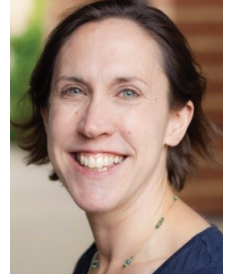


Annual Review 2022-23

As you may well be aware, we are sadly seeing record levels of mental health problems, with six children in every school class likely to have a mental health disorder. This has led to increased demand nationwide, which we are seeing in our schools in Cambridgeshire. Blue Smile are proud to have continued to deliver high quality 1:1 therapy to more children this year, providing long-term, specialist help alongside support for teachers and families.



We have also focussed on expanding our small group work. This is our model of early intervention, allowing us to meet demand by increasing the number of children we support in a cost-effective way and make good use of the mental health workforce. We remain committed to supporting trainee therapists, with clinical placements within established therapy teams, and our new training bursaries. In this way, we contribute towards developing the therapists of the future.

I am delighted to present the Blue Smile Annual Review for 2022-23. The work that we do is only possible due to the generosity of our supporters. Thank you for everything that you have done over the past year to help us support happier children to have brighter futures.

Anne

Anne Kent-Taylor, Charity Director

Our year in numbers

20%

children in England have a probable mental health disorder (NHS Digital, 2023)

We continued to provide specialist 1:1 arts-based therapy and other support for children with mental health difficulties, expanding our work to support more children in more schools.

255

children supported through 1:1 therapy, compared to 232 in 2021-2.

30

Cambridgeshire schools where we worked, up from 24 in 2021-2

86%

of children felt they'd made progress at the end of therapy

153

children were supported via small group work, compared to 59 in 2021-2



"At school I feel more confident in myself and happier and now I have more friends. At home I have got better at knowing and managing my feelings" - child after 1:1 therapy with Blue Smile.



"(my child) worries less because she communicates more easily about what she is experiencing" - parent

"It helped me talk about my feelings to other people..to understand that the sad things are OK to talk about" - child

"My child is being listened to and given tools to help in a school environment... she has become much more confident" - parent

"The support has been vital... in beginning to make sense of some of the experiences they have had" - teacher

Who did we help?

In the 2022-3 academic year, we supported 255 children with 1:1 therapy, up from 232 in 2021-2. Average age at the start of therapy was 8.1 years. 59.5% were boys and 40.5% were girls. We saw a rise in the complexity of problems children were facing, compared to 2021-2, reinforcing the need for long-term, specialist support.

53%

were eligible for Pupil Premium, indicating greater socioeconomic need (national average: 24%).

47%

were on their school's Special Educational Needs register (national average: 14%).

60%

were facing 2 or more "Adverse Childhood Experiences" eg family breakdown, domestic abuse, parental illness or neglect, with 29% facing at least 4.

Parents and teachers of all children receiving 1:1 therapy also received support to help them better understand and meet the child's needs at home and in the classroom.

Our impact

At the end of 1:1 therapy (on average 31 sessions):

90%

of parents reported children had improved on their identified goals.

61%

of children were more engaged in school life.

44%

of children improved school attendance.

Aaron's story – a young carer *name has been changed

As a young carer, Aaron, 10, felt different from his peers. He was isolated at school and struggled to concentrate.

When he started 1:1 therapy, Aaron enjoyed painting and playing out imaginary games with toy figures in a sand tray, a safe way of exploring situations and feelings. Over time, he started to talk more directly to the therapist about his life. She helped Aaron understand what was going on in his brain and body when he was anxious, upset or angry and ways to maintain positive and healthy relationships.

Meetings with Aaron's parents supported the whole family, and they could reassure him that not everything was his responsibility. Aaron started to spend less time on his own and form new friendships. He became more confident in class, expressing his own choices and preferences, he started to believe that he mattered.

Focus on groupwork

We continued to expand our **early-intervention groupwork**, supporting 153 children in small groups, up from 59 last year. We work with small groups of 6-8 children who need a bit of extra support to manage big feelings or situations, such as transition to secondary school. This is a cost-effective way to reach more children and make effective use of the limited mental health workforce, intervening early when children start to struggle to prevent problems escalating.

We delivered our first **groupwork in secondary schools**, running 6 pilot "Survive and Thrive" groups for 41 year 7 children needing additional mental health support following transition from primary.

"It's a good space where you feel safe to share things, but if you don't want to, [they] give you space" - child

"helps me to de-stress and calm down" - child

"At home, it has helped me to tell people how I am feeling inside. At school, I worry less" - child



Our team

61 Blue Smile practitioners supported children, including qualified therapists, student trainees on clinical placement and volunteer mentors. Regular training sessions ensure our team can continue offering the most effective support possible to children. We ran 6 training sessions in the year with topics including self-harm, safeguarding, unconscious bias and working with clay.

