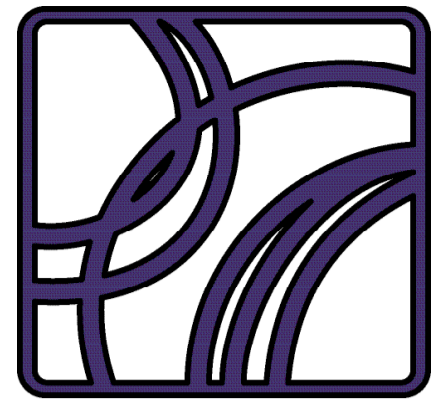


Holloway Neighbourhood Group

# Stress Project

## Mindfulness Project Report



**Aim: To offer local people who experience mental health problems and who are on low income access to Mindfulness services - providing coping strategies to improve wellbeing.**



Major of Islington - Una O'Halloran  
Pictured at the project launch event.

### About the project & Mindfulness

Islington has the highest levels of depression in London and mindfulness helps people with depression. We applied to the People's Postcode Trust so that more local people, who experience mental health issues, could access a range of mindfulness activities.

Mindfulness is a very simple form of meditation. A typical mindfulness session consists of giving your full attention on your breath as it flows in and out of your body. Focusing on each breath in this way allows you to observe your thoughts as they come up and, little by little, help you let go of struggling with them. Mindfulness is about observation without criticism; being compassionate with yourself.

Scientific studies have shown that mindfulness not only prevents depression, but that it also positively affects the brain patterns that cause day-to-day anxiety, stress, and irritability - providing people with the tools to help manage their own mental health. We evaluated, and measured, the impact of the project, using methods widely used in the primary healthcare system to measure levels of anxiety and depression - and were delighted with the results.

### Helen's experience

*"The casual nature of the Drop-in classes, their free availability and ethos - both literally and theoretically - not only encouraged me to give them a try but to delve further into mindfulness, and take the 8-week course. I'm delighted I did. It has opened up new ways of thinking and approaching life, and helped me to respond rather than react, and of self-resilience and happiness. I continue to attend the weekly Drop-in sessions each Thursday afternoon, both as a participant and now a facilitator.*

*After training, I have also given several taster mindfulness sessions at events. This has boosted my confidence and has helped me in my mindfulness practice. I'm not only keen to share the peace which mindfulness has helped bring me but to 'give something back'.*



### Jonathan - a thank you

*One of our key volunteers throughout this project was Jonathan, who led our drop-in class. He would say that mindfulness is about self-care and he spent a lot of time with people helping them to understand that. He cared deeply about other people and made the drop-in a welcoming and nurturing environment. Jonathan recently turned 80 and decided to leave the Stress Project to go travelling and study. Amazing. A true example.*

*I'd encourage anyone to give the practice of mindfulness and learning of self-compassion a go, whatever their current state of mind. For me it has been a positive, if at times, challenging experience.*

### In Conclusion

The project has been hugely successful; there were many more beneficiaries than were originally anticipated and the evaluation of the project evidenced an improvement in both physical and mental health wellbeing and much more.

The results are a very strong indicator that the courses & drop-in classes are effective and consistent in helping people overcome the debilitating conditions of anxiety and depression. In light of the all positive outcomes of the project we are exploring ways to expand the reach of mindfulness to young people and the local community at large. We received a substantial donation from one of our service users who wanted to give back to the project. We've used the donation to run another eight-week Mindfulness course.

### The Project, In Numbers

Total people reached: 284

#### What we delivered

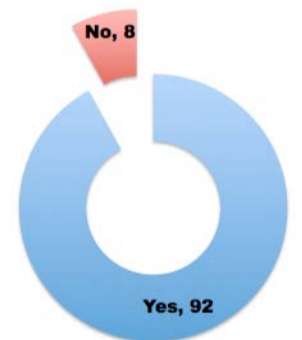
- One Launch event
- 48 Mindfulness drop-in sessions
- 10 Mindfulness taster classes
- 5 eight-week Mindfulness courses
- 1 Volunteer training event

#### Impact

##### Mindfulness Courses

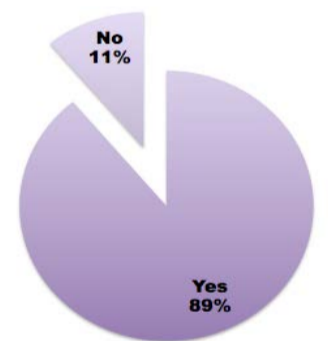
Anxiety & Depression scores fell on average by 40 & 50% respectively

92% said it helped to improve both their physical and mental health



##### Mindfulness Drop-In

89% said the class helped them learn new coping strategies



##### Volunteering

Five people who participated in the Mindfulness course and drop-in sessions have been inspired by their experience to become a Stress Project volunteer.

*"I love coming to mindfulness, it helps me remain focused and I'm doing well in my studies and life - with all it's ups and downs."*

#### Thank you

