



Parent Project

R E P O R T

September 2023–March 2024



Support for Parents

The Exchange working in partnership with
Moray Council



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About The Exchange

The Exchange is part of **The TCS Group** – a psychological wellbeing organisation with over 18 years' experience working with children, young people, families, and adults.

The Exchange specialises in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and their families. We are currently delivering a range of services in 767 schools, colleges and communities, working in partnership with 10 local authorities. We are invested in all things **wellbeing** and our team of psychologists, counsellors, Theraplay specialists and practitioners provide evidence-based support and accredited training as part of a whole-system resilience focused approach to improving mental wellbeing.

Exchange Families is set up to build resilience in early years, primary school children and teenagers by supporting parents and carers.

Exchange Youth provides counselling and psychological wellbeing support to young people aged 11-25 in schools and local communities.

Exchange Resource delivers accredited education, training and resources to schools and staff who support young people.

What does this look like?

- School and community based counselling
- Online counselling support
- D-EXY our digital wellbeing App
- Thera-play/counselling
- Group work
- Resilience programmes
- Resilience yoga
- Psychoeducation workshops
- NEET support
- Digital training suite
- In-person and virtual training
- Staff qualifications
- Tailored ALN training and resources



Aims

The Exchange was commissioned by Moray Council to provide help and support to parents and carers

The aim of the project was to help parents and carers develop **skills** and **confidence** to support their child's psychological wellbeing

1. Upskilling parents to support their child(ren) who are showing early signs of mental wellbeing concern
2. Supporting parents to develop the confidence to manage their own psychological wellbeing and support resilience development in their child.

Outcomes

1. Increase parent knowledge about psychological wellbeing issues and building resilience
2. Increase self-esteem about being a parent
3. Increase confidence for supporting child's psychological wellbeing
4. Develop parent skills and strategies for supporting their child's psychological wellbeing
5. Improve parent's understanding, empathy and connectedness to their child

Project Overview

In partnership with Moray Council, **The Exchange** delivered support to parents and carers in the form of online & in person workshops, resources and 1-2-1 support sessions, which targeted a better understanding of common issues their child/children were facing. These included (but were not limited to) anxiety, stress, self esteem and self harm.

- The project included working collaboratively with Schools across Moray Council to deliver a seamless service to parents
- Schools, services and parents made referrals via an online portal through **exchange-counselling.com**
- Parents attended an initial consultation to identify what support would be suitable
- Support was delivered in-person and virtually

Delivery Model

There were 3 types of support available:



Workshops/Information Sessions

1-1 Wellbeing Consultations

1-1 Support

Workshops/Information Sessions on 4 Wellbeing Themes (1 hour)

- Managing Anxiety
- Managing Stress
- Self-Esteem and Confidence
- Dealing with Self-Harm

These were delivered virtually weekly and in-person through a series of pre-arranged dates.

1-1 Wellbeing Consultations

Parents and carers booked a telephone consultation with a practitioner to discuss concerns about their child's mental wellbeing and support options. There were 3 possible outcomes:

- 1) Resources tailored to the individual needs of the family and child
- 2) Attend a workshop
- 3) Arrange a block of 4 support sessions

1-1 Support

The parent/carer and the practitioner set goal-based outcomes based on the needs of the parent/carer/young person.

Support was strength-based, identifying the parent/carer's skills and ways in which these can be optimised for their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of their child(ren). The parent/carer's concerns were listened to, and their experience respected and validated.

The practitioner introduced the parent to strategies for managing their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of their child(ren).

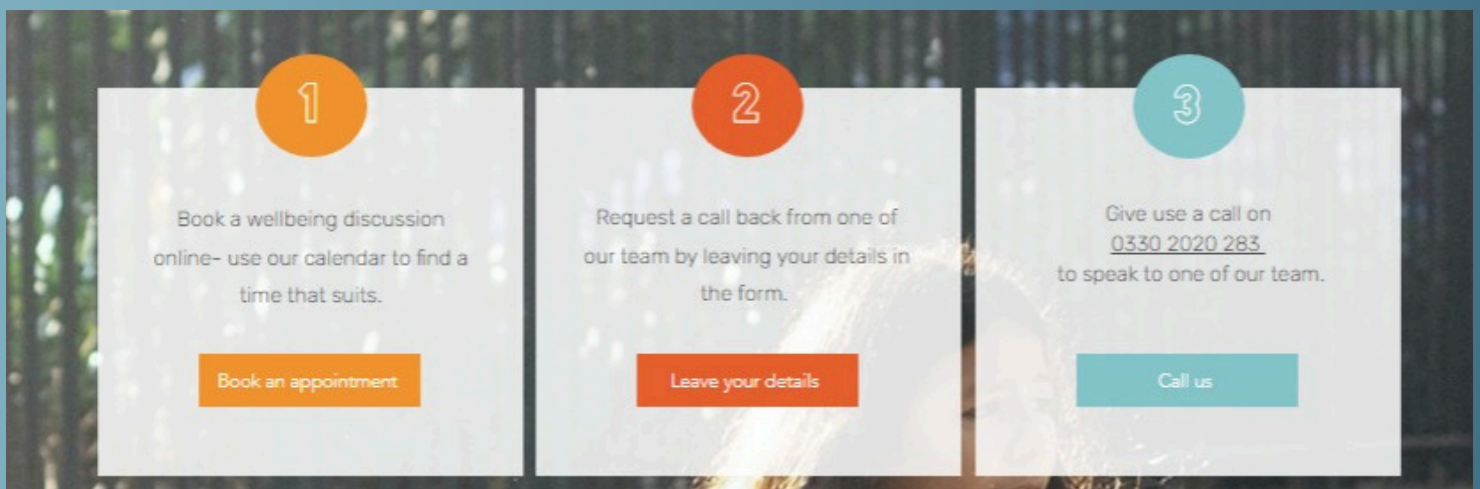
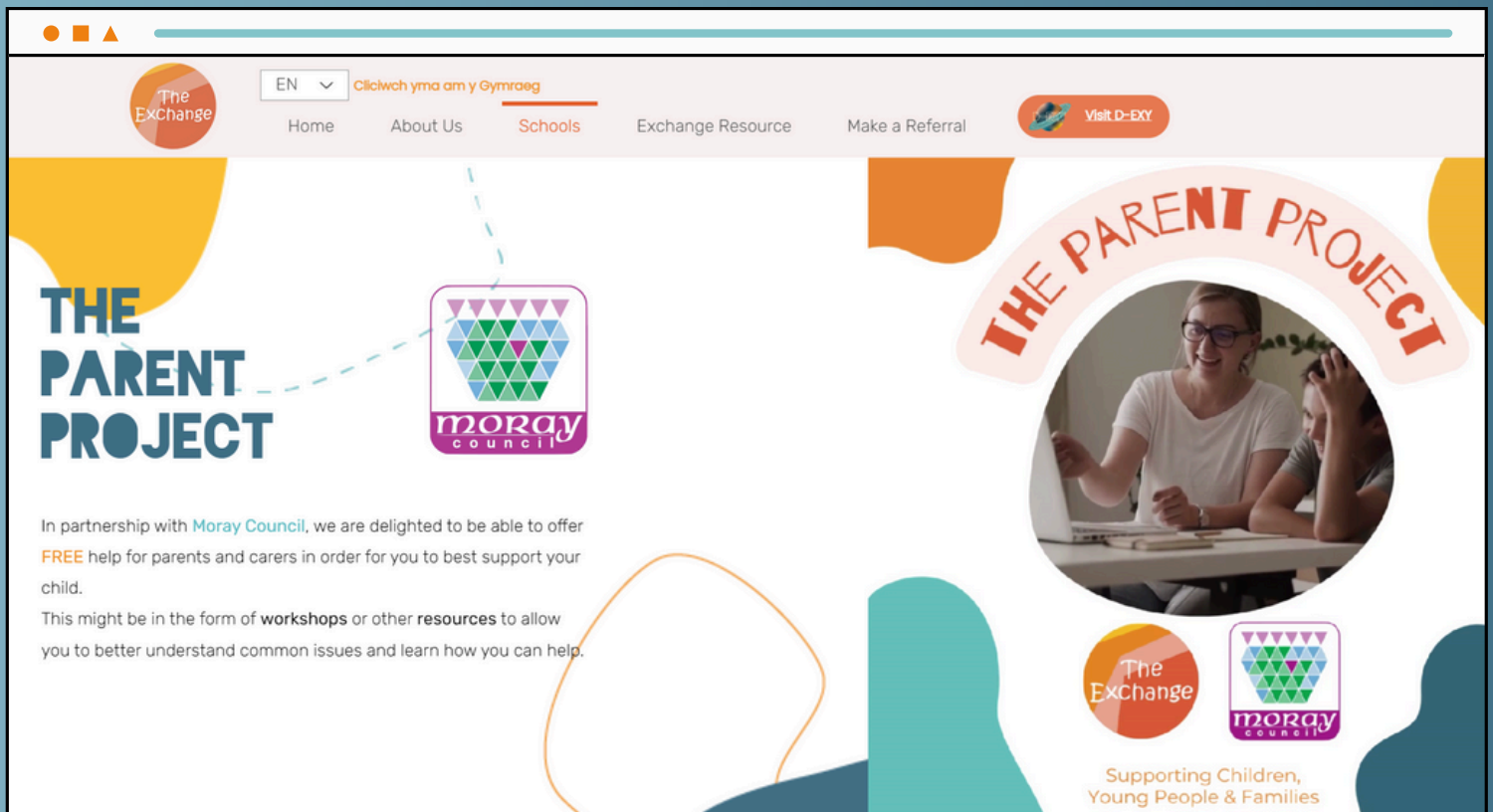
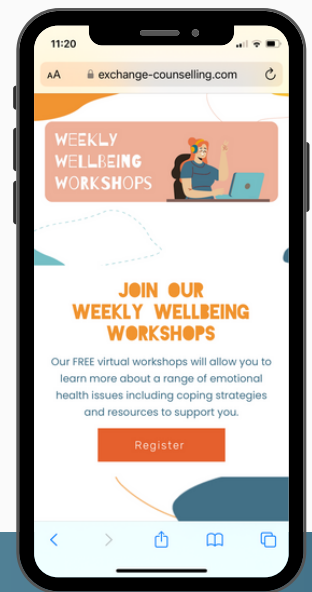
Referral Process

