

North Tyneside LCEP

Social prescribing and Barriers to Cultural activities

Following funding through the LCEP Children North East (CNE) delivered a two phase programme looking at engaging children and young people in cultural and arts activities, with a specific focus around the Riverside ward and Percy Main primary school and Norham High School. The two phases were:

1. Consultation on the wider barriers children and young people faced in accessing cultural activities. This was carried out through a Poverty Proofing the School Day audit at both Percy Main Primary and Norham High School.
2. Support for between 10 and 20 children and young people into cultural activities through a mentoring programme, identifying and overcoming any specific barriers they may face.

Following the start of the programme Covid-19 impacted on the delivery and development of the programme, and instead of completing the programme mid-2020, the programme extended with the official end date in Dec 2020, however some work is ongoing.

This report focuses on 5 core areas

1. Literature Review on Social Prescribing
2. Evaluation of barriers that children and young people face when trying to engage in cultural activities
3. Ongoing learning throughout the pandemic on additional barriers to engaging in cultural activities following CNE consultation project VOICES delivered in conjunction with Newcastle University
4. Culture Link Report: detail of the delivery and impact of the mentoring of young people into cultural activities.
5. Learning and evaluation from the work

Social Prescribing – Literature Review

Definitions

There is no one agreed definition of Social Prescribing (SP) (Bikerdike et al, 2017, as cited in Hayes et al, 2020), however the newly launched National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP) (2020) defines the process of SP as:

‘Supporting people, via social prescribing link workers, to make community connections and discover new opportunities, building on individual strengths and preferences, to improve health and wellbeing.’ NASP, 2020:7’ (Howarth and Leigh, 2020).

This term has emerged in recent years to mean the linking of individuals to sources of support in the third sector (Pescheny, 2019). SP is a public health strategy that seeks to treat individuals in a holistic way that may be suffering from chronic illnesses, mental health or

psychosocial problems (Beardmore, 2019), however treatments can be diverse and include a broad range of interventions and therefore refining SP to one single definition can be problematic (Beardmore, 2019). Interventions can take many forms such as workshops for life-based skills initiatives, creative classes and interventions for mental ill health (Beardmore, 2019).

Kimberlee (2013, as cited in Beardmore, 2019) has attempted to define SP in four categories: SP Signposting, where the client is pointed in the direction of potentially useful services; SP Light, where the client is referred to a specific service or intervention; SP Medium, where the client is referred to a link-worker to help identify their needs and navigate the services available to them; SP Holistic, where the client works with a link-worker over a period of time in order to treat the whole person and helps them access and navigate appropriate services.

SP seeks to address the socioeconomic and psychosocial determinants of health by expanding the range of non-medical options (Fixsen et al, 2020) and is a non-medical asset based process to enable individuals to make new connections, discover new opportunities and build on individual strengths and preferences to improve health and wellbeing (Howarth et al, 2020).

Rationale for SP

SP is of particular interest to commissioners and health care providers as it has the potential to treat patients with persistent and long-term health conditions while reducing pressure and cost on primary care services (Beardmore, 2019). There is an increasing recognition of the limitations of bio-medically centred approaches to tackle many leading health problems which may have socioeconomic or psychosocial roots based on inequality and cultural individualism, such as obesity, loneliness, depression and anxiety. There has been rising support by academics and practitioners for more community-based approaches, available over the longer term and more personalized to the individual to meet increasing levels of un-met social needs (Aughterson et al, 2020, Fixsen et al, 2020). There is emerging evidence to suggest that SP can support people's mental health, individual empowerment, self-esteem, confidence, cognitive function, health outcomes, and create lowered feelings of isolation and social-exclusion (Aughterson et al, 2020).

Since 2016 the SP movement has grown rapidly in the UK and has begun to attract international attention. It has been widely accepted as an innovative, non-medical approach to support citizens and communities. It moves away from the traditional deficit model of biomedicine and is based upon the premise of 'what matters to the person' rather than, 'what is the matter with them' (Howarth et al, 2020, Fixsen et al, 2020).

Due to the aging population, it is estimated that the people living with multiple long-term conditions will rise significantly in the UK (Pescheny, 2019). Globally, the number of people living with non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, cancer, mental health problems and diabetes is increasing and loneliness has become recognized as a global health concern and is linked to a range of negative health outcomes (McHale et al, 2020, Holding et al, 2020). SP allows practitioners to signpost service-users to a range of non-clinical community based activities and take a patient-centred and whole-population approach, and allows for the traditional boundaries between healthcare and third sector organisations to be dissolved to build coordinated and personalised services designed around the needs of the patient (Holding, et al, 2020, Mulligan et al, 2019, Pescheny, 2019).

People live socially complex lives affected by a number of factors such as deprivation, unemployment, food poverty and poor housing (Fixsen et al, 2020). Lack of community based social care results in people seeking support from traditional healthcare service, with around 20% of people going to their GP with what is essentially a social problem (Young People's Health Partnership, no date). Mental health concerns have a disproportionate affect in those from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds and higher rates of deprivation are linked with physical health problems. With such complexity, a complex solution that addresses the causes of poor health must be sought. Integrated, community organisations are ideally placed to meet the needs of people living in socially deprived areas (Hassan et al, 2020, McHale et al, 2020).

The flexibility of the approach and variety of services on offer is likely to appeal to those marginalized from traditional health care services. It is possible SP could support people suffering from multiple disadvantage to better engage formal services in the future and to increase the number and richness of social relationships within these communities and have a positive impact upon their mental and physical wellbeing (MEAM, 2020).

Three quarters of mental health problems occur before the age of 25 and half before the age of 14 (Hayes et al, 2020). The majority of SP research and practice neglects approaches for children and young people, instead focusing on the needs of adults and the elderly. Children and young people face a host of issues and make up 40% of GPs workload, yet 60% of health care practitioners have no training in paediatrics. There is therefore a need for care for children, young people and their families in partnership with education, health and social care services (NHS, 2016)

For the full literature review please contact Children North East at CNESchools@Children-ne.org.uk.

Barriers in Access to Culture

Following two Poverty Proofing audits that were carried out by CNE we investigated two core questions, as outlined below. The Poverty Proofing audits were carried out at Norham High School and Percy Main Primary School. These questions were asked amidst many questions around children and young people's school life. The findings identified can inform a wider cultural offer across North Tyneside. The core questions were:

1. What activities would you like to engage with in your local area?
2. What things stop you from accessing those opportunities?

There were a range of activities that children and young people would like to access in the local area, some were very specific and some more general:

- Boxing
- Martial Arts
- Museums
- Sports clubs
- Space to play music
- Dance inc. hip hop
- Art
- Minecraft

- Food
- Nothing
- Football
- Gaming
- Being outdoors
- Fortnite

The definition of cultural activity was left very open for children and young people to interpret, and therefore the areas were wide ranging. There was a gaming element to the answers which was interesting as many children and young people find some form of gaming a key element in their cultural identity, but some did not have the opportunity to do that socially, while others were able to interact online with their friends. Some children talked about having the opportunity to use computers alongside their friends as opposed to online.

Another key aspect was the opportunities for martial arts that many of the older young people expressed an interest in. This was particularly in relation to boxing, and lots of young people did not know where they might get the opportunities to, or know how to, access martial arts.

Generally there was a broad spread of key activities that children and young people wanted to engage in, and many of the ideas were bespoke and had different elements. Many children and young people liked the idea of 'doing' more but were unsure what that might be and what that might look like.

There were a number of core barriers that children and young people talked about in relation to their engagement of cultural activities. The most common barriers that were identified were:

- Not knowing what was available
- Not knowing anyone else that attended
- Transport to activities

The biggest barrier that children identified was a lack of awareness of what it was that children and young people could access. There were suggestions around having a guide for children and young people around the different activities that were produced. The second main barrier that was reported was about how children and young people would like to access new and different experiences. Many talked about wanting to go with friends, and some would only go to something if a friend was already going. The final issue that some people recounted was both the inability to access transport to activities. Sometimes this was linked with whether a parent or carer had a car, and was willing or able to use that transport to get to a cultural offer. If there wasn't a car the public transport had some concern, some of the concern was using public transport when the nights got dark, and sometimes it was linked to the cost of the public transport.

In addition to these areas there were some other key findings. Firstly a number of children talked about the fact that they weren't allowed to go to certain activities because their parents would not let them or did not have the ability to support them to go. The detail behind this was wide ranging including not having the equipment, not trusting the people who ran the programmes, and the cost implications. Secondly a number of children and young people did not want to engage in new or different activities and felt as though they were either doing enough activities in and out of school, or they had no desire to engage in any activities.

Impact of Covid-19 on accessing cultural opportunities

VOICES is a 12-month North East region wide consultation running from November 2020 to understand the challenges that the young face as a result of Covid-19. The project is delivered by a team from Children North East and from Newcastle University and is funded by the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council). Since the initial consultation around cultural engagement during the Poverty Proofing audits our children and young people have faced a pandemic which has rocked lives and had a significant impact on how society operates. The below is an excerpt from the latest findings linked to challenges engaging in cultural and leisure activities:

Children and young people talked about their access to cultural, leisure and social opportunities, and the impact that Covid-19 had on these opportunities.

The main theme through this section is that children and young people had limited opportunities to do things that they would normally enjoy. Whether that is a weekly sports club, a holiday or spending time with friends; 'gymnastics club was not on', 'couldn't go to rugby', 'my friend's party got cancelled', 'our holiday was cancelled', 'missed cricket, I was looking forward to the season but then we didn't have a single match', 'not going to Greece our holiday got cancelled' 'I did all my prep (for first holy communion) and then it didn't happen'. There is also an acknowledgement that charities and other community organisations also haven't been able to engage with children and young people, and this was also talked about in a negative context.

There have been a lot of children and young people who talked about trying new things at home; 'using Youtube to learn how to draw- it's fun', 'riding a bike after years of not doing. I enjoyed it but I've come off it!', 'Lockdown capsule- weird how things have changed. Mam bought it, did it with Mam, Dad and brother', 'cooking more and learned to make banana bread'. While this was positive for many children and young people there was still a frustration that there was a lack of space to do the things that they wanted to; 'couldn't play out still can't now', 'all packed into the house'.

As part of our learning through this project we have so far identified two recommendations specifically for cultural partners and schools:

1. The desire for face to face interaction
2. Young people feeling unsafe on public transport due to the pandemic and the guidelines around the pandemic.

Culture Link Report 2020-21

Culture Link is a programme working with individual young people to support them into cultural opportunities. CNE is using its expertise in mentoring programmes to match young people with trained mentors who will support these young people into opportunities. Young people were referred into our service using our established referral process, initially this was to include Percy Main School and Norham High School. Subsequently no referrals were received from Percy Main with all referrals being received from Norham High with the exception of one from

the Early Help Team. Prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic it was expected that young people would receive a mentor for up to six weeks and be encouraged to research and travel to chosen activities in North Tyneside. The outcomes from this support would then lead the young people to continue to access these post mentoring.

In March 2020 the project was put on hold and after further discussion with Norham High it was agreed that this would recommence in September 2020.

On recommencing the Project co-ordinator was able to re-establish contact with the 5 young people who had originally been referred. Unfortunately of these 3 were unable to progress, with two having planned moves to other schools. Through direct engagement and working with the Norham High school Family Support worker and Early Help link a further 8 referrals were received.

After the initial assessments were carried out it was envisaged that face to face work would commence supported by our newly developed online mentoring service offering a blended approach to delivery. These had started to take place with some mentors after their online induction session with their mentor but were severely curtailed as a result of the second lockdown in November which impacted all access to any facilities. Whilst it has not being ideal or in any way replaces the interaction a young person would gain from spending time with a mentor face to face we were able to continue to support them online.

This adaptation enabled young people support to discuss, research and explore with their mentor all the opportunities of cultural activities in North Tyneside and help them to decide and plan to visit them after the lockdown. Due to ongoing lockdown restrictions mentors have been unable to meet their young people but online sessions were extended to reflect this. Although prior to this and when it was permitted, one of the young people meet with their mentor and was able to socially distance walk to the beach and engage in some drawing and on another occasion visit St Mary's Lighthouse both of which supported their interest in art and marine life.

Overall the project received 13 referrals of which 7 young people have regularly participated, with 5 achieving 100% involvement over the project period. Others were unable to engage regularly due to a number of reasons from changing school, to not wanting to take part in an online environment or as a result of emergent impact and concerns relating to Covid-19 either from the young people themselves or their families.

In conclusion we found that young people have barriers around knowledge of what is available in their area. They were also struggling with their own confidence to access activities including travelling to, able to make booking and being able to afford activities in terms of their overall cost i.e. courses might be free but equipment needed to take part was not. All the young people who took part identified that they struggled with making friends and were socially isolated. All those who took part reported that they looked forward to their sessions. The pandemic has made access to support more difficult and for many this has further impounded their situations.

Although all the young people reported progressing (evidenced through Youth Star) it can also be concluded that this would have being more impacting if sessions had been delivered

Molly and Holly's Story

Children North East is working with North Tyneside Cultural Education Partnership ([NTCEP](#)) on a new social prescribing initiative. It's aimed at increasing connections between the education and cultural sectors as well as raising awareness of the cultural offer in the borough and supporting schools to use the Arts to meet their wider objectives. Eleven-year-old Holly is just one of the young people to have benefited from this.... [Read more](#)

on a face to face basis. More detailed information on each of the regular matches is available upon request, however one example of this work in action can be found here.

Our evaluation tool Youth Stars showed that of those regular attendees:

100% taking part in culture link had improved their communication skills.

100% said they were better understanding their own choices and behaviours.

100% felt they had improved their health and well-being.

100% of the young people felt they were more confident in thinking about their hopes and dreams.

We suggest that had the project been delivered entirely face to face as planned this project would have had a more significant impact.

For a case study

Learning and Evaluation

In conclusion this project has had real impact in understanding and being able to respond to the needs of children and young people who are struggling to engage in cultural activity. We have developed a recipe for success in working with young people who do not see the opportunities that may be around them, and one core conclusion from this programme is that there are currently a plethora of opportunities for young people, there is not necessarily the routes of communication for young people to find out about opportunities.

The peer mentor model has found to be a robust and effective way of getting young people talking about their experiences and as well as engaging young people in new opportunities, has also increased the confidence of participants. Young people have found the relationships they have built with their mentors as a source of ongoing support and this has been particularly effective in exploring what cultural experiences may benefit each of the young people referred into the programme.

Another key finding is the importance of engaging with parents in supporting young people into opportunities, and there is evidence that suggests that if you can engage parents in the process of how their children can access these opportunities, then you are more likely to increase participation. The barriers to participation do go further than the awareness though, and it seems significant how poverty can be the most significant barrier whether the barrier is based on perception or reality.

Moving forward CNE recommend the following key areas in future work around social prescribing for young people moving into cultural organisation.

- Create a communication forum where young people can access all the opportunities that are available for them throughout North Tyneside.
- Consider a peer mentoring programme that can build on the culture link work with a specific focus on engagement in cultural activities.
- Utilise VOICES to continue to understand barriers for engagement.
- Work with transport providers to explore any opportunities for free or subsidised transport to cultural activities across the region.