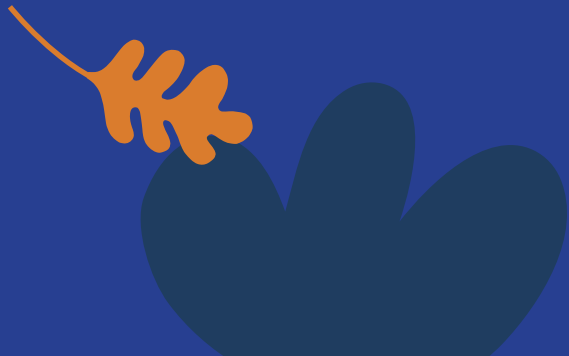
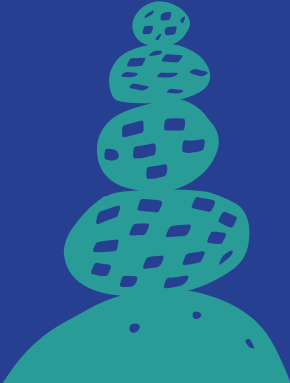




**10 YEARS OF
THIS WAY UP**





All quotes throughout this publication are from previous participants. Names and photos used with participants' stories have been changed to protect privacy.

FOREWORD

As a prior participant on This Way Up, I'm delighted to have been asked to write the foreword for the programme's 10-year anniversary publication.

I was kindly introduced to This Way Up after being out of employment and suffering with depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. I'd lost confidence in myself and my abilities. I wanted to overcome my inner fears so I could upskill and get back into employment.

I didn't know what to expect but from the first one-to-one coaching session, I immediately knew that the programme would help. I participated in group mindfulness sessions which taught me how to be aware of my thoughts and how to accept things that I cannot control.

I've incorporated mindfulness into my daily life, which has improved my wellbeing, my relationships with others and how I see

myself. I've taken steps towards my goals. I signed up to a new course, which will give me a fulfilling new career that I was previously too afraid to do. I'm overcoming doubts with a newfound sense of belief and inner confidence. I was delighted to be invited to join the volunteer team for the ongoing drop-in service.

I feel This Way Up is a very valuable service for anyone facing difficult circumstances or challenges and wants to make real changes. The programme has greatly impacted my life. I am certain it has had a similar positive impact on many others over the last 10 years, and that it will continue to do so in the years ahead.

Diane Hudson



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1

INTRODUCTION

Quaker Social Action (QSA) is delighted to be celebrating 10 years of This Way Up. Since 2012 this innovative and unique project has run six-week intensive programmes – twice per year – consisting of mindfulness-based resilience group training, alongside one-to-one life coaching.

In alignment with QSA's overall mission, This Way Up seeks to help people on a low income – in east London and beyond – to seek their own solutions to their life challenges, to activate their inner potential, and to move towards their goals.

Throughout its 10-year history the programme has stayed true to its founding aim to support people on a low income who feel held back by challenging conditions or difficult past experiences. All sorts of things could be holding people back from achieving the things they are capable of – poor mental or physical health, unemployment, past addiction, a criminal record, bereavement, or a difficult family life. Over time, these tough conditions can drain

away self-belief and hope for the future. This is often severely exacerbated by poverty, which can significantly limit the opportunities for improving one's lot that most people may take for granted. People can be left feeling stuck in a rut, stranded, and often only just about coping.

This Way Up helps people to rebuild that vital sense of purpose, inner strength and hope.

Through its unique combination of mindfulness and coaching, the programme supports people – in a highly pragmatic way – to find their own resources for taking control of their lives, to handle stress, and to feel more confident. This naturally leads to the ability to plan and make clearer decisions to move towards their goals – like getting into work, training or education; taking up new activities; or making new friendships. Essentially, it's about feeling good in yourself and, from here, making your life work well for you.

Since 2012, This Way Up has helped more than 500 people. Over the 10 years demand for the service has grown. It also expanded its service to include online sessions during the pandemic, a men-only introductory trial course and a drop-in service for past participants.

This special publication marking the programme's 10-year anniversary takes an in-depth look at its history, how it works, and the impact it has on people. We'll hear from many programme participants (names have been changed to protect people's privacy) and how their lives have changed. We'll explore how the programme adapted to the challenges of Covid lockdowns. And we'll look to the programme's future – especially an exciting initiative for programme 'graduates' to provide ongoing support to each other, long after they have completed their original programme.



“This programme re-humanises people and lets them know they do have control, and can make a change, where before they thought they were powerless.”

2 A SHORT HISTORY OF THIS WAY UP

2012

A powerful idea leads to a pilot project

In 2012 QSA was approached by Tim Segaller with an idea for a new project helping people on a low income who feel stuck in their situation and who are struggling to see a way forward. Tim had recently trained as a professional coach and a mindfulness teacher, and wanted to make coaching and mindfulness available to people who couldn't afford them on the open market. QSA was immediately attracted to his idea. We knew that people at another of our long-standing projects, Made of Money, made real changes when given the space, time and tools to properly understand their own relationship to money. So Tim's proposed programme focusing on people's ability to make broad life changes fitted right into our mission to enable people to seek solutions to the issues affecting their lives. With our support, Tim secured seed funding for a pilot of a mindfulness course plus one-to-one life coaching for 12 participants, with QSA acting as a host organisation. We were so impressed with the pilot results that we used some of our unrestricted reserves to fund a second tranche.

2014

The ABC of Mindfulness

Tim rewrote the mindfulness course to reflect what he and Michele had learnt about how best to align it with the forward momentum generated by one-to-one coaching. The new course – centred around a simple ABC model (see section 10) – formed the framework of the book that Tim later published: 'The ABC Guide to Mindfulness'.

2013

An innovative partnership

Tim co-founded, with Michele Grant, Rising Minds, a coaching and mindfulness social enterprise. We were keen for This Way Up to continue, and so we entered into an innovative partnership with Rising Minds as our delivery partners of the programme. Tim and Michele co-delivered the programme until 2020, when Michele stepped down from her involvement in Rising Minds.

