







**Kerrin Page**  
CEO of West Sussex Mind

# Welcome from our CEO

**Welcome to our new five-year strategy 2025-2030. This is the culmination of 18 months of structured work to develop and refine a new strategy in consultation with our trustees, partners, people who use our services, employees and volunteers.**

We've actively listened to our stakeholders – through engagement events, trustee away-days, surveys and strategy roadshows – and we've examined local demand and the challenges people face around mental health support in West Sussex. In line with our values as an organisation, we're proud to share what we believe is a truly co-produced\* strategy with the voice of lived experience at its heart.

Against the backdrop of worsening mental health among adults, children and young people in West Sussex, growing waiting lists and greater complexity of need, we will work with our partners to co-produce high-quality services that intervene early, prevent the escalation of problems and meet the increased needs of our local population.

We will build on our deep mental health knowledge, strong community connections and leadership role in the local voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to tackle health inequalities and reach under-represented groups, who may find it more difficult to access our support – so that everyone in our

community gets the mental health support they need and deserve. And we'll continue to reduce stigma around mental health through our community development, training and communications activities.

Our strategy sets out how we will work together with all our stakeholders and partners to move from where we are now as an organisation to where we want to be over the next five years. And we'll be accountable for delivering on our aims through five key metrics we've developed to measure our progress and impact (see page 13).

The detail of our vision, mission and strategic aims is outlined in this document, which we hope you enjoy reading and helps you learn more about our work. In order to make our strategy as accessible as possible, we have explained some of the terms used with footnotes throughout.

We're confident that our co-produced strategy will ensure that we can meet the mental health needs of our communities over the next five years and we will work in partnership to achieve that, building more healthy and resilient communities together.

**\* When a piece of work is co-produced, it has been created as a result of an "equal partnership where people with lived and learned experience work together from start to finish" (NHS England).**

# A view from peer volunteer Simon

It's been a privilege to contribute to West Sussex Mind's new strategy and I know from first-hand experience how important its aims really are.

I've experienced obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and associated anxiety and depression, since childhood. At first I didn't realise – and didn't want to admit – that I had a mental health condition, because I didn't want to be judged. Not feeling I could be open only made my situation worse, leading me to isolate and withdraw into my own OCD-controlled world.

The breakthrough came when my GP referred me to a mental health worker at West Sussex Mind. This connected me to other services through the charity, including discussion groups, where I could share my experience in a safe and non-judgemental environment.

Knowing that you aren't alone, and there are others who can empathise with you from their experience, helps immensely to reduce the isolation that mental illness can cause. Since then, I've trained with West Sussex Mind as a peer volunteer to support others who are struggling with their mental health.

It was a pleasure to be invited to one of West Sussex Mind's strategy roadshows last year. Listening to people who benefit from the

charity's support ensures that its strategy includes what's important to people with lived experience of mental health conditions and, importantly, it reflects the charity's values of working together and learning from each other. I felt a sense of achievement being able to contribute to the strategy and I felt that my voice, and every voice, count.

The aims for 2025-2030 show careful consideration of the needs of those using mental health services and cover a number of areas that are important to me: reducing health inequalities, building an inclusive culture, addressing mental health stigma and challenging prejudice. The strategy aims to question the misperceptions which can prevent individuals from seeking the support they need, while reaching out to under-represented groups for whom stigma remains a barrier.

The next five years will undoubtedly present challenges in a difficult economic environment. However, having experienced first-hand the life-changing effect West Sussex Mind's work can have, I firmly believe that, in the words of its values, "we are unstoppable".

Watch a video  
about our new  
strategy



**Simon Wells**  
Peer volunteer



# The mental health landscape in West Sussex



**1 in 6 people living in West Sussex has a common mental health condition**

**24% of adults in West Sussex self-report high anxiety**

**3.3% of people in West Sussex live in the most deprived areas in England for income**

West Sussex Mind is an independent local mental health charity, providing mental health support and advice, delivering training to individuals, organisations and businesses, and campaigning to increase understanding about mental health and reduce stigma.

