



Learning Space Community Triage Pilot

Demonstrating Getting Advice and Signposting and Shared Decision Making with Children, Young People and their Parents/Carers

Natasha Adams, deputy manager and community wellbeing lead at 'Learning Space' Mindworks Surrey, describes a recent pilot to improve and facilitate **Getting Advice and Signposting** and **shared decision making** with children, young people, and families (CYPF) in the community and how their offer aligns with the THRIVE Framework for System Change (Wolpert et al., 2019).

Background

Learning Space, a service that is part of Mindworks, Surrey, is a mental health charity working across Surrey to improve the emotional wellbeing of children aged 5 to 18 years old. Learning Space have centres in Guildford, Redhill and Tadworth and adopts a strengths-based, solution focused approach to meet the needs and interests of CYPF.

How did the pilot come about?

In spring 2021, Learning Space held several voice and engagement events for CYPF to understand how to meet their needs in the community. CYPF identified that they wanted greater involvement in decisions made about their care, a quicker and smoother process to access services and transition between services, and a stronger focus on positive attributes within the family to build their confidence and sense of self-worth. Learning Space regularly met with Alliance partners and recognised there was a strong focus on delivering interventions for children, but less so on supporting the family through advice and signposting. This led to a collaboration with colleagues in the Access and Advice Team (Mindworks, Surrey, single point of access service), to pilot a new system of triaging, designed to meet the needs of CYPF at the point of initial contact to services.

What were your aims?

- To construct a community-based triage model offering choice and genuine shared decision making;
- Use solution-focused methods to identify existing family resources, develop coping skills and resilience;
- To recognise and celebrate family strengths and develop a sense of hope;
- To build relationships with services in the local community.

How did the pilot work?

A total of 18 CYPF from East Surrey, took part in the pilot in May 2022. The families were from East Surrey (Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead or Epsom and Ewell).

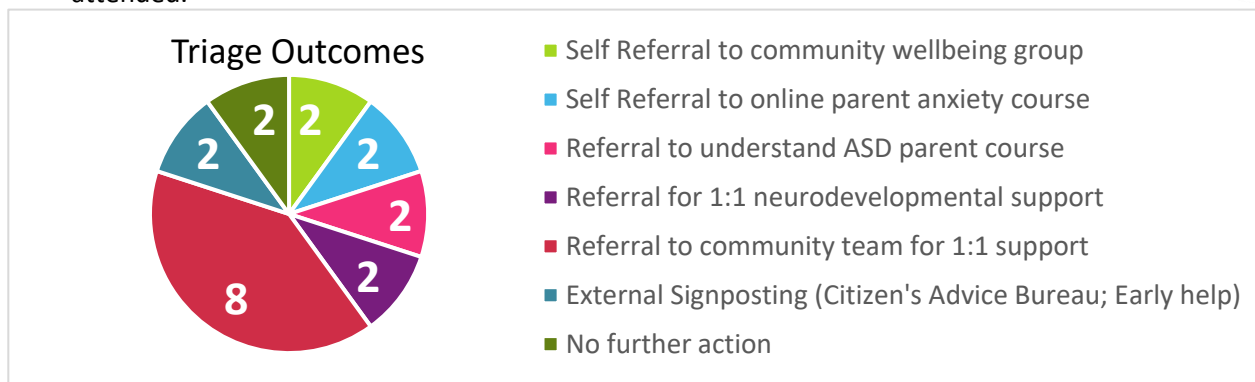
1. 18 referrals were received and accepted from Access and Advice for children aged 7 to 15 years old, some of these children were awaiting an ASD diagnosis.
2. A Learning Space community practitioner contacted the family via email, phone or text and the young person was included in the decisions of where to meet.
3. 10 families were triaged in person, including home visits and 8 took place via 'Zoom'.
4. A solution focused script was used to understand and identify the strengths of whole family, their best hopes and what it would look like if things were going well.
5. A range of different provisions were shared with families, and they were asked to identify what would be most beneficial for them going forward.

What were the results of the pilot?

- Following triage, of the 18 children who were awaiting a diagnosis of ASD, 75% felt their immediate needs (building confidence, family relations and coping mechanisms) could be met within the community well-being or parent anxiety group and did not feel an automatic referral to the neurodevelopmental team was needed.



- All children and young people were invited to attend the triage meeting and 90% attended.



Aligning with the THRIVE needs-based grouping and principles?

By adopting a solution focused approach and script to the triaging process, we have been able to meet the needs of the young person, by identify the family strengths, their best hopes and develop a shared understanding of their difficulties i.e., bullying, low confidence, and poor school attendance. This has enabled us to consider options and appropriately signpost young people to services which best suit them and work at their pace.

Example:

We used our solution focused approach with a mother and her 15-year-old son who attend an initial triage at their local centre. The family identified they were good at communicating and wanted to focus on improving the young person's sleep and feel more settled in school. We outlined different services for the family, and they felt they would benefit from six sessions of school-based mentoring, with the support of a Learning Space mentor.

What has been the impact of the pilot?

Children and families have described the service as kind and supportive and they felt their ideas were listened to and implemented. Following triage, families reported an increase in optimism as their strengths weren't typically recognised in other services and were hopeful their child would engage with the signposted services. As a team, Learning Space said they have felt more equipped to utilise their knowledge of local services to meet the needs of more families, in a timely manner.



"I am very happy with the support we have received so far. We did not have to wait long, and N really listened to us and made my daughter feel important"

"N really listened to us. After coming out of session it's made me think about my own mental health"



Future directions

- Getting Advice and Signposting is an Alliance wide approach, and we hope to use our experience and knowledge from this pilot in other local community settings. We hope to support young people through sharing our learning with our Alliance partners, to develop a sustainable and high-quality model of delivery for emotional wellbeing services at a local level.
- We are adapting our current triage model to enable us to take direct referrals from schools in the local area and will continue using solution focused methods which support the use of shared decision making with CYFP.

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