

Amplified Trailblazer: Case Study



Cumbria Multi-Agency Children and Young People's Emotional and Wellbeing Partnership

Cumbria Multi-Agency Children and Young People's Emotional and Wellbeing Partnership includes Clinical Commissioning Groups, young people's mental health and local authority services, schools and third sector organisations across the region. In the area there is a higher rate of children looked after than the national average.

The organisation's Trailblazer project was to support the participation of young care leavers to design new ways of supporting positive transitions from child to adult mental health services for young people like them. The Care Leavers Forum had identified that this process of transitions was currently difficult for care leavers and felt strongly that those care leavers who were making the transition into Adult Mental Health Services should know what to expect. They also wanted staff to have a greater understanding of the needs of young people who are moving into adulthood after being in care.

What happened?

Care Leavers participated in an insights workshop where they explored how transitions to adult services currently worked, and how they thought this process could be improved for care leavers, taking into account the specific experiences of this group.

Young people identified that a quick win would be co-producing an information leaflet with child and adult services about what care leavers should expect from adult services - to help them be prepared. Care Leavers also engaged with the local transformation group and worked with representatives from health and social care to inform strategic thinking about improving mental health care for this group during the move to adulthood.

1. Tell us about what motivated this project?

We wanted to develop a more strategic approach to how young people participate in the overall Transformation Programme to improve emotional and mental wellbeing support services

Cumbria youth voice groups commonly prioritise emotional and mental wellbeing issues to raise awareness, challenge stigma and call for service improvements. We wanted to knit that in better to our Partnership working around the Local Transformation Plan to give young people a stronger voice, including more young people who had used specialist mental health services and those who had had little contact with support services.

"We're working hard to raise awareness and challenge the stigma surrounding mental health – schools should work towards a 'Trailblazer Award'"
- Youth Council member

“I want young care leavers to be able to get the information they need when they are referred to Adult Mental Health services”

- Young person who has left care



Our Care Leavers forums were also contributing to the development of a core offer for young people leaving care following the Social Work and Children Act (2017). Young people felt strongly that those care leavers who were making the transition into Adult Mental Health Services should know what to expect and also that staff should have a greater understanding of the needs of young people who were moving into adulthood after being in care.

2. What were key barriers to it being successful?

- The challenge of bringing groups of young people together over the vast geography of Cumbria within the time span of the project.
- Getting enough information out to young people about where we were/are with our transformation work and supporting their understanding of how it links to what's important for them
- At the outset our approach was too adult focussed and we talked about a 'strategy' which wasn't that helpful from young people's perspective

“The leaflet produced by young people leaving care has been circulated to all Adult Mental Health teams and the feedback is staff find it really helpful when meeting all young people (not just care leavers) for the first time.”

- Adult Mental Health Service Manager

3. What expertise or skills did you have in your team/organisation, what did you need to bring in from outside? Whose buy-in was important and how was it demonstrated?

In our Local Authority Children's Services we have Participation Officers and Children's Rights Officers, they support Youth Councils, Leaving Care Forums, Children in Care Councils, our LSCB Young Perspectives Board and Youth Members of Parliament. In CAMHS there are 3 Assistant Psychologists with a brief to involve both service users and children, young people and parents more broadly in improving Specialist CAMHS.

Bringing in members of the Young Minds Trailblazer team was helpful in enabling all the different stakeholders to focus on what was important for young people in this project and their facilitation of a workshop gave young people the opportunity to share their views and ideas in a safe environment.

We needed the support of Senior Leaders for the project and this was given at Chief Exec and Director level and we had their full support.

4. What did you learn along the journey about co-production and participation?

We've learned the importance of young people being involved in different ways at different levels in a more inclusive way. Some young people are very active and want to be part of a



“I didn’t know what to expect and I was really nervous but the activity was good and nearly everyone was able to talk about mental health and how they felt”

- Young Person attending the Autumn workshop at Carlisle Youth zone

group. Others would rather comment on a Care Plan format or complete a survey. Some are passionate campaigners and want to work alongside service providers to bring improvements.

We learned about the resources required to do participation properly and how a multi-agency approach can help to involve a wider range of young people. How by sharing the aims of different organisations, participation work across the NHS and

LA we come to realise that we all want the same thing – mechanisms in place whereby voices can be heard and young people supported to get involved in the decision making processes to improve services as part of our transformation work.

5. What are your Top Tips to other organisations wanting to develop a participation project with a group like this?

- Good planning is crucial.
- Training for both young people and staff on the participation and involvement skills base so that young people can feel confident about taking part is very useful.
- Bringing people together over large distances can be difficult so make the most of other ways of communicating, via safe social networks, teleconferencing etc.

6. What impact have you had? What impact do you hope to have?

- We’ve linked up the wider engagement work with the CAMHS engagement work – e.g. CAMHS staff attending district (evening) Youth Council meetings
- We’ve raised the profile to a national level in terms of service improvement requirements in Cumbria as one of our Youth Members of Parliament did an interview with Rory Stewart on ‘Time to Talk’ Day
- More young people are aware and involved in the Transformation work
- Specialist CAMHS have been successful in attracting funding and 20 weeks of organisational development support for a Young Ambassador Scheme for CAMHS

“The Transformation Plan 2017 is too adult focussed and not youth friendly so we’ll be writing a young person’s version next year and make sure we get that information into the hands of young people who need help.”

- Youth Council member

7. What comes next for your project?

Young people are now generating ideas for how they will contribute to the refresh of Cumbria’s transformation plan this year.