Creating Mental Health Services to Meet the Individual Needs of Care Leavers

Brandon Centre
Here for Young People

Care Leavers' Psychotherapy and Professional Consultancy

- NHS England Suicide and Bereavement funding
- Ringfenced for Care Leavers, due to higher rates of suicide and incidence of mental health difficulties
- Provision of services split across Camden, Haringey and Islington
- Brandon Centre delivers Psychotherapy with young people resident in Camden and Islington, aged between 16-25.
- Direct model of psychotherapy in Camden and Islington, building on existing provision of direct therapy and Young Adults Service consultation model in Haringey
- Extended for a further 12 months in April 2022.

Early Intervention Approaches

- Developed links with local Leaving Care Teams and statutory transition frameworks, such as "Minding The Gap" and CAMHS practitioners – referrals at points of transition towards independence, when statutory support is reducing
- Up to 24 sessions of individual psychotherapy, which can be tailored to the individual's needs (exploratory and structured), based on a relational model
- Referrals welcomed for anyone aged 18-25, which will include Care Leavers on a supported accommodation pathway, those living independently and those who are formerly Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

Ensuring Access for Care Leavers to Talking Therapies

- Responsive adjustments; scaffolding and proactive engagement prior to therapy starting in order to emphasize individualised approach and build on existing supportive relationships. Additional sessions to allow for longer assessment.
- Majority of sessions are delivered face-to-face at sites in Camden and Islington, in recognition of the difficulty for Care Leavers of finding an appropriate space to undertake remote therapy sessions
- Challenges; ambivalence within initial relationship-building as a result of relational trauma – previous contact with mental health services may have been experienced as pathologizing
- A young person may concurrently request a diagnosis via MHA – psychotherapy can feel slow, less transaction-focused.
- The number of practical difficulties can impact on ability to engage in therapy, especially if these arise during therapy and if a young person is estranged from support network.

Monitoring Outcomes of Mental Health Interventions

- Ongoing monitoring of outcomes during therapy, through clinical review and outcome measures.
- Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (CORE-OM) self-report questionnaire
- Goal-Based Outcomes reviewed mid-treatment and at end of treatment
- Experience of Service Questionnaire (CHI-Esq) – quantitative and qualitative elements

Case Vignette

- KL; 20yo, White British woman referred by her PA in March 2021 for help with mood regulation and a space to explore multiple childhood traumas, exacerbated by repeated moves within the Care System
- History of Psychiatric in-patient admission due to suicide attempts and drug abuse.
- Clinical impressions and impact on relational security
- Successes/challenges in therapy
- Outcomes and review – self-reported increased coping, increased willingness to engage with outside agencies, including structured support.

A Service That Works With Care Leavers - Consultation Sessions

- The service offers mental health and psychological consultations to the service who work with young people who have left, or are in the process of leaving care
- This was seen to be the best and safest use of the limited funding (around 1 day per week) as it would have the widest reach.
- The service is made up of 6 teams. Each team has a manager and a mix of social workers and personal advisors
- Each team receives a fortnightly consultation with a clinical psychologist where a member of the team will bring a case, a challenge or situation to discuss
- The sessions are used to provide a supportive space reflect on the work, provide advice on mental health and imbed psychological thinking

Why would this be helpful?

- Working with high levels of risk and complex young people is often challenging because it can bring up difficult feelings for the worker
- Provides a space to understand the lived experience of workers
- There is often frequent 'burnout' reported in similar roles
- Many of those who are classed as care leavers may have a complex relationship to help. This can influence how they interact with workers and types of relationship dynamics that arise.
- Having a space to process the emotional content linked to the work and understand relational dynamics from a psychological perspective can enhance wellbeing and restore a sense of agency to workers when faced with challenging or stuck relational dynamics.
- Often staff are faced with situations where action is needed. However, it is also important to protect a setting where 'just thinking' can take place.

Our Approach

- Drawing on core principles of reflective practice to help the group think together about their work
- The importance of attachment and how this impacts us all
- The impact of trauma
- Drawing attention to key relational issues
  - Action as language
  - The concept of feelings and expectations from previous life experiences being brought into the relationship with the workers (transference)
  - The practitioners response to challenges (countertransference)
  - Ways that people can manage difficult relational and emotional experiences including 'defence mechanisms' such as projection, regression, and comparmentalisation

Learnings

- The way that this offer is introduced to staff and managers is incredibly important.
- In order for consultation sessions to be most useful, staff need to have a sense of ownership of the space and time.
- For these sessions to be fully utilised by staff, managers need to carve out time, space and capacity for staff to attend.
- It was felt that it might have been useful if there had been some initial training in psychological or relational concepts before the consultation sessions started.
- The presence of managers in the group can be incredibly powerful. It can be difficult to strike the right balance and each team will be different. In some cases it can be important for managers to attend to help provide a sense that the space is valued by the organisation. In other cases, it may be important to give the staff group the opportunity to speak without managers present.

Feedback

- These are valuable sessions for my team. We are able to share our thoughts on work stressors and gain an understanding of each other's responses to these stressors.
- I enjoy attending as I think it is really important to promote group reflection as a way of developing my own reflective practice.
- hearing the issues out loud helps as it can make things clearer when spoken. The input of other staff is also really helpful as they may have experience of the same/similar issues and therefore able to provide some guidance to help make sense of the issues. Good to have a healthy discussion in a safe environment.
- The session gives SW a platform to share ideas regarding various complex cases.
- It is just helpful to hear out loud what the issues and complexities are with the children we are working with. It is also helpful to get the views and input of other members of the team.