A designated webpage was set up for the project.

Parents were directed to

exchange-counselling.com/the-parent-project

where they could refer themselves by booking onto a workshop, booking a wellbeing consultation or request a call back to speak to us about the support available.



To keep things simple, schools and other services referred through the main exchange referral pathway exchange-counselling.com 'Parent Project' was added as an option to select for Moray schools and services

Awareness Raising and Promotion

Promotion of the service took place weekly via multiple channels of communication

The Service Manager met with the **8** secondary schools and the partnership development group to introduce the project and make them aware of the referral pathway and the support available.

The **Exchange** team attended **29** parents evenings at all schools and presented at the Child Service Launch along with other forums which included Active Schools, the Youth Team and Military Support.

The **Exchange** created and distributed physical and digital assets in the form of posters and leaflets to all schools and community centres. The materials included QR codes which directed users to the designated webpage.

In-Person

The **Exchange** team offered drop in's at the end of the school day for school staff to discuss potential parents and/or find out more about the project.

Email

All schools were emailed on Mondays about the up-and-coming workshop dates and a link to share with parents and carers. This was later adjusted to take place on Thursdays and Fridays to align with the newsletters that schools prepared for parents. Workshop spaces filled up following this communication.

TSI Moray supported the project by circulating promotional materials to all children and young people's third sector and the health and wellbeing forum members.

Social Media

Weekly social media campaigns advertised the workshops themes.

The **Exchange** provided information and links for schools to post across their digital platforms.



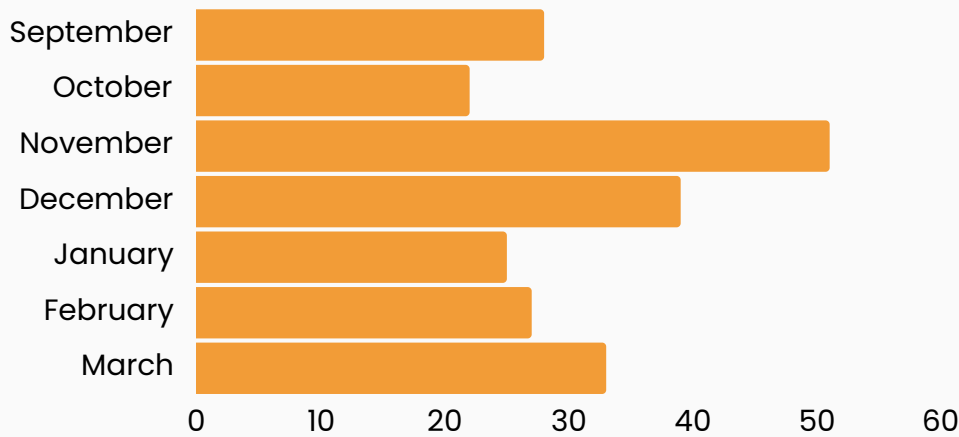
Referral Information

235

Parents referred



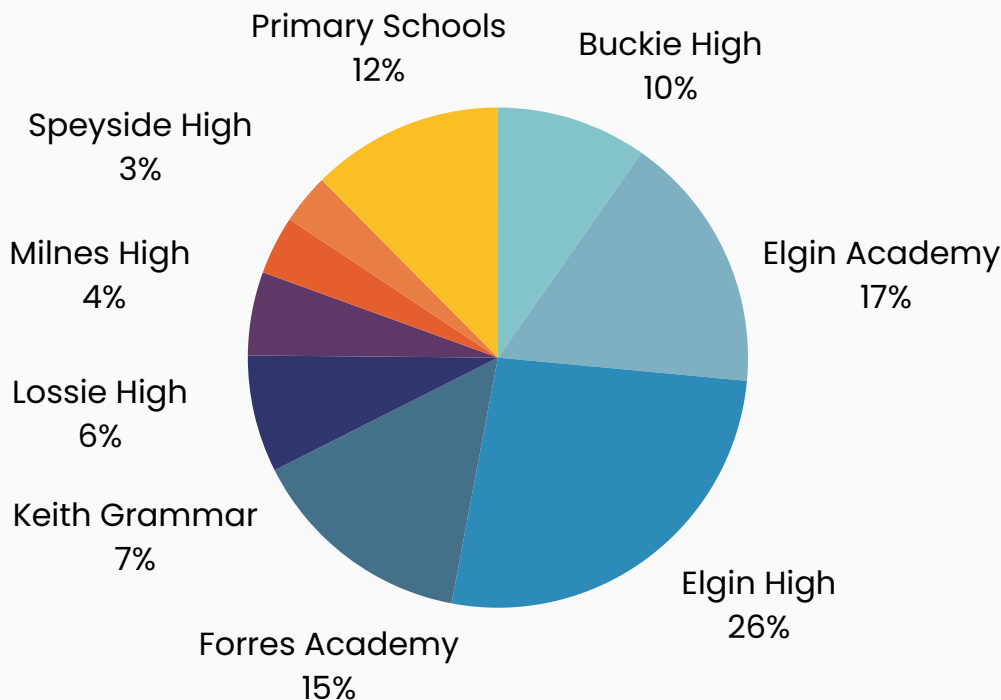
Referrals per month



30% of parents had a child in support with The-Exchange.

Of the families where the-exchange were supporting both parent and child, 50% of YP were referred by their parents following the support and 50% had already been referred before the parent received support.

Areas accessing support



In-person group support was offered to every secondary school

6 locations were used to deliver in-person support:

Elgin High

Elgin Academy

Forres Community Centre

Buckie High Community Space

Milnes High School

Elgin Library

Referral Information

Concerns Reported by Parents at Point of Referral

Reasons for referral / Concerns for Child	
Anxiety	35
Attendance	3
Bereavement	2
Confidence	52
Stress	27
Self-Harm	6
Disabilities	3
Gender Identity	2
Family Difficulties	5
ASD	3
Self-Esteem	50
Low Mood	5
Anger	1

Data was collected as part of the initial **wellbeing consultation**.

The therapist gathered information about the parent concerns during the screening dialogue.

The majority of the parents reported that their child(ren) had spoken to them about their issue and therefore, the parents were describing the concerns raised by the young person.

89% of parents were mums and 9% were dads with 2% being carers

An important takeaway from analysing the project data is the notable lack of involvement and utilisation of available support services by fathers

Gender



Male 19
Female 216

The project's brief duration hampered our capacity to adapt to data trends. Had it persisted, we would have aimed to engage under-served demographics, including fathers and caregivers.

Support Preferences

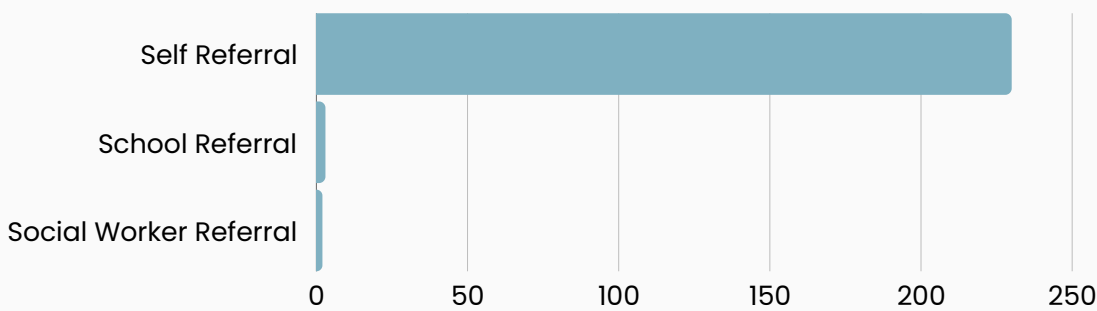
89% of parents were Mothers looking for support

80% of Dads preferred Workshop/information sessions

20% of Dads attended 1-1 support sessions with their spouse, none attended alone

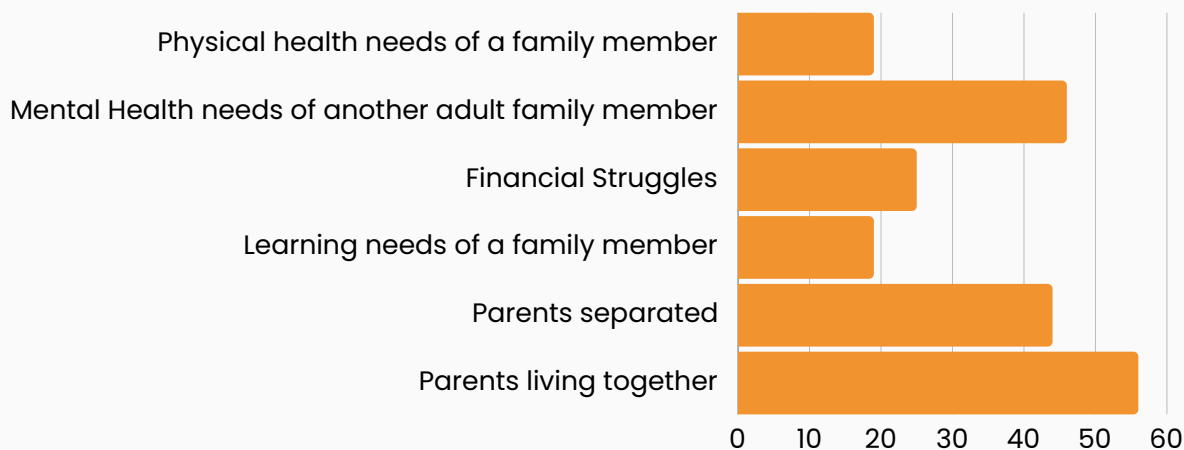
The dads who accessed support with their partner shared the same concerns and engaged in the sessions as much as their spouse.

Referral Source



Referrals made by social services did not go on to receive support. Support was set up with the parent/carer and a support worker but, support was not attended.

Profiles of Parents Referred



During the initial wellbeing consultation, the therapist gathered information about the needs of the wider family.

What Support were Parents Looking For?

38% of parents were looking for a combination of group and 1-1 support

30% of parents were struggling with their own mental wellbeing and recognised that they needed to make improvements in order to support their child. All of these parents reported that the support had a positive impact on them and how they were able to respond to their child.

70% of parents reported that they were looking for tips and resources to support issues such as anxiety/stress/self harm/self-esteem.

100% of parents reported that they were looking to increase their knowledge of psychological wellbeing issues

Information about what support parents were looking for was gathered during the initial assessment and/or during initial contact (e.g. a parent calling into the office)

Parent Comments

"I want to learn more about how anxiety affects young people different to adults"

"I want to understand self-harm more and how I can help him"

"I want to support my daughter in a way I wasn't supported growing up"

"I am worried my stress is affecting her"

"We are all coming to terms with the changes and I want to learn how to help myself and my children to get through this [divorce]"



Parent's Level of Concern at Point of Referral

<p>A high level of concern</p>	<p>14%</p>
<p><i>Parents who registered a high level of concern reported significant life events/additional/complex learning and health needs/neurodivergent diagnosis</i></p>	
<p>A moderate to high level of concern</p>	<p>37%</p>
<p><i>Parents who registered a moderate/high level of concern accessed a combination of workshops and one-to-one, and/or they were being supported by other services</i></p>	
<p>A moderate level of concern</p>	<p>35%</p>
<p><i>Parents who received one-to-one support registered a moderate (or above) level of concern.</i></p>	
<p>A moderate/low level of concern</p>	<p>12%</p>
<p><i>Those who reported a low/moderate concern attended support with a specific concern e.g. "My daughter has started doing this and I don't know what to do"</i></p>	
<p>Low level of concern</p>	<p>2%</p>
<p><i>The 2% of parents who registered a low concern attended workshops only. These parents reported that they were keen to be educated in preparation for supporting their child in the future</i></p>	

