



APPENDIX E – DOMESTIC ABUSE UPDATE

Next Chapter (previously Colchester & Tendring Women's Refuge) became the commissioned provider for domestic abuse services in Mid & North Essex in April 2019 covering the local authority districts of Colchester, Tendring, Maldon, Chelmsford, Braintree & Uttlesford.

We provide the full range of domestic abuse services with 2 Refuges offering specialist crisis accommodation, one family refuge with 12 spaces and a Recovery Refuge with 9 spaces for women fleeing DA who have the multiple-disadvantages of a substance addition or dependency. We work in partnership with Open Road to deliver our Recovery Refuge services.

Our Community-based services offer safety planning & advice, advocacy, support & access to recovery group-work, counselling services and sign-posting to other services as required. Our Community DAP (Domestic Abuse Practitioner) Team supports individuals who are assessed as having a standard or medium risk and our IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) Team support individuals who are assessed as having a high risk of harm.

Our newly reshaped Children & Young People's Team offer specialist DA crisis and recovery support to children and young people (age from pre-school through to 19 and sometimes up to 23 depending on circumstances). This is the first (& only) specialist DA community-based support for children and young people in Mid & North Essex.

This report focusses on services and referrals from the Colchester district where it has been possible to extract the data to a local geographic area.

Colchester referrals

The total number of referrals for the Colchester area is detailed in Appendix 1 – which provides a breakdown of the referrals by gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity and disability. It also provides the profile of the referrals in relation to level of risk and the referring organisation.

Trends

We have been monitoring our total weekly figures since the start of lockdown to understand the pattern and volume of referrals. Chart 1 below shows that up to the beginning of October we can see that there is a clear upward trend in relation to overall referral numbers. The dip at the end of June was recovered in the beginning of July and we continued to see referral figures that are higher than any months prior to Covid-19. Our June figures show a 61% increase above the pre-lockdown monthly average for all referrals, with high risk cases showing a 62% increase over pre-lockdown referrals.

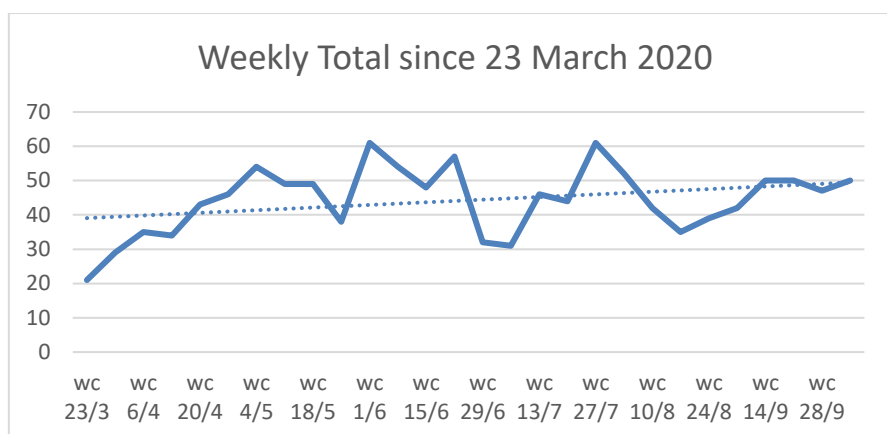


Chart 1 – Weekly referrals since first national lockdown

Chart 2 below shows that whilst the weekly numbers continue to be somewhat “spiky” and show no real defined pattern – the upward trend that we have seen since mid-way through the first national lockdown continued through to the start of December and the run up to the Christmas break. With the downward dip over December, our trendline of referrals has levelled off for the first time since the start of the pandemic. The numbers over December returned to a pre-Covid level. The 3rd national lockdown is most likely the reason that we have not experienced our usual post-Christmas deluge of referrals and we are keeping a close eye on the level of referrals over the next few weeks as we have already seen referrals rise to the mid-40 level for each of the first 2 weeks in January 2021.

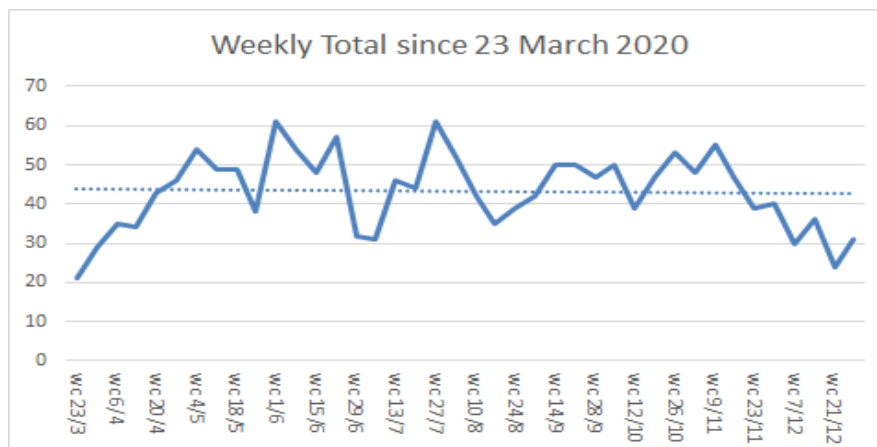


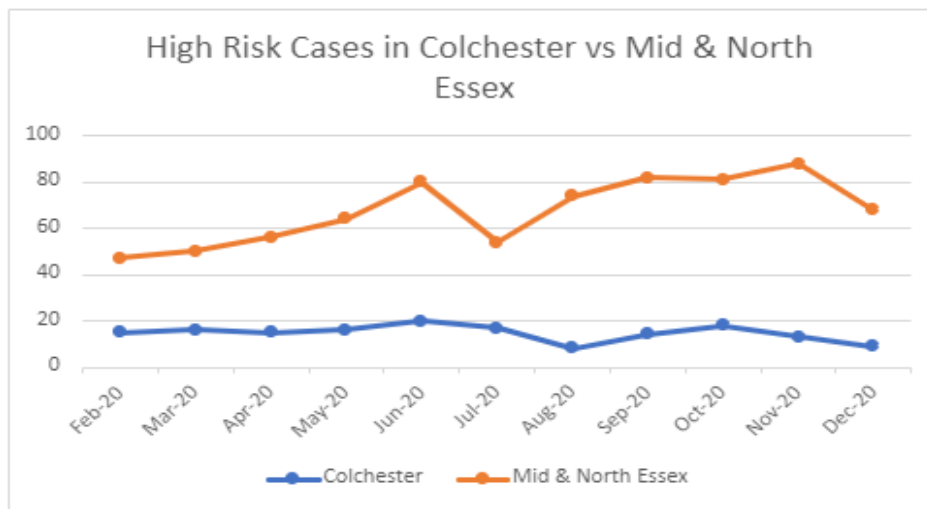
Chart 2 – Weekly referrals from first lockdown to end Dec 2020

Risk profile trends

In a recurrent theme across the past year our practitioners are continuing to feedback that there is a maintained increase in the complexity and risk profile of the cases that being referred.

The risk profile of cases is broadly consistent across all areas, with Colchester showing a less marked rise in high risk cases but nonetheless a discernible increase in the number of high risk cases in June/July and Sept/October which relate in the first instance to the easing of the first wave of restrictions going into the summer when clients had more opportunity to seek help. We saw a dip in August, which follows the normal pattern over the summer and

perhaps still represented the general feedback that clients just want to keep the peace while the children are home and will look to seek help when the return to school. The rise in high risk cases in September and October would support this theory and the second impending lockdown/circuit break saw a spike in referrals to our services.



We continue to hold cases for longer than previously in order to help support and manage risk within the restrictions in place and as a knock effect of the number of cases awaiting court hearings and the delays in the judicial system causing a knock-on effect to the number of cases that we need to keep open to provide the court-based support. Our concerns relate to the impact on safety of victims, the wellbeing and impact on mental health of our client and their children and the impact the delay will have on the likely success of any family court hearing, application for a non-molestation order or prosecution by the CPS due to the emotional impact on our client undermining their ability to present a credible witness.

Our concerns in respect of these delays in court proceedings and the impact on safety has been raised with both the PFCC as our service Commissioner and with the Colchester Community Safety Delivery Board. As a result of the report to the CSDB, a meeting with representatives from the Essex Criminal Justice Board has been convened to discuss the issue as a matter of urgency.

