



impact report

2024

A review of our
impact in 2023/24

 **Look Ahead**
CARE, SUPPORT AND HOUSING

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Dipti, our 2024 Rising Star Award winner

about **Look Ahead**

Look Ahead provides supported housing and social care services for people who have a range of needs in local communities across London and the South East. Our services include integrated care, support and housing for four main groups: people with mental health needs; people living with learning disabilities and autism; young people and people with experience of care; and people with experience of homelessness and other complex needs.

our vision

Building better lives through social care and housing in local communities.

our mission

We co-design and deliver services that offer innovative social care solutions and support people to thrive.

our values

- We are caring and compassionate.
- We are inclusive and trusted.
- We focus on excellence and innovation.
- We work in partnership and are one team.

Look Ahead at a glance

109

care, support and housing services delivered, nine of which are regulated by the Care Quality Commission

32

local authorities we work with

3,808

people we support or provide services to

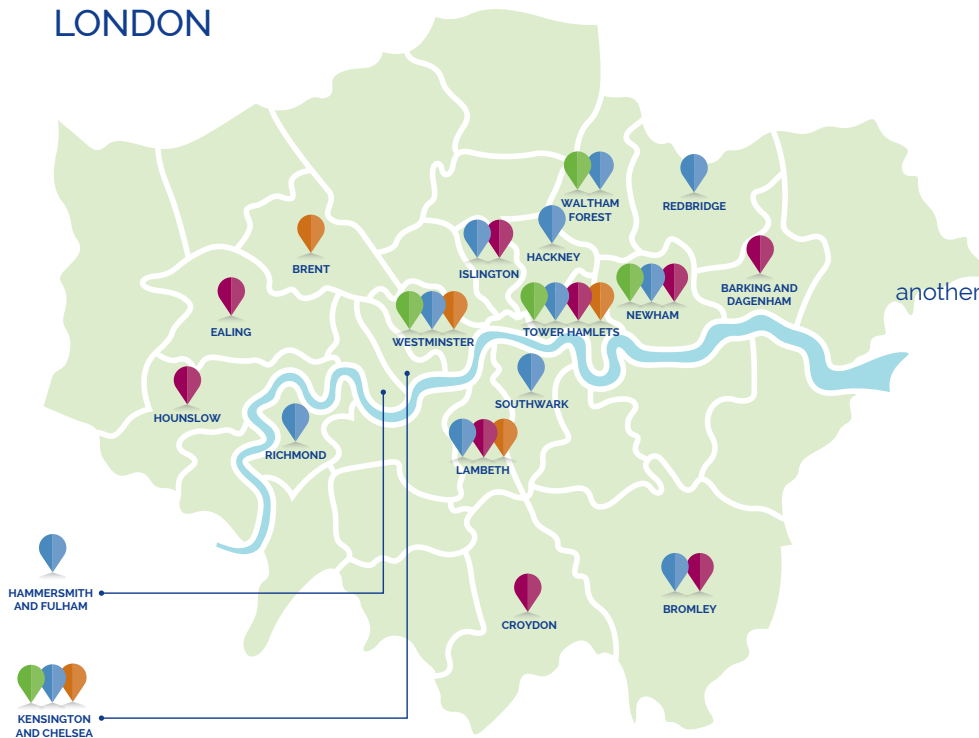
£79,862,000

annual turnover

where we work

Services delivered in 2023/24

LONDON



49

learning disabilities
AND AUTISM

27

mental health

THE SOUTH EAST



16

young people
AND CARE LEAVERS

17

homelessness
AND COMPLEX NEEDS

We also provided floating support and housing services to almost another 1000 individuals.

Pins on these maps may represent more than one service.

welcome

David lives at Edward Alsop Court (EAC), our hostel for people affected by homelessness in Westminster. Here, he shares his story and welcomes you to this impact report.



“After being on the streets for four years, I accepted the fact that I was always going to be on them. But since moving to Look Ahead in October 2023, I see a different future.

So, it’s nice to introduce this impact report. I’ve seen Look Ahead help people and this report shows how they do that.

I moved in to EAC after someone stamped on my knee when I was asleep on the streets. It was swollen and I struggled to walk. My GP referred me to EAC where they have emergency beds and a clinic with NHS nurses that’s visited weekly by a doctor. I spent six weeks in that part of the hostel. Staying there, I could rest and heal properly.

“It was good to have recognition”

I’d ended up homeless after I came back to the UK after 10 years of backpacking around Europe. When I got to London, I couldn’t get any benefits and got into the routine of sleeping rough.

I started drawing to earn some money. I used pen and ink and photocopy paper to draw animals and plants made up of dots. It took my mind off the fact that I was homeless and helped me cope. What I really wanted was a place to sit down and do my art.

I’ve moved to the self-catering part of EAC now and have made my room a little studio.

In December 2023, I was surprised to win the Look Ahead Christmas card competition with a drawing of an owl. I never thought much about my art and it was good to have recognition. Then, in early 2024, I had my first art exhibition near Covent Garden. It was nerve wracking but helped me feel more confident. BBC London even filmed it for the news.

I have three more exhibitions in 2024 and orders for my art.

“Look Ahead has provided a stepping stone and a base”

I’m more relaxed now. I know there’s always someone to talk to at the hostel and I get on with the other lads. Everybody has different challenges and they offer more support for people with mental health needs and addiction. There’s art therapy too which is good.

I hope to get my own place, some full-time work and to do my art part-time through my own website. I just want to get on with things.

It’s difficult to accept help because I’ve always been independent. But people need to be off the street and to have help to get into work. For me, Look Ahead has provided a stepping stone and a base.

In the rest of this impact report, you will read about how they have changed people’s lives for the better.”



Highlights of 2023/24

Supporting those in need



Achievements



17 

homelessness and complex needs services

Our **17 homelessness services**, which include everything from hostels to support for people affected by domestic abuse, have **helped 1,180 people**.

49 

learning disabilities and autism services

Our **49 specialist services** have **supported over 220 people** who have a broad range of learning disabilities, autism, complex needs and behaviour that is seen as challenging.



new services opened

We **opened six new services** to support more people with mental health needs, working across Barking and Dagenham, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Bromley.

