

Our Strategy 2019-2021



Who are we?

Blue Smile is a Cambridge based charity offering arts-based therapeutic services to children aged three to thirteen.

We operate in the child and adolescent mental health sector offering a clinically driven service where therapists go into schools and offer psychotherapeutic services to children on an individual and group basis. We use proven, fun, arts-based therapies which engage the child in a non-threatening way, helping them to organise and process difficult feelings. The service is backed by a small administration team based in Cambridge city centre.

The organisation partially defrays the cost of provision to schools otherwise unable to offer this service to some of their most vulnerable pupils.



Our VISION

A world where happier children have brighter futures.

Our MISSION

To transform the mental health and life chances of children across Cambridgeshire.

We BELIEVE

Every child deserves the time and space to be heard.

Every child deserves the chance to be mentally and emotionally healthy.

“I have brightness in me again and I feel happiness. I feel that I can take on any learning challenge, and I never used to feel that.” (A, aged 11)



History

Blue Smile was founded in 2010 in response to a stated local need from Headteachers and Children’s Services and its mission has remained constant throughout that time. The service has grown significantly over the last few years. The external environment has evolved, with higher mental health awareness in the education sector and growing incidence of mental health problems in children driving increasing requirement for the charity’s specialist provision.

Inwards funding for this activity has struggled to meet demand and during the summer (2019) the charity implemented an organisational restructure to adapt for the future.

Status

The charity is registered in the UK under the Charity Commission and is an organisational member of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

What do we offer?

Different levels of service are made available to schools depending on their level of need:

- Our Partner Schools service offers a team consisting of experienced therapists and trainees on placement. This team will be in school for a day each week and will see 16-18 children. All therapists and trainees are managed by an experienced team leader on site and also receive external clinical supervision. We work in 8 Partner Schools: most are in areas of disadvantage.
- Our Outreach service is a model where a single highly qualified and experienced therapist will see 2-4 children per week, these children will tend to have more complex needs. We have 10-12 therapists providing Outreach services.
- Our menu of services offers a whole school approach, teacher training, mentoring, pupil group work, class workshops and parent group work.
- A senior clinical management team offers support, advice, management supervision and training to each of our fifty therapists and trainees.

Why are we needed?

- Around 1 in 8 UK children have a diagnosable mental health problem - up from around 1 in 10 in 2004 (*NHS Digital 2018*)
- 50% of mental health problems in adults begin before the age of 14 (*Kessler R & Wang P, 2007*)
- 1 in 3 diagnosed mental health conditions in adulthood are known to directly relate to adverse childhood experiences (*Young Minds: Addressing Adversity, 2019*)
- Cambridge City, where many of our Partner schools are situated, has significant numbers of children living in the poorest 20% of UK households, affecting wellbeing, self-efficacy and attainment (*The Good Childhood Report 2019, The Children's Society 2016, Webber et al., UCL 2005*)
- A particularly significant attainment gap exists in Cambridgeshire between disadvantaged children and their peers
- 58% of referrals to the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) were declined in 2016-17 (*Children's Commissioner*)
- On average just over £14 per child was allocated to low-level mental health services in 2018-19: While in London it was £17.88, in the east of England it was just £5.32 (*Children's Commissioner, April 2019*)

"I now know a lot of strategies to calm myself down at school and at home. I feel more in charge of my volcano inside me." (M, aged 11)

Strategic objectives 2019 - 2021

We have five clear accountable objectives for the next two years:

1. **Build** on the excellence of our clinical service to meet children's mental health needs most effectively.
2. **Complete** an organisational restructure and consolidate service delivery in year one to improve efficiencies, ensure continued excellence and prepare for further growth in subsequent years.
3. **Undertake** a comprehensive review of fundraising strategy and complete costs optimisation to maximise funds into clinical service delivery.
4. **Review** our internal and external communications and marketing to strengthen our service, reputation and supporter base.
5. **Increase** evaluation and research to maintain our high standards and enhance understanding of children's mental health and practice.

94% of parents say that their children's emotional problems improved

87% of teachers say that children improve because of Blue Smile



How are we funded?

The above service generates an income stream from the schools involved but this is subsidised by Blue Smile and does not cover the entire cost of provision.

The charity relies on significant fundraising efforts to pay for the remainder and to cover the cost of back office support.

In order to support our current commitments we look to raise £250,000 each year through a combination of grants, donations from trusts, private and corporate donors.

How are we different?

Blue Smile offers a very high quality of service to those children with difficult needs who are unable to access statutorily provided CAMHS services.

The service is tailored to the child rather than a one size fits all approach adopted by some providers; we work with a client for as long as is needed rather than offer a time bounded programme as in other agencies.

This inevitably means that cost of provision can be higher than other offerings in the sector.

How do we reach our clients?

Our charity is small and we focus our efforts on schools within Cambridgeshire.

There is some limited competition from other charitable organisations but the quality proposition that is core to Blue Smile does not have any direct competition.

There is minimal competition from statutory service providers.

Oversight and governance

The current management structure consists of a Charity Director to whom the Clinical Operations Manager, Finance Controller and Office Manager report.

The charity operates functional advisory groups made up of Board members, senior managers, employees and expert volunteers. These groups report to the Board and support the Board in providing oversight of Clinical Safeguarding and Ethics, Finance and Remuneration, Fundraising and Marketing, and Research and Impact.

In addition, ad hoc groups are created to oversee specific change projects as required.

These groups report directly to an enthusiastic and committed Board with extensive experience relevant to our work.

Financial management

The charity engages a Finance Controller responsible for finance operations. An overview of our budgeting, forecasting and fundraising processes can be provided upon request.