

# Evaluation of Peter Bedford Housing Association Vocational and Community Services

Mobilise Public Ltd, November 2015

## Executive Summary

*"I would tell [people] to find out about [PBHA] because they would enjoy contributing towards something and giving something back [to society]... I like showing that I have a skill and that I can provide towards something. It is nice to use my initiative to design my own product. I think it is surprising to see what you can actually do when you put your mind to it"*

1. Mobilise were engaged by Peter Bedford Housing Association to evaluate the effectiveness and value of their Vocational and Community Services (VCS) offer.
2. We find the Vocational and Community Services offer is a unique blend of end-to-end interventions for people facing multiple disadvantages and exclusions.
3. The offer broadly achieves what it sets out to do- provide bespoke recovery opportunities for its service users.
4. The approach embeds co-production with service users, and actively combats stigma to support services users to become more active citizens.
5. The offer compares favourably to other recovery focussed support services.
6. The VCS employment offer is particularly effective.
7. The report recommends extending the offer, particularly the creative industries and social enterprise elements.
8. The report recommends further developing data collection and evaluation of user journeys.

## Part one – Introduction, Background & Context

### 1.1 Introduction

Mobilise Public Ltd was appointed to evaluate the success of Peter Bedford Housing Association's (PBHA) Vocational and Community Services (VCS) Programme. Mobilise did this by examining PBHA's own records and quarterly reports, qualitative and quantitative targets, utilising focus groups, interviews with staff members and service users, and undertaking a comparator analysis.

Section One examines PBHA's own records and quarterly reports to see if the organisation met its targets for various funding streams, as well as specific goals, such as participation and attendance rates, progression to employment and independent living.

Section Two looks at similar projects and research carried out using the Recovery Model, creating a framework with which to evaluate PBHA's success in implementing the model.

Section Three evaluates the value of the work to service users, wider community and partner

organisations.

Section Four examines PBHA's monitoring and evaluation practices and Section Five provides a short list of recommendations that PBHA may wish to consider going forward.

In essence we were impressed with PBHA's VCS services – they mostly deliver against both internal targets and those set by funded programmes; the embedded approach to recovery is clearly evidenced and identifiable throughout; they compare favourably when comparing to comparator organisations, and most importantly tenants and service users are increasingly involved in both having a say, organising activities and co-producing particularly with opportunities relating to the creative industries. In fact there is evidence of increasingly linked 'end to end' working; food is produced that is healthier and eaten in cafes; tenants and service users get real life experience of making products for sale and working in PBHA's own sales environment, Outpost.

There is still room for improvement. Chiefly better data systems could be employed to make the capturing of individual and programme data easier for all; better publicity for activities and regular evaluation would enable better take up and fine tuning; and continued investment in staff is essential to the recovery model. We describe a triple bottom line that PBHA are beginning to create through some of its activities – benefit to the tenants and service users; benefits for society; and financial benefits to the organisation. This is an approach that can be built on and should underpin all new activity at PBHA.

All of the sections of the evaluation utilise focus groups held by Mobilise to discover whether the quantitative and qualitative targets have been met. Eight focus groups were delivered for this evaluation; four with staff members and four with participants.

The evaluation explores PBHA's approach to supporting vulnerable and excluded adults, examines the effectiveness of recent changes that have been made and methods used. It will also assess how and why outcomes have been achieved, or not, and the value and significance of PBHA's work to service users and the wider community.

## 1.2 Background

The majority of the people experiencing mental health issues are unemployed and amongst those who suffer the most from social exclusion<sup>1</sup>. A report authored by the Royal College of Psychiatrists found that less than half of the people who have a common mental illness are employed. For people without a common mental health disorder employment rates are much higher, at 69%. According to research from King's College London, the economic recession exacerbated this situation. Between 2006 -2010 the rate of unemployment increased from 12.7% to 18.2% for people with mental health problems, twice the increase than for people who do not experience mental health issues. Experts cite that stigma towards people with mental health issues is a significant factor in higher rates of unemployment.

This is particularly worrying since access to employment, training, housing and social inclusion are essential components of a successful path to recovery.<sup>2</sup> The benefits of supporting individuals re-enter mainstream society and achieve a good quality of life are widely cited. Organisations that offer a mix of these services are especially valuable when the barriers people with mental health problems face are considered.

---

<sup>1</sup> (Meltzer et al., 1995 and 2002, Burns et al., 2007).

<sup>2</sup> (The National Mental Health Development Unit, 2007; Department for Health, Breaking Down Barriers Report.)

Evidence also shows that volunteering improves physical and mental wellbeing, and increases opportunities for social inclusion.<sup>3</sup> Taking part in courses, workshops, mainstream activities and building social relationships help people take control of their lives. The benefits of forming good relationships, taking part in satisfying work and belonging to a community are well documented in research.<sup>4</sup> This is especially valid for high-risk groups for social exclusion, such as those with learning difficulties and disabilities, low incomes, mental health problems and a history of drug or alcohol misuse or offending.

Recovery also features prominently in the Government's 2011 mental health outcome strategy 'No health without mental health'. The strategy builds on previous statements supporting recovery as the way forward for mental health services and suggests that for a good quality of life recovery will be supported by people being able to '*manage their own lives, develop stronger social relationships, a greater sense of purpose, the skills they need for living and working, improved chances in education, better employment rates, and a suitable and stable place to live*'.

### 1.3 Context

Based in the London Boroughs of Hackney and Islington, Peter Bedford Housing Association has been supporting socially excluded adults in North East London for the past 40 years. Many of PBHA's tenants have a history of homelessness, mental health problems, learning difficulties and disabilities, drug or alcohol misuse or offending. Each year PBHA enables 450 vulnerable and excluded people in North East London to gain confidence and skills to re-build their lives and achieve greater independence.

PBHA provides a combination of supported housing and innovative vocational and community based training, social enterprise and community activities which facilitate a progression pathway from recovery through to further learning and achievement.

One of PBHA's objectives is to extend its activities beyond its residential community, to a wider cohort of residents from Islington and Hackney. Islington has especially high levels of inequality, and Finsbury Park ward in Islington is amongst the top 20% most deprived wards in England. 40% of areas in Hackney are among the 10% most deprived in England, with only five local authorities in England having a bigger proportion of deprived areas. Healthy life expectancy is 4 to 5 years below the national average, there is a higher than average hospital admission rate for mental health disorders - one of the highest rates in the country with significant cost implications, and the proportion of statutory homeless households is more than 4 times the average for England.

The area is home to many programmes designed to address social problems, including a wide range of organisations that support vulnerable individuals through training, workshops and a range of activities. There is therefore an existing network of organisations with similar goals and PBHA has been able to make links with and benefit from many of them. These include Shoreditch Spa, The Food Chain, Hackney Young People Outdoors and Hackney Learning Trust.

The impact of government welfare reforms, cuts to supported housing, rises in unemployment amongst people with mental health issues due to the economic downturn across Europe and changing demographics of Hackney and Islington account for some of the challenges for PBHA.

---

<sup>3</sup> (Brown et al. 2003, Rabiner et al. 2003, Department of Health, 2010)

<sup>4</sup> Repper & Rerkins, 2013; North East London NHS Trust 2011-2013)

## 1.4 Vocational and Community Services Programme

PBHA's Vocational and Community Services (VCS) programme helps individuals identify and break down barriers to recovery and independence. Participants are supported through personal development plans and a range of resources and learning opportunities that encourage them on the journey from feeling stuck to self-reliance. PBHA's Vocational and Community Services (VCS) adds value to the housing association's offer and reaches out to the local community by providing social enterprise, training courses and community activities in the following areas:

- Growing and cooking healthy food.
- Creative Industries - joinery, art, print making, product design, exhibitions
- Outpost shop and gallery (sells products made by service users).
- Retail and hospitality training in enterprises - Outpost and cafes.
- Formal and informal entry level courses e.g. English, maths, online skills, food hygiene, and customer service.
- Employability support and coaching.
- Volunteering across PBHA.

VCS's uniqueness lies in its ability to provide a personalised programme for the individual, for example, a participant can volunteer in our shop, make something in the joinery workshop and attend a numeracy class within a welcoming and supportive environment that plays to individual interest and strengths. Enterprise and Community are at the heart of PBHA's recovery model.

For those closer to employment, VCS provides training and work experience placements in its enterprises – Arts and Creative, Catering and Horticulture, Retail, Reception and Hospitality. These offer tenants valuable experience and help develop the “soft skills” employers expect. They also provide a source of income for PBHA and help integrate the VCS programme into the local community.

Overall, the VCS programme ensures participants are provided with activities that support their recovery, expand their networks and improve their physical and mental wellbeing. Tenants are encouraged to progress and move on as quickly as they are able, and at the latest within two years. Participants are encouraged to progress onto employment, education or training within six months.

The VCS programme works with vulnerable adults in Hackney and Islington who are not tenants at PBHA but who have support needs, and the programme is extending its outreach programme to attract new beneficiaries, via its exhibitions and direct outreach in community venues.

### Menu of opportunities

VCS offers a wide range of opportunities. These include information, advice and guidance (IAG), training courses and workshops, work placements, volunteering opportunities and more informal activities that support health and wellbeing. Each academic term VCS updates the list of available courses and activities and distributes it widely for recruitment. Outreach is undertaken in neighbourhoods of Hackney and Islington known to have higher proportions of adults with lower levels of basic skills, through community mental health teams, forensic services and community groups. Other creative methods to attract potential clients are also utilised depending on the programme, for example, events like Open Square Gardens or activities at PBHA's shop Outpost.

Examples of courses that were offered in the previous terms include: ‘Welcome to Excellence’ customer service training, courses in literacy and numeracy, film and video making, money management and work placements at one of PBHA’s enterprises. In addition, various IAG opportunities are provided each term. Please see Appendix 1 - for a full list of activities offered by PBHA currently.

## 1.5 Funding streams and programmes

The Working Futures (ESF funded 2012-15) programme delivered a holistic, tailored and flexible programme to support 488 adults with mental health problems towards employment in 12 North East London Boroughs. Funded by an initial grant of £376,040, from London Councils ESF Co-financing, (subsequently increased to £430,340) it drew on the full range of activities and interventions needed to engage and empower participants with mental health conditions including close 1:1 IAG support, training, work placements, liaison with clinical teams and partnerships with employers. Funding was provided over 24 months and quarterly payments were made based on the results achieved.

PBHA led a partnership to deliver Working Futures that included East Potential (part of East Thames group), Hillside Clubhouse and Thames Reach that brought a complementary mix of skills, knowledge and experience. The project’s original aims were to enrol 488 participants; deliver 6 hours or more of 1:1 IAG support to 307 participants; facilitate 153 work placements; support 100 participants into work and 50 into sustained employment, and progress 122 participants to further education or training. In March 2015, the partnership was awarded additional targets as a successfully performing project and the targets were re-profiled to include:

- 119 Gaining employment
- 163 Work placements
- 120 Gaining employment
- 61 Sustaining employment
- 132 progressions into training
- 347 Information ,Advice and Guidance (IAG) sessions

Output/result	Working Futures Project Totals				
	Original Profile	Final Profile	Actuals	% of original profile	% of final profile
Enrolled	488	533	476	98%	89%
Participants receiving 6+ hours of support (IAG, job search, mentoring and training)	307	347	345	113%	100%
Participants undertaking a work / volunteering placement	153	163	163	107%	100%
Participants (non JSA) undertaking a Skills for Life or ESOL qualification at Level 1 or 2)	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
Participants in employment within 13 weeks of leaving the Project	100	120	120	120%	100%
Participants into further job-search and training	122	130	121	99%	93%

Participants sustaining employment for 26 weeks	50	61	61	122%	100%
---	----	----	----	------	------

The **Flexible Support Fund** provides additional funding from the Department for Work and Pensions for PBHA to work with a wider range of disadvantaged people to help them overcome multiple barriers and find employment. The project aims to compliment Job Centre Plus provision and support 40 of their clients, who are long-term unemployed, claiming income support or employment support allowance (ESA). It offers information, advice and guidance, training, work placements in the PBHA catering and retail enterprises, access to health and wellbeing activities and volunteer opportunities. In addition, participants receive personal skills training, support with money management and transition to work benefits.

The Flexible Support Fund targets and achievements for October 2012 and 2015 are shown in table (3). Upon the successful completion of the first programme, PBHA received funding from East London District DWP for a second programme. Currently, the second round is nearing completion:

Category	Target Phase 1	Actual Phase 1	Target Phase 2	Actual Phase 2
IAG	40	40	40	26
Work Placement or Volunteer Placement or Training	40	40	40	25
Employment	20	15	20	10
Sustained Employment	8	3	8	0

The **Henry Smith Charity** awarded PBHA a grant of £90,000 for the VCS Programme in May 2013 to engage 156 supported housing tenants. The project aimed to equip them with the confidence and skills they needed to achieve greater independence whilst increasing participation in VCS from 20 to 60 per cent. 79 tenants benefited in 2013/14. In 2014/15, 25 tenants were enrolled on the programme.

In addition the Tenant Engagement Project helped PBHA to engage more tenants with support needs in VCS, an overarching aim, (88 in 2013-14 compared with 26 in 2012-13) and more tenants moved on to independent accommodation (36 in 2013-14 compared to 15 in 2012-13).

This was achieved through closer working between supported housing and VCS teams and changes and improvements that were made to VCS services such as Creative Industries and social enterprises - the cafes and shop.

Through its relationship with **Hackney Learning Trust (HLT)** as a sub - contracting partner, PBHA provides a wide range of formal and informal, accredited and non-accredited learning opportunities including: Functional English, Functional Maths, Employability and Information and Communications Technology (ICT). The HLT funding comes through the Skills Funding Agency and therefore has to comply with Ofsted quality standards, a requirement which ensures high standards. HLT funding requires 80% of the course attendees to be Hackney residents. For the period of 2013-2014, (part of a three year framework agreement renewed in 2015) PBHA worked with 87 HLT Learners against a target of 108. 11 learners progressed into employment and 38 of the participants moved onto

further education. Attendance across courses averaged 88%, a high figure considering that many of PBHA participants experience multiple challenges to attending and studying regularly. In addition, PBHA delivered a course in 'Employability and Confidence Building', which incorporated aspects of motivational coaching, developing resilience, self-esteem, and self-presentation skills. PBHA included courses in 'Internet Safety' and 'Using Social Media' for this year.

The **Time to Change** campaign has funded **Change Together**, a 12-month joint project between PBHA, project lead, and Volunteer Centre Hackney. The project recruits volunteers who have experienced mental health problems in the London Boroughs of Hackney and Islington and trains them to have conversations about mental health with the wider public, the aim is to reduce stigma. The plan was to organise opportunities for the volunteers to engage with the public through a series of workshops, pop ups shops and events, tasters and exhibitions. A simple survey was designed to facilitate a conversation between the volunteers and the public in order to challenge prejudice and foster greater tolerance and understanding. Between March 2014 and March 2015, this project recruited 19 volunteers who had 928 conversations with the public in a range of situations, which included Open Garden Squares, Outpost exhibitions, public events, workshops, and local markets. Specific social contact events included a film club, coffee mornings, and Hackney Women's Forum. Mobilise conducted a focus group with some of the volunteers for Time to Change and the feedback from them suggested that Time to Change had a significant impact on both the volunteers and the general public. Volunteers talked about the confidence they gained by being supported in having these conversations with the general public, a significant step for most of them. They also talked energetically about the impact their work had on the attitudes of the public that came into contact with the project. Some quotes from the focus group that illustrate this appear below:

*We hear people's honest opinions about mental health. And quite a few people's attitudes actually have changed because they have "expectations" of someone with a mental health issue and meeting us actually changed their minds, enlightened them.*

*It's a real gift to have an opportunity to have a voice... and then I will say I am actually one of the one in four and in the past I have self-harmed. However, I overcame all those issues ... and it's cathartic. Every time I share my experience... two years ago, I couldn't even speak in public, now I've spoken in front of 500 people. Just the simple idea that by sharing our experiences someone else can see that "these people have been in really bad situations but now they are positive examples" it's powerful that I can do that just by sharing my experiences in a positive light.*

*I think talking about things lifts any shame you feel.... Since doing this, I've really been able to take it on board, that there is nothing shameful about having a mental health problem that it is really okay to speak about it and it's given me the confidence to have my voice heard*

## Part two: Outcomes. What has been achieved and why? What hasn't been achieved and why not?

### 2.1 Delivering time limited, user focused activities

#### Number of tenants and participants using services (for the first time and on-going)

The table below shows PBHA's estimation overall of the number of vulnerable and socially excluded adults who had access to and benefitted from Vocational and Community Services activities, courses and trainings in the past 8 quarters.

Year	Target	Actual
2012-2013	n/a	282
2013-2014	300	299
2014-2015 for Q1 & Q2	300	314
Total	600	895

PBHA estimates that it has reached 895 vulnerable and socially excluded adults through its VCS programmes since 2012, successfully exceeding its target of 600.

#### Number of tenants engaging in VCS activities (for new and existing tenants)

In order to alleviate tenants' social isolation and improve their employability, PBHA tracks tenant participation separately. PBHA has a dedicated participation officer who supports a range of activities that are designed to ensure tenants have both a real say and real involvement in delivery of activities. These include:

- PBHA Forum - regular monthly forum meetings with the majority of the agenda set by tenants.
- Formal Consultation on PBHA's 5 year strategy – focus groups held with tenants
- Tenants' committee - currently consists of 5 tenants.
- Rising Star – the PBHA quarterly newsletter, largely written and edited by tenants.
- Over 50's Club and Urban Vegetable Growing Project - tenant-led initiatives
- Pride 2015 - tenants led in providing the catering for this year's Pride celebration

The 2013 Strategic Plan estimated that 49% of tenants were engaged in meaningful activity, against a target of 60%. Although there were no specified targets for tenant engagement in 2014, PBHA estimates that 44% of tenants completed a work programme or course through VCS. In 2015, PBHA aims to increase its supported tenants' participation in education, training and employment activities to 50%. The table below shows PBHA's estimation of the number of tenants who had accessed VCS services per year:

Year	Annual Target	Actual
2012-2013	n/a	25
2013-2014	100	93
2014-2015	48	67

PBHA set up the tenant and participant forum following feedback that there was a desire to have greater influence in how PBHA works. Since the establishment of the forum, a third of tenants have taken part in PBHA committees and consultations.

The Henry Smith funded Tenant Engagement Project helped PBHA engage more tenants with support needs in VCS, 88 in 2013-14 compared with 26 in 2012-13 and more tenants moved on to independent accommodation, 36 in 2013-14 compared to 15 in 2012-13.

This was achieved through closer working between supported housing and VCS teams and changes and improvements that were made to VCS services such as Creative Industries and enterprises such as the cafes and shop. There are more opportunities for tenants to take an active role in their own learning, to co-produce activities and take part in the running of the organisation. A new PBHA Forum for service users and a tenant sub-committee have been developed which meets with the Board twice a year.

For example, Phil became a support needs tenant of PBHA in early 2014. Since then he has been an active member of the joinery workshop (which he helps to lead) and regularly edits Rising Star, the service user newsletter. Phil also recently joined the Board, filling one of two vacant positions kept for tenants or service users. He wrote:

*“Whilst putting together the last edition of the Rising Star I saw the advert. I thought the role sounded interesting but wasn’t sure I had the experience to apply. My support worker pointed out that I had experience of being homeless and mental health issues in the past, as well as volunteering experience and encouraged me to apply.*

*When I got the call that I had been short listed for an interview I was extremely nervous! But the panel Clare (CEO), Robert (Chair of the Board) and Kitty (another Board member), were very friendly and put me at ease. I came out feeling positive and confident that it had gone well.*

*I was over the moon when Clare phoned to offer me the post. I am looking forward to the induction training and finding out more about contributing to the running of PBHA”.*

### **Attendance and retention rates (for all VCS users)**

In addition to participation, PBHA measured its attendance and retention rates for years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. Attendance and retention are described as consistency with which participants attend classes, events, workshops and the percentage of people who complete listed activities, respectively. There are no such targets for the current year.

PBHA has a Participation Policy, which clearly defines what is meant by participation, and a draft Participation Strategy for 2015. The strategy includes the following as key aims ‘Ensure Tenants/participants voice is heard, and that 2 way communication is effective and inclusive’ and ‘Develop “Participation first” expectation across PBHA - ensuring that routinely there is input in the development, design and delivery of services’ demonstrating PBHA’s commitment to participant-led service design and delivery.

Attendance and retention has also been massively helped at PBHA by the strong links forged between the classes and workshops and the opportunities to give participants authentic work experience producing food for sale in cafes and goods for sale at the Outpost shop on Holloway Road. The joinery workshop is part of the Creative Industries and makes high quality furniture and home ware products for sale in PBHA's shop, community hub and gallery (Outpost). As well as helping to make products participants can volunteer or undertake work placements at Outpost. Many of the participants have also helped to co-curate and produce artwork for exhibitions and facilitated workshops open to the public. Cecil, one of PBHA's tenants who had rarely engaged with VCS before, was supported to put on a solo exhibition at Outpost in October 2014. His exhibition, 'Thought Forms' featured as part of the Islington Exhibits festival programme co-ordinated and supported by Rowan Arts, London Metropolitan University and Islington Council.

Volunteer and work placements enable tenants to interact with the public, make friends and help to develop softer, job ready skills that employers expect. 'Welcome to Excellence' a new Customer Service course which is accredited by the English Tourist Board was developed during the year. Change for Success, a six-week coaching course (a successor to Time for Change) uses a growth model and helps tenants to set goals and understand and experience the benefits of change.

The following quotes from participants illustrate how positively VCS programmes are viewed:

*It's worthwhile, you are achieving something and for the younger generation it gives them motivation to move on from these courses. We make cushions from the material. Even when you hear that a card has been sold it feels great that someone has bought my cards*

*There are usually about 9 on the course. This is called **supporting makers**. All the facilities are open. Crochet, print, joinery. The buyer for the shop comes in and if she likes it, it goes into the shop. Rather than just learn, people are learning to make things and about business. Lorna from the shop looks at the designs and we make more of what she thinks will sell.*

### **Courses and other activities completed**

In 2012-2013, 54 external participants and tenants completed courses or activity programmes. This figure rose to 206 in 2013-2014. The following figures give a flavour of the programme's accomplishments from this year: 49 participants from Working Futures achieved up to Level 2 vocational qualifications in Hospitality, Retail Knowledge, Health and Social Care or Customer Service. Ninety-six unemployed Hackney residents attended courses in Literacy, Numeracy and IT; four participants completed employability programmes and held paid positions with PBHA at their Outpost shop.

In 2014-2015, the number of tenants and participants enrolled in PBHA activities was 314, signalling considerable growth in this area.

## **2.2 Embedding employability, aspiration and progression**

### **Progression to further training:**

In 2012-2013, 25 individuals, 20 external participants and 5 tenants, progressed into further education. This figure improved significantly in 2013-2014 when 94 participants, 75 external and 19 tenants, progressed into further training, even though it fell short of the target of 120 for that year. PBHA set the target for this category at 210 for 2014-2015. In the Financial year 2014/15, 176 participants have taken part in further training and educational opportunities.

If we specifically look at Hackney Learning Trust rates for progression into further, educational opportunities, 76% of the 87 participants progressed into another Adult and Community Learning (ACL) course and 44% progressed to further education.

## Work placements

Through the Working Futures Programme, 217 participants have completed a work placement since 2010. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of Working Futures, PBHA led the delivery partnership that included East Potential, Hillside Club House, and Thames Reach. The project achieved or exceeded most of its targets against the original and final profiles. Most importantly, it exceeded its employment start and sustained employment targets by 20% and 22% respectively against the original profile, with 120 employment starts and 61 sustained employment outcomes. These also matched the final profile, which included additional targets awarded to the project in March 2015 as indicated previously.

As part of the programme, participants go on courses and have the option to work toward qualifications. For example, for a work placement in Outpost, a participant could benefit from PBHA's existing retail training programme, gain a Level 1 NVQ in Retail Skills, and work towards a variety of other qualifications. These include a City and Guilds qualification, literacy and customer service qualifications or a work experience certificate. Work placements are also provided through Islington Working, the Council's job brokerage service and the programme contacted employers directly to arrange work placements.

## 2.3 Progression to employment

PBHA improved significantly in this area since 2012. In 2012-2013, the figure for VCS participants who progressed into employment was 22 people. In 2013-2014, this figure rose to 48 people against a target of 30. To date, 40 participants found employment in the financial year of 2014-2015, which is in keeping with the annual PBHA target of 60.

The Working Futures programme has been making a significant contribution towards these figures. In 2010-2012, the Working Futures programme supported 29 people into employment, with 10 sustaining their employment for six months or more. In the second part of the programme (2012-2015), the ESF partnership supported 120 people into employment, with 61 sustaining their employment for six months or more.

## 2.4 Improving Confidence and Wellbeing

The table below indicates similar numbers of tenants moving on from PBHA to another form of housing though in 2014/15 more of these tenants moved into independent housing.

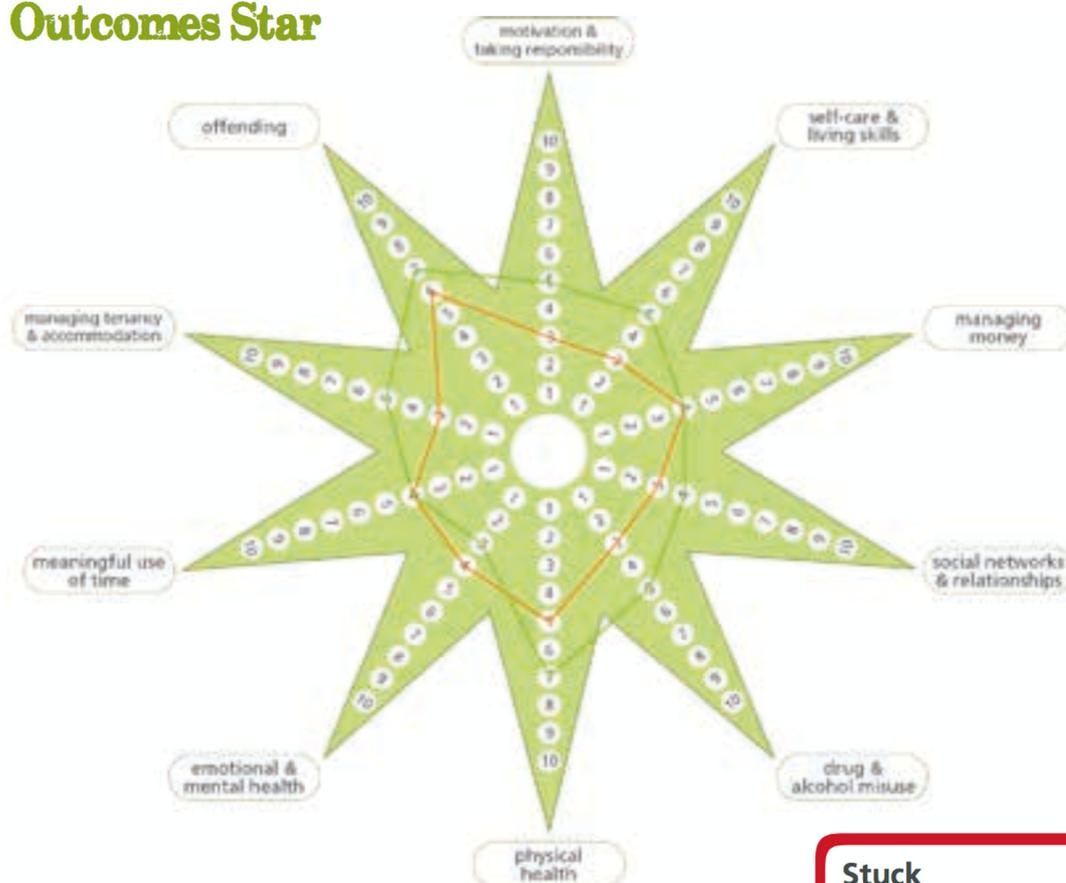
### Number of tenants (accessing VCS services) who moved on to more independent housing

<b>Tenants leaving Supported Housing for:</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>
Independent housing	6	17	9
Long-term supported housing	2	2	0
Sheltered housing	2	0	0
Short term supported housing	3	2	1

## Number of tenants who have support plans and who were involved in putting together their support plan

PBHA requires that each supported tenant complete a support plan with a support worker, identifying their goals for the future. This is a personal development plan that directs tenants to helpful resources, and challenges and encourages them towards their goals. PBHA use Triangle Consulting's Outcomes Star, which is a useful tool to help people work out what changes to aim for in different areas of their lives. In 2012-2013, 84% of all tenants had a support plan, which was written with their active involvement. This figure has improved consistently over the next two years. In 2013-2014 92% of all tenants completed support plans. Results from 2014-2015 show 81% of tenants have support plans against a target of 100%.

### Outcomes Star



Homelessness Star™ © Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Ltd  
Authors: Sara Burns, Joy MacKeith and Kate Graham

**Stuck**  
Leave me alone

## Part three: Approach

### 3.1 The Recovery Model

Although there are many different definitions for the recovery model, the following quote from Bill Anthony, one of the founders of the recovery movement, provides a concise explanation:

Recovery “is a deeply personal, unique process of changing one’s attitudes, values, feelings goals, skills, and/or roles. It is a way of living a satisfying, hopeful and contributing life even with the limitations caused by illness. Recovery involves the development of new meaning and purpose in one’s life as one grows beyond the catastrophic effects of mental illness.”<sup>5</sup>

Recovery is a personal journey of change and discovery – no ‘one size fits all’. It addresses multiple vulnerabilities and barriers and is tailored to individual need. It is innovative and responsive to requests for more influence by enabling people to emerge as ‘experts by experience’ through co-production. The approach incorporates learning plans and activities that help recognise and use talents to help re-build lives.

There are a growing number of organisations that use the recovery model. In England, several mental health trusts and organisations provide best-practice policy documents that incorporate principles of the recovery model.<sup>6</sup> Mental health organisations in New Zealand, United States and Australia have long been using the model to define a rationale for their services.<sup>7</sup> Despite their diversity, the majority of these organisations identify similar principles for a successful recovery. These can be categorised under the following headings:

**Self-management:** Individuals should have the opportunity to support others and give back, rather than being passive recipients of care. Providing for others is a key step in the recovery process, as it helps people step outside of the ‘sick role’. Staff should be in a supportive role and provide services that are more akin to that of a personal coach. The individual with mental health issues is an “expert-by-experience”. The staff’s priority is to help people find resources to manage their condition on their own.

**Agency:** It is key to gain a sense of control over one’s life and illness. People should be supported in finding a way to re-define their identity in a positive way.

**Tailored support for each individual:** Each individual’s journey is unique and it does not necessarily mean ‘recovering from’ the illness. Not everyone will be ready to embark on the path to recovery in the same way. Individuals will have to decide for themselves to what degree they engage with the principles of recovery.

**Social inclusion:** Enabling people to function as full citizens in their communities. Employment is still the principal way in which people establish relationships and add meaning to their lives. Therefore, working and having the ability to make a positive contribution to society are essential for building a positive sense of self-esteem.

---

<sup>5</sup> (Anthony, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> (Devon Partnership NHS Trust, 2007; South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, 2010; South West London and St George’s Mental Health NHS Trust, 2010; Centre for Mental Health, 2007 and 2014; Department of Health, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> (Mental Health Commission, 1998; Department of Health and Human Services, 2003 and Australian Government, 2003, respectively.)

**Hope:** Believing that the individual can pursue their hopes and dreams, even with the continuing presence of illness. The individual should maintain high expectations for themselves and the future, and the staff should support individuals in achieving their goals.

In addition to the above principles, research suggests the qualities practitioners should embody. These include, a caring, emphatic and respectful attitude, believing in the individual's ability to achieve their goals, willingness to support the individual's self-management and an acknowledgment that they are engaging with the individual as equals.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.2 PBHA's Approach to Recovery

PBHA's adapts the recovery model, which encourages people to think about their strengths, abilities, and changes they can make to take control, reach their goals and achieve improved well-being. Individual and social enterprises lie at the heart of the project creating a virtuous circle – vulnerable people can contribute and improve their life chances and those of their peers, in turn generating income for PBHA. Activities draw on Five Ways to Well-being (New Economics Foundation) – being active, connected, learning, and making a contribution improves well-being. Participation in social and community life is closely associated with recovery. PBHA promotes active citizenship, integration, inclusion and these opportunities are available to vulnerable people beyond their tenants.

The VCS programme focuses on participants' strengths, believing in their abilities and developing their talents to see what changes they can make for themselves. This involves taking small steps, at first, so that participants can experience the benefits of change and see how working can improve their lives. Interventions are relatively short to motivate the individual on to the next recovery stage. Within these principles, the approach is adapted to each individual's needs and circumstances. PBHA's client group has a huge range of different needs and so a personal approach is prioritised. Principles of self-organisation, self-help, mutual support and participation have been central to Peter Bedford since its beginnings in the late 1960s. Recently PBHA has been putting even more of an emphasis on co-production and enterprise also encouraging the organisation of participant-led activities.

PBHA's recovery model helps individuals to move through the following stages<sup>9</sup>:

#### *Stuck— Accepting help — Believing – Learning – Self Reliance*

- **Stuck** – the mental condition in which an individual first arrives at PBHA. The Individual starts to define his/her recovery and take back some control by socialising at the Community Canteen, receiving Information, Advice and Guidance and attending events.
- **Accepting Help** – the individual starts to feel more energetic and empowered, taking part in health and wellbeing activities, creative arts classes, events and motivational training. Later in this stage, the individual starts to find ways to recover and sets goals for his/her recovery.
- **Believing** – the individual starts to develop and refine life skills, managing their tenancy and finances, cooking, cleaning and learning basic IT skills. At this stage, they start working on their values. They improve their health, volunteer, make friends and take classes in PBHA's Creative Industries. Towards the end of this stage, the individual can see the bigger picture and consider possible future work or training opportunities. They may get involved in employability or pre-employment training, start developing numeracy, literacy and ICT skills and start volunteering at one of PBHA's in-house enterprises.

---

<sup>8</sup> (Borg & Kristiansen, 2004)

<sup>9</sup> Licensed by Outcome Star™ Copyright Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Ltd.

- Learning – the individual starts gaining specific skills through vocational training, work placements at one of PBHA’s enterprises and volunteering. They start looking for employment, attending the Job Search club, learning how to write CVs, develop interview techniques, building their confidence and working on their self-presentation. They continue the work placement or volunteering activities they started in the previous stages.
- Self-reliance – they find and sustain employment. They keep in touch with PBHA and receive post-employment support from staff members.

There are clear similarities between the PBHA’s path to recovery and ‘the Five Stages of Recovery’ by Andersen, Caputi & Oades.<sup>10</sup> In the first stage (*Moratorium*), the individual is withdrawn and experiences feelings of hopelessness. Through engaging in recovery activities, the individual starts realising that a fulfilling life is possible (*Awareness*), recognises their strengths, and works on developing skills (*Preparation*). The individual then sets goals and start taking control of their life, actively working towards a positive self-image (*Rebuilding*). The final stage (*Growth*) is characterised by finding meaning in life and developing self-reliance.

### 3.3 Comparison with best practice elsewhere

**Providence Row** is a homelessness charity in East London that focuses on helping people develop skills and confidence. They provide trainee schemes, language classes, assistance with finding employment and support for people with mental health and substance misuse issues. In the past year, the housing association supported 372 people through their advice and support team, 178 people participated in their Learning Programme and trainee schemes. They recently formed a partnership with Royal London Hospital to offer proactive support to patients who are leaving the hospital, and provided 26 people with finding accommodation and services. They have an extensive music program, some of which is peer-managed. The music programme organises ‘Streetwise Opera’ sessions that encourage people to improve their confidence through acting and singing to the wider public. As part of their engagement with the wider public, they work with 200 employee volunteers from local businesses who participate in a range of activities, in addition to delivering some of the services, such as teaching courses and helping serve lunch. Feedback from service users was extremely positive, and the charity has taken positive steps to integrate clients with the wider community.

**St Martins of Tours Housing Association** – Based in North London, St Martins of Tours provides mental healthcare and accommodation to those with complex needs and history of offending. They use the recovery approach, offering classes and recreational activities to help build confidence and practical skills. They work with NHS Trusts to resettle forensic mental health patients in the community and help the trusts and commissioners deliver significant savings. For example, in 2012 St Martins opened an 18-bed unit for men leaving the Three Bridges secure unit. Three bridges costs £3,000 per patient per week, whereas the St Martins unit costs £900 per patient per week. In addition to allowing cost savings, St Martin’s has a proven track record in helping vulnerable individuals. Most of the organisation’s patients come with 5-10 years in a medium or high security hospital. The average stay at St Martins is two years, and only 10% of the patients return to a hospital after their time with St Martins.

**Aspire Housing** - based mainly in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Aspire Housing is part of the Aspire Group. The Group has three core aims: successful communities, maximising people’s potential, and supporting the local economy. In order to complement their housing services with employment and training provision the group acquired a training provider, PM Training, and converted it into a social

---

<sup>10</sup> Andresen, Caputi & Oades, 2006

enterprise. Through PM Training, Aspire housing estimates it helped 83 clients access jobs, 646 young people access training opportunities, and 882 adults gain apprenticeship opportunities in 2013-2014. They estimate that the social return on investment for PM Training was £3.50 for every £1 spent and credit having a separate enterprise for their successful employment figures. Another interesting practice by Aspire is their 'best in class' exercise, where they compare their performance against similar organisations to determine progress.

**Origin Housing** – based in North London, Origin Housing provides affordable housing, care and support services, and aims to create strong communities. Although they do not focus on supporting a particular vulnerability group, such as youth or people with mental health issues, they have an original and cost-effective volunteering service for their residents and people from the wider community. Origin launched a 'Time bank' volunteering service in 2008. The service allows residents, staff, and external participants to earn time credits in exchange for volunteering services, which can then be used to buy services from other participants. For example, volunteers can exchange language courses with basic IT training. This way, Time bank ensures a mutually beneficial service where an individual can experience the benefits of both receiving and providing a service. Origin estimates 120 people involved in the programme learned practical skills that helped them access employment. In addition, Time bank seems to have benefited the community greatly, having established a community garden, a yoga group and a mosaic project.

The housing providers we looked at find that they are most successful at building soft skills, such as confidence building and motivating people, rather than providing more 'mainstream' and formal training that help people access employment. PBHA's focus on providing practical training and work placements, especially now that they have the Working Futures programme, seem to put them ahead of many other housing associations in terms of ambition & vision.

Some housing associations are creating social enterprises in order to reorganise their business and provide specially designated services, such as employment and training services. Other examples include community gardening, refurbishments, furniture repairs, and these are often explicitly linked to their efforts to create work opportunities for their tenants. Those who have gone down this route describe it as an effective way to focus their efforts (and funding) to address unemployment. For many, this is a new approach but PBHA have been operating well-established enterprises for some time. In this way, Peter Bedford seems to be ahead of the curve in this trend. Programmes such as Supporting Makers, Plot to Plate and Outpost indicate that PBHA is innovative and multi-focal, creating opportunities for income generation and professional training. The report will provide a more detailed analysis of how these programmes support PBHA's aims. However, for the purposes of this section, it should be noted that the organisation might wish to consider further developing its enterprises so that more in-house employment opportunities could be made available to clients.

Lastly, in the current environment where public funding opportunities for housing associations are decreasing, services such as 'Time bank' seem to be increasingly considered by other organisations. It helps people who are traditionally on the receiving end of services break out of that role and participate in the delivery of services. It is also beneficial for the wider community for creating a more inclusive environment and helping make savings. This may be another area PBHA might want to consider developing.

### 3.4 Has PBHA fulfilled key principles of recovery?

## **A) Opportunities for service users to get involved in the organisation**

PBHA has been trying to give service users more influence over how the organisation is run, increasing co-production and tenant participation in managing activities. The organisation is formalising the ways in which clients give feedback and make decisions. In addition, participants are increasingly encouraged to help deliver services. This approach seems to be forming a culture where participants feel empowered to voice their opinions, make demands and contribute to the developing organisation.

Moreover, the approach PBHA is taking both through to local growing and sourcing of produce for its cafes, and the links being made between crafts and workshop activity and the supply of goods to the Outpost shop it has set up offer significantly better opportunities for tenants to both get real world experience of a range of roles (making crafts and woodwork for sale; exhibiting art; learning and practicing customer service) that also offer them revolutionised ways that service users can get involved in PBHA. They can help grow food that others will help prepare for selling and eating at the café; they can make wooden stools and breadboards that will be sold at Outpost. In fact, service users were even involved in the fit out of Outpost under the supervision of their tutors. Service users are utilising their talents to support PBHA become more sustainable whilst at the same time improving their skills and taking new steps on their road to recovery.

### **Tenants and Participants Forum**

After clients expressed interest in having greater influence in how PBHA works, the organisation helped set up a tenant's forum in July 2013. The forum meets monthly with an average attendance of about 10 tenants per meeting and PBHA tries to respond to issues raised. For example, upon receiving feedback from tenants that they no longer needed communal phones, PBHA removed all payphones. Further, when tenants voiced that communal lights do not need to be on 24/7, PBHA altered the timer switches. Both decisions will generate savings for the organisation in the long term.

In September 2014, tenants and participants were invited to submit their ideas for how they could get involved with planning and running VCS activities. In addition, the forum set up a 'buddy' system and agreed that the buddy role would involve "Welcoming new tenants; Offering to take to forum or introduce at places like Isledon canteen; and attending tenant induction sessions." However, even though the management team advertised the programme in an article and advert in *The Rising Star*, only one person volunteered for the position.

Nevertheless, it is clear that PBHA works hard at offering a range of opportunities for tenants and participants to be involved. Focus groups were run in 2015 to engage tenants and participants in PBHA's 5-year strategy; *Rising Star* (newsletter) is largely written and edited by tenants; tenants are involved in planning and organising a range of activities and events – the Over 50s urban vegetable growing project, *Pride 2015*, and the annual seaside trip. Tenants have also requested to be involved in staff recruitment again and a tenant recruitment panel is being reintroduced.

### **Delivering Courses and Activities**

There are clear indications that tenants and participants are taking a greater role in developing and delivering creative activities, training and curating exhibitions. Staff members commented that participants are now asking more questions and being more pro-active in running activities. One

such example is of a participant who, after completing some courses, became the class assistant for a VCS IT course. The same participant also volunteered at the PBHA reception as a trainee administrator. Another client who has a Master's Degree in Fine Art helped lead a Creative Crafts workshop where she encouraged students to bring photos and special objects to trace the objects' origins and recreate it using different materials, colours and media. This exercise was intended to help participants share and develop new perspectives on their life experiences. The same client also helped design and deliver a quilt-making project for public display.

Service users are also involved in facilitating a range of workshops at Outpost including a poetry workshop. In the 2015 VCS tenants' survey, 40 tenants said they were willing to share skills and interests with their peers.

### Using PBHA Facilities for Client Empowerment

There is evidence to suggest that the organisation is taking full advantage of its physical assets to empower clients, creating opportunities for them to deliver services. For example, there is a clear change in emphasis from catering for participants to teaching them how to cook in the PBHA cafes. Plot to Plate, a Big Lottery funded, an initiative to improve tenants' physical and mental health through promoting healthier diets and use more local food at PBHA canteens, is another example of how the organisation used its assets to help participants acquire new skills in growing and cooking food. Through this project, 58 individuals have been involved in learning to grow vegetables and 84 in the cooking of local food. Furthermore, the programme recruited 12 gardening volunteers and 10 catering volunteers. The evidence suggests that even tenants who did not take part in the growing were able to benefit from the better quality food and enhanced garden environments resulting from the development of the outdoor spaces.

In addition, the reception areas and even some of the individual departments are utilised to create volunteering opportunities and work placements for participants. In one of the interviews, a staff member describe the volunteers who run the reception as "essential" saying:

*"... They are so important for the running of the organisation. I always tell them the reasons why we are doing it, and the benefits we get out of it. They are not just answering the phone, they do data input, they do work processing, they are involved in the stationary orders, they do the fire alarm testing. They also are greeting the tenants who sometimes come in angry or with whatever demand. So it does take a cool head and good people management skills. They meet with a range of people."*

Additionally, PBHA's recently refurbished contemporary homeware store 'Outpost' located on the busy Holloway Road, has been very effective in creating employment and training opportunities for PBHA clients. At Outpost participants get volunteering and work placement opportunities, working towards a qualification in retail. In addition, the shop is a not-for-profit business that markets and retails products made by PBHA's Creative Industries, which are made by VCS workshop participants. The shop is helping individuals who participate in joinery, art, design and textiles courses to become designers in their own right and produce high quality products to be sold at a profit. Recently, the VCS programme started a course titled Supporting Makers, where individuals design and produce products specifically to be sold at Outpost. Although the shop is intended to make a profit, participants are making a profit as well. If picked for production, they have to make sure that their work is good enough to be sold. Each participant works on a different product to prevent in-group competitiveness and encourage mutual support. We undertook a focus group with participants from the Supporting Makers course who describe their involvement as follows:

*"You are thinking, is my work good enough to be sold? You doubt yourself and it formalises the atmosphere... When you are producing your work, you think "it's not good enough" then you try to*

*do better. For instance, you learn to keep your hands clean because it is not for you anymore, it is going to be sold to other people... But afterwards, it is really rewarding."*

*"We help raise money for Peter Bedford, because when we make a product, it goes to the Outpost and when it sells, it brings money to PBHA. You are giving something back."*

The participants also recounted that a previous Printmaking course made Christmas cards and presented them to a professional buyer. The buyer expressed interest and the class produced 200 Christmas cards to be sold at Outpost, out of which only seven were not sold. These projects provide evidence that PBHA is succeeding in its aim to cultivate independence through the development of both creative production skills and the application of these in a real time retail environment. There is also evidence that they are empowering individuals to have a more profound role in the delivery of services.

### **Becoming Active Citizens**

There is also evidence to suggest that participants are taking initiative to solve problems and voice their opinions. One of the staff members interviewed recounted a recent event where one of the creative arts classes had problems with a participant using inappropriate language. When some members of the course expressed that the space was becoming less safe for some people, the staff member called a group meeting. She recounted having an honest discussion about how words can have a powerful impact on the space and on the people who hear them, as well as the person who utters them. After the conversation, the group decided to define a 'code of respect' – moving away from the idea of a code of conduct towards one that defines how they want to be in the world and create the safest and most supportive training environment for everyone. She quoted one of the group members who said, *"I know I use sexual innuendo, I'm a bit freaked out that I can have such an effect on other people, but I need to take this inwards and say, this is about my development."* The group also expressed interest in establishing a 'code of respect' across all PBHA activities and writing about it in the organisation's newsletter, the Rising Star. They also made a commitment to take responsibility for challenging this type of behaviour when they see it. The staff member said:

*"They want to extend that behaviour beyond Peter Bedford, so if they meet any Peter Bedford participant on the street, they would extend that exact same courtesy and respect to those people. And they know that their personal lives are their personal lives... but that Peter Bedford, this space has to be kept sacrosanct and safe. That was another really, really powerful example of how they lead what they do here."*

Another example of participants taking on more initiative came out of the joinery course. This year Outpost demanded more production from the joinery course participants, which meant that they had to work on smaller items for sale and spend less time on building furniture. After two months, participants called a meeting with Outpost and the Creative Industries co-ordinator to express their concern at losing the time to make furniture. Following a discussion, participants suggested working on Outpost products in the morning and personal projects in the afternoon. Some people were more interested in doing personal projects and others said they had no objection to producing solely for the shop. The participants and co-ordinators were able to find a solution that suited each person individually. The solution came into effect immediately, which again shows both the flexibility of VCS programmes, co-ordinators and tutors and the impact resident and participants are having on how things operate.

