



# Hastings Voluntary Action

## Holistic Health Project

### Report July '25

#### Definition of Holistic Health:

*Holistic Health considers the whole – Body, Mind and Spirit. Integrating physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual aspects. With the emphasis on preventative care. The integration of natural/alternative therapies complements conventional medicine and supports the overall wellbeing of the individual, while addressing all aspects of wellbeing.*

## Introduction

### Why a Holistic Health Project?

Hastings Voluntary Action was left a legacy bequest from a dear friend and colleague her wishes that it be used to fund project/ service delivery that was less likely to be funded from other funding sources. Our colleague was passionate about mental wellbeing and supporting communities and individuals to find avenues to express themselves and find tools to look after their wellbeing and had spent much of her working life in roles that enabled people to connect to others and look after their health and wellbeing.

A meeting was convened with Steve Manwaring – HVA director, a family member of our colleague, Jacy and Su and Sarita

The legacy team was formed with the above people.

The idea of a Holistic Health project aimed at young people was discussed:

- A holistic health project for young people would be beneficial in addressing the wide-ranging and interconnected factors that influence their wellbeing.
- Young people today face a variety of challenges — from mental health pressures and social media influences to physical health risks and social inequalities — that cannot be effectively managed through single-issue interventions.
- A holistic approach recognises that emotional, social, physical, and psychological health are deeply linked, and it aims to support young people in all aspects of their lives. By providing integrated support that covers mental resilience, healthy

relationships, nutrition, exercise, and emotional literacy, a holistic health project empowers young people to build strong foundations for lifelong wellbeing.

- It also ensures that interventions are tailored, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse needs of different individuals, fostering a generation that is more resilient, self-aware, and capable of making positive health choices.

### **Holistic Health will support young people to access different ways to look after their health and wellbeing**

With the above in mind the project would set out to provide safe spaces for young people to access complementary therapies/ activities that they are interested in and that would benefit their overall wellbeing. In doing so the project hoped to engage with young people who may not necessarily attend traditional support services. The Holistic Health project would add value to services / groups already running and offer a new and valuable resource for local young people. The project would link into the five ways to wellbeing, by encouraging young people to Be Active – Take Notice- Keep Learning – Give and Connect.

### **Holistic Health Project team will support a local group of practitioners to reach younger people and offer the framework to do this**

The project would also aim to create a directory of local verified holistic therapists that embraced the idea of delivering therapies that are accessible and easy for young people to access. Creating a wellbeing community that embraced reaching younger people with new ways to look after their wellbeing.

The project team agreed that this would be a good idea, and that Loise would approve of the idea.

Sarita and Jacy drew up an initial project proposal for a pilot project that Steve could take to the HVA trustees.

The Trustees agreed that a pilot could go ahead to be reviewed after 6 months.

### **Initial Holistic Health Project Statement created by Sarita and Jacy**

"We're on a mission to create a vibrant community where diverse holistic practices thrive, nurturing wellbeing on multiple levels. With a focus on helping young people 18-24 in our community, we invite passionate individuals in alternative therapy modalities to join us in building a stronger, healthier community. Let's collaborate to make a meaningful difference together and cultivate a space where well-being flourishes for the benefit of our youth."

## Discovery Phase

The project used the initial 6 months to engage with a wide range of complementary practitioners to ascertain and understand their motivations for wanting to be involved in the project. It was important to try out and test the therapies and also their knowledge of safeguarding.

The project visited local complementary health events and activities to talk with holistic health practitioners to gauge interest and were met with enthusiasm and agreement to discuss this further.

Alongside this the project reached out to the Hastings Youth Partnership and spoke to local youth projects to assess the need and was again met with enthusiasm.

The project used a person-centred approach and focused on the individual needs of each practitioner whilst also keeping the overall project aims in mind.

This approach builds a rapport and finds 's a natural and genuine fit between the practitioner and the project.

The project spent time building confidence with the practitioners enabling them to deliver their therapies for younger people in a safe and accessible way that young people would engage with.

The Holistic health project was also able to work with the practitioners to ascertain the right safeguarding practices that needed to be put in place and had the resources and networks to reach out to local young people's groups and services.