2015

An independent perspective

We commissioned an extensive external evaluation of This Way Up. The longer-term impacts on people's lives were extremely positive. See section 6 for more.



2022

Supporting the supporters into a new future

This Way Up is in the midst of launching an innovative new pilot programme to set up a peer-led ongoing drop-in service open to all past participants. See section 8 for more.

2016

Coming back for more

This Way Up started inviting previous participants to come back to support the mindfulness course. This has turned out to be a major aspect of the programme's unique approach and ongoing success (see section 4). It has also led to innovative plans for the next year (see section 8).



2021

Reaching men

This Way Up put on a special three-session online resilience course for those identifying as men only, as we felt that some men find it harder to seek help and open up in mixed spaces, and we were keen to encourage more men to take part in our main programme. See section 7 for more.



2017

The more the merrier

The programme started to bring in additional professional coaches to deliver some of the one-to-one coaching. This brought a sense of freshness, innovation and mutual support to the 'team'. Different coaches also bring diverse skills to the table – and sometimes coaches have been 'matched' to participants based on particular life experiences. Over the years, seven coaches have worked on the programme.

2020

Locked down...but not shut down

The first Covid lockdown came bang in the middle of a This Way Up tranche. Participants were able to complete their one-to-one coaching online or on the phone, and to repeat the mindfulness course later in the year. For the subsequent three tranches the programme was adapted to run entirely online. Extra services were also put on to support people's wellbeing during challenging times. See section 7 for more.



SARAH'S STORY

Sarah was trying to come to terms with her beloved father's terminal illness. Although she hadn't lost him yet, her grief had already begun. During this time, she joined This Way Up. This helped her to manage the painful feelings she was facing through mindfulness practices.

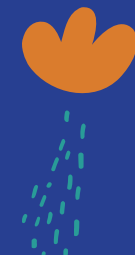
"Tim says, go with it. Don't put it aside and avoid it. Go with it. And you'll find your way though. And that's what I'm doing." She was inspired by the course and the mindfulness she learnt there. This started her on a "big journey," deepening her mindfulness knowledge and practice and through other courses.

But life was still hard for Sarah. She has bipolar disorder and found herself in a dark place. Six years on from starting This Way Up, she happened to find a letter that she had written to herself as a part of the course: "I've never forgotten. And when I saw that letter and it was all yellowed out...I was feeling a bit low and I looked and it said there that it was possible for me to do anything I wanted to do. Anything I could put my mind to, I could do." This message helped Sarah to find the strength not only to carry on, but also to thrive.

Today she is the proud author of three books about her life and mindfulness. She holds a certification in life coaching and several community roles supporting people including those with terminal illness.

"Tim truly supported me through the whole thing. Even when I rang him six years later, he knew who I was, knew what I was going through. And I thanked him so much for where I am today. I didn't think I was anything ...but this guy gave me hope and made me resilient."

– Name and photo changed to protect privacy.



3

THE CONTEXT: WHO THIS WAY UP IS FOR

Life can throw challenges and struggles in anyone's way. Some people experience more than their fair share. Bouncing back requires resilience, courage and self-belief. Sometimes people may need professional or psychological support to fully access these qualities, so that they can get through tough times and move onto to a brighter future.

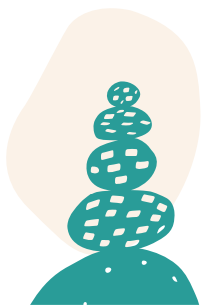
Some people can afford to access such services on the open market, and so can more easily turn things around. But for others on a low income, it's a very different story. Often they may be dealing with complex histories and experiences that impact their mental health and resilience. Sometimes the backdrop can be dramatic – like severe trauma, or being the victim of chronic abuse. Often it's more commonplace – job loss, bereavement, addiction, poor physical health or overwhelming family responsibilities. People on low incomes are less likely to be in employment, active in the lives of their communities, or engaged in fulfilling personal pursuits.

Put simply, some people have to channel all their inner resources into just 'getting by', with no spare time or energy for working out new life goals and how to achieve them. They can feel completely stuck – unable to access their innate strengths and capacities, or even to know how to reach out for help.

Many of these people fall between the cracks in our social safety net. They may not benefit from youth or age-related services or be in sufficient immediate need to benefit from statutory crisis interventions. Others are often coerced into single issue services with narrowly pre-determined outcomes, which don't address their particular circumstances and challenges.

It's these people that This Way Up seeks to support – to help them access their inner strength and capacities to deal with what's challenging them, and to realise their potential for a rewarding, fulfilling life.

To make matters worse, the daily struggle of life on a low income can itself be a contributing factor to poor mental health. Uncontrollable debts or the threat of insecure housing, for example, can take a heavy toll. In a tangle of cause and effect, 75% of people living in the lowest income bracket have reported having mental health problems.*



“It’s a constant battle to remain human when you are going through the system and having to apply for benefits, and everything else. It’s a dehumanising process. Self-esteem is really stripped from you in the system.”

**Mental Health Foundation, 2017*

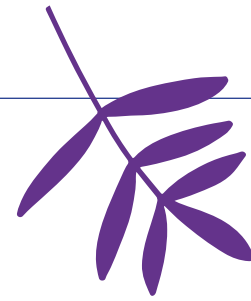


ABIOLA'S STORY

“My life had become quite chaotic. I had lost two members of my family in quick succession. It was traumatic. I then lost my savings and my job. I was reaching out to save myself really. Usually I deal with the problems by going on auto-pilot, panicking and being anxious. The programme taught me to accept things, without giving up. I was able to let go of the things that were not important. In the one-to-one coaching I could talk about my personal issues. I felt safe. I found a different perspective on how to deal with these problems.”

– Name and photo changed to protect privacy.





4 THIS WAY UP – HOW IT WORKS

Programme elements

This Way Up is a six-week intensive programme, run twice per year for groups of 16 people, combining two distinct but related elements: group mindfulness-based resilience training, plus one-to-one coaching for each participant. As we'll see shortly, it's more than the sum of these two parts, as there are several unique ways the programme operates that make it so effective. But first, let's look at these two core elements.

