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ANNUAL REPORT

2020/21

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@thebraincharity



www.thebraincharity.org.uk



When the world stood still, we started running

The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably been the most seismic crisis of a generation. The societal changes of the last 18 months dwarf any others I ever have seen in my own lifetime.

When the UK was plunged into lockdown, many people initially felt a sense of novelty at being asked to stay at home. But sadly, being unable to leave your home is something which is not new for many of The Brain Charity's clients. A neurological diagnosis can have a devastating impact on confidence; people struggle with communication and feel unable to venture back into the world.

This meant The Brain Charity was already well-equipped to support our shielding clients to deal with the social isolation which followed the UK's 'stay at home' mandate. Nothing, however, could have prepared us for the extent of the ensuing mental health crisis.

Overnight, demand for our services skyrocketed. Around us, many other organisations and support services stood still or crumbled at a time when the people they helped needed them most. I will forever be proud of the way The Brain Charity's committed staff, volunteers and trustees did exactly the opposite – rolling up their sleeves and getting on with it. I have always known The Brain Charity is lucky to have a great community, but this year they proved it to me as the whole organisation came together for the benefit of our clients.

We rallied and stood up to the challenge, setting up emergency food and prescription deliveries and a telephone befriending service within weeks. Our centre in Liverpool has always been the focal point around which our neurological community comes

together, but, unable to meet there in person, we organised weekly social activities online instead and supported clients to access digital technologies.

Shortly after the end of the financial year this April, we were able to start safely reopening our centre and welcoming familiar faces, and plenty of new ones, back into the building.

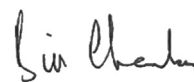
One thing it is important to mark is that not only has The Brain Charity managed to survive the pandemic and weather the storm, our grit and determination has paved the way for significant expansion in the coming year.

Taking into account the pandemic's huge impact on mental health, we have secured additional funding to grow our counselling and phone befriending services. We know the shockwaves of COVID-19 will continue to be felt throughout communities for years to come, so we have built a new employment team to help people with neurological conditions find jobs, training and education opportunities. We will imminently have two Information & Advice Officers dedicated to supporting patients of The Women's Hospital in Liverpool to provide vital support to pregnant women and newborn babies with neurological conditions, genetic illnesses and brain injuries.

Looking forward to the next financial year, there is one message I want to instill. We are stronger when we work together.



Nanette Mellor,
CEO, The Brain Charity



Professor Bill Chambers,
Chair of Trustees, The Brain Charity



The Brain Charity's year in numbers

We welcomed

3,529
new clients

from all over the UK with practical help, emotional support and social activities.

In its second year, our Brain Changer Arts Project supported 88 children and young people – improving the mobility of

84%
of participants
and the confidence levels of 76%.

The Brain Changer

Arts Project



Our counsellors delivered approximately

1,268
counselling
sessions

meeting with more than 354 clients struggling with their mental health.

More than
20,000

people now follow our news on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

77,016
people

accessed information

on their neurological condition and our services via our website

Our phone befrienders made 50 1-hour calls per week,

supporting
114
isolated people

Our first ever Sixmas appeal in December 2020

raised more than
£11,000

– a vital boost for our front line services.

Around

60 people

attended our virtual Head Matters event in September 2020

Between April and June 2020, our emergency food delivery service made

1,014
drop offs

to an average of 58 people each week.

A virtual programme of

37
innovative
videos

were created to offer our Music Makes Us! workshops – which combine speech and language therapy through singing and physiotherapy through dance – to people living with dementia all over the UK



We helped

293
people stay safe

at home by attending online Zoom and Teams-based social activities, workshops and classes – including neuro-pilates, yoga, cookalongs, dance, mindfulness, cosmetics and even hat-making!

7 virtual
editions

of our newsletter The Nerve were sent out to an online mailing list of more than 4,000 people.



Hazel's story

Hazel's husband Robert, 92, was diagnosed with vascular dementia with Lewy bodies in December 2018 following a heart attack and a stroke.

Former teacher Hazel, from Cheshire, gave up work to care for Robert two and a half years ago after realising he was no longer safe at home on his own.

She said: *"You think you're prepared for something like this to happen, but when it actually happens to you, you realise you can never be prepared for someone you love being so different to how they were before."*

Hazel discovered The Brain Charity's Music Makes Us! programme for people living with dementia in February this year after being recommended it by a support worker.

The workshops – which combine singing with speech and language therapy and dance with physiotherapy and were previously held in care homes – moved online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hazel said: *"Robert absolutely loves all forms of music, so I thought we'd give it a try."*

"It was brilliant – we did every session together. It was so enjoyable, but also something beneficial for Robert."

"Even though he can no longer speak, he loves to play along to the songs with shakers and bells and will clap and hum to the tunes, and sway in his chair."

"Because the same people featured in the videos each week, they became familiar and Robert would wave at them and touch the screen as if he recognised them."

"When you're caring for a partner with dementia, it means so much to have that connection through music with them and see them smiling and happy."

"Seeing Robert engage with songs we used to dance to together was lovely to see, and gave back a sense of who he was before the dementia."

"My husband's dementia took away his ability to speak; Music Makes Us! allowed us to reconnect"



Teresa's story

Former care home worker Teresa Randles, 55, was diagnosed with dyslexia in 2011 after Job Centre staff realised she struggled with writing and her short term memory.

This diagnosis brought sudden clarity to experiences she'd been having her whole life: being called stupid, struggling at school before leaving age 15 and feeling forced to abandon her successful job as a carer because she couldn't keep up with the admin and digital technology.

The paperwork piling up and use of tablets in the workplace caused Teresa extreme anxiety, leading to her having to take an extended period off work.

This is when she discovered The Brain Charity, first volunteering in our Brain Food Café every week before joining Directions, one of our employment projects.

Teresa, from Liverpool, said: *"For me to learn something, I need it repeated over and over."*

"It can take me quite a bit of time to pick up new things and my short-term memory can be a massive problem when learning."

As part of Directions, Teresa was enrolled on a course which resulted in her receiving a brand new smartphone and learning Zoom – as well as taking her first ever selfie. ►

This allowed her to develop her digital skills so she is better placed to work with technology in her future career.

She also got the chance to record her own podcast, despite not knowing what a podcast was before.

Teresa said: *"The Brain Charity kept me together. Now, I want to work supporting children with learning difficulties. It was hard for me growing up with dyslexia and knowing what I had to go through, I want to do what I can to care for people going through that."*

"Struggling with the written side of jobs can be a massive barrier, but I know with The Brain Charity's help that I can get there."



European Union
European
Social Fund



"I've been called stupid since I was young due to my dyslexia; The Brain Charity's employment team helped me build my confidence"

Dee's story

In 2016, mum-of-two Dee noticed her daughter, Rose, then aged two, was walking with a slight limp.

Four weeks later, the family received the heart-breaking news Rose had a pilocytic astrocytoma brain tumour. The 3cm tumour was located in her brain stem and was the size of a ping pong ball.

Radiographer Dee said: *"Rose getting a brain tumour diagnosis was like all the clichés, our world was completely turned upside down. We were in complete shock."*

In June 2016, Rose underwent a 13-hour operation which removed 75% of the tumour but left the youngster with posterior fossa syndrome.

This neurological condition describes a collection of symptoms that can affect speech, fine motor skills and the ability to swallow and is a risk associated with the removal of brain tumours in children.

For Rose, this started with almost total paralysis – she stayed in hospital for three months and had to relearn how to walk and talk but was left with lasting effects on her speech and fine motor skills.

Rose, now eight, first took part in The Brain Charity's Brain Changer Arts Project sessions online during the first COVID-19 lockdown.

Thanks to the workshops, which combine crafting and occupational therapy, she has seen huge improvements in her fine motor skills and was even able to make her own dolls house from scratch.

Dee said: *"Rose being able to do things she enjoys that use fine motor skills has helped her improve a lot. I've noticed a big difference in her using scissors."*

"Rose is very creative and can get frustrated when she doesn't feel capable with her fine-motor skills."

"Being able to use scissors might seem a small thing to some, but being able to make that dolls house really helped her keep on top of her mental health – especially through the lockdown."

"I would 100% recommend the Brain Changer Arts Project. It was welcoming, and they really made an effort to be inclusive to all ability levels."



