

# ACTION UPDATE

## Update 9: Complementary Therapies

### Groundswell's Action Updates

Groundswell's Peer Advocates support homeless people to attend nearly 2000 health appointments a year. Each month our **Action Updates** highlight a topic which homeless people have told us is important and offers practical advice around the issue. The guidance and quotes are based on what our Peer Advocates see first hand when working with homeless people to improve health.



### Key facts on Complementary Therapies

- There are lots of complementary therapies out there. Common types are **acupuncture, meditation, breathing exercises & massage.**
- **Many people feel they help with recovery and mental health issues.**
- They are often based on spiritual beliefs.
- **It's best to use them alongside normal medicine to treat illness.**

### Complementary Therapies Groundswell's Experience

Lots of Groundswell clients and volunteers have found that complementary therapies can help with mental health and recovery from drink and drug issues.

*"Give it a try and see. When you're finished you can come back and be angry if you want but its really calmed me down and stopped me using drugs as much."*

*"Anything that gives you self-awareness can only benefit recovery."*

*"A lot of people like it others don't. But if it works for you that's great! If you get into it you'll feel relaxed for quite a while."*

### Groundswell

Groundswell exists to enable homeless and vulnerable people to take more control of their lives, have a greater influence on services and to play a full role in our community.

### Homeless Health Peer Advocacy

Groundswell works to improve the health of homeless people. Peer Advocates, who have been homeless themselves, can go with you to physical health appointments to help you to get the best service from the NHS. Practically we can offer you:

- Help to make health appointments
- Go with you to your health appointments
- Pay for your travel fares if needed.

Find out more at: [www.groundswell.org.uk](http://www.groundswell.org.uk)



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# ACTION UPDATE!

## Update 9: Complementary Therapies



A complementary therapy is a technique used alongside normal medicine to support health and wellbeing. A lot of people find them very helpful especially around recovery from drug and alcohol issues.

Complimentary therapies are often based on spiritual beliefs and haven't been tested in the same way as normal medicines. It's not a good idea to use complementary therapies instead of treatments recommended by a medical professional but if they work for you they can be a great source of extra support. They're not normally available on the NHS but you can often get them at drug and alcohol services.

**Acupuncture** has been around for thousands of years. A trained acupuncture professional puts very small needles into particular parts of your body, such as your ear, which they believe are linked to other parts of your body. Sometimes magnets are also used to put pressure on an area. The idea is that this can help your body and mind to recover naturally. Lots of people find the process very good for nerves and stress especially if you're trying to come off drink or drugs. Find out more at:

[www.acupuncture.org.uk](http://www.acupuncture.org.uk) or [www.nadauk.com](http://www.nadauk.com)

*"I've had feet and body massage to relax. It leaves you sleepy and chilled out."*

**Massage** is used in lots of different ways to help people with physical health and mental wellbeing. A massage professional will speak to you about your health and physically touch your body, using techniques to help with the symptoms you are experiencing. This could mean reducing stress and anxiety or physical pain in a muscle. There are loads of different types of massage, some common ones are the Bowden Technique, Shiatsu, Reflexology, Reiki and Indian Head Massage. Find out more at:

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

**Yoga** is a spiritual practice designed to increase awareness and self-knowledge, so that you can be freed from old behaviour patterns. It usually involves exercises and breathing techniques. Find out more at: [www.bwy.org.uk](http://www.bwy.org.uk)

**Meditation** encourages you to be still and rest, putting you in a state of calm. It focuses on your breathing and being "in the moment". For some people it's a religious thing but for many it's just a good way to deal with life. Find out more at:

[www.schoolofmeditation.org](http://www.schoolofmeditation.org)

**Transformational Breathing** is one of many techniques based on focusing on your breathing to help you to be calm and manage your physical and mental health better. Find out more at: [www.transformationalbreath.co.uk](http://www.transformationalbreath.co.uk)

*"At first I thought it was nonsense. I was angry and my leg was hurting but it really worked. I was so shocked I came out laughing. I think what it was is it gave me space to let everything go. I was able to just stop and think. Things are manageable!"*

*"Its like tuning in your body. It makes you aware of where you're at."*



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