

The Well



**TRANSFORMING**  
**LIVES** **AND**  
**COMMUNITIES**

The Well Progress Report 2022

# Foreword from the Chief Executive

This year we celebrate 10 years of The Well. I'm so proud of what we've achieved and how far we've come.



We started out as a social club for people with drug and alcohol problems and their families. Now, we're a professional recovery organisation with a dedicated team of staff and volunteers providing high-quality services across Cumbria, Lancashire and parts of Merseyside. As well as having a strong community base, we're also in hospitals and prisons, working with people with complex needs.

Over the last decade, we've helped thousands of people achieve their dream of long-term recovery. We've found that 68% of those who use our service stay abstinent. All of our outcomes are significantly better than the national average achieved by others in the recovery field.

Our success is due to a unique formula, which includes a choice of therapies, structured day-hab, mutual aid, round-the-clock support and a supportive community of people with lived experience.

People ask me: "What's different about The Well?" We've discovered that to create the ideal setting for people to recover, there needs to be six Core Conditions (highlighted in the About us section). When these Core Conditions are in place, when we have hope and community, when we're in a safe environment, and when we have a reason to get up in the morning, sustainable recovery is possible.

Looking ahead, we want to share what we've learned with other recovery organisations, and support them to grow. We're part of the College of Lived

Experience Recovery Organisations (CLERO), where we work with others to influence government and tackle the stigma associated with addiction.

Our five-year business plan will see us helping more people as we secure more long-term contracts, develop new income streams and increase the number of recovery homes we have.

Our success wouldn't be possible without the passion and dedication of our staff, volunteers and Board members, and the vital partnerships we have with others. I'd like to thank them all for everything they do to help us save lives and transform communities.

**David Higham**  
Chief Executive



When I look at my own journey – from being a prolific offender and addict to now being drug-free for 17 years – I've learned so much. I believe that addiction comes from a person's surroundings, not the substance itself.

In my new book, **Rat Hell to Rat Park: The Core Conditions of Recovery**, I explore this further and question whether the current system for addiction rehabilitation works. Having worked in all levels of the substance misuse field, from support worker to regional manager of services, I share my insight in the hope that this can bring change. I also share my own personal story and the experiences I had growing up.

The book is available to buy from Amazon, through the website [www.davehigham.org/shop](http://www.davehigham.org/shop), or by emailing [book@thewell2.co.uk](mailto:book@thewell2.co.uk).

## The Board

**David Higham**  
Executive Director

**Kerrie Higham MBE**  
Executive Director

**Polly Parker**  
Director

**Dr Venetia Young**  
Director

**Dr Andy Knox**  
Director

**Professor David Best**  
Advisory Board Member

**David Dawson**  
Advisory Board Member

# About us

The Well Communities is a not-for-profit community interest company founded in 2012. We're a LERO (Lived Experience Recovery Organisation), providing high-quality support to people recovering from drug and alcohol addiction.

Support is provided by 56 staff and 20 volunteers – all of whom have lived experience of addiction. The team specialises in supporting people with a broad range of issues such as poor mental health, childhood trauma, offending behaviour, learning difficulties, domestic abuse and homelessness.

We use Asset Based Community Development where we focus on each person's abilities, skills and knowledge (or 'assets') to build their self-esteem and develop their potential.

We help people into work and continue to support them as they progress in the workplace. For example, 47% of the prison leavers we've supported have gone on to gain employment or voluntary work. While 52% of our workforce are former members who we've developed and trained to become recovery experts.

We support people in the community and we also have our own specialist recovery housing in Barrow-in-Furness, Carlisle, Kendal and Morecambe.

The design and delivery of our services is very much led by our members. This is important as it keeps our offer relevant, effective and inclusive.

We're led by an inspirational CEO – an ex-offender who's also an expert in the field of addiction recovery and treatment. He's supported by a passionate and experienced leadership team and Board.

**“It's a privilege to be a Director on the Board. What makes me most proud is the Well's sense of community, built on genuine humility, vulnerability and compassion. These core values make it truly special.”**

Dr Andy Knox, Board Director.



Keep fit and outdoor activities are an important part of the programme.

## Our approach

We've learned that successful recovery can only be achieved if we create the right environment for people to heal. We've developed six Core Conditions which we believe are vital for long-term recovery. These conditions underpin everything we do. Staff and volunteers across the organisation are trained to put this approach into practise on a daily basis.

### Lived Experience

# 1

We believe that the visible recovery of one person acts as a powerful motivator for others. When people see recovery they want it for themselves, and that's why companions are so important. All of our staff and volunteers have lived experience.

### Connection

# 2

Many people in addiction feel disconnected from themselves, their family and society. We work to re-build those broken connections so that people feel loved, valued and able to make a positive contribution to their community.

### Meaning and Purpose

# 3

Having a strong sense of purpose improves every area of our lives, from relationships to work and family. Without it, we're lost – and that's how most of our members are when they come to us. We show people that they don't have to accept their fate; they can achieve so much more.

### Community

# 4

Unlike many traditional recovery services, support is available for as long as a person needs it. This means our members are able to build long-lasting relationships with each other and feel part of a vibrant community.

### Trauma-Safe Environment (TSE)

# 5

We know that trauma can lead to addiction. For people to be open and honest about their experiences we create a safe, non-judgemental environment where members and staff have complete trust in each other.

### Hope

# 6

Without hope, change can't happen. Our staff act as role models who've had the same experiences as our members. So we become their hope – a real and tangible example of what recovery looks like.

## Case study

# “I hardly recognise the person I was”



There was a time when Sam (47) had lost everything, Here, she talks about how bad things got and how lucky she feels now.

“Looking back over my life, I had no issues growing up. I had a happy childhood with loving parents and a good education. There was no reason to explain why I became an addict. It just began with a love for partying.

I started drinking heavily and doing drugs when I was in my 20s. I’d go out on a Thursday night and wouldn’t sleep until Sunday. Despite my party lifestyle, I still managed to function well in my day-to-day life. I had a good job and my own home.

When I was 29, I moved to Australia and hooked up with a crowd of people who, like me, enjoyed getting wasted. I saw myself as a free spirit and told myself that I’d stop when I was ready.

Two years later I came home, keen to settle down. I met a man who was caring and dependable, and we got married.

My husband knew I had a drink problem and encouraged me to get help. I tried everything. I went to my GP, had counselling, went to AA, read books, did detoxes and sought help from the church. Each detox got rid of the physical effects of addiction but it didn’t stop what was going on in my head.

### A new responsibility

A few years after getting married, I became pregnant with our son. When he was born, he was quite poorly and ended up in intensive care. I struggled to cope and turned to drink once again.

In the years that followed, things gradually went downhill. I was drinking a litre of vodka a day and my marriage ended. My health deteriorated too. I got a burst ulcer and spent time in hospital recovering.

I wasn’t capable of looking after my son and, eventually, my husband took full custody of him. After that, I moved into a crack den with other addicts. Drinking and doing drugs was my main occupation. My weight dropped to seven stone and my hair started falling out.

Once again, I ended up in hospital – this time with pneumonia and sepsis. I was put on life support for three weeks. That’s when I finally got the help I needed. The hospital’s drug and alcohol team referred me to The Well. Everything changed after that.

### Beginning the transformation

I moved into one of The Well’s recovery houses in Barrow-in-Furness and followed the 12-step programme. I went to the gym every morning, then took part in group sessions in the afternoons and evenings. I also did some voluntary work for The Well. Each day had purpose and I felt connected and valued.

It took me 10 months to complete the programme, and I’ve now been sober and drug-free for more than four years.

I hardly recognise the person I was. My life has been transformed. After getting a job as a key worker for The Well, last year I became a senior recovery worker. I get a lot of satisfaction from helping others and sharing my story.

The best thing to come out of my recovery is the new relationship I have with my son, who’s now 11. I had to gradually re-connect with him, and now I share custody. I’m taking him on holiday this summer, which will mark a major milestone for me.