Group mindfulness training

A group training programme consisting of six 90-minute weekly sessions, teaching simple but effective skills that lead to greater calm, clarity and emotional resilience. The sessions are highly experiential – with an emphasis on practice – including guided meditations, mindful movement, and other exercises. Participants also spend time in discussion, both in small breakout groups, and in the whole group.

All of this is backed up by some basic theoretical presentation of the key concepts. Participants get access to course materials online, including a summary of the concepts for each session, plus audio and video guided meditations

to practice in between the sessions – which they are strongly encouraged to do.

“Before I could sit and watch TV all day and not do anything – I was really unmotivated. But the mindfulness somehow unlocked something.”

“The meditation has been amazing – helpful in feeling calmer and less anxious and more patient.”

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the art of skilful awareness – a way of paying attention in the present moment, without judgement and with kindness. It's like training for your brain: when you practise mindfulness, you learn to become more aware of what's actually going on in and around you. By developing this 'mental muscle' – through regular practice of simple awareness techniques – you build new neural pathways to parts of the brain associated with calm, wellbeing and emotional positivity. It also counteracts unhelpful 'autopilot' thinking – when attention gets stuck in difficult thoughts and emotions. Numerous studies have found that mindfulness increases positive emotions while reducing negative emotions and stress.

One-to-one professional life coaching

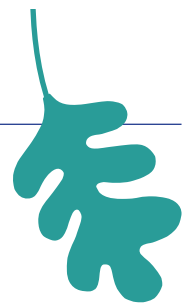
Life coaching is a confidential process – through a series of open, honest and meaningful conversations – where a trained coach helps someone to discover who they really are – their values, aspirations and strengths – and what might be stopping them from fully activating them. It's then about taking active steps to move towards what the person really wants.

It's different from counselling or therapy, which tend to seek to resolve deep-seated issues from the past. Nor is it advice, which provides a prescription for what you should do. Instead, life coaching takes as its starting point the view that everyone is the expert on their life, and has all they need to make life work. So in their sessions, the client is invited to take the driving seat and set the agenda. The coach's job is to help facilitate this process of growth and change.

In their life coaching sessions, This Way Up participants get to work with a fully trained and accredited coach. The sessions happen in parallel with the group mindfulness course. Over the 10 years of This Way Up the number, frequency and duration of the sessions have varied. Currently, participants receive six sessions, the first and sixth are 60 minutes and the others are 30 minutes.

“Life coaching was just brilliant. I can't think of anything worse than going through life thinking that you did not fulfil your potential. It was like doing a jigsaw puzzle. I had all the pieces of my life to put together, but I did not have the picture on the box.”





5 — THIS WAY UP – DISTINCT APPROACH

This Way Up is a highly innovative programme, with several distinctive approaches that make it so effective in supporting people to make real and lasting changes to their lives.

Putting participants in the driving seat

Many participants on This Way Up have found that support services they'd accessed previously were too narrowly focused on pre-determined issues and desired outcomes. They felt 'funnelled' through a system that treats everyone as having the same 'problems', which can only be resolved by a one-size-fits-all 'fix'. This approach doesn't address the complexity of each person's unique situation. Crucially, it often ignores much more deeply-rooted challenges around a depleted sense of agency, self-confidence and resilience.

For these reasons, This Way Up doesn't have expectations about participants' destinations. That's for them to explore and define. The programme is about encouraging participants to reclaim agency and choice – to realise that they are the best expert on themselves, and can discover their best next steps. Sometimes, this approach comes as an initial shock to participants, as they have rarely been asked about their values, passions or aspirations. But most come to realise that this approach is exactly what they want, and they are ready for it.

More than the sum of parts: the integration of coaching and mindfulness

We are not aware of any other such project that combines coaching and mindfulness as This Way Up does. They are natural companions – grounded in humanistic beliefs about change: people naturally learn and grow when the right conditions are in place. For This Way Up, the two core conditions are awareness and compassion. Positive change happens when people get to fully understand what's going on in their lives and when they activate their natural sense of positive regard for themselves and others. This change process is always most successful when it comes from within, rather than dictated by others. Both coaching and mindfulness are firmly rooted in this viewpoint.

“The life coaching has helped me to find the ‘good friend’ voice in me and that is much stronger than before. This is helping me feel much more balanced and calmer as well as much more confident.”

This Way Up works in a totally different way. Its starting point is the belief that every human being has the potential to meet the unique challenges of their lives, and to move from merely surviving to actively thriving. However, past challenges and current circumstances get in the way of this potential being

fully activated. And for people on a low income, the severity and complexity of these blocks can often be all the greater, making it harder to remain hopeful, cope and find ways forward.



This Way Up is, however, more than the sum of these two parts. Over the past 10 years the This Way Up team and participants have noticed how the two approaches complement each other:

“The difference from anything else out there is the pairing of mindfulness with life-coaching. They really should go hand in hand. The life coaching gives you the chance to work out what to concentrate on and work further on what you’ve deemed necessary through the mindfulness sessions.”



- **Mindfulness helps coaching go deeper:** mindfulness training gives people practical skills to understand themselves, and to manage their minds and emotions. This provides a solid foundation for more effective, targeted and authentic one-to-one coaching. It enables people to get to the truth of themselves more easily and quickly. It gives them more ballast to take risks and to explore adventurously what could be in their futures.
- **‘Personalising’ mindfulness:** mindfulness is a set of well tried-and-tested tools and techniques that can be taught in a group setting. However, for these to really ‘stick’ and make a lasting impact in someone’s life, they need to be adapted to individual circumstances and personalities. One-to-one coaching can help people get clearer on this.
- **Coaching provides a safe space to process difficult material:** while mindfulness training is not therapeutic work per se, it sometimes surfaces challenging emotions, memories and past experiences. One-to-one coaching is invaluable here. While it’s also not a therapeutic or crisis intervention, it provides a vital safe space for people confidentially to explore and process difficult material and then take active steps towards positive life choices.
- **Group solidarity and connection:** dozens of programme participants have told us over the years that the group part of the programme fosters a sense of mutual support and community. People feel they are not alone with their challenges, and their aspirations. This ‘normalising’ effect helps people to let go of self-critical views for having challenges in the first place. It also promotes camaraderie: participants’ sense of shared experience helps develop connections, friendships, and mutual encouragement.