465

domestic abuse survivors provided with lifesaving support

We provided **lifesaving support to 465 people** affected by domestic abuse across London, Kent and Medway.

27 

mental health services

Over the last year, we have **delivered 27 specialist mental health services**, across 14 local authorities and seven integrated care systems, **supporting 799 people**.

16 

young people and care leavers' services

Our **16 services for young people** and those with experience of care **supported 699 young people** to develop the skills and confidence they need to live independently.



moved our head office

We **moved our head office to Caledonian Road in North London** after a decade at a Westminster space, distributing furniture, stationery, and personal protective equipment to our services and charities.



awards success

Domestic Abuse Support Worker Ruth Carton **won Carer of the Year at the Local Hero Awards**, after a customer nominated her in Kent. Our Westminster homelessness service was also **shortlisted for one of the Housing Heroes Awards**.



Our housing and properties



1,094
properties owned
and managed

We **own and manage 1,094 properties** supporting a range of people.

100%
safety
compliant

100% of our properties comply with fire, gas, asbestos, water and lift safety regulations, providing safe homes for the people we support.



rated energy efficiency

Most of our properties are now rated C for energy efficiency, an indication of our ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) commitment.

£2.8m
invested in
planned works

We **invested £2.8 million in planned works** on our properties.

849
properties managed
for other landlords

We **manage 849 properties for other landlords**, allowing us to bring our expertise to more people.

What the people who live at our services say



77.5%



Overall, over three quarters (77.5%) of our tenants say they are **satisfied with the service** provided by Look Ahead.

73%



Just under three quarters (73%) of tenants are **satisfied that we listen to and act on their views**.

81%



More than four out of five (81%) tenants are satisfied that **Look Ahead provides inclusive and accessible services**, information and accommodation.

84%



More than eight out of 10 (84%) tenants were **satisfied with our planned works**.

97.3%



97.3% of tenants were **satisfied overall with repairs**.

we support young people and those with experience of care

This year, we supported 699 young people between the ages of 16 and 25 to develop the skills and confidence they need to live independently. We do this by providing everything from supported housing to hostels, services for young parents to semi-independent living for those leaving care and unaccompanied asylum seeking young people.



Young people from our Barking and Dagenham Young People Service were interviewed on *BBC Breakfast* as part of a National Housing Federation campaign to show that vital services are under threat without more funding.



We have painted, redecorated and bought new furniture for our services for young people in consultation with them.



Our services for young people and care leavers are becoming smaller, meaning we can provide more specialist support. This includes our new services for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.



We started to support young people with experiences of care from outside London at one of our Ealing-based services. It offers semi-independent living in five shared two bed flats and one shared four bed maisonette.

Our new Oaklands and St Kilda's sites will support young people with mental health needs from across London

Integrated support for young people experiencing a mental health crisis

We are working with specialist mental health charity MAC-UK to develop a new service model providing supported accommodation for young people who have experienced or are experiencing a mental health crisis.

MAC-UK take mental health professionals out of the clinic and onto the streets and into communities. They support young people where and when they need it. Our new rehabilitation and recovery model that MAC-UK and young people are helping us to shape could reduce pressure on hospitals, save social care and the NHS money, and be replicated across the UK.

In the last year, clinical psychologist trainees from MAC-UK have worked with young people to design our new Oaklands and St Kilda's services in West London and enhance 'psychological practice' in Tower Hamlets. This is the professional application of psychological principles, theories, and techniques to help improve people's mental health and wellbeing.

The trainees are integrating clinical knowledge into our community settings. For example, the psychologists have worked with young people to develop an evaluation framework to shape the Oaklands and St Kilda's services. This will help us to review the services which are supporting up to 12 young people transitioning from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to adult services.

The aim is to provide more specialist support to young people who may otherwise fall through the gap between adult and children's services. This work also aims to reduce hospital admissions, lengths of inpatient stays, and ambulance call-outs.

At our Campbell Road service in Tower Hamlets, MAC-UK psychologists are supporting staff to work alongside young people to co-design a service that meets their needs. This has included providing training to staff on anti-oppressive and reflective practices, as well as supporting teams to foster stronger partnerships with health providers.



The new buildings have been supported by LandAid, SEGRO, Property Race Day, the Story of Christmas, and the GLA



Terri's story: "With the support of Look Ahead, I've turned my life around"

Terri, 21, spent two years at our Mile End Young People Service and moved into her own flat in April 2024. Here, she shares how Look Ahead helped her build resilience and become more independent.



"As soon as I walked in to the Mile End Young People Service, I thought 'I like the energy of this place'. I met Damien, the team leader, and Shahed, who became my support worker, and thought 'I want to be here'.

I was 19 and in a dark place then. I was sofa surfing after being made homeless. My mum was a drinker and kept kicking me out. We'd gone to live with my grandad when he was very ill and he'd died.

I had followed in my mum's footsteps, getting into the wrong crowd and starting to drink and take drugs when I was 14.

Before Look Ahead, I tried to take my own life twice. I felt like I wasn't good enough.

"I felt safe"

I was quite timid walking through the door of Look Ahead. I find it hard to trust people and to ask for help. But the staff were positive and listened. I could talk to them.

Being there gave me stability. I got progressively better as I felt safe after all of the madness. I started to have counselling with an organisation called Step Forward in the room next to my bedroom. It was amazing. I opened up and realised I needed to have some boundaries with people in my life.

I'm dyslexic and the Look Ahead staff would help me with forms I had to fill in, like for benefits. They also helped me to start a maths course.

I have happy memories of the barbeques and beauty nights. I got on with the other girls. Some would come to talk to me to ask my advice.

"Look Ahead was a big step to independence"

When I got my own flat, Shahed helped me sort out the council tax and bills. I love my flat but know it wouldn't have worked out if I'd got it first. I would have had parties as I'd have been friends with anyone back then.

Look Ahead was a big step to independence. They taught me to respect my home, to do my cleaning and washing and make my own food when I was used to living on takeaways. I learned discipline.

