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You said, we did... Summary Report

Children & Young People with Autism+
Keyworking Engagement

December 2022

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SCVYS



STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL OF VOLUNTARY YOUTH SERVICES

Introduction

The published [Children & Young People Keyworking Engagement Report](#) (May 2021) presented findings and recommendations of engagement undertaken with Children and Young People regarding the proposed Keyworker role aimed at supporting those with Autism and/or a disability. We are now delighted to present the responses from health colleagues highlighting how these Keyworker roles were adapted in response to the recommendations in the initial report.

The following feedback comprises perspectives from both the Keyworkers themselves and their Team Leaders. We also requested input from Commissioners, given their ability to influence and shape the delivery of pilot projects of this nature; however, this was not forthcoming at the time of writing.

“ YOU SAID:
Keyworkers should help us communicate with professionals (especially those we are least comfortable with).
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WE DID....AND ARE DOING

The Keyworker role is designed to **LISTEN** to the children, young people and families they were supporting. This was evidenced by adapting their communication methods to what was most effective. Examples included:

- Keeping communication simple in terms of language and clarity (Don't go around the houses if something has to be said, say it!)
- Using Picture Exchange Communication
- Utilising subjects of interest i.e. using a cat story book to better engage a child with a love of cats.
- A person-centred approach.
- Keyworkers took a whole family approach considering the differing needs of parent/carers and each sibling
- Mutual understanding of information and decisions is checked and reinforced through follow up calls

The Keyworker role helped to build and connect up bridges between the family and the education, health and social care arenas they were working with. On occasion this meant attending a meeting with other professionals to help them feel more at ease, advocating for the family to professionals, highlighting gaps and challenging understanding and decision-making.

“ YOU SAID:
Support should be available when we feel we need it.
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WE DID....AND ARE DOING

This recommendation is tough to achieve, as usually the earlier an effective intervention, the better and more lasting the positive outcomes are. The Keyworker support is allocated according to identified risk recorded via the Dynamic Support Register. This system uses a RAG risk factor rating, i.e. **Red**, **Amber**, and **Green**.

The level of support provided is matched to the needs of the family in a person-centred way, enabling families to outline the level of support they need.

The support plan is agreed with the families, and includes agreed goals and regular reviews. If parents were ready take up support, but young people needed more time, then Keyworkers adapted to those circumstances. If young people were discharged due to this, then Keyworkers checked in regularly with parents to enquire if they were ready to be supported. The pace of progress was jointly agreed to avoid pushing for outcomes that weren't achievable in the timescale.

“ YOU SAID:

Reducing help should be done with me and my family.

”

WE DID....AND ARE DOING

In other words the Keyworker should work with you and your family to decide how long they will support you for. They should also make sure you are asked how they should stop supporting you to make sure you feel ready to become more independent.

Discharging of cases is reviewed weekly against the agreed support pathway with the voices of children, young people and families being heard alongside that of professionals. Families can also challenge a decision to discharge if they wish to.

Families are invited to all meetings about them, and if they don't attend for any reason, feedback is given as quickly as possible afterwards.

Professionals have recognised that this process could be further improved by using Easy Read formats for more of the documentation, and plans are already underway to complete this work.

“ YOU SAID:

Keyworkers should know about other support which is available to help me and also help me to find it.

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WE DID....AND ARE DOING

Keyworkers continue to network, building up a knowledge bank of information about available support, as well as promoting the project to help connect support services up. A range of resources are available and these are currently promoted in a booklet format. Examples of where families were connected to support they had requested include:

- Art therapy
- 1:1 PA support
- Educational support
- Apprenticeships
- Bereavement counselling
- Welfare checks
- Housing support

Keyworkers provide a listening and supportive ear for families worries and concerns, and help them to communicate their voice to professionals around them. There are future plans to recruit a Family Support Worker and set up a parent group.

“ YOU SAID:

There should be a way to get back in touch with my Keyworker after their help has ended, in case I need extra help again.

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WE DID....AND ARE DOING

The intention is that risks around any family can be escalated on the Dynamic Support Register at any time. Families also have the contact details of the Keyworkers, so they can make immediate contact if and when support is needed.

Individuals have open access to the Keyworker Service up until the age of 25 and can email a generic inbox with any concerns or worries they have following discharge.

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YOU SAID:

Young people should carry on being involved in what Keyworkers do and be able to say what they think about what the Keyworker does.

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WE DID....AND ARE DOING

Keyworkers have continued to listen to the views of the families they support, adapting their practice to best meet the needs expressed. This includes not only what kind of support is delivered, but also understanding how the support is best delivered.

In addition, SCVYS has been deployed to undertake a further piece of engagement work with a number of families who have experienced the support of the Keyworker role. The aim of this work is threefold:

- To test the findings of this “You Said, We Did” report, offering families an opportunity to comment on their experience of the service.
- To evidence the value of the Keyworker role and potentially support its sustainability.
- To further develop and improve the Keyworker role using the experience and ideas of children, young people and families who have been supported.

Conclusion

It is clear from the feedback provided that the Keyworker teams and managers feel they have listened and responded to many of the recommendations from the Children & Young People Keyworking Engagement Report, in designing the support provided through the Keyworker roles.

As with all projects, the ability to meet every demand or expectation has to be considered in light of the level of available resource, team capacity, current caseload, the scope of the role and avoiding duplication with the Care Coordinator role. The advocacy element is particularly crucial.

SCVYS will now test the feedback from practitioners through interviews with children, young people and families who have experienced Keyworker support to ensure the perspectives align.

SCVYS would like to close the feedback loop with the 50 young people who participated in the original engagement exercise and requested to be kept informed on the project and its development.

The information in this report may be used within health to identify and secure funding to sustain the Keyworker roles and therefore provide much needed support to children, young people and families on the edge of crisis. However, the subsequent report which we hope to publish in early 2023, could more powerfully communicate the impact these roles have had on positive outcomes for individual children, young people and families.

This report has been authored by Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services.

Any questions or feedback can be directed to Phil Pusey, Chief Executive Officer on:

Tel: 07429 759641 or Email: phil@staffscvys.org.uk

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42a Eastgate Street

Stafford. ST16 2LY

Telephone: (01785) 240378

Email: office@staffscvys.org.uk

Website: www.staffscvys.org.uk