

The Attendance & Wellbeing Project

Post Implementation Review June 2025



2025

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BACKGROUND

WHY THE NEED FOR THIS PROJECT?

Emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) is growing issue nationally, resulting in increasing numbers of children missing school, families in distress and facing fines, and families deregistering from school rolls. The Children's Commissioner's audit in 2022¹ showed that 1 in 4 children were persistently absent, a number that had more than doubled from 2019. In Devon, the proportion of secondary school children persistently absent is greater than the national average (38.7% vs. 28.3%).

Statutory services in Devon have a programme of work underway that includes developing an EBSA pathway and a training offer for all schools, including Ordinarily Available Provision, Restorative Practice, Attachment based mentoring, Understanding Autism and the ATTEND Framework². The SEND transformation programme³ prioritises early identification of needs, promoting inclusive responses to social, emotional and mental health in schools, and reducing waiting times for assessment for neurodivergence, which all contribute to addressing EBSA. Devon County Council, Devon ICB, Child and Family Health Devon, Family Hubs and the VSCE are working together to find solutions.

The Family Minds⁴ Attendance and Wellbeing project enabled an existing partnership of voluntary sector organisations to work closely together to trial the delivery of an innovative, multi-agency, creative response to EBSA, and to share learning across Devon that will be relevant nationally.



The Family Minds (FM) Partnership is a group of thirteen organisations with shared values, who are working alongside each other to better improve mental health support for children, young People and their families across Devon. As well as sharing information to identify needs, we seek opportunities to collaborate and thereby increase the success rate of interventions that families receive, by taking a shared, holistic approach.

1. ECI Family Resource
2. Parental Minds
3. Heads Up
4. Esteem Team
5. Bounce Brighter Futures

6. YMCA Exeter
7. Devon Mental Health Alliance
8. Action East Devon
9. Normal Magic

10. TOR Support
11. Young Devon
12. Youth Arts & Health Trust
13. Calmer Lives

¹ Voices of England's Missing Children | Children's Commissioner for England

² iSupporting School Attendance: Understanding Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) and what to do about it | DES

³ Devon's SEND transformation programme work strands – Children, families and education

⁴ Family Minds – Parental Minds

EVIDENCE BASE - WHY THIS APPROACH?

Recent research⁵ shows that a wide range of factors related to school, home and the individual can impact emotional disorders and attendance at school, as well as wider systemic factors. Home and school issues can include:

- **Symptoms of emotional disorders themselves**
(e.g. insomnia, fatigue, social withdrawal)
- **Co-morbidity with other mental health conditions**
- **Physical illness**
- **Peer victimization and bullying**
- **School environment**
(poor teacher-pupil relationships, feeling safe and respected)
- **Academic attainment – poor attendance impacts attainment, which in turn increases risk of emotional difficulties and poor self-esteem**
- **Family life e.g, stress of child's difficulties on family as a whole, abuse and neglect, parental ill health**

As the factors are often complex and interlinked, research suggests that a collaborative approach between school and family is the best way to support young people. However 'a key barrier to collaboration is that parents and young people tend to place strong emphasis on the role of the school environment in contributing to attendance problems, while school staff emphasise the importance of factors related to the young people and their family.'⁶

This can result in a sense of 'blame', or feelings of hostility, between school and family. This sense of mistrust was borne out by Family Minds practitioners with experience of supporting young people and parent caregivers in this situation, who often felt that the school did not understand or respond to their child's needs.

5 Finning K, Ford T, Moore DA, eds. In: Mental Health and Attendance at School. Cambridge University Press; 2022:i-ii.

6 Finning K, Ford T, Moore DA, eds. In: Mental Health and Attendance at School. Cambridge University Press; 2022:i-ii.

We listened to the views of young people (via Devon Youth Council's 2024 survey⁷) who were either not in education, or being educated at home (not out of personal choice) about the top 8 reasons for struggling with school:

1. School/ college was too stressful
2. My anxiety was too high to cope in school/ college
3. I felt lonely and isolated in school/ college
4. I was bullied in school.
5. The school/ college that was best for me was too far away
6. I tried to reach out to staff but didn't feel heard or supported
7. The school/ college couldn't meet my needs
8. The school/ college was too big and there were too many people



And the views of young people expressed in Young Devon's 2024 Highlight Report⁸ which contained six key recommendations:

1. Creating Safe Spaces Enhances Student Wellbeing: Establishing quiet areas provide students with a safe environment to express their feelings, relax, and escape overstimulation
2. Strong Relationships Foster School Engagement: Building trusted relationships with peers and supportive adults is crucial.
3. Flexible Learning Environments Support Neurodiverse Students
4. Understanding the impact of Academic and Social Pressures on Anxiety
5. Practical Interventions Make a Significant Difference
6. Collaboration with Education Professionals is Vital to ensure consistent support for struggling young people

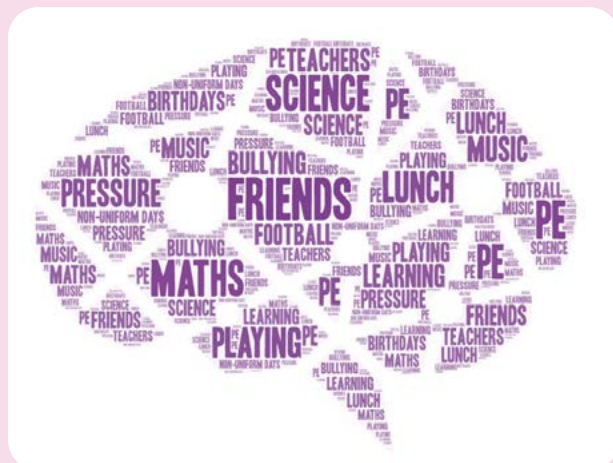
The experience of FM partners was that families we worked with often reported a mistrust of school, and sometimes a breakdown in communication with statutory authorities. An increasing number of families are electing home education due to unmet needs and mental health concerns, however this can further impact on emotional wellbeing and stress within families, including financial stress as parents struggle to maintain employment. As VCSE organisations, with skills and experience in gaining trust and building relationships within communities that may be distrustful of authorities, we are well placed to facilitate communication with schools (as well as health and other support services) and help identify ways forward.

We co-created a 'menu' of support for young people, parents and schools. We also created a theory of change which focused on not only supporting the family, but building better understanding and communication between schools and families, and identifying learning to inform system change.

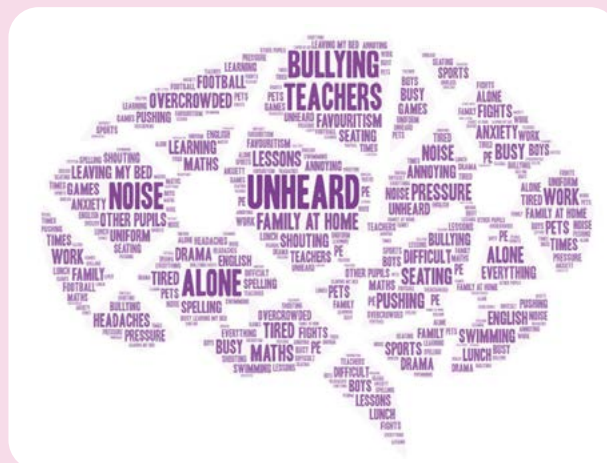
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Devon Youth Council 2024 Make Your Mark Survey: Mental Health in Schools and Colleges
Young Devon Highlight Report: Young People Struggling to Attend School, 02 July 2024, Jamie Keyse

Word clouds produced by Parental Minds using feedback from Bow Primary (Crediton) and St Mary's Primary (Axminster):



Things that push young people to go to school



Things that pull young people away from school

OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Drawing on the relevant expertise within the Family Minds Partnership, the Attendance and Wellbeing Project was co-created with five member organisations as delivery partners, and others acting in an advisory capacity, to:

- Identify and support CYP (& their families) who are unable to engage with school/ education where it's affecting their emotional wellbeing
- Work in partnership with statutory partners to identify those children who are in most need of targeted support to reduce burnout, improve attendance and prevent a break-down of school placement.
- Ensure where needs are identified that CYP and families are referred into appropriate and relevant services in a timely manner.
- Support an increase in the number CYP's engaged in learning, whilst increasing emotional wellbeing for CYP and their families.
- Strengthen the 'trio of attendance' (school, family, CYP) identified in research as a key factor in improving attendance.
- Demonstrate how a VCSE partnership approach can contribute to good outcomes for CYP, schools and families, by working alongside other services.
- Capture the learning to share across Devon.

At the start of the project we created a theory of change, drawing on existing evidence of need and available research – see appendix 1. Our short, medium and long term (primary) objectives are described in detail in this report.

THE INTERVENTION

Families with a child struggling to attend school can be identified by either the school or one of the partner agencies, or can self-refer (e.g. via social media promotion of the project).

Upon referral, the parent/caregiver in each family is contacted by a Parent Peer Support Worker to explain the 'menu' of support on offer. The family can then decide on the support that they feel is relevant to their needs. This can include:

- 1:1 support for CYP and parent/caregivers in the home from a Family Support Worker (ECI Family Resource)
- 1:1 and group art therapy for CYP (Youth Arts and Health Trust)
- Forest school group sessions for CYP (YMCA)
- 1:1 sessions and small-group sessions and peer support for CYP (Heads Up)
- Parent/carer wellbeing, advocacy, support, skills workshops and GROW programme (Parental Minds, Esteem Team)
- Practical liaison and partnership working between schools, families and the project.

The practitioners take time to listen to CYP and their families, amplify their voices and advocate for them where necessary. They co-create a bespoke, child and family-centred plan based on the young person and family's expressed needs and preferences. The services then work together and share information to offer cohesive family-based support.

Alongside delivery of the interventions, we were keen to capture learning from the project to be shared more widely. We are working with researchers from the University of Bath to carry out an evaluation. The researcher provides regular feedback on emerging insights to inform the planning and development of the project as it happens.

The project will also capture the voice of young people who struggle to attend school, in a way that not only informs the project, but can influence practitioners and service leaders more broadly (e.g. in schools, local authorities and other agencies). We are working in partnership with Sound Communities, a local organisation that works with marginalised young people and helps them to lead digital production opportunities together, to improve their well-being and facilitate expression, creativity and agency.

Sound Communities worked closely with a small number of young people supported by the Bridges service who have experienced the journey from school exclusion, alternative provision and the youth justice system. Sound Communities engaged them with creative media activities, responding to their interests and skills, to capture their voices and help them to express how their experiences with the 'system' have made them and their families feel. This was an opportunity to talk about their experience, explore what could

be done differently, and produce creative materials with the aim of influencing those involved in the education system to help create change.

RESOURCES

The total budget for the project in 2024/2025 was £80,000. This included £40,000 from Eastern Devon Local Care Partnership, matched by £40,000 from Devon Designated School Grant Funding (DCC).

An additional £5000 was later secured from DCC to fund the external evaluation by the University of Bath to capture learning from the project. Additional 'in-kind' resourcing was provided by some of the delivery partners, who chose to contribute additional resources (e.g. staff time) as part of their commitment to the project.

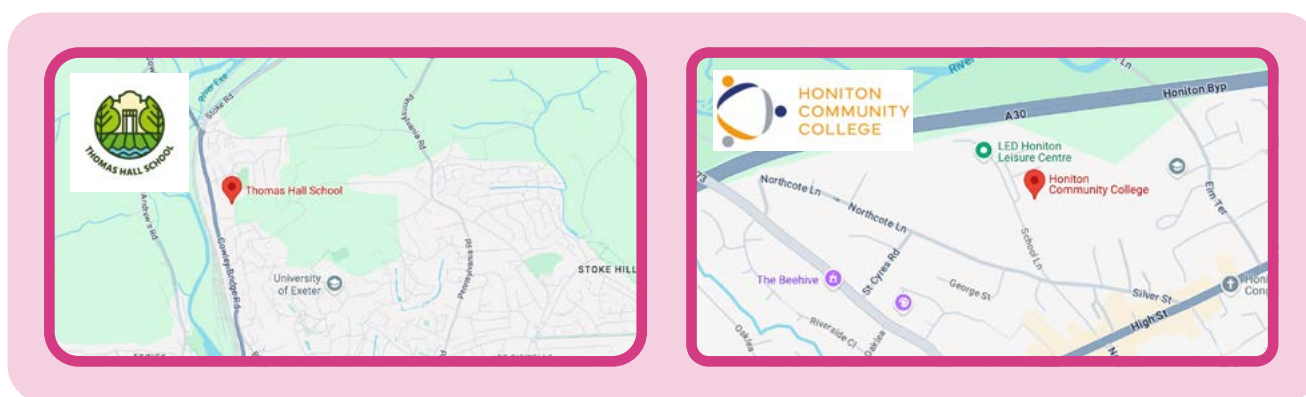


WHAT EVIDENCE HAS INFORMED THE PIR?

- Attendance and contact data from each delivery partner
- Outcome measures and questionnaires
- Evaluation interviews with practitioners
- Case studies and other feedback methods from young people, families, delivery partners and other stakeholders such as schools
- Reflective notes from regular project meetings, meeting minutes etc. recording on-going learning
- Interim feedback from our evaluation partner (University of Bath)

WHAT WAS DELIVERED

The original plan was for the programme to be delivered in two schools: Thomas Hall (TH), an 'all-through' school in Exeter, and Honiton Community College (HCC), a secondary school in a more rural market town.



Both are situated in areas that face significant and multi-dimensional deprivation according to the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation. One of the delivery partners (YMCA) had previously delivered a forest school provision in TH, and several delivery partners had existing links with HCC.

The first half-term of the autumn term was scheduled for building relationships with school staff to make them aware of the provision available, so that they could then identify families they felt could benefit from the provision. The young people's groups were initially planned to begin after October half term. Despite HCC making efforts to recruit the families they had identified, they found that gaining consent from the families to share their details took time, needing particular staff with whom the family had an established relationship to be aware of the provision on offer, make contact with the parent, and gain consent to share the family's details. The young people's groups were therefore postponed until January (and will now run until Dec 2025). Building

communication routes and relationships with staff at TH has taken longer, due to changes in leadership and staffing at the school. The recruitment of families from this school was therefore slower and work with young people began in the summer term.

Because of these delays, the partners decided to widen the reach of the project, to maximize the potential impact on families experiencing issues with emotional wellbeing and school attendance. Partner's whose offer was not site-specific (i.e. Parental Minds, Family Resource, Heads Up) broadened their reach to offer the following support to families with children in other schools.



Examples of Support:



Tailored 1:1 support to families currently known to one of the partner agencies where school attendance is an issue, and where the family could benefit from concurrent support from another partner agency. This has included, for example, Parental Minds referring a family to Family Resource to access support from a family support worker in the home, or Heads Up working 1:1 with a child for whom Parental Minds are supporting the parents.



Responding to requests from other schools (particularly in rural and coastal areas) to provide support for families struggling with attendance by providing workshops for children (Heads Up) alongside workshops for parents (Parental Minds).



Providing 'Navigating Change' workshops for children transitioning from primary school to secondary school, targeting families that schools identified as vulnerable during transition, as a preventative measure to support mental wellbeing and positive engagement with education.

The figures below show the number of families who have engaged with the AW project as at June 2026.

Total receiving AW intervention:

62

Total of others supported re school attendance:

187

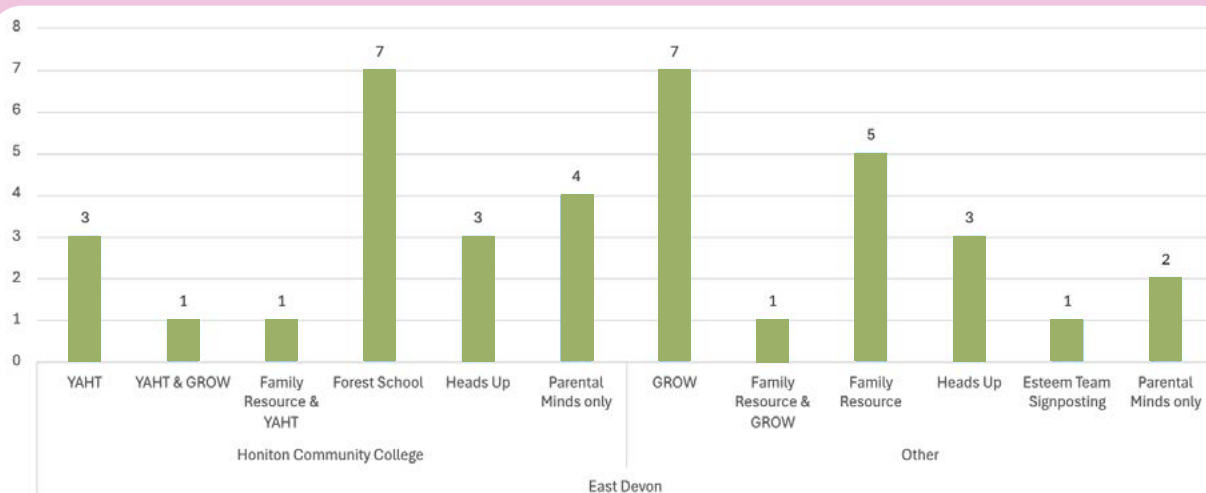
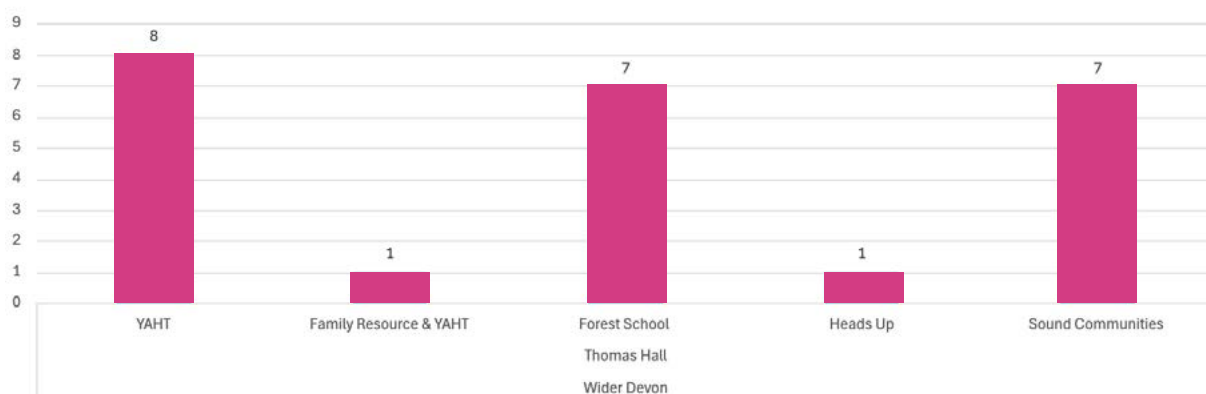
Total of workshop attendees:

148

Families
supported
overall

397

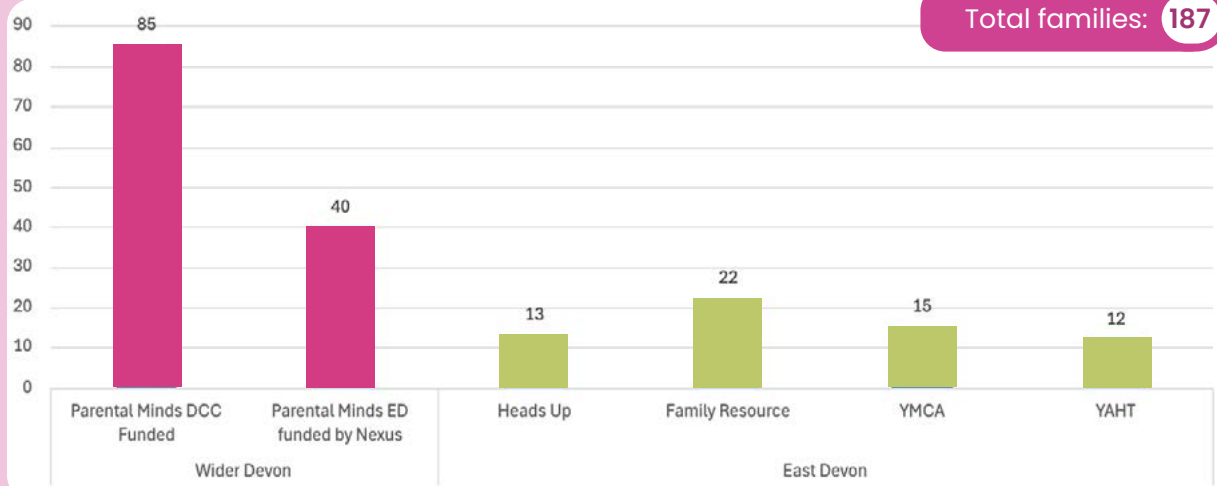
Families receiving AW intervention



Total families: 62

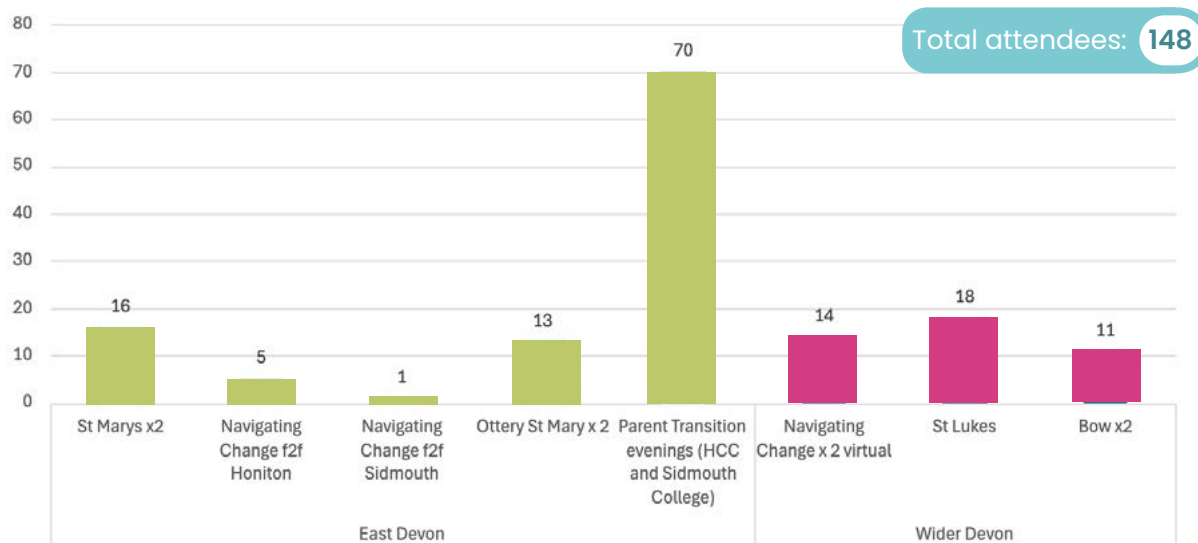
(Excluding school workshops)

Other families receiving additional support relating to school attendance



Average Cost per family for Attendance Wellbeing Support:
£80k Budget = £201 per family

Families attending AW workshops



YOUNG PERSON'S VOICE

We wanted to find innovative ways to capture and share the experiences and voice of young people experiencing emotionally based school avoidance, to help inform system change. To do this Sound Communities worked in collaboration with Speech and Language Therapists from Bridges (DCC).

Together they worked with a group of seven young people, aged between 12 and 16, who were interested in being involved in a creative digital media project and were happy to share their experiences of mainstream education. The project ran from January to April 2025 with each young person participating in six consecutive weekly sessions. Each young person worked on their own project to express their experiences and views. These included producing a short film, podcasts, a photography project and an animation and piece of music.



The 'S' Word – The Creative Expressions Project:
<https://youtu.be/ABq7BHVsqio>

OUTCOMES

The outcomes shown below are those anticipated at the beginning of this pilot project, drawn from our theory of change model. Those shown in italics are some unanticipated outcomes that have also been identified as the project has progressed.

OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (CYP)

Short-term

- Cohort of CYP identified within each school and offered the intervention
- *Individual CYP struggling to attend school identified in other schools and offered interventions*
- CYP engaging with an intervention supported to identify and express their needs, fears, interests and strengths.
- CYP positively engaging with peers and/or trusted adults
- CYP accessing a safe space and learning environment

Medium term

- CYP have a better understanding of their emotions & how to regulate them.
- CYP have developed skills to express themselves, and have their voices amplified.
- CYP have support of peers within their educational environment
- *CYP supported to identify previously unknown or unmet needs, and a 'warm transfer' made into other services where appropriate*

Primary / longterm outcomes

- CYP are re-engaged in education, without detriment to their wellbeing

OUTCOMES FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS (PC)

Short term

- PC accessing individual, peer and group support
- PC supported to engage as partners with school and other agencies



Medium term

- PC have a better understanding of their own & their child's emotions, and how to co-regulate with their child.
- PC have greater confidence in supporting their child & improving their emotional wellbeing.
- PC further develop skills for communicating with their educational environment and advocating for their child
- *PC are supported to identify previously unknown or unmet needs and 'warm transfer' made into other services where appropriate*



Primary/longterm

- PC feel listened to and that their needs are addressed
- PC have a better understanding of navigating systems

OUTCOMES FOR SCHOOLS



Short term

- Schools, families and agencies jointly better understand the CYP needs
- Ongoing facilitated communication between school, family and agencies involved



Medium term

- Pilot schools trial new collaborative approaches
- Learning is captured through evaluation
- *Schools are more aware of support available through other agencies (within and beyond the AWP project) and able to make appropriate referrals*



Primary / long term

- Schools have strategies in place to support reengagement of individuals

JOINT OUTCOMES

- Bespoke plan developed for each CYP, with the CYP and family at the centre, stating how all will work in partnership.

- TAF process and Right for Children used to monitor interventions and progress where appropriate
- Other systems for sharing information and relevant data developed within the partnership



Primary / long term

- To support an increase in the number CYP accessing education, improving attendance, whilst increasing emotional wellbeing
- A cost-effective approach that provides support for the whole family (rather than scattergun approach to different needs)

SYSTEM WIDE LEARNING



Short term

- Action learning throughout the project to inform development in year two
- Shared knowledge and expertise across the partnership
- Trialing new ways of co-working across organisations



Medium term

- Evaluation report to be disseminated to share learning
- Sound Communities outputs share CYP voice
- Partner organisations and schools better understand each other's offer and expertise
- Stronger collaborative working within and beyond the partnership



Primary / long term

- Demonstrate how a VCSE partnership approach can lead to good outcomes for CYP, schools and families by working alongside other services.
- Dissemination of learning from this approach across county at an appropriate event accessible to schools and other elements of the system
- Share voices of CYP and families

TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE THE OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME MEASURES BEEN ACHIEVED?

The formal evaluation of the project, facilitated by the University of Bath, will provide an in-depth analysis of the impact of the project and will be completed in January 2026 (due to the timing of the project being pushed back as above, and due to the funding for the evaluation not being available until spring 2025). In the interim, the researcher has been conducting early interviews with practitioners and families during the summer term, and observing meetings, to feed learning points back to the partnership in real time to inform this trial project as it develops.

One learning point relates to outcome measures; we found that the Short Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale that was implemented to measure outcomes isn't appropriate for the project, as explained in more detail below (in the 'Challenges' section). However we have drawn on emerging findings from the interviews, as well as feedback from families gathered through each organisations' own monitoring processes, and from schools, to show the impact of the project at this stage.

OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

As outlined above young people from HCC, TH and other schools across Devon have engaged with an intervention offered as part of the AW Project.

Interventions for each young person were carefully chosen to suit the needs of the individual, in consultation with the young person themselves, the family and the school. A large majority of young people engaged positively with the intervention offered; in one case where a young person didn't engage the practitioner was able to talk them about their reasons and refer them into a different intervention.

Forest School

Feedback from young people demonstrates that young people were able to form positive relationships with peers and/or trusted adults, and were able to access a learning environment that felt safe and supportive for them. For some young people the intervention provided a positive way back into the school environment.



“

“A better start to my day! Especially when we’ve cooked pancakes over a fire, as I hadn’t had breakfast. Gives me freedom from home, getting me out of the house. The forest school area is a fun space to hang out in.”

”

YMCA

Here for young people
Here for communities
Here for you

“Forest School makes me want to come into school...I’d stay out here all day if I could.”





"Being outside in nature helps my mood and makes me feel more relaxed."

"Forest School is fun, and I enjoy learning in other ways than writing. I smile during Forest School, when I'm making or painting in natural arts and crafts activities."

Art Therapy

Young people also described having a better understanding of their emotions and ways to regulate them, and developed skills in expressing their emotions, as shown in these reflections from young people who took part in therapeutic art sessions.

“

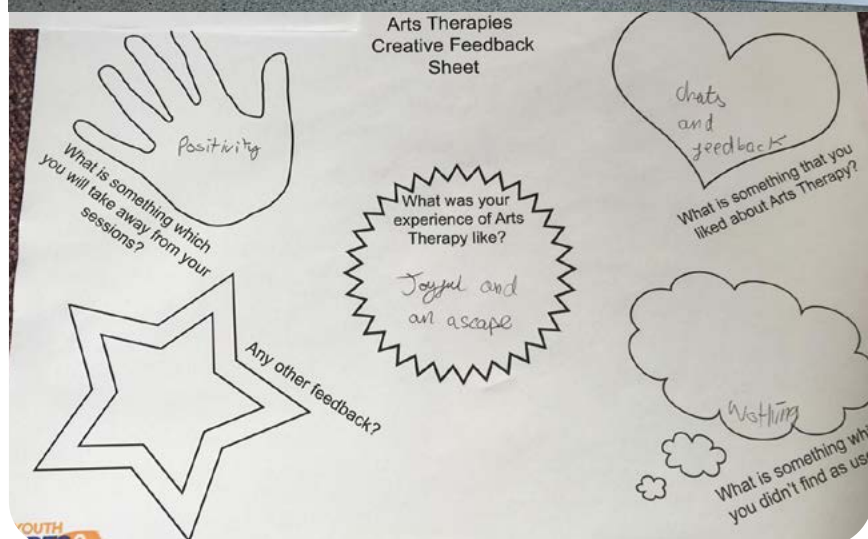
“It helps me to express my emotions; I could face my fears of talking to other people.”

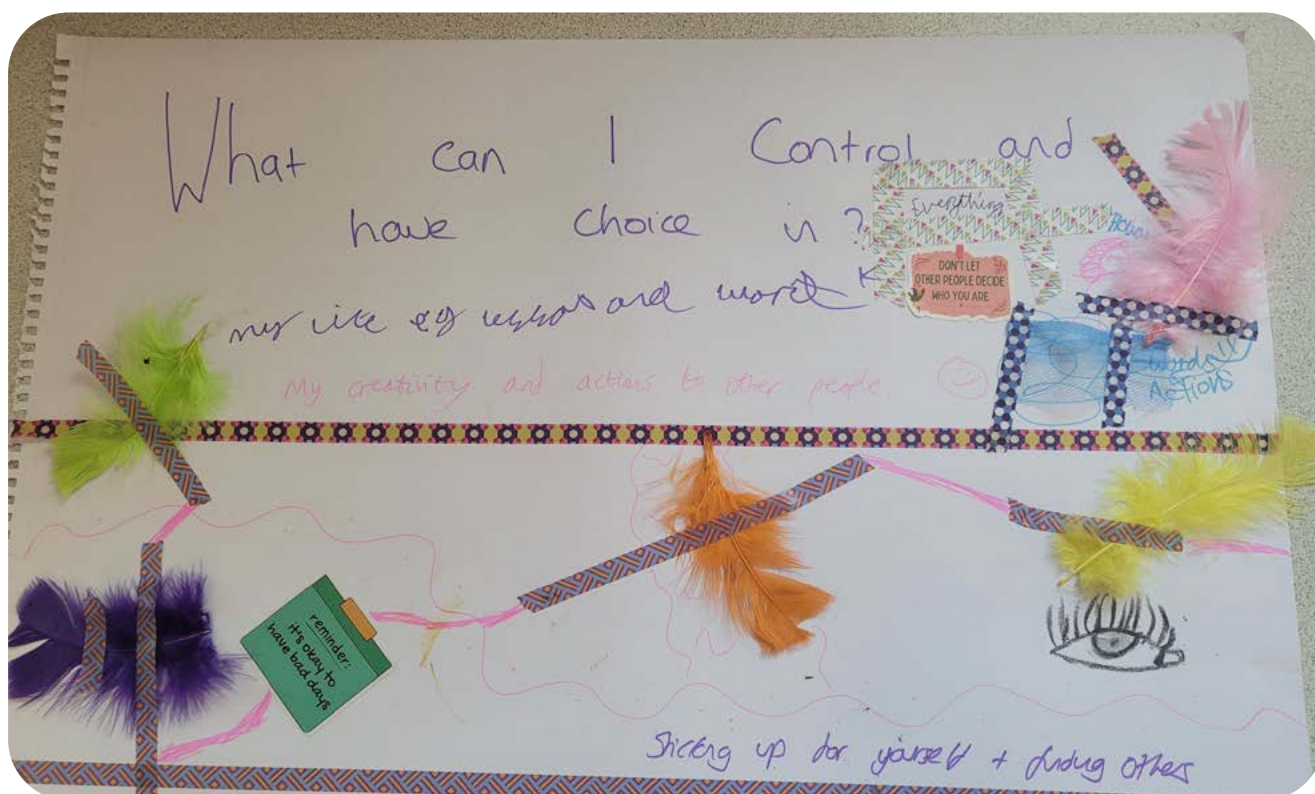
”

**YOUTH
ARTS &
HEALTH
TRUST**



“I could push myself because I could show my art.”





1:1 Sessions

This is also demonstrated in the feedback from two Year 6 pupils, who were identified by their primary school as in need of some support to prepare for the transition to secondary school, and who took part in 1:1 sessions with a Heads Up practitioner;



"It felt good to share my feelings with someone and I felt I could talk to her about most things. I learnt how to look after myself so if I have worries I know some different ideas to try...I wished my sessions with Paula were longer."

"I liked that I could talk about how I felt- I was able to tell her anything. I learnt how to cope with my feelings and some good ways to deal with them. I also liked that it was not just talking but that we learnt things through activities as well."

Workshops

Scores were taken before and after workshops with Bow Primary School and St Mary's Primary School. All areas have had improvements – particularly safety, dealing with problems better, feeling more optimistic about future, and feeling better understood by staff.

20%

of students reported thinking clearer since the workshop.

15.4%

of students now feel safer at school following the workshop.

16.1%

of students feel more optimistic about the future.

11.8%

of students are enjoying learning more.

16.1%

of students now feel more connected to others.

29.3%

of students more able to problem solve.

In terms of longer term outcomes, practitioners reported supporting young people to successfully re-engage with learning. For some young people this has involved the practitioner being able to mediate and facilitate communication with the school, so that young people have been better able to express their needs and identify ways in which they could successfully engage, sometimes with other forms of education (see example case study).

In the example below, a forest school practitioner describes a young person who previously had low attendance and multiple suspensions from school. Forest school leaders were able to identify his strengths; at home he enjoyed practical activities like woodwork with his grandad. Expending energy outside, succeeding at activities that he enjoyed (e.g. making a stool, building fires) and developing positive relationships with adults motivated him to positively engage with other lessons. Both the practitioner and the young person describe below how they feel he has changed over the course of several months:

"Some of them only come into school that week for our forest school session and then go home. At least they did to begin with. And they spend the whole time running around smiling.

There's one kid in particular who has gone away the last two or three weeks to get a special form that you they can pass to their teachers and the teacher writes feedback on, and they're going to take it with them through the day. And then they get to take that home. And he's actively sought out that form to get our feedback on how well he has done. And then last week, his supervisor brought him back down into the woods because he wanted to show him what he'd been doing with us, and that engagement and that enjoyment of having a project that he's responsible for. Using tools and being proud and wanting to show other members of staff what he'd been up to. His attendance has increased on a day-to-day basis and also his willingness to go into lessons after having been with us in the woods."

- Forest School Leader

I used to just be able to do 3 lessons and then go home. But now I can do full time, like all the others.

I used to be bad at school, but now I'm not because I have something to do at the end of the week. It helps me, thinking about what we're going to do on a Friday. Cos I used to go to school and then be suspended the next day, then go to school then be suspended for the next day. Every Friday I used to be suspended but now I'm not because I want to do Forest School. I used to just go home and be on my X box. I like the activities and the stuff we do.

Now I keep hearing about how well I'm doing.

[How does that make you feel?]

Good.

- Young Person



Another example, described by a Youth Arts and Health therapist below, shows how participating in 1:1 arts sessions gradually enabled another young person to return to school:

One particularly impactful experience involved working with a young person who was not attending school and instead accessing online learning from home, while also receiving support from CAMHS. When I initially contacted the family, I was informed that the young person experienced significant anxiety and would not engage in face-to-face sessions. We began our work together online, with their camera off, creating art and gently building rapport. At the end of the first session, I asked whether they might feel comfortable meeting in person the following week and they agreed. From that point on, we continued our sessions face to face in school. Midway through our work, this young person independently reached out to the school to ask if they could return to lessons. Our final session together took place the week before they resumed on a reduced timetable.

- YAHT Practitioner

OUTCOMES FOR PARENTS

Some parents reflected on how their young person's involvement in the project had not only benefited the individual and how they felt about themselves, but had helped their relationship with school, as illustrated in this feedback from a parent at TH whose child had attended art therapy:

"Thank you for your recommendations to the school. And thank you for your work with E. I think the art sessions have helped E to gain a little more confidence to attend school. If anything they have made her feel wanted and that is half the battle."

HCC also fed back that they had noticed the benefit to parents of having support from an external agency, as illustrated in this quote from their Safeguarding Lead:

"Our parents have really benefited from parent support from the project. Parents have commented that having someone outside of school who understands their family difficulties has been hugely beneficial. "

Practitioners have noted that their status as a 'neutral' individual offering support (e.g. not from school or social care) has been important in enabling them to build relationships with parents, particularly those where the relationship with school may have broken down, or who may have negative perceptions of statutory services from previous experiences. An additional outcome from this has been that as practitioners have got to know a family and their needs, they have been able to support them in accessing other relevant support. For example an application to the Household Support Fund, or a referral for specialist mental health support.

Feedback from parents who attended school workshops around school attendance and navigating change facilitated by Parental Minds showed that parents felt more confident about supporting their young person, and their own wellbeing, and in seeking further support when needed. Parents listed tools and resources that they found helpful and planned to put into practice, for example in relation to managing emotions, sensory soothing, self-care, building habits, communication and expressing emotions.

Grow

Nine parents took part in the GROW programme delivered jointly by Esteem Team and Family Resource. Over 6 sessions they covered topics such as parenting styles, anxiety and dysregulated behaviours, sensory systems and demand avoidance. Parents regularly reported ways in which the programme was helping them to better understand and support their child, for example:

- One parent explained that using the strategies she learnt had prevented her child running away when dysregulated.
- One parent commented that GROW was helping her understand her child, stay more patient and this was in turn helping her child stay regulated. There was a situation where her daughter was struggling to attend school and she actually attended so that their parent could attend the group, as they wanted their mum to understand more and the sessions were helping them to connect.
- Several parents began adapting their language throughout GROW to better connect with their children. Some also talked about adapting their body language and tone of voice to de-escalate behaviours and remain in a co-regulation situation.
- One parent shared changes at school following GROW, including a part time timetable and the additional support from school.
- Following a discussion about Young Carers, and signposting throughout the sessions, a parent reported registering their daughter as a young carer and as a result accessing the HAF holiday programme, which they hadn't previously known about.

Things we may see during dysregulation...

- Unpredictable and erratic behaviour
- Anger / argumentative / screaming / shouting / swearing
- Trouble sleeping / over sleeping
- OCD type behaviours / more rituals and need for routine
- Shutting off / withdrawal
- Physical symptoms - headaches / tummy aches, etc
- Big feelings and big responses
- Sensory seeking or avoiding
- Controlling behaviours that may seem manipulative
- Masking and camouflaging
- Tearful
- Self harm
- Mute or very talkative
- Panicking

Things we may see during dysregulation...

- Not 'reading' the room
- Apologising lots
- Avoiding demands
- Helplessness
- Regression of skills / interests, etc
- Fear of being wrong (and avoidance)
- Saying what they want to be true (trying to convince)
- Struggling with other perspectives
- Fake laughter / being 'silly' / appearing overexcited
- Running away
- Seeking their safe place (not wanting to leave their room)
- Over / under eating
- Increased perfectionism
- Physical or emotional exhaustion

Discussion topics during GROW sessions

Helpful statements in moments of dysregulation



Why don't you explain what's going on?



Are you okay?



I'm sorry you are struggling right now / I can see you are struggling.



Do you need any help?



Would you like to take a break?



What can I do to help? What do you need?



I'm here. It will be okay.



You are safe. Take your time.



I understand this is upsetting.



Would you like a hug?



Tell me about it. I am here to listen / Do you want to talk?



I could be wrong...



I wonder if...

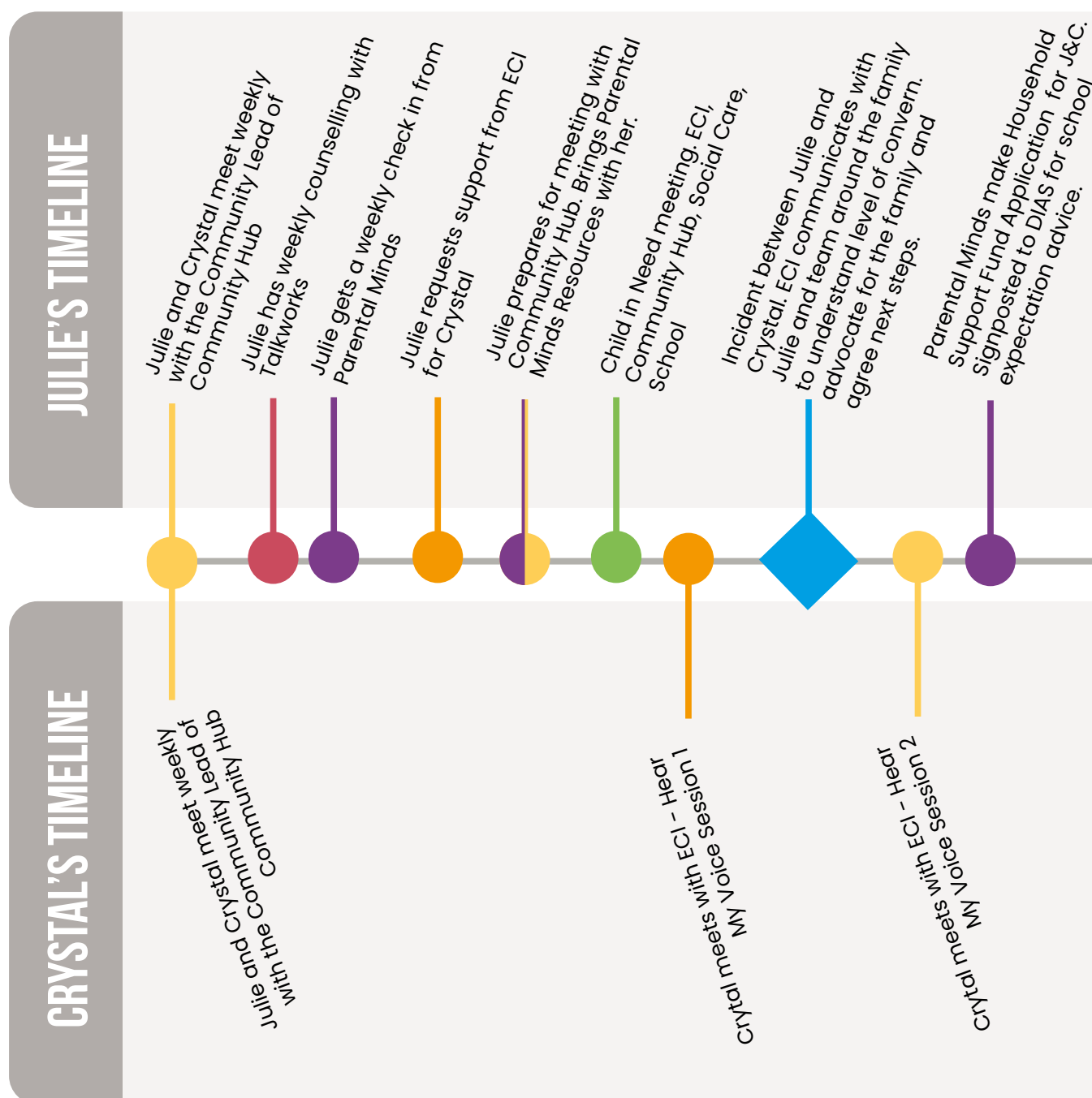


I'm here with you in this.

CASE STUDY: JULIE & CRYSTAL'S JOURNEY

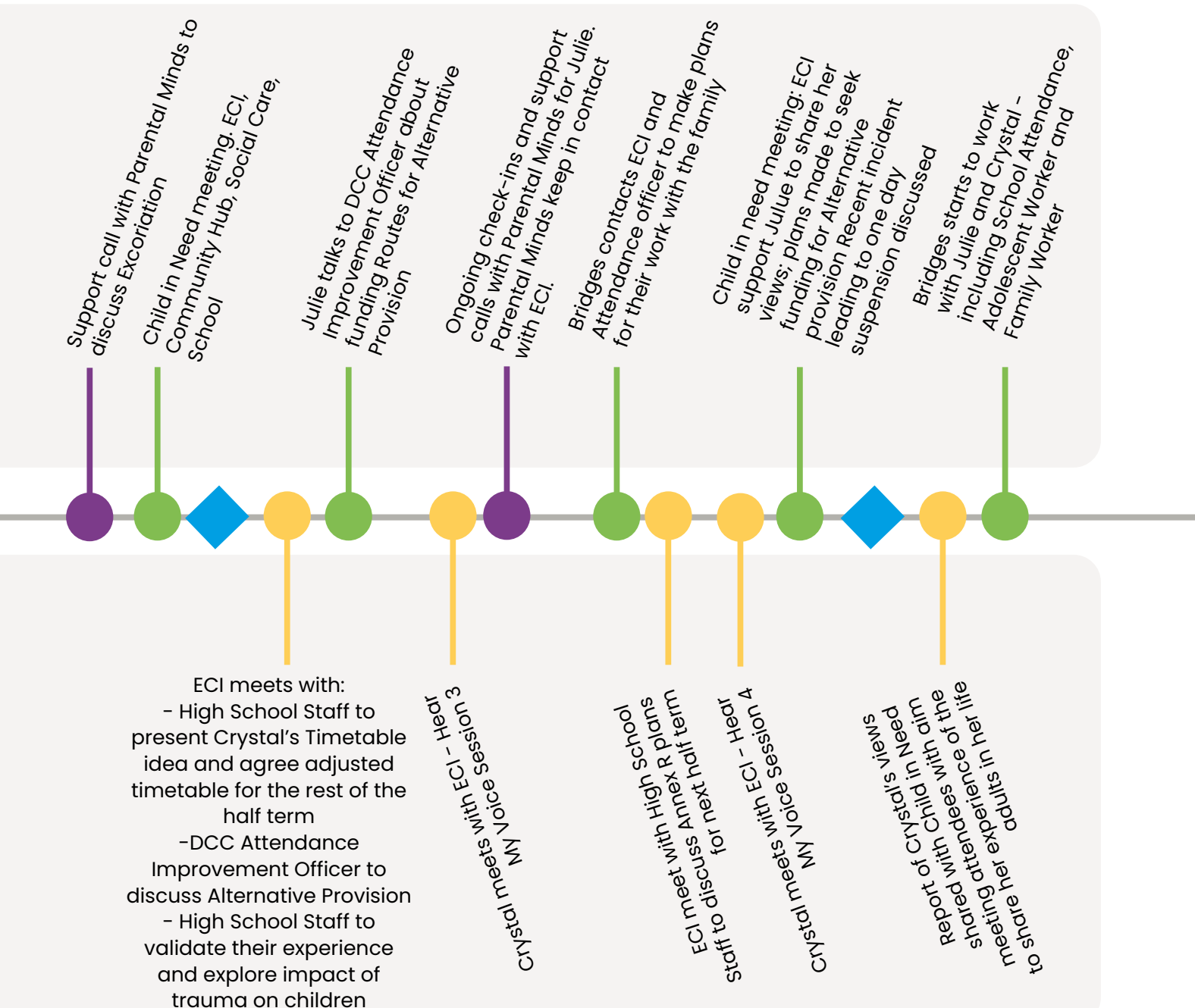
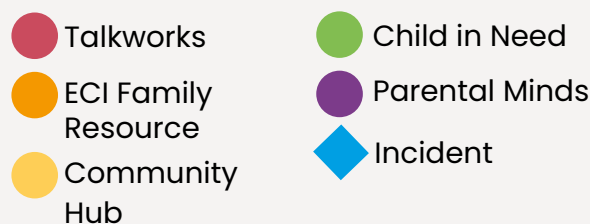
This example shows how a family facing colliding challenges were supported by Parental Minds and Family Resource through the Attendance and Wellbeing Project. An in-depth case study is provided in Appendix 2 showing how that support helped prevent Crystal's exclusion from school, and also provided holistic, needs-led, wraparound support for the family.

Crystal struggled with full engagement in school following a traumatic year which included Crystal spending time in care. The parent reached out to her local Community Hub for support from the voluntary sector, as she had a difficult relationship with statutory services already involved with the family. This timeline shows Julie and Crystal's interactions with a range of statutory and voluntary sector services over five months.



FAMILY MINDS PARTNERSHIP

Throughout this process Daisy at Family Resource and Mags at Parental Minds have remained in contact, which Julie has found reassuring as it means she does not have to keep repeating her story.



SCHOOL AND JOINT OUTCOMES

Feedback from school staff shows that the project met its primary aim to support an increase in the number of children and young people accessing education, improving attendance and engagement in learning whilst increasing emotional wellbeing:

Forest school helped to build relationships between students and school. It helped support some of our most vulnerable learners to manage the rest of the day in lessons.

The art project really engaged a group of low attending students. The students especially benefited from the one-to-one sessions and were able to share how they were feeling through the use of art.

Heads Up one-to-one sessions supported two of our year 11 students with their well-being, which meant they accessed all of their GCSE exams and are likely to achieve the grades needed for their next step in education. Without this support this may not have been the case.

As a school we would really love to continue the amazing work started with all of these projects, and for more of our students and their families to access such valuable support.

- Designated Safeguarding Lead, Honiton Community College

We have seen measurable improvements in both attendance and pupil engagement. Children who once avoided school are now attending more. Their confidence, peer relationships, and resilience have grown significantly. One child, previously identified as socially withdrawn, is now leading group tasks and eagerly anticipating each session.

This project has demonstrated that when attendance issues are viewed through an inclusive, needs-led lens, meaningful change is possible. Forest School is an enriching experience that should be accessible to all, and this intervention has made a real difference in removing barriers for some of our most vulnerable learners.

- SENCO, Thomas Hall School

You communicated really well...Both girls seem more confident and they were able to share with me how they felt after working with you, which is great.

- Family Support Worker, Littleton Primary School

Some parent workshops facilitated by **Parental Minds** were also attended by school staff, and staff fed back that appreciated the opportunity to recap their knowledge, think about what learning looks like from a child's perspective, and think about parents as experts. They also appreciated signposting to further relevant resources and materials. Parental Minds also ran specialist staff training specifically for Honiton Community College on supporting someone who is causing harm to themselves, in response to a specific request. **This was attended by 55 staff and was positively received, with staff reporting that it helped them to reframe their understanding, and to feel more confident in supporting young people.**

For individual children involved in interventions, there was a focus on helping each child to identify their own strengths and needs and find ways to address them. Where appropriate this included practitioners working with other professionals, including school staff, to help develop a bespoke plan to enable the child to reengage with learning, without detriment to their wellbeing. The case study in Appendix 2 provides an example of how **Family Resource** and **Parental Minds** were able to collaborate with each other, as well as with school staff and with other statutory health and care services, to provide wraparound support for a family. **As a result, a tailored plan was put in place to help identify the right provision to help the young person stay in education.** When appropriate in individual cases, Family Minds staff have supported families going through the TAF process and have used Right for Children to monitor interventions and progress.

SYSTEM WIDE OUTCOMES - LEARNING & RESOURCES

As part of the project we held monthly advisory meetings, attended not only by the delivery partners but a wide range of other stakeholders including individual school staff and senior leaders, Early Help, ICB, DCC, MHST and other Family Minds and voluntary sector partners.

As a result, attendees were able to extend their knowledge and understanding of other services and pathways, and this improvement in collaboration has helped improve the support available to families, as shown in the examples below:

Many of the families we support experience neurodiversity in the children and / or parents, making access to the professional meetings challenging for them. The work with the AWP has connected us to the local Education Attendance Officers who are also working with other families we support in other schools. This has helped us to understand barriers and wider pictures around the families we support. We have also developed pathways for families through the partners – for example between Esteem Team, Parental Minds and ECI Family Resource – offering support from Esteem Team or Parental Minds until a Family Support Worker from Family Resource can be allocated.



Parents who have contacted our Starting Point Service (Single Point of Access for Woodbury, Exmouth and Budleigh) who are out of our funded area are still supported by our Starting Point worker with referral forms, general advice, signposting etc. Understanding the work that others do in a wider area has enabled us to give parents/carers a clearer picture of what is on offer to them outside the WEB area. It has helped us to make referrals that are relevant for that family and have the contacts at the organisation to chat the referral through with.



We have benefitted from involvement in the Family Minds Partnership, and the Attendance and Wellbeing project in particular. Sharing the learning from working more closely with schools and partners has helped shape what else is offered within the charity. This has included developing relationships with key school staff which has led to additional referrals. Also receiving feedback from parents and young people about their preferences in how they might

best engage in arts therapy (e.g. venues, times, details) has led to YAHT exploring more options for offering more face to face sessions in East Devon (hopefully within the Family Hub), as well as increasing sessions outside of schools hours (new rooms opening soon at Exeter Library) in response to families wanting attendance and wellbeing support and arts therapy outside of school hours.



The sustained attendance levels at the monthly meetings, by external organisations as well as delivery partners, demonstrates their value.

SHARING LEARNING ACROSS THE COUNTY

One aim of this trial project is to share learning from this new way of collaborating, to inform service responses to the growing issue of EBSA across the county. We have commissioned an evaluation report by a researcher at the University of Bath, and this in-depth evaluation report will be widely disseminated once finalised.

As the project has progressed partners have shared information and learning from its development in various forums, including the county-wide Early Help Devon Partnership Meeting, and Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly.

Partners are also planning to showcase learning from the project at a county-wide schools conference in the autumn term of 2025.

Partners are also collating relevant resources, tools and information sites, both for families and for practitioners, within a specific Thrive Directory focussing on school attendance, which will be made widely available in summer 2025.

Staff from Parental Minds have presented the collated voices of families with lived experience at the county-wide Attend Training events held for school staff by DCC. Attendees fed back that the presentations had helped them to better understand the young person and parent's perspective and experiences, and as a result this would change the way they engaged with families.

Sound communities

Young people engaged with the Sound Communities project have produced the following resources, which will be used at training events, conferences etc. to help practitioners and system leaders understand the young person's perspective:

- Short film expressing how it feels to go to school when you're struggling with anxiety
- Podcasts about young people's experience of mainstream education
- Photography project showing images that express young people's thoughts and feelings about how learning is presented to them in mainstream education, and changes they would like to see
- Animation and piece of music called 'The S Word' expressing a young person's thoughts about how school made them feel

Staff from the project summarised the key messages that emerged from young people:

- In the majority of cases, mainstream education had not been willing, or able to meet the young person's needs, which resulted in them being isolated, excluded and had a negative effect on their self-esteem and wellbeing
- Mainstream education didn't provide opportunities to explore learning in creative ways, they felt the curriculum was very narrow. Creativity, fun, play, curiosity, questioning, problem solving, collaboration, technology and a love of learning don't seem to be part of the current educational offer.
- The transition to secondary school was really tricky and often overwhelming. Many went from small, supportive primaries to huge secondaries without a great deal of extra support that reflected their situation and specific needs
- Their perception was that lots of teachers at secondary shout as their method of engaging with a class



[What does school mean to you?
https://youtube.com/shorts/Fad36FThT98](https://youtube.com/shorts/Fad36FThT98)



[Entering school
https://youtube.com/shorts/
xmWnkZenNA](https://youtube.com/shorts/xmWnkZenNA)

CHALLENGES

RECRUITMENT

As described above, recruiting families to the project in the early stages relied on schools making contact with the parent and gaining consent to share their information, and this took much longer than anticipated. We mitigated this by extending the programme to families beyond the two schools, and also broadening the offer to respond to needs identified by other schools (e.g. parent and child workshops) and to school staff (e.g. staff training). In consultation with funders we also extended our timescale for delivery, so that some of the school-based groupwork will be delivered in the autumn term. We have now established effective communication routes within both schools. We have built understanding and awareness of the project by sharing information, joint meetings and attendance at school events and are now well placed to continue working with these schools in year two of the project.

OUTCOME MEASURES

At the start of the project we were aware of potential difficulties in implementing standard outcomes measures across the project. In consultation with the evaluation team we decided to trial the use of the Short Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale, as the most suitable standardized measure, alongside an internal registration form which included relevant questions about the family using a likert scale. However the measures have not been successful for a number of reasons including partial completion by families (who have engaged in support but not responded to requests to complete the form), young people not understanding the form, and/or asking staff to complete it with them (and staff feeling that young people were trying to give the 'right' answer rather than an accurate one). The measure has also not been appropriate for some aspects of the delivery, e.g. workshops.

To mitigate this we will be drawing on the external evaluation to analyse impact, using other evaluation tools and outcome measures better suited to the relational nature of the work. This will include interviews with practitioners, young people and parents, analysis of notes and data and the internal recording of outcomes used by each organisation. We will work with researchers to implement more appropriate and feasible monitoring and evaluation systems for the second year of the project.

Although practitioners worked collaboratively with school staff and young people to build understanding of some of the barriers to school attendance and how to address them, sometimes it was difficult to accommodate the needs of the young person within mainstream school systems. A Youth Arts and Health therapist describes one example illustrating this ongoing tension;

One individual I worked with experienced frequent clashes within the school system due to feelings of overwhelm linked to being neurodiverse. Although diagnosed at a young age, she had never had the opportunity to explore what that meant for her. Often, the issue wasn't that she was a 'bad student,' but rather that her sensory needs were not being met or understood, leading to dysregulation. Our goal was understanding yourself and what you need in order to regain balance and continue with the day. Clashes had historically been met with the prospect of 'behaviour breaks' rather than an opportunity to truly understand what she was experiencing. This reflection process has been really helpful in seeing what works and where we can make improvements. Providing her with a space to understand herself and regulate her emotions would be incredibly beneficial during her school day—not to simply prevent dysregulation, but to help her manage overwhelm, sit with her emotions, and receive the support needed to re-regulate...

The challenge lies in the opportunities to make meaningful changes within the structures and processes that currently feel restrictive... ensuring these adaptations support their self-esteem, self-expression, and overall development as confident individuals—elements that can often be impacted when trying to fit into an environment that does not fully meet their needs.

HAS THE EVIDENCE IDENTIFIED ANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER REDUCING THE BURDEN ON BUSINESSES AND ARE THERE ANY LESSONS LEARNT FOR FUTURE PROJECTS?

The project has engaged families previously struggling to engage with schools and other organisations, as well as some families who were already engaged with a range of statutory support services but for whom this wasn't working, or the situation had become 'stuck'. Given the broad-ranging economic and social costs of dis-engagement with education, for the young person, their family and more broadly in society, the project demonstrates an effective intervention that is also cost effective. Whilst the full evaluation will provide a more in-depth analysis, initial basic calculations show that the cost of delivery at this stage is £205 per family (this is an average across all families).

EMERGING LEARNING

Reflecting on our delivery model and on wider system learning is part of the project monthly meetings, and as part of our evaluation we will be drawing out learning that can be shared with schools, other providers and systems. Some of the learning we have identified so far about our delivery model, about collaborative working and its impact on families and on services is outlined below.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT THAT IS HELPING US DEVELOP OUR DELIVERY MODEL?

Working with parents:

Partners supporting parents and caregivers have found it more difficult to engage those identified by the school (compared to those who choose to seek support directly from agencies). We are reviewing our joint registration process to make it easier for schools to share contact details directly. Parental Minds will allocate one member of staff as a central point of contact, to facilitate clearer communication between partners, with parents and with schools.

Working with schools:

Building relationships with school staff and developing effective communication routes has taken longer, and been more time-intensive, than anticipated, and this will be considered in future planning. Practitioners also need allocated time to attend school meetings and events to engage both staff and parents

Working with CYP:

We are tweaking the delivery of interventions with young people, based on practitioner's and young people's feedback, to better meet their needs. E.g. Forest School provision will include a therapist to work alongside the forest school leader and will review the length of sessions. Art therapy provision will focus on 1:1 rather than group sessions. Heads Up will extend the number of workshops run with young people in schools.

Our flexibility and adaptability as voluntary sector providers has enabled us to respond to individual, small group and school needs, and this has been key to successful engagement. For example, providing bespoke individual or group sessions in response to the needs of the young people attending, rather than standardised interventions.

“Rather than applying a ‘one-size-fits-all’ model, we collectively prioritised flexibility, choice, and responsiveness. This created a rare and powerful sense of community — a model where support could shift and evolve depending on what was most beneficial for the young person.”



HOW HAS THIS NEW COLLABORATIVE MODEL OF WORKING BENEFITTED FAMILIES?



- Providing **simultaneous support to the parent and young person**, or several types of support to one of them, provides a more effective and holistic approach to helping them when more intensive support is needed
- The alliance allows for **smoother and better referrals between organisations**, and practitioners are aware of whom they could reach out to when the family they are working with could benefit from additional support.
- Partner organisations can **complement each other's support provision and provide support in ways that best suit each family** – for example, some are able to do one-to-one work within the family home, some can work with small groups in school settings, some can work online.
- **Working together has meant there is less need for the family to repeat their story** or current challenges, as practitioners communicate regularly and share information.
- **The range of activities and delivery models offers options for young people to try without 'failing'**; for example if a young person feels that forest school doesn't suit them, they can try art activities; if groupwork is uncomfortable they can try 1:1 or online activities.

- **When spaces are available within one organisation's programme (within the project but also more widely), uptake is increased** by sharing them with partners who may know parents and YP in need of this support.
- **The partnership can offer more continuous support to families**, e.g. when one practitioner is on leave another practitioner can step in, or if one agency is offering time-limited support another may offer long term support .
- **Team effort has been key when reaching out to families not currently engaging** with support. If they have any previous relationship with a practitioner, this organisation makes the call even if it's to introduce them to another partner.
- **Voluntary sector organisation have an advantage when reaching families experiencing health inequalities** as their 'neutral' position is more acceptable to families who may be wary of statutory services, and they can use flexible ways of engaging to find 'what works', e.g. different venues, whatsapp messaging.
- **Families experiencing health inequalities can access the project via the organisation that they trust, but also benefit from wider expertise** within the partnership. For example, e.g. if one organisation is supporting a family with neurodivergent children, the practitioner can draw on expertise within Family Minds (e.g. Calmer Lives or Esteem Team) to either advise the practitioner or directly support the family.

Before this project we did work in parallel with the other organisations, with occasional touchpoints, but the project has lead us to working with a more integrated approach. There is a deeper collaboration, with regular joint planning, and an increase of trust. This has benefitted the families involved in the projects as well as the organisations running the project.



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT ABOUT WORKING COLLABORATIVELY, AND HOW IS IT CHANGING HOW WE WORK AS AN ALLIANCE?

- **Fast and effective communication between partners** has been time-consuming but necessary. Use of different methods of communication (whatsapp groups, shared spreadsheets and folders) has worked better for some practitioners than others, and we are reviewing how to improve our shared record-keeping and communication.
- **Practitioners can offer support to each other and share expertise**, particularly in challenging situations where collective and varied professional knowledge may provide more creative solutions and suggestions.
- **Developing strong working relationships between practitioners across organisations** has been successful for those who have worked together with families, but others (e.g. those working on site and with limited hours) have found this more difficult. Time needed to bring everyone together is much higher than originally thought, and monthly stakeholder meetings are not enough. We will be reviewing how best to bring practitioners together regularly and strengthen links.
- **Shared locations have helped information-sharing.** Where partners have spent time working in the same location this has built closer relationships and provided opportunities to share information.
- **Working as an alliance is worthwhile, but complex and time-consuming to co-ordinate.** It has needed one passionate person to lead the project and dedicate considerable time. Learning for Parental Minds in the subsequent year will be to have less internal staff involved, but one dedicated person to drive information gathering and sharing as well as one person to lead the partnership.

“Working in partnership with such dedicated and passionate individuals has been both a privilege and a learning experience. As an organisation, we’ve gained valuable insights into how true collaboration can transcend traditional service boundaries. We’ve learned that when we trust each other’s specialisms, listen closely to the voices of young people, and place choice and autonomy at the centre of our practice, we can achieve outcomes that are both meaningful and sustainable.”

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TRUST**

HOW HAS WORKING AS AN ALLIANCE CHANGED EACH ORGANISATION WITHIN THE PARTNERSHIP, AND WIDER STAKEHOLDERS?

- **Monthly stakeholder meetings have increased collaboration and learning within and beyond the delivery partners.** For example, schools have a better understanding of other sources of specialist support within the voluntary sector and have referred other families for support. Voluntary organisations have developed links with Attendance Officers and school trusts.

“The alliance has built stronger referral pathways and clearer communication with partner organisations, which is increasingly embedded in our day-to-day work. The project has broadened our understanding of the support landscape for families, leading us to adapt our internal processes to be more flexible and responsive. We’ve also seen greater staff awareness of wider community resources, and have developed new ways of sharing learning and feedback between teams.”

YMCA | Here for young people
Here for communities
Here for you

- **Joint delivery increases the knowledge base within each organisation**, which in turn improves the support and information available to families

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- **Joint delivery increases the knowledge base within each organisation**, which in turn improves the support and information available to families

The Family Resource practitioner and I are working together to deliver GROW , which we have never done before. We were both able to signpost to other elements of support we offer. On week one we shared the Family Minds Partnership information which led to parents asking what other help was available. I also shared information about DCC Four Cornerstones and the new SEND strategy, which was new information for all families.



- Partner agencies have been able to **learn from each other's ways of working and adopt or adapt them within their own organisation**, e.g. using Letters of Assurance when accessing schools, sharing lone working guidelines.

Being part of the alliance has brought more opportunities for cross-organisational training, reflection, and peer learning. Our staff have developed a broader understanding of the sector and how others work. I feel it has increased our innovation, as we have borrowed ideas or adapted approaches from partners.



- Some partners are **trialing different technical tools to help with information-sharing**, such as using Read AI to record meetings.
- **The partnership gives each member greater confidence and a wider evidence base from which to contribute to county-wide discussions** about services, need and strategies for children, young people and families

It's been good to speak as one voice across Devon and be able to speak up as Family Minds Partnership in county wide conversations. Our partnership gives me a sense of greater voice and confidence.



HOW DOES THE APPROACH COMPARE WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SIMILAR MEASURES IN OTHER TRUSTS AND SYSTEMS AND HOW OTHER TRUSTS HAVE IMPLEMENTED DIFFERENTLY?

Our own review of the evidence base before embarking on the project suggested that most existing interventions were education-based, and provided by statutory services, for example school programmes to address EBSA. Our model is unique in trialling a multi-agency, voluntary sector model, and early evidence suggests that this is enabling a holistic, tailored package of support. Support is curated for each individual young person and parent, so that not only can they choose the type of intervention they'd like to engage with, but the interventions themselves are shaped to meet the needs of the individual.

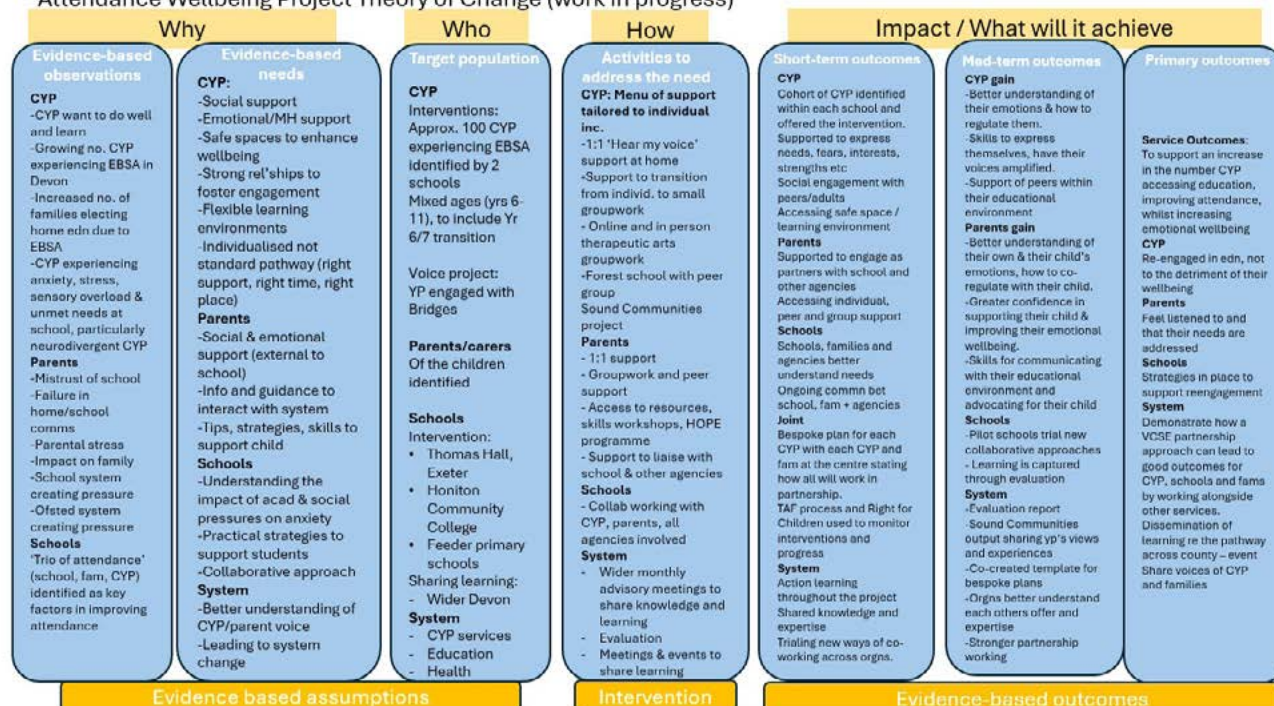
This project has reinforced the importance of working with young people rather than for them, and demonstrated that collaboration does not have to mean compromise. Instead, our diverse offerings have complemented one another, creating a richer, more holistic support network — free of competition, and focused purely on what works best for the individual. It's a model we hope to continue building on.

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APPENDIX

1 - THEORY OF CHANGE

Attendance Wellbeing Project Theory of Change (work in progress)



2 - CASE STUDY - JULIE AND CRYSTAL'S STORY

Family background and challenges

Julie (J) is a single mother to 13-year-old Crystal (C).. After a difficult year for the entire family, and C spending some time in the care system, the family sought support from voluntary sector organisations as they had become wary of statutory services. J was signposted to Parental Minds by her local Community Hub, and was on the waiting list for support from Family Resource. Because of the funding available via the AW project, Parental Minds were able to liaise with Family Resource so that the family could be supported by both organisations simultaneously.

This communication channel allowed practitioners to gain a full picture of what was going on for the family, and any support they had already received. Through one-to-one conversations with her Parental Minds Peer Support Worker Mags, J was supported to think about and put into practice resources from Parental Minds such as Emotions Wheels, Preparing for Meetings, Animal Metaphors and Growing Emotions, with the aim of helping her connect with C, but also look after her own wellbeing.

During the time when C was in foster care J struggled to feel involved with her daughter's issues with school. As C transitioned to home, J was able to use these resources to help her feel equipped to understand C's needs and advocate for her. Specifically, she sought support with helping C process some thoughts and feelings around school and home life. At the time of the referral C was attending school but was encountering issues. When Nina (Family Resource) started working with C, she felt that there was a sense of frustration, burnout and helplessness within the school, which possibly contributed to the increasing conflict between the school and family. J was able to share some Parental Minds resources with school staff around the impact of positive and negative feedback on C's relationship with school, which had a positive impact.

Support provision to the family

While Daisy (Family Resources) and Mags (Parental Minds) continued to support J, Nina's (Family Resource) initial steps to support C included 1:1 meetings using the 'Hear my voice' framework to help her to identify and understand her own needs, strengths and concerns. Nina also worked with C to help her understand what others may be seeing on the outside, and advocated for her needs in school meetings, helping the school understand what C was experiencing and feeling. As a result of this work, agreements were made with the school to accommodate some of the rules, such as uniform requirements, for C.

Despite the amendments made, the overall impression was that there was a degree of burnout among everyone involved – the parent, C herself, and the school. Although a reduced timetable was agreed, due to heightened tensions within school, C received a

suspension soon thereafter. Family Resource helped all involved to consider other options, such as a referral to Devon Pathways, an organisation that supports young people who are at risk of permanent exclusion from school through 1-1 mentoring.

Nina negotiated with all involved, enabling them to become less defensive, more validated and better able to understand the situation. This led to a shared goal of C having her voice heard. As a result of this improved communication, all agreed that relationship-based education was the most appropriate way forward for C. Towards the end of their work together, Nina and C created a comprehensive document summarising C's perspective on adults, on learning and on communication, e.g. "What I wish people knew about me". This helped C advocate for herself in meetings, bringing the document along rather than having to voice her feelings each time. C felt that having this document was important when adults were making decisions for her.

"All those things really needed to be front and centre in meetings and decision making, but it was unrealistic to expect Crystal to share in that sort of context."

- Nina, Family Resource

During this period, Parental Minds also supported the family with other issues that were impacting on their wellbeing, for example making a successful application to the Household Support Fund that helped ease financial pressures and supporting J in her communication with the legal system in relation to care processes. Mags also supported J in managing her relationship with C's sibling and to navigate the dynamic of their contact as he was accommodated in supported living,

Throughout their work with the family, Family Resources and Parental Minds staff stayed in regular communication and shared information, which J herself reported was helpful as she did not have to repeat herself in separate meetings. One on occasion it was helpful for J to speak to both Daisy and Mags at the same time:

"We actually phoned her together. She'd had a bad day...and together we chatted to her and, you know, assured her and encouraged her to, you know, have a calm weekend and yeah, everything will be OK."

- Daisy, Family Resources

This joint conversation with the parent was also helpful to the practitioners, allowing them to exchange knowledge and expertise, particularly during challenging moments while supporting the family. It also allowed continuity of support, as Parental Minds continues to support the family although Family Resource's work with them has ended.

Reflections on working with the school

After spending time with C helping her to understand and express her needs and experiences, Nina was able to help staff understand her perspective, providing reminders and psychoeducation to school staff about what may be going on for a 13-year-old struggling with school. Her work with the school decreased ongoing tensions and helped staff better understand C's needs. Nina's reflected that large schools do not have the capacity to provide this kind of additional support to an individual student:

"Even like with the school, they were doing their very best, but they were never going to be able to provide the level of relational work."

- **Nina, Family Resource**

Having Nina advocate for C, based on their 1-1 sessions, was crucial. As Nina explained, it was also key to look at the whole family, and the bigger picture across all stakeholders, to understand what support was needed:

"I think about how all of the pieces fit together. You know, it's never just one person that needs support."

- **Nina, Family Resource**

Nina was able to meet with C in different locations (e.g. home, school, neutral settings, with or without her parent) which was an important factor in enabling C to engage.

Conclusion and outcomes:

Nina reflected that in this complex situation, it was important to advocate, and to provide flexible support simultaneously for the parent and young person. Both agencies expressed a concern that C would have been expelled had it not been for partner organisations getting involved to support the family;

“I think it may have been going down a more punitive route and she might have ended up at a higher risk of exclusion, and it wouldn’t have been because people didn’t care. It would have just been because people were at the end of their tether and didn’t know what to do.”

– **Nina, Family Resource**

Key outcomes:

- Avoidance of exclusion from school by advocating and negotiating with and on the behalf of the family; helping bridge the gap between the family’s and school’s perspective
- Provision of tailored individual relational support which was required due to the complexity of the situation but beyond the capacity of the school
- Identification of suitable support provision better able to meet the child’s needs and give her a chance to succeed at a crucial point in her education
- Strengthening parent and child relationship as both were being supported at the same time; improving communication and connectedness between them.
- Parent empowered to remain curious at a time when she had been feeling judged and overwhelmed. Given a space to vent and then to share ideas about ways forward.

- Building more positive links between the family and services at a time when the family sought a more neutral source of support due to their reluctance with statutory services.
- Co-created document with C to help her advocate for her needs going forward – even after formal support from the Attendance and Wellbeing project for the child ends.
- Practitioners perceiving more efficiency, consistency and better-informed support due to a shared workload and regular communication.
- Ongoing support for the parent with a trusted agency (Parental Minds), as the family navigate future challenges.