



Annual
Review
2023-24

2014-2019

Why we're here

Every 90 seconds
someone in the UK
is admitted to
hospital with an
Acquired Brain Injury

Hello, we're Headway East London.

We're here to support people in our city affected by brain injury.

Each year in the capital, tens of thousands of people are admitted to hospital with a brain injury. This might be the result of an illness like meningitis, stroke, or head trauma.

Brain injury can have a significant impact on the life of the individual and those closest to them. For many, it becomes a long-term condition which requires long-term support.

Headway East London was founded in 1997, opening its doors a year later to one member of staff and three members. To begin with, we just worked in Hackney, but we've grown significantly and today help people from across **13 London boroughs**.

In 2023/24, we supported over **800 brain injury survivors**, family members and carers, and we've got big ambitions to reach more people than ever before.

*we call people who use our services **members**



What we do

We combine expertise to do things a little differently.

Brain injury is complicated. It affects people in lots of different ways, and not all of them are visible. In fact, brain injury is often referred to as a hidden disability.

In many cases, people with a brain injury are offered generic support for a physical disability, which makes only a limited difference. This not only represents poor value for money for commissioners, but it can also lead to a deterioration in health, wellbeing and relationships; requiring additional intervention for both survivors and their families.

At Headway East London, we offer services **specifically tailored** to the needs of people affected by brain injury. Most importantly and uniquely, we always work in partnership with those we support. We know our **members are experts** in their own injury and needs; that only they can tell us what is most important to them. We combine this expertise with our own, empowering people affected by brain injury to explore new identities; developing new skills and interests along the way.

2.6 million people
are living with the
effects of brain injury
across the UK

How we work

We understand and support the whole person.

We believe in the power of **connection and creativity** to create better futures for those affected by brain injury. Our holistic approach means that projects are **co-produced** in response to members' needs, desires and ambitions, whilst the breadth of our work reflects the **diversity** of Headway East London's community.

Our art studio – **Submit to Love** – provides a means of discovery and expression, whilst our **Kitchen Project** encourages people to work together on a shared goal. Weekly dance, music, writing and exercise groups provide several ways for members to gain skills, share stories and find agency in their own journey. Meanwhile, **partnerships** with leading organisations celebrate our members' work and talents on a national stage.

All of this sits alongside our established **day and evening services, neurological therapies, community support** and **casework**. We take a responsive approach, so members can access the support and projects they feel will most benefit and interest them.

Who we are



We are one big team.

At Headway East London, members, staff and volunteers talk about feeling part of one **community** in which every person is valued and respected. We're all equal partners, combining our collective experiences to make a difference.

Members have a feeling of **belonging** and can be themselves, or find themselves again. Since many of our volunteers have personal experience of brain injury, they also bring invaluable insight to our work. Decisions and ideas are shared, and we place a strong emphasis on **peer support** in all that we do.

Each day we come together to discover what's meaningful in life; forging friendships and connections along the way. While we have ambitious plans to grow, we are dedicated to maintaining this philosophy and community. It's what makes us so special.

Why it Matters

Our work is important – to people affected by brain injury, their families and communities.

The impact of brain injury on someone's life can be severe. We help people to not only navigate this unimaginable experience, but move towards a place where they can meet their potential and thrive. At the same time, we also reduce pressure on non-specialist services and ensure public money is spent more effectively.

Every person we support should be able to live the life they want, without facing marginalisation and lack of understanding. That doesn't only affect our members: it benefits entire communities and health and social care economies. Together we can discover new ways of looking at the world, and ensuring it is accessible to everyone.



The Future

We've got big, ambitious plans for the future.

We want to be the leading brain injury organisation in London providing high quality, innovative specialist support, and to have a strong voice across the health and social care sector. We also want to create more opportunities for our members to share their contributions and talents, and to interrogate what true collaboration looks like in the process.

There is no shortage of people who would benefit from our help. In 2016/17, the most recent year for which data is publicly available, almost 40,000 people were admitted to a London hospital with an acquired brain injury. That was a 15% increase over the 10 years to that point.



Our Mission

We empower our community of brain injury survivors and their families to imagine new possibilities – ones filled with creativity, embracing diversity and backed by specialist support.

Our vision

Brain injury survivors experience a world which is accessible to them, and where their contributions are valued and celebrated.

“each “member” – be they a car-crash survivor or a top brain surgeon – has equal rights and opportunities, and is supported to flourish as an individual in a curiously diverse collective ”

Billy, Day Service Member

Our principles

- **Co-production:** Members are at the centre of everything we do; they are actively involved in designing new projects, developing new ideas and helping to make decisions at all levels.
- **Equity, diversity and inclusion:** We are committed to valuing every person as an individual and ensuring that our members, staff and volunteers do not experience discrimination at Headway East London. We will continue to work hard and create space for these conversations with everyone involved in the organisation.
- **Sustainability:** We want to be around for the long term, to support survivors of brain injury now and in the future. To do this we will make sure our systems and processes are efficient and effective to support our work, and work hard to make sure our financial position remains positive. We care about broader sustainability too. That's why we're committed to cutting our carbon footprint, including through reducing our dependence on non- renewable energy sources.

A Message from our CEO and Chair



This has been a very special year for Headway East London as we celebrated **25 years** of the organisation supporting people affected by brain injury across East London. Our events programme dominated our work this year and resulted in great opportunities to raise awareness of the organisation and more widely about brain injury.

Our celebrations included a **Community Day** in June where members brought family and friends together to get a taste of the community that is such an important part of their lives. Guests enjoyed music, food and pottery while meeting up with old and new friends.

Our most ambitious undertaking yet was our **differently various** exhibition at the Barbican in the summer where we took over the Curve gallery for the first truly co-produced exhibition of its kind; raising awareness of brain injury and showing the world the incredible art works that our members create. You can read more about the exhibition later in the report. We also highlighted two of our artists at our first exhibition at Burgh Gallery in Hampstead, where they both sold several artworks.

We held our first ever **Conference**, fully co-produced by a Steering Group of people with lived experience of brain injury working alongside staff, volunteers and trustees. We delivered a truly first-class event attended by professionals from within the health and social care sector, legal firms, private agencies, and Government departments. The combination of personal stories alongside expert professionals from health and social care gave attendees a rich and insightful day, while also giving people the opportunity to get involved in workshops to gain a deeper understanding of what life is like living with a brain injury.

We couldn't have delivered any of these events without support from our partners and supporters, and we are grateful as always for their support that enables us to continue to achieve great things with our members.

This year, we opened a new **Evening Service** one day a week. This service provides a new group of members with the opportunity to meet one evening a week 4 – 8pm in the centre. Together the group have designed the service and enjoy a range of activities together. For many, the chance to have dinner together, rather than eating alone, makes life much better than it was, and it's lovely to see this new group taking shape and growing in confidence together.

We welcomed our new **Finance Director** at the start of the year and have made some significant changes to the finance team and systems to enable us to become more efficient, providing more timely financial information to managers and the Board.

We said goodbye to our longest serving trustee, **Norman Keen**, at our AGM in December. Norman had been involved with Headway East London since it began and has been a huge source of support and knowledge over that time. We will miss him.

We also prepared for our CEO, **Anna McEwen**, to move on in April 2024 and made plans to recruit her successor.

Our incredible community of members, staff and volunteers have, as always, worked together to ensure a very successful year despite the challenges faced by charities around the country, and showing that Headway East London continues to punch above our weight, delivering first class events based on our principles of co-production and inclusion.

We are grateful to be a part of such a wonderfully diverse, passionate, and supportive community.

Anna McEwen, CEO
Glen Hodgson, Chair

CE Recruitment

After a rigorous recruitment process, led by [Peridot Partners](#) and our [Board](#), and [co-produced](#) by an [Advisory Group](#) of staff from across the organisation, **Sarah Lantsbury** was appointed as Chief Executive of Headway East London in August 2024.