## B) Opportunities for service users to create their recovery paths

One of the key determinants of a successful recovery model is a participant's ability to help create a personal journey that fits their individual needs. At PBHA, individuals take an active role in tailoring their path to recovery. Staff members help participants recognise their challenges and talents. In return, participants set short and long-term targets and write up action plans, listing specific activities to undertake with deadlines for each. Through this process, not only do clients have a direct say on their path to recovery, but they are also supported to emerge as 'experts by experience.'

### Client-driven Recovery Plans

It is clear that individuals and staff members work together to create a recovery path. Documentation relating to Information, Advice and Guidance sessions show that those participants that qualify for IAG sessions are encouraged to set personal development goals, decide if they would like to pursue professional qualifications and think about the kind of programme he/she requires. The sessions provide a space where individuals can engage with the menu of opportunities at PBHA and see which activities might be best suited to their goals. In addition, IAG meetings help staff members assess participants' literacy, numeracy and IT skills and assess their need for specific support, such as support with dyslexia. At the end of IAG sessions, individuals write out a step-by-step action plan, complete with deadlines. If they express interest in undertaking a work placement or volunteering opportunity, they are supported in finding one. They then agree on actions and goals specific to these opportunities with the supervisor.

In addition to the above, there is a separate process to track the progress of and allow goal setting for VCS participants. For each course and activity, participants have to create an 'Individual Learning Plan.' In this, they identify what they want to get out of the course, and whether they want to use it to get accredited towards a qualification or for their personal development.

It is clear from the evidence presented that when individuals plan their recovery, they are the primary decision makers. They are encouraged to engage in a thoughtful process, which helps them determine their next steps. However, the VCS approach to gathering evidence is not uniform. It is hard to tell how regularly individuals meet with staff to review their overall progress. It is not clear how individual learning plans feed into action plans, and vice versa. Although each participant designs a learning plan, not everyone goes through an IAG session. Consequently, not everyone has an overarching action plan. This may be appropriate, since not every participant needs an IAG session or a set of comprehensive goals. However, it is not clear if PBHA is working from a clear set of rules to decide who gets to receive an IAG and who does not. Similarly, it is not clear how the organisation captures overarching data on participants who do not receive an IAG but have a learning plan.

This process is much more standardised for the Working Futures Programme participants. Although Working Futures sits under the VCS programme, it has a different funding stream, and its own specific data-capture requirements. Each participant meets with an advisor for an induction meeting where they fill out an enrolment form capturing the participant's background information. In the same meeting participants discuss their short and long-term aims and objectives with the staff member. They are asked to imagine where they would like to see themselves in their working life. They also discuss their support needs and barriers to employment they experienced previously. At the end of this meeting, participants set out an action plan to achieve goals, complete with

deadlines. The examples we reviewed show that participant goals are holistic. They include personal development goals as well as concrete targets to support their journey toward work. For example, one participant notes that in the long term he wants to work as “a freelance photographer with on-going contracts” and also “become more confident when making decisions.” Another client notes that in the future, he would like to open his own restaurant, serving Mediterranean food. The evidence indicates that individuals meet with their advisor at least on a monthly basis, reviewing their progress and agreeing on a new set of actions with new deadlines. These meetings last anywhere between one to three hours, depending on how much support the individual needs. This exercise is renewed when a participant completes a work or volunteering placement. Participants determine what they want to get out of the placement experience by listing aims and objectives specific to the work placement. They agree on a list of tasks and duties with a supervisor. When the placement is complete, the participant provides a summary of their achievements and challenges. This suggests that the programme also provides the participant with an opportunity for self-evaluation.

### **Fostering ‘Experts by Experience’**

It is especially clear with ‘Change Together’ that PBHA is helping clients emerge as ‘experts by experience’ through co-production. The project allows volunteers to engage in conversations with the general public as experts in mental health. In addition, they help with the administrative aspects of the project and take an active role in organising and training for these events. One of the participants of the programme said of her experience:

*“I think talking about things lifts any shame you feel... I still had a lot of self-inflicted stigma, there was a lot of shame directed towards myself and I felt that I had to hide it from certain people. Since doing this I’ve really been able to take it on board, not just intellectually that there is nothing shameful about having a mental health problem but also emotionally that it is really okay to speak about it. It’s given me the confidence to have my voice heard and to not shy away from disclosing certain things because I am worried about [people’s] reactions.”*

Another participant said:

*“Your mental health is just as important as your physical health and that’s what Change Together has done. It made people aware by giving them a vision from our own lives, how to tackle talking about difficult issues...”*

This project seems to have complemented PBHA’s efforts to emphasize co-production in the delivery of its projects. There are many such examples. As discussed above, it is evident in the way Peter Bedford clients prepare their learning and recovery plans that they are seen as experts by experience. However, many of such examples come in the form of anecdotes or in case studies prepared for grant applications. Although the organisation is clearly taking steps to promote co-production, it does not collect data reliably on participants who help deliver courses and training. For example, there are many reports of VCS participants who ‘peer volunteer’ at PBHA facilities, however it is hard to find hard data to support this. Most of the participants who help in the delivery of courses seem to be involved in the Working Futures programme, suggesting that the programme is steering the organisation towards adopting a culture where participants emerge as contributors.

### **C) Clients feeling hopeful about overcoming barriers and becoming more independent**

A successful recovery path would help participants feel more hopeful about overcoming barriers as they move onto a more independent life. Participant's satisfaction with the support they receive is an important indicator of future wellbeing and ability to sustain a more independent life.

The results from the 2013 Tenant Survey show that a significant majority of respondents feel sufficiently supported towards more independent living at PBHA. In response to the question, "Do PBHA's services help you feel more confident about moving on to more independent living?" 68% of the respondents answered 'yes'. In addition, 78% of the respondents said that PBHA's services are helping them make positive changes in their lives. 55 tenants participated in the survey and it is likely that a high proportion of the respondents were involved in VCS activities, since many of the survey forms were filled out at one of PBHA's offices. Of the 28 tenants who moved onto more independent housing in 2013-2014, 15 were engaged in VCS activities. All 15 tenants who moved out of supported housing received Information, Advice and Guidance from VCS, 5 went into work, 1 achieved an NVQ Level 2 in administration and 1 achieved Preparation for Teaching in the Life Long Learning Sector (PTTLs) qualification. The rest of the tenants took part in a variety of courses, including one long-term placement at Outpost.

However, the overall reliability of these results could be improved by asking tenants to clarify which aspect of PBHA and VCS they participate in specifically. For this survey, only 30% of the supported housing tenants responded to questions. For future surveys, higher response rates would guarantee more reliable insights.

Satisfaction surveys conducted with Working Futures programme participants show all of the participants were 'very satisfied' with the support they received. All survey participants noted that the programme improved their confidence, skills, motivation, and chances of getting a job. Only a few said that the support they received from staff members made a minor difference in their ability to manage their time and responsibilities. However, no negative feedback was received from the survey participants.

It is harder to determine whether non-tenant participants in the VCS programme feel more optimistic about moving onto more independent living. There was no hard-data gathered from this cohort. Conducting surveys with all VCS participants would help determine this. However, participant responses from focus groups and interviews indicate that satisfaction levels with the service are high. Participants expressed that they are making progress and have a positive outlook on life.

#### **D) Recovery oriented staff members**

Experts found that for a successful recovery, practitioners who engage with service users must possess high-level relationship skills, which include empathy, caring, acceptance, respect and patience.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Staff support for Recovery Plans**

It is evident that participants receive ample staff support to write their learning and action plans and receive individual attention from course tutors.

Course tutors review learning plans to support individuals in achieving their goals and provide feedback. In one of the learning plans reviewed for a joinery course, a participant sets the learning

---

<sup>11</sup> Making Recovery Reality

goal to “*design, turn a salt & pepper set in softwood, then hardwood.*” At the end of the class, the participant evaluates her initial goal, saying “*It took time to complete some of the shapes, but I am happy with my progress.*” The tutor also comments on the participant’s progress, saying “*Excellent progression. Your work shows consistent development. Although this could not be completed due to limited facilities, you designed the set and turned the shapes required, taking time to [make your designs come to life].*” The evidence shows that not only are individuals given the opportunity to identify goals, but also that tutors give individual attention to each participant. The feedback provided by tutors seem to be encouraging and insightful, even when it contains criticism.

In another participant’s learning plan for a Functional English class, the tutor writes, “*[participant] enjoys homework. Keep it up as your writing and spelling is getting better.*” After which the participant is given another chance to revise her goals and set new ones. She comments that she needs to make more time to read, use punctuation correctly and write more messages. At the end of the report, we see that the individual progressed onto a higher-level Functional English course.

Evidence suggest that staff members approach goals with equal enthusiasm, helping individuals identify specific actions that would get them closer to their goals, regardless of how modest or ambitious they may be.

### **Participant Feedback on Staff from Focus Groups**

Focus groups showed that service users valued staff members. The general opinion was that staff are very helpful. ‘Patient’, ‘nice’ and ‘knowledgeable’ were the most frequently used words to describe staff members. The following quotes illustrate participants’ thoughts about staff:

*“I think PBHA is the best, the courses and the advice they give tells me that they care [about my future]. Here the lessons are tailored to your needs.”*

*“I would recommend it because I think it’s the best agency available. The service at PBHA is far superior to the service Job Centre gives, it’s just much better here. The staff makes it better, you don’t feel that there is someone hovering over your shoulder, watching every single thing you do.”*

*“The staff are very well informed and they help you make up your mind. Then it is up to you if you want to launch forward...”*

*“I can say that when I was taking the computer course, the tutor was very patient, and took the time to correct our mistakes. The tutors are really good.”*

*“The staff are very caring and friendly.”*

*“They are always positive towards you.”*

*“Everyone is helpful and approachable. It helps you come to the class every week because you know the people will be nice. There are a lot of people who won’t come if tutors are not approachable.”*

The overwhelmingly positive feedback regarding staff members is not surprising. Staff members also seem well supported by the organisation and have access to a variety of training opportunities. In the last year, 21 staff members attended different training courses on subjects ranging from computer skills to first aid at work. Specific to engaging with volunteers, the staff was trained on management skills, benefits training sanctions, and volunteer management. In addition, 3 members of the VCS team (Team Leader and two coordinators) undertook management training with Catalyst Housing, which involved management training at Level 3 plus 3 sessions of individual coaching. In addition, the Head of Vocational & Community Services (VCS) department reported undertaking a six-session programme with Sitra Housing titled, “Action Learning Sets for Senior Managers” and attending “Leadership Coaching” courses with Catalyst Training.

However, there was a small minority of participants who expressed that at times staff members make them feel 'small' or appear not to have time for them. Other participants who generally seemed satisfied with the staff also agreed that some were 'always busy'. Interviews with staff members and a review of clients who received action plans indicate that the organisation would benefit from more staff resources. For example, there is only one staff member who conducts Information, Advice and Guidance and induction meetings with participants. It is not clear why this specific staff member was chosen to handle the bulk of these activities.

The 'Making Recovery a Reality' report suggests that creating a set of desirable qualities for staff members may be helpful in improving staff aptitudes. PBHA could undertake such an exercise with participants and staff members. The agreed qualities could then be used to help motivate staff. They could also be discussed with staff members during their performance reviews. At a minimum, it would be helpful to provide staff with a clear list of prerequisites for practitioners of a successful recovery path. Additionally, staff could be further encouraged to get involved with IMROC's activities, which has become a leading source of support for mental health service provider organisations wishing to progress towards more recovery orientated services. Membership offers providers and their partners the opportunity to come together as part of a 'learning set network' – 4 1 day workshops over 12 months with 6 to 8 other organisations.

#### **E) Possibilities for engagement in 'mainstream' activities for the users**

Participation in social and community life is closely associated with recovery. According to latest evidence<sup>12</sup>, making connections with people at work, school and in one's local community promotes wellbeing and improves mental health. One of PBHA's aims for the future is to increase links with the wider community, involving more local people and encouraging volunteering. This would help tenants and participants integrate into wider society and would create benefits for the community as a whole.

VCS activities give participants opportunities to interact with the wider community. At Outpost participants regularly engage with customers. There is a community hub within the shop's premises that is open to the public. The shop sells products participants create in the workshops, giving a chance for the wider public to engage with the talents and creativity of PBHA residents. The shop also has a changing programme of exhibitions. Many of the exhibitions show work created by tenants and participants. The first floor of PBHA's new facilities will include a space for a large café, which will create a further opportunity for the wider community to engage with VCS participants.

Another way in which service users engage with mainstream society is through VCS courses, which allows for more in-depth exchanges and brings external funding to PBHA. Recently one of the joinery courses was marketed to a wider public audience and it sold out. PBHA could build on this success and publicise VCS courses to the wider community more intensely. This would also support the sustainability of services.

In addition, VCS events help increase social contact with the outside world and create a sense of community. PBHA celebrates PRIDE, Black History month, and World Mental Health Day by organising related events. All events are participant-led. Upon request from tenants, International Men's and Women's Day were also celebrated in the past few years. These events also help PBHA address its aim to challenge discrimination and stigma against people with mental health issues.

Recently PBHA included 'challenging stigma and isolation experienced by vulnerable adults' to its strategic aims. The events and actions taken above help contribute towards this goal. The Change

---

<sup>12</sup> Centre For Wellbeing, NEF Five Ways to Wellbeing, 2008

Together programme, which recruited 19 volunteers and engaged 928 members of the public in meaningful conversations about attitudes towards people with mental health problems, shows PBHA is making progress towards this goal. An audience survey with members of the wider public who took part in conversations indicated that it also helped change attitudes. Half of the survey participants responded saying Change Together participants were very or fairly effective in raising awareness, particularly with regards to showing how stigma affects people with mental health problems. 37% of the respondents said the conversations made them more likely to challenge if they witnessed someone with mental health problems being badly treated. When asked what they liked about the conversations they had with Change Together volunteers, survey responders said the following:

*“Having someone talk very openly to us”*

*“I wasn’t expecting to talk about mental health this evening. However I found it refreshing to talk about something we don’t normally talk about”*

*“[That it is a] community-based activity to educate people on how to address a condition that affects us all”*

*“I liked the openness about this difficult subject”*

*“Raising awareness and acceptance that [mental health problems] can happen to anyone at any time for any reason, we all individuals.”*

*“Chatting to people openly about their mental health and how they coped with difficult times.”*

Finally, the PBHA canteens contribute towards creating a sense of community where participants who are enrolled in courses can have a free, healthy lunch cooked by their peers. The canteen and sharing meals together encourage people to socialise and help create an inclusive environment.

## Part four: Value of the work to service users and the wider community

### 4.1 Service users themselves describe the changes PBHA made in their confidence and attitudes toward work and training:

Leetee and Deegan say the most powerful evidence for recovery lies in the narrative accounts of individuals, therefore individuals' accounts of feeling better about their progress and more socially included should complement objective evidence. PBHA are committed to hearing the evidence from individuals. They trained and supported 20 paid service user auditors to evaluate services as part of a user focussed monitoring project. During focus groups for this current evaluation, service users themselves described changes made in their attitudes towards work, training and life by taking part in VCS activities as such:

*"Since I started coming to PBHA my social skills have improved and I gained more confidence in myself. As a result now I am doing voluntary work Tuesdays and Thursday, so I think coming here has definitely been beneficial."*

*"Coming here made me come out of my house, because I was indoors all the time before."*

*"I have a bit more confidence in myself because I am used to putting myself down saying, 'I can't do this, I can't do that'. I feel like I don't do that as much anymore. I am challenging myself."*

*"I find coming here relieves stress as well."*

*"Peter Bedford does build your confidence up because you learn how to do things differently here."*

*"I believe when you've been out of work for a long time, you become scared of the unknown and you become static, but with these initiatives you can build things and see what you've done and it improves your self-confidence."*

When asked whether they would recommend PBHA to others, focus groups participants said the following:

*"I actually recommended PBHA to my friends already, because I feel that I am achieving things here and meeting people I get along with... The time I spend here is worthwhile."*

*"I would tell [people] to find out about [PBHA] because they would enjoy contributing towards something and giving something back [to society]. I like making new stuff for the shop. I like showing that I have a skill and that I can provide towards something. It is nice to use my initiative to design my own product. I think it is surprising to see what you can actually do when you put your mind to it"*

### 4.2. Research on value of outcomes (e.g. with reference to social impact of housing providers, SROI)

In 2014, the University of Bristol and the Hackney Social Care Forum wrote a social investment report on PBHA. The study determined that the organisation has a SROI ratio of £4.06 for every £1 invested in services. PBHA's ability to reduce social isolation, promote social cohesion and self-confidence were important factors in the SROI calculations. These were measured by looking at the benefits created through taking people off benefits, people accessing employment and educational opportunities, and costs savings associated with reduced mental health interventions. The ratio of £4.06 for each £1 pound is a strong social return on investment. This ratio reflects the overall contribution of PBHA, so results cannot solely be attributed to VCS activities. However, considering

the majority of the activities that enhance social cohesion, improve confidence and employability and reduce social isolation are provided through the VCS programme, it is fair to say that VCS programme is significant contributor to a strong SROI.

In addition HACT's 'Measure the Social Impact for Community Investment: A Guide to using the Wellbeing Valuation Approach' estimates wellbeing values for community investment activities. For example, the benefit of securing employment for a 25-64 year old individual is £ 11,588, the benefit of receiving vocational training is £1,124 and regular attendance at a voluntary or local organisation is £1,773. Having high levels of confidence as an adult is valued at £13,080. These figures are based on national averages and might vary according to an organisation's location. Although not bespoke to PBHA, these figures give an indication of the wider benefits PBHA creates through helping individuals access employment, training and community activity.

PBHA take value for money seriously and state it is at the forefront of their work. A VFM statement appears in the annual report together with practices and priorities that ensure this is happening. They also took part in a VFM benchmarking group in 2014/15.

### 4.3 Working with Partner Organisations

From the evidence provided in the partner survey, working relationships appeared largely positive. Over half (52%) of respondents described PBHA as *'Better than most organisations we work with.'* A further 38% described PBHA as equal to other organisations that they have worked with. Partners were aware of the organisation's specialism of supported housing, with a third recognising a focus on mental health and just under a third recognising the emphasis on employability advice. Comments praise the equal treatment of partner organisations, even when there is a significant difference in size. Partners report a professional manner across the organisation, with staff quick to respond to queries. The staff appear to be committed individuals who know a lot, and care a lot, about what they are doing.

However, there is a criticism that the communication can, at times be difficult, with different members of staff frequently contacting partners with 'crossed purposes about the same issues.' A suggestion from partners is to put in place greater individual ownership of particular tasks and areas.

Partners recognise the quality of PBHA's work with vulnerable and excluded people. No respondents felt that the work was below average; 50% of respondents rated their work *'Better than Average'* or *'Excellent.'*

There were areas in which partners felt that there could be improvement in the working relationship, and in the project as a whole. For PBHA, the issues in communication are recurring but, as a part of this improvement, more information about initiatives and outcomes for clients would be useful to partners. For the partnership as a whole, the survey results called for greater specialism, potentially down to just mental health and diverse communities. Alternatively, there was the suggestion that the partnership could improve through 'transformational leadership' to 'bring partners on board' to include them in decisions and to make them feel valued.

