



Adverse
Childhood
Experiences

Be the Change

EITP WORK STEAM FOUR: TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

BARNARDO'S NI LIFECHANGERS PROGRAMME



Artwork by Chloe, Young Person from Barnardo's NI Leaving Care

SBNI - Early Intervention Transformation Project (EITP) Trauma Informed Practice Project: Children and Young People's Forum

1 Overview of the EITP Trauma Informed Practice Project & Children and Young People's Forum

The SBNI specification requirements were for the procurement of a service (initially for a period of January – March 2019) to establish, service, support and provide feedback from, a Children and Young People's Forum.

The Forum is to provide the opportunity for children and young people to be integral participants in and to support the SBNI EITP Work Stream Four: Trauma Informed Practice – Professional Development Project. The work stream has five sectors of focus for ACE awareness and trauma informed practice training the multi-agency workforce:

1. Community & Voluntary
2. Education
3. Health
4. Justice
5. Social Care

The Forum will be utilised for advice and guidance to this project team and to involve children and young people in the design, delivery and implementation of the programme.

2 Barnardo's Northern Ireland

In January 2019 Barnardo's NI were awarded the contract. Barnardo's NI works directly with over 10,000 children, young people and their families every year. It has over 50 distinct services and also delivers a range of early intervention and family support services in over 200 schools. Barnardo's NI has been on its own journey to become more trauma informed and is investing in staff training,

capacity building with partners and service design to become a trauma informed organisation.

Barnardo's NI has a long history of rights based, participatory practice with the children and young people and is delighted to have the opportunity to work in partnership with SBNI on the work stream.

3 Project Activity

The project was led and delivered by Project Worker Chris Hackworth with support from Julie Healy, Head of Programmes. Following discussion with the SBNI team it was agreed to initially engage with children and young people through Barnardo's NI services. Many services already had 'youth forums' or similar groups who met regularly and had friendships within the group and trusting relationships with service staff. This ensured a safe environment for the work to take place. Support was available from a trusted adult should it be needed and the activities could be part of ongoing engagement. Given the breadth of Barnardo's NI services across NI this also provided geographical spread of participants and diversity across age groups, gender and community background.

Activity centred around two projects:

3.1) Informing the ACE's (Adverse Childhood Experiences) animation for Northern Ireland

To raise awareness of ACEs in NI, SBNI commissioned ESC Films to create an engaging and accessible animation to communicate key information about ACEs to a wide audience. To help inform the 'story' Barnardo's NI were asked to engage with services and capture real life examples of how children and young people had experienced and coped with adversity.

Seven services contributed eight case studies to the project team which were used to inform and create a compelling narrative for the ACEs animation. Those services have been listed overleaf:

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Child Bereavement Service | Parenting Matters |
| Children's House | Pharos |
| Leaving Care | Young Carers |
| Parenting Matters | Time4Me |

For more information about these Barnardo's NI Services please visit:
www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/northernireland/northern_ireland_service_search.htm

3.2) Creating 'Life Changers' short film

SBNI requested the creation of a short film capturing children and young people's experiences to be shown at the launch and during training (when appropriate).

A number of Barnardo's NI projects and programmes facilitated the involvement of children and young people in this process and parental / carer consent was gained before any filming took place. To facilitate the process of engaging children and young people's in the short film, the 'Life Changers' workshops were created. See Appendix 1 for more information. These workshops involved a combination art work (some examples are shown below) and group work to introduce the concepts of adversity and resilience in an accessible and engaging way. This helped children and young people understand the purpose of the film and informed their decision as to whether or not they would be comfortable sharing their views on film.

The aim of the session was to facilitate views and experiences on:

- What types of adversity might children and young people experience?
- Who or what has a positive difference in your life?
- How did that make you feel?

Examples of art work from children and young people who participated in the Life Changer workshops. The art work shows who or what has been the positive difference in the young people's lives and how it makes them feel.



More participants were involved in the sessions than the final editing could include and some young people enjoyed the session but did not wish to be filmed. A breakdown of all the participating services and young people is shown below.

Life Changers Workshop Participants from across Barnardo's NI Support Services

| Service | Location | No & gender of young people | Age range |
|---|---------------------------|--|------------------|
| Disabled Children & Young People's Participation Project | Tower Hill, Armagh | 3 2 female 1 male | 15-21 |
| Family Learning & Integration Project | Holy Rosary PS Belfast | 19 9 female 10 male | 10-11 |
| Leading Change Project | North Belfast | 5 3 female 2 male | 16-17 |
| Leaving Care Project | Belfast | 2 2 female | 19-21 |
| PATHS® Programme | Jones Memorial PS | 23 9 female 14 male | 7-8 |
| | Enniskillen Integrated PS | 27 17 female 10 male | 7 – 8 |
| Refugee Support Service | Belfast | 5 4 female 1 male | 6-16 |
| Young Carers | Ngage, Ballymena | 7 7 female | 14-17 |
| Total number of participants | | | 91 |

The Life Changer sessions and filming took place in March 2019.

Short description of the Barnardo's NI services involved:

- Disabled Children & Young People's Participation Project – facilitates the participation of young disabled people in children's services and planning
- Family Learning & Integration Project –supports black and ethnic minority families in South Belfast
- Leading Change Project – a leadership and youth development programme for 16-17 year olds in North Belfast
- Leaving Care Project – provides support and accommodation for young people leaving care in Belfast and Ballymena
- PATHS® Programme – whole school, social, emotional learning programme for Primary Schools
- Refugee Support Service – supporting Syrian refugee families to make the transition to independent living
- Young Carers – individual and peer support groups for young people helping look after someone at home in the Northern & Western HSCT areas

4 Findings from the engagement process

The nature of adversity and disadvantage experienced by children and young people in NI is well documented. We also know that many children experience more than one type of adversity. Even within this small piece of work carried out over the three months of January to March 2019, the types of adversity shared by children and young people involved in our support services has been stark.

A number of key themes emerged from the collection of case studies and from the engagement sessions. They can be grouped as follows:

- **Types of adversity experienced**
- **How this is felt and experienced by children and young people**
- **'Life Changers' - who and what has helped?**
- **How does this make you feel?**

4.1 Types of adversity experienced

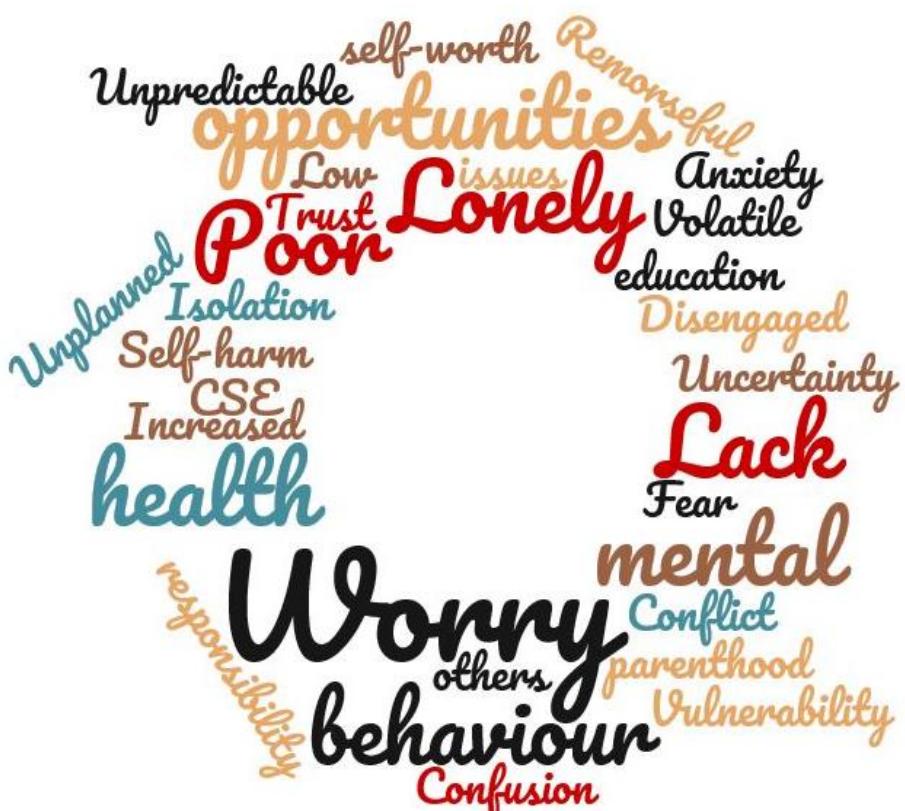
Within the case studies and during the Life Changers filming, children and young people shared experiences of a wide range of adversity. This included adversity that they had directly experienced, or that someone close or known to them had experienced. These experiences included domestic violence, have parents / carers where there is substance misuse, parental / carer ill health, physical abuse, bereavement, death by suicide, having a parent in prison, being a refugee, bullying and cyber bullying and experiencing poor mental health.



4.2 How this is felt and experienced by children and young people

Children and young people were very articulate about the impact of experiencing adversity. Again they spoke about their own direct experience and sometimes about the experience of someone close or known to them. These feelings and experiences included the impact on health and well-being. Children and young people described feelings of – anxiety, stress, low self-worth, self-harm and feeling

isolated and lonely. They also described how dealing with adversity can make it difficult to trust people, coming into conflict with others and challenges in regulating behaviour which sometimes leads to unpredictable or volatile behaviour. Adversity can make engaging in education difficult which can reduce opportunities and enhance feelings of isolation. Adversity can also lead to increased responsibilities at home which can lead to feelings of stress, isolation and poor well-being.



4.3 ‘Life Changers’ - who and what helps?

Children and young people identified a wide range of ‘who’ and ‘what’ that helps when they need some support. Relationships unsurprisingly were key. This ranged from family members (parents, carers, siblings, grandparents and aunts / uncles), other key relationships highlighted included youth workers, teachers, key worker, sports coaches and friends and peers. An important support for some young people was having a stable and secure home life and

for others it is access to specialist support such as counselling or therapy. Children also highlighted the importance of having fun, socialising with peers, sharing their experiences with other young people and for some children their pets were very important to their well-being.

Key themes:

- **Trusted adult** - having someone to listen when they needed it, a key person is available and accessible, having time to engage (not being rushed) and conversations and support moving at their pace (child led).
 - **Practical support** - having a home, safety, financial support and help with everyday tasks.
 - **Peer support** – opportunities to have fun, play sport, share views and socialise.



4.4 How does this make you feel?

The most common response to this question was – happy. Children and young people also described feeling – hopeful, loved, safe, comfortable and able to focus. Some direct quotes from participants:

“My mum helps me through tough times. She is loving and gives me good advice.” – Participant from Young Carer’s group

“My teacher changed my life. She taught me English Language, helped me with my verbs and she always throws me the best birthday parties!” – Participant from Syrian Refugee Programme

“My Keyworker changed my life. She is always there for me – no matter what. She is funny, makes me laugh and always understands!”
– Participant from Disabled Children & Young People’s Project



“My Foster Carers changed my life. They took me out of a very bad situation, gave me additional support. They are always there when I need a helping hand.” – Participant from Disabled Children & Young People’s Project

“My friends changed my life. They make me happy every day. They look out for me. They support me. They encourage me. If I am sad they ask if I am ok.” - Participant from PATHS® Programme

“Sport changed my life. When I am playing football I am just so focused on the game that I don’t have enough time to think or worry about anything else.” – Participant from Leading Change programme

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

This small snapshot of a small number of children and young people in Barnardo’s NI services and programmes highlights the wide range and complexity of adversity experienced by children and young people. The experiences include complex and sustained adversity, the impact of a single traumatic event and the more common challenges facing children and young people such as bullying.

The impact of adversity is sometimes clear to those around the child but it can also be hidden. Children and young people often feel guilty for the situation and can be reluctant to ask for help.

Many strategies highlighted by children and young people as helping them through tough times do not cost extra resources. Things like taking time to listen, to ask questions, to notice, to wonder ‘why’ someone is behaving the way they do. These are human qualities of empathy and respect that everyone interacting with children and young people can employ.

Also highlighted is the importance of having at least one trusted adult who is available and accessible. Where this wasn’t available at home (or in addition to support at home) many young people highlighted the positive role of teachers, youth workers or the importance of their key worker.

Children and young people need to be involved in shaping and informing strategies to improve their lives. Their voices bring a richness and real life experience to illustrate the importance of being trauma informed and using trauma informed practice. The views and experiences of children and young people resonate with the trauma informed professional development planned in the EITP work stream. Building the capacity of the workforce to identify and respond to adversity will have prevention and early intervention benefits.

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APPENDIX 1 – Life Changer Session

Barnardo's 'Life Changers' Session Plan

| TIME | ACTIVITY | NOTES |
|-------|--|--|
| 5min | Intro & Explanation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Today we will be discussing Life-Changers – people or programmes that have changed our lives for the better. At the end of the session there will be a chance for some of you to answer a few questions and possibly feature in a short film. |
| 15min | Group Icebreaker Game: Perfect Life vs Real Life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYP draw “The Perfect Life” – this could be a person or a picture Feedback & explain that real life isn't like that. At one stage or another everyone experiences adversity – some more than others. |
| 15min | Individual Exercise: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYP get 3 post-its and are challenged to think of 3 examples of adversity that they think children in N.I. might face. Feedback & stick posters on flip page entitled “Real Life”. Short discussion on adversity that affects young people in NI |
| 25min | Life Changers Exercise | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYP each receive a paper plate and some pens to draw or write down the name of a person /group /moment that changed their life for the better. |

| | | |
|--------|---------------|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback: CYP stand up, show plate, share with group |
| 5min | Conclusion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank everyone for participating in this part of programme. • Ask if anyone would like to answer a few questions around “Life Changers” for a short video we will be making. Not all videos will make it to final edit. |
| 55mins | Record Videos | <p>Can be recorded as a group or as individuals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could I ask you to say “Hi my name is ...”? • Who or what made the difference in your life? • How did it make you feel? |



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