

Bury IASS: Increasing CYP's support with mental health and well-being

The context

Bury lies on the northern edge of Greater Manchester and is the fourth smallest metropolitan borough in the country. Bury is becoming an increasingly diverse place and is now a town of many cultures, languages, races, religions and lifestyles. This diversity is valued and has helped fuel the prosperity of the area. Migration has enriched this diversity, but brings with it new challenges for creating and sustaining a sense of belonging amongst all communities. The town is an area of contrast with areas of prosperity and pockets of deprivation. Bury has moved from the 97th most deprived area in the country to the 122nd.

In academic year 2019/2020 17% of CYP in education were receiving SEN support or had an EHCP, this is above the national average of 15.3%.

The issue that was identified to be tackled using IASP funding

Since the beginning of lockdown, due to Covid 19, the SENDIASS team have worked in new ways in order to support CYP and their parents or carers. One of the areas identified for development before was to increase support and meet the need regarding CYP's mental health and well-being. With the added pressures of lockdown, families isolating and change in routine many of the families the service supports expressed that their CYP were finding it harder to cope and were struggling to understand the changes that were happening to them and around them.

How the funding was used

It was decided that some of the funding would go towards providing Youth Mental Health First Aid training for practitioners on the SENDIASS team. The training covered:

- An in-depth understanding of YP's mental health and factors that affect wellbeing
- Practical skills to spot the triggers and signs of mental health issues
- Confidence to reassure and support a YP in distress
- Enhanced interpersonal skills such as non-judgemental listening
- Knowledge to help a YP recover their health by guiding them to further support – whether that's through self-help, their place of learning, the NHS, or a mix – engaging with parents, carers and external agencies where appropriate
- Ability to support a YP with a long-term mental health issue or disability, to thrive
- Tools to look after personal mental wellbeing

With an enhanced skill set practitioners thought about the ways they could put the learning into action. Initially the service involved the SEND Ambassadors, which make up the YP's steering group and asked them to reflect on the impact of Covid and how they were feeling. YP expressed a mixture of emotions with some explaining that home schooling suited them, whilst others described feelings of loneliness and disconnect

and that they were pleased when professionals enquired about them even if they preferred or chose to respond via their parent or carer.

The steering group decided it was important to them that the first part of any meeting or session was dedicated to talking about what positives had happened over the last couple of months, sharing ideas of places to go walking, new skills learnt and things they were looking forward to. An added benefit of emotional health and wellbeing training is it supported the team to be supportive of each other and their overall mental health and wellbeing.

Practitioners sat on fortnightly joint working meetings to address any issues that were occurring in the borough. This meeting is developing and now includes representatives from SENDIASS, Education, Bury Parent Carer Forum, Health and Social Care. It was at this meeting that SENDIASS was able to share some of the findings around how CYP were feeling about the local support being offered at this time of crisis.

Volunteers have accessed additional training to develop their awareness of mental health in YP, looking at things from a trauma informed way. Volunteers have started working alongside practitioners on virtual steering group sessions to widen the reach and develop their knowledge of how SENDIASS supports and what CYP want from the service.

The difference made (i.e. the impact of your work and how your service/service users have benefitted)

Families are supported by practitioners who have a better understanding of how to support CYP who are struggling with their mental health and well-being. They are able to provide quality support to ensure a child is supported in an emotionally supportive manner that helps build self-esteem and feelings of being able to cope and participate and where practitioners have a genuine interest in their wellbeing.

YP on the steering group are able to see how their voice has impacted service delivery. Ensuring practitioners give CYP the option of checking-in and sharing their voice shows care and compassion. Having someone that listens to what they have to say has a positive impact on their well-being and makes them feel valued.

Sharing information across teams and services helps inform other services of trends being seen by the SENDIASS team. Being able to share the voice of CYP and their families helps other services to deliver quality support to the people they are working with ensuring there is a positive impact as needs are being met. Equally having information given to the team on what is going on in the borough enables workers to share the most relevant up to date information with the families the service supports.

Up-skilling staff and volunteers so they can identify signs of mental health illness in CYP ensures all the team are able to effectively support and signpost.

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