



A brief history: 1972–2022



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The content of this booklet is informed by 30 oral history interviews, several art and craft workshops, reminiscences, illustration and poetry writing sessions that took place as part of a funded project from the National Lottery Heritage Fund entitled "Fifty Years of Middle Street Resource Centre: the Legacy of Wellbeing". To find out more about the project, please visit: [www.mentalhealthcarememories.co.uk](http://www.mentalhealthcarememories.co.uk).

The oral history collection from this project is held at the East Midlands Oral History Archive, Leicester University: <https://le.ac.uk/emoha>.

To find out more about Middle Street Resource Centre, Beeston, Nottingham, please visit: [www.msrg.org.uk](http://www.msrg.org.uk).

## CONTENTS

<b>The Heritage Project</b>	1
<b>History of Middle Street Resource Centre</b>	2
<b>Values and Ethos</b>	3
<b>Timeline</b>	5
<b>Centre Activities</b>	9
<b>Poem: No Longer Drifting</b>	10
<b>A Safe Space</b>	11
<b>Poem: The Garden</b>	12
<b>The People Make the Place</b>	13
<b>Poem: Con[FREE]dence</b>	15
<b>The Heritage Project Infographic</b>	16
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	17



## THE HERITAGE PROJECT

In 2022, Middle Street Resource Centre in Beeston, Nottingham celebrated its 50th year.

Thanks to a project led by the department of Social Work, Care and Community at Nottingham Trent University and the support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Middle Street community – members, staff, volunteers and others including young people – began to document and celebrate the Centre’s hidden history, using arts and crafts, oral history, reminiscence, illustration, poetry, and photography.

The project showed the crucial role that the Centre has played in supporting individuals with long-term mental health needs in the community.



**“During a time of limited government investment in community facilities, day services to support the wellbeing of people with mental health problems are under constant threat of closure, and the project aims to advocate for the importance of rehabilitative provision for those in need of it.”**

Dr Verusca Calabria, Project Lead, explains the motivation for the project.

## HISTORY OF MIDDLE STREET RESOURCE CENTRE



The Centre was built in 1972 as a psychiatric day service and in 1989 it began to embrace user participation, namely involving users in meaningful decision making. Service users began to volunteer to run the Centre and to build links with the community, embracing social inclusion.

At this time, the Centre had strong links with the Nottingham Advocacy Group, one of the earliest mental health service user groups to be formed in England. This was a time when user participation in mental health services was not yet recognised or supported by professionals and policymakers. In the ensuing decades, the ethos of user involvement continued to be implemented through the formation of self-organising and mutual aid groups.

In 2005, the local council implemented the national policy of personalisation, which gave rise to personal budgets and self-directed support for people in need of continuing social care. This new form of individualised care was viewed more favourably than running a day service, calling into question the future of the Centre. From 2010 onwards, the Centre was threatened with closure several times, but it was saved by a 3-year campaign mounted by service users and their allies.

Today the Centre runs independently, following a co-production model. This means that people who use it, including those with lived experience of mental health problems and their allies, are included as equal partners in the decision-making processes. It is the only day centre in Nottingham to cater for the rehabilitation needs of people with enduring mental ill health during an era in which there has been little investment in mental health community services.



## VALUES AND ETHOS

Middle Street Resource Centre uses a social model of mental health, which focuses on social, cultural and environmental issues that impact mental health, rather than psychiatric diagnoses, which can be stigmatising.

Staff and Centre users work empathetically and non-hierarchically in partnership through group activities and one-to-one therapeutic support. Decision making at the Centre is taken jointly by staff, volunteers and Centre users.



“ The first thing that struck me about Middle Street is how welcoming it is, you can come along with any lived experience of mental health, no matter how old you are, no matter how you live, what postcode you are. If you want to come along and be part of it, you’re really welcome to join in. ”

Centre User

“ Our model was about the importance of having a base for the community to be rooted in, well resourced, run by the service users, or alongside, the co-production with service users. Without that core community resource, people were just isolated, in an uncaring and unsupportive space where they have no power. ”

Staff Member



## TIMELINE

1972

Nottinghamshire County Council opens the Centre as a psychiatric day hospital

**“There were councillors, doctors, I know Dr Gordon was there, and some from Mapperley Hospital, quite a few with chains round their neck you know. Mind you, we were too busy to notice. I remember the coffee! We wanted to buy Nescafe but we were told it was too expensive, so we bought the cheaper stuff, and the more we added the worse it tasted, terrible stuff!”**

Former staff member remembers the Centre's official opening.

1989

The Centre embraced participation, Centre users were encouraged to take an equal part in decision making and to volunteer in the day to day running of the building and its activities.

**“Everybody belonged to a team, I think there were three or four teams, you belonged to a team, there was a team meeting every lunchtime which just talked about what was going on, then each team elected a couple of reps and there was a reps meeting on a Friday where things like... well, dirty cups was a recurring theme! You talked about things to do with the running of the centre, what people were happy or not happy with and what was wanted.”**

A Centre user remembers user participation in the early 1990s.

2000

**“It was dynamic, it was, involved, it felt in front of policy in some senses, rather than trying to catch up.”**

Robert Ashford, CEO reflects on his first impressions of Middle Street, joining the centre in the early 2000s as a Mental Health Worker.

2005

User consultation changes the Centre's name from Beeston Day Centre to Middle Street Resource Centre

2008

Introduction of personal budgets means less direct funding for day centres and the cooked lunch which had been at the heart of the Centre's offer since it opened stopped being free.

2010

Austerity cuts force Nottinghamshire County Council to consider closing the Centre, causing outcry among the community and a public campaign to save the Centre

**“I set up a little group, I was trying to get everybody here - all the members involved in, and I called it MiStAG, which stood for Middle Street Advocacy Group, we had weekly meetings... and I started going to County Hall to sit in the public gallery and listen to debates up there. And I got to know the councillors very well.”**

Centre user and founder of MiStAG

Building works at the side and front of the building, including laying the new tramline, make the building inaccessible for a time.

**“At one time, when they were refurbishing we were at the West End Community Centre, that must have been for some months. Again, you know I just don’t remember. I’ve never not had contact, again obviously at that point things were very different and a lot of people had lost contact. Cause you have to be, you know, when it moves to a different place and things you have to be in a fairly good place yourself to follow it, don’t you? So, I’m afraid people were lost along the way.”**

Centre User

2014

The Centre reopened run on the principle of “co-production”, users of the Centre now had a formal role in the management and running of the Centre, and Centre users established a charity called Mindset to lead a programme of activities and run the Centre café.

**“Mindset was a safe place for people with mental health problems, to have activities, to provide a hub for the community to meet up, to provide therapy and key workers, it was a powerful mission statement.”**

Centre User and founder of Mindset

The Centre celebrates its 50th anniversary. Nottingham Trent University secures external funding to document the Centre’s history.

2022

2013

Nottinghamshire County Council fund a £500,000 refurbishment of the building with the intention of using it as a hub for multi-service provision.

**“Nottinghamshire County Council spent half a million pounds refurbishing it. And they’ve done a really good job on it. And it’s a nice building. It’s a nice premises to have... having a tram stop ride outside and bus stops right outside, enhance the building and make it good. We run two thirds of the building and a third of the building is still Notts County Council Livingwell Team, which is the older people and mental health team. So there’s a good synergy. It works well between the two groups.”**

Staff Member

2015

Nottinghamshire County Council formally handed over the responsibility for running the Centre to the community – a new group called Beeston Community Resource (BCR) was formed. BCR was formally constituted as a charity in March 2015.

As an independent charity, BCR are not restricted to helping people from Nottinghamshire – today the Centre is open to those with and without lived experience of mental health.

**“I think a big part of it is not just about helping people, but also helping other people understand each other.”**

Centre User



## CENTRE ACTIVITIES

Self-organised and supported activities structures the week at Middle Street. In the 1970s, activities were run by occupational therapists and focussed on mental health recovery. Since 2015, the programme has been run by volunteers and is called the Mindset programme. From a relaxation group to gamelan drumming, from music appreciation to walking, activities at Middle Street support mental health, and the programme follows the interests and talents of Middle Street's members.



“ Well, at first, I was just doing the poetry group. And then, because I've managed to get a bit of improvement on my mental health, I wanted to do some on my physical. So I started doing the walking group, which was just short, local walks, nothing strenuous. It seemed perfect for me, and got me out in fresh air and meeting a few new people. As well as helping my physical condition a bit, it also helped my confidence in meeting and talking to people. ”

Centre User

## NO LONGER DRIFTING

By Fiona

There is structure in my day  
Someone might even miss me  
If I stay away

I can hear the guitarist strumming  
I find it lifts my mood  
And I see a volunteer smiling  
As he serves up the food

Cheese omelette on my plate  
Friends who care  
They help me feel connected  
And thankful to be there

The Garden feels so peaceful  
And not only flowers blooms  
But friendship, hope and encouragement  
Is found in every room.



## A SAFE SPACE

Many people who use the Centre feel that it is very important to have a permanent home at Middle Street, a place within the community where people can be themselves without fear of judgement. Activity rooms flow off a central café area, the café is often described as 'the beating heart of the building'. The design of the building supports Middle Street's values.



“ What it offered.... almost most importantly was safety, security but it was never strangling, it was never institutionalised, you were always encouraged to mix together and mix outside. ”

Centre User

“ Other day centres lacked the sanctuary element that was there at Middle Street. ”

Centre User

## THE GARDEN

By Cathy

The wind chimes the bells  
The smell of the trees and grass  
The Daisies grow between the blades of grass at my feet

The kaleidoscope of the windmill  
The cool breeze on my back

Bunting floating in the breeze under the gazebo.





## THE PEOPLE MAKE THE PLACE

Middle Street is run on a peer support model - this means that alongside professional staff, members support each other. Being sociable supports good mental health, helping others builds esteem, and at Middle Street there is always someone who can empathise with mental health challenges.

“ The Centre enables people to help themselves. I think that’s a good way of putting it because, you’re not gonna get all the help you need here, but in some respects it gives you the erm, the ability to meet other people and feel better about yourself and develop the tenacity within yourself to make things in your own life better. ”

Centre User

“ You only have to walk through sort of the cafeteria, you can see that the people that come here for social groups, to form social bonds. ”

Group Facilitator



This piece was made by the Centre users and it weaves memories of Middle Street into a depiction of the Centre’s beautiful garden.

# CON[FREE]DENCE

By Ray Winstanley

So hard to build but quick to fall  
Sometimes there is enough, others none at all  
Stand at the counter, working the till  
This is where confidence, begins to till  
Some want a drink, some want to feed  
But for me being useful, is all that I need  
Trusted with money, and casting a smile  
It is hard for my depression to say this is not worthwhile  
If I was good for nothing, then I could not do this  
Defying depression, absolute bliss  
Depression's still there, but in the back of my head  
I will be damned to feel better off dead  
If you feel it is too hard, that you are not good enough  
Take my advice and try call Depression's bluff  
Stand at the till and just breath and feel free  
Build up your confidence and get my Coffee.



# THE HERITAGE PROJECT INFOGRAPHIC



15

Co-production Workshops

4

Public Exhibitions

8

Public Events

6

Delivery Partners

4

Academic conferences

4

Paid student internships

200+

People involved

30

Oral history interviews

15

Portrait photographs

1

Heritage Booklet

1

Film Documentary

3

Heritage of Wellbeing Postcards

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### Special thanks to:

The members, volunteers and staff of Middle Street Resource Centre for their support and contributions to this project.

Facebook:

[@50yearsMSRC](#)

X (Twitter):

[@HealthMemories](#)

Website:

[www.mentalhealthcarememories.co.uk](http://www.mentalhealthcarememories.co.uk)

Project exhibition:



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Community Artist Network  
Philip Formby Photography  
Nottingham City Libraries  
Rad Digital

### Project delivery partners:



