



WINTER 2021

# mind View

## Helping people set life goals and measuring outcomes



**M**ind mental health practitioners provide practical day-to-day and motivational support to help our clients develop the skills they need to move on, thrive, and improve the quality of their lives.

We know that every person's recovery journey is a very personal one, and needs a flexible, person-centred approach. Mind has developed the My Better Life® model to provide our clients with just that.

My Better Life® is an approach to goal setting and recovery that draws on the tradition of Motivational Interviewing and Implementation Intentions.

My Better Life® provides client choice and control in the recovery process because it is based on conversations between the client and their support worker about the client's views, values and motivation for change across key life areas. It reinforces their intention to achieve change by supporting them to make specific plans to carry out that change.

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# Dear friend,

**W**hen I encounter yet another example of someone with mental ill-health getting inadequate support or treatment, I often find myself saying, “Would this happen if it was cancer?” I think the tangibility of a physical recovery such as a successful cancer treatment makes it easier for policy makers and politicians to allocate funding for these more demonstrable recoveries.

This is one reason why it is so important for us in the psychosocial domain to be able to provide data on the successful outcomes we achieve with our clients. Otherwise, overly medicalised models of mental health treatment will continue to remain the paradigm in the public imagination despite what we know about the importance of the social determinants of health.

This issue of Mind View introduces a major new innovation Mind is rolling out nationally that, among its benefits, will help put psychosocial recovery into high definition.

Mind has developed the My Better Life<sup>®</sup> conceptual model and planning tool to support clients to find a path to improved wellbeing. It is an evidence-based, co-designed and

co-produced model that makes it easier for clients to discuss their needs, hopes and dreams.

Already Mind clients, in partnership with their support workers, are having fantastic success self-identifying their key goals for a better life, then creating a plan to achieve them and bringing them to fruition. You can read two case studies in this issue of clients who have done just that – and our thanks to Heather and Aimee for generously sharing their stories with us.

As well as helping clients to realise their goals, aggregated data from My Better Life plans<sup>®</sup> will also provide us with important data on client outcomes in different service settings, and on the life domains that the people who come to us for help consider most important for intervention for their future wellbeing.

Complementing My Better Life<sup>®</sup>, Mind has also developed a digital outcomes measurement survey. This is a self-evaluation tool by which a client can identify where they are across a spectrum of measures of mental health and broader wellbeing at the beginning and end of their support engagement with us – and also at intervals during that engagement if it is an extended one.

Comparing these evaluations from start to finish gives a client an opportunity to gauge their progress and satisfaction. Mind is also able – for the first time – to use the aggregated data of our clients to evaluate the success of all of our programs and services for continual service improvement.

I am very excited that this capacity to capture individual and aggregated client data will be something Mind will be able to share with the broader mental health sector, so we can all better delineate the proofs and pathways of sustained mental health recovery.

My Better Life<sup>®</sup> is the product of considerable work and collaboration between Mind’s Research and Advocacy, Quality and Practice, Learning and Development, and Digital Transformation teams, and the Queensland frontline staff and clients who piloted it. I am delighted to be part of an organisation achieving such positive innovation and collaboration.

Warm regards,

Gill Callister PSM  
Chief Executive Officer



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The My Better Life® model

**M**y Better Life® is built around 12 key life domains that are essential to wellbeing and align with the social model of health. It powerfully articulates the scope for psychosocial interventions.

It was developed through a synthesis of evidence from various sources, including the international research on health, quality of life and wellbeing; deep engagement with Mind clients and their families and carers; our service data; and evaluation studies.

My Better Life® provides a holistic model of mental health and wellbeing support that is tailored to the individual's needs, built on the social model of health and the knowledge base on quality of life and wellbeing, and is measured for its impact on the person's life goals and program objectives.

Each client has a truly personalised program of support that is delivered within a highly professional and evidence-based model of care and through effective partnerships with other support providers.

Clients and their loved ones experience Mind's support as flexible, caring, empowering and accountable. ■

My Better Life® provides a holistic model of mental health and wellbeing support that is tailored to the individual's needs.



# Making a plan for a better life

**M**y Better Life® features a recovery planning tool built on Microsoft Power App. The My Better Life plan® tool is a structured, evidence-based, co-designed and co-produced recovery tool. It supports the Mind practitioner and client through a person-centred recovery planning process and puts the client and the important people in their life at the centre of service delivery.

## The My Better Life plan®

- assists the client, the important people in their life and their worker to identify clear life areas for support and also what mix of services could best help the person reach their recovery goals
- promotes meaningful engagement through curious and rich conversation that focuses on whole-of-life wellbeing
- supports the development goals which are clear, meaningful, feel possible and are important to the client
- facilitates ongoing real-time assessment of where the client is at with their wellness and recovery.

By supporting clients to make changes that are meaningful to them, the goal is to assist clients to become empowered in managing their own wellbeing, including housing, and reduce reliance on formal support systems and healthcare. ■

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The goal is to assist clients to become empowered in managing their own wellbeing.

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# Linking personal goal plans with services

A person's My Better Life plan<sup>®</sup> helps guide which individual and group activities will support achievement of their personal goals within a model of care that is built to address the 12 life domains important to health, quality of life and wellbeing.

The model of care may vary for different service types, such as longer-term residential compared to short-term interventions, but they generally share a focus on:

- improved mental health and wellbeing
- a safe and managed return to school, training or employment
- sleep hygiene and the establishment of healthy daily and weekly routines
- information and the skills to recognise and manage early warning signs
- improved self-confidence and self-regard, through feeling heard and understood

- increased positive connection to others and reduced isolation
- improved relationships with those who are close and important to them, as well as other natural community supports
- skills to maintain and increase personal safety
- practical skills such as meal planning, budgeting and cooking
- tools and information to improve physical health: healthy eating, exercise, access to primary health care in their community of choice, and
- community connections with targeted and universal services.

Group activities have a therapeutic frame and are delivered under the award-winning **Mind Recovery College**<sup>™</sup> banner. Courses are a mix of psycho-education; life skills training; tools and information to improve physical health such as healthy eating,

smoking cessation, drug and alcohol use; opportunities for creative expression; adventure and outdoor education; parenting support; and informal social activities to promote social skills, better interpersonal relationships and family connections. There are also specialist topics on issues relevant to particular groups of clients, such as gender re-assignment or eating disorders. ■

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# How Aimee is achieving goals and a sense of control



**A**imee's journey to a better life started with a conversation in the sunshine in a local park. Making a My Better Life plan<sup>®</sup> was part of Aimee's recovery program during her stay at a short-term residential mental health recovery support service in Mackay, known as a 'Step Up Step Down'. These services are an alternative to hospitalisation for people experiencing mental distress.

Opening up and talking about something as personal as your mental health can be difficult, but Aimee, a 32 year old student

who has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, says it helped that her psychosocial support worker Clare was a young woman like her and that they had shared Asian heritage.

The My Better Life plan<sup>®</sup> includes scaled questions that ask participants to rank how they feel about a certain area of life from 'very dissatisfied' to 'very satisfied'. In that first conversation, Aimee ranked how she felt about both her physical health and study as 'dissatisfied'.

"Study is important to me and it's something that motivates me, but the stress of deadlines can get to me and I go through an emotional rollercoaster," Aimee explains. "And at the time, physically, I didn't feel very fit and I was overweight. Personally, I felt like, if I'm not happy in my body, I don't have control over other things."

Having chosen study and physical health as the key areas for improvement in her My Better Life plan<sup>®</sup>, with Clare's help Aimee began thinking of some strategies they could use to improve her satisfaction levels in these areas.

They started exercising together so Aimee was always accountable to someone else, and Clare identified new physical activities like badminton and Pilates that could work for Aimee - and Aimee still does both to this day. Clare also supported Aimee with her medical sonography studies, keeping her on track and focused.

Several months after the initial setting of her plan, Aimee has ranked her feelings towards her physical health and her studies as 'satisfied' - a notable improvement. More importantly, Aimee says the process has supported her mental health recovery, by giving her a clear formula for identifying and achieving goals, giving her a sense of control.

"My Better Life® has directly helped put what I want to achieve at the forefront of my mind. Having a greater goal is good, and it has been helpful to break down the steps I need to take to achieve those goals," Aimee says.

Aimee's My Better Life plan® is part of a larger program of recovery work Aimee is doing with Clare to learn skills to better manage her mental health. "I feel like I'm learning about my highs and lows, and how they alternate," Aimee says. "I've become more resilient so the highs aren't as extreme, and I listen to my body so I know when those times are coming and I use my emergency action plan to keep me safe and so I don't fall so hard."

Aimee now regularly participates in public forums, such as local art exhibitions and community events, and talks openly about her lived experience of mental ill-health. It's a monumental leap forward from her first conversation with Clare in the park. ■

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*Pictured: Aimee and Mind peer practitioner Kristie Bell*

# Heather's story: Getting better together

**H**eather says the Getting Better Together surveys are not only a way to track how her recovery work is going, but doing them actually contributes to the recovery process.

Heather moved from her family's home into Haven Frankston when it first opened in February 2019. She was keen to live as independently as possible and Haven's supported independent living model was an opportunity to do just that.

She is living with significant mental health issues and building skills to manage these was a key focus of her early work at Haven with her key support worker Isha. Heather has come a long way. She is now undertaking a PhD in Social Epidemiology and her My Better Life® plan is now focused on leaving Haven and living independently and setting up all the supports she'll need to achieve that.

While her My Better Life® plan helps Heather and Isha to envision her goals and develop a plan to achieve them, her six-monthly Getting Better Together digital outcomes survey is an opportunity to assess her overall wellbeing and recovery progress.

"When a client completes an outcome measures survey, it means their feelings about a whole range of things are

documented, reviewed and assessed – instead of just having a conversation that just happens and might go nowhere," Heather's key support worker Isha explains.

Heather completed her latest survey only last month so it is still fresh in her mind. "The surveys are good because they give me an objective picture of what's going on," she says. "If I am struggling, I can have a hard time acknowledging that to myself, but when it's some questions in black and white that are asking me how I'm going, it somehow allows me to be a bit more vulnerable and to really think about how I'm going across all those different aspects of life."

"It's a really good record for the staff too," Heather adds. "I can be really honest with Isha and open up, but I don't necessarily have the same sort of relationship with everyone else, so it's good that they can just read my survey and know where I'm at without me having to have a personal conversation with everyone."

Heather says the survey has given her a fuller, more objective view of her recovery progress.



*Pictured: Heather (right) and her support worker Isha (left)*



# Measuring client outcomes

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“Heather rated a question around how meaningful she considers her life to be extremely highly – and that’s a very important metric for anyone.” ”

Heather says she also appreciates how the survey gives her the chance to have a voice about her level of satisfaction with things at the service, something that could be uncomfortable shared face-to-face.

“Questions 41-47 are about service satisfaction,” Isha explains. “How listened to does the client feel? Do they receive enough information? Do they feel safe? Heather’s responses highlighted some definite areas for improvement so, once I’d reviewed her survey, that gave us the basis for a really fruitful discussion about areas in which we could do better here at the service. That’s great for my accountability and duty of care.”

Heather says the survey has given her a fuller, more objective view of her recovery progress. “Doing it (the survey) has made me look at where I am at and helped me identify where I want to go. It has not only highlighted areas that need attention, it has also made me recognise areas that are going well that I hadn’t fully realised.”

“Having enrolled in her PhD and successfully published her first paper has given Heather a big sense of achievement,” Isha says. “Heather rated a question around how meaningful she considers her life to be extremely highly – and that’s a very important metric for anyone.” ■

**M**ind complements the data collected through My Better Life® with surveys that measure client outcomes. We call these ‘Getting Better Together’.

These surveys periodically track how a person rates their current situation against standardised, service-specific outcomes such as reduction in distress or improved activities of daily living.

Individual and service outcomes are measured from entry to exit in a collaborative way with the client. The

client can track their progress and staff can use the data to facilitate meaningful conversations about what the client has achieved and how they can continue to progress.

The aggregated outcome measures and My Better Life plan® data will provide Mind with valuable insights over time as to how well our different service categories perform in helping people make progress in achieving program objectives and their chosen recovery goals. These insights will inform our service review and planning, as well as provide data demonstrating our impact. ■



# In brief

## Research: Mind welcomes Nicola Ballenden

Mind welcomes Nicola Ballenden, our new Executive Director of Research, Advocacy and Policy. She replaces Dr Sarah Pollock who left Mind in March 2021 to take up an appointment as the Chief Advocate for Mental Health for Western Australia.

Nicola has held senior leadership roles across the not for profit sector, providing research, policy, service development and strategic communications expertise in health, welfare and homelessness organisations including the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, the Brotherhood of St

Laurence and Launch Housing. Nicola has also spent time in policy roles with the Commonwealth Government and the Australian Consumers Association (CHOICE).

Nicola is passionate about using research and evidence to measure impact, build better mental health services and to influence the policy process.

‘It’s exciting to begin this role at this pivotal moment when the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System and the Productivity Commission have flagged a real

commitment to and opportunity for structural reform,’ Nicola says. ‘I hope it will see us build a system that integrates mental health support with the broader health system to provide the holistic wrap around support that makes sustained recovery possible.’



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## Housing: Third Haven residence open



Residents have moved into the newly completed Haven Geelong development. The 16 unit residence will provide long term supported independent living for people from the greater Geelong region living with significant mental ill-health, with Mind staff providing 24 hour service management and recovery support.

The development comprises 16 self-contained one-bedroom units for residents, and common kitchen, dining, recreation and meeting areas. The modern high-quality development has been sensitively landscaped to harmonise with its local environs.

Haven Geelong was made possible by a \$3.75 million capital grant from Homes Victoria and a \$1.3 million low interest loan

from the Treasury Corporation. It is the third in the Haven building program, following the original South Yarra development in 2011 and the opening of Haven Frankston in 2019. Haven Laverton is expected to be completed in June 2021, Haven Mooropna (Shepparton) in July 2021, and Havens in Epping and Pakenham in early 2022.

The Haven Foundation Australia Limited has now been registered as a community housing provider in other states, opening the opportunity for expanding the provision of Haven residences beyond Victoria.

## Mind new youth psychosocial recovery programs

Mind has been granted \$1.36 million in Victorian government funding to develop youth psychosocial recovery programs to help young people with mental health challenges to build the skills to live successfully in the community. These are designed to prevent young people from needing a stay in a youth residential service, or to help them stay successfully and independently in the community after a residential stay.

A great complement to existing residential support services, these new programs will operate in the Melbourne metropolitan Local Government Areas of Banyule, Yarra and Nillumbuk from June 2021 and soon after in regional Victoria in the Latrobe Valley and Wodonga for two years.



Aaron and Kim

## Thank you for looking after each other and yourselves

A big thank you to all our staff, clients, families and carers, and our clinical partners for your continued cooperation and endurance through the pandemic. Thank you for following mask requirements, social distancing, lockdowns, visitor restrictions and service changes, to keep all of us safe and well.

Different states have been affected at different times but our services in all states have reacted quickly, professionally and compassionately whenever restrictions have been introduced because of outbreaks. It is not over yet but our COVID and vaccination working groups will continue to make the safety and wellbeing of our clients, staff and families their top priority.

## Reconciliation at Mind

Thanks to Aaron, a client at our Mind Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing in Cairns, and his support worker Kim, for helping us launch our National Reconciliation Week 2021 activities. This year Mind moves into the second, 'Innovate', stage of its Reconciliation Plan, focusing on practical actions that will drive our contribution to reconciliation both internally and in the communities in which we operates.

Our second National Reconciliation Week staff webinar, entitled 'Taking Action in Indigenous Mental Health' was a rare opportunity for staff to hear from three First Nations people who are running Aboriginal mental health and suicidality and cultural learning programs. These powerful speakers shared very personal stories to strengthen our understanding of the transgenerational impacts of dispossession and build staff capacity in supporting our First Nations clients. The webinar is available on the Mind Australia Limited Youtube channel.





# Haven Mooroopna:

a place to call home

**This brand new development offers one-bedroom stand-alone cabin-style units within a 16 unit complex. Owned by The Haven Foundation, specialists in providing quality housing to adults with mental health-related disability.**

Mind Australia is the nominated service provider, delivering around the clock support to residents with NDIS SIL or supported housing funding.

Set in beautifully landscaped grounds, Haven Mooroopna provides a great environment to focus on recovery, create a sense of community and to feel at home.

Close to public transport, local shops and other amenities.

When you come to Haven Mooroopna, you are coming to a place to call home.

**Expressions of interest are invited** from people who are currently on the Victorian Housing Register or willing to be listed on it, once shortlisted. Other eligibility criteria apply.

**For all enquires please contact:**  
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