The **Blue Smile bursary scheme** launched in 2023 is part of our commitment to developing and diversifying the mental health workforce, supporting training of therapists from under-represented groups. Two £1000 awards per year are made to post-graduate students training as child and adolescent therapists. The first recipients, Sharifa Begum and Helen Prasad, are both undertaking clinical placements with Blue Smile as part of their studies.

"I decided to train as a therapist because I want to support children's mental health at a time of great pressure. I used to work in education and saw how the covid pandemic, cost of living crisis, social media etc are all putting a massive toll on children's wellbeing. So far, the training has been challenging but rewarding. Starting placements with children has made it all feel worthwhile."

Helen Prasad, Blue Smile trainee and bursary recipient.

Looking forward

In 2023-4, we will:

- 🕒 Pilot early intervention groupwork for children struggling with anxiety.
- 🕒 Introduce a new cloud based system for clinical data to improve efficiency and allow improved analysis and evaluation.
- 🕒 Continue expanding our service to new schools across the county



A huge thank you to all the individuals and organisations who supported us in 2022-3, including:

AKA Contemporary, Albert Van de Bergh Charitable Trust, ARM Ltd, Ashtons Legal, Barnabas Oley's Charity, Batterson Chivers Foundation, Binks Trust, Bruntwood SciTech, Cambridge University Press & Assessment, Cambs Community Foundation – Innovate Cultivate, Cambs Community Foundation - Warwick & Dominey, Camena Bioscience, Castle Townswomen Guild, Churchill College, Cooperative Community Fund, Corpus Christi College, East Cambridgeshire District Council, Ely Community Unit Trust, Enabling Activities Charitable Trust, Friends of St Bartholomew's Court., Friends of Blue Smile, Fulbourn United Reformed Church, Garfield Weston Foundation, Hills Road Sixth Form College, Homelands Charitable Trust, Innovia Technology, Interact Group, Johnson Matthey PLC, Kirkland & Ellis International LLP, Laragh Homes, Lesley's Social Dance, Mrs Smith & Mount Trust, Netherby Trust, Northstowe Running Festival, Openwork Foundation, OST Marketing, Pye Foundation, Qualcomm, Rotary Club of Cambridge, Red Hill Trust, Selwyn College, St Bene't's Church, St Neots Crazy Skaters, Strawberry Fair, The Betty Lawes Foundation, The Clothworkers Foundation, The Cole Charitable Trust, The Edward Gostling Foundation, The Evelyn Trust, The Henry Smith Charity, The John Coates Charitable Trust, The Leathersellers' Foundation, The Paragon Trust, The Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust, The Strangward Charitable Trust, TK Maxx and Homesense Foundation, Trinity College, Yellow Door.

Blue Smile heroes

None of our work would be possible without incredible supporters like you! Here are a few examples of how you helped fund vital mental health support last year, creating happier childhoods and brighter futures.



Friday night is dance night at St Ives Corn Exchange! Lesley Collier's monthly sessions are a chance to enjoy dancing Ballroom and Latin styles. She has kindly donated proceeds of "Lesley's Social Dance" to Blue Smile for several years.



OST Marketing put the "fun" in fundraising and raised over £1700. Luke says: ***"The static bike ride to raise funds for Blue Smile was revelatory to me in terms of the sheer enjoyment the OST team took from it and the buzz it created!"***

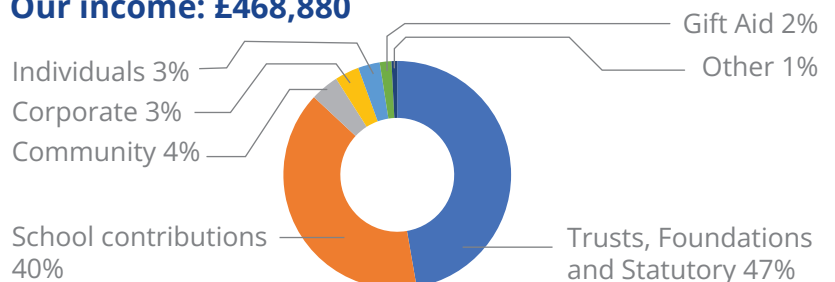


Tim Bryson, one of our founders, says: ***"Leaving a gift in my Will to Blue Smile is my contribution towards safeguarding the continuation of the charity's important work for future generations. I've seen first-hand what a difference the expert, long term help Blue Smile provides can make to children."***

Finances

Our full Annual Report & Accounts will be available from our website and on request from April 2024.

Our income: £468,880



Our expenditure: £468,839

