



THINK  
AHEAD

# Impact Update

## April 2019

◀ **Paddy**, a Think Ahead trainee social worker who supports individuals with mental health problems to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

**Think Ahead's first cohort of new mental health social workers completed our programme in September 2018.**

Six months later, as we are about to bring our fourth cohort of new graduate recruits into mental health services, this is an update on the impact of our charity's work.

**Here's what we've achieved** since we first launched our programme in 2015.

# 1. We have brought talented and dedicated people into mental health social work

**297**

**new recruits**  
(and 100 more starting this year)

**93%**

**did not apply for**  
any other route into social work.\*

**31**

**subjects studied**  
at over 60 universities.

\*Based on the 2017 and 2018 Cohorts, as this data was not collected for the 2016 Cohort.

“The individual trainees are evidently highly educated but also demonstrate a passion and engagement for working in mental health.

“Their academic ability and knowledge of mental health practice and law exceed the ability of any previous social work students.

“They are all very motivated, curious, respectful and willing to work hard and learn.

Service managers from 2018 partner organisations.

## More of our recruits have entered and stayed in the workforce than those on university-based entry routes.

| Cohort   | Recruits | Of initial recruits:                     |  |   |                                       |
|--|----------|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|
|  |          | Qualified as social workers <sup>1</sup> | Employed as social workers 6 months after qualification <sup>2</sup> | Employed as social workers 18 months after qualification <sup>3</sup> | Completed Think Ahead master's degree |
| 2016-18  | 95       | 93%                                      | 85%  | 79%   | 78%                                   |
| 2017-19  | 98       | 90%                                      | 81%  | -   | -                                     |
| 2018-20  | 104      | (Will qualify in Sep 2019)               | -  | -   | -                                     |
| All university-based courses (for comparison) <sup>4</sup> | -        | 93%                                      | 74%  | -   | -                                     |

<sup>1</sup> Achieved an approved qualification allowing application for entry to the register. Think Ahead participants can achieve this (via a postgraduate diploma) at the end of the first year of the two-year programme. <sup>2</sup> The Think Ahead programme is designed so that participants who progress to the second year of the programme spend that year working alongside completing their master's degree. This figure is based on all participants who remained on the programme six months into their second year, plus available data on participants who qualified through the programme but entered employment outside of it. <sup>3</sup> Based on a survey of the 2016 Cohort taken roughly 6 months after the end of their two-year programme, which is 18 months after the point of entry to the qualified workforce. <sup>4</sup> Most recent figures (2016/17) from Social Work Education 2018 (Skills for Care).

## 2. We have trained our recruits to improve support for people with mental health problems

81%

of our partner services say that **the Think Ahead model is more effective** than other training routes at developing trainees to become great mental health social workers.\*

100%

of our **recruits are placed full-time in mental health services** (prior to Think Ahead, only 8% of social work training placements were in mental health services†).

\*Based on a survey of our 2018 Cohort partner organisations, to which a service manager from 28 of 33 partner services (85%) sent a response. †Reported by David Croisdale-Appleby in Re-visioning social work education: an independent review (2014).

### Richard's story

**Richard\* has paranoid schizophrenia and has experienced hallucinations and anxiety.**

When he was referred to his Think Ahead social worker, Benji, he was being harassed at home by a local individual. Benji got the police to stop the harassment, and used person-centred approaches and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy to help Richard focus on the future. Richard is now studying nutrition therapy, to help others understand how nutrition affects mental health. He says Benji “re-ignited the fire I had”.

\*Richard's name has been changed to protect his identity.

**Top reasons service managers gave for our training model being more effective\*:**

- 1 Focus on mental health.**
- 2 Structured support provided by trainees working together in a unit led by a Consultant Social Worker.**
- 3 Integration of theory and practice.**
- 4 On-the-job learning in challenging situations.**

“*They are more prepared for working in complex situations and are more resilient to the challenges.*”

“*I have had excellent feedback from within our organisation which stands out above feedback about other trainees.*”

“*Very compassionate and competent professionals.*”

**Service managers**  
from 2018 partner organisations.

# 3. Being part of Think Ahead is strengthening our partner services across the country

89%

of our partner services say that **partnering with Think Ahead has had a broader positive impact on the organisation**, beyond our participants' direct practice.\*

91%

of Consultant Social Workers say that **leading a Think Ahead training unit has improved their own practice.**†

33

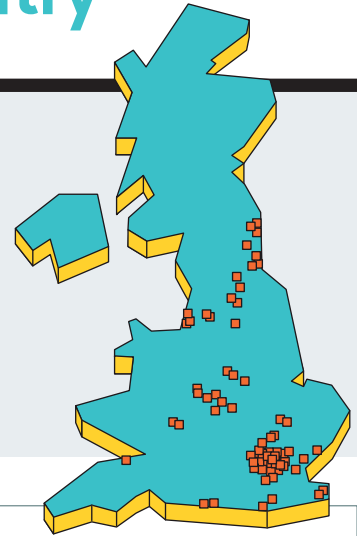
**original research studies** were carried out by participants from the 2016 Cohort, adding to the body of research in mental health social work.

\* Based on a survey of our 2018 Cohort partner organisations, to which a service manager from 28 of 33 partner services (85%) sent a response. † Based on surveys of Consultant Social Workers who led units from our 2016 and/or 2017 Cohorts, to which 22 of 40 individuals (55%) sent a response.

“The participants have conducted research projects on a broad range of topics related to mental health social work. This research will strengthen the evidence base for the profession, supporting the development of practice in the UK and beyond.

Professor Martin Webber, Think Ahead Academic Lead from the University of York

To date we have partnered with **over 50% of England's NHS Mental Health Trusts**, and 30% of Local Authorities.



“[Our participants] have led service improvement in their team and have been recognised at the Trust awards for their leadership and contribution.

“[Partnering with Think Ahead] has encouraged my team to consider their own practice and to ensure they are evidence-based in their decision making. Having the students in the team definitely improves practice.

“[Partnering with Think Ahead has] made the Board more aware of social work, heightened the profile of social work, and strengthened social work's role in community mental health team transformation.

Service managers from 2018 partner organisations.

**Think Ahead is a charity working  
towards a society where everyone with  
mental health problems can flourish.**

**We give talented people the inspiration,  
training, and support to make a  
difference in mental health services.**

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Think Ahead's 2016, 2017, and 2018 Cohorts have been delivered in partnership with the University of York and the University of Central Lancashire



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