

HAPPIER HEALTHIER WORKPLACES OUTCOMES & REFLECTIONS



THE BACKGROUND AND THE WHY

At the beginning of 2020, just before the Covid 19 pandemic took hold, we were made aware of a fund available through the Design Council from Impact on Urban Health, the charitable wing of Guys and St Thomas' Trust. We were encouraged to apply for funding to support the wellbeing of employers and their employees and to research how 'wellbeing in the workplace' impacts on the success and sustainability of businesses in the Station to Station BID area.



Once the Covid 19 pandemic had taken hold, we became aware that many of our businesses were faced with severe financial difficulties, issues affecting their health and exposure to the virus because they were on the frontline, the abuse they were experiencing from the public and the extreme emotional distress that all of these factors were causing them.

THE APPROACH AND HOW

As a result of what we were hearing and with the support of BUD Leaders and the Design Council we developed the 'Happier, Healthier Workplaces Project'. The first thing we needed to do was map the issues that the businesses within Station to Station BID were facing and gauge how they identified their health and wellbeing in relation to work and running businesses. In order to gather the information and data on this BUD Leaders undertook a series of 1-2-1 anonymous interviews with both workers and business owners/managers in the area (spreadsheets with this data are available on request).

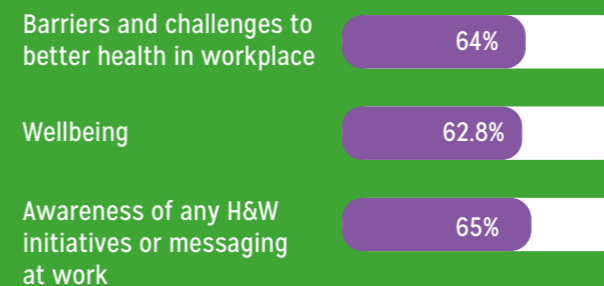
PHASE 1

During this first phase it became apparent that many business owners and managers felt a great deal of responsibility for their employees health and wellbeing and that this was impacting the effectiveness of running their businesses. We also became very aware of the high levels of concern amongst employees about sharing details of their own health and wellbeing, because of a fear that this would influence how employers regarded them and may affect their job security. The stories and reports of very unpleasant experiences that workers and business owners were sharing with us also raised concerns for us and we wanted to find a way to support and protect the workers and business owners within the BID.

As a result of this data gathering exercise we decided to run a series of workshops. We held one for employees, where they shared experiences, worries and what their needs were. Followed by a second workshop where employers could come and share their experiences, worries and possible solutions to them. We used the information and shared experiences from these sessions to inform the next steps for the project.

PHASE 1 OUTCOMES OCT-DEC 2021

AWARENESS SCALE SCORES



6 EMERGING TRENDS



EMPLOYER NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN THE WORKSHOPS



PROPOSED SOLUTION CATEGORIES



PHASE 2

In phase 2 of the project, we explored a number of offerings that would provide support in practical and emotional ways. We hoped these initiatives would empower business owners and managers to support their staff at the same time as successfully running their businesses. We wanted to offer solutions and support that would aid and improve the wellbeing of workers and owners by giving them access to services that would help them to feel more healthy and well. We divided these offerings into 3 categories: Training, Finance and Wellbeing.

TRAINING:

LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE

This was a 12 week course that focused on the tools needed for developing strong leadership skills enabling managers and owners to be able to support staff by firstly supporting themselves. We ran these as lunchtime sessions, so that they were as easy to attend as possible without impacting on other work commitments, time is precious to small business owners!

HOSPITALITY APPRENTICESHIP WEBINAR

We commissioned a webinar from Workwhile on how to utilise the Apprenticeship Levy Transfer scheme to subsidise apprenticeships and upskill current staff or grow the team. This was in direct response to business feedback on how difficult it was to recruit and retain staff. While this issue was an area that was highlighted as a problem for a lot of businesses, the webinar was under utilised. The reasons given for poor attendance were, ironically, that the owners and managers were too time poor to attend, and 'too busy doing business'. However, Station to Station has information on its website on apprenticeships and also hosts a 'Local Jobs Board' that is free for local businesses to use. This is our most visited webpage and we know that a lot of the businesses within the BID have recruited using this service. It is designed to be very quick and easy to use, with admin staff at Station to Station looking after updates and managing the page on their behalf.



MONEY HEALTH CHATS

We introduced an anonymous service, delivered by BID based charity Centre70, to offer financial advice and support for business owners and staff. The service included debt reduction advice, advice on how to deal with final demands and court summons. We found that although this service was marketed as completely anonymous and free there was some reluctance for businesses to use it because there is stigma related to financial problems. However, those that did take up the offer were incredibly grateful and found the advice to be invaluable. We continue to offer this service to our BID members even after the project has concluded.

Feeling much better that I have the correct help in this. Thank you so much for thinking of me!

THREE WORKSHOPS - 'KEEPING YOUR STAFF AND KEEPING YOUR STAFF HAPPY'

We ran 3 workshops that aimed to empower managers to retain their staff by keeping them happy at work and loyal to the organisation. Recruitment costs are high and it is time consuming to find the right person for an organisation or role, taking valuable time away from managers and owners being able to focus on day to day running of the business as well as other more developmental work for their businesses. We again offered these as lunchtime sessions to make the most of the time that managers and owners could spare. The three separate workshops on 'keeping your staff and keeping your staff happy' covered; empowering your team; clarifying the business vision-mission-values and ways to support and promote wellbeing in the workplace.

BUSINESS RATES SURGERIES

We ran a series of both 1-2-1 telephone consultations and an in person workshop for businesses to get advice on any Business Rates Reliefs that they might be eligible for. Expert advice was provided by a retired Lambeth Business Rates Officer on how to access these reliefs or set up payment plans for underpaid business rates bills. She was also able to offer guidance and advice on how to appeal business rates valuations through the Valuation Office Agency, which is a very complicated and arduous process. This had some very positive outcomes and

Many thanks to everyone for helping me with this. I feel so relieved. The business rates are now paid up to date and I am super grateful for all the help.

3-MONTH LEADERSHIP COURSE IMPACT



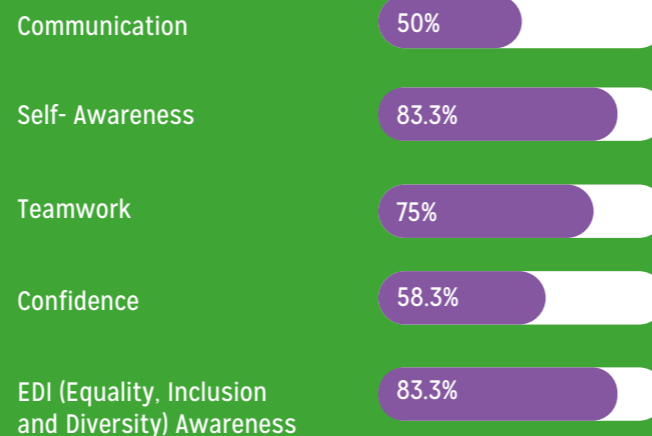
WHAT DID THE PARTICIPANTS ENJOY?

This was extraordinarily powerful thing to do, and I know what I have learned will help me be a more resilient, less stressed manager.

To dream Seemed silly but tried it and had an epiphany!

Ownership Enabled me to think of myself. Less Stressed & anxious!

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING HAVE YOU DEVELOPED IN THE PROGRAMME?



WHAT HAS IMPACTED YOU MOST ON THIS LEARNING JOURNEY AND WHAT CHANGE WILL THAT BRING?

Realised I've been running an EGO business for years. Started alone but now have a team. Didn't evolve my management style, was a dictator. Missed a trick because of lack of empathy & communication.

That a leader can have any personality.

Listen to your cleaner - Find out how they feel, making them part of the decision process.

FINANCE:

NORWOOD WORKERS DISCOUNT CARD

This was an idea that came to us from a business located at the very edge of the BID area next to the industrial estate, Norwood Works. They are a small cafe who wanted to find a way to generate more footfall and customers. We focused this scheme on this particular area of the BID - a strip of shops that borders the industrial estate - and designed a discount card that the workers based on Norwood Works could use to access special 'workers discounts'. Examples of which were; meal deals, discounted haircuts, 2 for 1 deals etc. Initially there was enthusiasm from the business owners and the local workers. However, ultimately this element of the scheme wasn't successful as workers preferred the stronger offers on the high street and the businesses involved were actually losing money by offering these discounts and finances were too tight for it to truly work for them.

we received excellent feedback from a large number of businesses who accessed this service. We will continue to offer this service on an ad hoc basis, when we become aware of any issues that our BID members may have.

What do the experts say... We have seen that this very personal service has resulted in a number of very beneficial outcomes for our BID members in being able to reduce their outgoings and being eligible for discounts or special rates from the business rates team at Lambeth.

WELLBEING:

SUBSIDISED GYM AND YOGA MEMBERSHIPS

Another area that we became aware of as we undertook our research was a lack of preventative physical activity. So we developed a service that would allow Station to Station businesses to access a 50% subsidised membership for a 4 month period, to either local gyms or yoga studios. We worked with

4 local providers: Anytime Fitness – Tulse Hill, Active Lambeth – West Norwood Leisure Centre, More Yoga – Tulse Hill and The Shala – West Norwood. We wanted the activities to be easily accessible, so chose locations that were convenient for all areas

I joined More Yoga thanks to the Station to Station local employee scheme and this is now a much needed routine in my life. This time that I dedicate to myself helps me cope. Thank you all for your help in making this happen for me.

of the BID. This service was well received, however, only one of the employers took up the offer, so we extended it to be available to workers in the area too. This saw more interest,

but we only had 5 or 6 places used and these were all at the Yoga studios. Again the reports of those who took part were very positive and in the case of the employer who accessed this service alongside an employee, this forged a stronger relationship that had benefits in the workplace too.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP)

An EAP offers a variety of anonymised professional services including, personal financial advice, business related financial advice, family and relationship advice and counselling services. We had initially ruled this service out as we were unable to find a provider who could adapt the service to cover multiple businesses under one contract. We eventually found MCL Medics who were able to offer us a contract that we as Station to Station BID signed and put forward BID member businesses to access their services under one umbrella. The MCL offer also included a very informative app with online articles covering subjects including: life, virtual world, nutrition, fitness and mind. Also in the app there are practical solutions for diet/nutritional advice, fitness suggestions including videos and workout programmes, articles and signposting for those experiencing mental health issues, domestic abuse, challenges with parenting and families, home life, legal advice, work life balance etc. It is a very useful resource of information – all held on your phone and really easily accessed in your lunch break, on the bus on the way to work etc. Within the EAP offer, staff can access 1-2-1 and couples counselling (x 6 sessions for free).

We have 10 organisations signed up to the EAP service with a £10 per month contribution by them and S2S subsidising the rest of the cost using the IoUH funding. We will be offering this subsidised service for 2 years.

THE LEGACY OF HAPPIER, HEALTHIER WORKPLACES

The overall effect of this project has been one of making connections with the whole Station to Station business community and their staff. This project has created a positive network for businesses to share their worries, experiences, knowledge and concerns. It has produced an environment of care and wellbeing; a problem shared is a problem halved. Knowing that other business owners and fellow workers are experiencing many of the same issues gives a sense of security and reassurance. Combined with the knowledge that there are resources and services available to help and support boosts the unique and special community in the Station to Station business community.

With the help of Fay Quale (mentor from IoUH team) we were able to map this network and its value to the business community in Tulse Hill, West Norwood and Parkhall Business Centre. We have a draft form of this 'mycelial network' available to view on our website. We have future plans to develop this network and enable more members of the business community to connect with each other. The value of peer knowledge is vital and instils confidence amongst fellow business owners.

As part of the development of this network we are also planning to engage more of our Board Members to offer peer support and advice, in an informal way, to encourage more collaboration between the BID members and the BID staff team. We hope that this will encourage more businesses to make the most of the services and benefits of being part of a business community. We are pleased to have BUD Leaders providing a training/workshop session to our Board members on the 'Vision, Mission and Values of Station to Station BID' as we hope that this workshop will support us in the development of our business plan for our 3rd term renewal ballot in 2026. As a BID team we strive to deliver the services that matter and offer value for money to our members, with that in mind we constantly seek their input into designing the services that they need and want.

The support, advice and knowledge that we received from the Design Council in developing and delivering the Happier, Healthier Workplaces

project has been integral to its success. They have provided intelligent and informed support and given us the confidence to adapt the offerings as we went along and saw how they were being received. This has allowed us to engage with different businesses in different ways throughout the process. Having the positive feedback from the team at the Design Council has given us the confidence in knowing that we are doing a good job, which in turn validates our continued efforts to do more good work on behalf of our business community. The overall sense of care and wellbeing that this project has created within our business community has fostered a wonderful sense of community cohesion, this is something that we will continue to build on.

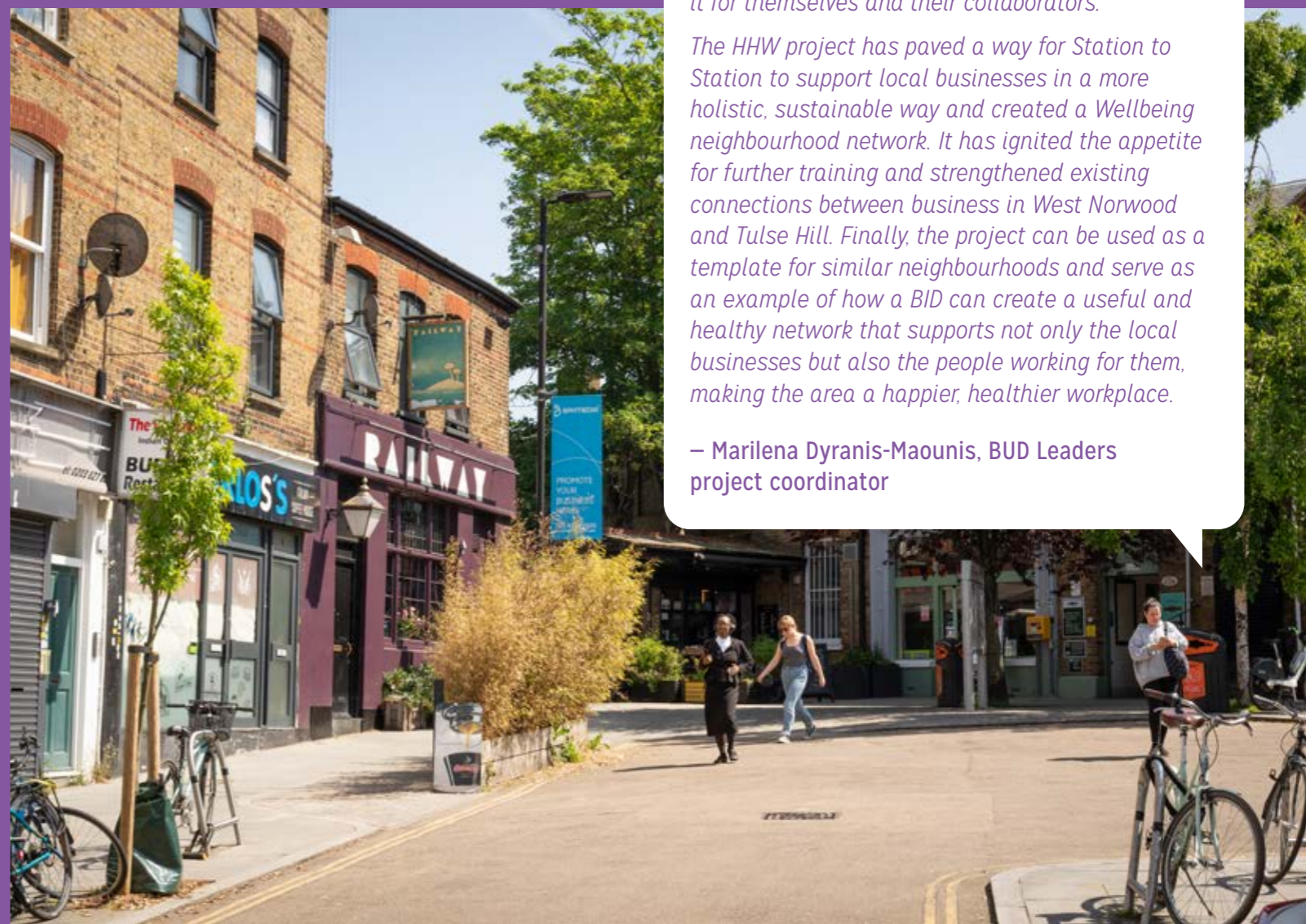
The Happier Healthier Workplaces project couldn't have come at a better time. The last few years have been very challenging for small business owners and because of Station to Station's initiative, we were able to offer the kind of support that people requested. Having been involved from the first survey, back in October 2021, I can honestly say that this project was birthed from local employers and employees' ideas, suggestions and requests. It was constantly adapted using their feedback and one can see the impact from the testimonials.

It has been a 2-year adventure that allowed for real conversations, genuine connections, birth of ideas and a lot of experimentation. The people delivering the project remained agile and ready to test and adapt the processes and offerings based on what the participating small businesses fed back.

What really stood out to me was the effort people put in, the extra hours of engagement and the overall care that both employers and employees show daily for each other and their customers. As a result, there are now new connections, groups and support systems in place. People are more aware of the importance of Wellbeing in the workplace and are more aware of ways to improve it for themselves and their collaborators.

The HHW project has paved a way for Station to Station to support local businesses in a more holistic, sustainable way and created a Wellbeing neighbourhood network. It has ignited the appetite for further training and strengthened existing connections between business in West Norwood and Tulse Hill. Finally, the project can be used as a template for similar neighbourhoods and serve as an example of how a BID can create a useful and healthy network that supports not only the local businesses but also the people working for them, making the area a happier, healthier workplace.

– Marilena Dyrani-Maounis, BUD Leaders project coordinator



An aerial photograph of a city street. In the foreground, there are rows of brick buildings with gabled roofs. A street with cars and a red double-decker bus runs through the middle. In the background, a modern city skyline with various skyscrapers is visible under a clear blue sky. A blue crane is also visible in the distance.

What is different about your business now?

We are thinking more about the employee experience at work, looking at new and more creative ways of working.

How do you feel about the future?

Optimistic and enthusiastic.

What impact has the Happier Healthier Workplaces project had on you as a leader?

Made me more reflective, made me more considerate of the wellbeing of those around me. Definitely made me want to be more inclusive of employee ideas and contributions.