



In June 2017 Break were fortunate to receive funding from Mark Masons of East Anglia for work with young carers across Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.

We put together a plan of service delivery as follows

- 3 young carers groups in schools
- Dramatherapy workshops in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk
- Mentors for young people
- Individual therapy for a small number of young people
- Sibling group for siblings of young people with disabilities.

This is the final report regarding the service that we offered, incorporating and updating the interim report provided in September 2017.

### Young Carers Summer Drama Project 'This is my story'

<p>Feedback from the young people who attended this project...</p> <p>"good fun, cool!"</p> <p>"I have met new people, de-stressed and had fun!"</p> <p>"I feel proud about remembering my lines"</p> <p>"12 out of 10"</p> <p>"I feel more confident"</p> <p>"I have enjoyed being creative"</p> <p>"I have had fun with new friends"</p> <p>"Can I come next year and in all the holidays?"</p> 	<p>...young carers present.....</p>  <p><b>THIS IS MY STORY</b></p>
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'This is my story' ran over 2 days in Ely, Cambridge working with Centre 33. 11 young people aged 9-15 participated. There was a short performance to which friends and family were invited to attend.

In Norfolk (Great Yarmouth and Norwich) 8 young people aged 10-14 participated over a period of 6 days (3 in each location) with a final performance day at Norwich Puppet Theatre, again with an invited audience. There were a number of young people who originally committed to attend but were unable to.

The project provided an opportunity for young carers to explore and share their experiences in a creative and playful way. It supported them to find their voice and also celebrated their resilience and the role they play in supporting their family. Attendance at performances was high suggesting that the young people and their families were invested in the project.

Having been fortunate enough to receive funding this year, we aim to make the project an annual event and seek funding to ensure this happens. This would allow us longer to publicise the project and increase the number of young people who would benefit.

#### Feedback from the young people who attended this project...

"good fun, cool!"

"In primary school I couldn't perform due to bad nerves. Here, I managed to perform and stay calm. I have met new people, de-stressed and had fun!"

"I feel proud about remembering my lines"

"12 out of 10"

"I feel more confident"

"I have enjoyed being creative"

"I was pleased I managed to perform because in school I get too nervous."

'the two days were really good, I enjoyed it. I would not have changed anything about it'

'my favourite part was acting and meeting new people.'

'it was REALLY good.'

'my favourite part was making new friends.'

"I liked meeting new people. I enjoyed both days."

"It helped me to feel more confident at performing. I feels more prepared for my performance in school in year 6. I enjoyed having fun with new friends."

"I enjoyed meeting new people and making friends."

“Can I come next year and in all the holidays?”

### Feedback from parents

My daughter gained confidence, got her out during the holidays and she made friends.

I believe S benefited from the club, it got her involved with other children and gave her more confidence in herself, I would like to thank all who ran the project as it was highly enjoyed by S.

A was eager to go to each session. He enjoyed the activities and certainly loved attending!!

### **Mentoring project**

Break is providing a personal mentor for 8 young carers in Norfolk. The mentors have been recruited and trained. They have professional supervision with our mentor co-ordinator. The mentors provide fortnightly individual support for the young people - giving them some time and attention from an adult. Some of the young people enjoy support in attending activities such as museum trips, going to the park to play football, cinema trips - others use the time to talk about their lives and the difficult times they experience. The young people have absolute choice about whether they have a mentor and indeed whether they continue to see their mentor - the relationships with the mentors and young people have developed well and are strong.

Break's mentoring service continues to thrive - we now have mentors in Cambridgeshire, matched with young people in care and care leavers.

This is a service which is making a real difference to the lives of these young people.

### **Siblings group**

7 young people attended a 3 day residential trip to Kingswood - an outdoor activity centre. They came from Norfolk and Suffolk. The young people took part in all sorts of activities including a climbing wall, “Jacobs Ladder”, some trust exercises, rock climbing etc. In the trust exercises they were all blindfolded and had to get into pairs. They then had to throw a bean bag and guide each other to it. This was then followed by the young people having to walk blindfolded across the site following the sound of an egg rattle. The young people then had to complete an obstacle course with various ropes and ladders around and under trees. The young people had to guide each other using verbal instructions only and they had to keep checking that the other young people were still behind them. They all did an amazing job and worked as a team really well together - experiencing the thrill of danger whilst also the joy of feeling supported and achieving a difficult task.

These young people had opportunities to be with other young people, to have fun , to take risks and to share their experiences as carers. They were well cared for and nurtured throughout.

One parent fed back

“L and F enjoyed every minute of it. They had such an amazing time and we're so pleased that they were able to access activities that we would struggle to do as a family. They miss out on 'normal' family weekends in a lot of ways and this gave them a real break from being at home where the mood and where we can go is often dictated by their brother and what he can cope with.