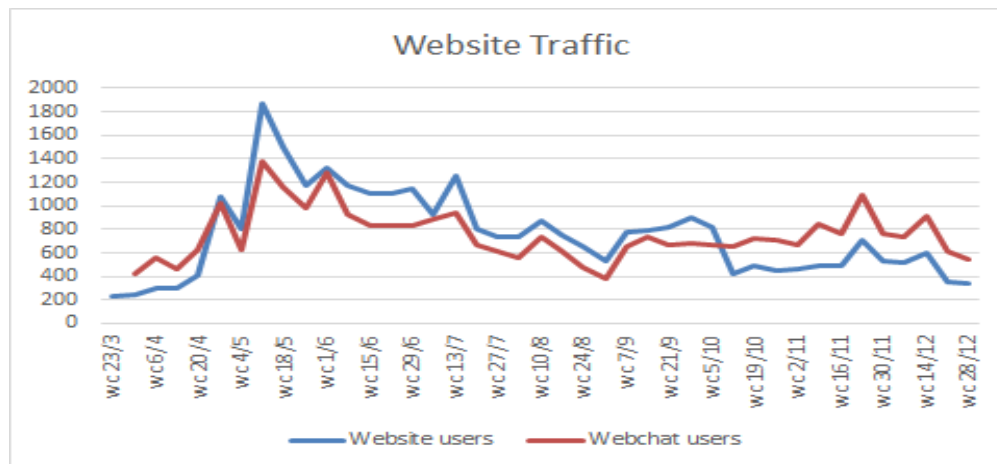
Ways of working

Up to the start of the latest lockdown (lockdown number 3) we have been providing telephone-based support and “Teams” based sessions depending on the client preference. This has been supplemented with face to face contact and “eyes-on” style contact for those clients that most need it, or where our practitioners feel the need to touch base with clients as a result of the discussions they are having. This face to face contact has been reduced as a result of the latest lockdown in order to keep our staff and clients safe, but clients are continuing to report that they are happy with the telephone support that they have received and our practitioners are reporting positive outcomes and feedback associated with the support that is being provided.

Website & Social Media

Our website traffic, which feels a good surrogate indicator of interest/activity in the community has seen a similar dip in numbers over December, although our webchat facility has seen a consistent level of contact which anecdotal feedback from our duty team

suggests is from individuals seeking advice and guidance (testing the water) prior to seeking support as well as individuals reaching out for help.



We include a range of information to provide help and advice to survivors and their families. Since the start of lockdown we have added a series of blogs to our website – which were aimed at trying to connect with our communities in a more personal way. Written by our practitioners, about topics that are important to them, with their own views and responses – they enable a different way for individuals to understand domestic abuse, its impact and what help is available. Feedback has been enthusiastic and the website traffic and hits to the pages demonstrate that they have been really well received and accessed frequently.

<https://www.thenextchapter.org.uk/Blogs/blog/Category/next-chapter-blog-posts>

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Partnership Working

Whilst not directly related to activity in Colchester, we have been working closely with the Tendring Local Policing Team to work up a pilot project to understand how we can ensure that victims access DA support as early in the process as possible, ideally at the time of crisis and often prior to the police investigation. We know that a high proportion of victims from the Tendring area do not access support and it is hoped that this approach will encourage them to do so at the right time. We are currently in the fact-finding stage to understand the need, the possible impact and canvassing opinion to ensure we include victims' voices in our plans. By working closely together we have created a domestic abuse awareness training package which is now in production in readiness to roll out to the Essex

local policing teams, ahead of the outcome of the pilot project which will inform how DA support can be provided across the rest of Essex.

Also funded by the PFCC from the Community Safety Development Fund, we have partnered with the Wilderness Foundation UK and the University of Essex to co-produce a programme of outdoor therapy to work with survivors of domestic abuse to aid long term recovery. The project is still in the design phase and we have attended the initial meetings alongside survivors, with the aim of starting the programme in early Spring, University of Essex researchers will complete the monitoring and evaluation of the project, with the longer term aims of being able to develop an impact rich intervention for domestic abuse survivors that can be sustained beyond the fixed term project.

Work continues on the co-production of the outdoor therapy programme with the University of Essex and the Wilderness Foundation UK and this project is on track.

We have used the MoJ funding (which was available to non-commissioned services) as a launchpad for a new partnership with Chelmsford Counselling Foundation. After the initial training provided to their Counsellors we began providing CCF with referrals from the middle of July and are just starting to see the first clients finishing their programme of counselling. Initial indications from the outcome analysis is extremely positive and we hope to have more detailed feedback on these outcomes for the next quarter when we have a sufficient number of clients to undertake meaningful analysis. The partnership is a positive introduction to assist us with moving clients on from DA practitioner support at the end of their support journey with us. Our practitioners are reporting that this is very beneficial in helping us close our cases efficiently when they come to the end of the DA support that they can helpfully provide to the client. There has been some decrease in engagement over December and the Christmas period but this is experienced across the range of our services and to be expected. We have worked with CCF to modify our referral process and are hopeful that this will improve understanding of the commitment required from clients.

Next Chapter is now part of the newly formed Victims Panel meeting which is proving to be very useful and allows us to share the DA victims experience to the group with the aim of improving services available and client outcomes.

Groups

We have now completed three separate online Freedom Groups which have been very successful, both in terms of engagement and outcomes and will be starting three more in January 2021. Two of these groups are held during the day, and one is held in the evening in line with clients wishes and availability. We are also running regular online healthy relationship workshops for clients completing their programme of support. Both of these groups have enabled participants to form a support network of their own which is invaluable going forward.

Staff Training & Induction

All existing and new staff have been through our mandatory induction training which includes both Level 2 Safeguarding and a full introduction into our service delivery standards. All new staff will be taken through mandatory induction training and as part of their induction into the organisation, are shadowed for the first 4 weeks of their direct work with service users and buddied with a more experienced member of staff beyond this period. Regular shadowing and supervision is undertaken by our team leaders which includes comprehensive case reviews.

We have commenced our next cohort of Domestic Abuse Practitioners on the VQAS Skills for Justice – Supporting the survivors of domestic violence (Level 3 qualification). This is a blend of self/distance learning with workplace support and points of assessment which can be carried out in-house by our approved assessor meaning that the delivery is less impacted by Covid-19 restrictions. We have 3 practitioners who have started this qualification and have a rolling programme for subsequent cohorts which provides this training to all our Domestic Abuse Practitioners.

We are still waiting for Covid restrictions to lift sufficiently for us to provide the Trauma-informed and Motivational Interviewing training for our staff in a face to face environment.

“Together We Can” Funded Projects

Recovery Refuge

Funded by the MHCLG “Together We Can” funding the Recovery Refuge is only the second refuge nationally, to offer specialist crisis accommodation to women fleeing domestic abuse with the added complexity of a substance addiction or dependency.

Our Recovery Refuge project was started nearly 2 years ago with the previous MHCLG funding achieved by CBC in partnership with other neighbouring local authorities to try and address the rising need we were seeing and experiencing, for crisis accommodation supporting women who were suffering domestic abuse alongside drug and alcohol addiction or dependency. We take women who are at risk of serious harm and need to flee the domestic abuse they are experiencing and provide them with the safety of crisis accommodation. Here they can then access recovery services for both domestic abuse and their substance misuse.

We know from the referrals we received both before and after starting our project, that whilst there is a national network of specialist women’s refuges offering crisis accommodation for those fleeing domestic abuse – this network is closed to women who have any form of active substance addiction or dependency, leaving them (in the vast majority of cases) with the stark choice of remaining in their abusive and dangerous relationship or becoming street homeless. This should not be the case and we believe that they have the right to safety & support and the opportunity to rediscover and reclaim their future.

This project operates in a complicated landscape of health providers and commissioned services who often misunderstand and misjudge women who find themselves victims of both domestic abuse and substance misuse. Our aim, alongside the delivery of specialist recovery services, is to engage and influence the health system that should support our clients, to change and inform attitudes, provide models of delivery that are client-led and offer success in their widest sense and to influence the commissioning of these vital services.

- The residents engage with Action on Addiction and receive weekly phone calls from the counsellor who also helps them to prepare for the Self-Help Addiction Recovery Programme (SHARP). This is a community rehabilitation programme for those in recovery from drug and alcohol use). The programme is currently conducted online due to Covid-19.

- Clients with problematic alcohol use will be referred to Phoenix Futures and will be given an opportunity to engage with SHARP as well.
- Residents are supported in 1-2-1 weekly sessions by an Open Road keyworker to support them in their substance recovery & separate 1-2-1 weekly sessions with their Next Chapter keyworker to support them in their recovery from domestic abuse.
- Some of the residents follow the 12 steps program and attend mutual aid meetings (NA, CA, AA) online, as well as a group session with Open Road women's complex needs manager.
- We have secured additional funding to provide residents with 1:1 therapeutic sessions with a qualified therapeutic practitioner to help them explore the issues surrounding their DA and their substance misuse. These 1:1 sessions are supplement with a weekly group session with the same practitioner to create a mutual support network and to learn from each other.

All the data provided are captured using 'Oasis on Track' database.

We measure outcomes using the POWeR tool (Personal Outcomes and Wellbeing Record). The POWeR measurement tool is linked to our case management system and measures the client's self-reported journey from referral to closure, with their progress against the range of factors being taken at the end of their involvement with our services, calculated using their feelings when they first entered our service.

Whilst we can demonstrate a very high percentage of our service users reporting positive increases in the outcomes, it is important to understand that external factors can change from referral to closure of service which will influence whether the service user feels they have made progress over their time with our services. For example, the relocation out of their risk area will result in a change to their support networks, the perpetrator may have been released from custody or prison or even a change in benefits can affect their confidence in being able to have a financially independent future. This can impact on the overall measurement of progress made. Therefore, it will reflect the overall situation in a service user's life, not just the work undertaken with Next Chapter. In some case there may have been disengagement with service due to resuming the relationship.

If using this service made a difference in your life, please tell us how – what's changed for you?

Everything, I have better awareness and skills to live my life, I cannot thank the manager/staff enough, they believed in me when everyone else gave up'.

'I am no longer on methadone which I could not have done without the support of the staff. It has taught me to be more accepting of people as at times living in a house full of other can been tough. I always felt by staff Lorna is always totally fair honest and approachable, Justine was always supportive and friendly, but I felt I could talk to all the staff, Mandy was like a kind Mum, Simon understood me and my substance needs. I felt after 5 months I needed to return home as my dad was not well and need me'.

'I arrived at the refuge on 29th January 2020, I was in a very bad way, my situation was dire, and I was at rock bottom. I had a crack addiction and alcoholism; I was also coming from a domestic violence relationship. The staff here have been nothing short of fantastic, I

have received the most incredible support and I am leaving here a different woman entirely. As my dear Father stated, he has his daughter back again'.

'I have never had anyone believe in me the way you do I will be externally grateful for being given this opportunity to better myself and my lifestyle. Since being here I have realised that I am worth more than what I have settled for previously. I never imagined I could even get to where I am now, and I am confident I can keep improving. You inspire me to do better and I feel I can tell you anything and you will never know how grateful I am. I admire you so much'

'I have only been in refuge for 2 weeks but being in refuge has made me never want to take drugs again as it has showed me how drugs can devastate your life. Witnessing the support, the other residents needed shocked me. It is so hard to stop taking drugs. I did not realise I was nearly at that stage'.

'When I came into the refuge, I was drinking 30+ units of alcohol, with the support of the team I am leaving abstinent from alcohol and looking forward to my future. I found the staff approachable and always willing to assist. I found the dynamics in the house hard at times as the women were always arguing amongst themselves, but the staff always managed the situations'

How would things be different for you if you'd not received support here?

'I would be drinking still, and my family would not have anything to do with me, this was my final chance'.

'I would be homeless, still in active addiction and a domestic relationship and resulting in more bad relationships in the future'

'I would have been dead in a ditch. I now understand my triggers and feel I can offer support to others with substance issues'.

'I would not be able to share with you that I have a job, my Daddy is buying me a car as I have now gained their trust'.

'If it hadn't been for the refuge, by now there is a strong possibility I could be dead. This could have been from the drugs, alcohol or at the hands of a man, so this has saved my life'.

'Probably would be dead'.

'The team of staff are amazing, I have so much gratitude to the staff for taking the time to listen to me'.

Children and Young Persons Service (CYP)

The breakdown of the data related to referrals received shows the significant number of children associated with the individuals and families we support. Until the expansion of our CYP service using the MHCLG funding, there were no specialist DA support services available for children and young people experiencing harm through domestic abuse. The

data also shows the increased impact of DA during the pandemic as can be seen by the rise in cases open to Children's Social Care or Family Solutions.

Since the last quarter report, practitioners have commenced direct work with clients and have been running recovery groups and providing 1-1 support to children and parents. We have had to continue to adapt our service model to ensure we are delivering in line with Government COVID guidelines, operating safely for both clients, their children, and our staff. This has been a challenge, but groups have been run remotely and client 1-1 work has been done remotely or by telephone. Children 1-1 work has been done remotely and in school when possible. The CYP manager left the service at the end of November 2020 and a new manager has been appointed and has reassessed the CYP service and in consultation with partners has amended the referral criteria.

Three Youth Violence Advisors have recently been appointed to work (from January 2021) with young people aged between 14-19 who are experiencing serious harm from intimate relationships or family domestic abuse.

Three teams continue to deliver the service covering Colchester, Tendring, Braintree and Chelmsford/Maldon. The Children and Young Person's Service has been shaped to meet needs presented and in response to this we have continued the three pathways (Recovery Groups, One-to-one work, Early Interventions) with adaptations.

i) Recovery Groups

The CYP team has been running recovery groups for parents with children aged 5 to 12 years old. The groups follow the Women's Aid Programme called 'You and Me, Mum'. These groups support mothers who are not in MARAC or considered high risk, the alleged perpetrator is not in the home and the support needs of the child are linked in some way to the domestic abuse they have experienced. The groups have three aims: -

- To help mothers understand how domestic abuse affects them as a parent
- To help mothers understand the effects of domestic violence on children and young people
- To strengthen the mother and child relationship post-abuse

Given the Covid-19 restrictions, we have been delivering these groups online and they run for ten weeks. For families referred to the service during this time, we hold a waiting list. For the period September until December, we have run 6 groups, with approx. 6 mums attending each group. Parents have engaged well, and staff have adapted the programme to fit this delivery style. Family Domestic Abuse Practitioners provide follow up support, between sessions.

We began direct 'in person' work with the children of these parents in school from 25 September 2020. Visits are planned and follow schools risk assessment as well as our own risk assessment. Schools are open to us coming in with robust risk assessments and it has been acknowledged that children are less able to learn if they have been exposed to an unsafe home environment. Much of the direct work with both parents and children is helping them to recover not only from domestic abuse experiences but also with re-engaging with school.

ii) One to one Work

Although originally our interventions had been designed for post-abuse support, we have adapted these to respond to need for support for children who are experiencing Domestic abuse and well as experienced domestic abuse. This change in referral criteria was made

in consultation with partners and has been welcomed because of the high need, especially during lock down. Practitioners work in partnership with agencies who are working with the adults, by giving expert domestic abuse advice and supporting the child to explore their feelings and help them understand what they have been through, know they are not to blame, help them to stay safe and let them know where they can turn if they need more help.

With families who are going through on-going Family Court proceedings we continue to support parents by providing direct work to parents via the telephone in order to be responsive to this need. This can be intensive, and support offered more than once a week. We are providing direct work to children in school and this work follows the 'wishes and feelings' model.

iii) Early intervention

Our early intervention work had been delayed because of the pandemic. Healthy relationship workshops targeting Year 6 in their approach to transition to Year 7 and we are also offering an adapted workshop targeting year 7, year 9, and young people aged up to 19. This work enhances the Relationships, Sex and Health Education Curriculum that is now compulsory in all schools. Schools have also requested a workshop for the teachers to allow an understanding of the domestic abuse, healthy relationships and the impact of domestic abuse on the whole family. We hope to start these in February. We are currently in liaison with schools and youth groups regarding delivering the workshops remotely during lock down.

In order to share this intervention, we have established a partnership with the Healthy Schools Initiative and will raise awareness of our service via this platform.

i) Partnerships Development

We have partnered with Family Solutions and Essex Child, Family Wellbeing Service, Healthy School Initiative and recently Schools, 'Xtra Support for families' and Youth services such as the YMCA for referrals. Awareness of our service is also being promoted by partners. The referrals are expected to increase significantly following the change in referral criteria. The new Service Manager has attended strategic meetings to introduce the service and Family Domestic Abuse Practitioners are continuing to attend the frontline team meetings to ensure the criteria is clear and referral pathway is known.

We have developed a working relationship with the Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service. This is to ensure we have a clear remit of psychological risk. The EWMHS are keen to partner with us, particularly for clients on their Complex Pathway waiting list, and we are establishing a mechanism to assist with joint assessing for particularly complex cases and ensure there is a clear identification of work.

i) Data

Young people worked with in the service: 255

Age range:

0-5 years old – 74

6-10 years old – 111

11-15 years old – 54

16 plus – 16

Parents worked with in the service: 126

You me and Mum – 6 workshops (each ran for 10 weeks), 7 arranged starting 11 January 2021 including 1 evening session following a need identified.