Themes reported by practitioners

Parents were concerned that they might not be meeting the child's needs adequately

Worried that their child isn't "normal"

Worried about their child being bullied and how they can help

Struggling to understand their pre-teen and the new attitude/behaviour

Concerned about neurodivergent behaviours .

Overwhelmed by life events.

Seeking reassurance about how they are managing their own mental wellbeing and the impact on their child when they have periods of struggle

Overview of Activity

235

Referrals received

70

Parents completed Workshops only

35

Parents completed 1-2-1 support only

90

Parents engaged in workshops and 1-1 support

40

Booked support but did not attend

625

Total Sessions Provided

66

Workshops Delivered

559

1-1 support sessions

Overall Outcome Data

89.5%

of parents reported an increase in knowledge about psychological wellbeing issues

87%

of parents reported an increase in self-esteem about being a parent

85%

of parents reported an increase in confidence for supporting child's psychological wellbeing

100%

of parents reported improved skills and strategies for supporting their child's psychological wellbeing

70%

of parents reported an improvement in empathy and connectedness to their child

83% of parents referred to the project engaged in the support

38% of parents utilised one-to-one and group support. 92% of these parents referred themselves for 1-1 following a workshop

373 resource packs provided to parents

The Brief Parental Self Efficacy Scale (BPSES) was used to measure outcomes

Baseline measures were completed during the initial wellbeing consultation

Outcome data was collected at the end of each workshop and at the end of each 1-1 process. Follow up data was collected between 4-6 weeks after support ended.

Data indicated no significant difference between the effectiveness of 1-1 and workshop support.

1-1 reported a slightly higher improvement rate on knowledge and confidence

One-to-One Support

125

Parents completed
1-1 support

559

1-1 sessions
76%
Attendance rate

4

Sessions were
utilised on
average for 1-1
support

55%

of parents/carers chose to be
supported virtually.
There was an equal split between
telephone and video calls.

The majority of one-to-one support was attended by Mum's.
On **3** occasions both parents attended the support

What did One-to-One look like?

The structure of the support was aligned to the parent's needs and reviewed in blocks of 4.

This included:

- practicalities such as days, times and frequency of sessions
- mode of delivery (all parents/carers had a choice of meeting virtually or in-person)
- one parent or both parents attending

The wellbeing consultation informed the agenda by identifying areas of concern and goals.

The support included:

- Listening and validating the parent's concerns and engaging the parent in a supportive discussion to explore and understand the issues from their perspective and the YP's perspective
- Facilitating the parents to develop insight and explore ways forward
- Identifying strengths and developing self-management skills
- Normalising what is going on with their child and managing expectations
- Offering tools on how to communicate, soothe, regulate and listen
- Discussions around setting boundaries at home along with appropriate consequences
- Offering resources and activities which can be completed at home with parent and child
- Demonstrating how to use activities and resources and how to have a resilience dialogue with their child
- Psychoeducation about teenage development and key struggles

One-to-One Outcome Data

Baseline Measures	Parents reported	Outcome Measures	Parents reported
Lack of Knowledge	42%	Increase in Knowledge	90%
Low Confidence	50%	Increase in Confidence	88%
Low Self-esteem	33%	Increase in Self-esteem	85%
Lack of Strategies	46%	More Strategies	100%
Relationship Issues	12%	Stronger Relationships	70%

One-to-One Feedback

"I was lucky enough to be offered sessions with The-Exchange. Right from the start I found Michelle to be very knowledgeable when offering tips and techniques to improve my parenting skills and more importantly my relationship with my child.

I was also relieved to hear that I was by no means alone in the things I was dealing with and it gave me the confidence and insight to realise I was actually doing better as a parent than I thought I was. I have recommended this service to a friend of mine who's really struggling with her son and I really hope the service will continue for her sake and for the sake of other parents who are struggling in Moray."