With the support of Look Ahead, I've turned my life around. I have better relationships with my mum and dad. My confidence is growing and I'm more mature. Going to the gym and walking have become my therapy and I have lost five stone in the last six months.

I feel more resilient. I know I'm going to have up and down moments but it's about how I handle it. Now, I want to train to do laser hair removal and see the world."





“Our staff offer honest, consistent and modelled boundaries and behaviour in a world that can often feel chaotic and lonely to some young people. We’re person and goal-centred, providing a tailored experience that sees young people as individuals, not just names and numbers. This support has helped Terri build relationships with her peers and family. She has repaired trust, confidence and resilience in herself – and passed this onto others in her life. It has been good to watch her learn and grow at her own pace, in her own time.”

**Damien, Team Leader,
Mile End Young People Service.**

Supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Around 90% of UASC supported by our new service in Croydon are now in education, and many have since moved into their own accommodation or work.

We used our existing housing stock to help Lambeth Council provide homes for these young people who often arrive in the UK with nothing except what they carry with them. The extensive refurbishment of our Dunheved Road service in Bromley means these young people have somewhere safe, comfortable and welcoming to call home.

We have a trauma-informed and person-centred approach to supporting these young people and encourage them to co-produce our services, from planning activities to choosing how to decorate their rooms and spaces (see page 30 for more about co-production).

 **90%**

of UASC supported by our new service in Croydon are now in education,

Supporting young people in to education and work

We support the young people we work with to develop a career and education, and go in to apprenticeships and training that sets them up for success and independence in the future.

This might include everything from a support worker helping a young person to enrol in a local college so they can learn to speak English or get their GCSE in maths to supporting someone to prepare for a job interview.

“We’ve been impressed with Look Ahead’s on-the-ground expertise and their appetite to influence and call for change at a more systemic level around the issue of young people’s mental health.”

Tim Wates, Chairman of the Wates Group, and founder of The Wates Family Enterprise Trust, which has supported Look Ahead since 2021.

The trust provided funding for research that has helped to develop our new mental health recovery supported living services for young people in West London.

Next, we will:



Start a co-production panel for young people so that they can shape our services.



Increase capacity for in-house mental health support at our services so that we can offer young people and people with experience of care timely trauma-informed therapeutic input.



Make sure services for 16–18-year-olds meet Ofsted regulatory standards and provide a good place to live for young people transitioning into adulthood.



Develop partnerships with local authorities and other registered social landlords to create more long-term move on opportunities for young people.

Residents at one of our learning disability services in Hertfordshire



we support people with **learning disabilities and autism**

Our 49 specialist services support over 220 people who have a broad range of learning disabilities, autism, complex needs and behaviour that is seen as challenging. Our teams support these people to work towards goals that are important to them. This might include building independent living skills, managing and maintaining their homes and becoming part of their local communities.



We are planning to repurpose some of our properties in West London to support people living with a learning disability to move into more independent living.



Our subsidiary organisations, Kingswood Care and Blythson Ltd provide support to 92 people with learning disabilities across Essex and Kent, supporting them to remain living in their local communities.



In Kent, Blythson Ltd, our subsidiary organisation, has created a successful model for supporting people that display behaviours of concern or distress.

Creating a best practice service for young people

We have opened a specialist service for young people who are autistic and might also be living with a learning disability which has already become a model of best practice.

We've shared the model with the UK government's Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to see if it can be replicated in other areas.

The best practice model is our Gravesend Learning Disability Service in Kent which opened in late 2023. It provides supported accommodation for four adults, aged 18-25, who have a learning disability and complex needs.

Often, when these young people leave a residential placement, it can be difficult to find the right support for them. It is not always possible for them to live in their family home and the challenge of finding suitable support can result in them being admitted to mental health hospitals.

Our Gravesend Learning Disability Service aims to help people to live and be part of their communities rather than in hospital.



Staff are available to provide 24-hour support to young people at the service.

Support and space to grow

One section of the service is a three-person shared home with spacious bedrooms and shared communal facilities for socialising. The other is a self-contained one-person lower ground floor flat. The flat supports someone to gradually settle into their new home and life with a comfortable space of their own, but with access to the communal areas as well.

Look Ahead staff are available to provide 24-hour support to young people at the service. This support is based around trauma-informed Positive Behaviour Support to help people at the service enjoy a good quality of life. We aim to understand someone's behaviour and make sure their needs are met through how we communicate with them and the team that supports them.

Working with partners, AD Construction Group, 1st Stop Property Solutions and Glendale, we have completely renovated the property, adapting it to meet the needs of the young people. This includes everything from removing glass shower screens to providing an enclosed outdoor space for the ground floor flat resident.

Investing in properties for people with learning disabilities

We invest in services that meet the specific needs of people with learning disabilities so that they can build their skills and live more independently.

This year, we transformed a Newham-based three-person service for young people who have a learning disability. In partnership with AD Construction Group and Brodie Plant Goddard (BPG), we converted a 1930s semi-detached house. We modernised it, added a new kitchen and bathroom, and landscaped the garden, including creating a new log cabin.

We also opened a service in Waltham Forest for four people with complex learning disabilities.

Supporting people to live in the community

Many people have come to our learning disability services have experience of living in hospital for a long time. Many of these individuals were never expected to live as part of a community, outside of a hospital's walls.

Our approach is to challenge these assumptions and work with each individual, their loved ones and the clinicians and professionals around them to see what is possible and achievable for them. We believe that the right support paired with the right accommodation is key to supporting people to live happy, fulfilling lives in their local communities.



Specialist support which meets the needs of people with learning disabilities and commissioners

“I am absolutely delighted with the environment. You have listened and understood the specialist nature of the brief.”

This is feedback from the commissioner we worked with to develop a bespoke service to meet the needs of someone living with a learning disability and complex needs in Hertfordshire. This will allow them to get the two-to-one support they need from staff to live safely in the community.

Working closely with the local authority and our contractor, AD Construction Group, we converted a spacious two-bedroom bungalow in a residential area on the outskirts of Letchworth Garden City. Every aspect of the service has been designed with the person who will live there in mind, with their safety, comfort and accessibility at the forefront.