Young People referred to Social care following CYP input – 30

Housing Domestic Abuse Project

We have now successfully recruited to our Housing Domestic Abuse Practitioner positions and our team is in place and working through their induction and training programme.

An introductory email has been sent to all nominated key contacts and each practitioner will be working with the nominated teams in their area to develop relationships and immerse themselves in all things housing. A request has been made for specific induction plans to be created to ensure they are able to develop a broad knowledge of the services that are specific to each area.

The team are preparing a domestic abuse led presentation to introduce Next Chapter and provide some further awareness on current DA issues and trends in their various locations. It is hoped that the increased awareness of the impact of domestic abuse and the various referral pathways and services available will allow housing professionals to refer more clients for support.

Covid and lockdown clearly has an impact on how we work right now with all meetings taking place over Teams, but we hope to be able to change that as soon as restrictions are lifted and it is safe to do so.

We are delighted to have secured the services of Dr Kelly Henderson, DAHA Co-Founder and former housing Professional of the Year to provide some bespoke training to our team to ensure they are up to speed with housing legislation and the current challenges faced by housing teams across the districts. Kelly is extremely knowledgeable and passionate about domestic abuse and housing and is very supportive of our project. The first of three training sessions takes place on 11 January 2021 and we will be working with Kelly to produce a toolkit for all our practitioners to use and share going forward.

The team have already started to work on some complex cases where they have had some very positive outcomes. These are being documented as case studies to ensure that we take the learning and share across all districts.

The rest of the team have been collecting examples of housing challenges their clients have faced so that we can try and work on these to find a resolution that can be replicated elsewhere.

We have set up a specific case surgery for the Housing DAP Team so that they can advise and guide each other, sharing particular learning from their area and in order to become a hub of knowledge for the rest of the organisation when supporting clients with housing difficulties.

We have amended our recording system to ensure we can accurately record housing outcomes, and these will be reported monthly to track referrals and impact. This is in addition to a client feedback survey that is being developed to ensure we are able to use our client's views in developing the service.

Next Chapter Service Outcomes

The outcomes (both quantitative and qualitative) delivered by our services are outlined in the 3 quarterly outcome reports appended to this report. We are currently working on the outcome reports for our Children & Young People's Service as this is a newly shaped service that has only been operating for a period of 3 months.

Or visit our website and read our survivors stories that really explain the outcomes for those individuals

<https://www.thenextchapter.org.uk/Pages/Category/stories>

Other funding

In addition to our commissioned services and the MHCLG "Together We Can" funding – we secured a range of additional funding to support the additional demand related to Covid and to support development of the services we offer.

MoJ/PFCC – Emergency Covid Funding for additional IDVA practitioners to cope with rise in referrals (£108k up to 31 March 21)

MHCLG – Emergency Covid Funding to cover additional costs of providing services in lockdown & additional practitioners to cope with rise in referrals (£98k up to 31 March 21)

Children in Need – Emergency Covid (Funding £2.5k) & Project funding to fund our Young Person's Violence Advisor (YPVA) team. (£79k to 30 November 2021)

Essex Community Foundation – Range of Emergency Covid funds to support service delivery – (£24k up to 31 March 21)

Essex Community Foundation – Tampon Tax funding to support delivery of Freedom Programme (£10k up to 31 March 21)

Essex County Council - £10k grant to provide a welfare fund for clients to access for specific support

Community Donations – incredible support both in monetary donations and community support. Notable mentions to Colchester Community Mask / Face Covering Tree who raised an incredible £8,500 helping to support our Counselling service, Anglian Community Enterprise who donated £5k to fund our secure webchat & covert secure email facility and Colchester Anti-loo Roll Brigade who amaze us on a daily basis with their coordination of community responses for to any and every practical need we have for the clients we support.

Gaps

We don't currently have funding to provide any practitioners in health based locations. There is a wealth of research that demonstrates the positive impact and outcomes of co-locating DA practitioners in health settings but to date we have been unable to secure CCG support for commissioning specialist DA practitioner resources in Colchester Hospital & there has been little interest by GP surgeries even when a small amount of funding was secured to pilot the impact of DA practitioners in the GP setting.

Beverley Jones

CEO, Next Chapter
January 2021