Workshops

160 parents completed workshops

Promoting Confidence and Self-esteem

16 Workshops

Supporting Young People with Stress

17 Workshops

Supporting Young People with Anxiety

25 Workshops

Supporting Young People who are Self-harming

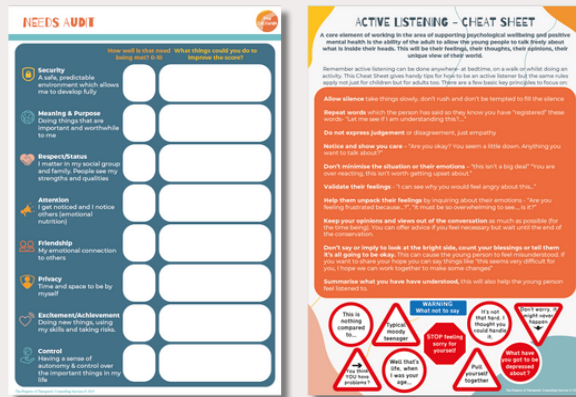
8 Workshops

54 Virtual Workshops

12 In-Person Workshops

All workshops had 3 distinct elements

- 1) **Psychoeducation**
- 2) **Personal Development**
- 3) **Skills and Resources**



“Supporting Young People with Anxiety” was the most popular workshop

*Each information session had a **takeaway guide** for parents and a set of **resources** for them to use with their child(ren)*

Resource packs were emailed out to all parents who had booked onto an online workshop and given by hand for in-person workshops

Workshop bookings were monitored on a daily basis. When bookings were low, the team engaged in additional promotional activity through social media and school guidance teams

Workshop Outcomes

Baseline Measures	Parents reporting	Outcome Measures	Parents reporting
Lack of Knowledge	43%	Increase in Knowledge	89%
Low Confidence	51%	Increase in Confidence	86%
Low Self-esteem	34%	Increase in Self-esteem	85%
Lack of Strategies	48%	More Strategies	100%
Relationship Issues	12%	Stronger Relationships	70%

Workshop Feedback



A thematic analysis of the feedback comments highlighted two additional benefits reported by parents:

1. Being listened to

2. Connecting with other parents experiencing similar struggles

Feedback Comments



One workshop was about promoting positive Self Esteem and the other was about Anxiety in teenagers life. They were very helpful, informative and quite detailed e.g. explaining what anxiety is, how we can perceive it in the body etc.

Michelle and the other therapist were holding the space for the parents really well, so I remember most parents participating, sharing their experiences and asking questions. I believe we were all supported by the therapists and we could bring something back home that we could apply or at least start to pay attention to. The therapists were responding to the parents' questions skillfully, so they really listened to them and the answers were very much tailored to each parent's needs. The service provided by these therapists was of such a great quality, human quality!



"The session helped me feel less alone/isolated in my experience and it was good to connect with others."

"The practical tips in the sessions give me more optimism that there is something that I can do"

"As a parent and a teacher, this has been extremely valuable. I can see how integrating strengths based language into daily conversations can boost my child's self-esteem and my own"

"I found out my daughter was self-harming a few weeks ago and I didn't know what to do, the information in this session will help me prepare for conversations to come."

"I learned more about my own struggles with anxiety/stress and feel understand my teenagers struggles more now."

"Comparing what makes me stressed to what makes my son stressed helped me realise that I can dismiss him at times. I'll notice myself doing it from now on and try to do better."

Follow Up Data

Follow up calls were made between 4 and 6 weeks to all parents who had attended a workshop and/or completed 1-1 support



Parents were asked to give feedback on the following:

- 1) Did you find the support helpful?
- 2) Have you found that the impact from the support/workshop been maintained?
- 3) Have you found that the impact from the support/workshop changed anything at home for their child?
- 4) Are you being supported by any other services?
- 5) Are there any improvements / suggestions or comments you would like to make about the Parent Project



Suggested Improvements

Parents reported two key improvements:

Support to be available to more parents going forward

More themes for workshops

Promotion and Project Reach

This was the first project that **The Exchange** have delivered to parents in Moray. Schools played a fundamental role in promoting the service to parents. The project has the potential to extend its reach directly to parents through social media and community partnerships. A longer term project would offer the opportunity for 'virtual community building' and new partnerships to be formed within the third sector and community.

Booking System

We created a designated online page for parents to learn about the project and book themselves onto workshops and/or initial wellbeing consultations. On reflection, the team spent a lot of time trying to make contact with parents to book their 1-1 sessions. If the project were to continue, we would invest in a more sophisticated online booking system to build in this capacity.