They have had a weekend where they don't need to worry about leaving their homework around because their brother may eat it or destroy it, or their toys because he may chew them or choke on them. They have also not had to worry about helping when he has a 'meltdown' or ducking because he lashes out when he is frustrated.

They have also made some new friends who have similar challenges in their home lives.

It was also lovely for us to be able to spend some rare 1:1 time with G while his sisters were away.”

Parents continue to inform us that support for their families is essential.

Residential short breaks for children with disabilities allow for family time for the non-disabled sibling, however we know this service is under pressure. Siblings also enjoy having time for themselves away from their family pressures and this funding allowed us to provide precious opportunities for young people with caring responsibilities for their disabling sibling.

### **Young carers groups and individual therapeutic work**

The schools we had offered a group to were initially very keen for us to provide this service for their young people. They were confident that they could identify children who had caring responsibilities. This took longer than we had anticipated and they have since come back to us and said that the need is no longer there for a group.

The young people who attended the drama workshops in the summer holidays evidently had a need for more therapeutic support. These young people engaged well with the dramatherapist and individual therapy was provided to them.

### **Updated report February 2018**

Since our interim report we have been delighted to be able to offer much needed support to 14 children, 3 of whom also received individual therapeutic sessions. Our plan had been to offer groups, but in addition to the challenges in co-ordinating this, we became increasingly aware of a marked need for family support services and more direct support to the families of the young carers who were

referred to us. This support in turn benefitting the young carers by addressing some of the under-lying challenges and creating what we hope will be lasting positive change. Referrals have mainly come from Great Yarmouth and Norwich. Examples of our interventions include:

Caroline (name changed) is a 15 year old girl who was referred to us by her school. A Year 11 student she was presenting as very tired and was noted to have a poor diet. Caroline's school attendance was at 70.37%. Caroline's mum had significant depression, anxiety and phobias, and was reliant on Caroline to help parent her 4 younger siblings (the youngest of whom is 2). Caroline benefitted from the opportunity to explore her experiences and feelings in individual sessions. In addition a Family Centre Practitioner conducted Home Visits, attended meetings and liaised with the school and other professionals. This included supporting mum in accessing much needed mental health services and ensuring that the family were accessing all relevant support. The sessions for Caroline are ongoing, but it is significant to note that at the start of our intervention Caroline rated her feelings about being at home as 1 out of 5, whereas she now feels the situation is 5 out of 5. Caroline has benefitted from a therapeutic space of her own, and from the advocacy and practical support of her Family Centre Practitioner.

Hannah (9) and Robert (8) are siblings that were referred to us via school. Both reportedly had very low school attendance and were caring for their mum and Nan at home, both with disabilities and in receipt of benefits. Hannah was shy, withdrawn, distant and tired. She reported being responsible for most of the household tasks, getting up at 5am on a school day to help dress mum and prepare breakfast. Both Hannah and Robert engaged positively with having individual therapeutic space for themselves. The Family Centre Practitioner was able to gain the trust of the family, who confided that issues of domestic violence were also present in the home. Support and advice was offered in this regard. We were able to support the family, explore ways of reducing the responsibilities for Hannah and Robert, and offer practical support. For example we were able to secure some further charitable funding to provide transport to school for Hannah and Robert in the morning which has eased one area of pressure for the family.

These are just three of the young carers that your funding has enabled us to support. Others include Karen (11) supporting her mother and older sister, both with chronic mental health conditions and Carla (11) caring for her father who has had a heart attack and her mother who has depression and hypermobility.

We have worked with 4 families particularly intensively during this period. Each piece of work has been bespoke, and planned to respond to the unique and individual needs of the young carer and their family. To give an idea of the amount of work this takes, on average each family has required 2-3 hours of worker time per week (direct visits, professional liaison and telephone support) over a 12 week period. This work continues to be on-going.

## Conclusion

The funding provided by Mark Masons has enabled some of our most vulnerable and burdened young people a range of activities and support to help them through a difficult time in their lives. They have had therapeutic support and they have had fun. Importantly they have experienced that there are other young people with similar experiences and have felt less isolated by that.

Our original plan was to provide groupwork in schools - this did not meet the presenting need which was for fewer children, young people and families with complex and multiple needs to receive more intensive support. We used the funding to provide this which has made an enduring impact on the young people and families, changing and improving their lives and family situation for the future.

This work is on-going. We have secured additional smaller pots of charitable funding to allow some of the families to continue to receive the service.

Break is very grateful to The East Anglia Mark Benevolent Association for supporting our work. The children and young people you have supported this last year have benefitted from a service which would not otherwise have been available. We have been able to reach the young people in multiple ways and importantly have been able to reach some of the most isolated children in our communities.

*CKennay*

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