There is a sense across the responses that all partners need to be more proactive in establishing clear roles, and will, therefore, avoid any overlap. Similarly, any similar roles or tasks could be improved by sharing good practice throughout the partnership. The suggestion of regular networking opportunities within the partnership would broaden the platform on which ideas and practice could be shared, as well as strengthening relationships.

With a view to a long-term relationship, two-thirds of respondents said that they were interested in making referrals, or cross-referrals, to PBHA services. Support and training in basic skills and employability were the area of most interest to referrers. Respondents also showed interest in referrals to supported housing, enterprises, creative industries, and volunteer opportunities.

Two thirds of respondents also see other opportunities to work in partnership with PBHA, specifically in employability services and in creative industries.

#### 4.5 Peer Support Networks

Creating opportunities for participants to support each other is another priority for PBHA. When asked whether they receive help from other participants and feel PBHA generates a mutually supportive environment, focus group participants said the following:

*I can tell something about Maria. We were on another course, I was scared of the sewing machine, I couldn't manage it and Maria helped me. She helped me relax and showed me how to get the footwork right.*

*We feel welcome, accepted and everyone's is approachable. We also show each other what we are doing, and help people who need assistance.*

*We are a lovely crowd, we meet together and keep each other company, do what we can do, build up each other's confidence*

*"I was talking to a tenant this morning about his neighbour who died recently. They were in an out of each other's houses constantly. I think there is a lot of that that goes on informally."*

## Part five: Monitoring and evaluation

### 5.1 How well do current systems of data gathering work?

Although PBHA uses the outcomes start to monitor all activity and outcomes from the work of VCS, there appears to be some lack of consistency in the way the system works. Individual learning plans are currently completed for every participant of each course or activity. In programmes with specific funding streams or requirements, participants are monitored accordingly, e.g. ESF are monitored as per programme requirements. In addition to this, all tenants of PBHA's housing have a support plan that is monitored. Some participants of activities aren't monitored at all, but we should keep in mind that some participants don't want to be monitored. There are also reported difficulties with the QLX database, which is essentially that it is designed around activities as opposed to clients.

### 5.2 How could these be improved?

Is it possible to simplify or streamline data collection and data system that is centred around the person and captures all data about their involvement? Currently the system is difficult because different programmes have their own monitoring systems with different requirements. For example, if a tenant is participating in a VCS course and also working with their support worker to receive an Outcome Star, it is not clear whether the support worker could access the tenant's records to review their overall progress. In addition to monitoring issues, this also shows that greater coordination between housing and VCS teams may be needed. In addition, it was suggested that better consistency could be maintained with regard to the tracking of KPIs. There was a sense that the choice of KPIs being tracked changes too frequently and this is not helpful for consistent, long term monitoring.

We also noted that VCS does not seem to have a clear induction or enrolment process. While some participants receive IAG, others do not. Although this may be fine, PBHA needs to make it very clear as to who should receive IAG and who should not, and why. In addition, the organisation should determine how to capture information from those who do not receive an IAG session. Currently it is very hard to track a change journey for a non-Working Futures VCS client. Even if PBHA decides to do IAG and Action Plans with a number of people who meet a certain criteria, there should still be a process to capture the change journey of others.

In theory, the Outcomes Star helps to record where people are at the start of the process and help to guide their action plan. However, it is not clear how Outcome and Work Stars are used across the organisation. Staff members commented that Outcome Star is currently administered for all VCS participants but there is no evidence to support this. Documents reviewed state that the Outcomes Star and ensuing action plan "will be reviewed monthly with participants as a way of measuring progress and also soft outcomes" however reviewing the evidence documents for VCS participants show that this may not be the case.

The organisation does not seem to be gathering data for a large portion of the participants. Other than individual learning plans, some participants seem to lack ways to set targets or communicate needs. Individuals set targets only for the course, so it is hard to track an individual's recovery path from individual learning plans.

The way information and data is monitored is chaotic and there are many inconsistencies. Some information is tracked under different forms (for example, KPIs, Annual Reports, Working Futures Re-profile) and often report different figures for the same category, which is confusing and problematic.

## Part six: Recommendations

Some participants noted that services could be publicised more and suggested a 'welcome pack' for new tenants and participants. They also said that classes could be better-advertised online and using social media.

The organisation's quality policy commits PBHA to introducing a new quality management system and quality manual as part of its strategic business plan. We believe that this could help enormously with a range of the issues that have been documented particularly those relating to data collection across a range of programmes and funding streams and capturing and measuring change journey.

In addition to the tenants and participants forum, we wondered whether an ongoing mechanism needs creating for individual feedback from tenants and participants. Staff said that currently they 'check in with participants after a course to see what they liked and what was difficult to deal with' but this may not be sufficient. We would suggest some kind of online suggestion box or feedback form might help tenants and participants to contribute their views when they feel strongly about anything. A more consistent approach to evaluation forms following training or courses may help.

The target driven culture may be creating a preference towards recruiting external participants, rather than tenants, because external clients provide quicker results, helping staff hit their targets. Three suggestions to combat this might include setting clear tenant participation targets for VCS activities, creating greater cohesion between housing support workers and VCS team and communicating clearly with tenants about what is expected of them via a tenant charter or agreement.

We also offer the following suggestion that may help increase tenant engagement in VCS activities. We suggest the use of 'time-bound cohorts', giving a group of tenants, say three months to work together in a form of group work whilst engaging in VCS activities. They would come to VCS activities together and have regular meetings where they can share thoughts and feelings. This can create strong bonds between them, help resolve their issues together, and orientate them to how they can use PBHA resources to the best of their abilities.

PBHA has come a long way in engaging residents in delivery and co-production particularly in the use of its enterprise activities. It has set a standard for a 'triple bottom line' – benefits for the organisation and a financial return, benefits for the service users, and benefits to society more widely. This is a strong rubric to measure any new activity against. Developing this in a more consistent way now would help embed the learning that is clearly having a significant impact on service users and the organisation.

Another way to engage tenants would be helping them take ownership of delivering or supporting delivery of one of the VCS courses. They would support the course on a voluntary basis, perhaps taking turns as a tutor's assistant.

We would also suggest that overall, PBHA's approach to volunteering needs re-examining perhaps with a view to exploring a stand-alone volunteer recruitment service to recruit, manage and train volunteers. The manager would put together a clear training programme for volunteers who are interested in different sectors and track their progression towards their goals. In addition, we felt that PBHA could benefit from resolving the ambiguity with the terms 'peer volunteer', 'work placement' and 'volunteer placement'. Clear definitions are needed for each for both the volunteers themselves and to ensure clear monitoring can take place.

A user-friendly booklet with information about the eligibility criteria for each course could be produced each year. We understand there is no one to coordinate this and therefore it can be difficult for participants and staff to know who is or is not eligible for particular activities or courses.

The roles and attitudes of staff towards tenants and services users are a critical part of the recovery model. Developing staff has to be a priority for PBHA and further steps should be taken to get them involved in the kind of learning sets that IMROC provide.

## Appendix 1 – VCS Courses 2015

### Peter Bedford Housing Association Course Timetable 5 October to 18 December 2015

#### Clothes Making for Beginners (6 week course)

10am - 4pm  
Geffrye Street Workshop 83A Geffrye Street, E2 8JA

#### Employability and Confidence Building

(6 week course starts 1 November)  
10am - 1.30pm  
Geffrye Street Workshop, 83A Geffrye Street, E2 8JA

#### Joinery Product Design & Personal Practice

10am - 4pm  
Geffrye Street Workshop, 83A Geffrye Street, E2 8JA

### Tuesday

#### Entry 3 ICT Qualification (12 week course)

10am - 12pm  
Kingsland Hub, 242 Kingsland Road, E84DG

#### Joinery Product Design & Personal Practice

10am - 4pm  
Geffrye Street Workshop, 83A Geffrye Street, E2 8JA

#### Craft Studio for All

10am - 4pm  
Clissold Hub, 23A Clissold Road, N16 9EX

#### Outpost - Retail Training

11am - 2pm  
2:30pm - 5pm  
Outpost, 546 Holloway Road, N7 6JP

#### Introduction to Drawing & Painting

10am - 1pm  
Isledon Hub, 179a Isledon Road N7 7JP

#### Supporting Makers Workshop

10am - 4pm  
Geffrye Street Workshop, 83A Geffrye Street, E2 8JA

### Wednesday

### Gardening for All

10am - 4pm  
Clissold Hub, 23A Clissold Road, N16 9EX

### Functional Maths

(9 week course)  
10am - 4pm  
Kingsland Hub, 242 Kingsland Road, E84DG

### Textiles for Interiors

10am - 4pm  
Geffrye Street Workshop, 83A Geffrye Street, E2 8JA

### Outpost - Retail Training

11am - 2pm  
2:30pm - 5pm  
Outpost, 546 Holloway Road, N7 6JP

### Evening Furniture Making course (Starts 14 October 2015)

Payment required for non- tenants  
6pm - 8pm  
Geffrye Street Workshop, 83A Geffrye Street, E2 8JA

### Mixed Media Illustration

5pm -8pm  
Geffrye Street Workshop, 83A Geffrye Street, E2 8JA

## Thursday

### Entry 3 ICT Qualification (12 week course)

10am - 12pm  
Kingsland Hub, 242 Kingsland Road, E84DG

### Outpost - Retail Training

11am - 2pm  
2:30pm - 5pm  
Outpost, 546 Holloway Road, N7 6JP

## Friday

### Age UK

9am - 5pm  
Kingsland Hub, 242 Kingsland Road, E84DG