

The impact of Emotional Wellbeing Group Intervention: Responding to the rise in need for C&YP

Sarah Shameti – PEEER Youth Service Lead

Kerry Franklin and Jasmine Hindle – Course Facilitators



Background

Increase in Emotional and well-being needs

Nationally it is reported that the rise in need for Children and Young People’s mental health support has more than doubled since 2019. National Charity, Young Minds, report; the number of under 18s referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) has risen by 53% since 2019, escalating to over 1.2 million in 2022.

Following Covid we recognised a rise in the number of young people reporting difficulties with anxiety and low mood. How this impacts on a young person varies, however common reports were; withdrawal from positive health behaviours and education, and difficulties engaging in activities they have previously enjoyed. As a Youth Service we recognised not all young people needed CAMHS, but they needed some form of supportive intervention.

Aims and Method

Offering a strategy based support programme

Having recognised the central need, we identified the common themes and found most were related to the isolation that had been enforced during Covid and social fears that had resulted. We tapped into existing interventions we already apply to support young people struggling with low self-esteem and anxiety and developed a programme to offer a structured and supportive group, enabling young people to explore helpful strategies, work within small (max 6) groups and understand a little more about how the brain works when reacting. Groups were split into ages 11-14 and 15-18 years and the group was offered online to ensure access was possible despite geographical location. Young people put cameras on to check in at start of the group(safeguarding) and could turn these off if they wanted to, to support anyone worried about being on camera.

The Programme

MYSELF - A 6-week Emotional wellbeing programme

Each session is 45 minutes long and includes an element of education, creativity and shared experiences. Facilitators fully participate to model strategies and techniques, including breathwork and mindfulness.

Take a way tasks are suggested each week which focus on practising the skill covered within the session, encouraging all to consider benefit to self through testing it out.

Week 1	My Brain - Understanding my emotions and why it is very normal to 'flip my lid'
Week 2	Positive Self-talk - Identifying your inner coach and turning up the volume
Week 3	The power of breath - understanding how we breath, and how breath can support positive emotional wellbeing
Week 4	Self-care - exploring how music and creativity are great tool of self-care
Week 5	Connecting with others - helping self, helping others
Week 6	Being grateful for my strengths - recognising all I am and all I can be

Results

Moving in the right direction

We have now delivered the MYSELF programme to 3 cohorts of each age group, with a total of 25 young people taking part in a group.

To help us measure outcomes of the course we use the Warwick and Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale. Below is the average score before and after course completion for all attendees and a shows an overall improvement post course.



In the last session we also encourage the young people to write a positive letter to themselves. Below is an example of a letter written in the last cohort.

To Megan

Throughout the my-self-course I hope you have not forgotten that feelings you have are not strange as everyone has them e.g. everyone flips their lid some times. I just finished the my-self-group, when I was doing it I found that talking to others is not that hard and others struggle with it too. It can be scary to encounter change however I am capable of overcoming this and I am great to be around. I have a negative voice inside my head which I probably listen to too often however remember I also have a positive voice, I just need to listen. If my brain is too busy with thoughts remember to write them down in my journal. When life seems stressful maybe stop and think of all the positives and may be even write them down.

Love
Megan x

Conclusions

Building resilience for the future

Delivering a Group intervention provides youth workers with flexibility to offer 1 to 1 support to those unable to engage in group work, whilst having an option that may be ideal for many, supporting an overall increase in service capacity. Group interventions also offer peer interaction, and 4 of the young people that have completed the course have since joined one of our Online Youth Clubs. We are currently training all youth workers to facilitate the 6-week programme, ensuring we are able to continue delivering a rolling programme, offering to new cohorts every quarter.

This course is **not** a replacement for counselling or professional therapy and is aimed at supporting young people with low level anxiety and low self-esteem, to help develop positive emotional wellbeing behaviours and resilience.