



Mental Health Strategy Document – 2020/2021

By developing a strategy statement, OC as a charity is demonstrating a commitment to identifying the mental health needs within its student population. The strategy will provide a framework around which the values and goals are structured.

Vision

Oarsome Chance is an alternative provision for young people with SEMH challenges. The Vision is for OC to provide a holistic approach to mental health identification, support and accessing appropriate interventions.

Mission

OC provides individualised support and advice to its young people and their network of family, carers, school and wider professionals. The project is unique and engenders a supportive working environment that demonstrates the values we believe in.

Values

OC recognises the prevalence of mental health difficulties in young people from SEMH backgrounds and those in alternative provision. It seeks to foster strong and relevant interventions. Furthermore, creating better life chances and vocational opportunities for the young people the charity serves.

History/Background/need identified

It is widely recognised that young people experiencing social, economic and emotional deprivation as well as educational difficulties are significantly more likely to experience the need for additional support. It is reported that those from such backgrounds are four times more likely to experience, low mood and psychological distress than others and are at greater risk of mental health difficulties.

Furthermore, the highest rates of mental ill-health occur in those with learning difficulties and those with Autistic Spectrum Conditions and ADHD. Many of our young people will either have a diagnosis or be suspected as having pre-existing neurological vulnerabilities, as well as environmental factors that can exacerbate their difficulties. Unless services are available to support them, then mental health inequalities will widen.

Furthermore, our young people may also live with a parent/carer or family member who themselves have mental health difficulties, drug and/or alcohol abuse or other physical conditions, which means our young people may take on additional responsibilities at a younger age. In 20011 Census, 4% of young carers said they had a mental health condition; this compares with 1% of non-carers.

Therefore, it is OC's desire to determine and implement the additional support needed for each young person and any other support required to engage and work with their families. Often this may mean going 'above and beyond' the normal duties of an alternative provision. For example, providing transport to students, discussing issues that may impact upon a young person with parents/carers, providing advice and attending meetings.

Furthermore, it is important to also ascertain and seek training and support for practitioners assessing and managing complex needs among children who present a high risk to themselves or others (through violence, aggression or distress as well as destructive coping).

Prevention and Early Intervention

Alternative school providers have a responsibility to support and develop the mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing of pupils, apprentices and service users.

It is OC's goal to give every young person appropriate access to emotional and mental well-being support. It is important that evidence-based interventions (to address behavioural and emotional issues in young people) are readily available within the charity. OC seeks to provide this by taking the following actions.

- As part of the overall strategy, OC will focus on training and professional development, as well as promoting good practice, positive behaviour approaches and non-physical de-escalation techniques.
- Basic Mental health training for non-mental health staff will be available across the service, monitored in practice and refreshed annually.
- Training in First Aid approaches for Mental Health are considered highly beneficial to support delivery in specific roles.
- OC will ensure that children and young people are included, engaged and involved in their education, care plans and mental health support. This is fundamental to their individual achievement, attainment and well-being.
- It is desired that OC provision fosters a positive culture for all students and mental well-being is considered across education, care and activity-planning.
- It is anticipated as part of this strategy that appropriate pastoral care is available to help children/adolescents feel secure, resilient, confident, supported, and able to access the learning opportunities on offer.

What/How

Within the next 6-12 months it is our goal to roll out mental health training for all employees and volunteers who support young people in OC. The level of this training will be dependent upon their role within the charity and capabilities to undertake training.

Furthermore, OC will remain committed to review interventions, pastoral guidance, and counselling (or other) for children and young people. Ensuring that the level of training, support and interventions are appropriate to the needs of the young people.

OC will ensure that young people and stakeholders are collaborated with around Mental Health documents, interventions, training and are provided with feedback.

Young People, their families and ACE

A young person's wellbeing is influenced by everything around them, and by the different experiences and needs they have had (or are currently having). OC endeavours to work with young people and families across the board to provide support. Furthermore, to identify and address need at the earliest opportunity, to prevent problems escalating.

It is recognised that in the alternative provision sector, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) are more prevalent than in mainstream education. Recognising ACE's in young people is important to current and future mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, it is crucial that historical mental, emotional health and well-being needs are considered, to help improve outcomes for these young people.

Staff working with young people need to be ACE-informed and confident in the early identification of risk factors and of symptoms of mental ill-health (Attachment and Trauma trained). Part of improving support is having a workforce that is confident in understanding predisposing factors, identifying mental health issues and knowing how to manage, report (within OC) and signpost to specialised external services where appropriate.

To assist non-mental health staff, training programmes will be offered (as outlined in the Mental Health Training document) to build their confidence and competence. The purpose of this training is to increase the early identification of symptoms, anticipate possible difficulties arising and therefore being able to implement intervention strategies which are within job role and training level.

Additionally, OC will continue to work with partners supporting families within their own communities and make necessary referrals where appropriate (e.g. HEH MIND)

Evaluation of OC

OC is committed to monitoring and gathering evidence on how we make a difference. Existing feedback forms are completed termly. The My Mind Star will also be used to evaluate changes in social, emotional and mental health needs. Additionally, each young person will complete strengths and difficulties questionnaires alongside trauma and attachment profiles to aid our understanding of their needs.

Currently, OC records the daily interactions of young people within the alternative provision environment. These records inform reports and meetings with professionals in the wider community and monitor daily changes. These can inform staff on well-being, by observing how young people behave, interact with others, engage with their education and work-based skills and tolerate others around them.

OC would like to develop further the identification of what works for students and what they feel they need, and this will be undertaken through collaborative consultation and feedback on newly designed measures/questionnaires.

The aims are to have data that is useful and meaningful to the charity and young people that it serves and to limit overuse of questionnaires and interviewing.

It is anticipated that there will be two points of review of the implementation of this strategy, at 6 months and a full 12-month progress review in July/August 2021. The purpose will be to ascertain the progress of the strategy and to make any necessary changes to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose.

Future

In order to ensure that we are meeting the mental health needs of the young people we support, OC is committed in continuing work with partners across organisations and developing links with agencies working with our young people.

It is expected that OC will continue to learn and grow its opportunities for young people and therefore always endeavour to be transparent with partners, funders, students and families about its mission, values and outcomes.

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