



## Talk for Health

‘It is talking which cures and not particular therapeutic schools and their preferred techniques’

Professor David Howe, *On Being a Client*, 2004

## What is Talk for Health?

The Talk for Health Company Ltd is a small but acclaimed Social Enterprise (Company Limited by Guarantee) with a vision to make therapeutic talk accessible to all.

We run the Talk for Health programme - a therapeutic-talk training which enables effective psychological support over the long term.

It is based on two powerful evidence-based principles:

- (i) That simply having the skills and opportunities to share inner feelings and experiences with supportive others – or ‘having confidantes’ - improves mental health and prevents mental illness (Cooper, 2008, p. 75).
- (ii) That effective therapeutic talk does not rely on professionals (Christensen and Jacobson, 1994).

## Key benefits

Talk for Health offers a means of psychological support which is:

### **Sustainable.**

Rather than being a ‘treatment’ it empowers people to engage in therapeutic talk long-term. In psychological terms, it is the equivalent of teaching people how to fish rather than giving them fish to eat.

### **Effective.**

People with the skills taught in Talk for Health can be as effective in supporting others as trained therapists

### **Good for wellbeing.**

It promotes mental health by virtue of the fact that people give as well as receive psychological support. The process of helping others supports mental health. (Government Office for Science, 2008).

### **Good for community.**

It promotes social bonds and a sense of shared humanity - the relief of knowing that ‘I’m not alone’.

### **Cost effective.**

Community based and educational approaches such as this offer a more cost-

effective approach to mental health than individual therapy (Yoeli & Morgan, 2011).

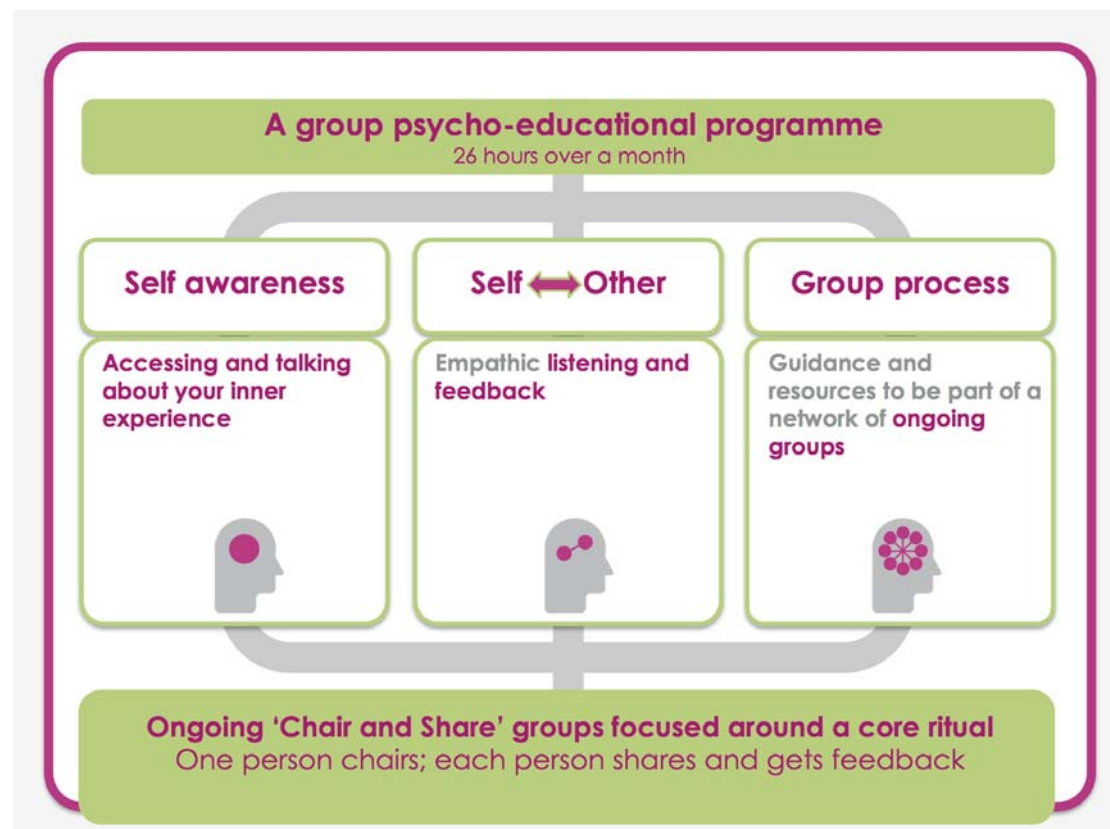
## The programme

Talk for Health enables 'therapy for people by people'. It teaches groups of people to engage in effective therapeutic talk with each other. In this way, Talk for Health builds both individual and social mental health and wellbeing.

The initial Talk for Health programme is run with a group of up to 20 participants over 4 and a half days. It teaches the essential communications skills that connect people at a deeper level and build wellbeing: sharing personal experiences; active listening; empathy; giving feedback; assertiveness and boundary-setting.

It also instructs participants on setting up ongoing peer support groups and provides access to a network of such groups in Islington.

Following the programme, participants may also do our Train the Trainer programme, so that they can in turn teach others the skills of Talk for Health.



## Who is it for?

Talk for Health has been found helpful by a wide range of groups seeking greater well-being and resilience – as well as stronger bonds with other people. It has also been used by:

- People with a mental health diagnosis, or are at risk of mental distress or relapse
- Those who work in stressful positions where emotional support is important - mental health; teaching; coaching; medicine; veterinary practice; volunteers

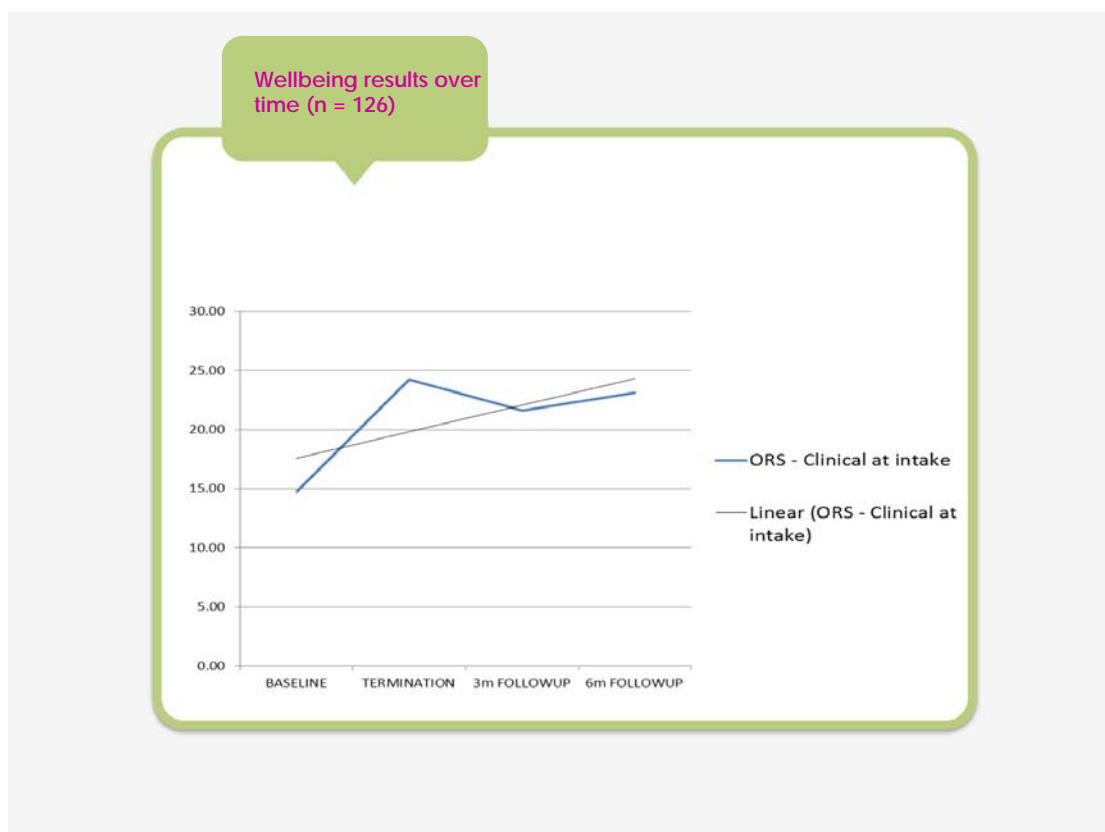
Since 2008 the programme has been run with more than 250 participants, demonstrating dramatic and long-lasting wellbeing impacts. Current and past clients include:

British Telecom  
National Service User Network  
NHS Norfolk and Norwich  
Royal Society of Arts  
NHS Islington  
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

## What effect does it have?

The short answer is that it increases psychological wellbeing.

Pre and post programme well-being amongst 126 participants was analysed by a Research Psychologist at Roehampton University. The instrument used was the Outcomes Rating Scale (ORS – Miller 2010). **In all Talk for Health groups, it was found that mean well-being scores increased, with a large statistical effect size. The same results were achieved whether the training was led by an accredited Psychotherapist or by a trained member of the general public.** Dramatic increases in wellbeing were observed immediately after the training. These dropped off a little at 3 months but recovered at 6 months, as participants adjusted to participation in ongoing groups. **These results are comparable to successful therapy.**



## Staff

### Founder and CEO

Nicky Forsythe MBACP (Accred.) is founder of the Talk for Health Programme and Social Enterprise.

She initially worked in the business world, leading research and innovation projects for clients such as BA, Singapore Airlines, the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Work and Pensions. In 1998 she trained as a Humanistic Psychotherapist and since then has worked as an innovator and practitioner in the field of mental health.

Nicky is passionate about the use of empowering yet everyday therapeutic approaches, and about eliminating stigma.

She is an accredited Psychotherapist and Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

### Advisory Board

**Philippa Perry UKCP** is a Psychotherapist and Author, committed to demystifying psychotherapy. Her acclaimed graphic novel Couch Fiction of 2010 did just that, and was followed by her 2012 book How To Stay Sane, both published by Pan MacMillan. Philippa is an eminent UK spokesperson on Psychotherapy and writes widely in the media. She lives in London and Sussex with her husband, the artist Grayson Perry.

**Harriet Spicer** is an expert in governance and strategy. She was a Founding Director of Virago Press, the feminist publishing company, and worked there for over twenty five years. Later, she served on the Judicial Appointments Commission and the Lottery Commission. She is currently a Council Member of the London School of Economics.

**Lionel Joyce OBE, CBE** is a former NHS Chief Executive, and pioneer of the Service User Empowerment movement. He has won both an OBE and CBE for his services to Mental Health. He was CEO of Newcastle City Health where he created service user based services and advocacy, brought CBT to the UK, and actively promoted alternatives to hospital and Psychiatric care.

**Michael Mueller MBA** is a Managing Director at Barclays Corporate Banking Division and is passionate about social entrepreneurship. He is interested in the opportunities and challenges that social enterprises face when applying business models to create social value in areas where governments, markets and charities have failed.

### Operations Manager

Kate Wisemen looks after promoting the programmes, special events and groups and makes sure everything behind the scenes stays nice and organised.

After a career in recruitment and learning and development in the corporate world, Kate decided to pursue a life long itch to work in the mental health sector.

After many personal experiences of the positive impact of belonging to groups and communities, she is very happy to support the work of Talk for Health.

## Data Analyst

**Dr Diego Vitali** is a Clinical Psychologist and researcher. He qualified at the University of Padua, Italy (Bsc Psychology 2006, 2yr Msc Clinical and Dynamic Psychology 2009).

He has trained and practised in Italy in the application of phenomenological and existential approaches to psychotherapy in intensive care units.

As well as doing data analysis for Talk for Health he is currently undertaking a PhD programme at Roehampton University.

## Talk for Health Trainers and Facilitators

Nina Boeger

Frances Coombes

Judith Cowie

Helen Cruthers (UKCP)

Anna Josefowicz

Ranjit Krishnamma

Phiiippa Perry (UKCP)

Jacqui Thompson

Mirjam Thullesen (UKCP)

Bonny Turner

Lucy Reeves

Kat Slater

### The experts say:

“Talk for Health has the potential to make a great contribution to social well-being by bringing the skills and knowledge of the counselling and psychotherapy field into the wider community. Research evidence indicates that people don’t have to be mental health professionals to be able to bring about positive psychological changes in themselves and others. Talk for Health taps this potential, and offers an accessible and exciting pathway towards greater psychological wellbeing for all.”

Mick Cooper  
Professor of Counselling  
University of Strathclyde

“Talk for Health is a truly innovative and genuinely original proposal. As someone who has managed the largest psychotherapy service outside London, initiated CBT in this country and set up a counselling service in a number of GP practices, I feel well qualified to endorse Nicky Forsythe’s conclusions about the slow, costly and unsustainable nature of services currently offered. Talk for Health offers a fast, cost-effective alternative that would reach the parts of our society that other therapies don’t reach. I am convinced that the idea is classically simple and likely to be highly effective.”

Lionel Joyce OBE, CBE

### Course participants say

“Teaches you the skills that society often forgets to: how to connect to your feelings and needs, how to express this authentically and appropriately, and how to adapt your communication so that others can hear you. The lessons are so integral and relevant to our daily lives at work, home, with partners and friends that it’s quite easy to remember and bring back into your life.”

“The programme helps teach you how important sharing feelings with others is to your emotional wellbeing – a revelation.”

“The programme was positive through and through – thought-provoking, encouraging, informative, life-enhancing, action-packed, insightful, supportive and surprisingly wide-ranging. Invaluable both personally and practically.”

“An opportunity to really listen and be listened to. A space to think about and explore feelings, emotions and responses.”



## Our Corporate Social Responsibility Proposal

Our programme is currently funded in Islington London and in Doncaster. In both locations, there is a thriving and growing network of Talk for Health groups. *However, we need support to carry on this good work. Cuts threaten our largest programme in Islington, despite the fact that the Vice Chair of NHS Islington has made the following declaration:*

“[Talk for Health] is the very bed-rock of developing community asset and needs to be supported, nurtured and grown. Opportunities such as this require minimal funding compared with the tsunami of cost to the system if we continue to depend on the historical medical model of delivering care and support to the population. Peer support is key in developing greater understanding and normalizing our experience, moving away from an overly pathogenic model of the human condition. This is why initiatives such as 'Talk for Health' are a vital way forward.”

If you are a private corporation with a CSR programme, you can help!

We offer an opportunity to grow and develop wellbeing in your own community whilst supporting the community outside. It works as follows.

Your organisation purchases:

- a series of Talk for Health programmes to grow empathy, communications skills and peer support in-house
- a Train the Trainer programme amongst suitable participants. Some of your people then become 'Community Talk for Health Trainers' and deliver Talk for Health programmes *in your company and the community beyond. Remember, our evaluations show that your lay trainers **will deliver wellbeing benefits equivalent to successful therapy.***

**We firmly believe that the way to grow our unique social asset is through collaborations with Corporate partners.**

**Together, we can grow your company's wellbeing and that of society as a whole.**

“By medicalizing our response to certain behaviour, we have persuaded ourselves that care is a matter of expertise, which we non-professionals do not have, so that, with a clear conscience, we can wash our hands of the need to care. This can only be regretted. It lessens us as humans.”

Illich, 1976

## Contact details

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