"I want us to celebrate where members are today, never forgetting the life changing experience they've had to bring them through our doors, and I want us to make things better for those that haven't started this journey yet."

Sarah Lantsbury, Chief Executive

"We are grateful for the support of everyone to conclude the search process for our new Chief Executive. I am delighted that Sarah has taken on the role and we now look forward to supporting her and the team to deliver their strategy so that present and future members of Headway East London continue to thrive."

Glen Hodgson, Chair



Service Highlights

Day Service



This year, the Day Service has been vibrant with activities, **enriching the lives of our members** and **building strong community engagement**. Our dedicated team has been actively coordinating and delivering a variety of group sessions, including a **women's group, writing group, music sessions, discussion groups**, and many **outings**.

We also played a key role in supporting the **Barbican exhibition** by facilitating workshops and ensuring our members could visit and actively engage in the experience. There have been several successful therapeutic groups run by our Therapy Team within the service, attracting a wide range of members in terms of ability, age, ethnicity, and sex.

We successfully implemented an **Monitoring system** on our database especially designed for our members and service provision. This enables keyworkers to meet with members twice a year for one-on-one reviews. These reviews provide essential feedback to both our team and social services, ensuring that our service remains responsive, and member focused.

We established a new transport contract with the **Community Ambulance Service**, and we are pleased to welcome Jamal as a regular driver, providing consistency and comfort for our members.

Service HighLighTights

One of the most exciting developments has been the launch of our **Evening Service**, aimed at reducing the waiting list. Initially starting with 7 members, we have since grown to **11 members**, and the service runs **weekly from 4–8 p.m.** To support this expansion, we also recruited an additional co-ordinator, both of whom also serve as support workers.

The group has truly embraced the new service, taking ownership by deciding together on the activities they enjoy most – art and games being the clear favourites. We also share dinner around a single table, fostering a strong sense of **community and belonging**.

Evening Service



Submit to Love

In the past year, Submit to Love Studio has achieved significant milestones, including notable exhibitions, collaborations, and artist engagements. Highlights include **differently various** at The Curve gallery, Barbican, which received a **five-star review** from The Guardian. All the work on display was created by our members, both in the studio and in other creative groups across the organisation.

Two of our artists held their first solo exhibition at **Burgh House**, another fantastic opportunity given to the artists of the studio with a significant breadth of work.

The **Christmas Open Studio** raised £4,240 in art and merchandise sales. These evenings are a collaboration between staff, members and volunteers and are carefully curated to involve as many members' works as possible, ensuring they can show their talents and gain firsthand acknowledgement of their skills.



Service HighLights

Highlights of 2023-24 in the Headway Kitchen included: **differently various** at the Barbican – catering for the opening event, a **Spice Mix** workshop and a **Food After Brain Injury** workshop.

The kitchen crew catered for the **Headway East London Conference** in October, hosted a Christmas party for **Devereux Chambers** in December, and a **Winter Feast Burns Night** in January. We provided drinks and mince pies for the Submit to Love **Christmas Open Studio**.

Another big highlight was the **Community Celebration Day** in August, when we opened the doors to all our members and their families and carers to celebrate 25 years of Headway East London, when the kitchen again catered for everyone.

And, lastly, 2023 will go down in the Headway Kitchen history as the year of the sausage roll...

Kitchen



Service HighLighTights

Casework

This year, the Casework Service opened the **Better Together** project at **Queens Hospital Romford**, which provides early intervention, peer support, advice and advocacy to patients at bedside and their families. This is running each week alongside the continued work at the Royal London Hospital.

We have reopened the **Saturday Social** support group, under the umbrella of the Casework Service. Once a month, members come and enjoy lunch together as part of a community as well as dedicated slots at each social, where members can book a session with a caseworker who will provide support and advice.

The team continues to reach more people in the community to secure the care and support they need.



Community Support Work

The Community Support Worker Service has continued to provide stable one-to-one support in our 13-borough community every week of the year. Recent new assessments and members involve **complex cases** with **greater collaboration** with NHS and community teams.