Inside and outside our bespoke new service for an individual with complex needs in Hertfordshire

Alice's* story

Alice lived in hospital for 45 years before being referred to Look Ahead. She is autistic, and has a severe learning disability and sometimes shows behaviours of distress. Alice, who is 55, moved in to her own Look Ahead bungalow in Hertfordshire in 2022 and has thrived into the last year. Evelyn is part of a team of support workers who provide Alice with 24-hour support and Anna is Director of Business Development. Here, they share their perspective on Alice's story.



**Not her real name*



Evelyn, Alice's Support Worker

Evelyn's perspective

"When I first met Alice, she was very isolated in hospital. I went in to help her manage the transition to leaving.

Alice wasn't allowed in the kitchen or to sit with any of the other residents in the living room at the hospital, because of what people thought she may do. So, she was locked in her room most of the time. She would sometimes scratch people or be aggressive.

She was different with me. We had a bond from the beginning. I always greet her and create a rapport before doing anything.

At Look Ahead, Alice is happier in her own space. Her wellbeing has improved because she has more choice and freedom.

I know this because she's not doing what she used to do. Alice does more for herself now, often using the bathroom on her own, tidying up her laundry and dishes.

She can go where she wants to in the bungalow, including the garden which she loves. If she wants something, she will come and hold your hand and take you to it.

She enjoys going for a drive in the local community with staff and doing puzzles and board games.

Alice is a lovely person who knows what she wants. It feels so good to have seen her quality of life improve since she moved in to her bungalow."

Anna's view

"I went to see Alice soon after she moved in to our service. It was a sunny day and she was standing in the garden, with bare feet, smiling. It was quite special to see her being free in her own space in that moment.

Alice had been described as 'impossible to work with'. But, at Look Ahead, we look at someone for who they are and ignore labels.

For Alice, it was about isolation and not being involved in decisions about her life or communicated with in a way that was meaningful.

We observed Alice to create a person-centred assessment of her needs. We looked at which staff she connected with to recruit a team who emulate the behaviours she enjoys.

Then we found the right property and reconfigured it to give Alice the best possible chance to live in the community.

The 2,000 autistic people and people with learning disabilities currently stuck in hospitals in England do not need to be there. Alice is living proof of this.

Our answer to this problem is to create specialist services. Alice has two-to-one support from compassionate, caring support workers who understand her.

She now makes choices about her daily life. That has improved her wellbeing, her connection to others and her surroundings."

Next, we will:



Develop another bespoke service for people living with learning disabilities in Hertfordshire so that they can get the support they need to live in the community.



Work with integrated care systems and local authority partners to provide more integrated care support packages for people with complex needs.

"I am absolutely delighted with the environment. You have listened and understood the specialist nature of the brief."

we support people with
experience of homelessness
and who have
complex needs

People with experience of homelessness and who have complex needs may have mental health, substance misuse or physical health needs. This area of our work also includes our domestic abuse services. We provide personalised services for this group of people by working with the NHS and other partners. Our compassionate teams build trust and relationships that help people to move forward.

31 

We presented at a Greater London Authority event at City Hall, sharing best practice around partnership working from our East London Apartments service which supports 31 people with experience of homelessness for up to two years.

17 

Our 17 homelessness services include an assessment centre which helps identify how people can get off the streets, hostels, supported housing and support in the community to help people maintain their tenancies.



We provide personalised services for people with mental health, substance misuse or physical health needs.



Integrated healthcare support at our homelessness hostel

In the last year, our Westminster-based hostel for people with experience of rough sleeping introduced 10 emergency health beds. They have supported around two people a month to move on to longer-term support or placements that cater for their higher or lower needs.

People can be referred to the emergency beds at Edward Alsop Court (EAC) for eight weeks of intensive health support. They offer temporary accommodation for people who are being discharged from hospital and have nowhere to go but the streets. Or, for people who have severe health issues and need somewhere suitable to recover from being ill or injured while getting additional support from EAC's support workers, health navigator and engagement worker.

Lydia Smith is a Homeless Health Applied Clinical Practitioner at Great Chapel Street Medical Centre who works with EAC. "Often referrals come from outreach or inclusion health teams in the local hospitals," says Lydia. "EAC has had brilliant outcomes with patients getting cataract operations to regain their eye sight, being diagnosed and treated for conditions such as COPD, and connecting with excellent psychological support."



EAC's onsite health surgery

A model for best practice

EAC also has an in-house clinic with NHS nurses who support residents four days a week. The team facilitate weekly onsite GP and social worker visits, alongside regular psychologist sessions, art therapy and substance misuse-related support from partners.

This model creates a single access point for residents to engage with the support they need, while reducing strain on hospital services.

We see the service as a model of best practice and this has been recognised externally.

EAC has continued to generate interest across the wider housing and homelessness sector. NHS England Chair Richard Meddings CBE toured EAC to look at how this model could be replicated elsewhere.

In early 2024, the service was shortlisted for 'Best health and wellbeing initiative' at the Housing Heroes Awards. EAC Team Leader, Sarah, has also featured in *Inside Housing's* 'A week in the life' section, helping us to share the model with new audiences.

The specialist work offered by EAC is driven by evidence which shows that 94% of people with experience of homelessness in England have a physical health issue. People with experience of homelessness are also more likely to die young, with an average life expectancy of 45 for men and 43 for women in England.

See page 5 for David's experience of being supported by EAC.



Access to talking therapy across all our homelessness services

We now have six psychotherapists working across our homelessness services who are helping the people we support to process trauma.

Our therapists build relationships and trust with the people they support over time, and are flexible. This helps to create an environment where people can feel safe to talk.

We employ some of the therapists directly and others are provided by the Enabling Assessment Service London (EASL). This is a specialist mental health team which supports people with experience of homelessness across London.

The psychotherapists are part of our wider staff team and provide therapy in our services. This is important because we know that people affected by homelessness may find it difficult to access and engage with traditional therapy sessions, or those available from the NHS. This includes turning up for appointments and building trust over time.