“I did not feel alone. I was free to open up about my feelings. It was almost like a burden was lifted. Before, I felt like I was the only person going through this.”



A distinct way of teaching mindfulness: the ABC model

Mindfulness has been practised for centuries in various traditions, most notably Buddhism. Since the 1970s it has been reformulated for secular settings (for example healthcare, businesses, schools) in two main forms: Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). The first iteration of the This Way Up mindfulness course was based on these. But after the first few courses the This Way

Up team felt it needed to be more closely aligned with the forward momentum generated by one-to-one coaching. While mindfulness seeks to promote more 'being' and less 'doing', there's a risk that only reinforcing this message doesn't support people to make pro-active changes in their lives. 'Doing' could easily be seen as a bad thing.

“The ABC approach over six weeks gave a new point of view and deeper understanding of the ways and benefits of mindfulness rather than simply spending 20 minutes on an app everyday.”

So Tim substantially rewrote the mindfulness course, including the accompanying guided meditations. The new course brought in much more content and guidance on the idea of 'choice' – taking proactive steps in line with one's values and aspirations – just as happens in one-to-one coaching. It is centred around an ABC model of mindfulness. See section 10 for details.

“It was a chance to consolidate and develop my own mindfulness skills and to compare my experience with my previous participation on the course.”

And for the course supporters, it's a great opportunity both to refresh and deepen their mindfulness practice, and to develop a range of new skills around communication and group facilitation. This Way Up's team supports them in

this learning, by spending time after each session debriefing the breakout groups.

This Way Up is excited in the coming year to be taking much further this element of participant involvement in programme delivery, with a pilot of a peer-led regular 'drop-in' mindfulness class open to all previous participants of the programme. See section 7 for full details.

Involving participants in course delivery

Since 2016 This Way Up has invited back onto every tranche a small selection of past participants (four to six) to support the group mindfulness part of the programme. Here they get to 'host' small breakout groups for 10–15 minutes each session. In practice, this means they 'hold the space' for their mini group (of three to five people) – making sure that everyone who wishes to gets the chance to speak about their mindfulness practice, and what insights, changes or challenges they are noticing. The course supporters also get to pass on any tips on how to make mindfulness work in daily life.

This aspect of This Way Up has turned out to be an invaluable part of the programme's effectiveness and impact. For the new participants, it's encouraging to spend time with people who have been on the course before, and to hear about the positive impacts on their lives.





FARAH'S STORY

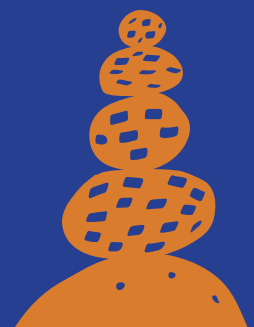
After a difficult relationship breakdown, Farah arrived in London having to start again. She had to create a new life for herself, reconnecting with distant family members, finding a new home and finding herself a job. Her confidence was rock bottom.

“I was at the point of wondering if I was ever going to be able to work again. Am I going to move on, or am I going to accept that I don't have the confidence? This Way Up gave me the realisation that yes, I can take that next step.

“A lot of things had happened to me where I really wasn't feeling very good in myself. I didn't think I could achieve anything like going back to work again. That affected my quality of life – I was very worried about my finances. Through the course, I learnt to manage my emotions and gain my confidence. It's hard to put words on it.

“It's going back to your own experiences, based on your own intuition and your own self-knowledge. Your own self-awareness of things that have worked in the past for you. After a while I was ready to go for job interviews. I had a coaching and mindfulness session an hour before a job interview. It was natural. It was very powerful. It calmed my nerves; I could manage my reactions and emotions and I felt grounded. The interview was very positive, and I was offered the job.”

– Name and photo changed to protect privacy.



6

THIS WAY UP'S IMPACT

Over the years, we have continually monitored the impact of This Way Up on people's lives. The case studies and quotes throughout this booklet give a strong sense of the many different positive ways in which this happens.



Stories of diverse people and outcomes

We have always felt that a true sense of the programme's effectiveness is best communicated through such stories. This is very much in line with the whole ethos of This Way Up. Rather than impose on participants our notions of 'success' in a limited and predetermined range of issues, they are encouraged to set their own goals, and to assess their own progress in various aspects of life (finances, work, learning and skills, general wellbeing, relationships, family, and friendships). This helps guide the one-to-one coaching work, and gives participants a sense of direction and concerted action.

Statistics backing up the stories

This Way Up has used one main 'quantitative' measure – the World Health Organisation's 'Wellbeing Index' – a simple questionnaire, which participants fill out at the beginning and end of the programme, asking them to indicate how often they experience positive feelings, such as calm, energy, and interest in life. Over the 10 years of This Way Up average scores for all participants have increased from 8.9 out of 25 (considered in healthcare as mild/moderate depression) to 14.8 out of 25 (considered good mental health, and at least in line with, or even above, national averages). In the table below are some other headline statistics for the programme.

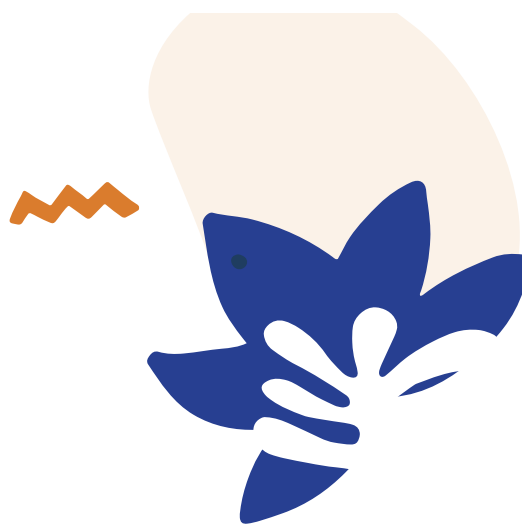


“I feel more like a person with value. I used to think that opportunities were for other people. Now I can move forward with more confidence.”

Delivery	Number of tranches of This Way Up	21
	Total hours of one-to-one coaching delivered	1,336
	Total number of group mindfulness sessions delivered	161
Participant numbers	516 in total	- 379 in the main programme
		- 137 in other TWU services
Programme ratings	% of people who say the programme was 'very helpful'	74%
	% of people who say the programme was 'helpful'	25.5%
Attendance rates	Attendance rate for coaching	92%
	Attendance rate for mindfulness	73%

Types of client and focus areas

We often get asked which kind of person This Way Up is most aimed at and helps. Given the fundamental ethos of the programme, this is almost impossible to answer with a meaningful summary. Participants bring a very broad range of personal challenges, as outlined in section 3. The programme’s flexible approach means that it can ‘pivot’ to meet people exactly where they are at. The following selected statistics also add to the overall picture about who the programme works with:



Category	% of participants (at the time of their participation on This Way Up)
Unemployment	60% unemployed or unable to work due to sickness
Disability	46% self-identified as having a disability (mental, physical or multiple)
Ethnicity	42% from black and minority ethnic groups
Gender	72% female; 23% male; 0.3% self-identified differently (the remainder did not provide this information)
Age	2% 18–25; 14% 26–35; 24% 36–45; 27% 46–55; 26% 55+ (7% unknown)
Housing	41% of participants renting from councils or housing associations; 16% renting privately; 5% living in hostel or temporary accommodation; 8% living with family; 14% owning their own home; 10% ‘other’; and 5% unknown
Referral sources	46% word-of-mouth referrals; 39% referred by local partner agencies (healthcare, voluntary and third sector support services); 13% via QSA website; 2% unknown

Local roots – evolving to a national spread

When This Way Up started it took place entirely in person, and was therefore targeted particularly at people in east London, in keeping with QSA’s founding mission. In its early years, the programme built up a network of informed referral partners across east London – healthcare providers, housing associations, voluntary agencies and charities that support people on a low income in a variety of ways.

As a result the programme has become well-known in east London, with several key agencies providing significant numbers of referrals. One such agency is The Mission GP Practice in Bethnal Green. Its Wellbeing Linkworker, Wilma Bol sees This Way Up as an invaluable alternative to being on an intolerably long waiting list for interventions like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), some of which can feel intimidating or cold and impersonal. As Wilma says, “I think the idea of an organisation that has something to offer for free to people who struggle is so good. It’s a safe place to go and explore who they are without an agenda”.

In 2020 Covid lockdowns meant that the programme had to adapt to be delivered entirely online (details in section 7). As a result, we decided to open out applications to people beyond east London, making use of QSA's wide network of national partners, referral agencies and supporters. The subsequent tranches have therefore included participants from across the UK, although a significant minority are still from east London.

An independent perspective

We commissioned an independent consultancy to externally evaluate This Way Up in 2015/2016, over three tranches of the programme. Their evaluators spoke to people six months after the end of their course. Participants told them about new jobs, hobbies, improved fitness, and better relationships. Others reported coping better with chronic pain and anxieties. All agreed that the combination of a group setting and one-to-one coaching worked for them. The report's key findings were that the vast majority of "people report that [This Way Up] allowed them to interrupt patterns which they now recognised as being harmful" and that they felt that the coping mechanisms they learned "were practical and could be put to use in their daily lives."



SAHESH'S STORY

Sahesh had a particularly "bad year" while facing anxiety and depression, and wanted to find new ways of challenging himself.

Although he tried a number of avenues to change his life, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, it was only when he found This Way Up that he felt he was moving forward: "I never knew about meditation and had never done it, so it really helped me. Anything that was going through my mind I almost felt like I could clear it off by basically meditating, so instead of letting my mind wander all the time, just connecting, be at the present."

"The programme has helped me to develop a better relationship with my own emotions, not to be scared of them or avoid them, but to view them as an indication that something important or that matters to me is happening."

As well as the meditation, he also found the life-coaching sessions to be really helpful: "It was really amazing, because then you can talk with someone more. With the group it's safe, but I think when you do it one-to-one you can go more in depth... you feel more comfortable because you can talk about anything you want really."

Since completing the course and despite his anxiety Sahesh feels more "relaxed and calm." He was inspired to volunteer to help facilitate the mindfulness group in the next This Way Up course, helping teach others the tools he has learned.

– Name and photo changed to protect privacy.

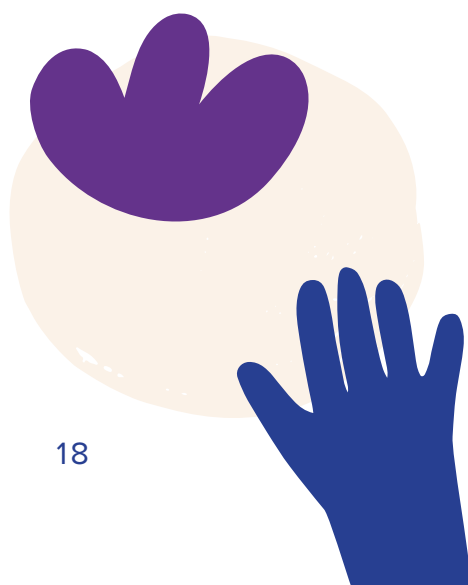
7 INNOVATIONS DURING COVID AND BEYOND

The outbreak of Covid and the subsequent lockdowns in 2020 marked a year of extraordinary disruption and uncertainty for the whole world. And for charities and social purpose organisations it presented huge challenges in how to adapt services to continue to support people in the community. This Way Up was able to respond to these challenges well. The adaptations it made have left a long-lasting positive impact on how the programme is delivered.