We've been supporting the people of West Sussex with their mental health for over 50 years through services that primarily cover the county's coastal and rural communities.

West Sussex is home to a diverse range of communities and includes some of the most affluent – and most deprived – areas in the UK. This diversity brings a range of mental health needs, experiences and challenges when it comes to people getting the support they need.

A key component of our strategy development has been looking at local and national data to inform us about increasing levels of need in our local communities and to steer our journey over the next five years.

Data from the West Sussex Public Mental Health Needs Assessment 2024<sup>1</sup> tells us that:

- One in six people living in West Sussex has a common mental health condition, such as anxiety or depression
- Anxiety levels have risen over the past five years and 24% of adults in West Sussex self-report high anxiety
- Mental ill health is rising in West Sussex. In 2022-23, there were 9,050 people with severe mental illness on GP registers, which is a 5% increase on the previous year
- There are increasing referrals to children and young people's mental health support services and demand for support is greater than the current capacity.

<sup>1</sup> **West Sussex County Council and partners, Public Mental Health Needs Assessment 2024:** [jsna.westsussex.gov.uk/updates/public-mental-health-needs-assessment-2024/](https://jsna.westsussex.gov.uk/updates/public-mental-health-needs-assessment-2024/)



We also know that several factors in the communities we serve continue to impact people's mental wellbeing.

- There is clear evidence that people living in poverty or experiencing financial stress are more likely to develop mental health problems<sup>2</sup> and this has been reflected in the experiences of people who use our services. Local data tells us that 3.3% of people in West Sussex live in the most deprived areas in England for income (this rises to 9.3% in Adur) – with 8.2% of West Sussex residents living in fuel poverty.
- West Sussex has an older population compared with the rest of England – with 22.8% of residents being 65 or older (rising to 26% in coastal areas). It is well known that mental health, as well as physical health, tends to be poorer in older age – with Age UK reporting that nearly half of adults over 55 have experienced depression or anxiety at some point in their lives.<sup>3</sup>

Demand for our own services is rising. In 2023-24, we supported 6,323 people, more than ever before, and new referrals via our Help Point phone line increased by 10% to 3,469.

**“I attended a strategy roadshow in Midhurst. I was really impressed that, as a service user, I was being given a voice in the development of West Sussex Mind’s five-year plan. It was a really positive experience. ”**

Kevin May, service user

Against this backdrop of rising need and a greater complexity of mental health and wider social problems, our new strategy responds to these challenges through our priorities to:

- fight for investment in preventative services
- address health inequalities and multiple disadvantage
- increase our reach with under-represented groups who may need our help the most and may face barriers when accessing mental health support.

We also know that we have to meet these challenges within the constraints of an uncertain funding landscape and cuts in some of our contracts. That's one of the reasons why we need to work in partnership more than ever to deliver efficient and joined-up mental health services to meet the needs of our local population. And we need to diversify our sources of income with a new fundraising strategy that gives us the flexibility to invest, innovate and support our ambitious aims.

<sup>2</sup> **‘Mental Health and the Cost of Living Crisis’, Mental Health Foundation, 2023**

