

Learning example

Rebuilding Bridges – Local Authority of Camden

Introduction

This learning example sets out how Camden have implemented a new short breaks provision from their involvement in the first year of the Department for Education's Short Breaks Innovation Fund. **Rebuilding Bridges** is delivered in partnership with health (Mosaic CAMHS - Tavistock & Portman NHS Foundation Trust) and the voluntary community sector provider Play, Adventure, and Community Enrichment (PACE), and supports children and young people aged 6 to 18 with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, Autism, and learning disabilities.

The example explores how Camden, PACE, and their wider partners have worked together to design and implement a programme of holistic, joined-up support for children, young people and families who otherwise might not have met the threshold or eligibility criteria for a service. It explores the principles and strategies that shaped Camden's approach and have enabled Rebuilding Bridges to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people. Key learning for other local authorities is also included, providing insight into how to successfully introduce new, innovative support services for children and young people with additional needs.

Aims and Objectives

Before writing their proposal for Rebuilding Bridges, Camden reviewed their support pathways for children and young people with SEMH needs, Autism, and learning disabilities and the reasons for children with SEN and Disabilities needing residential school care out of borough. This review allowed them to reflect on why some children and young people with additional needs were not accessing support and missing education, and the difference that early intervention could make to their outcomes. This gap in provision affected children and young people who did not meet thresholds or eligibility criteria for a statutory or commissioned service, but who also needed more support than the universal services offer.

The team wanted to be able to develop interventions that prevent escalation of need, especially in relation to school attendance and the lack of support for parents who can be under pressure as carers without getting any form of a break during the day. Camden's proposal for Rebuilding Bridges aimed to address the problem of children and young people with complex needs falling through the gaps created by different thresholds criteria.

Camden target this service at families who are not supported by an enhanced short breaks provision or where the universal provision is not always able to meet the needs. The support is prioritised for children who would otherwise remain out of education or there is a risk of educational placement breakdown. The child-focused approach means that where needed, there is capacity to extend the work to some children and young people who are already

receiving a core offer short breaks provision and would also benefit from more intensive support.

Ultimately, Rebuilding Bridges aims to support children and young people to:

- Improve their school attendance
- Improve emotional wellbeing
- Reduce behaviours of concern.

Other key benefits of the project are about:

- The break from caring responsibilities for parents and improve wellbeing for parents
- The support for siblings
- Supporting parents to better respond to children and young people behaviours of concern in the family home.

Approach

Camden, Mosaic CAMHS, and their VCS partner PACE collaborated to produce Rebuilding Bridges, which enables children, young people, and their families to receive 1:1 and small group support from experienced keyworkers, alongside whole-family therapeutic interventions from project psychologists, often in the community or family home. By prioritising building relationships with families at the start of engagement, the programme maintains a relationship-based approach where both the child and parents' needs can be explored holistically.

Camden's approach to planning and delivery of the project has been shaped by a number of factors, including:

- Effective multiagency relationships
- Clear referral and allocation processes
- The expertise and local knowledge of Mosaic CAMHS and the VCS delivery partner, PACE
- Family and child-centred practice, which reduces the pressure on families to engage with deadlines and strict criteria for interventions.

Multiagency relationships: Camden based their proposal for Rebuilding Bridges on a previous pilot programme. This learning and the pre-existing, effective working relationships between the local authority, PACE, health, and children's social care helped create a clear vision for Rebuilding Bridges within the timescale of the bid application. A wide range of agencies are now invested in the Rebuilding Bridges model for developing future short breaks provision, so more children and young people with complex needs be supported in their home environment.

Referral and allocation process: There is a clear, multiagency referral and allocation process. Children and young people are assigned to Rebuilding Bridges following a multiagency allocation panel. This panel facilitates in-depth discussion about children and young people's network of support and what interventions have been successful or not and reasons why, to understand how best to support families as part of the project and avoid duplication.

Delivery partners: Camden wanted to develop a short breaks model that is integrated between health, social care and delivered in partnership with the voluntary community sector organisation with the expertise to work with children and young people with complex SEMH/ additional needs as part of the Rebuilding Bridges. Delivery partner PACE is an established and trusted presence in the local community, are the face of the work with families. PACE run a range of playschemes and sessions for disabled children, and its familiarity with the local area helps break down barriers at the start of the intervention. PACE carefully consider which worker is best suited to the family's needs, and ensure they receive support to carry out the work through regular supervision, input from the project psychologist, and sharing learning about how best to support children and young people's complex needs.

Family and child-centred practice: A key focus of Rebuilding Bridges is giving the worker and family time to develop their relationship, with sessions taking place in the community and family home. Overall, this child-centred approach means that children and young people are not under pressure to engage, and workers have the time to unpick challenges within families. Children and young people on the programme often have intersecting needs, arising from unaddressed SEND support needs, and risks of criminal or sexual exploitation, social isolation, online exploitation or bullying. Collaborative working between the PACE worker and the project psychologist is crucial to ensuring children and young people receive support that encompasses informal, relational and clinical perspectives.

Challenges and successes

Key challenges

- The complexity of families' needs, and the intervention's holistic approach means that workers are mindful of the importance of staying child-focused while working constructively with the whole family system. Workers are supported to maintain clear boundaries with parents, to ensure that sessions are framed by what the child or young person needs help with.
- Camden have worked strategically to support CAMHS and PACE to work together as effectively and in families' best interests. This involved trialling different ways of joint working, adapting to the child or young person's needs as to whether the project psychologist should work jointly with the PACE worker or whether a staged introduction to 1-1 support from the psychologist is more appropriate.

Key successes

There have been many successes in the first year of the programme:

- **The expertise of PACE, the voluntary community sector delivery partner:** The workers at PACE have a high level of experience in building trusting relationships with children and young people with complex needs and instil a relational approach to their work where children and young people are always treated as individuals.
- **Strong multiagency relationships and joined-up working:** An established culture of multiagency working in Camden helped develop Rebuilding Bridges at pace. The multiagency referral and allocation process and the joint working between CAMHS and PACE in the intervention was enabled by an integrated, joined-up system where health, social care, and voluntary community services understand each other's roles and responsibilities and work together effectively.
- **Input of CAMHS project psychologists:** The project psychologist is able to analyse needs from a clinical perspective, including producing functional behaviour assessments and behaviour support plans where required. Their work also includes supporting parents to understand their child behaviour and develop strategies, assessing family's psychological and emotional needs and developing bespoke package of therapeutic interventions.
- **Reaching the right cohort of children and young people:** By working with a broad range of local partners such as the parent carer forum, headteachers, SENCOs, Early Help, the School Inclusion Team, Camden were able to target children and young people with additional needs who were not known to children's social care but would needed an intensive, preventative intervention.

Key learning

Camden have embedded collaborative and child-focused principles into the design and running of Rebuilding Bridges, and utilised local strengths and resources by empowering a trusted voluntary community sector service to deliver the intervention.

- **Utilise local strengths:** Planning and mobilising a new service can be a lengthy process, so consider the time it will take to map out existing strengths and resources in the local area, across staff, key partner relationships, and voluntary community sector networks.
- **Joint working:** When CAMHS and the organisation doing the direct work with families work in partnership, families benefit from clinical and family support perspectives. By slowly building towards a clinical intervention with the help of their family support worker, this can make a positive difference to families who otherwise might not feel able to seek out help or self-refer to services.

- **Empower and include the team around the family:** Intensive, relational interventions benefit from a strong team around the family approach from all agencies involved with the child, who can continue stands of work once the intervention ends.
- **Approach to engagement:** Prioritise a relational approach so the family can build a trusting relationship with their worker. Allow for a flexible number of sessions a child or young person can receive each week, alleviating the time pressures of a statutory intervention.
- **Persistence:** Be led by what the family needs and show persistence by reaching out even if they seem initially reluctant to engage.
- **Measuring success:** When you base the success of the intervention in terms of outcomes achieved for children and young people, this means families and children and young people can focus on what they want to achieve at a pace that suits them rather than a time limited intervention.