Response to Covid lockdown: special 'pop-up' course

The first Covid lockdown in 2020 came in the middle of a This Way Up tranche. Participants were able to complete their one-to-one coaching online or on the phone, and were invited to repeat the next mindfulness course later in the year. They were also invited – along with all previous participants of This Way Up since 2012 – to attend a special six-session 'pop-up' Zoom-based course, held in April–June 2020. This course was designed to help people refresh and

deepen their mindfulness-based resilience skills, and to apply them in these uniquely challenging times. The course was well attended (with an average of 21 attendees across the six sessions) and with a very high level of engagement, enthusiasm and interaction. There was a palpable sense of mutual support and community that participants found particularly helpful in navigating the particular challenges that lockdown had thrown up: anxiety, isolation, relationship issues, old habits kicking back in, sadness and loss.





SANDRA'S STORY

After a considerable period out of work due to ill health, Sandra was feeling more herself, and considering a new career. But along came the pandemic, which meant months of shielding alone due to an underlying illness.

This Way Up came in February, just after Sandra had spent three weeks in hospital due to her illness: "I ended up in hospital in a high-infectious ward. A few days after I got back, there were a lot of infections of Covid in the hospital. I was lucky."

During Covid restrictions, Sandra was able to take part in the course mostly over the phone and online using Zoom. "It was what I was looking for. I'd already been thinking of ways of changing my life because now I was free. I was not a primary carer any more and it was my time to go through the next cycle of my life."

Learning the mindfulness skills has been a "godsend" in helping Sandra to "slow down and take a moment" when she's feeling anxious. Her morning meditation routine is also a chance to assess her physical health, which she has struggled with recently: "I'm able to sit down and say, ok my pain is about an eight, let's see how I'm going to deal with this today."

Throughout lockdown, Sandra was able to access follow-up sessions online, with previous attendees and volunteers. "The way they deliver the sessions makes it feel inclusive and non-judgemental. Participating online, the energy felt tranquil."

– Name and photo changed to protect privacy.

Changes to the programme's format and reach

For the subsequent three tranches the programme was adapted to run entirely online, as intermittent Covid lockdowns continued. The challenges in recruiting people to an online course were mitigated by the careful efforts of our recruitment manager in explaining how the programme would work and to allay anyone's fears. It also enabled us to cast our net wider outside London.

“The online resources are really useful as a point of reference. I am still using the audio files to help my practice.”

Participants adapted extremely well to the Zoom format for the group mindfulness sessions. This Way Up's facilitators were also very well experienced at running group sessions in this way, making effective yet simple use of the format. The programme will continue to run in a hybrid fashion (group mindfulness sessions taking place online, and one-to-one coaching taking place either in person or online – at the choice of the participants).



Open access mini mindfulness course

In February/March 2021 – as Covid and lockdowns continued to disrupt 'normal' life – This Way Up ran a special three-session Zoom mini course on 'Mindfulness for Wellbeing & Resilience During Challenging Times'. This was open to all and free, and was marketed widely to QSA's existing networks and beyond. The course provided a broad introduction to tools and techniques from mindfulness and positive psychology to help people take better care of their mental health and wellbeing – and how to apply this during turbulent times. Participants had access to materials online (written session summaries, plus guided audio and video mindfulness practices) to support them in practising skills in between sessions, and after the end of the course.



“Over the last year or so when the only constant in my life was change, the mindfulness course and the follow up drop-in sessions were something that gave me strength, hope and tools on my way to emotional and mental stability.”

Trial of Monthly Drop-in Workshops for TWU 'graduates'

In February–May 2021 we also ran a trial of new monthly drop-ins for 'graduates' of This Way Up. The sessions, which were attended by a total of 30 participants (10 of whom came to all four sessions) were designed to help people refresh their mindfulness skills; connect with others; and gain new tips on applying mindfulness to daily life. This Way Up had long felt that a drop-in service would be an excellent way to provide ongoing support to people in maintaining momentum around the benefits and changes in their wellbeing and lives, and to create a sense of ongoing mutual support and community. The success of this initiative gave rise to the idea for our next level of innovation in 2022 and beyond – a peer-led regular drop-in service open to all past participants (see section 8 for details).

Course for Men

This Way Up has always attracted more women than men (77% compared to 23%). While this gender imbalance is typical of wellbeing programmes on the open market, the tranche-on-tranche decrease of male participants had become a diversity concern, especially in light of the particular challenges men face around mental health**. In response, This Way Up put on a special three-session mindfulness-based resilience course on Zoom for those identifying as men in September–October 2021, widely marketed to local and national agencies that support men around their mental health.

****77% of men suffer from stress, anxiety or depression at some point in their lives.**

(<https://www.priorygroup.com/blog/40-of-men-wont-talk-to-anyone-about-their-mental-health#:~:text=77%25%20of%20men%20polled%20have,anyone%20about%20their%20mental%20health>)

Men are less likely to access psychological therapies than women: only 36% of referrals to NHS talking therapies are for men.

(<https://files.digital.nhs.uk/99/3916C8/ment-heal-act-stat-eng-2019-20-summ-rep%20v1.1.pdf>)

“A real eye opener, thank you. I will continue to use the approaches and techniques I have been shown.”

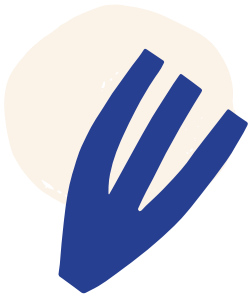
The course introduced simple tools to help men take better care of their wellbeing, and also to support them in speaking more openly about their mental health. It was well received and attended (16 participants). There was also a strong sense of how this kind of service can help turn the tide for men and their mental health. Men spoke about an emergent new positive stereotype: the man whose strength comes from his openness about his feelings and mental health challenges, not from shutting them down. In the following tranche of This Way Up six out of 16 participants were men (38% compared to the historic 23% average), three of whom had taken part in the resilience course for men.



8 — LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



A key reason for This Way Up's effectiveness and longevity has been its ability to continually evolve and change. Some of the resulting changes have been major – like rewriting the mindfulness course, or adapting the programme to become entirely online during Covid. Others have been subtler tweaks – like the number and duration of coaching sessions, or what evaluation data we collect. As This Way Up moves into its second decade, the programme is keen to keep adapting and responding wisely to best meet the needs of our participants. There are two main ways it seeks to do this:



“You're not alone in going through what you're going through – that's nice”

Reach and diversity

Over the years This Way Up has worked hard to reach out to people on a low income in east London and beyond who could most benefit from the programme, and who cannot afford equivalent services on the open market. In particular, the focus has been on attracting applications from people

who have found it harder to engage in statutory or voluntary support services, or to get the most from them. At risk of over-generalisation, such people are more likely to come from 'disadvantaged' groups, such as long-term unemployed, people with a disability, and people from minority ethnic backgrounds. This Way Up can claim some success in reaching these people, as demonstrated by the relatively high proportion of participants from these groups (see section 6 for statistics).

However, the programme isn't complacent, and is keen to keep improving in this regard. This is part of a wider agenda currently for QSA to address challenges around 'equity, diversity and inclusion' (EDI). Particular EDI challenges are, to some degree, distinct to each of QSA's services. In This Way Up's case, the challenge is less about reaching those from traditionally under-represented groups, and more about attracting greater numbers of young people (to date only 15% of participants have been under the age of 36) and men. This Way Up intends to further widen its network of agencies and services that support these groups.

Participant co-production

This Way Up is an intensive shorter-term learning and development experience, which can lead to longer-term changes. Many participants ask what support there may be to help them maintain the momentum of change once it's over. In response, This Way Up is currently devising an ongoing drop-in service open to all past participants. These regular sessions would give people the chance to refresh and maintain their mindfulness-based resilience skills, while creating a sense of community, support and encouragement.

But perhaps the most innovative and significant feature of this regular drop-in service is that it will be participant-led. This Way Up is currently training a selection of past participants in group facilitation skills, rooted in coaching and mindfulness. In the

next stage, This Way Up will co-design with them the regular service, and then support them in initial service delivery. Eventually, the participant team will 'fly solo' in running sessions, with behind-the-scenes supervision and support from This Way Up.

We are not aware of any other such mindfulness-based wellbeing service that has this level of peer-led, participant involvement in the delivery and evolution of the service offering. It will not only benefit many past participants to keep their lives on track, but also support some people to move from 'service participant' to 'service enabler'. This shift can be hugely important – strong evidence of individual progress, as well as giving them valuable skills that are highly transferable for multiple contexts (employment, community activities, personal and family relationships, etc.)



9 — THIS WAY UP PEOPLE AND THANKS



“This Way Up really does seem to help people deal more effectively with the challenges life throws at them, and to get themselves back on track. I’ve witnessed hundreds of cases where the programme seems to be a major turning point in people’s lives. It’s hard to put into words how rewarding this feels.”

Tim Segaller Programme Founder, Mindfulness Course Trainer and One-to-one Life Coach



“Many mindfulness programmes try to address diversity simply by reducing fees for under-represented groups. This does not solve the problem. This Way Up’s unique approach does something different. By blending mindfulness with one-to-one coaching it helps participants tap into their innate wisdom to strengthen self-belief. I get immense value being part of the This Way Up team.”

Sham Minhas Mindfulness Course Trainer and Peer-led Service Lead



“Being part of the This Way Up team means meeting and supporting wonderful individuals – people who might feel stuck at this particular point of their life, but who deep inside feel and believe that change is possible. To be able to assist them in this change journey is a true privilege. It is also always a journey for me – as each interaction re-shapes many things for me.”

Magda Voigt One-to-one Life Coach



“It’s great to have the opportunity to work with people who wouldn’t usually be able to access mindfulness and coaching, and to see first-hand the difference in their confidence and self-belief after just six weeks. This Way Up definitely works, and I’m honoured to be involved.”

Melanie Sheehan One-to-one Life Coach



“My experience working as part of the This Way Up team has been absolutely fulfilling and rewarding. I particularly appreciated the immediate feedback and reporting of positive outcomes from participants. I feel that I was making an actual difference.”

Michael Johnson One-to-one Life Coach



“Working with clients on This Way Up is incredibly rewarding – seeing people make such dramatic progress in their lives and mindsets.”

Becky Seale One-to-one Life Coach



“Working on This Way Up is an inspiration and a reminder that interventions can be simple and effective. Talking to the participants prior to the programme and listening to their feelings of stuckness, confusion or anxiety, and then seeing the impact that the programme has had on them is humbling.”

Jane Brant Programme Administrator

Acknowledgements

This Way Up would also like to thank the following people for their support over the years:

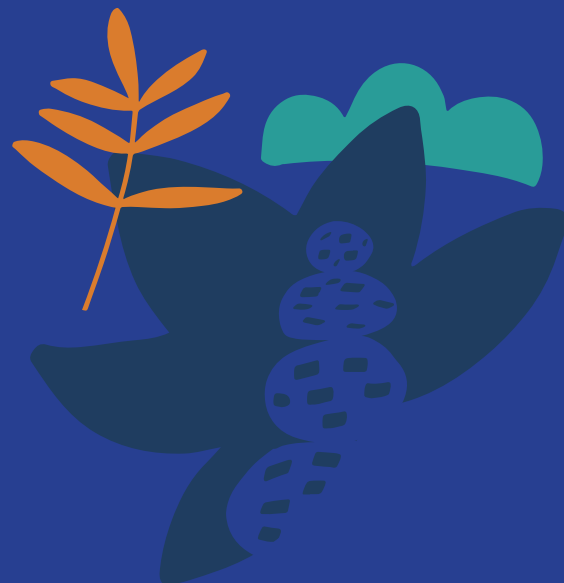
- **Participants and volunteers:** without you, there would be no This Way Up!
- **Previous This Way Up team members:** Michele Grant (who co-ran This Way Up between 2013 and 2020); Jolene McCullough (Programme Recruitment Manager), Farah Govani (Life Coach).
- **QSA staff and trustees:** especially Judith Moran (QSA's Director); Caroline Tisdall (Trustee), Claire Brandon (Head of Services), Ramona Pearson and Duncan McLaggan (ex-Heads of Operations); fundraising and communications team past and present, including Rosie Marteau, Sarah Hind, Jez Smith, Sarah Woolley, Peter Christmas, Giles Robinson and Catriona Forrest.
- **Partners and referral agencies:** who have been hugely supportive of our efforts, and have helped spread the word to the people they work with.