<sup>3</sup> **‘The State of Health and Care of Older People’, Age UK, 2023**

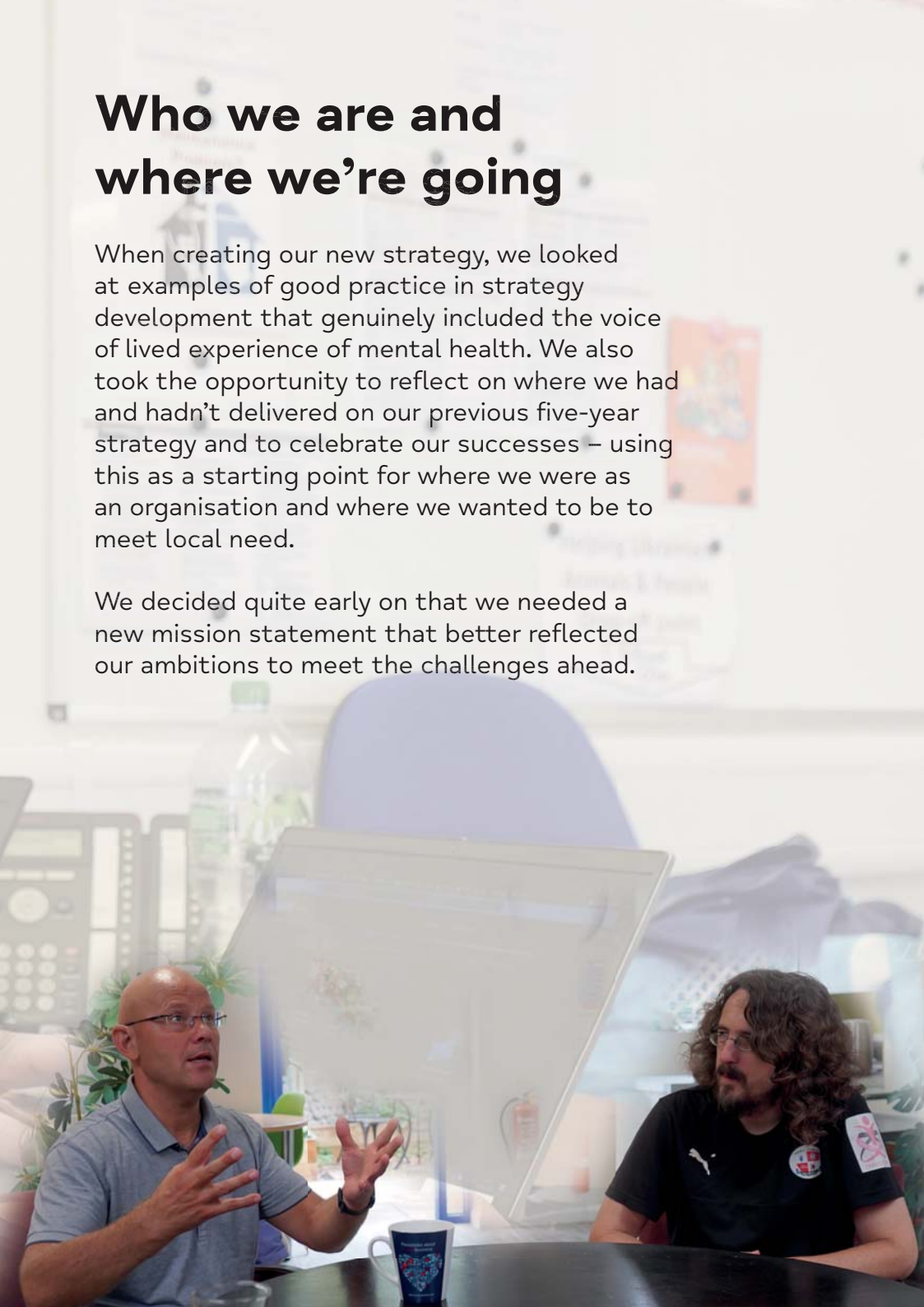




## Who we are and where we're going

When creating our new strategy, we looked at examples of good practice in strategy development that genuinely included the voice of lived experience of mental health. We also took the opportunity to reflect on where we had and hadn't delivered on our previous five-year strategy and to celebrate our successes – using this as a starting point for where we were as an organisation and where we wanted to be to meet local need.

We decided quite early on that we needed a new mission statement that better reflected our ambitions to meet the challenges ahead.







## Our vision

“We won’t give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets both support and respect.”

## Our mission

“Together with those experiencing mental health problems, we will build inclusive and empowering mental health services, reduce barriers to support and challenge stigma.”

## Our values

These are the values that guide our work and shape the culture of our organisation.

### “We are equitable”

We treat people fairly, with respect and show empathy and kindness.

### “We are open”

We reach out to anyone who needs us and we listen, respond and are inclusive.

