

Brandon Bulletin

Spring / Summer
2021 Edition

Welcome from Julia Brown, our CEO

As we emerge from one of the most challenging years on record, I've really enjoyed reflecting on everything we've achieved at Brandon Centre over the last six months.

Some of the highlights for me have been seeing our teams' dedication to staying accessible throughout the pandemic. In particular, our mental health teams who have been delivering the majority of their sessions virtually, developing our exciting Systemic Therapy research project, welcoming a new cohort of excellent Trustees, and launching our coil and implant fitting service.

As the saying goes, we often find strength in the face of adversity, and we've seen this demonstrated across the nation throughout the pandemic. At Brandon Centre we've stayed open and found creative ways to make sure our young people can access our services, at a time when they've needed us most.

We've witnessed the Black Lives Matter movement gain momentum, raising awareness of our responsibility to all the young people and families in our community.

As an organisation we're moving onto a more secure financial footing and we're exploring exciting opportunities for new funding so that we can grow and continue to innovate.

With this in mind, we've also started work on an important young people's involvement strategy which will bring young people into the heart of our decision-making, and see us become more of a community hub.

Of course, there's much more happening all the time, and I hope you enjoy reading about some of the highlights here.

Finally, I'd like to thank all of our supporters and everyone in the Brandon Centre family (it really does feel like a family).

Happy reading!

Julia



Julia Brown
Chief Executive

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Giving parents the tools to tackle childhood obesity

Obesity is often a more complex problem than we might think. It needs to be considered alongside a child's wider wellbeing, looking at emotional regulation, coping mechanisms, life experiences, environment, and parental mental health.

Our sector-leading, 6-week group programme *Families, Food and Feelings* is giving parents of children between the ages of 5 and 17, a forum to discuss, and the tools to deal with, complex childhood obesity.

Towards the end of 2017, our dedicated Clinical Training and Consultancy team began work on a childhood obesity programme with a pilot project funded by Camden & Islington Public Health and Clinical Commission Groups.

Three years on and a lot of hard work spent developing, adapting, and growing the service, we now offer a successful **sector-leading childhood obesity programme** under our *Enhanced Healthy Living* banner.

What is the programme?

- » A **6-week group programme for parents** of children, between the ages of 5 and 17, struggling with excess weight.
- » The programme, called *Families, Food and Feelings*, is **run every quarter**, and covers topics including setting boundaries around food choices, maintaining healthier lifestyles, identifying emotional eating habits, and encouraging positive parent-child relationships.

What's different about *Families, Food and Feelings*?

- » Holistic approach proves effective

While the focus is on healthy living, the programme helps families understand and **improve their wider health, by addressing the link between mental health and physical health**. We look at boundary-setting and healthy relationships, giving parents the confidence and skills to deal with any issues.

- » Building rapport reduces concerns about being judged

Our team puts a lot of effort into building rapport with families, making sure that any worries about participating are eased before the programme begins.

"We've implemented a pre-group assessment where we meet every family on a one-to-one basis," says Michelle Drummond, Head of Clinical Training and Consultancy at Brandon Centre.

"It's proven invaluable in encouraging parents to join the programme. They get to know us and see that we're here to help."

*"Some parents have initial fears of being judged by other parents or professionals, but at the end of the group many of them report that being able to **share experiences and hear from other parents with similar difficulties was incredibly valuable**," says Michelle, who delivers the programme together with Counselling Psychologist Olga Palmqvist.*

"Our dropout rate has reduced significantly with many more families seeing the course through to the end," says Olga.

» Ongoing support gives better outcomes

Our model makes sure that participating families receive a **one-to-one follow-up**, usually 6 weeks after the programme. We discuss what changes they've been able to implement and where they need further support.

Initial results are extremely positive with 9 out of 10 parents reporting that their confidence in setting boundaries has improved, and 8 out of 10 parents telling us that their knowledge of healthy living has increased since completing the programme.

» Virtual sessions a success

Families are invited to attend the sessions online, and the uptake has been steadily increasing.

*"The groups are really interactive," says Olga. "Parents value the fact that others are in the same boat and enjoy supporting each other. We use the chat function too, which allows us to be flexible and **guide the sessions according to the topics families need most help with.**"*

Sessions are accessible to everyone who needs them, and if families can't attend online, they're offered sessions over the phone.

Obesity should be considered as part of a child's wider wellbeing.

Obesity is a complex systemic problem that often needs to be dealt with alongside other factors including emotional attachment to food, coping mechanisms, adverse life experiences, and parental mental health.

Our work is helping to inform research and funding for this important problem. *"Research in the UK on effective interventions for childhood obesity is quite limited, and we're building up significant knowledge and understanding of the issues involved, and how we can help," says Michelle.*

What our parents say:

"Hearing other people's experiences made me feel at ease when explaining my issues. Olga and Michelle were fantastic in explaining, not rushing the session, and most importantly I felt heard and not judged. Thank you."

"Giving the holistic approach to parenting gave me more confidence. It removed some of the doubts I had about parenting."

"After attending this course, I just felt that something clicked in my head and that all the theory I read before, I can now confidently practice."

Obesity training for professionals working with young people

Our team also provides quarterly webinars and ad hoc consultations on how to manage obesity in children for other professionals working with young people. For more information contact: brandoncentre.healthyliving@nhs.net or call 020 7267 4792.

Other Parent Groups available at Brandon Centre

» **Love and Limits:** For parents of teenagers with challenging behaviour

» **ADHD Parenting Group:** For families with a child diagnosed with ADHD.

To find out more contact: familyservice@brandoncentre.org.uk

Brandon Centre Highly Commended in 40th HSJ Awards

Brandon Centre and our partners were Highly Commended in the Integrated Care Partnership of the Year category, for our work with the Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Partnership in Islington.

Considered the 'Oscars of the NHS', the HSJ award recognised our outstanding contribution to healthcare over the past 12 months.



In March this year, over 4000 attendees within the health and social care sector tuned in to the first virtual Health Service Journal Awards.

Hosted by Sir Lenny Henry, alongside broadcaster Victoria Derbyshire, the evening celebrated dedication, innovation, and teamwork within the health care community during one of the most demanding years on record for the NHS.

Brandon Centre and our partners were thrilled to be **Highly Commended** in the Integrated Care Partnership of the Year category, for our work with the Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Partnership in Islington.

What is the SEMH Partnership?

It's a **joined-up approach to Mental Health service provision** within Islington. Young people between 16 and 25 can contact a Central Point of Access which makes sure they receive the right care and support by directing them to the most appropriate provider.

*"It's about getting it right first time," says Pavlos Rossolymos, Brandon Centre's Head of Mental Health. "It stops duplication of effort, but more importantly, it means young people and families **don't have to navigate the system alone.**"*

Brandon Centre attends weekly referral meetings and makes sure that our highly skilled specialist services are offered to the young people that need them.

What the judges said about the service:

*"The service was simple, accessible and reacted quickly to complex patient's needs. The impact this has on the individual service user and the clinical professional, in service terms (providing clinical input when needed) can't be underestimated. **It is an excellent integration of all sectors including health, social care and housing, which has a lifelong impact on individuals.**"*

Why is this award important?

Brandon Centre has a long-standing history of nurturing our partnerships and we're very proud of our strong connections with local service providers.

"The SEMH Partnership is a great example of collaborative working. We refer young people on to other services if we don't think we can offer them exactly what they need," says Pavlos. "Partnerships take work, and this award is a fitting acknowledgement of that work."

The partnership was also a finalist in the Health and Local Government Partnership Award.

We'd like to congratulate everyone involved, including all the other partners: North Central London CCG (Islington), Whittington Health, Barnardo's, Chance UK, Isledon and Kooth.

Young people and families in Islington looking for mental health support, can contact The Children's Services Contact Team on:

- » **020 7527 7400**
- » or visit the offices at 222 Upper Street, N1 1XR
- » or complete a Request for Service form [here: https://tinyurl.com/yv6kwp75](https://tinyurl.com/yv6kwp75)



North Central London
Clinical Commissioning Group



Whittington Health
NHS Trust



Youth Endowment Fund partnership gets underway

In 2019 our Systemic Integrative Treatment (SIT) team won a bid to become a partner in a new Home Office backed research programme into treatments that help prevent violence in young people. Find out more about our innovative model, and how we're helping inform the first phase of the research project.

What is Systemic Integrative Treatment?

We developed Brandon Centre's Systemic Integrative Treatment (BC SIT) model following 14 years of **intensive work with the families of children, between the ages of 8 and 16, at risk of going into care or custody.**

Building on the Multisystemic Therapy approach (which works closely with a child's family, peers, teachers, and the police where necessary) our programme incorporates an extended period of involvement, taking the usual six months up to 18 months.

For the first six months (phase 1), our therapists work closely with the family and their support network. They meet up to three times a week at the family home and are available on 24-hour call. The work includes behavioural therapy, pragmatic family therapy, CBT, and interventions for substance misuse.

"It's about sustainability and removing barriers to ongoing support which is vital," says Carly MacDonald, BC SIT Service Lead.

*"Our model involves conceptualising treatment goals in a way that allows for intervention, follow up and review. Phase 2 includes a less intensive programme of therapy (usually monthly check-ins) and allows us to be flexible and responsive to **ensure families don't slip back into previous patterns,**"* says Carly.

What is the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) project?

In 2019 the Home Office created the Youth Endowment Fund, making £200 million available over 10 years, with the aim of **tackling youth crime by supporting early interventions for young people at risk.**

Brandon Centre was selected as one of the first 24 grantees for the fund. The pilot project, which concentrates on the families of children between the ages of 10 and 14, is running alongside our regular programme and will feed data about our model back to the YEF.

*"We're gathering feedback through parent and child questionnaires which will be reviewed by the Fund's evaluating partner, the University of Hertfordshire. This will give us important information about **the feasibility of becoming a longer-term partner with the YEF,** which is really exciting,"* says Emily Callard, Business Development Manager for the BC SIT team.

Brandon Centre's SIT team have been instrumental in the development and evolution of our model. *"It's great that our work is being recognised by the YEF. We're constantly learning, and that's helping feed into research in our field, and ultimately helping more young people,"* says Emily.

*"We're following up with families after 18 months and we're finding the results are more positive. **It's really rewarding to see parents feeling happier, knowing that their child is at home, at school and out of trouble,**"* says Carly.

Feedback on our BC SIT model...

"We've had an absolutely lovely time with D over the half-term break - the best we can recall in literally years - and his attitude, behaviour and general engagement with home/family life has been great."
(Family)

"I just wanted to say WELL DONE again, I know the effort that has gone into this case from you all and it really has worked well." (Professional)

"F's mum talked about how helpful your work with her was and she is still using strategies!! So good job!"
(Social Worker)

To learn more about our SIT work or the YEF project contact: deancharlery@brandoncentre.org.uk or call **020 7424 9935**.



Counselling services go online

Our virtual Mental Health services have been running successfully for over a year now. Before the pandemic, we might have doubted the effectiveness of offering our specialist counselling and psychotherapy services online. But with more young people than ever needing our support, we've seen that we can take them through our 16-session therapeutic intervention online with very encouraging results.

Virtual Counselling and Psychotherapy Service a success

As the world locked down in March 2019, our Counselling and Psychotherapy team wasted no time getting our one-to-one therapy sessions up and running online.

Within days, sessions began online, and now young people can **learn more, register, and have their therapy sessions, all virtually.**

*"Being accessible online has been critical. We're continuing to see as many young people as we did before lockdown, and **referrals are continuing to rise**,"* says Pavlos Rossolymos, Brandon Centre's Head of Mental Health.

Our award-winning team includes 4 clinical psychologists, 5 psychotherapists and our referral coordinator Robyn. We also work with 6 trainees, who have diligently done all their training online this academic year.

The team is expert in late adolescent mental health and, **every week, helps over 80 young people between 16 and 25** with specialist one-to-one Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Young people receive up to 16 sessions of exploratory psychotherapy which uses integrative methods including CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy), interpersonal psychotherapy and psychodynamic therapy.

We know that young people coped less well with continued lockdown restrictions than the overall population. Particularly those with pre-existing conditions. *

*"We've been helping young people **understand what they can do to help themselves**,"* explains Pavlos, *"such as the importance of getting outdoors into green spaces, keeping to a routine, doing activities they enjoy, and texting and catching up with friends and family virtually."*

*Mental Health Foundation, September 2020 - Resilience across the UK during the coronavirus pandemic

» For more information about our counselling and psychotherapy services contact:

Email: counselling@brandoncentre.org.uk

Telephone: **020 7267 1321**

Text: **07520 633477**



More local experts join the Board of Trustees

With their impressive collective skills and backgrounds, our Trustees help govern Brandon Centre's activities and direct how the organisation is run. Our team is now complete and raring to go as we welcome a new Chair, Vice Chair and three new Trustees and prepare to say a fond farewell to Dolores, our longest-standing Trustee.

Our new Chair has been a Brandon Centre Trustee since June 2019 and we couldn't be happier that he has accepted the role as Chair.

Mark is a Head Teacher at a North London Secondary School and knows all too well that young people need emotional guidance just as much as they need academic support.

"Adolescence is a time when young people are still forming their identities, and we need to make sure that they know how to look after their mental health. There's still some stigma among young boys in particular, who worry about being judged," says Mark.

"Social media makes their world much more complex, and young people need to learn skills to deal with it in a healthy way."

Q. As Chair, what are you looking forward to working on?

"Brandon Centre is in a good position, both financially and with the team we've put in place. But we can't sit still. We've got a rich history of innovation and I'm looking forward to helping the organisation look at new markets and niches, while staying true to the heart of why we're here – to support young people with our specialist services."

"We have a long-established reputation for working within the community and I'm excited about looking at ways to strengthen that work in a way that meets the community's needs," says Mark.



Mark Bland
Chair of Board of Trustees

more Trustees on the following pages...

Victoria's been one of our Trustees since September 2019 and has been a brilliant support with her experience and expertise in healthcare, management, and strategy. Victoria's now taking on the role of Vice Chair, and we're delighted.

By day, Victoria is Director of Health and Local Crisis Response at the British Red Cross overseeing the work of over 3,000 staff and volunteers.

Q. What interested you about working with Brandon Centre?

"I really liked the fact that it offers two critically important, sometimes stigmatised, services for young people right in the heart of the community. I've got two teenage daughters and know what a difficult time adolescence can be."

Q. What are you looking forward to in your role as Vice Chair?

"I'm really excited about helping Brandon Centre sustain and grow its services. The opportunity to share our expertise, through our training and consultancy services, is really promising. Also, the research opportunities we're working on reflect the innovative history of the centre."

When she's not busy working and vice-chairing, Victoria's favourite time of day is first thing in the morning when she walks her dog. *"It's a great time to get outside when others are sleeping. You can have the streets to yourself and plan the day ahead."*



Victoria Corbishley
Vice Chair of Board of Trustees



Temitope Ademosu
Trustee

With her background in Systemic Family Therapy and interest in global mental health, Temitope is a natural fit as Trustee. She's currently Head of Children and Families Clinical Service for the London Borough of Hackney and lecturer in Systemic Therapy at Kings College London.

Her PhD in Global Mental Health has taken her to Sierra Leone, where she studied the effects of war and the Ebola pandemic on children's mental health.

Q. What appealed to you about working with Brandon Centre?

"The fact that Brandon Centre offers a community-based service for young people, covering both mental and sexual health really interested me. Also, Brandon Centre was very open about wanting to welcome Trustees from diverse backgrounds to the Board and I was impressed by that," says Temitope.

"My involvement in systemic therapy means I've followed Brandon Centre's work over the years, so I'm really excited to be able to support that work now."

Temitope's experience working with young adolescents abroad drives her interest in sharing knowledge and experience from different countries and cultures.

"I'd like to share what I've learnt in my international work, and help give more young people a voice in how the services are developed. I think the focus on work in the community is already there, but I'm looking forward to supporting that even more."

Lucy Moore's experience and knowledge are impressively diverse. Currently working at Public Health England, she's also enjoyed a handful of leadership roles in the NHS, a stint as a maths teacher and has a newfound passion for beekeeping.

She joined the Board of Trustees earlier this year, and we talked to her about her hopes for the role.

Q. What are you looking forward to in your role as Trustee?

"I live in the neighbourhood and have noticed Brandon Centre on my local walks. I thought the work being done looked really interesting, and like it was really making a difference to young people."

"As an organisation it cuts above its weight, and has a history, profile and reach that's impressive."

After teaching 11-16-year-olds in a deprived area, Lucy found she wanted to help young people with their emotional wellbeing as well as their academic education. She now offers mentoring and support on a one-to-one basis, so finding out more about Brandon Centre's work with young people felt like a logical next step.

"I'm particularly interested in helping Brandon Centre build and maintain its partnerships, in putting my governance and accountability skills to good use, and using my creative thinking to help win new contracts and funding."

Lucy's work is driven by a desire to get the most out of disadvantaged young people. She's not new to work as a Trustee, working on the Board of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, which supports women with their choices about when, and if, to have children. As well as advising on sexual health, it's also developing an infertility service.

We asked Lucy for a peek into her life outside of work and volunteering: *"Not everyone knows that I've got four children that they are two sets of twins. The oldest pair share the same birthday as my husband, so that's a busy day for me!"*



Lucy Moore
Trustee



Joanna Stronach
Trustee

Jo is a programme manager and supports hospital discharges for NCL CCG. Before this, she worked as an Adult Mental Health Commissioning manager and held a public health role examining population trends and behaviours. She's also a mum to two boys, aged 12 and 17.

Q. What are you looking forward to in your role as Trustee?

"I was a relatively young mum and was lucky enough to have family and friends to support me. But young mums with little or no support can often feel very isolated, which makes everything harder," says Jo.

"I'm looking forward to using my strategic experience to help Brandon Centre grow and help young people who, without our support, would feel isolated and alone."

"I'm also keen to share my knowledge and understanding of trends within our communities to help us support the vulnerable young people that really need it, where they need it."

"Brandon Centre is already doing so many things right, and I want to help showcase and shout about all the great work that's being done."

We welcome Temitope, Lucy, and Joanna to Team Brandon Centre!

Thank you Dolores

It's with a heavy heart that we say goodbye to our incumbent Chair, Dolores Currie. Dolores has been with Brandon Centre for 26 years, and for the last four years she's been Chair of our Board of Trustees.

2021 sees her current roles come to an end. She's staying on as Trustee until August, after which she'll continue her work with us as an Ambassador for Brandon Centre.

"I've seen quite a lot of changes over the years, but what has always been there is the dedication to young people. There's a real passion for helping them, and an understanding of the importance of the work we're doing," says Dolores.

"I'm looking forward to raising awareness of Brandon Centre's great work, and helping to get more young people involved in how we grow our services. Their input is really being supported, and that's important."



Dolores Currie
Trustee



Peter Suchet
Head of Fundraising
& Marketing

Sorry to see you go!

We bid a fond farewell to Peter Suchet as he moves on to pastures new, including an exciting invitation to become a Trustee of the Government-backed Holocaust Memorial Day Trust.

As Head of Fundraising & Marketing at Brandon Centre, Peter has helped develop the strategy and lay the fundraising foundations that will enable us to continue to attract and develop the important revenue streams that make possible the help we offer our young people.

We thank Peter for his contribution during his time with us, and for his hope that this won't be a final farewell as he continues to offer any support he can in the future.

Football helps keep young women's mental health in shape

University College London Women's Football Club (UCLWFC) joins forces with Brandon Centre to make sure mental health support is available for young women during and after the pandemic.



Brandon Centre's long-standing relationship with University College London (UCL) grew even stronger last year through a **budding partnership with the University's Women's Football Club (UCLWFC)**.

We caught up with Penny Postgate, Secretary at the club, to talk about how the team have managed to stay positive during lockdown, and what motivated them to raise funds for Brandon Centre.

*"Covid restrictions have meant that the team hasn't been able to play regularly over the last year, and we felt that there **wasn't enough support available for students struggling with their mental health**," says Penny.*

*"**Many of us are away from home and rely on sports and social activities like the football club** not only to enjoy the sport itself, but also to de-stress and reduce the pressure of our studies."*

*"The University does offer counselling sessions but they're really over-subscribed. We heard about Brandon Centre and how they're making services accessible to everyone, and decided we wanted to help. **We've had a bake sale to raise funds for the centre, and now we're looking at other ways we can help.**"*

Despite football being off the agenda for a while, the strong community in the WFC has really helped the team stay positive.

"We have a book club, and we meet regularly for online socials, fitness sessions and to play virtual games. The community really helps."

The team are looking forward to getting their boots back on and exploring opportunities to help us get our young people involved with some **free informal coaching sessions**.

*"It's easy to feel isolated as a student in London. Brandon Centre is doing so much to help young people, and we want to offer whatever we can to **help young people discover the many benefits of team sports.**"*

Brandon Centre also works in partnership with **Arsenal in the Community** and its Girls Kicks programme, offering confidential support and advice to help tackle the anxieties that prevent some girls joining football clubs.

Be a Brandon Centre partner or Ambassador

We're always interested in hearing from organisations that can help us support our young people.

If you'd like to get involved, email our CEO, Julia Brown juliabrown@brandoncentre.org.uk

More about the Arsenal in the Community Girls Kicks programme <https://tinyurl.com/v2c2wn9w>

Our superheroes-behind-the-scenes

The number of young people needing access to mental and sexual health services is higher than ever, and the job of managing the referrals that come into Brandon Centre is no picnic. Our Super-Coordination Robyn and Dean keep those referrals running like a finely-tuned machine.

Our very own Super-Coordination are Robyn Beresford, Psychotherapy Referrals Coordinator, and Dean Charlery, Brandon Centre's Systemic Integrative Treatment (BC SIT) Coordinator.

They work diligently behind the scenes, contacting young people and their families, liaising with clinical professionals and GPs, managing waiting lists, arranging appointments, and generally being brilliant human beings.

Robyn works directly with young people accessing our counselling and psychotherapy services. *"When I meet our young people, it's often the first time they've reached out for help. It's so important that they feel listened to and valued,"* says Robyn.

"We're helping bridge the gap into adulthood. Most of the young people we see are too old for the children's mental health services, and not yet in a position to access adult services. They don't need a diagnosis to come to us, which makes us really accessible."

"We're reaching them at a time when their future is still full of possibility, so we try to give them the best chance possible by intervening early," explains Robyn.



Robyn Beresford
Psychotherapy Referrals
Coordinator



Dean Charlery
Integrative Treatment
(BC SIT) Coordinator

Dean works with the professionals referring difficult cases to our Systemic Integrative Treatment:

"Often, the professional referrers are keen to find an intensive, effective, evidence-based treatment service to help support families of children with persistent, moderate to severe behaviour problems," says Dean.

"After exhausting all avenues, they come to us and, once I've explained how effective our intervention can be, they feel a great sense of relief."

"We set out to make lasting changes to the child's behaviours, and within the home environment, and this is something that our amazing team consistently achieves."

"When we take the lead, it gives them hope and relieves that pressure," says Dean.

Join us in a virtual high-five, sending huge thanks to our brilliant superheroes-behind-the-scenes!

- » Contact our Counselling and Psychotherapy team: counselling@brandoncentre.org.uk, Telephone: **020 7267 1321** or Text: **07520 633477**
- » For more information about our Systemic Integrative Treatment contact Dean at: deancharlery@brandoncentre.org.uk or call: **020 7424 9935**, or read more [here](#).

Young people co-designing Brandon Centre's services

We've always believed that our young people should be at the heart of everything we do. They're our customers, and we want to do everything we can to make sure we stay in tune with their needs.

Now, as we grow and adapt as an organisation, we're looking at new ways to bring our **young people even closer to the design and evolution of our services**. Here's how we're doing it...

» 2020 Brandon Way survey listened to young people's views

In 2020 we carried out our Brandon Way interviews and workshops with young people who've visited the Centre, to find out **how it feels to access our services**, what works well, and what could be better. We'll repeat the survey in autumn 2021, and annually after that.

» 2021 Strategy Development Workshops

In May 2021 we held two 3-hour workshops, led by Angela Newton, a specialist in service user involvement, service user leadership, and co-production.

12 staff and young people attended the online workshops to help us look at what we want our services to look like in the future and the steps we'll need to take to get there.



**Here we are
workshop-ing
away!**

The great news is we're already doing a lot of things right.

Young people told us they feel:

- more confident managing their emotions, and seeing patterns in their own behaviour;
- that Brandon Centre is a safe place for them to talk about sex and contraception;
- Brandon Centre is a welcoming, non-clinical and non-judgemental environment;
- being included on recruitment panels is a good way to get involved.

It also gave us a good steer on **what's important to them**. They said they'd like:

- a more formal mechanism to voice their opinions about how services are delivered and designed;
- better communication channels about service provision AND about issues affecting young people, including outreach work in the community;
- opportunities to learn and get involved practically in Brandon Centre work.

What's the future for our young people's involvement work?

Our **Young People's Leadership Board** will become the formal mechanism for staff and young people to work together to design and implement changes in services and service delivery.

We'll create **Communication channels and Forums** to make sure young people are being reached, brought together, and their voices and opinions listened to, and heard.

Our **Young Ambassador Programme** will continue its great work providing a range of relevant training, employment and volunteering opportunities for the young people engaged with Brandon Centre.

"Our Young people are passionate about campaigning and making a difference," says Emma Saunders, Brandon Centre's Head of People. "We're lucky that our young people are so engaged with our work. It's something that everyone in the organisation feels strongly about and guides everything that we do. It's not just a box-ticking exercise."

If you're **interested in getting involved in our Young People's Leadership Board or Young Ambassador Programme**, email our CEO, Julia Brown: juliabrown@brandoncentre.org.uk

Spotlight on Lillan Lemouchi

Lillan Lemouchi, a student at UCL, wanted something to put her energy into during lockdown. She turned to her interest in uncovering the ideas and issues effecting young people's sexual health and education, and with university funding and a small team she started putting together a new publication 'b.zine' to raise awareness of the ideas she uncovered.

Lillan's also a fan of Brandon Centre and has generously given her time to help us co-design our young people's involvement strategy.

Lillan's story: From visitor to service-designer

Lillan Lemouchi is studying Educational Studies at UCL, and has been interested in how young people think and learn about their sexual health since she was 16.

It's turned into a passion for her, and today she's the driving force behind a new publication 'b.zine', funded by the university. It's the result of Lillan's interest in uncovering the ideas and issues effecting young people's sexual health and education in 2021.

We talked to Lillan about her experience as a visitor to Brandon Centre, and as a contributor to our young people's engagement work.

Lillan first visited us at Brandon Centre in 2020, just as the effects of lockdown were starting to take their toll.

Q. What was going on in your life when you first visited Brandon Centre?

"I was on the last row of my contraceptive pill, and my GP just couldn't help. My sister suggested Brandon Centre because she'd always found them really reliable."

"I'd never been to a sexual health clinic before, so I was a bit nervous, but also intrigued. Within the hour I had the pill!"

"I also had a really long and helpful chat with one of the sexual health workers who asked me about whether I was happy with my choice of contraception. I felt very soothed."

"I'd never been asked that before. It was either take the pill, or get pregnant. The people at Brandon Centre were amazing. They're really compassionate, welcoming, and forward-thinking in their approach."

"I always recommend Brandon Centre to my friends, for contraception and STI testing. They all say how welcome they've felt. Brandon Centre turns something that's quite anxiety-inducing into something very normal. There's no stigma, and that's really reassuring."

Q. Can you tell us about your Zine project and your interest in sex education?

"I've been interested in how young people are educated about sex and sexuality since I was about 16."

"Last year, during lockdown, I wanted something to put my energy into. So, I approached the university with a proposal for a Zine that would focus on untangling the issues related to sex that young people want to talk about. An un-edited, genuine artefact and insight into how young people are thinking."

"They agreed to give me some funding, and I put together a team of about 14 other students. Since then we've been working on our first Zine. It's called 'b.zine'."



Lillan Lemouchi
Student & Volunteer

Q. How did you research young people's views?

"We visited the sixth form at a local school, and also held some public workshops with 16–25-year-olds."

During the workshops, Lillan's team asked what young people want to talk about versus what they did, and didn't, get from sex-ed at school. The workshops focussed on four main topics:

- » Redefining sex and pleasure
- » Pornography literacy
- » Body image
- » Consent and communication

"We've had some really interesting ideas about how to discuss sex with young people. Even my perceptions and assumptions have changed during the workshops. Young people want to talk about pleasure and porn for example, not just clinical stuff."

"I also did some work with Angela Newton at Lived Experience Matters, helping to run workshops for the CAMISH network, which was an amazing opportunity."

Q. Can you tell us a bit about your work with Brandon Centre?

"I approached Brandon Centre at the beginning of the project, and they've been so supportive and enthusiastic."

"The fact that they wanted to help me, a 19-year-old with an idea, made my year!"

"Their support has really opened doors and catapulted the project forwards. I've met with people at Brook, and made other important industry connections. Dom from Brandon Centre ran a workshop about the Creative Arts and Sex Education for us."

"The people at Brandon Centre are genuinely dedicated to getting young people involved, and have a passion for the work."

Lillan also joined our young people's engagement workshops, run by Angela Newton, in May this year.

"It's been my first professional insight into how services are run, and I've been delighted that I've been asked to be involved, and really listened to. It's been an amazing experience."

Q. In your experience, what still needs to be done to make sure sexual health services and education are serving young people in the best way?

"There's still so much taboo and shame around sexual health and identity. But it's so universal."

"I've found that most people actually want to talk about it. Almost before I tell people what I'm working on, they want to tell me their thoughts and ideas!"

"We can really all benefit from these conversations. Everyone deserves to be looked after and we should make talking about it as safe as possible."

"In my liberal space, it feels like we are making progress. But in the wider world there are things that still aren't being spoken about, remedied or healed."

"Dialogue is improving though, and organisations like Everyone's Invited' are catalysts for people like me and Brandon Centre, to make sure young people are listened to."

Lillan is looking forward to publishing the first b.zine later this year. *"We've got the support of a local independent printing company, and hope to have b.zine ready to send out to schools and clinics at the end of the summer."*

It's thanks to the input and interest of young people like Lillan that Brandon Centre can stay at the forefront of sexual health services, and we're really grateful for her time and support. Thank you Lillan!

"I've loved my academic learning, but now I'm ready to work on more projects, and to learn by seeing how things are actually implemented," says Lillan.

Six tips for talking to young people about sex

If the thought of talking to young people about sex brings you out in a cold sweat, read on for our top tips for blush-free, helpful conversations.

1. Be honest with the facts

It's completely natural for young people to be curious about sex and their bodies, and it's never too early to answer their questions.

Talking openly and honestly to young people about sex doesn't make it more likely that they'll have sex. In fact, it makes it more likely that they'll have sex later, and use contraception.

2. It's ok to feel embarrassed

If the thought of talking about sex brings you out in a cold sweat, be honest about how you feel. If you feel awkward, it's fine to admit it. Being honest about your feelings helps young people be ok with theirs too.

3. You don't have to talk about your own sex life

Talking about relevant topics in the news, on tv programmes, or about celebrity couples can make talking about sex so much easier. Try not to talk in metaphors though! Keep it real.

We all have some emotional baggage around sex and our bodies. It can be useful to reflect on how you think about sex, and then try to keep any judgmental opinions out of the conversation.

4. Don't just have ONE BIG talk

The more often you talk about sex and sexuality, the easier it gets. The cold sweats will soon be a thing of the past.

Talk about it when it crops up in conversation, rather than waiting for the 'right time'. You might think you're not ready to discuss genitals or STIs over the dinner table (and you might never be) but normalising the topics makes them feel less overwhelming.

5. Listen without judging

Try to listen without judging. Depending on their age, some young people will already know about sex and have their own ideas and opinions.

Helping them see that their attitude to sex might change as they go through life can make talking about it easier. Your opinions have probably changed over time, and theirs will too.

6. Get support if you need it

If you don't know the answer to something, say so. You could even spend time looking up the answer together.

And don't worry if they want to talk to somebody else. Help them find support elsewhere if that's what they want. There are lots of experts whose job it is to help.

Brandon Centre offers confidential sexual health support and advice, free contraception, pregnancy testing, and tests and treatment for STIs.

Get in touch to find out more

Email: contraception@brandoncentre.org.uk | Telephone: **020 7267 4792** | Text: **07451 288524**

Using photography to make sense of the world

Sometimes it's easier for young people to express themselves through creative means than through traditional therapy. This is something we explored last year with our Photo-project, an 8-week programme for 15- to 18-year-olds.

With an emphasis on creativity and exploration, the sessions combined group reflection with more structured photography tasks, helping young people build their confidence to tell their stories.

Dominique Golden, who co-ran the sessions told us more...

"Within the groups we focussed on what we found interesting, and what resonated with each person. There's no such thing as a mistake or a bad image," says Dominique.

"Sometimes images would open up group discussions about emotions and mental health and help us make sense of the world around us."

*"As the group progressed, young people became more willing to take creative risks. Through group discussion and reflection, **they built the confidence to talk about themselves and put words to their feelings.**"* Dominique explains.

Over the course of the project the young people were given more and more control over the nature, content and structure of the sessions. This gave them a feeling of ownership, and cultivated independence and life-long decision-making skills.

The group also learnt about the language of photography, how to build a portfolio of work, how to work independently as well as in groups, and how to present their ideas.

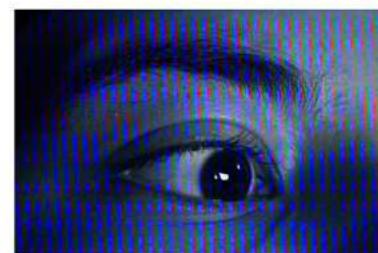
"We addressed personal topics in a positive and sensitive way, and encouraged young people to suggest why they chose to take the images they did."

"We had a number of young people who were reluctant to speak at first and who, over the course of the project, found their voice and the confidence to contribute to group discussions, which was great."

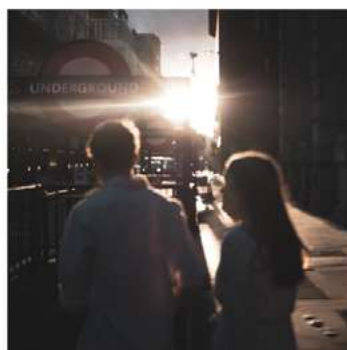
Photography can be a safe medium to explore emotional difficulties, and **for those young people who find one-to-one therapy difficult to engage with, it can be an invaluable support.**



1st Place; Brandon Photo Gallery Project 2020



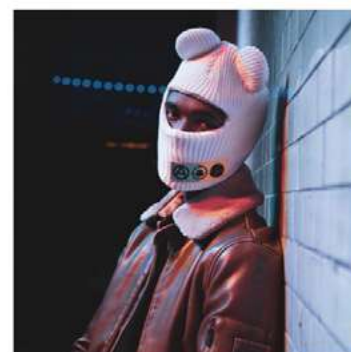
1st Place; Brandon Photo Gallery Project 2020



2nd Place; Brandon Photo Gallery Project 2020



2nd Place; Brandon Photo Gallery Project 2020



2nd Place; Brandon Photo Gallery Project 2020

At the end of the project the team ran a competition for project members to submit images in response to the title 'Multiple worlds - My Life Online and Offline.'

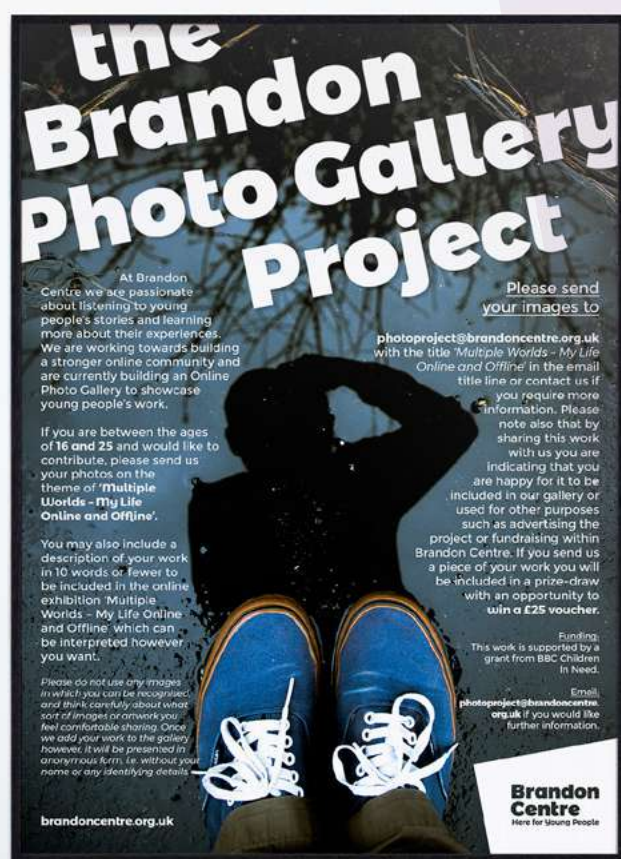
The winner, Ruqaiyah Sayoud, explained how her photos represented her life through lockdown as she spent her days indoors on her laptop, watching TV or scrolling through Instagram.

Ruqaiyah says "I took a close up photograph of my eye to imply how my eyes are 'glued' to the screen and how I am unable to look away."

"I think that applying my creativity to photography is quite rewarding and fulfilling. Once I complete an idea, it greatly helps in aiding my state of mind, as I find it to be a healthy 'distraction' from the pandemic."

Congratulations to Ruqaiyah, and thanks to Brandon Centre's Dominique Golden and Marc Tibber for organising the project.

We're always keen to hear from young people interested in getting involved in our projects. It's a great way to build skills and confidence and support more young people who need help. For more information email us at: counselling@brandoncentre.org.uk



Giving HIV the finger



Brandon Centre team giving HIV the finger!

Did you know we offer free HIV tests all year-round? All it takes is a finger-prick. It's quick, free and confidential! Call us today on **020 7267 4792** or ask for a test at your next visit.

Donate and help more young people get the mental health and sexual health support they need

Covid has put increasing pressure on young people's lives, waiting lists are growing, and we need to increase our capacity to help.

The right care during the early years of adolescence can be life changing, **and your support means we can reach more young people who are waiting for help.** Here's how you can get involved.

Get involved and help change a young person's life

✓ Make a one-off or regular donation ✓ Donate to a specific project ✓ Support us through Payroll Giving ✓ Volunteer with us for a day ✓ Choose us as your 'Charity of the Year' ✓ Take on a challenge and donate your sponsorship ✓ Donate as a gift

Donate via our website: <https://brandon-centre.org.uk/donate-now>

or scan this on



your phone camera

Call us to find out more on **020 7267 4792** or email us at admin@brandoncentre.org.uk

A big thanks to all our supporters who are helping us give more young people a promising future.

Please click on this to view our Just Giving page: <https://brandon-centre.org.uk/donations>

We're open! Here's how you can reach us

We hope to be open for drop-ins again soon, but for now, please call before you visit.

We'll book you an appointment or direct you to the right service.

General Enquiries: 020 7267 4792

Mental Health services

Email: counselling@brandoncentre.org.uk | Telephone: **020 7267 1321** | Text: **07520 633477**

We're currently mainly offering remote therapy sessions via telephone or video call, which are working really well for most people.

Sexual Health services

Remember to call us before you visit. We're seeing just as many people as before lockdown, but we'll need to book you an appointment. On Fridays and Saturdays, we're only available via email.

Email: contraception@brandoncentre.org.uk | Telephone: **020 7267 4792** | Text: **07451 288524**

Systemic Integrative Treatment

Email for professionals: deancharlery@brandoncentre.org.uk | Telephone: **020 7424 9935**

Parenting Groups

Email for parents: familyservice@brandoncentre.org.uk

Email for professionals: deancharlery@brandoncentre.org.uk

Training for professionals

Email: brandoncentre.healthyliving@nhs.net



Thanks to our donors

While you're reading this, our team is providing life-changing support to local young people.

We'd like to say a big **thank you** to the following organisations and individuals for supporting us and the young people we work with:

- ♥ **Arsenal Foundation**
- ♥ **Axa Health**
- ♥ **Islington Giving**
- ♥ **John Lyon's Charity**
- ♥ **Rhododendron Trust**
- ♥ **Richard Taffler**
- ♥ **The Mitchell Charitable Foundation**
- ♥ **The Oakdale Trust**
- ♥ **The Sir Mark & Lady Turner Charitable Settlement**
- ♥ **The Vandervell Foundation**
- ♥ **UCL Women's Football Club**
- ♥ **Young Camden Foundation**

A high percentage of lifetime mental illness is first experienced before the age of 20. Support from our donors means we can tackle poor mental health as soon as it appears, giving young people every chance of a life free from mental illness.

By keeping young people in education, building their resilience, and keeping families together, we're helping to build a positive future for our community.

Help make a difference in your community

Brandon Centre's summer picnic is on!

Well, we can't quite believe it, but it looks like the Brandon Centre summer picnic is on!

Calling all staff and volunteers. Dust off your sunhat and shades, hunt down your shorts and sandals, get the Pimm's and strawberries at the ready, we're doing this...



Join us for a civilised celebration of everything we've achieved over the last year. And what a year it's been!

When?
Tuesday 20th
July, 10am

Where?
Parliament Hill,
Hampstead Heath

**Don't forget
your
picnic rug!**

Did you know...?

Our founder, Dr Faith Spicer, was an impressive woman. Back in 1969 she had the idea to set up a support service for adolescents that combined contraceptive advice with counselling and psychotherapy. She was years ahead of her time in offering such a holistic service for young people.

Brandon Cadbury, (of the famous philanthropic chocolatiers) was so impressed by Faith's work that he donated our current building in Kentish Town to the charity and as a thank you, we named the charity after him in 1984.

We're so fortunate to continue to have a close relationship with the Cadbury family through The Oakdale Trust who very generously support us on a regular basis and Brandon's daughter Olivia Tatton-Brown is our very special Patron.

Faith's vision still drives our work today, as we continue to push the boundaries of innovation to help more young people harness their strengths and become responsible, fulfilled, and healthy young adults.

Follow us...



Brandon Centre for Counselling and Psychotherapy for Young People | 26 Prince of Wales Road, London NW5 3LG

www.brandon-centre.org.uk | Registered Charity No.: 290118 | A company limited by guarantee.

**Thank you for your interest in
our special charity**

The logo for Brandon Centre is a blue, rounded rectangular shape with a white border. It contains the text "Brandon Centre" in a large, bold, white sans-serif font, and "Here for Young People" in a smaller, white sans-serif font below it.

**Brandon
Centre**
Here for Young People