SAMIA'S STORY

"I've got twenty years' experience of working in mental health and then had an accident and couldn't work anymore. Life-coaching was something I'd tried before so I found the idea of This Way Up really interesting. This Way Up was great. By the third session a light had gone on for me. Because of not working for a while and having been stuck in the house and out of everything This Way Up was a way of reintroducing me to the world, a guide on how to start up again. It led me to want to begin again and start up a programme of my own. I have a lot of life experience, and work experience in mental health which I don't want to throw away."

– Name and photo changed to protect privacy.



10

THIS WAY UP MINI GUIDE TO WELLBEING

Life can be challenging. Of course, it can also be wonderfully fulfilling – but the tough truth is that we can face all sorts of physical and emotional struggles at different times in our lives.

While This Way Up can't solve these directly for you, we want to help you to support yourself through whatever may be challenging you. That's exactly what This Way Up seeks to do for its participants – helping them to deal best with challenge and change, so they can thrive in their lives.

We have seen countless times how mindfulness can help people to navigate the choppy waters of life. It's about getting more ground beneath your feet. This is ultimately what mindfulness can do, so that you're better placed to take good care of yourselves and make wise decisions for today and tomorrow. So in this short guide, we look at how to apply mindfulness to the reality of your life. We also include some tried and tested top tips on maintaining general wellbeing.

This guide is also available online, together with a guided video presentation and meditation: www.quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/improving-your-wellbeing/way/guide-mindful



The ABC of Mindfulness

Let's start with a brief overview of mindfulness – what, why and how. The starting point is a basic distinction between two modes of mind: autopilot (or doing mode) and intentional (or being mode). Autopilot evolved in our prehistoric past to keep us safe and functioning. It takes care of basic tasks and activities, and also alerts us to danger. It's essential to our survival. It's also highly useful in carrying out all our routine activities without us having to think about them, like getting dressed, walking, talking.

However autopilot mode isn't so useful when it comes to solving complex tasks, including and especially those that involve complex and difficult emotions. Yet we use autopilot so often that sometimes we get stuck here, particularly when something happens that we perceive as a threat.

This is when it's great to activate the other mode of our mind – intentional – located in our 'clever' neo-cortex. This part is better suited to the job of solving complex problems and emotions. It's capable of highly sophisticated, analytical and imaginative thinking and problem solving.

This is where mindfulness comes in, because the best way to step out of automatic repetitive thinking and to step into intentional mode is to create a gap or space for awareness and reflection. And this is what mindfulness is all about. We use a simple ABC model of mindfulness:

Awareness of your experience: pausing regularly throughout your day to notice what's happening in your mind, body and environment – with kindness and patience. Creating space in this way is like re-booting and refreshing yourself. It paves the way for the next step...

Being with your experience: having created more space, your brain and body are better able to process your experience. The mindfulness approach here is to notice thoughts, emotions and body sensations, and to allow them to run through you without getting overinvolved in them. It's also about cultivating an attitude of acceptance towards difficult experiences, instead of pushing them away. This opens up the possibility for the third step...

Choosing wise responses to your experience: by doing the first two steps, you open up access to the wiser parts of your brain where you can see things more clearly, and what's in your best interests. This is about responding wisely instead of reacting automatically – allowing the most helpful decisions and choices to emerge. Then it's about taking active steps to bring about real-life change.

Top tips for applying mindfulness to wellbeing

- It's extremely helpful to **establish a mindfulness routine and practice** – ideally first thing in the day, even if only a few minutes.
- Be **vigilant around how much news and social media you engage with**. It can be quite anxiety-provoking. One dose of news a day is enough.
- **Notice strongly triggering thoughts and write them down**. It's also really useful if you can find people to share those thoughts with. Chances are you're not the only one to have had them.
- **Find positive distractions**: keeping busy with activities that are interesting, nourishing and stimulating is a BRILLIANT WAY to keep anxiety at bay.
- **Kindness**: this is perhaps the most important of all, and mindfulness can open up the portals to natural kindness to self and others. Carve out time for gentle, self-caring activities as far as possible. Also, don't give yourself a hard time for the fact that you may experience difficult emotions at times. This is an entirely natural part of being human.

Five top tips for general wellbeing

The following five top tips are taken from the New Economics Foundation's 'Five ways to wellbeing'. They are highly effective in establishing a more resilient and positive outlook on life.

1. **Connect**: feeling connected to others can make all the difference in your mood and outlook.
2. **Be active**: exercise and physical movement are not only good for your body, but for your mind too.
3. **Take notice**: this is the mindfulness thing again! It's another way of applying it throughout your day. Take time to look at things in your environment afresh...just notice how things actually are...
4. **Keep learning**: if you have any spare time, learning or developing new skills can provide a powerful boost to wellbeing. There are a great many free online courses. Or perhaps you might want to pick up some activity that you used to enjoy doing but have neglected for a while (for example playing a musical instrument, knitting, etc.)
5. **Give**: again, if you have spare time, you may feel able to offer your support to others who may need it. Being of service to someone else sometimes really helps take the focus away from your own concerns, at least for a while.

We hope you've found this short guide helpful. We don't pretend that it will solve some real-world challenges you may be facing. However, we know from our experience working with many people over the years that if you can take basic good care of your mind and body by following some of the wisdom above, then you are far more likely to be in a good overall state to deal with difficulty and to make good decisions about how best to respond.



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