Staffing

Due to the short duration of the project, **The Exchange** team extended their working hours to build in capacity for the project. Whilst this worked in the short-term, at times it was a struggle for the staff who were accommodating evening hours. If the project was to continue on a more permanent basis, we would recruit a staff member for evening hours.

Representation

An important takeaway from analysing the project data is the notable lack of involvement and utilisation of available support services by fathers and carers. The pilot has provided important insight into patterns of service users which can be used to create targeted promotion going forward.

Case Study 1

Parent information: Mum, 34 (2 children aged 12 and 10)

Referred by: Self

Support offered: 5 virtual 1-2-1 sessions

Reason for Referral:

Mum referred herself because she had concerns about her 12 year old who was struggling with the transition to high school. Her son was demonstrating this with emotional outbursts at home and isolating himself in his room. Mum was struggling to understand this because he was performing well in school.

Areas of Concern

The wellbeing consultation highlighted 4 key areas of concern:

1) child's ability to self-regulate 2) child's sense of security and stability 3) understanding of child's struggle 4) adult stress reactions impacting on the child

Goals

1) Support strategies for self-regulation 2) Increase external resilience resources focused around sense of security and stability 3) improve knowledge about resilience development 4) personal wellbeing strategies for managing stress

Intervention and Outcomes

Improving knowledge about resilience development

Explored the current situation in detail and what the behaviour of her son might be telling us Mum was introduced to Dan Seigal's model of the brain and how to manage emotional outbursts, in particular his model to teach SIFT (sensations, images, feelings, thoughts). Mum developed a framework for managing the children's behaviour which she reported as helpful to her confidence and feeling in control. Mum chose to create a contract of 'family rules' and all family members were invested in this to improve homelife. At the end of the support the children were responding well and her husband was trying to learn the new strategies.

Increase external resilience resources focused around sense of security and stability

Mum reviewed the time and attention she was giving to her son. Mum explored ways strengthening their connection through his hobbies and most importantly, creating a schedule for this so that mum was not using this as a strategy to 'respond' to his distress. Instead this was a 'preventative' strategy to create regular quality time.

Support strategies for self-regulation

Mum engaged in an activity to explore her son's needs. Mum implemented 'time alone' after school, allowing him/encouraging him to isolate for a short period of time to unwind. Mum was facilitated to explore boundary setting and appropriate use of consequences.

Personal wellbeing strategies for managing stress

Mum discussed financial struggles and work demands in relation to her stress. Mum explored burnout signs and identified communication as an area of improvement between her and her husband. Mum created a list of non-negotiables for her own wellbeing and created a health plan.

Mum feels she is able to contain her son's outbursts better without "flipping her lid" since taking more care of her own wellbeing.

Case Study 2

Parent information: Mum, 41 (1 daughter aged 15)

Referred by: Self

Support offered: Virtual Workshop: Supporting Young People Through Anxiety

Reason for Referral:

Mum referred herself because she was worried about her daughter's increasing anxiety levels around school and about the future. She has noticed her daughter had become withdrawn and was spending less time with friends. Mum was finding it hard to connect or "get through" to her and reported not knowing much about anxiety.

Themes/Engagement/activities delivered:

Themes

- *Separating Stress, Fear and Anxiety
- *Exploring how we respond to anxiety and also how others around us may respond.
- *Understand the teenage brain
- *Signs and symptoms of anxiety in teenagers
- *Strategies and resources (helpful and unhelpful responses / self-regulation activities)

Engagement

Parent engaged very well throughout the workshop , participated in reflective exercises and activities and asked questions.

Activities delivered

1. Creating our own Anxiety Scale
2. Reflective activity to understand differences in anxiety responses.
3. Introduction to Habit Tracker
4. Introduction to Wellbeing Planner
5. Mindfulness/breathing

Outcomes (Observations/Comments)

During the workshop mum appeared to develop a clearer understanding about her daughter's anxiety and made links around upcoming exam stress , changes in friendships and the impact of hormones. Mum reported that she had some new tools to try with her daughter and was confident she could use them in a supportive. Mum stated that her key learning was to give her daughter space and help to process her day and then revisit this with a reflective discussion . In the follow up call mum reported that her daughter was more open, was more able to identify her triggers and together they had worked out 'positive responses' which involved 'helpful things to say' and 'helpful things to do' . Mum reported that the wellbeing planner and habit tracker was still being used by her daughter.

Working in partnership with



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