walking past the activity was so intrigued he stopped, talked to the mentor and ended up demonstrating such impressive knowledge of fixing bikes that he was lined up with a job at a major chain of bike and car sales and repair by the end of the week. This helped him with motivation and he moved out of the Mercure, and to date is still employed and happily working in full time employment.



The activities group organised and held a craft stall at Christmas making £145 which became their budget for materials that they can then choose for future projects.

Our ILM team lead is also a social work practice placement lead. **12** social work students were on placement at the Mercure during 20-21. This experience of direct, frontline and intensive support is a great opportunity for students in addition to The Brick being able to influence a new generation of social workers with our strength based practice. Being able to deliver placement experiences for a student's portfolio encourages us all to reflect on how social work theory is put into practice during our everyday work.

Supported Accommodation

'Firs' is The Brick's first managed property offering supported accommodation to people moving on from temporary or emergency accommodation. Firs is a house divided into six self-contained studio flats, with an Independent Living Mentor offering wrap around support. Support includes move on planning, brokering social, work and education opportunities, while encouraging people to become increasingly independent from The Brick. Firs residents are also offered coaching through the PTS service. One of the key elements of Firs is that the people living there have to pledge to engage with support as well as do 'something' meaningful. We don't specify what, as we don't want to build dependency on opportunities offered by the Brick – it could be any or a variety of college, volunteering with another charity, work experience, fitness, or working with our in house mentoring scheme.

Firs has been a haven for several people who would have otherwise been at risk from staying in larger shared properties and typical temporary accommodation. Firs provides somewhere for people that might benefit from additional privacy because of social anxieties, mental health issues or indeed age, gender or sexuality. The Brick recognises that there is no one size fits all approach to solving someone's homelessness. Our asset based approach means that we strive to accommodate individuality, as difficult as that can be. Firs provides what some individuals really need.

For example, Firs has been home to several younger individuals who were quieter, more reserved and more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation from others because of their age and insecurities. Being supported by a friendly, approachable ILM who listens and acts on what they say has led them to volunteering and training with The Brick's mentoring scheme Steps to Success (now rebranded as Flex). The training

courses have given them qualifications and confidence to help them gain employment. Some of those people were then provided additional specialist counselling from places such as Survivors Manchester and LGBT Foundation, and support from Princes Trust.

It has also been home to a number of women. Violence and abuse are more likely to be a cause and consequence of women's homelessness more than their male counterparts – so having a safe place is essential. Women are more likely to be further targeted by perpetrators of sexual and physical violence after they become homeless either within emergency accommodation or on the streets. Firs can provide a safer option for women experiencing homelessness than the other shared provisions.

Adam* came to Firs Lane after presenting as street homeless after his relationships within the family home broke down. First he was accommodated in ABEN, then moved to the emergency access accommodation at The Hotel. While at the hotel he was determined to find something to do during the day, and starting getting involved in lots of activities. Adam struggled with his mental health after a number of traumatic events in his early life. He said he wanted to work, to keep busy. His ILM supported him in a referral to Firs , which was successful and he moved in. After moving in Adam met with the training coordinator and established a plan to keep busy while working towards a long term goal of his own business. He took part in different work experience opportunities across the Brick, gaining confidence and making friends. Mentors enjoyed his company and he was reliable, positive and enthusiastic. The training coordinator put Adam forward for a job with an external company, which he's still working at now and given him the financial security to move on to a private tenancy. He remains in contact with his ILM, and he's now engaging in counselling to ensure his wellbeing is sustained.

Outreach

529 people were supported by the outreach team over **3,664** recorded contacts

79 % male

21 % female

Nearly half of this cohort have been supported for over a year. This represents the quality of contact and the trust that is built between the Brick Outreach team and the people they support. There are a huge number of reasons why someone might remain street homeless, or return to street homelessness. Outreach are there to support them no matter what has happened, and to ensure they are as safe as possible.

The outreach team has developed over 20/21 to become a key part of how The Brick reaches so many people across the Wigan Borough. The team have extensive street knowledge and years of experience of working with people living outside of services. Pre Covid, the team were primarily based at the Brick's Project building. They worked with people who attended the drop in crisis intervention service and also responded to Rough Sleeper reports to engage with people, and support them to come into the Project. When Covid closed the Project building, outreach took to the streets and became a service that not only engages with individuals, but provides intensive practical interventions alongside emotional support.

The outreach team are out in the community 7 days a week and they start early – at 6am. They complete proactive outreach every morning and respond to rough sleeper reports as and when required. Outreach are able to find people to ensure that they are safe, and that they have everything they need. Their work with people starts with building trust – many people who are rough sleeping have had negative interactions

with services at some point and are less likely to make initial contact with an agency unless it's a crisis. Outreach might work with someone to establish their local connection, that they are accessing required medication or healthcare, and ensure they are connecting with emergency accommodation – but primarily they are building a relationship that may last weeks, months or even years.

Like many other towns, Wigan has a small cohort of people that are regular rough sleepers. People who may not be happy in supported accommodation for many reasons, including mental health or addictions. The outreach team act as friend and family to these individuals, providing consistent emotional support. That emotional support keeps people connected and safe, as they know that when they are ready to come in off the street, there's a place for them. Outreach are also there to ensure that if someone is newly street homeless, that they can access an alternative quickly and safely. Outreach work with many other services including We Are With You, Complex Dependency, Housing First and the Mental Health Team.



EAA resident artwork

The Outreach Team supported an average of **23** people per month during 20/21 either relieving or preventing them from sleeping rough. Quite often the work of the Outreach Team does not end here. They ensure that people have the necessary support networks in place to continue to make positive steps and build for a better future

Outreach case study.

Carl* has engaged with the Brick since 2015 and has been rough sleeping on and off since this time. He is alcohol dependant and due to his addiction, he has struggled to make long term positive steps in his life. He'd been in and out of the night shelters due to various reasons since 2015 and has had one temporary property which only lasted a matter of months due to his chaotic lifestyle. Carl has epilepsy and has been in and out of hospital many times due to fits which have also been linked to his alcohol use. We have worked closely with him for years now as

well as with other agencies such as WAWY, Wigan Council, Housing First and other Brick staff to ensure that he was given every opportunity to succeed and turn his life around.

Carl's lifestyle has made it seem impossible at times and we have only been able to meet his immediate needs in the moment rather than offer any long term solutions to his problems. However, he recently expressed to the outreach team that he has had enough and can't carry on living the way he is. He was drinking simply to stop the fits and had made many visits to hospital after being discovered collapsed on the streets of Wigan. He often appeared disgusted with his own drinking asking "Why am I like this?" and stating that he hated the drink. This honesty and vulnerability was a result of the trust we had managed to create so he was able to confide in us his fears and we were able to find solutions for him.

We contacted WAWY and began the process of looking at options for him to go into detox. WAWY said he had to complete an assessment over the phone but this was proving extremely difficult as we could not pin Carl down to the times that the nurse was free (or even find him sometimes). He was sleeping on the streets at this time, and he had scabies which is highly infectious. This meant he was unable to go into one of the night shelters.

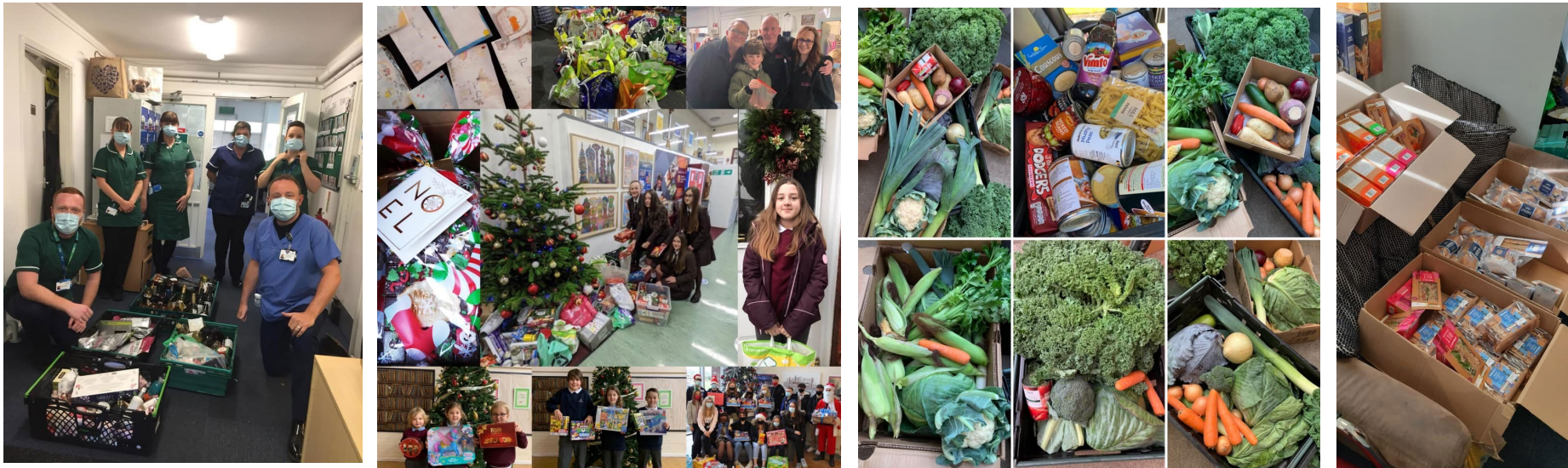
We worked closely with Wigan Council who sourced a Covid Care unit in Manchester. This would be secure accommodation where Carl could go and get treatment for his scabies, and also possibly move on from there into detox and rehab. To our huge relief he accepted this offer and we supported him to get a taxi to Manchester. Whilst waiting for the taxi he told us of his dream to become a butcher again and get his life back on track.

Whilst at the facility WAWY were able to complete the required assessment (after approximately 15 previous attempts!) We then spoke with WAWY again who arranged for Carl to go straight from the Covid Unit in Manchester to Liverpool where he would complete his detox and then on to rehab. He will then be helped by Phoenix Futures into the next stage of his life. We have since checked in on him, and he's doing really well!

Commitment, drive and dedication shown by all staff involved has been incredible. We did not give up on Carl at a time when he had entirely given up on himself and was sleeping in a pub doorway with only a small fleece blanket for warmth. Fully committed outreach staff and fantastic multi-agency working has made this possible and has given him a chance to move forward.

Brick Food

The Brick is working towards a transformational offer of food, where we offer wrap around support to other food communities using our experience of crisis intervention, alongside a community food offer. At the moment we recognise our food bank is largely transactional, and that to continue to work in line with our asset based model we want that to change. Our aim is to provide choice and dignity while still offering healthy nutritional food to people at risk of food poverty. We continue to work in partnership with Fur Clemt to ensure food that would be wasted is redistributed to people in need, and to develop a stronger offer that is in line with what people have told us they want.



The food bank moved twice during 20-21, from a small retail space to the Brickworks at the start of the first lockdown. This accommodated the additional volunteers needed to pack and make food deliveries. The delivery service was a way to reach people shielding at home, and because we didn't want people to make unnecessary and difficult journeys (many bus routes were cancelled at this point, and where previously they may have had a lift, it was no longer safe to do that).

42 additional volunteers came forward to support the food bank's Covid response. These volunteers were people who wanted to help, who had been furloughed from their regular employment, some had been redeployed from their regular work with Wigan Council.

We were fortunate to receive donations from many businesses that had excess stock due to lockdown or recognised that need in the community was spiking.

We worked alongside partner agencies to ensure food got to people who couldn't leave their houses because of health reasons, or were suddenly without work due to Covid. We passed on some hampers of pamper products to NHS staff as we wanted to show our appreciation for their huge efforts coping with the crisis.

Through April and May 2020 we saw an increase in referrals of between 200 and 300% compared to the previous year. In the first week of May 2020 Brick Food delivered 418 parcels in a single week.

A new van was funded through an £8000 grant from WRAP to support collections and distributions of food across the borough.

"There might be someone in crisis, who goes to the food bank. The staff at the food bank won't just give them a food parcel and say, 'See you later', they'll ask them more questions. They'll ask that person, 'What's happened? Do you need more support?' Then they might contact us in outreach, so then we'll arrange to meet this person, you know what I mean? It could be somebody going into the food bank because they're hungry, but then when you get to the bottom of it and there's more to it than that, more support than just food if that makes sense?" (Brick Outreach Worker)



Brick Food volunteers are provided with training around person centred interventions, as part of our learning has been that every contact counts. People may attend for a food parcel who aren't in contact with any helping agencies, and being able to engage, enquire and respond empathically and effectively is a key role for those volunteers within Brick Food. This means that a food parcel can become a gateway to other support, whether that's from within the Brick or partner agencies.

Our Food Coordinator Danielle, along with our volunteer coordinator Emma and lots of other staff and volunteers then pulled together the Brick's Christmas hamper campaign, reaching over 200 families with nutritious basics, festive food and treats (including a turkey or ham or veggie alternative) along with toys for children and gifts for adults. She then stayed at work over the break to work alongside our van driver and complete the second move of the year. This meant that Brick Food was in its new home for the beginning of 2020, at St Georges Church on Water St in Wigan.

We're grateful to everyone who donates food to us throughout the year – **Thank You.**

“[I got] Food parcels, gas and 'lectric, my white goods as well... I moved into a flat with absolutely nothing and I got furniture off 'em [The Brick]... Everything like that they've helped me with, they're brilliant!” (Brick welfare and food recipient)

As well as food parcels, the Brick also provides a welfare service contracted by Wigan Council to source and deliver furniture and homewares to people referred through Universal Credit. During 2020-21 The Brick provided 561 of these welfare packages. Items are delivered by our drivers accompanied by a volunteer or trainee van mate. The driver is trained in safeguarding, so is able to pick up on issues within a home. One incident of this was when he delivered a fridge to a person who appeared to have no food. Engaging with this person showed that they had been discharged from hospital to their flat, but due to poor health, mobility and financial issues was not able to go out to shop. There was also evidence that the person had been a victim of financial exploitation. The van driver made a safeguarding alert for referral to social services, and returned to the person within an hour with an emergency food parcel and mobile phone to enable the gentleman to call for emergency assistance if required. Social services then picked up care and we ensured that the person was safe and well over the next few days until the necessary care package was established.

Brick Retail

Whilst closed for several months due to Covid restrictions, Brick Retail brought in an income of **£97,873.09 for 20/21**

The Brick has three retail sites. Two are in Wigan, at Gidlow Lane and based within The Brickworks. The third is in Leigh.

The Brick shops provide reach into the community, giving people insight into what the charity does. They also help the environment by diverting unwanted items away from landfill, and enabling people to buy pre loved items rather than new.



Customers who use the shops say they

‘feel like part of a family’

‘you can come in and see people you know and just have a chat’

Staff and retail volunteers also value their customers, ensuring they are well and safe. During the first lockdown shop staff were checking in on customers who they knew to be isolated.

The **41.5** tonnes of collected furniture and electricals results in CO2 savings of **30756kg**



7. Volunteering

“I am passionate that the most vulnerable in society receive care and consideration. The support has been thoughtful, focussed and affirming and has really brought out qualities in myself I didn't even know I had!”

“My views are listened to, my contributions are valued and appreciated and I feel like I make a real difference” (Brick Volunteers)

Profile of volunteer breakdown:

Percentage age breakdown:

<input type="checkbox"/> Under 24 years	16
<input type="checkbox"/> 25 to 34 years	10
<input type="checkbox"/> 35 to 44 years	12
<input type="checkbox"/> 45 to 54 years	14
<input type="checkbox"/> 55 to 64 years	20
<input type="checkbox"/> Over 64 years	26
<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	3

Monetary of volunteer time donated in 20/21 = **£201,073**

Percentage gender breakdown:

47 % Male

53 % Female

We are working on embedding our equality and diversity strategy across all projects, so will be capturing a better diversity profile of our volunteers for the following years' report, to ensure that we have a good understanding of where we can do better in attracting a representative volunteer population.



Since April 20-21 The Brick has supported **11** volunteers with help into gaining employment. Out of the 11, 9 have secured long term employment.

Our volunteer coordinator Emma came through volunteering to employment with The Brick. This provides her an excellent insight into the volunteer experience through recruitment, retention and development/move on.

“I am retired and have the time, I felt I wanted to make a positive contribution in some way to society and, if I am being honest, as I live alone, it was an opportunity to be able to have contact with other people. I chose The Brick as it is local to me with a focus on homelessness which is close to my heart.”

“I wanted to make a difference in my local area. The benefits I gain from volunteering for The Brick are the satisfaction of knowing that I am helping less fortunate people who need help locally”

We are working on increasing the influence of volunteers on the organisation, through monthly forums being facilitated by the volunteer coordinator and our chaplain. These are also being used to explore what outcomes volunteering with the Brick gives to everyone to ensure we can build an evaluation framework that reflects the people who gift their time to us.

8. Fundraising

As with everything else, our approach to raising donations from private and business donors had to adapt due to Covid. The planned events such as a town centre sleep out in April, and a gala event in October couldn't go ahead. The sleep out became the Brick Garden Sleep out – which became our most engaging campaign to date, with over 300 people taking part and raising **£22,402**.

A Soul Like Yours, a poem written by Matt Kelly was the second big campaign after this, moving words which we were fortunate enough to get narrated by Johnny Vegas. This raised an incredible **£25,668**.

The fundraising campaigns are not only about raising money, but also about changing people's perceptions around homelessness – realising that people experiencing homelessness are people too, to be treated with respect and seen as having strengths and assets of their own.

We also ran two additional fundraisers which only happened because of Covid; 'Xmas party superheroes' – donating the cost of what would have been the office Christmas party and 'Donate your Commute' We are very thankful to a local construction company who saw the social media posts regarding Xmas party superheroes and donated an enormous cash pot of **£9,000**.

As the Brick Garden Sleep Out was fun for everybody and we were in lockdown again, we simply repeated it, and the second Big Back Garden Sleep (27th March) raised £8,821.



9. Outcome Measurements

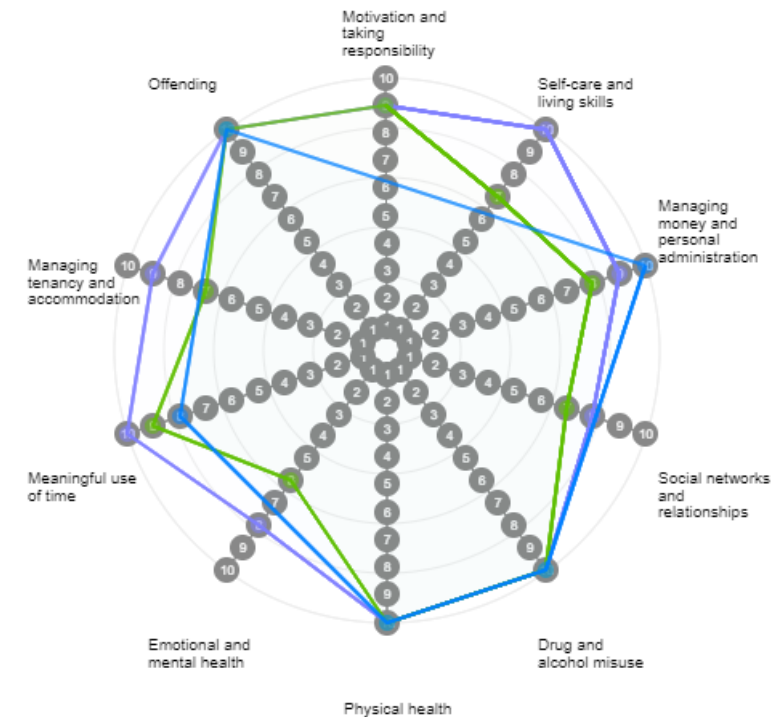
Moving through what has been a very reactive year, it has been increasingly important to capture the impact of the work being done. All staff are now able to access bespoke training on using the Homelessness outcome star to measure change over time.

Staff have also been encouraged to use the Short WEBWMS survey as has been used by the PTS coaches. This approach should improve the consistency of our monitoring.

When working on a fiscal return of investment, we have to be very careful not to overclaim. Individuals' supported by The Brick are often involved in more than one project at a time, so it's essential that we record outcomes by individual rather than by service. Again, this reflects the asset and strength based culture that The Brick is striving for – where people are more important than systems.

Our overarching aim is to support people to build their own lives that are as good as possible – where they are able to achieve wellbeing and a positive sense of identity. How that looks is going to be different for every single person. At this point we have multiple indicators of progress that link to a number of different contracts, so we are working towards a framework that has flexibility to reflect individual goals, as well as demonstrating the overarching impact of our work.

The intention for 21/22 is to identify outcomes on a more individual level to bring those out to influence overall strategy and day to day work as well as system change. This is following the adage that suits our asset based approach, of 'nothing about us, without us'. This can then be articulated with the support of people we work with into an organisational framework of outcomes and impact measures.



10. Future vision:

- Develop and embed an equalities strategy that ensures The Brick is fair, reflective and innovative
- Continue to develop feedback loops that ensure that people we support influence our delivery and direction
- Consolidate and improve evaluation systems to ensure impact is captured meaningfully
- Expand the organisational capacity to provide more occupational opportunities for people we support
- Expand the organisational capacity to provide more bed spaces in supported accommodation schemes like Firs
- Become a Registered Social Landlord to become part of a real world solution to homelessness
- Continue to build our food community model and campaign for the right to food
- Continue to increase the reach and impact of our outreach service
- Consult and create the 22-26 Brick Strategy
- Expand our Trustee Board from 6 to 8



10. Our funders:

