

## Our changing world

# Building flexible support for children and schools

As our children returned to school for the first time in five months in September 2020, it was to a very different world. Although the first lockdown was over, the school that they returned to was not the same as the one they had left.

In responding to this changing world, Blue Smile has listened to children, parents and teachers. We have maintained the high clinical standards of our services but adapted to the needs of schools with flexible and tailored delivery.

This review spotlights the work that we achieved through a turbulent time, the excellent outcomes for the children we support, and the impact that this has on them and the whole school community. We will continue to grow and learn, keeping support for mental health and emotional wellbeing at the heart of our service.

## Case Study 'Finding a Voice'\*

Blue Smile therapists led an eight-week group on 'Managing Our Emotions' for eight children aged 10-11. The class teacher chose the children she hoped would benefit most. Four children (Joshua, Nadim, Tyler and Ashley) had an impact on her class with their behaviour – including lack of self-control and poor social skills. The other four (Aiden, Chloe, Mahasin and Grace) concerned her as they did not participate well in class or seemed on their own without friends.

Tyler contributed well to the group but seemed to put on an American accent every time he spoke. Aiden told Tyler what he wanted to say in a quiet voice and Tyler would say it for him out loud. Chloe sat quietly observing the others, Grace just seemed to agree with everything Ashley said, and Mahasin moved herself away from the others in a circle to sit quietly against the wall on her own.

The children were encouraged through group games and art activities to explore their emotions and how to manage them better, how their brains work, 'fight, flight and freeze' responses and how we express ourselves differently.

In the fourth week, Nadim remarked to Tyler 'You're speaking in your own voice!!'. Tyler had begun to drop his American accent. Aiden also was now speaking up himself rather than relying on Tyler to speak for him and was deliberately placing himself next to Nadim for the art activities and enjoying his company.



Chloe was growing in confidence speaking in the group and discovered that she had a lot to say which the others really listened to – she glowed when this happened, while Grace, as she splashed thick paint on her picture, had begun to express to one of the therapists her anger about her parents' separation and how it made her feel.

There was a poignant moment in the last session when Mahasin said to the group 'I'm lonely sometimes but maybe I'm a loner' and Joshua replied, 'We want you to play with us, but you go off on your own, why?' 'Because I'm shy and worried,' said Mahasin. The group joined in reassuring Mahasin that they liked her and wanted her to be with them. She flushed and a smile lit up her whole face.

As the therapists reviewed the children with the class teacher, she reported that they were more confident, seemed happier, and were more settled.

\*All details have been changed to protect a child's anonymity

## A note from the Charity Director

### Goodbye from Jess

'This past year has seen a continuance of delivery of Blue Smile's core therapeutic values across the charity in a contrasting environment; we have moved out of a series of lockdowns, to a more familiar, freer and open situation but with the continuing shadow of the pandemic present in our minds. Despite this Blue Smile has resolutely and consistently offered support to many children and to the wider school communities.'

I am incredibly proud of both the Blue Smile therapists and office staff and their willingness to serve with continued professionalism and compassion in these challenging times and am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work with such a competent, capable and thoroughly wonderful group of people.

Personally, this has been a year of change too and, after much deliberation, I decided to step back from my role within the charity and embrace semi-retirement. I am so pleased to see Anne take up the role of Charity Director and I am confident she will provide the drive and vision to enable Blue Smile to move from strength to strength and help even more Cambridgeshire children.

While life cannot yet be described as "back to normal" it has been so inspiring to see Blue Smile growing in resilience over the last couple of years and holding fast to its vision to help as many children as possible. I wish the trustees, staff, donors and supporters all the very best in their future work.'

Warmest regards  
**Jess Manley**

### And, hello from Anne

'I am delighted to be joining Blue Smile at the start of the 2021/22 academic year and to have the opportunity to look back on everything the charity has achieved in the previous year.'

And what a year it was – we all went back to school in September 2020 with bubbles, masks and one-way systems. We had new start times, new end times, burst bubbles and closed classes. November 2020 saw a second lockdown – but with the schools remaining open. As the New Year started, we were back to full lockdown and online schooling. Only in April 2021 were we once again able to be back to school.

And through all of this, Blue Smile continued to support more children, in more ways. With over 300 children supported this year through 1:1 therapy, groupwork and joint parent-child therapy – Blue Smile have now supported nearly 2000 children.

As well as increasing our reach, we have delivered flexible support – online and face-to-face – and to the children that need it most. 58% of the children we supported this year were eligible for Pupil Premium and 45% were on the Special Educational Needs register. This shows our ongoing commitment to supporting children with the highest levels of need.

I look forward to working with all of our staff, therapists, volunteers, trustees, donors and supporters as we continue to support the children of Cambridgeshire with their mental health and emotional wellbeing.'

With best wishes,  
**Anne Kent-Taylor**

## More children year on year

1,992 35,006

Children helped Therapeutic sessions provided

## Who we are

Blue Smile is a Cambridgeshire children's mental health charity, which believes in a whole-school approach to mental health. This means that in addition to providing therapeutic support for children, we offer services that build mental health understanding in the school and family systems around children.

Children are at the heart of all that we do at Blue Smile, and we are committed to supporting children's mental health and emotional wellbeing so that they can build resilience, be happier, and engage in learning better.

## What we do

- ★ We provide expert arts-based therapy in schools, working 1:1 with children aged 3-13
- ★ Our 1:1 therapy is based on the needs of the child and is provided for as long as it is needed
- ★ We provide additional groupwork and wellbeing workshops for children and young people
- ★ We also support the community around the child with services for parents, carers and school staff.

## Why we are needed more than ever

- ★ 1 in 6 children have a probable mental health disorder, increasing from 1 in 9 in 2017, with a higher increase among primary-aged children (NHS Digital, 2020)
- ★ Record numbers of children and young people are seeking help from NHS mental health services – but only about a quarter are receiving treatment (Children's Commissioner, 2021)
- ★ Levels of emotional and behavioural difficulties have been significantly higher for young children in low-income households and children with SEND (Oxford Co-SPACE study, 2020)
- ★ Primary school leaders are reporting that pupils are struggling with anxiety, social skills and confidence, as well as skills for learning such as concentration, memory and stamina (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2021)
- ★ Children have shared that good mental and physical health are their main priority for having a good future (Children's Commissioner, Big Ask Survey, 2021).

93%

of parents say their child's mental health has improved because of Blue Smile

89%

of teachers say children's mental health has improved because of Blue Smile

80%

of children with very worrying mental health issues improved

No one was prepared for this pandemic. I think you've done a marvelous job at helping us stay connected through this trying time.

Parent

## From September 2020 to August 2021, we have:

- ★ Provided flexible in-person and remote support to over 300 children across 27 Cambridgeshire schools
- ★ Delivered group work on topics such as Managing and Understanding Emotions and Managing Transition
- ★ Completed our two-year project with Relate Cambridge – 'Stronger Families – Building Resilience'
- ★ Developed and provided class wellbeing workshops to over 300 children, promoting and normalizing discussions around mental health
- ★ Piloted a family support service that offered joint parent-child therapy, developed in response to an increasing need for whole family support
- ★ Trained Blue Smile workers, covering areas such as safeguarding, providing therapeutic support online, and LGBTQ+ awareness.

## How do we give children the best support possible?

2020/2021 has been a year of ongoing adaptation for Blue Smile as the coronavirus pandemic continued to affect our lives. Our priority this year was to continue providing excellent mental health support for children and schools by embedding a flexible approach into all our services.

### Flexible support for the child

Throughout the 2020/2021 school year, therapists and children experienced numerous interruptions due to more lockdowns and self-isolation requirements. Blue Smile prioritised face-to-face support but embedded our remote support options to prepare for the ongoing uncertainty. Almost 90% of our therapy sessions happened in person – but our flexible services meant that children were always able to access Blue Smile support even if they could not attend school.

Recognising that the pandemic has affected all children, we provided groupwork centred around managing and understanding emotions and preparing for upcoming transitions such as a move to secondary school.

We also offered whole-class wellbeing workshops to hundreds of pupils. These workshops aimed to promote and normalise discussions about mental health and how we can all take care of our emotional wellbeing.

I enjoyed learning about keeping your mind healthy.



### Flexible support for the community around the child

Blue Smile has always taken a whole-school approach to mental health support because we recognise that working with the school and family community around children to foster stable environments is crucial for sustaining the positive effects of therapeutic interventions.

This year, we have continued to work alongside teachers and school staff to equip them with better understanding around pupils' behavioural and emotional issues. We have also helped school staff manage their personal stress and pressures during what was a very challenging year for everyone.

Blue Smile has also responded to the increasing need for support for the whole family, as highlighted in our referrals data. Our parents and carers survey showed that more support was needed for adults' mental health and emotional wellbeing compared to before the pandemic.

Throughout the school year, we continued to make regular support calls to parents and carers of children who were receiving therapeutic support. The calls provided them with time to chat with a Blue Smile therapist to receive appropriate support and advice.

### What this means for children

- ★ Blue Smile's support has become especially important in the ongoing pandemic that has had a disproportionate impact on children's mental health and wellbeing
- ★ Blue Smile's services provided directly through school means that families at our schools have more and quicker accessibility to much-needed support
- ★ Our clinical recovery rates show that children's emotional functioning is significantly improved with Blue Smile's early intervention, which can prevent more serious difficulties later in life
- ★ Supporting children's emotional wellbeing reduces behavioural difficulties and emotional blocks related to learning
- ★ Children who have received Blue Smile support have better school engagement, improved attendance, and fewer exclusions.

74%

of children were more willing to engage in school life

40%

of children had better attendance

66%

of children had fewer exclusions

## With thanks to

Our work is only possible due to the generous support that we receive. We would like to thank everyone who has helped us over the past year, including:

### Individuals

Our major donors, our Ambassadors, 'Friends of Blue Smile', Supporters, Trustees, Volunteers and Regular Givers

### The Community

Brampton Golf Club, Chaneth & Dinath, Cheska Tyler, Clare College, Corpus Christi College, Dillan, Ecclesiastical – Movement for Good, Grand Lodge of Cambridgeshire, Impington Village College, Jesus College, Local Giving, Magdalene College, Maggie Brown, Monkfield Park Primary School, Queen's College, Sidney Sussex College, St Andrews Church, Histon, Tesco Bags of Help and Trinity College

### Corporate

Adepto Consulting Limited, BDB Pitmans, Cambridge University Press and Assessment, Cambridge Consultants, Cambridge Design Partnership, Elica Ltd, Ewing Associates, First Base Ltd, Global Inkjet Systems, Mace Group Ltd, Ninja Theory Ltd and Smoom

### Trusts and Foundations

Albert Van den Bergh Charitable Trust, Arm Cambridge Community Fund, Cadent Foundation Covid Fund, Cambridgeshire County Council Discretionary Business Grant, Cambridge County Council Innovate & Cultivate Fund, Cambridgeshire Coronavirus Community Fund, Cambridgeshire Coronavirus Recovery Fund, Cambridgeshire Rural Fund, Chapman Charitable Trust, Cheffins Community Fund, Eastern Counties Educational Trust, Ely Community Unit Trust, Enabling Activities Charitable Trust, Homelands Charitable Trust, John Coates Charitable Trust, Kelly Family Trust, Masonic Charitable Foundation, Mrs Smith and Mount Trust, Openwork Foundation, Sir Jules Thorn Trust, South Cambridgeshire District Council, The Batterson Chivers Foundation, The Betty Lawes Foundation, The Draper's Company, The Evelyn Trust, The Henry Smith Charity (Improving Lives), The Newby Trust, The Paragon Trust, The Pye Foundation, The Red Hill Trust, The Strangward Charitable Trust, TK Maxx/Homesense and Wates Family Enterprise Trust

### Blue Smile Heros

Dillan – who completed the Three Peaks Challenge and had raised £1781 by the end of July

Chaneth & Dinath – who climbed Snowdon and had raised over £200 by the end of July

Cheska Tyler – who ran a whole marathon and raised £1302

Maggie Brown – who raised over £100 by selling her beautiful handmade cards

By leaving a gift to Blue Smile in your will, you can support Cambridgeshire children to live happier lives and have brighter futures. Together, let's make building children's resilience and life prospects our legacy

To donate visit our website:  
[www.bluesmile.org.uk](http://www.bluesmile.org.uk)

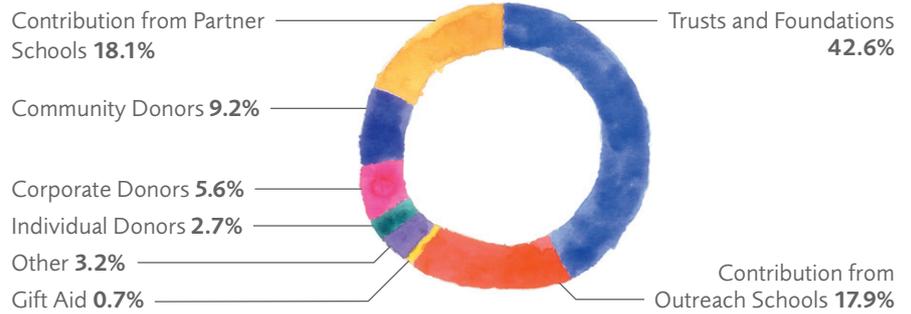
For more information email:  
[info@bluesmile.org.uk](mailto:info@bluesmile.org.uk)

Or call:  
01223 314725

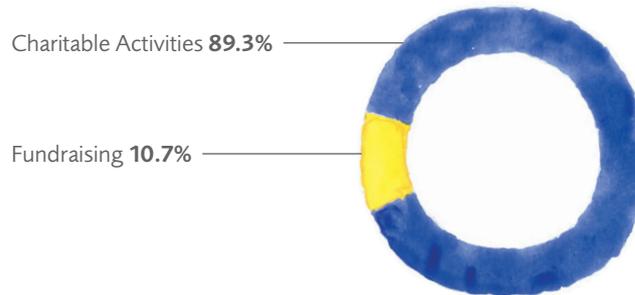
Blue Smile: Registered Charity No. 1139279  
Registered Company No. 7411348

## How we fund the help we give

### Our income £496,047



### Our expenditure £383,766



## How your donations help

- ★ £900 provides a child with a term of specialist, one-to-one, arts-based therapy
- ★ £200 enables a child to join an interactive workshop on managing their feelings – just like the children in our case study
- ★ £150 provides all the art therapy materials we use in one school each year
- ★ £10 buys a puppet which helps a child to tell stories about what is upsetting them.

## Moving forwards

As the world moves on from the initial stages of the pandemic, we recognise the immediate impact that this has had on the children we support, but acknowledge that the long term effects are, as yet, unknown.

As part of our charitable response to supporting the immediate impact of COVID on Cambridgeshire children's mental health, Blue Smile will:

- ★ make it easier for schools where we are currently working in an outreach capacity to refer more children for 1:1 therapy
- ★ deliver four pilot workshops on Managing Change, then learn and adapt these for the future
- ★ take the results of our parents and carers survey, and offer more support to adults so that they can support their children.

Thank you to everyone who helps to put smiles on the faces of children and adults alike with your creative and inspiring fundraising activities! Cheska Tyler (right) ran a full marathon to raise £1302.