Service HighLights

Therapy



The Therapy Service is made up of employed staff, associates, volunteers and trainee therapists.

Our Therapy Team uses their expert knowledge of brain injury to help people achieve their potential and live a meaningful life. Our interdisciplinary approach brings together our skills across a range of therapies to give each person what they need in the best way for them. We work with individuals and case managers and can provide medico-legal assessments and reports, as well as providing therapies and support to our services, the brain injury service in Enfield, and exploring areas of research.

As part of the **Enfield Brain Injury Service** our team offers occupational therapy, physiotherapy, psychotherapy and neuropsychology intervention for Enfield residents who have had a brain injury (excluding a stroke). The team saw **41 Enfield residents** for community rehabilitation this year. **95% of rehabilitation goals** were achieved or partially achieved.

We have also been working on a **pilot research project** funded by **Propel**, to investigate **health inequalities** in our catchment, with a focus on **mental health services for brain injury survivors**. A service audit found that there were no free to access, stand-alone psychological therapy services available for survivors with a moderate to severe cognitive impairment. This was followed up with a series of focus groups and surveys to understand members' experience of accessing mental health services. Several themes emerged from these highlighting the intersectional barriers brain injury survivors face when trying to access mental health services. These findings were used to apply for a further two-year funding to expand on this work in the coming years.

Service HighLighTights

The highlight of this year was delivering **differently various**, the largest exhibition of art co-produced by people living with brain injury. See more information about this project below!

We also recruited two new staff: a **Heritage Project Manager** and a **Peer Researcher**, a role for someone with lived experience of brain injury. They will deliver our **25 Years of Headway** project, funded by the **National Lottery Heritage Fund**. Planning began for the Touring Exhibition, a programme of mini-exhibitions & events inspired by 'differently various' reaching all 13 boroughs in our catchment. Four exhibition partners were confirmed: **UCLH** (Camden), **Westminster City Hall** (Westminster), **Apple Cart Arts** (Newham) and **Shoreditch Library** (Hackney). An additional grant was also secured from **Arts Council England** to support the touring exhibition.

Public
Engagement



Communications

Our Communications team collaborated with the Barbican Press & Marketing team to create a conversation around our exhibition at the Barbican. There were a number of press articles about the exhibition with members and staff talking on news and radio, most notably on **Channel 4** and **BBC News** and receiving a **5-star review** in **The Guardian** by Cathy Reay, freelance journalist covering disability, politics and culture.



We supported Headway UK's **Action for Brain Injury Week** campaign 'Every 90 Seconds' with a reach on Instagram of 12,000, and our members featuring in the Headway UK poster campaign. We also engaged in campaigns for **#SupportCantWait** and **#worldmentalhealthday**.

differently various

The **differently various** exhibition took place at the **Barbican's Curve Gallery** from **29 July – 6 August 2023**, and was the largest exhibition of artwork co-produced by people living with brain injury.

It was the culmination of our partnership with the Barbican as their **Community Collaborator** since 2019, a long-term creative collaboration designed to develop two-way exchange and learning.

Our members stated early on that they wanted to stage an exhibition at the Barbican; but it wasn't until member Chris Miller challenged the Artistic Director, Will Gompertz, on a live panel called '**Can We Be Artists?**' in 2021 that the commitment was made and wheels started turning.

A **Steering Group** of **11 members and volunteers** was formed, and met monthly over the course of a year to co-produce every element of the exhibition with the Barbican Communities team and freelance staff, including designers **Pup Architects**, graphic designers **Wolfe Hall**, and curation consultants **Art et al.**

The result was **differently various**, a display of **124 artworks** by **71 artists with a brain injury**, including sculpture, painting, ceramics, textiles, audio and video. It captured the colour, creativity and joy of our community of people living with brain injury, welcoming **5,500** people into the world of Headway East London.





"Because of this exhibition I've finally been able to have a conversation with my children about my brain injury."