### “We work together”

We’re stronger in partnership.

### “We are curious”

We learn from each other, our partners, the community and through development.

### “We are unstoppable”

We have passion, independence and speak out fearlessly.

### “We strive for excellence”

We are motivated and driven to work to the best of our ability to provide great services.

We developed five strategic aims, which will steer our work over the next five years.



# Strategic aim 1:

## Our mental health services

**Mental health services for adults, children and young people are transforming. We will provide a key leadership role in enabling this, co-producing high-quality services that deliver vital support in our community.**

**Goal 1:** We will campaign and fight for investment in preventative services.

**Goal 2:** We will ensure that all our work uses trauma-informed\* principles, is co-produced and that we increase opportunities for participation.

**Goal 3:** We will provide leadership and collaborate with partners to transform systems and services, ensuring there is no wrong front door and people have equal access to support.

**Goal 4:** We will make our services more accessible by extending our online and telephone support and our provision outside working hours.

**Goal 5:** We will ensure that all services demonstrate the difference they make by measuring outcomes.

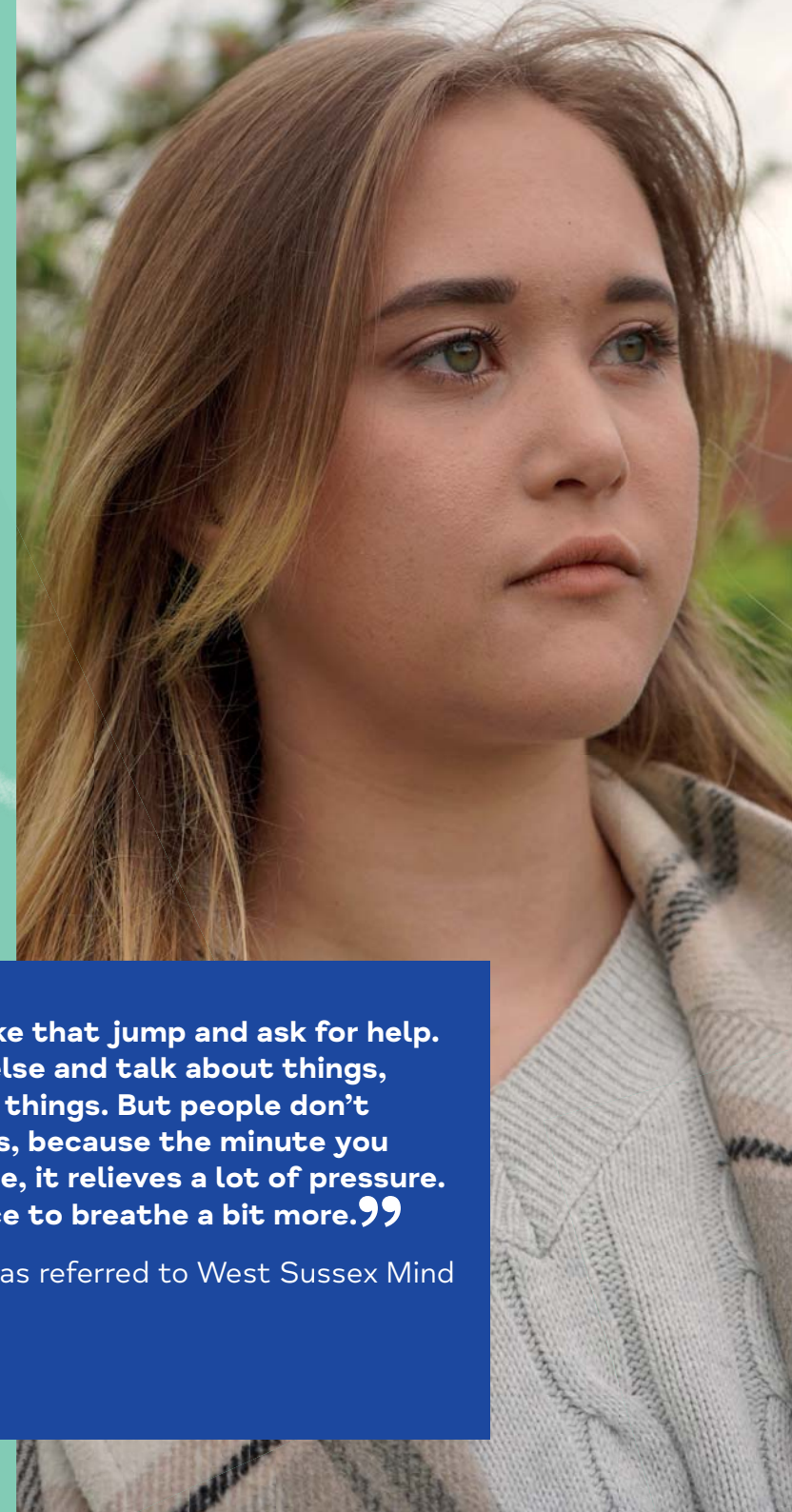
\* Trauma-informed means being sensitive to the trauma that service users, employees or volunteers may have experienced and actively seeking to prevent re-traumatisation.



