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Supporting service re-design and capacity building within Chance UK

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Improving the mental health of children and their parents

The 'Girls Programme' and 'Parent Programme' are two interventions currently offered to disadvantaged children and families by London-based charity Chance UK (CUK). Dr Sarah Blower was given the opportunity to complete a secondment working directly with CUK to support the re-design of these programmes, both of which have been operational for several years in a number of London Boroughs, as well as other areas of the UK. The 'Parent Programme' is a combination of one-to-one and group-based support for parents whose children are displaying significant emotional and behavioural difficulties. The 'Girls Programme' is designed to foster resilience in girls experiencing emotional difficulties through one-to-one mentoring. With Dr Blower's help, CUK applied learning from research on 'what works' to revise the programmes, with the goal of maximising positive impact on children and families.

The research

Rates of emotional and behavioural difficulties in children are high, and levels of wellbeing and life satisfaction (particularly that of girls) are worryingly low. As a result, third sector organisations like CUK are experiencing high levels of demand for their services, and in the context of austerity are required to provide robust evidence of impact and value for money. Dr Blower's secondment was set up to support CUK to identify and apply relevant research evidence to the design of each programme, and develop systems for monitoring impact.

Dr Blower facilitated a series of knowledge exchange and capacity building workshops in London and York to share findings from relevant research (including research produced by the University of York) and support the development of key service design skills, such as developing a theory of change, selecting outcome measures, and writing a programme manual. These workshops also provided a platform for CUK to consider how to best reach and address the needs of the children and families they work with, in order to agree the design features of the revised programmes.

The outcome

Dr Blower's team, in collaboration with CUK, have successfully re-designed the 'Parent Programme' which was launched in December 2018. Measures are now in place to monitor the impact of the newly revised programme. The 'Girls Programme' will be launched in Spring 2020 and will provide a positive and empowering service to girls who are vulnerable due to a combination of pressures, either in their locality, school, home or relationships. The implementation of new manuals and programme materials, developed during Dr Blower's secondment, will enable these interventions to be delivered consistently and aid replication on a larger scale to greater numbers of children and parents, as well as assist in the training of new CUK staff and volunteers.



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