Audience Member

5,500

people attended across 10 days

89

Members took part in outings, events, and tours



20

public events

including a cinema screening; Music, art, dance and spice Mix workshops; sensory and BSL tours



60+

Barbican staff received member-led training



24

new Merch products

created and sold in the Barbican x Submit to Love Merchandise range, earning over £6K in royalties



1

new ramp installed at the Curve gallery, to ensure equal access to the exhibition for all audiences!

"Best show in the Curve for a very long time – incredibly moving and beautiful."

Audience Member



"I have an invisible disability. You made me feel less alone. Thank you."
Audience member

Barbican 2023

Fundraising

We want to express our huge thanks to everyone who supported us during the year, particularly our loyal regular givers, and everyone who undertook a fundraising challenge event and those who sponsored them.

We were delighted that the **National Lottery Community Fund** agreed to fund the Casework Service for five years. **Bolt Burdon Kemp** renewed their support of Casework which is extremely welcome and **Coulthursts** funding enabled us to launch Better Together at Queen's Hospital in Romford. All of this gives the Casework Service long-term stability and a basis from which to look at expanding and reaching more people out in the community.

We are proud to have received funding under the **Propel** initiative. This first year Explore grant supported us to investigate areas of systemic inequity in our catchment and the lack of access to mental health support for people with brain injury (see above in the Therapy Service section). We will build on this work in the future to address this harmful lack in provision.

The **National Lottery Heritage Fund** gave a grant for our 25th year, employing a Heritage Manager and Peer Researcher, together with two volunteers, to work on our 'differently various' Barbican and touring exhibition, and beginning work to set up an archive to capture and preserve our history.

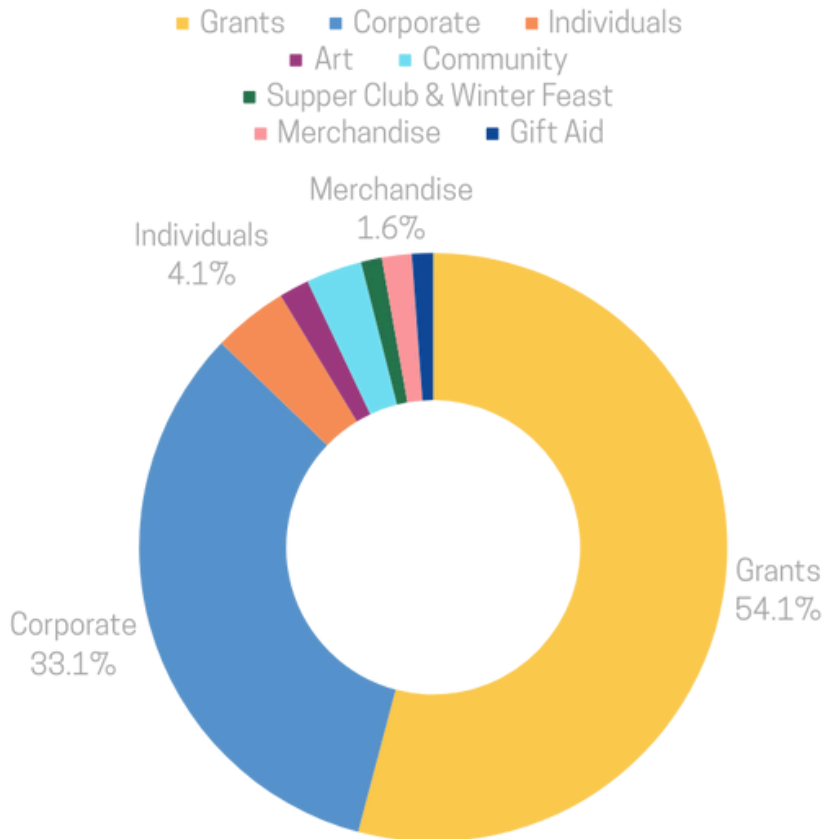


Supporters

Arts Council England
Barbican
Bolt Burdon Kemp
City Bridge Foundation
Coulthursts
Credit Suisse
Devereux Chambers
Ford Britain Trust
Irwin Mitchell
Joseph Strong Frazer Trust
Linklaters
LSE Students' Union
National Lottery
Community Fund
National Lottery
Heritage Fund
OLS9EIRE
Osbornes Law
RWK Goodman
St James Place Foundation
Waitrose

Fundraising

Whilst a large proportion of our income is derived from service incomes, we rely on fundraising from our community and supporters to bridge the gap between fees income and all the services we want to provide for our members. It was another challenging year in the fundraising environment, and we are very grateful for the continued support of our corporate, trust, Headway Friends, and community supporters to see us through, putting us in a strong position for future growth.



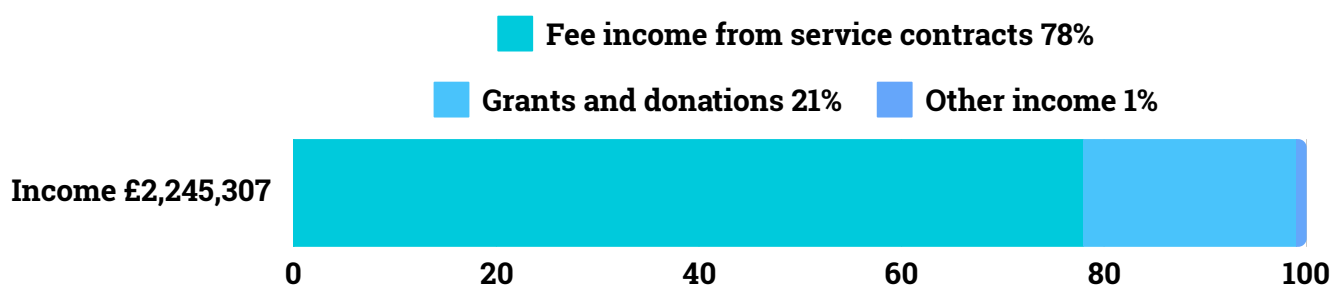
Financial Overview

All around the country, the financial climate for charities has continued to be challenging in the year 2023-2024. However, thanks to a focused strategy and careful financial management we have managed to deliver all our services, while retaining our financial sustainability. During the year we have carried out a thorough overhaul of our financial systems and processes and adjusted our fundraising strategy, so that we feel fully prepared to withstand economic challenges in coming years, and will be able to build on new opportunities that are coming our way.

Income

In the year 2023-2024 our **total income was £2,245,307**. Of this, **£1,748,461 (78%)** consisted of fees charged to Local Authorities and NHS bodies to pay for services provided under the Health & Social Care Act 2012. The other **£496,846 (22%)** consisted of fundraised income (**£479,963**) and other trading activities (**£16,883**).