Domestic abuse support across our services in London

This year we launched the London Domestic Abuse Advice Service (DAAS) to support people across all of our services in the capital who are experiencing, or who have experienced, domestic abuse.

This means everyone supported by Look Ahead's London-based services can now get specialist help around domestic abuse.

They get access to a trained and qualified Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) who will act as their advocate and help them feel safer.

DAAS also provides training on domestic abuse for all Look Ahead managers, as well as workshops on healthy relationships directly to the people we support.



Rebecca, who manages our IDVA services and Yvette, our Domestic Abuse Strategic Lead

“Look Ahead’s homelessness services provide an invaluable service to the community by providing a supportive environment for some of the most vulnerable people.”

**Rough Sleeping Coordinator,
Central London local authority.**

“It is evident that Look Ahead have motivation for collaboration and partnership working with a strong commitment to improving outcomes for survivors of domestic abuse in Kent.”

**Ashleigh Cain, Commissioner,
Kent County Council.**



Our domestic abuse services in 2023/24

465 We have provided lifesaving support to 465 people affected by domestic abuse across Kent and London.

130 Our hospital-based IDVA service in Kent received 130 referrals, including from patients and hospital staff.



We refurbished all of the flats at our refuge for survivors of domestic abuse in East London, providing a psychologically-informed environment for women and their children and making the flats homelier.



Our cyber clinic helps people affected by domestic abuse by checking their devices and removing spyware.



Rebecca's story: Working alongside the police to reduce domestic violence

Rebecca manages our IDVA services in West Kent. From June 2021 to early 2024, this included an innovative partnership which meant one of Look Ahead's IDVAs was based in local police stations. Rebecca shares more about the impact of the work with the Kent Proactive Vulnerability Investigation Teams (VIT) Domestic Abuse (DA) team.



“Look Ahead can’t manage domestic abuse alone – no organisation can. We need a holistic, multi-agency approach to reduce risk to families.

This was the idea behind the partnership with these specialist police teams. It started when we were approached by the police as the Euro 2020 football tournament was beginning in 2021. We joined together to provide support and police intervention, as we know domestic abuse increases at times of major sporting tournaments, especially when teams lose. On the first night alone, our IDVA accompanied police on six visits.

A main aim was to support people who had refused help before and faced repeated domestic abuse. Overall, the service engaged 62% of people who had been at high risk of harm three times or more and hadn’t previously worked with the police or us.

Police in the UK spend around £1.23 million a year responding to domestic abuse. So the Kent Proactive VIT DA partnership saves services money by helping to reduce domestic violence – we helped secure arrests. It also saves lives. For example, our IDVA helped one woman to escape her family home when she was at risk and we’ve also supported people caught up in a human trafficking ring that spanned the UK.

62% of people, engaged by the service had been at high risk of harm three times or more and hadn’t previously worked with the police or us.

“There should be an IDVA in every police station”

If a perpetrator had been arrested, or was in custody, the police station-based IDVA, would go with police to talk to the survivor of domestic abuse on their own. The IDVA was either myself or a colleague. We’d emphasise that we were independent and there to help the survivor with whatever they needed. That might be finding secure accommodation or getting legal orders in place. We built rapport with survivors which allowed them to trust that we would be their advocate.

We linked the survivor into our other IDVA services which work with around 200 people at a time, providing everything from peer support to a drop-in service.

We would also work with our hospital-based IDVA to support someone. And we trained police officers on managing domestic abuse cases, including all new recruits in Kent in 2023.

It was good to celebrate the partnership at our Blue Light event for emergency services partners in December 2023. It won the award for Look Ahead’s Partner of the Year.

The model we created has been replicated in other areas of Kent which we are proud of – we believe there should be an IDVA in every police station.”

Next, we will:



Support more people experiencing homelessness in smaller bespoke services as we move away from larger, older buildings.



Start a specialist domestic abuse service that supports male survivors.



Plan a British Sign Language version of Own My Life, our 16-week recovery programme for survivors of domestic abuse, to improve accessibility for people who are deaf.



Create pens that are also USB drives containing supportive information for the people we support who are survivors of domestic abuse.



Our mental health services are bespoke, person-centred and co-produced with the people we support

we support people with mental health needs

As one of the largest providers of specialist mental health support services across London and the South East, we reach hundreds of people with mental health needs. This includes everything from working with people in hospital to try to overcome barriers to them being discharged, to accommodation-based support for people leaving the criminal justice system.



Our Newham-based mental health service, Newark Knok, started to provide 24-hour support for people experiencing a crisis or needing a bed after they'd been discharged from hospital.



We opened six new services to support more people with mental health needs in Barking and Dagenham, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Bromley.



Over the last year, we have delivered 27 specialist mental health services, across 14 local authorities and seven integrated care systems, supporting 799 people.

Helping people to recover from a mental health crisis

Our Tower Hamlets Crisis House service was used as a best practice example of supported housing that cuts expensive hospital stays and readmissions.

It featured in the NHS Confederation's March 2024 report, *Unlocking reform and financial sustainability: NHS payment mechanisms for the integrated care age*.

The report states: "The Tower Hamlets Crisis House cost per person is £198 [now £213] per bed day (including accommodation and support costs), over 45% cheaper than an average hospital stay per night (based on NHS reference cost data)."

The report also says that, on average, people stay at the Crisis House for 22 days, compared to 41 days in acute hospital wards.

The Crisis House offers an alternative to hospital admissions for some people, and a step-down for others who no longer need to be on a psychiatric in-patient ward. The service is run in partnership with Tower Hamlets Council and East London NHS Foundation Trust. So it offers supported housing in tandem with specialist NHS clinicians across the Home Treatment Team and other community-based teams.

Figures from 2023/24 show that nearly nine out of 10 (88%) of people supported by the service said they would recommend it to another person. Less than 10% of people supported by the Crisis House returned to hospital.

The Crisis House team includes specialist support workers who sit down with new residents to make a support plan tailored to their needs, aspirations, and goals.

 **<10%**

of people supported by the Crisis House returned to hospital.

 **88%**

of people supported by our service said they would recommend it to another person.



We deliver a wide range of mental health services, that provide both an alternative to hospital admission and also step down options from in-patient care



Masud's Story: Supporting people in East London who've been discharged from hospital

In 2023/24, we launched the East London Hospital Discharge Service. Now, people with mental health needs who are discharged from hospital receive support with everything from housing to managing their physical health. The additional support provides them with a more sustainable recovery. Masud, who manages the service, shares more about its impact.

“Our service is based near Brick Lane, right in the heart of the East London community.

We work closely with the East London NHS Foundation Trust’s discharge team in Hackney and take in people who either have nowhere to go, or aren’t ready to go home yet straight from hospital.

The service eases pressure on the NHS, freeing up hospital beds, and saving funds that might otherwise be used to put people in costly bed and breakfasts or other short-term, and sometimes inappropriate, accommodation.

In the first instance, we usually support people for an initial 14 days, but this can be expanded to 28 days or longer, if needed. However, our aim is usually for the people we support to move on in the first two weeks.



Masud with Ash, one of our Bank Support Workers

Tailored support

We support people in different ways as they get ready to move back into the community. Their circumstances vary so there’s no one size fits all. Some may need help with welfare and getting documentation. For example, we had someone who had no benefits or identification. We helped her with her passport form and managed to get her signed up to Universal Credit before she moved on.

We also support customers with managing their day-to-day wellbeing, and check whether they are taking their medication. We report this back to our NHS colleagues.

“Most people go home which is fantastic to see”

My experience at other services at Look Ahead really prepared me to manage the East London Hospital Discharge Service. I first joined Look Ahead in 2013 as an assistant support worker at a rehab service in Tower Hamlets.

Then, eight years later, I became team leader at our Independent Living Community Support service which offers specialist mental health support for people in the community.

I’m proud of what we have achieved here at this new service. At the end of their time with us, around a third of people go on to other supported accommodation that is more suitable for their long-term support needs. But around two thirds go straight home, which is fantastic to see.”

“Look Ahead provide good quality support for those with serious mental illness. They have a wealth of experience and put new ideas into practice which can be very challenging. I’ve seen staff advocate and exceed their roles for the benefit of the people they support. They develop meaningful relationships with people, engaging, escalating and seeking wider support, as needed. Staff don’t ‘give up’ on people who may have exhausted other opportunities. There is a strong ethos of personalisation and dedicated staff embedding this.”

Dawn Clarke, Mental Health Commissioning Manager for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Introducing best practice community mental health care

The Trieste model is recognised by the World Health Organization as a global best practice example of community mental health.

We have been designing a new East London service that will use this innovative international model, which is based on community health care in Trieste, a city in northern Italy. We are hoping to launch the service in late 2024.

We will trial a 24-hour service, using existing buildings and space, where six people experiencing a mental health crisis will be able to stay for up to 72 hours. They will be supported by NHS professionals based at the service, including a

psychiatrist, psychologist, occupational therapist and mental health nurse. Our staff will also support them with housing, benefits and employment advice. We will involve their families, carers and clinicians in their support, if appropriate.

In Trieste, over the last 50 years, this holistic model of community mental health care has helped to reduce suicides and homelessness, and saved the health service money.

Health Affairs figures from 2020 showed that Trieste once had 1,200 mental hospital beds for its 240,000 people. Now it has six general hospital beds and 30 overnight community centre beds.

Reaching more young people with mental health needs

Our 2023 research found that there's a gap in provision for young people who are well enough to be discharged from a psychiatric ward, but not yet ready to return home or move into a place of their own.

This research was funded by the Wates Family Enterprise Trust.

These findings are why we've refurbished our Oaklands and St Kilda's services in Ealing, West London, so that they can provide much-needed specialist support for young people who need mental health rehabilitation and recovery services in the community. This is thanks to funding from our partners LandAid, SEGRO, Property Race Day, The Story of Christmas and the Greater London Authority.

Importantly, we have created therapeutic spaces in the two services, where young people can receive support or do activities. We have also extended the buildings and completely refurbished the indoor and outdoor environments, so young people can feel at home during this difficult point in their lives.

See page 9 for more about these services.

Ash, one of our Bank Support Workers





Next, we will:



Open a new service in Newham which will offer an alternative to discharging people to bed and breakfasts or temporary accommodation.



Repurpose more of our existing buildings to create new specialist services that are tailored to people with mental health needs including crisis houses and hospital discharge services.

working alongside the people we support

We co-produce services with the people we support so that we can best meet their needs. Opportunities include everything from deciding what a service looks like, to recruiting staff with the right values. We also provide volunteering opportunities for our customers. This helps them develop their confidence and self-esteem through meeting new people, having a say in things that affect them and others, and learning new skills.

>30

In the last year, over 30 people supported by our services volunteered their time to help recruit staff, check the quality of services and be part of resident panels.

77.5%

Over three quarters of the people we support said they are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with Look Ahead.

73%

Just under three quarters of people who live in Look Ahead services said they were satisfied that we listen to and act on their views.

81%

More than four out of five people who live in our services are satisfied that Look Ahead provides inclusive and accessible services, information and accommodation.

Aa

We trained a group of people with learning disabilities to interview their peers about their experiences of being supported by Look Ahead. They also worked with us to make sure our easy-read customer materials were accessible.



Members of Look Ahead's Co-production Team

Sharing the benefits of co-production with the supported housing sector

“The customer incident panel is one of the more important things I have done in my life as it has a direct impact on safeguarding across the organisation. It has helped me to develop self-confidence and skills in analytical thinking, presenting, and conflict resolution.”

These are the words of Customer Incidents Panel Co-Chair, Tyler, who used to be supported by Look Ahead. He spoke at Westminster Insight’s annual Supported Housing Conference, along with our Head of Customer Experience, Kate.

The pair discussed ways Look Ahead has benefited from getting people supported by our services involved in producing them.

They said that this included allowing Look Ahead leaders to stay focused on the people we support and identify areas for improvement.

Customer Incidents Panel Co-Chair, Tyler

Recruiting the right people

- How would you make sure you can get the job done right, first time?
- Are you able to provide apprenticeship or work experience opportunities for customers?

