



Wellspring Healthy Living Centre



Location

Inner and East Bristol

Founded

2000

Legal structure

Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee

Description of activity

Wellbeing Healthy Living Centre houses a GP practice, Boots chemist, dentist, community midwives, health visitors and other statutory health services. In addition, it delivers services to tackle health inequalities including talking therapies, therapeutic arts, and food and nutrition. The centre also offers peer support groups and a range of community activities.

Key assets

£2.5 million purpose built building

Employees

27 (mostly part-time)

Volunteers

Ten

Biggest obstacle to success

Physical space and capacity available to manage the variety of services at the centre.

Overview of organisation

In 2000, Wellspring Healthy Living Centre (WHLC) evolved as a result of a national government regeneration initiative called New Deal for Communities, locally known as the Community at Heart initiative. This involved a major investment in new infrastructure, which included new housing, schools, and shops. At the time, the only health facility in the local area was a hut at the bottom of one of the local tower blocks, which served as a GP surgery. However, as part of the new initiative, WHLC was established and came to be considered a major asset for local health care provision. Initially, Community at Heart operated the facility and the local authority, Bristol City Council, was the financial accountable body. Community at Heart established a range of working groups, one of which was a Health and Wellbeing working group of local residents. This group met weekly, conducting surveys with local people, and reflecting on what they required in a health and wellbeing facility. The working group also considered the needs of the community in terms of the design of the building, looking at other health care facilities to see how they were designed and operated.

In 2000, as the Community at Heart initiative was ending, the Health and Wellbeing working group established itself into a charitable company, and as such, took over the running of the building. The group subsequently applied for registered charity status. The purpose built building was also transferred to the charity by the local authority as a freehold asset in 2011.

WHLC is now a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. There are 27 paid staff in various departments who report to a board of trustees who come from the local community, some of whom were originally involved in the Health and Wellbeing working group. The trustees are also the directors of the company. The centre leases space to a GP practice, Boots chemist, dentist, community midwives, health visitors and other statutory health services. WHLC focuses on improving and maintaining wellbeing, with a number of services dedicated to tackling health inequalities including talking therapies, therapeutic arts, and food and nutrition sessions. The centre also offers services related to social issues such as debt and housing that can contribute to physical and emotional problems, and delivers peer support groups as well as a range of community activities.



The centre concentrates on providing these services to the local community of Lawrence Hill and neighbouring areas of inner and east Bristol. The community it serves is particularly diverse, comprising of English, Somali and Eastern European residents, with the majority being young families. As another community hub in the locality, Barton Hill Settlement, provides family support services, WHLC focus on providing physical and mental health services in order to ensure that they are not in competition.

Wellspring Healthy Living Centre's journey to success

Strong partnerships

Central to the success of the business are the partnerships and contracts WHLC has secured. One of the centre's largest contracts is directly with the NHS. WHLC works closely with Bristol Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) on two mental health contracts. The centre is a qualified provider for Bristol Talking Therapies, which is part of the national Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme, and works with a number of local healthcare providers on the Bristol-wide Community Access Support Service (CASS) contract. CASS involves providing guidance to the local community on the availability of mental health services and reporting to commissioners about why groups are not using them and/or whether these groups are marginalised. In addition, the centre runs a muscular skeletal clinic for local GP surgeries under another NHS contract. GPs are able to refer patients to the clinic, which includes physiotherapists, chiropractors, and osteopaths. WHLC meets with the designated commissioner for both IAPT and CASS quarterly, and notes how these relationships are very complimentary, focusing on what needs to be achieved and how services can be improved, rather than concentrating on performance management. Through this collaborative approach, WHLC has been able to adapt its model to the needs of the local community. For example, the demographics in the locality have changed enormously in the last decade. There is now a large Somali population, which has increased from around 25% to nearly 70%. As such, the centre now offers a number of services specifically tailored to this community, where mainstream healthcare may not have the designated budget to do so.

The centre has also benefited from Public Health England (PHE) funding in the past. However, since PHE funding responsibilities have been transferred to local authorities, there has been a change in the availability of PH funding to voluntary organisations. As such, WHLC has had to compete for this funding with the whole Bristol voluntary sector. The centre has recently secured two Bristol-wide partnership bids to tackle disadvantaged groups and improve resilience in communities. As WHLC has a very strong locality model, focusing on the needs of the inner and east Bristol community, it has collaborated with health and wellbeing facilities that are embedded within other communities

in Bristol, for example, Knowle West Health Park in south Bristol, and Southmead Development Trust in the north of Bristol. These communities vary greatly in terms of their demographics and subsequent health needs. WHLC acknowledges that it lacks the in-depth knowledge required to effectively deliver wellbeing services in these areas and notes how building strong partnerships enables the centre to successfully reach beyond its own community.

Financial self-sustainability

WHLC views financial self-sustainability as key to the success of the business. It is very important for the board of trustees to have confidence in the stability of the business, and for the community to trust that services are secure and will not be removed.

Central to the Centre's sustainability is having a steady income stream. Around 84% of WHLC's income stems from trading contracts, with the remaining coming from grant funding. Since 2014, there has been a shift of funding away from charitable trusts and WHLC are increasingly looking at contracts as their main source of income. The Centre views having contractual relationships with the NHS as central to its future, however social prescribing needs to be embedded in mainstream healthcare if it is to become a long-term service. Charitable trust funding is useful for innovative ideas and services, but when these funding sources cease, these new services are often cut, which is disruptive for the community accessing them. Conversely, NHS contracts tend to have a substantial timeframe, which facilitates greater financial sustainability. However, they also have complex recommissioning cycles, which are often postponed or delayed. For example, the IAPT contract should have been recommissioned in 2017, but it is now likely to be extended until November 2018. Although this unscheduled extension is useful for the centre in terms of income, uncertainty can make future planning challenging.

One of the major contributors to the centre's sustainability is the building in which it is based. It is the largest asset on WHLC's balance sheet and valued at £2.5 million. The purpose built building is considered a flagship amongst the health and wellbeing sector in Bristol, as very few facilities in the city are owned outright and offer such an extensive and attractive space. The centre believes that owning the building has significantly contributed to its success, not only providing extra security, as opposed to leasing a premises and the associated costs that involves, but also in owning such an expansive property where WHLC are able to offer a wide range of services which go beyond those typical of a health facility.

Nevertheless, there are physical limitations to the building. It is currently running at capacity and there is no further space available to expand services or numbers of personnel. As such, the centre would welcome further support in the future to develop the building or access other premises.

In the short-term, WHLC believes it is relatively robust and self-sufficient. However, to continue with its ambitions to grow, rather than just maintaining current operations, the centre requires capital investment in the building so that it can expand its reach in the locality and its number of services.

Raising profile and influence

Being prominent is incredibly important to WHLC. Not only with the local community, but also with potential funders, such as the NHS. Over 2016/17, the centre has employed a part-time marketing professional to oversee WHLC's social media campaigns. This is essential as the centre's reach and presence is extended, especially as the majority of the local community are younger families. Indeed, the centre views the reach of the services it provides as one of its most successful aspects, and it has been able to access groups that other services struggle to reach. They have achieved this by employing people and engaging volunteers who have existing connections within the community and who have the knowledge and necessary skills to offer support to these groups.

Being influential is considered another success factor for the centre, especially considering it is a relatively small organisation in one of the most deprived areas in Bristol. WHLC can reach both into the community, and up to decision makers, helping to guide policies and shaping the future health and wellbeing provision in Bristol. In order to become influential, the centre works hard at demonstrating to statutory bodies that if they want to work in challenging areas of deep deprivation such as inner and east Bristol, WHLC have the necessary expertise to deliver. By employing and engaging with organisations who are already fully embedded in the area, the centre is able to offer assurances to decision makers that services will be delivered efficiently, thus increasing its credibility.

Engaging the 'right' staff and volunteers

Over 2016/17, the number of employees and volunteers at the centre has remained static. Increasing the number of staff is difficult for the centre as physical space is a limitation, but additionally finding staff with the relevant community and professional expertise is also a fundamental requirement. As many of the staff at WHLC are involved in mental health services, it is vital that they also have a breadth of community knowledge as well as specialist skills in issues such as mental health and domestic violence. For example, staff working on the IAPT contract combine counselling and community development, and so require skills such as motivational interviewing and safeguarding, as well as strong networking skills in order for them to coordinate with other organisations and signpost people to them, i.e. debt or immigration advice. Without this level of expertise, the centre would not be able to perform effectively. Therefore, WHLC works hard to recruit enthusiastic staff who have a positive attitude and are able to maintain their core competencies. Requiring such a skilled workforce means there are fewer opportunities for volunteers to get involved. However, WHLC

engages volunteers as much as possible through gardening and other outdoor activities that do not require specialised qualifications.

The majority of centre's trustees are also local volunteers. They enhance the credibility of the facility due to their links with the local community. Around three of the original trustees from the health and wellbeing working group remain on the board, which demonstrates their commitment and confidence in WHLC. When the centre first opened, commitment from local people was essential. If they had not engaged with WHLC, links with community would have been lost. The centre believes that this enthusiasm stems from the trustees' sense that they are equal partners with responsibility for a large number of staff, and that they are recognised and respected and are involved in all aspects of decision-making.

Strategic leadership skills are also essential and WHLC places great importance on having good financial management and controls in place to ensure continuation of their services. However, one of the greatest challenges for WHLC is the capacity required to manage the variety of services delivered at the centre. This takes great attention to detail and the centre highlights that it is currently too understaffed to manage these aspects adequately. Extending the building to make more space for employees and income-generating space would help to alleviate this.

Future direction

WHLC acknowledge, as with any organisation, that there is always room for improvement. Currently, the centre is working on deepening community connections through its membership scheme by gaining further intelligence on community needs from its members. It also has a suite of new programmes planned for the future. For instance, embedding social prescribing within GP surgeries and directly influencing the way they work. This will broaden the reach of WHLC from deeply deprived areas to other localities in Bristol. The centre also intends to apply the model it uses for the muscular skeletal clinic to a range of other long-term conditions such as dementia, leg ulcers, and diabetes. This will enable people to access specialist support locally rather than having to travel to hospitals.

The centre is very confident about its future sustainability. This is mainly due to the key asset of the £2.5 million building, but also because of the strategic direction the NHS is currently taking with its commission services. WHLC views itself at the heart of the NHS Sustainability and Transformation plan, which aims to ensure health and social care services in England are built around the needs of local populations. The centre believes it is already doing this and fully supports a change in the current NHS model, where more funding is needed to be invested in early intervention and prevention.



WHLC also believes it is likely that its business will expand. In particular, it envisages having a presence in every GP surgery in Bristol, as having a social prescribing service in each practice would only require one or two rooms as well the expertise to accompany it. Finally, with the right investment, expansion of the current building is also a possibility.

Financial information

The following table provides an overview of Wellspring Healthy Living Centre income, expenditure and assets for the period 01/04/2015 to 31/03/2016.

Income	£985,769
Expenditure	£1,023,606
Difference between income and expenditure	-£37,837
Surplus/deficit on ordinary activities before taxation	-£37,837
Annual income from grant or subsidy	£465,005
Fixed assets	£2,364,709
Current assets	Stocks: £0 Debtors: £52,290 Cash at bank and in hand: £345,977
Total	£398,267
Net assets	£2,540,625

Source: Wellspring Healthy Living Centre Accounts 2016, Companies House