Total income breakdown

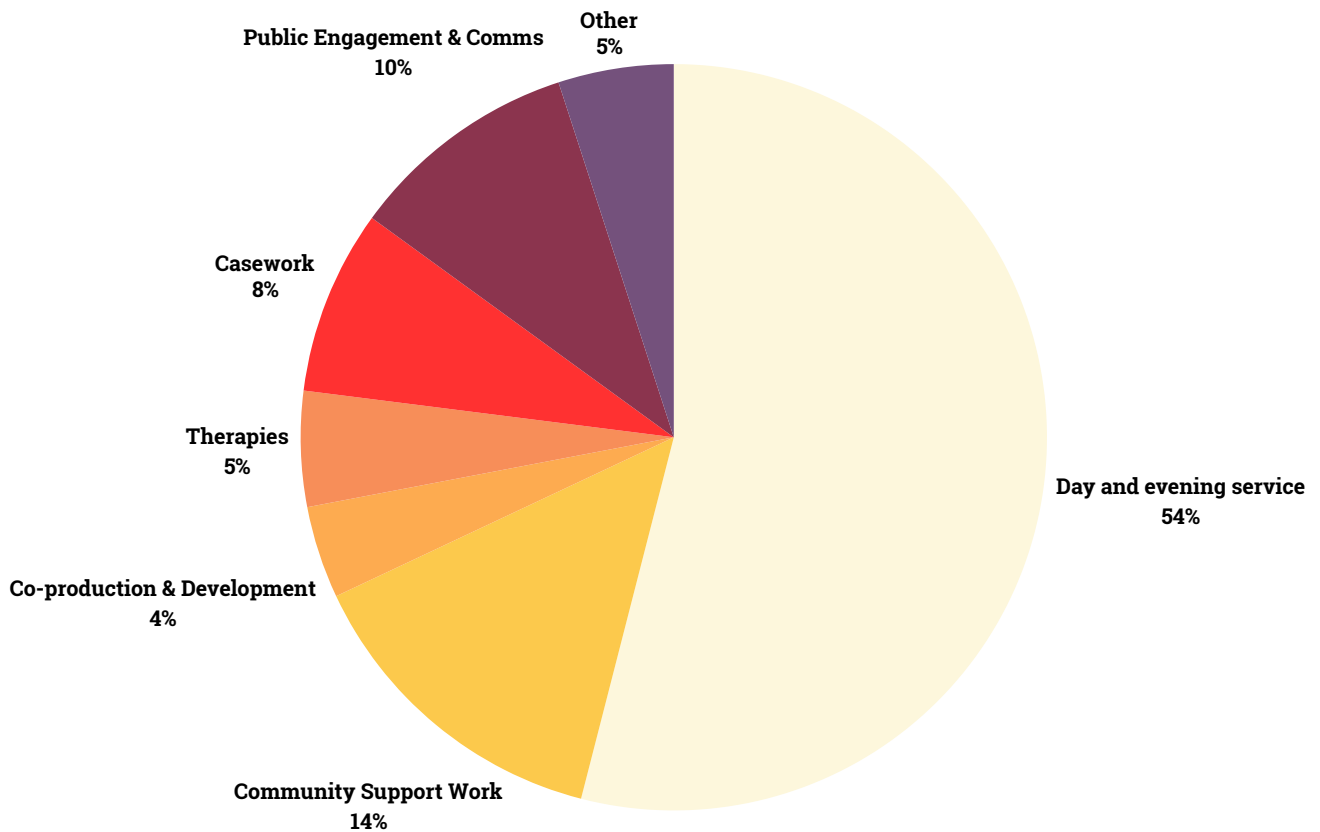


Expenditure

Our **total expenditure was £2,311,018**. Of this, **£1,865,220 (86.5%)** was spent on delivering our services, and **£291,393 (12.5%)** on Support and Governance. There was a **small deficit of £65,711**, however this consisted of **£54,822 in Restricted Funds** carried over from the previous year, and **£10,889 in Unrestricted Funds**, which reduced our Unrestricted Funds balance by **1.8%**.

Financial Overview

Total Expenditure breakdown



Restricted and Unrestricted Funds

Charity funds consist of Unrestricted and Restricted Funds. Unrestricted funds can be spent by the Charity as and when needed to deliver its services, without any restrictions placed by funders and donors. Restricted Funds have been donated to the Charity under specific conditions, and must be spent in line with the funder's wishes. It is important for a Charity to have sufficient Unrestricted Funds available to run its operations.

On 31 March 2024, our **total fund balance was £529,592**, of which **£490,026 (92.5%) was unrestricted**, and **£39,566 (7.5%) was restricted**.

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You can find our full Audited Accounts [here](#).

Financial Overview

Reserves

Our policy is to maintain unrestricted reserves at a level that allows the Charity to be managed efficiently, to provide a buffer for interrupted services, to provide for future potential relocation and service development and to cover costs in the event of the Charity needing to wind down services due to significant loss of income, and/or increases in costs. This year we maintained our **contingency reserve of £369,600**.

We have been able to secure various new large multi-year grants to ensure delivery and growth of our services in the coming five years. In order to build a robust foundation for this delivery, the Trustees have made it their highest priority in the budgets for the coming years to build healthy reserves.



Find out more at

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Affiliated to Headway - the brain injury association