These were two of the questions put to representatives of grounds maintenance and cleaning companies by the people we support in interviews for prospective providers.

The people we support were involved in the tendering process. This has allowed us to recruit companies that align with our values and it helped them to develop interviewing skills.



“The benefits of co-production have had a lasting impact and have helped me get better prepared for life as an adult. For that, I am forever grateful.”

Tyler, Look Ahead Customer Incidents Panel Co-Chair



Ash's Story:
"I was able to make headway with some people where staff might have struggled"

Ash used to be supported by Look Ahead, went on to become a peer volunteer with us and is now one of our bank support workers.

“After I came out of prison, I started having floating support from Look Ahead when I moved into a place of my own.

I took up an offer from Look Ahead to help out in services as an expert by experience, and peer support volunteer. My first placement was at a service supporting people around substance and alcohol misuse in the East End. I was able to make headway with some people where staff might have struggled.

The best thing I did was support someone who used to sit silently. He hadn't spoken to staff for two years, but I managed to have a conversation with him. I met all kinds of people in prison, accepting them for who they were at that moment.

Working with young people has been fantastic. I get the problems they face. I understand gang culture, and know how drug dealers operate.

I think the people Look Ahead supports look up to and listen to me because I've lived in the same world as them. They confide in me and we're able to resolve problems together with the staff team.

I'm proud to have joined the Look Ahead staff team as a bank support worker. I'm keeping my volunteering up as it has been wicked – in the best possible way.”

Next, we will:

Recruit a new co-production volunteer post to help with everything from our communications to reaching more of the people we support to design services together.

fundraising and partnerships

The income we raise from grants, corporate partners and fundraising helps us do more for the people we support. It pays for everything from therapeutic activities for young people, to improvements at our properties that have an impact on people's quality of life. Many of our partners volunteer for us, which benefits our customers and their employees.

£10,000

We received a £10,000 National Lottery grant to develop gardens and green spaces at five of our learning disability services.

£10,000

A £10,000 donation to one of our Kent refuges for survivors of domestic abuse from a member of the public will pay for a summerhouse where we will run wellbeing activities.

£70,000

A grant of £70,000 from the London Community Foundation helped us to transform our East London refuge for women and families affected by domestic abuse.

Look Ahead staff, partners and supporters raised nearly £8,000 through the London Walk



Giving partners the opportunity to volunteer

From gardening to cooking meals, volunteers from our corporate partners have made a big difference to the quality of life of the people we support.

138 

volunteers from seven partners volunteered their time this year

Creating a more welcoming domestic abuse service

A £70,000 grant from the London Community Foundation paid for refurbishment work at our East London Domestic Abuse Refuge. The grant transformed the environment, making it more psychologically-informed and providing toys and games for children who had to flee their homes with nothing. This helped to make the refuge feel more homely and welcoming.

Teaming up with corporate partners for the London Walk

In March 2024, we teamed up with our corporate partners to raise funds for our services through the London Walk organised by the London Homeless Collective.

30 

walkers walked London's streets through the night. They walked either 10K, a half marathon or a full marathon and raised nearly £8,000.

Funding for therapeutic dance sessions

Our AnyBODY Can Dance (ABCD) sessions allowed over 100 people from our learning disability and mental health services to build confidence and express themselves creatively.

They were funded through Disability Rights UK via Sport England and individual donations from a supporter.

"I enjoyed spending more time with the people I live with, and meeting new people," said Chris who took part in the sessions.

Next, we will:



Raise more funds for outdoor activities for the people we support.



Secure funds for specialist posts, including for male Independent Domestic Violence Advisors at our domestic abuse services.



Expand ABCD sessions across more mental health and learning disabilities services by securing further funding.

our supporters

A huge thank you to all of our donors and partners for their generous support.

- 1st Stop Property Solutions Ltd
- AD Construction Group
- Andrina Cleaning Services Ltd
- Asda
- BPG Architects + Surveyors
- Canary Wharf Group
- Carter and Faraday Associates
- chapmanbdsp
- Choir with No Name
- Clarion Housing Association
- Community Harvest
- Complete Transport Solutions Ltd
- Computers 4 Charity
- Design Culture
- Devonshires Solicitors LLP
- Disability Rights UK
- Drax Foundation
- East End Community Foundation
- EcoCare Facilities Ltd
- Electra Fit Ltd
- Employee Volunteering
- Faithorn Farrell Timms LLP (FFT)
- GDS Chartered Surveyors
- Gilmartins
- UK government Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
- Greater London Authority (GLA)
- Heinz, Anna and Carol Kroch Foundation
- Interform Contract Furniture
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- LandAid
- Little Village
- London Community Foundation
- London Corporate Cleaning Services Ltd
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- Marr Procurement
- Mayor's Community Grants Programme, Tower Hamlets
- Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)
- More Pepper
- National Lottery
- Newham Council
- Newline Essex
- Orange Peel Consultancy Ltd
- OrchLab, London Philharmonic Orchestra
- Pret A Manger
- Property Race Day
- RGE Ltd
- Royal Academy of Arts
- Saal Digital
- SEGRO

- Social Bite
- Southwark Council
- Sport England
- The Felix Project
- The Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS)
- The Story of Christmas
- Vigilant Security Services
- Village Heating Limited
- Wates Family Enterprise Trust
- ZunTold
- The Spore Merry and Rixman Foundation

accreditations



awards



memberships and associations



our people

Our people are from different backgrounds, have different skills and different experiences. And they have a huge impact on the quality of our services and the lives of the people we support. We help our people to achieve what they want to in their careers, whether that's through promotion or by gaining new training and qualifications. When we nurture our teams, the people who use our services receive consistent high quality support, delivered by committed staff they have built a relationship with.

Recognising female leaders and rising stars

Our Women in Leadership and Rising Star Awards offer staff a bursary of up to £5,000 to spend on developing their career.

Winners show clear talent, dedication and passion for the work Look Ahead does.

In 2024, the Rising Star Award Winner was Dipti, our Fundraising and Partnerships Manager. "I feel grateful to work for an organisation that continuously invests in staff development and recognises their potential," says Dipti.

