

# The impact of Aspirations

An evaluation by the University of Kent

Aspirations is a Building Better Opportunities (BBO) project which aims to reach people with mild to moderate mental health conditions who are not working and who are geographically and/or socially isolated.

Participants are supported to set their own objectives which can include feeling more confident, widening social networks, becoming more engaged in their local community, learning tools to reduce anxiety and depression, as well as engaging in volunteering or paid work.

Aspirations is delivered by Porchlight and funded by the European Social Fund and The National Lottery Community Fund.

## The aim of the evaluation

Porchlight funded an evaluation of Aspirations' work over the three years up to June 2020 to explore what works for whom and under what circumstances. It collected evidence of the service's impact in terms of reach, efficacy, adoption, implementation and maintenance.

The University of Kent's Centre for Health Services Studies gathered data and interviewed participants, paid staff and wider stakeholders (delivery partners and other agencies who referred people to the service).

Porchlight 

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## What the evaluation found

925

925 people accessed support in the period evaluated (as of January 2022, the total is 1,376)

51.6%  
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48.3%

51.6% of Aspirations participants were male and 48.3% female – a roughly even split

195

The average length of time spent in the service was 195 days

## Geographical reach

Aspirations works with participants right across Kent, Medway and East Sussex, and has been successful in reaching people in geographically isolated areas.

Support has been targeted in areas of known coastal deprivation including Thanet, Hastings and Folkestone, and in rural areas.

## Loneliness and mental health

Aspirations has been successful at engaging with people with needs associated with loneliness and/or mental ill health.

- 84.6% of participants reported a disability
- 27.4% had experienced severe mental ill-health
- 73.9% of participants were classified as 'intensely lonely' upon entering support

"We work with people with serious mental health conditions, if they fit the project, because we work with the person, not with the condition"  
Staff

"Aspirations made you feel safe and like there were no right or wrong answers. There was no judgement or anything like that."  
Participant



76.6% of people reported an improvement in their mental health and wellbeing



56.6% of participants reported a decrease in loneliness

## Employment approach

Aspirations has been successful at helping people into work.

Of those who entered the service unemployed and actively seeking a job, 103 found employment.

"It's given me the confidence to go back to a job that I know I can do, and do well"  
Participant



"So we got her a volunteering job. Then three months later, she ended up working there. Now she has got a network of friends. You know, her whole life has turned around"  
Staff

## Our staff

Participants, wider stakeholders and referrers all speak very highly of our Aspirations team.

"reliable"

"personable"

"supportive"

"willing to advocate"

"responsive"

"The staff are really approachable, their communication is very good. If they say they're going to ring, they ring. If they say they're going to email, they email. They follow things up"  
Referrer

"Everybody I met, either on the phone or in person, they're all so friendly and kind, and always have the time to listen and talk to you. This person actually cares and wants me to do well"  
Participant

Porchlight 

Registered charity no. 267116

 Employability  
Sussex Community Development Association

Registered charity no. 1094905

 Mind | North Kent  
for better mental health

Registered charity no. 1103790

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