"My little girl was paralysed for three months after life-saving brain tumour surgery; The Brain Changer Arts Project helped her regain her fine motor skills"

The Brain Changer
Arts Project

**Occupational
Therapy through
Art and Craft**

Graham's story

NHS pharmaceutical manager Graham, 58, started his 30-year career as a pharmacist at The Walton Centre, working across the hospital including in intensive care.

But in Easter 2017, the 58-year-old found himself a patient in the same hospital when he suffered a sudden brain haemorrhage on his way back from the shops.

When Graham fell to the floor he hit his head, suffering an occipital fracture and was later put in a medically induced coma for four weeks.

His wife Jane, 55, from Liverpool, said: *"Doctors were preparing us for the worst"*

"They literally saved his life in front of us. It was very surreal."

Initially, Jane spoke to The Brain Charity's staff based at The Walton Centre to seek legal advice over gaining power of attorney.

She said: *"At the time I didn't know what Graham's recovery would be like, or whether he would."*

"The Brain Charity helped me talk through different legal options."

"It was nice to have someone calm to talk to who could give me hope."

"When you've got a loved one on the verge of dying it was really good to be able to get good advice."

"I was also given a lot of information about The Brain Charity's other services and it was a complete relief to know the support was out there."

When dad-of-two Graham came out of his coma he had an acquired brain injury which caused him to struggle with his mental health, short term memory loss, mood swings and epilepsy including seizures.

During the pandemic, he received weekly calls from The Brain Charity's phone befriending service.

Jane said: *"The calls have been a lifeline, especially during the lockdown as Graham had been shielding."*

"When mental health professionals fell silent during lockdown The Brain Charity were the first people to call to check if we were ok."

"For Graham to have someone who understands brain injury call each week has been very beneficial to his wellbeing and it doesn't rely on him remembering to make the call."



"I went from working in intensive care to being there myself"

Income & expenditure

Against the backdrop of a very difficult year for the third sector due to the pandemic, we have actually had our most successful year ever in terms of grant funding.

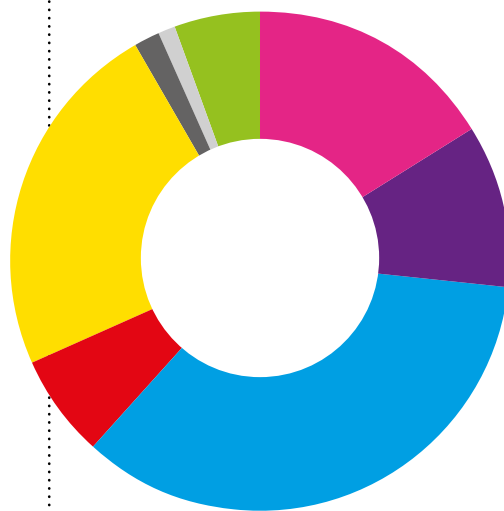
The Brain Charity continued to receive funding from Quilter Cheviot for our Music Makes Us! Dementia Project, and from BBC Children in Need for our Brain Changer Arts Project for children and young people. Through the European Social Fund, we have been able to launch a new employment team to help people with neurological conditions to find work, training, education and placement opportunities in supportive environments.

In December 2020 The Brain Charity received a multi-year core funding grant from the Henry Smith Charity; recognition of our excellent service delivery and ability to clearly demonstrate benefit were key to winning this grant.

Furthermore, despite the immense challenges faced because of COVID-19, we were supported through this complex and difficult time with valuable grant-based support from the Steve Morgan Foundation, LCR Carers, P.H. Holt Foundation, National Lottery Community Fund, Charities Aid Foundation and Public Health Liverpool.



Income



- Charitable Activities - Contracts: £131,708
- Charitable Activities - Projects: £82,287
- Corporate Sponsorship: £283,333
- Donations and Individual Fundraising: £52,285
- Grant Income: £187,537
- Fundraising Events: £14,871
- Investment Income: £9,199
- Trading Income: £42,512

Expenditure



- Frontline Services: £698,056
- Other Overheads: £80,735
- Raising Funds: £82,125



CLOSE

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