Check out this video about  
our young people's service

“It’s so difficult to make that jump and ask for help. To put trust in someone else and talk about things, especially very traumatic things. But people don’t realise how important it is, because the minute you share it with someone else, it relieves a lot of pressure. It actually gives you space to breathe a bit more.”

Service user Sydney, who was referred to West Sussex Mind by her GP





## Strategic aim 2: Addressing health inequalities

**We want to ensure that everyone has access to the mental health support they need and deserve by working to reduce health inequalities.**

**Goal 1:** We will focus on reaching those facing multiple disadvantage, increasing the number of people we support from under-represented groups.

**Goal 2:** We will deliver our plan to become a truly anti-racist organisation.

**Goal 3:** We will involve people with lived experience, recognising that we will not always be best placed to lead our health inequalities work and that we are stronger in partnership.

**Goal 4:** We will use our knowledge, influence and reach to challenge and speak out where we identify health inequalities, and share learning and innovative practice with others.

**Goal 5:** We will use equality impact assessments to review our services, policies and procedures to ensure that they are accessible and inclusive and that there is no unintended bias.

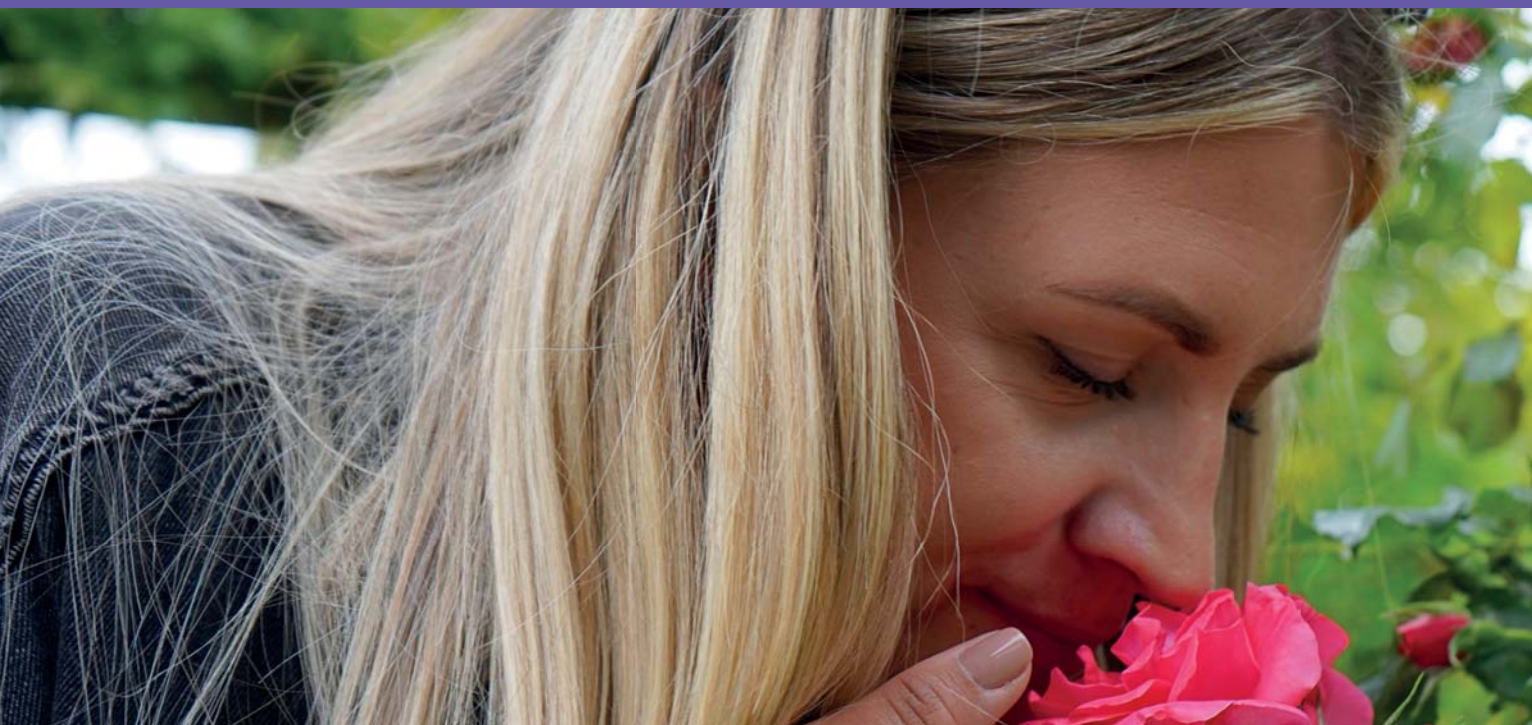
**“ My experience as a South Asian seeking support for my mental health has been a rollercoaster. I always had the preconception that the services weren’t made for me, because I couldn’t see anyone like me talking about mental health or represented within these services.”**

Tanya, a trustee and former service user of West Sussex Mind. Tanya is an expert by experience for our work to understand barriers to support for people of colour and minoritised communities





