



THE LOCAL PICTURE 2017

Special Report

Children, Young People and Families Under Pressure

Report produced by Crawley Community & Voluntary Service based on discussions and feedback from forum meetings and events held in 2017

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THE BIG PICTURE

UK-wide, children, young people and families are under pressure, as are the organisations which are there to support them. Huge increases in the number of children and young people needing additional support, be that around special educational needs, disability or mental health, combined with ever-tightening statutory budgets is nothing short of alarming. The additional stress of ongoing benefit reform, growing financial need and a spike in food poverty is pushing whole families much closer to crisis point.

A NATIONAL SNAPSHOT

Additional needs

More than 1.2 million children in the UK have special educational needs (SEND). A National Children's Bureau (NCB) report published in October 2017 *Off the radar – Shining a light on children whose rights and welfare are at risk*,¹ reports that disabled children and those with special education needs are “frequently let down by schools which are unable to meet their complex needs”. It goes on to say that children with SEND are more likely to face additional challenges like bullying, missing out on school, and issues with their mental health.

Since 2004, there has been a 50% rise in the number of disabled children in England with complex needs, and the number of children with complex autism has nearly doubled in that time.² Department for Education figures show big rises in the number of education, health and care (EHC) plan assessments being refused or delayed, with 40% of those who do receive an assessment having to wait longer than the 20-week cut-off date. More than 4,000 children in England with an approved EHC plan are still waiting for provision, which is more than double the number from 2016.³

Mental health

According to the NCB report, three children in every classroom have a diagnosable mental health problem, and this number is on the rise. Half of lifelong mental illness starts by the age of 14. Demand is outstripping capacity. A report by the Health and Education committee⁴ found that financial pressures are restricting the provision of mental health services in schools and colleges, and yet there are calls to make schools from primary age upwards a first-line of support for children, young people and families who are grappling with mental health issues.^{5 6}

¹ <https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Off%20the%20Radar%20full%20report.pdf>

² https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/feb/22/disabled-children-in-england-finding-it-increasingly-hard-to-access-council-care?utm_source=LINX+459+-+23+February&utm_campaign=LINX459&utm_medium=email

³ https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/sep/05/crisis-in-support-for-sen-children-ehc-plans?CMP=share_btn_tw

⁴ http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/health-committee/news-parliament-20151/report-children-young-adults-mental-health-16-17/?utm_source=LINX+469+-+4+May+2017&utm_campaign=LINX469&utm_medium=email

⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-mental-health-training-for-teachers-will-make-a-real-difference-to-childrens-lives?utm_source=LINX+480+-+20+July+2017&utm_campaign=LINX480&utm_medium=email

Financial need and poverty

A Child Poverty Action Group report published in May last year⁷ warns that poverty and low income are seriously affecting the health of UK children, and things are getting worse. It reports that two-thirds of paediatricians surveyed said that poverty and low income contribute “very much” to the ill health of children they work with and housing and homelessness problems were a concern, more than 60% said that food insecurity was a factor in the ill health of the children they treated, 40% had difficulty discharging a child because of concerns around housing or food insecurity, and more than 50% said that financial stress and worry contribute “very much” to the poor health of children they work with.

The Trussell Trust reported thousands of primary school children are being supported by food parcels,⁸ the All Parliamentary Group on Hunger says going hungry during the school holidays is a growing problem for up to three million UK children,⁹ and one in four families does not eat regularly or healthily because of a lack of money, according to the Food Standards Agency.¹⁰

⁶ https://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2017/feb/15/charities-vital-role-protecting-childrens-mental-health?utm_source=LINX+458+-+16+February&utm_campaign=LINX458&utm_medium=email

⁷ http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/poverty-making-children-sick-say-children%E2%80%99s-doctors-0?utm_source=LINX+471+-+18+May+2017&utm_campaign=LINX471&utm_medium=email

⁸ https://www.localgov.co.uk/Thousands-of-primary-school-children-helped-by-food-banks/43500?utm_source=LINX+481+-+27+July+2017&utm_campaign=LINX481&utm_medium=email

⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-39697216>

¹⁰ https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/mar/30/poorest-uk-families-struggle-eat-regularly-healthily-food-standards-agency-survey?utm_source=LINX+465+-+6+April+2017&utm_campaign=LINX465&utm_medium=email

THE LOCAL PICTURE

The pressures are real, and they are on the increase. But how is that having an impact at a local level, what are organisations doing to address the issue, and what additional support is needed to support children, young people and families in Crawley?

During the course of 2017, Crawley Community & Voluntary Service (CCVS) hosted a number of forums and partnership events which touched on some of the big issues highlighted nationally, in particular issues around supporting families where a member has additional support needs or mental health needs. 49 frontline organisations including schools, statutory agencies and local VCS organisations attended one or more forums, consultations or related events around this topic, and young people representing secondary schools across Crawley on the Crawley Youth Council gave their input. People attending brought to the table input around their own, and their clients' experiences of additional needs and mental health needs, information about local solutions and creative ways of working which are currently taking place, and insight into what is missing and needed in Crawley.

The issue of financial hardship and poverty, which received attention in The Local Picture 2016 report¹¹, will be picked up again as a theme throughout 2018, and will be explored more fully in next year's Local Picture report. The main theme in this year's Special Report is around Crawley's response to the additional and mental health needs of children, young people and families in the town.

Common themes fundamental for lasting change – a reminder

In The Local Picture 2016 report, a number of common themes emerged across the board. These are issues which have been raised by frontline organisations across sectors on a regular basis with CCVS through forum meetings, through our annual surveys, and through other cross-sector meetings. Those same themes continued to run through discussions throughout 2017.

IN A NUTSHELL

We need to:

- Understand what's out there in order to capitalise on the wealth of good work already happening in Crawley
- Work more effectively in partnership
- Create more funding and capacity for existing services, not just for new ideas and new services
- Be more flexible in the way services are delivered

This report will not pick these up in any more detail than this, but the reader should bear in mind that these fundamental needs underpin many of the situation-specific needs which this report will highlight, and are a driver for the responses which CCVS and partner organisations are making.

¹¹ <http://www.crawleycvcs.org/perch/resources/ccvs-local-picture-report-2016.pdf>

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ADDITIONAL / MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

IN A NUTSHELL

We need:

- Early education and normalising of emotional wellbeing with children and young people
- Specialist and post-diagnosis support for parents
- More support for staff and volunteers on the frontline
- Holistic support around emotional wellbeing
- Smoother transition between services and more flexibility

The issue

Schools are under pressure

The pressure on schools is ratcheting up. Local schools are reporting a greater prevalence of students facing difficulties in line with national trends. Particular problems were noted around financial deprivation, an increase in students with diagnosed special educational needs and mental health conditions, and the rising number of students with suicidal tendencies, particularly among young people in school years 11-13. In 2016/2017, after schools were able to join the C CVS-led Young Crawley Family Credits project, nearly one third of referrals into the project were made to Autism Sussex, compared to only 10% the previous year.

At a meeting in January 2017, three local secondary schools attending the Young Crawley Children & Families Forum (YCCFF) expressed a sense of frustration and a certain degree of helplessness at the position in which they found themselves. At the same time as facing this marked increase in need, they are also grappling with reduced staff budgets, less county support, less specialist support (eg Educational Psychologists and Speech and Language Therapists), and greater difficulty in referring to CAMHS. Ifield Community College, for example, has had to reduce its number of Learning Support Assistants from 12 to three. It employs a therapist for one day per week, but this isn't enough to meet demand so young people are falling through the net. The desire to support the students who need it is there, but the resources to back this up are thin on the ground. This is having a knock-on effect on staff morale and wellbeing, and the students who need more specialised support are struggling to get it.

There is also increased pressure in schools which have to meet ever more stringent educational targets which are simply unrealistic for some of the children/young people with additional needs. There was concern that children are being constrained to fit a certain model from an early age. If a child doesn't "fit", their difficulties are magnified.

Parents and families are under pressure

Parents often have a fight on their hands to get a diagnosis and to put in place the support needed for their children in a timely way. Some parents simply don't have the practical/emotional resource to do this, and their children are more likely to fall through the gaps. Services like Think Family are increasingly acting as advocates for families who need support for the fight. They report that families are facing issues day in, day out with very little respite and are near breaking point.

Undiagnosed conditions are in themselves an issue, particularly among young adults where learning difficulties were not picked up at school and are impacting them now (Sussex Oakleaf reports). This also means that young children do not have access to funding and support, and is a particular problem for certain groups like traveller families who don't meet thresholds and aren't able to disclose earnings.

At the other end of the spectrum, organisations report an increase in parents who are seeking a diagnosis to address behavioural issues which are more likely to be down to parental/environmental factors. They report a sense of apathy among some parents, a lack of parental control and a greater reliance on technology (computers, online gaming etc) to watch over children/young people.

Support networks for families with a child/young person with additional needs are thin on the ground, leaving families isolated and more susceptible to reaching breaking point. More people have extended families living far away. This is a particular issues for migrant families, or for families where English is not their first language. It can be difficult to discuss complex issues and to ensure families access the support they need when this is the case.

Poverty and debt are impacting on families, and exacerbating issues around additional support needs. Think Family are seeing families where poverty results in debt, which leads to poor mental health in the parents, which in turn impacts the children and their behaviour.

Support services are under pressure

Funding cuts to services are having an impact as there is less access to support, and longer waiting lists for the support which remains. CAMHS waiting lists are a particular issue, as are the high-level criteria for support. Relate said they are seeing many more young people with complex issues who need specialist mental health support but are not able to access it. Similarly, many children don't meet the threshold for EHC plans, although organisations report an increase in requests for references to support an EHC plan application.

Organisations which have faced funding cuts and reduced staff/volunteer levels are seeing increased sickness/stress levels among remaining staff as a result of the additional workload, and the stress of managing behavioural difficulties linked to conditions.

What's needed?

In addition to the fundamental themes raised in the Local Picture Report 2016, and mentioned earlier in this report, the following support needs were identified for children, young people and families with additional needs and mental health needs

Early education and normalising of emotional wellbeing with children and young people

At a consultation event in March 2017, 25 local organisations and schools working with children, young people and families in Crawley were given an open forum to discuss the most pressing needs facing this group of people. Far and above every other need raised was the need for support around the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children, young people and families. This was echoed in other forums and events across the year, with specific mention being given to:

- The fundamental need of supporting children, young people, families and workers on the frontline to know where to go for help.
- Encouraging young people to engage and recognise their need for support. This could be achieved through existing youth clubs, or creating an open-door space where the voice of young people can be heard.

- Group work in schools around particular emotional wellbeing issues, and teaching children and young people about feelings which are normal at their stage in life, and feelings which may be linked to a particular mental health issue. Supporting children and young people with both “normal” stress (eg around exams) and with more enduring mental health issues. Using older children and young people to support and mentor younger ones.
- Making emotional support more day to day and accessible. This could include more open discussion in schools and colleges through tutor time, assemblies, workshops, PSHCE lessons and social media/publicity.
- Creating more opportunities for peer support and learning from other young people who have had similar struggles.
- Addressing particular areas where emotional wellbeing can be an issue, for example among the LGBT community in schools.

Specialist and post-diagnosis support for parents

The need for post-diagnosis support for parents was highlighted by the Young Crawley Children & Families Forum as a need, in particular signposting for parents who’ve just “had a bombshell diagnosis” so that they know where to go for support. On a more ongoing basis, the need for support for the whole family was highlighted. Schools are finding that parents don’t know what to do, and can’t get support from traditional channels like CAMHS. Empowering families to engage and to help themselves was raised as a priority, with a particular focus on families where the parents have special needs, or who are from other communities (eg the traveller community).

More support for staff and volunteers on the frontline

The need for increased support, supervision and upskilling of staff who are carrying the stress and responsibility for the emotional wellbeing of the children and young people in their care was raised as an urgent need. Although Mental Health First Aid training was recognised as helpful, at a consultation event with schools in July 2017, staff felt it was not enough, as the complex issues students in their care were facing require more knowledge and skill than Mental Health First Aid offers. Particular training needs highlighted included mindfulness, basic CBT techniques and role-modelling, as well as specialised support around autism, bullying and specific mental health conditions. Organisations also recognised the need for more of the same – so more YES workers for schools, more volunteers etc.

Holistic support around emotional wellbeing

Support around the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children, young people and families is not limited to specialised support. Holistic support around wellbeing in general was raised as a need, which could include support for children and young people around food and exercise, or free activities which boost mood and self-esteem. There was an emphasis among frontline workers on providing this at a young age. Young people in particular liked the idea of groups and activities which would take them out of the school setting, and felt this would encourage those struggling with their mental health to relax and feel encouraged to open up and engage. There was concern that this wouldn’t simply be available to “targeted” groups, as this would make it possible for some young people quietly struggling with their emotional wellbeing to fall through the gaps if either they or the teachers weren’t aware of their issues.

Smoother transition between services and more flexibility

The need for smoother transitions when key age milestones are reached was raised. Currently different services for different ages have varying thresholds which creates stress and confusion. This is particularly true for 18’s-25’s with additional support needs or mental health needs. This group needs support around living independently, housing, employment

etc, but support tends to fall away after the age of 18. The Springboard Project identified the gaps around this age group and has opened a service for them, but they've done this without funding and so have had to charge individuals to access it. Schools also expressed frustration around inflexible, "tick-box" support which is not always appropriate to the needs of young people, and raised the need for a more flexible and person-centred approach from some support services.

Examples of what's already working well

There are many local organisations and services whose reason for being is to support children, young people and families with their emotional wellbeing. Linking families to them and ensuring these organisations are adequately resourced are key. Despite the rising pressures in the whole area of emotional wellbeing and mental health, other local organisations with a wider remit are continuing to work creatively to meet the growing needs around emotional wellbeing for children, young people and families in Crawley. Here are some examples:

Schools working collaboratively and creatively

Collaborative working between schools and between sectors is paying dividends in Crawley's schools. This includes sharing resources like the cost of an Educational Psychologist, meeting and sharing ideas with other Special Educational Needs Coordinators (Senco) in the area, partnership with local charities and starting Early Help Plans and attending Family Support Network Forums. Local schools are also making their reduced budgets stretch as far as possible by employing their own therapists to work with groups, rather than individuals so that more students are supported, putting on extra clubs and activities where mentoring and emotional support is an added benefit, and creating dedicated social, emotional and mental health teams within the school.

Support and awareness raising around autism and other additional needs

Healthwatch West Sussex, Autism Support Crawley and Pound Hill Medical Group worked together to improve GP services for children with additional needs resulting in an Autism Support Action Plan being implemented in the surgery last year, Tesco in Three Bridges has implemented an Autism Quiet Hour to accommodate the needs of its customers with Autism, and Gatwick Airport has created a lanyard for people with hidden disabilities as a "discreet sign" telling airport staff that they may need additional support. At Crawley Library, toys and equipment are available for children to borrow when they're in the Library, (eg small tents for children with autism to help them sit and read), and through its "Understand Me" scheme lends out communication devices to aid speech and language development.

Existing information networks

Although there is ongoing confusion about what's out there and how to access support, there are nevertheless a number of ways that families and frontline workers can find out more. One way is through the [Parent Partnership in West Sussex](#), which is an online service to help families find appropriate support. Similarly, WSCC has an online platform [Connect to Support](#), and at the Young Crawley event in October 2017, WSCC provided a list of commissioned services specifically supporting children and young people with their mental health.

PARENTS WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

At a Young Crawley Children & Families Forum meeting in April 2017, frontline workers met to discuss the issue of supporting families where it is the parents who have additional support needs.

IN A NUTSHELL

We need:

- Consistent support within services
- Upskilling frontline staff
- Building the resilience of children and young people
- Safe, supported places for children to play
- Therapeutic services for children aged 4-11

The issue

Young carers

IPEH has seen a big increase in young carers, particularly those caring for parents where drug/alcohol misuse is an issue and they may not recognise themselves as carers. Sussex Prisoners Families noted that these young carers suffer a double whammy when an offending parent is then sent to prison as this has an impact on the family's finances.

Physical health needs

Home-Start has noted a consistent need around supporting families where the parent has had an operation or is undergoing chemotherapy and needs temporary support caring for children. Organisations have also noted a link between mental health and parents struggling with long-term conditions (eg Fibromyalgia, Lupus etc). The impact of this leads to unintentional neglect of the children. Parents may not recognise that they are neglecting their children, and so their needs aren't addressed.

Special educational needs and mental health needs

Home-Start has also noted an increase in families who are hoarding, which impacts on the children in terms of play/space etc. IPEH has seen an influx of parents with special educational needs, and parents with mental health needs. As the child gets older, the parents increasingly struggle to parent them.

Other vulnerabilities

There's a high rate of domestic abuse in Crawley, which impacts parents and children who witness it. Parents may move from relationship to relationship, which negatively impacts the children. IPEH has also noted an increase in families where there is no recourse to public funds, leaving them very vulnerable. The forum was given an example from one IPEH worker who had received three such referrals in one week, and was working with one family still awaiting an immigration decision and in limbo after nine years. Linked to this are issues around parents housed in unusual or unsuitable accommodation (eg all living in a room, or travellers) and the impact this has on the children. There can also be cultural issues, where parents from particular communities don't seek help for their own issues for various reasons, but ultimately feel it is better to stay in the situation than to escalate it in order to get support and help.

What's needed?

Once again, forum members highlighted the identified fundamental needs outlined in the 2016 report: better partnership working between agencies to work holistically and openly with vulnerable families; understanding what support is already out there – not just for professionals, but also for parents; and more flexibility within services. In addition to this, forum members highlighted the need for the following:

Consistent support within services

Forum members called for more consistent staffing of mental health and emotional support services for parents. An example was given of one woman struggling with her mental health who had seen three mental health workers who left one after the other. The result has been complete disengagement.

Upskilling frontline staff

Organisations said that upskilling staff to promote awareness and recognition of different issues (mental health, domestic violence, young carers, prisoners etc) so that they can bridge the gap between parents and specialist support services would make a difference. Making the parent's first contact a positive experience with no barriers, and reassuring families that the organisation is there to support them, not take their children away, is an important step in building trust. Linked to this is ensuring that these "first-contact" staff have time and capacity to invest in these issues and also to understand what is out there.

Building the resilience of children and young people

There is scope for doing some resilience work with the child or young person. This is particularly valuable where the parent's situation is unlikely to change. Organisations wondered if this is something which could be introduced in schools via the Learning Mentors.

Safe, supported places for children to play

When parents are struggling themselves, it's hard for them to get out and about with their children, which in turn has a knock-on effect on the children's wellbeing. Forum members said that safe places for young children to play where struggling parents are also supported are needed. This could be achieved through using existing play areas with the help of peer support.

Therapeutic services for children aged 4-11

Forum members identified a gap in therapeutic/supportive services for children aged 4-11, particularly where there are mental health or other issues with parents. The waiting list for counselling support for children is immense, as is low-cost therapy for children and teens, particularly for those with emotional needs which are not within the CAMHS remit.

FAMILIES WHERE ENGLISH IS A SECOND LANGUAGE

The Young Crawley Children & Families Forum meeting held in July 2017 looked specifically at issues around families where English is an additional language. According to the 2011 census¹², between 2001 and 2011, there was a 12.4% increase in the number of ethnic minority groups living in Crawley, and 14% of households have at least one member for whom English is not their first language. Out of 104 recorded languages, only eight are not spoken by at least one person in the town. After English, the most common languages spoken are Polish, Gujarati, Urdu, Tamil and Portuguese.

IN A NUTSHELL

We need:

- Language classes and interpreters
- Frontline staff and volunteers from other communities
- Openness and curiosity from frontline staff and volunteers
- Ways of connecting to the wider community
- Free or low cost venues for community groups

The issue

Isolation

The main problem facing refugee families in particular is isolation, often as a result of poverty (resulting, for example, in a family not being able to afford a child's school uniform). Having the language barrier can result in a family receiving a letter from a school and not understanding it. Due to the number of languages spoken by children in the education system it is not possible to translate everything for everybody. EAL Teaching Strategies and British Council websites have information on teaching when English is an additional language.

Lack of connection

Many organisations struggle to make meaningful links with other communities in Crawley, and so aren't working with as many people with English as a second language as they'd like. There was a general sense of unawareness of the actual make-up of Crawley (which communities live and work here, how many people within the community etc), and difficulty knowing which language to focus on with publicity/information. Some organisations simply didn't have the resource to publish leaflets in different languages.

Parents struggling with language

There are different needs for different members of the family. Forum members tended to agree that children (especially younger children) picked up English very quickly, through play, pre-school and school. At the Library, for example, families come to Baby Rhyme sessions and pick up repetitive nursery rhymes and phrases. However, their parents struggle more, and as a result, there is often difficulty communicating effectively with them, particularly when it comes to filling out statutory paperwork/communicating with schools etc. If a parent does not feel confident to communicate, they can become isolated which has an

¹² <http://www.crawley.gov.uk/pw/web/pub193637>

impact on the child, who also becomes isolated. At times teenagers act as translators, which means relying on them to pass on information accurately. One issue can be that as children move out parents cannot access English as a language.

Lack of interpreters

Schools will often let children settle into a school and then get an interpreter in, but the schools themselves struggle with funding. There is also an issue with families telling authorities whether English is an additional language for their child. The language barrier makes it difficult for families to know what they are entitled to. For traveller children schools do not always understand their culture and some families do not value education.

Loss of culture

Forum members noted that there are often cultural differences within families – young people growing up in a different culture from their parents. There is a concern among the communities themselves that their children will lose a sense of their own cultural heritage, and forget their mother tongue. The Lithuanian community, for example, holds regular community events to keep their culture and language alive in the minds and hearts of their children and young people.

What's needed?

Language classes and interpreters

A need widely identified by the forum is the need for language classes (with childcare provided) for parents and adults, as children tend to pick up language very quickly. But there is a need for classes/activities for parents at different times, as many parents work long hours and shifts to support their families and so aren't available between 9am-5pm. In addition, a need for free or low-cost interpreters was identified by many organisations, particularly when offering services and support around more complex areas (like supporting families through the court system, for example).

Frontline staff and volunteers from other communities

Organisations felt that recruiting volunteers directly from the different communities was the most helpful way of effectively reaching those communities in a wider sense. For example, Family Support Work (working with Polish community) found recruiting a Polish volunteer improved their reach and effectiveness in Worthing and Bognor (service is not currently in Crawley). There was the suggestion that organisations could collectively hold an event aimed at recruiting volunteers directly from other communities.

Openness and curiosity from frontline staff and volunteers

One simple step that organisations can take is simply valuing different languages/cultures in the community by asking questions, being curious and supporting families to learn English, while at the same time understanding and respecting the mother tongue and culture which people from other communities bring to the mix. It would also be helpful for organisations to learn and understand where cultural tradition/boundaries differ from British culture to promote understanding. (One example given was differences around understanding of safeguarding.) Organisations can also set up informal clubs and activities in response to need (eg Refugees Welcome sewing group) offering in particular opportunities through play, as this gives confidence and independence which can give the main carer confidence to go into the community. Organisations felt there should be more activities and services which focus on the whole family from within different communities, rather than just on the children, for example. In general, it was felt that there is a lack of understanding of the communities that we have in Crawley.

Ways of connecting to the wider community

Forum members said there was a need to connect current services and activities with the different communities. One suggestion was to work with community leaders, but there was the concern that sometimes leaders can act as a gatekeeper and fail to pass relevant information on to the wider community. Another was to ensure that different communities have a presence at existing forums and meetings in the town, although some thought may need to be given to timing/location in order to make them more accessible. It is important to find out from the communities themselves what it is that they need and want.

Free or low-cost venues for community groups

This was suggested as a way for community groups to hold classes, groups and events which promote their language and culture. There was the suggestion that matches could be brokered between local companies with space to offer and corporate social responsibility mandates to fill with community groups who need space.

A RESPONSE

To help meet some of the needs raised over the course of 2017 and highlighted in this report, CCVS has been working with a range of local partners including voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, schools, Crawley Borough Council, West Sussex County Council and with the Crawley Youth Council to develop new partnership projects from the ground up.

Young Crawley Emotional Wellbeing Packages for schools

What are they?

Young Crawley Emotional Wellbeing Packages will offer a range of training, information, support and activities provided by local organisations which aim to educate and support groups of children, young people, families and staff around their mental health and emotional wellbeing. Schools will be able to subscribe to the packages for a nominal annual fee and subsequently access services appropriate to their needs. The packages are universal, rather than targeted, and aimed at groups, rather than individuals. They will, however, include signposting to other relevant support in the area, including pathways to 1:1 support around mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Outcomes

The Young Crawley Emotional Wellbeing Packages aim to:

1. Make talking about mental health and emotional wellbeing with children, young people, families and staff a fun, normal and everyday thing, reducing stigma and raising awareness.
2. Educate children, young people, families and staff about mental health and emotional wellbeing, equipping them to manage their own mental health and preventing escalation into more serious mental health issues.
3. Support children, young people and families to take part in a range of positive activities which keep them fit and well both mentally and physically.
4. Improve understanding and access to the range of mental health support available in Crawley, through links to existing programmes and services.

Who's involved?

At the time of publishing this report, 19 local organisations have joined together to offer a range of services and activities to local schools under the following three strands:

1. Training for staff/frontline workers around emotional health and wellbeing
2. Support and information for children, young people, families or staff/frontline workers around emotional health and wellbeing
3. Positive activities for children, young people and families to support their physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing.

One pre-school, primary school and secondary school are signed up to test the packages during a pilot year which is due to start in September 2018, with more schools waiting in the wings as funding allows. A project working group comprising provider organisations, the participating schools, Crawley Borough Council and CCVS is overseeing the development of the packages.

Funding

At the time of publishing this report, £12,500 of funding has been secured, with funding applications for approximately a further £20,000 being submitted in the coming months prior to the launch of the pilot.

Vision

The pilot will run throughout the academic year starting in September 2018 to test and refine the concept, and to gather evidence of impact. During 2018/2019, larger funding applications will be submitted with the aim of launching the project to schools across the town.

Crawley Skills Swap

What is it?

This network is a simple way to share skills, knowledge and experience with other frontline organisations in the town. Frontline organisations across sectors have been invited to join the network by offering skills, training and awareness-raising sessions about their own specialist topics and knowledge, in exchange for being able to approach other organisations within the network to learn from them and upskill their own frontline workers.

Topics on offer can be anything ranging from information about benefits, housing, volunteering, employment, and local services and activities open to the community, to physical or mental health, disability, autism, dementia, support for carers, family issues, minority groups in the town and more. Skills to share range from short awareness-raising sessions which can be delivered at another workplace, to longer training sessions, or opportunities for frontline workers to shadow staff and volunteers from another workplace to gain an understanding of a different service.

Although this project is co-ordinated by CCVS, organisations who are part of the network will receive a Skills Swap menu on a quarterly basis and will be able to connect directly with one another to arrange skills swaps.

Who's involved?

The Skills Swap network was only launched in January 2018, and started with seven member organisations. This number has already nearly doubled ready for the next menu update due in April 2018. Organisations will be invited to join the network throughout the year, and new, updated menus will be produced and circulated to network members every quarter.

Vision

The Crawley Skills Swap is a simple way to address the common themes of helping organisations, and in turn their service users, to understand what's out there and to work more effectively in partnership. Apart from CCVS-coordination, there is no cost attached to this project. Our vision is to link in many more organisations during the course of the year, and to begin seeing links and connections made through the network leading to a better-informed, better-connected Crawley.

Focus in 2018

Throughout 2018, CCVS will continue to coordinate forums and events themed around hot topics and issues which arise throughout the year. The big changes taking place locally around benefits and housing and the resulting concerns and financial hardship have already been flagged as a key area to explore and address and is being picked up by a number of the forums throughout the year.

Members of CCVS are welcome to contact us at any point throughout the year with suggestions for relevant topics and suggestions for change which can be picked up at forum meetings or even bespoke events and learning lunches.

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