"The Diploma in Fundraising qualification, funded by the Rising Star prize, will help me grow in my current role at Look Ahead, raise more support to enhance our customers' quality of life and support my development in the wider sector."

The Women in Leadership winner was Aniah, a Senior Compliance Coordinator on our Property Team. "This recognition is not just a personal achievement, but a testament to the supportive and inclusive environment at Look Ahead," says Aniah. "It especially highlights the organisation's commitment to fostering leadership and empowering women to excel."

Top: Dipti, Fundraising and Partnerships Manager
Bottom: Aniah, Senior Compliance Coordinator



939 staff

368 bank staff

47 staff completed ILM qualifications

47 staff completed Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) qualifications, including one for people who want to become managers and another for senior leaders.

39 people promoted within Look Ahead

39 people were promoted to other positions within Look Ahead, helping to bring on the ground experience to more senior roles.

Counselling Skills certificate launched

We launched our Level 2 Certificate in Counselling Skills programme, supporting staff to develop active listening skills.

225 eLearning training courses for staff

We provided 225 eLearning training courses to staff, which provide accessible training on everything from resolving conflict to hoarding.

55 apprenticeships offered

This year, we offered 55 qualifications through the apprenticeship levy, a UK government tax scheme to fund apprenticeships, including in adult care and housing and property management.

247 face-to-face training courses

We ran 247 face-to-face training courses on everything from modern slavery to end of life care. We also ran 197 induction sessions.

Black History Month celebration event

Our Cultural Diversity Network ran a well-attended celebration event for Black History Month which was attended by customers, staff, and partners, including local councillors.

“Like our customers, our staff have different cultures, lifestyles, and experiences, and we’ve helped set up several diversity and inclusion staff networks from DisAbility to LGBTQ+ and Cultural Diversity, to make sure that colleagues feel at home.”

Amber, Look Ahead’s Recruitment, Training and Talent Manager.

Our Senior Leadership Team

Chris Hampson

Chief Executive

Julie Blair

Executive Director of Corporate Services

Rosa Napolitano (resigned July 2024)

Executive Director of Business Development and Innovation

Nicole Njie

Executive Director of Quality and Customer Services (until May 2024)
Interim Director of Group Operations (from May 2024)

Harindra Punchihewa (appointed September 2023)

Chief Financial Officer

Guy Robinson (resigned May 2024)

Executive Director of Group Operations

Our Board of Management

Mary Watkins, Baroness Watkins of Tavistock

Chair, Look Ahead Group Board of Management
Member of the House of Lords (crossbench)
Board Member, NHS England

Kevin Chiweta Obi

Managing Director, Synergy Inc.
Board Adviser, EcoSync
Chair, NIDSG

Tom Dacey

(resigned from the Board 23 September 2024)
Chair, Blythson Ltd (Look Ahead subsidiary) (Until September 2024)
Chair, Kingswood Care Services Ltd (Look Ahead subsidiary) (Until September 2024)
Chair, MP Living Limited (Until September 2023)

Ellie Edwards-Scott

(resigned from the Board 23 September 2024)
Board Representative for Diversity and Inclusion
Trustee, Digilearning Ltd

Stephen Firn OBE

Chair, Look Ahead Quality and Safety Committee
Chief Executive Officer, Cynet Health Care Ltd

Kevin Gould

Chair, Audit and Risk Committee (until September 2024)
Chair, Look Ahead subsidiaries – Blythson Ltd and Kingswood Care Services Ltd (from September 2024)
Director and shareholder, Sharpthorne Services Ltd
Board Member, Grand Union Housing Group
Board Member, Legal & General Affordable Homes
Vice Chair of the Independent Decision Making Body, Bar Standards Board
Internal Audit Consultant, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
Trustee, Centre for Alternative Technology
Governor, Staffordshire University

Chris Hampson

Chief Executive, Look Ahead
Non-Executive Director (NED), GreenSquareAccord
Trustee, Voluntary Organisations Disability Group (VODG)

Richard Jones CBE

Vice-Chair, Look Ahead Group Board of Management
Chair, Nominations Committee – Shared Lives Plus
Chair, Syncora Ltd
NED, Calico Group
NED, FairOak Housing Association
Independent Chair, Leeds Safeguarding Adults Board
Sharon Slotnick
Chair, Look Ahead Remuneration Committee
Chair, Look Ahead Tenant and Landlord Panel
Magistrate, London Circuit

Sarah Willows

Chair, Investment and Treasury Committee
Chair, Audit and Risk Committee (from September 2024)
Independent Non-Executive Director (NED), Storegga

Johanna Ellis

(joined 1 July 2024)
Non-Executive Director, Southdowns
Member, Orbit Housing Association
Audit and Risk Committee

Anne Copeland

(joined 1 July 2024)
Co-Head of Social Infrastructure, AlphaReal



thank you

We hope that you have enjoyed reading about our impact in 2023/24.

Following our 50th anniversary last year, this has been an exciting time where we have opened a number of new services and trialled innovative ways of supporting people.

We anticipate change in the year ahead, as the new UK government becomes established. Against this background, we will continue to deliver care, support and housing services using an approach that:

- encourages and helps people to recognise and fulfil their full potential
- provides person-centred support, tailored to what each person wants and needs

- delivers integrated health, social care and housing services in partnership with the NHS
- provides opportunities for staff and the people we support to work together to design and deliver services.

This approach changes people's lives – as you will have seen in this impact report.

We are looking forward to delivering more specialist services that meet the needs of the people in our communities who need us most. We will do this thanks to everyone that funds, commissions, supports and champions Look Ahead.

On behalf of everyone at Look Ahead, thank you so much for your support.

Baroness Mary Watkins of Tavistock
Chair of Look Ahead's Board

Chris Hampson
Chief Executive

about Look Ahead

Look Ahead provides supported housing and social care services for people who have a range of needs in local communities across London and the South East.

Our services include integrated care, support and housing for four main groups: people with mental health needs; people with learning disabilities and autism; young people and people with experience of care; and people with experience of homelessness and other complex needs.



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