## Strategic aim 3: Tackling mental health stigma



**We will empower people to share their experience and will amplify their voices to help tackle prejudice and stigma.**

**Goal 1:** We will reduce the stigma of mental health issues with an initial focus on men, racialised communities and those with severe mental illness. We will do this through impactful communications and community development work.

**Goal 2:** We will create healthy workplaces by promoting best practice and seeking opportunities to grow services to educate employers.

**Goal 3:** We will create opportunities to educate and raise awareness about mental health and support available to build resilience in our communities.



“Men have this really annoying thing about bottling things up. We don’t speak out because there’s a stigma... Stiff upper lip and strong... and we’re not, we all break down sometimes. But no one should have to suffer alone. Don’t be silent, speak out and get support.”

Timmy Ovard, who fundraised for West Sussex Mind in memory of his friend Graeme who died by suicide



Watch Timmy’s  
moving story  
on YouTube



## Strategic aim 4: Our people



**We will build an inclusive organisational culture and supportive workplace where people are proud to be part of West Sussex Mind. We will invest in opportunities for employees, volunteers and trustees to develop.**

**Goal 1:** We will develop and implement a measurable people strategy.

**Goal 2:** We will build on the success of our volunteer programmes, exploring short-term volunteering opportunities and increasing uptake in services new to volunteering.

**Goal 3:** We will develop peer employee and volunteer roles, strengthening routes into employment and opportunities for progression.