### STEPS TO MAKING EVERY CONTACT MEANINGFUL



## **First community meeting of practitioners**

15 practitioners attended and the following therapies were represented:

*Doorstep herbs; Meditation; Gong Sound Bath; Emotional Freedom Techniques; Peoples Health Alliance; Healing spiritualist; positive affirmations; Reiki healer; Tarot; light therapy; reflexology; dance movement therapy; palmistry; crystal healing*

### **The project was introduced with following statement:**

*Hastings Voluntary Action is pleased to say that it has funding from a bequest to deliver a pilot project exploring holistic health and complementary therapies for young people aged 18–24. With the aim of providing young people with opportunities to access holistic support through a wide variety of complementary therapies enabling young people to learn and understand how to look after their own wellbeing in a variety of ways. The project aims to add value and work alongside existing health care support available for young people adding value to existing services. Sarita and Jacy are in post as project workers on a part time basis to carry out consultations with local young people and services and meet with local complementary practitioners. To work in collaboration with young people / services and complementary therapists to put on an event in July that enables young people to understand and try out different complementary practices.*

### **The group agreed the following principles:**

- *Young People at the Heart of the Project – Engaging young people*
- *Workers (trusted person) to accompany*
- *Working with existing young people's / services / groups and projects and consulting with local young people*
- *Providing opportunities for young People to learn skills and understanding*
- *Working together and building value into local community*
- *Working together with young people, listening and hearing what they are saying*
- *Working with existing young people's services to add value and complement existing support for young people*
- *Working together to deliver a safe and responsive event*

### **Practical considerations:**

- *Making screens for privacy for young people – HVA to take on this task*
- *£100 flat rate – for practitioners attending event for 4 hours attendance – HVA to pay this initial cost*
- *Risk assessment – HVA to complete this*
- *Booking venue – HVA to find and pay for venue*
- *Plan for event – Collaboration*
- *Décor for event – Collaboration*

### What the event will offer:

- *Tasters*
- *Talks*
- *Young People to take away goody bag at event*
- *Leaflet each practitioner has one helpful exercise to add for the event, "Take away tools"*
- *Number of therapies 12/15?*

### Possible therapies and practices to offer:

- *Ilaria-Teaching of touch healing EFT (emotional freedom technique)*
- *Art therapy*
- *Breathwork and meditation*
- *Self-Care*
- *Simple exercises Young People can take away.*
- *Reiki- energy healing*
- *Crystal therapy*
- *Journaling – Self statements (affirmations) Meditation*
- *Jo-Tarot trained- Young People love tarot - -Some Young People have own channel.*
- *Scared Geometry*
- *Angel cards*
- *Hand massage*

### Creating the feel and structure for the project

The project team made 8 screens using wooden frames and sari fabric these were to create a cosy and less overwhelming environment for younger people to take part and take ease any self-consciousness about having a therapy in front of others.

We held a series of meetings with invited practitioners and regular meetings became an important component of the project's success, providing a structured opportunity for partners, staff, and stakeholders to communicate, coordinate, and reflect on progress. These meetings ensured that everyone remained aligned with the project's goals and promotes the sharing of best practices and new ideas. They also strengthened collaboration by building trust, fostering accountability, and encouraging open dialogue. Though we started with 15 practitioners we ended up with eight core practitioners. We ended up with eight core practitioners.

## Going Forward

Following on from initial event we were able to ascertain which practitioners were really invested in the outcomes and ethos for the Holistic health project and we identified that there were 8 core members of the holistic health team who believe in and want to reach younger people with their therapies and also want to share their practices with this younger age range who may not usually be able to afford to take part in these therapies. The core team of therapists have been supported to adjust their practice to enable it to be more accessible and attractive for the younger people the project aims to reach.

## First event at Hastings Observer Building

Hastings Voluntary Action Holistic Health Project is pleased to report that the project's first event was held on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July at Hastings Observer Building.



The event brought together a great team of local complementary practitioners all keen to reach out work with young people aged 18-24 offering free taster sessions of their particular therapies.

## **Feedback from practitioners:**

- Thanks all I had some great readings and met some lovely people
- Thank you everyone for an amazing afternoon
- Lovely to be a part of this
- really enjoyed being a part such a great new healing and positive venture

### Feedback from attendees:

- That I need to listen to my body
- Make regular contact to support my well being
- Being chilled and try and open up
- To be open
- Taking care of my mental health
- Trust my intuition and not stress over decisions
- Be open and try new things
- Self-care
- I have learned to about taking care of myself instead of always giving to others

What we learned from our first event was the space is very important. We held our first event at the Observer building. The space is lovely but it was too big. We also clashed with St. Leonard's festival where a lot of the youth had gone for the day. We had about 35 people through the day.

Our next event was at Central Hall 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2024. The space was perfect and we had around 50+ people throughout the day 40 of whom were young people aged between 16-25

The first event in 2025 was in March. This event didn't go ahead as 4 out of 8 of our therapists had called in sick on the day.

Holistic Health attended the following:

- Hastings College wellbeing week
- Xtrax drop in session
- Mac Millan Hastings Launch
- Partnership event with People's Health Alliance – central Hall

We went to promote Holistic health at Hastings college during Mental health week in May. We engaged with around 15 young people. Through this event we were invited to meet the young people at Xtrax at their summer BBQ. It was a fun afternoon with the young people. We took Lee who does meditation and breathwork and Sarita did Angel cards and Tibetan singing bowls. During the couple of hours, we were there we engaged with around 7 young people. They appreciated the cards and the support workers said that they felt the cards were a good tool to help young people open up.

The next event was on 10<sup>th</sup> May and we had over 50 people attend. Around 30 young people attended.

The lessons learned were that we needed to join forces with the People's Health Alliance who promote health and wellbeing in the community. They have a lot of therapists who we could work with so as not to have another situation where we had to cancel due to lack of therapists.

Our next event was with the People's Health alliance and it was amazing, we had over a 100 people attending and around 45 were young people.

The Holistic Health project is also building connections and partner working with internal HVA projects alongside external collaborations and the project was invited to attend the Broomgrove Christmas lights up event. We had a stand and made bath salts and had a touch of gentleness offering hand massages to all the families and children who attended. All the children came and made bath salts – at least 70 bath salts bottles got made and many children and their parents had a hand massage.

This was a positive experience for the families at Broomgrove as many said they hadn't had a massage before and it felt really good to have that experience, and the children made the bath salts as gifts for family members and enjoyed smelling the essential oils and getting involved. To see so many families joining in and taking part showed us that the project can reach younger children and families and we can adapt our delivery according to the groups we are working with.

#### **Sarita and Jacy from Hastings Voluntary Action said:**

*"We are aiming to reach young people who may not have had the opportunity to try these types of activities before and those that did come along really appreciated the opportunity to have a go and went away feeling more relaxed and definitely wanted to attend more events like this"*

Holding events is an important way to engage young people, raise awareness, and build a sense of community around the project. These events provide the opportunity for young people to get to know more about the project and access more complementary therapies and learn how to take charge of their own health and wellbeing. Our events provided opportunities to promote health messages in a fun, interactive, and accessible way, making learning more memorable and impactful.



## Partnerships and collaboration



Partnership and collaboration are fundamental to the success of this holistic health project; by working together, everyone can pool their expertise, resources, and networks to provide a more comprehensive and effective service. Strong partnerships also encourage innovation, shared learning, and community involvement, making projects more sustainable and better suited to meet the real needs of young people. Building trust and open communication between partners is key to creating a unified approach that truly places young people at the centre of decision-making and service delivery.

The model of delivery for the holistic health project will be based on a flexible, youth-centred approach that combines structured programmes with accessible, informal support. Delivery will include a blend of various therapeutic practices to meet young people's diverse needs and preferences. The model emphasises accessibility, cultural sensitivity, and early intervention, ensuring that support is provided in safe, familiar environments such as their regular meeting places and groups alongside regular events. Regular feedback from young people will shape and refine the delivery model, ensuring that it remains relevant, engaging, and effective in promoting positive health outcomes.

## Future of the Holistic Health Project

Going forward, establishing a partnership with the People's Health Alliance offers an exciting opportunity to strengthen and expand the holistic health project. The Alliance's community-led, integrative approach to health aligns closely with our vision of supporting young people across all areas of their wellbeing. By collaborating, the project can access a wider network of practitioners, innovative resources, and community-driven models of care that emphasise prevention, empowerment, and resilience.

This partnership will also help build stronger local connections, enhance service delivery through shared expertise, and create more sustainable pathways for young people to engage with holistic health support. Together, we can ensure the project remains dynamic, inclusive, and truly responsive to the evolving needs of young people and their communities.

## What's next for Holistic Health?

Jacy Kilvert stepped away from Holistic Health in June 2025 and Sarita will continue to work in partnership with PHA going forward.

Sarita collaborated with the PHA to organise the June Holistic health event. We had a full house of therapists. We were able to provide more modalities of therapies which were very popular, and we had over 100 people including 40 young people attend the event. The therapists asked for a donation or small charge to enable offering free treatment to young people.

Holistic health is supporting Ellie (HH therapist) and her partner Kurt to deliver the 12th Step programme at Central Hall for three months while their regular meeting place is being refurbished. PHA want to provide training for therapists and members of the community who are interested. Holistic health will support PHA to provide this training in September.

**The next Holistic Health event will be 4th October with further events in planning for December, February, and April.**

More events are planned 2026 mostly in collaboration with the Peoples Health Alliance.

To find out more about the project contact: [holistichealth@hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk](mailto:holistichealth@hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk)