



Community Planning Aberdeen

Progress Report	Project End: LOIP Aim 5.3 100% of schools offer sustainable and equitable access to counselling for those children aged 10 and above who require it by 2022.
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Date of Report	17.6.22
Governance Group	CPA Board – 14 September 2022

Purpose of the Report
This report presents the results of the LOIP Improvement Project Aim to ensure 100% of schools offer sustainable and equitable access to counselling for those children aged 10 and above who require it by 2022 and seeks approval to close.

Summary of Key Information
<p>1 BACKGROUND</p> <p>1.1 The Mental Health Foundation for Scotland reviewed the <u>Mental health impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic in Scotland on vulnerable groups</u>. Within Aberdeen, we recognise many of the factors highlighted within the review through our own professional and personal lives seeing a negative spiral of mental wellbeing across our schools and communities.</p> <p>1.2 Mental wellbeing has been a significant focus over the past year and the declining mental health of all has been recognised. <u>'Good Mental Health for All'</u> recognises the benefits of improving mental health which link with positive health and social outcomes for individuals and the broader community. Those who have positive mental and emotional wellbeing are more likely to have success within their lives.</p> <p>1.3 Counselling is a talking therapy that involves a trained therapist listening and helping individuals find ways to deal with emotional issues. Counselling support for children and young people allows us to provide early intervention and help individuals develop resilience and coping strategies in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mental health condition, such as depression, anxiety or an eating disorder • An upsetting physical health condition • A difficult life event, such as bereavement, a relationship breakdown or stress • Difficult emotions – for example low self-esteem or anger • Other issues such as sexual identity

- 1.4 Scottish Government funding is identified to support counselling in secondary schools and for children and young people aged 10 and above who have additional support needs. The current local authority funded offer of support is not equitable across the system and requires review and amended planning.
- 1.5 Alongside our current counselling supports a review of data has led to the introduction of interventions such as, Let's Introduce Anxiety Management (LIAM), Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) and Emotion Coaching. Four of our Secondary Schools are also currently piloting Distress Brief Interventions (DBI). Review and planning around these interventions continue to be required.

2 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AIM

- 2.1 Against this background, in February 2022, the CPA Board approved the project charter for the initiation of an improvement project which aimed to ensure 100% of schools offer sustainable and equitable access to counselling for those children aged 10 and above who require it by 2022.

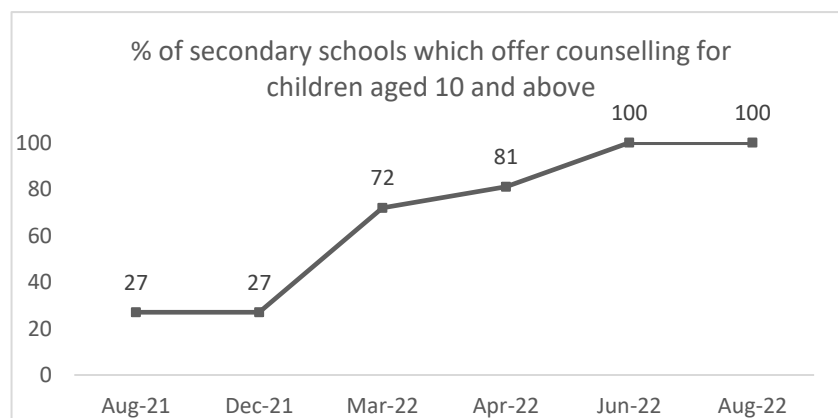
3 WHAT CHANGES DID WE MAKE?

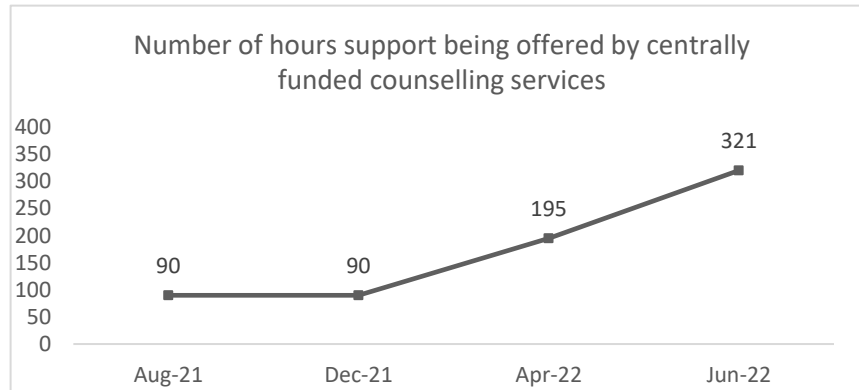
- 3.1 As part of the work to review the counselling services available to children and young people in Aberdeen City, we considered the existing provision and what was required in order to provide a more sustainable and equitable resource. With 27% of our Secondary Schools receiving funding for this support and 73% having to self fund or go without, it was clear that further work was required in this area to provide an equitable offer and grow the supports for all schools.
- 3.2 There is evidence that where therapeutic services are built in to the day to day offer of support, this impacts more positively on outcomes as relationships across the school community are supported and developed. We planned for 1 core member of staff to be situated in each Secondary School in the first instance to support this. There is recognition that this may not provide the same level of support depending on the number of pupils on the school roll or based on the level of need, but it was agreed through this process that ongoing review of staffing would be completed to ensure the demands were met as equitably as possible.
- 3.3 A tender process was undertaken which involved Head Teachers and members of the Quality Improvement Team. We contracted support from Mental Health Aberdeen Counselling Service (ACIS Youth), who had already been supporting in a number of our self-funded schools. Through this process we have agreement to have 1 member of counselling staff in every Secondary School within Aberdeen. We also have access to 1 member of counselling staff for each locality (Don, Dee and West) to provide counselling provision for children aged 10+ across our Primary Schools. Again this provides consistency of support across a locality and supports relationship building of staff to enable all a greater opportunity to meet the needs of children and young people within Aberdeen.

- 3.4 To ensure that access to counselling was fully monitored, we have increased frequency of monitoring to termly instead of the previous 6 monthly reporting directly to Scottish Government. This will provide us with a more succinct understanding of the rising needs of children and young people, supporting a more effective and efficient response to these needs, through approaches to staff professional learning, curriculum content and delivery, and considerations for wider supports. We will continue to complete the requested bi-annual report linked to the funding.
- 3.5 Recognising that counselling is only one intervention to support the mental health of children and young people therefore to further enhance this across Aberdeen, we have focused specifically on 2 further interventions; Let's Introduce Anxiety Management (LIAM) which offers support across both primary and secondary settings and is led by school staff, school nurses and staff from Fitlike Aberdeen. Using a multiagency approach, we are able to offer support more timely for those that require it. We have also undertaken a pilot in partnership with Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and Penumbra who have been funded by Scottish Government to work with children and young people using Distress Brief Intervention (DBI) with young people aged 14-16. This has been piloted in 4 schools across the city and is now being extended to include a further 2 with training to be implemented at the beginning of the school session 2022-23.

4 HAVE OUR CHANGES RESULTED IN IMPROVEMENT?

- 4.1 The changes have resulted in improvement. We achieved our aim with 100% of schools now offering counselling, an increase of 73% since the project started. With an equitable offer of financial support provided across all our secondary school settings and primary school aged children from aged 10 and above, we now have more consistent reporting of data and more visibility of supports in place. Termly reporting has been agreed with the approved provider and current recruitment is underway to increase the capacity to ensure all secondary schools have 30hours of support in place as soon as possible and each Primary Locality has 36.5 hours support available.

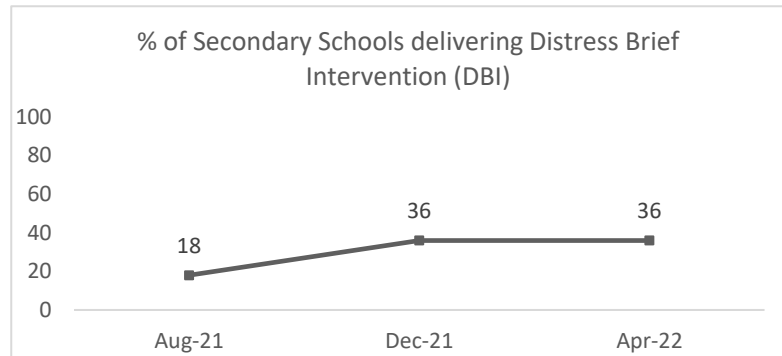




	Number of children accessing counselling (P6-S6)	Number of children who have reported an improved outcome following access to a counsellor
Jan – June 21 Shared provision across 2 providers	363	339 (93%)
July – Dec 21 Shared provision across 2 providers	332	256 (77%)
Jan – June 22 Provision from 1 provider only – clearer picture of outcome	295	165 finished counselling support and 100% reported an improved outcome

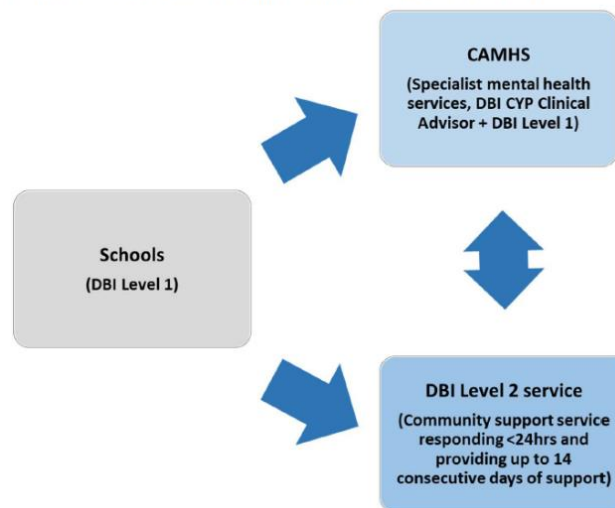
4.2 We are in a positive position with all schools across Aberdeen city offering a counselling service or having access to this if required for children aged 10+ We continue to work closely with one local provider to ensure all children and young people in this age bracket have access to the appropriate support. All young people referred are seen within the agreed 2 week timeframe for an initial consultation. We are seeing a large number of children and young people access this service and although there was a dip in the number of children and young people reporting an improved outcome following access to a counsellor, this was also at a time of change with service providers and significant staff absence due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We hope to see an increase in positive outcomes through the move to one provision and more stable supports. Within the last reporting period we have confirmed that 100% of those finalising their planned support from the service, reported an improved outcome. 130 learners will continue to receive support if required over the holiday period and into the next academic session with further referrals and supports offered if and when required.

4.3 In partnership with Child and Family Mental health Service (CAMHS) and Penumbra Mental Health, there are positive outcomes being shared from some of our settings in relation to (DBI) but this is still very early days for this project.



4.4 DBI Level 1 training enables identification, compassionate response and referral of eligible pupils in distress to DBI level 2 services. A (DBI) network of support has also been established to ensure support is in place for those delivering this intervention at school level. This will provide an opportunity for staff to debrief and ensure their own wellbeing is supported through this process.

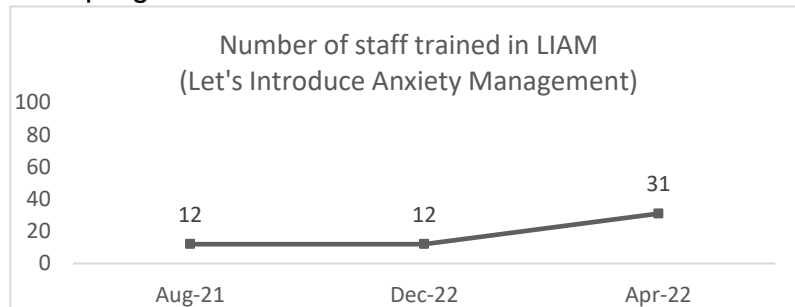
Figure 1. The DBI Children and Young People (CYP) Pathway



4.5 Evidence from across 3 local authorities (58 referrals, 17% of those from Aberdeen) suggest that the older age group (16–17 year-olds) were more likely to engage in DBI. A high percentage of engagement across the 3 local authorities also showed that 71% of those engaging with support were female with the most common presenting problem for referral being stress / anxiety (76%) followed by low mood/depression (67%). Just over 26% of the overall number of young people, however also reported suicidal thoughts and 17% reported self-harm.

4.6 From the perspective of the young people referred to receive DBI support, those interviewed across the local authorities all felt the immediacy of support was very beneficial, as it met their needs quickly and effectively. Additionally, they considered the support provided as suitable for them, and when they finished their DBI support they felt they had developed better ways to cope and manage their distress.

- 4.7 Further LIAM Training has been undertaken and next steps are to be agreed to ensure collaborative delivery in schools, with School Nursing Team and FitLike Aberdeen Staff. There is a need for us to increase the evidence and impact of this as we progress into session 2022-23



5 HOW WILL WE SUSTAIN THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

- 5.1 The data shows that the increase in access to counselling across our schools has been sustained with 100% of schools providing access to a counsellor since June 2022 and 100 % of children requiring a counsellor accessing this support. To ensure this is sustained we have an agreed partnership in place supported by ongoing Scottish Government funding to support a sustained programme of counselling in schools over the coming years. We continue to consider other supports that will increase the mental health of children and young people at the earliest of stages with current work being undertaken in partnership with CAMHS and wider NHS teams to consider play therapy and counselling services for young er children to complement our current offer. Ongoing review of the current service delivery will take place to ensure the service provision is robust, targeted and seeing improvements in outcomes for children and young people. This will continue to be overseen by the Education Service, Quality Improvement Manager for Health and Wellbeing.
- 5.2 We will continue to work in partnership with CAMHS and Penumbra Mental health to review the impact of DBI and respond to the outcomes as the pilot progressing, sharing our findings with the Children's Services Board and the Scottish Government.
- 5.3 We will continue to build the partnerships around interventions such as LIAM to ensure we are working across services to maintain the appropriate supports that are timely, effective and improving outcomes for children and young people.

6 HOW WILL WE MONITOR THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

- 6.1 Ongoing review of our mental health interventions in schools sit with the Quality Improvement Manager and Health & Wellbeing working group. There is also responsibility across ICFS to report to Scottish Government our work supported by grant funding in respect of counselling in schools and the children and young people's mental health funding.

6.2	Should it be agreed that the project is ended, the data recorded will continue to be monitored and reported to the Children’s Services Board, as well as added to the Outcomes Framework/Improvement programme Dashboard to ensure that performance continues.
7 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALE UP AND SPREAD	
7.1	We have recognised that close partnership working with key partners is essential in us meeting the mental wellbeing needs of children and young people. There is collective recognition that if we work collaboratively, the offer of supports can be more effective, timely and provide earlier intervention and prevention. There is an ongoing need for us to consider all resources available to support mental health and wellbeing and join up services to address this. A whole family approach is beneficial to ensure the supports provided are sustained and at the heart of this is the strength of relational approaches, building confidence in the systems of support and removal of barriers and lengthy timescales for response.
7.2	We have also been advised that Scottish Government will fund a further 2 Secondary Schools to undertake training and deliver Distress Brief Intervention from August 2022. We have accepted this offer and have 2 schools registered to undertake training at the beginning of session 2022-23.

Recommendations for Action	
It is recommended that the CPA Board:	
i)	Agree that this Improvement Project is brought to an end on the basis that the project aim has been achieved and the changes tested will continue with business as usual and that the Children’s Services Board will continue to monitor the data;
ii)	Note that the dataset for the overall aim will continue to be reported via the Improvement Programme dashboard to ensure progress is monitored; and
iii)	Note that training and delivery of Distress Brief Intervention will be scaled up to two further schools from August 2022 that development and progression of this will be reported to the Children’s Services Board.

Opportunities and Risks	
Opportunities: -	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better communication in partnership working • Learning opportunities across multiagency • Increased frequency of monitoring to termly will provide us with a more succinct understanding of the rising needs of children and young people, supporting a more effective and efficient response to these needs, through approaches to staff professional learning, curriculum content and delivery, and considerations for wider supports. 	
Risks: -	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to appropriately trained counsellors 	

Consultation
Children's Services Board CPA Management Group – 17 August 2022

Background Papers
The following papers were used in the preparation of this report. Final-Draft-LOIP-Refresh-21.pdf (communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk) Charter-5.3-Counselling-in-Schools.pdf (communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk)

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