**Goal 4:** We will work with our partners to explore opportunities to collaborate on workforce pathways.

**“It felt great to be part of shaping the strategy. I feel proud to work at West Sussex Mind.”**

Employee who attended a strategy roadshow in Worthing

**“It was a chance to talk and work alongside other colleagues and service users I normally wouldn’t see and to think about the organisation as a whole and not just my service.”**

Employee who attended a strategy roadshow in Littlehampton



# Strategic aim 5: Our organisation, finance and buildings

**Our organisation will be innovative, efficient and financially secure, minimising any negative impact on the environment.**

**Goal 1:** We will develop a new fundraising strategy that enables us to diversify our income, giving us the flexibility to invest, support innovation and meet our strategic aims.

**Goal 2:** We will undertake a review of our premises, to ensure we are in the right locations to best meet the needs of our communities.

**Goal 3:** We will develop a social return on investment\* framework to enable us to truly evidence our impact, and the added value that we bring.

**Goal 4:** We will explore opportunities for efficiency, innovation and to diversify our income with consideration of the impact on the environment.

**Goal 5:** We will work with partners in the Mind Federation to deliver the “Federation First strategy”, co-creating a sustainable future for Mind in Sussex and nationally.

\* **Social return on investment means looking at the outcomes (social, environmental and economic) an organisation achieves through its activities and calculating the financial benefit these outcomes can bring to the wider community. These calculations help us to work out the effectiveness of projects and services.**

SCAN TO DONATE



“ I chose to fundraise for West Sussex Mind, because supporting mental health is more important than ever. It’s a fantastic small charity doing excellent work for those that need it. Signing up for the Brighton Half Marathon and the thought of helping people through West Sussex Mind really motivated me with my training and with the run on the day! ”

Lesley who ran Brighton Half Marathon for us in February 2025



# How we will measure our success

Here are five key things we will track to measure our impact and progress in delivering our strategy.

**90% of people using our services will be more able to manage their own mental health and emotional wellbeing**



**Year on year, we will reduce the disparity between our service user demographics and local population data**



**90% of workplace wellbeing course attendees will feel better able to support themselves and colleagues around mental health and wellbeing**



**90% of employees, volunteers and trustees will feel valued in their role**



**We will diversify our sources of income, so that no one funder accounts for more than 50% of our income**





# Finding community for my family

**Jo struggled with her mental health when her twins were born prematurely and with heart conditions. Subsequently she experienced postnatal depression. Here she describes how, since seeking support with Families in Mind, she has found community with a group that feels “like family” to her**

I felt very isolated and anxious after our twins were born. I was concerned that our children had disabilities and I was struggling to manage everyone's needs. Then when I became pregnant with our now three-year-old son, Grayson, I struggled again when we were told that he had a blocked aorta and was unlikely to survive.

I felt depressed and angry that we were having another child with disabilities. And then, when he survived against the odds, having open heart surgery at eight days old, I experienced postnatal depression. I think this was partly because I hadn't processed the birth trauma with the twins, and my partner Becky's near death during childbirth, but also because I spent most of my pregnancy not expecting Grayson to survive and so didn't bond in the same way.

Becky, Grayson and I decided to try West Sussex Mind's play and chat sessions for parents experiencing difficulties with their mental health. At first I sat back and just observed, but slowly I began chatting and building relationships. Over time Families in Mind has become a safe

space for our family where I can be open if I'm finding things difficult with my kids and not feel judged.

The weekly group is a great community and you aren't made to feel like a service user being helped by a charity; I feel like any other parent. It's a priceless support group that doesn't just listen to us, but inspires and encourages us, and gives us coping strategies for the hard times.

My life has become much healthier and I've built my confidence in social situations. It's made me feel valued and accepted. I'm not excluded for being autistic and sometimes a little blunt, but feel like I genuinely matter and that people are interested in what I have to say.

I feel the most 'normal' I have in a long time and I'm hopeful for our family again. Although life is still a struggle at times, I feel much more supported with help from Families in Mind.





## A word from our chair: delivering for those who need us most

Our new five-year strategy has been a wonderful opportunity to take a fresh look at our progress so far, changes in the mental health landscape and how we will address the challenges ahead. There's a lot of work that goes into developing a new strategy and while we updated our previous five-year plan every year, this important new roadmap ensures that our work is live, relevant and up to date.

The new strategy is the responsibility of the Board of trustees and we planned the last 18 months to give it extra time and resource, to allow for co-production and for different ideas and viewpoints to feed into the process.

I'm super-proud of how everyone engaged so actively in developing our new strategy. I'm honoured that our employees, service users, volunteers and partners all felt that they had a part to play in our wonderful charity. These contributions, with plenty of ideas and vibrant discussions, have given us important guidance and a positive steer for the next five years.

We know that the decisions we made – and our new mission and strategic aims – are evidence-based. They are founded on data about current levels of need from our services and the West Sussex Public Mental Health Needs Assessment – and on feedback from our partners, service users and employees with the voice of lived experience at the centre.

Of course any new strategy expands on the previous one, as well as highlighting new areas for focus. In addition to building and improving on our excellent services for adults, children and young people, our new roadmap is an opportunity to develop further our work tackling health inequalities and reducing stigma through our training and education offer.

Our initial focus will be on developing our support for men, who our data tells us don't come forward for support in the same numbers as women. We also acknowledge the high level of demand for mental health support among children and young people – and the systemic challenges of meeting that need – and we will do our utmost to support this group.

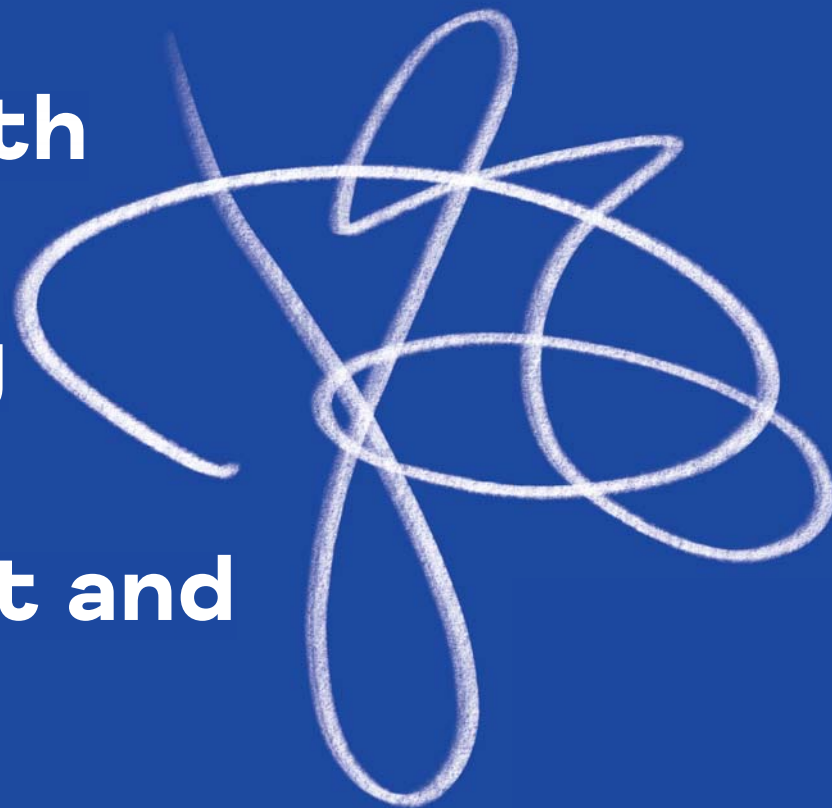
There will be ongoing challenges and the environment we operate in is constantly evolving. The cost of living crisis is a reality that continues to affect people's mental health, and there is a backlog of mental health needs that have gone unmet.

In the face of growing waiting lists – and a restricted financial environment – we will need to work efficiently, and closely with our partners, to meet the challenges ahead. And we'll need to be flexible to adapt to the changing environment. But change also comes with opportunity and we can be confident that our robust new strategy is closely linked with what our community needs.





**“Together with those  
experiencing mental health  
problems, we will build  
inclusive and empowering  
mental health services,  
reduce barriers to support and  
challenge stigma”**



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