It’s hard to measure just how much my life has changed. There was a time when I’d lost everything and I almost died. Now, I look around and I can’t quite believe how lucky I am.”

# How we're doing

Every day we make a difference to someone's life. But our work goes much further than that. Our unique approach to recovery benefits families and communities, while bringing cost savings for the NHS, police, courts, prisons, probation service, social services and local councils. We work hard to reach as many people as we can.



Our Well Fed social supermarkets in Morecambe and Barrow-in-Furness offer affordable groceries to local people.

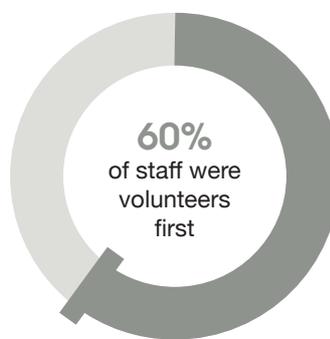
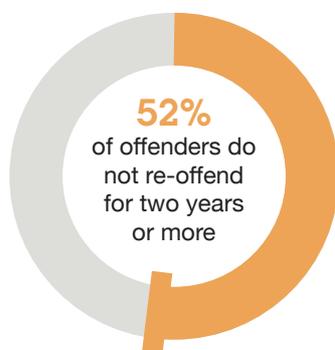
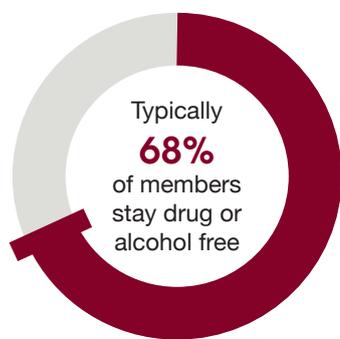


**1000's of people** supported since we began



**392** people have stayed in our supported housing

Over **4,000 people** use our service or are part of our Facebook community



Over **100 families** benefit from our food club each week



We have **56 staff** and **20 volunteers**

## Over the last 12 months

(31 March 2021-1 April 2022):

- 149** people accessed our supported housing
- 67%** of people living in supported housing got into training, employment, education or voluntary work
- 190** male offenders supported in prison or the community
- 170** hospital patients with drug or alcohol problems were supported
- 2,903** bags of shopping distributed through our food clubs
- 250** people received online support through Zoom sessions

More than **90** family members were supported

## Key partners

We work with a diverse range of organisations in Cumbria and north Lancashire who are dedicated to improving lives and communities. Our key partners include:

- NewYou
- CGL (Change Grow Live)
- Humankind
- Morecambe Bay CCG
- Bay Medical Group
- Lancaster City Council
- Lancashire County Council
- Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council
- Cumbria County Council
- PCC Cumbria
- Cumbria Community Foundation
- John Fisher Foundation
- Frieda Scott Trust
- The NHS
- P27 Trust

**"It's been my privilege to work with The Well Communities to help reduce substance misuse-related crimes. I have enormous confidence that any work we do with them will be delivered professionally and will make a positive impact on peoples' lives."**

Peter McCall,  
Police and Crime Commissioner for Cumbria.

## Case study

# “The Well is full of miracles”



Recovering alcoholic, Mark Wilson (49), turned his life around after getting support from The Well. This is Mark's story.

“I was 14 when I started drinking. My parents moved the family from Morecambe to a nearby village to run a pub. I had to change schools and make new friends but I found a way to fit in by sneaking out alcohol.

After two years, we moved back to Morecambe and that's when I got into the rave scene. Ecstasy was the new party drug and I couldn't say no to it.

When I was 20, I met my partner and moved in with her and her two young children. Life was good and, although I continued to drink and take drugs, I only did it at the weekend.

It was when I began a career in sales that my drinking got worse. I had a well-paid job but it was stressful at times. My tolerance to alcohol went up and I switched from lager to vodka.

To hide my drinking, I would stay up late and sleep in the spare room. I told myself it was OK because I was still a good provider for the family.

When my partner became pregnant with our daughter, I decided to stop drinking. But I was kidding myself. After she was born, alcohol was still a priority. Drinking had become my secret 24-hour job, and it was exhausting.

### Hitting rock bottom

In the years that followed, I attempted suicide several times and my family now realised I was an alcoholic. I got some help but was stuck in a cycle of rehab and relapses. I moved from job to job, taking a drop in salary each time. Eventually, I didn't have a job at all so I would steal and lie to get my hands on booze.

In 2017 my partner told me to leave. With nowhere to go, I ended up sleeping in my parents' greenhouse. A restraining order followed, which meant I couldn't see my daughter and I was devastated.

Just as I hit rock bottom, my life was about to change. I bumped into someone I'd met in rehab. He looked healthy, sober and happy. I wanted to be like him. He told me that he'd got help from The Well so I phoned them that day and was put on a waiting list. All of a sudden I had hope. If this guy could turn his life around, then I could too.

### Getting support

A month later, I moved into one of The Well's recovery houses and started the 12-step programme. I spent every hour of the day working on myself – attending group sessions, doing homework and going to the gym.

Listening to other people's stories and seeing their recovery was what I'd been missing. It soon became clear that The Well was full of miracles.

Change came very quickly for me. For the first time in 25 years, I had a sober brain. After a few weeks, my daughter rang me, and that spurred me on. At last, I could give her real hope.

After six months I moved back home and began volunteering for The Well. I found that helping other people gave me purpose. I went on to get a paid job there and, just recently, I was promoted to the NewYou Project Lead.

The Well has made a huge difference to my life and those around me. Back in 2017 my daughter was struggling at high school. Now she's at university. I have a great relationship with my partner and parents.

Above all, my recovery has given me freedom. I love spending time with my family and I get pleasure from seeing them happy. What more could I want?”

# Our services

Here's a round-up of the projects and services we provide.



Each week our food clubs provide healthy food to more than 100 families.

## Recovery housing

We began providing supported housing in 2014. Since then, the service has gone from strength to strength. We now have properties in Morecambe, Barrow-in-Furness, Kendal and Carlisle which, together, provide accommodation with structured support to 64 people. Our housing projects support individuals with multiple complexities, helping them to learn more skills, maintain a tenancy and move on to independent living.

## Wellbeing hubs

We have wellbeing hubs across Lancashire and Cumbria where the local community can access support for a range of difficulties. Working with a 'no wrong door, completely open door' policy, we support some of the most marginalised members of society.

## Cumbria Carers Addiction

This service supports the families of people experiencing substance misuse disorder. It brings people together to share lived experience in a supported, trauma informed environment.

## Recovery Steps Cumbria

This is a county-wide substance misuse service where we work in partnership with Humankind. It provides focussed interventions throughout the whole of Cumbria.

## Food Clubs

We operate three weekly membership-based food clubs across Morecambe. Each week, we provide healthy food products to more than 100 families. Membership enables individuals to be a part of a thriving community, which facilitates peer-led support.

## E-platform mutual aid

Operating seven days a week, 365 days a year, our e-platform hosts daily online mutual aid groups for people across Cumbria and Lancashire.

## Social prescribing projects

We are true social prescribers in the very sense of the term. We manage a range of social projects throughout Lancashire and Cumbria including community vegetable gardens, weekly football training sessions, community walks and events, bicycle recycling, access to gyms and community engagement with Spill The Beans Coffee Van.

## ICLIC - County Lines Informed Cumbria

Working in partnership and in a co-location with Cumbria Constabulary, we're heavily invested in ensuring county lines awareness is raised throughout South Lakeland. A community problem requires a community solution, therefore it's vital that we raise awareness amongst the public.

**“The Well Communities is an invaluable resource in the Morecambe area. It transforms and saves lives. The impact of that, by whatever means, is incalculable.”**

Anji Stokes  
Development Lead, Bay Integrated Care Community.



Our Spill the Beans coffee van out in the community.



Families join in activities at our Lancaster hub.

**“We’ve worked closely with The Well Communities over the last few years. Their support of our community is exceptional and invaluable to us. We strive to achieve great things by working together.”**

Maxine Barron  
Development Lead, Barrow-in-Furness Integrated Care Communities.

### Social supermarkets

We have Wellfed social supermarkets in Barrow-in-Furness and Morecambe. The social supermarkets highlight the benefits of healthy cooking and eating through the provision of affordable, healthy groceries. Members are encouraged to switch to better diet choices, which helps to address the health inequalities that plague the towns.

### NewYou

This service gives people the practical skills to help them meet their health, wellbeing and lifestyle goals. It could involve helping them to strengthen their relationships, improve their career prospects or be healthier.

### Through the Gate

We work with men in prison at HMP Altcourse before they’re released, as they go ‘through the gate’ and after leaving prison. We give structured support to help them with their recovery and transition back into the community. As a result, 47% of those we support go on to gain employment or voluntary work, and around 52% don’t re-offend for two years or more.

### Morecambe Bay Health and Wellbeing Companions

We offer trauma informed health and wellbeing coaching to people with low level mental health, drug and alcohol problems.

### Morecambe Bay CCG in reach and outreach support

Working with the Royal Lancaster Infirmary’s drug and alcohol team, we offer early intervention support to people with an addiction while they’re in hospital and after they leave. We work both on the wards and in A&E.



Regular social events take place with members and their families.



Kerrie Higham MBE, Operations Lead (right), coaching a member of staff.

### Changing Futures

This service supports people in Lancashire with complex needs through a multi-agency, trauma informed and ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) approach. It’s delivered by people with lived experience who act as peer mentors.

# Future plans

Over the next five years we'll continue to develop existing services while reaching out to more people and looking at ways to maximise our income.

We plan to grow the business by securing more long-term contracts with partners in the areas where we already work while also extending into Merseyside. For example, working in partnership with Humankind, we've just started delivering Recovery Steps Cumbria – a new, integrated community addiction service. This is a five-year contract which is set to transform the lives of hundreds of people across the county.

We're also looking at securing more properties to complement our existing recovery housing portfolio. At the moment we provide short-term accommodation with support for 64 people. We want to extend this as we know how effective supported housing is for recovery.

We've seen how our model works for people and we're keen to share our expertise with others in the recovery field. In particular, we want to work with smaller, grass-roots organisations around the UK, supporting them to grow and become more sophisticated in how they deliver services.



Sir Chris Whitty, the Government's Chief Medical Advisor, visits The Well, pictured with Ged Pickersgill, Business Development Manager.

With a wealth of collective experience at The Well, we also have a role to play in influencing government decision making. We believe that national quality standards are needed for those working in addiction rehabilitation. We will continue to lobby for change and work with key government departments to make long-term recovery a reality for everyone.



Recovery staff and volunteers take part in a training session.

**“It's clear that the Well Communities team has developed something really special. They are a real values-based LERO, and bring something unique to a partnership that large providers can't do.”**

Ted Haughey, Executive Operations Director North & Midlands at Humankind.

## Awards

### For the organisation

- **Mayoral award 2021** for our services to those in food poverty in the Plungington area of Preston during the pandemic.
- **Winner of the National MJ Award 2021** for partnership work on drug-related deaths with Cumbria County Council.
- **High Sheriff of Cumbria awards** Organisational Community Champion, 2018 and 2021.

### Individuals

- **David Higham** - High Sheriff of Cumbria awards from 2017-2021 for services to Cumbria.
- **David Higham** - Winner of the Unsung Hero award from the National Justice and Redemption Awards 2016.
- **David Higham**- Barrow-in-Furness Ambassador of the year 2022.
- **David Higham** - National Third Sector leadership winner 2022.
- **Kerrie Higham** – Awarded an MBE in June 2021 for services to Morecambe, particularly during the pandemic.

# The Well



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Morecambe,  
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## **Kendal Hub**

Highgate Hotel,  
128 Highgate,  
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## **Carlisle Hub**

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