

# **Supporting Families Against Youth Crime**

Project Evaluation

**A great place to live and work.**

## Introduction

Central Bedfordshire Council was awarded a grant of £202,000 through the Supporting Families Against Youth Crime Fund. Our project delivered a range of services to young people, parents and professionals with a focus on an Early Intervention and multi-agency approach to prevent criminal exploitation of our young people. When the Covid-19 lockdown came into force on 23 March, we were only half way through the delivery of many aspects of the project and this has therefore had a significant impact on the project. Whilst it has resulted in challenges in terms of having hard outcomes to prove its efficacy, we have still managed to continue to deliver many of the services virtually, providing vital support for vulnerable young people and families. Due to the positive feedback, we will be continuing to offer several services that were piloted through the project.

## Project delivery

Our project has focused on an Early Intervention approach and working with a wide range of organisations in the community. Our project delivery broke down into three streams; direct delivery to young people, training for parents and training for professionals. In delivering this project we worked with a range of partners. We worked with St Giles Trust, a leading provider of peer delivery around Criminal Exploitation and County Lines. Through a facilitator with lived experience of these issues in our local area, they delivered their SOS+ project, offering knife crime awareness sessions, group work and mentoring. We also worked with existing partners within Central Bedfordshire:

- Grand Union: delivers youth work in the north of Central Bedfordshire including detached work
- 4YP: delivers youth work in West Mid Beds along with careers advice
- Homestart: provides volunteers to support parents of under 5s and delivers parenting groups
- Groundworks: delivers youth work across Central Bedfordshire
- Tactic: run a youth club and youth services in Leighton Buzzard

Along with two new partners:

- Hear2Listen: deliver counselling services and the National Citizens Service (NCS) programme
- Luton Tigers: deliver youth work programmes in Luton, focussed on preventing extremism and exploitation

This enabled us to access a wide range of skills and develop relationships with those who are already delivering important services to young people in the community.



***“On a personal note, communication before the session was excellent with Jordan. Meeting him in person was a privilege, his honesty and positive belief that people can change was incredible and we would have him back again in a heartbeat. I can truly say having worked at the school for 12 years he was one of our very best presenters and the information he shared was vital for our students to know. “***

***Staff feedback***

## Direct delivery to young people

### Knife Crime Awareness Sessions

**Target: 20 schools**      **Outcome: Exceeded – 38 sessions at 20 schools and over 5,000 children**

St Giles Trust delivered their SOS+ project in schools across Central Bedfordshire. Thirty-eight Knife Crime Awareness Sessions were delivered in over 20 schools, primarily to secondary age children and young people. The sessions reached approximately 5,000 young people. Whilst we made the offer available to all secondary schools, we also targeted schools in areas of concern along with special needs provisions and alternative provisions in order to reach the most vulnerable. The sessions were approximately an hour long and the facilitator shared his personal experiences along with educating the children on the risks of knife crime and the law. Of those who returned feedback forms, 100% gave a maximum score for the quality of the sessions and the verbal feedback from staff and students was excellent.

*"I found the talk really interesting especially as Jordan was telling us about his actual life experiences. I was quite shocked about how easy it was to get caught up in a gang."*

**Student feedback**

### Group work

**Target: 20 groups**      **Outcome: 12 groups reaching 90 children**

Group work was delivered in 12 schools. They were prioritised based on the needs of young people in that school/area. The group work was then offered to schools with whom the providers had a relationship and schools who had accessed the knife crime awareness sessions and had then expressed an interest in the group work. It was notable that whilst we had broad interest in the knife awareness sessions from schools, several schools where external professionals felt there was a need for more targeted support declined the offer. This may relate to concerns around their reputation or a different view of the vulnerability of their students. As part of the group work aspect, St Giles delivered their group work in two alternative provisions and a special needs provision to a total of 27 young people. This group work was made up of 6 sessions covering gangs, county lines, knife crime, joint enterprise, realities of prison and fraud. The other group work was delivered by our local partners and were made up of 4 sessions. We held a development day with delivering agencies so that they could discuss the issues in Central Bedfordshire and programme content. In addition, they were invited to attend the Knife Crime awareness sessions to ensure consistency of message. Each agency developed their own programme, but all focused on assessing risk, making positive choices and consequences.

*The group did not think there were gangs in their area but did think gangs came into Flitwick from elsewhere (Luton). They definitely did not believe their peer group were in gangs.*

Central Bedfordshire is a very rural area but with some larger towns, particularly in the south. Young people also spend time in the adjoining areas of Bedford and Luton. In addition, group work was delivered in a range of schools, from a middle school in a rural location to an Alternative Provision in a town close to Luton. Therefore young people are exposed to very different levels of criminal and gang activity and this was reflected in the feedback from young people in the groups. Whilst young people in the Alternative Provision knew people in gangs and in some cases had witnessed Serious Youth Violence, the younger children in a more

rural middle school did not think there was gang activity in their area but thought that gangs from Luton came to their small town.

There was capacity within the project to deliver group work to 20 groups but unfortunately the Covid-19 crisis prevented further group work being delivered. Most of our providers have agreed to offer the group work again in September 2020 when schools return and we hope that schools will wish to take up this offer.

Feedback from young people who took part in the group work was generally positive, but there was broadly consistent feedback regardless of the agency delivering the work that 4 sessions was insufficient and they would have liked further sessions. Those delivering agreed with this and felt it was difficult to create a group dynamic where everyone kept comfortable and able to engage and also deliver the work in only 4 sessions. We had planned to address this by using some of our capacity to provide follow up group peer mentoring to some groups who would benefit from further intervention but unfortunately this was prevented by the Covid-19 pandemic. Some young people were identified through the group work who would benefit from mentoring work. An advantage of having organisations with a strong community presence deliver group work was that they could then signpost young people to their other services.

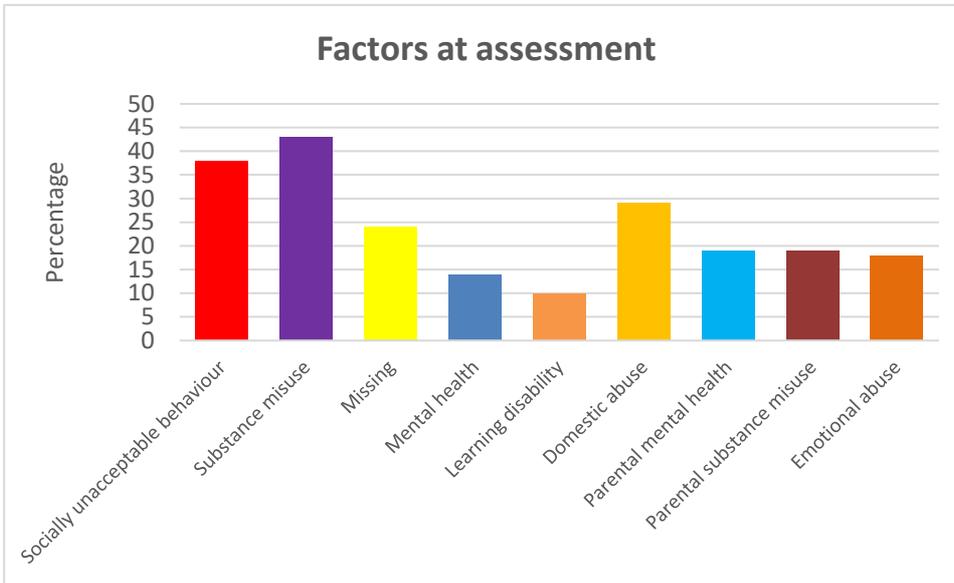
### **Mentoring with a whole family approach**

**Target: 25 young people      Outcome: Met**

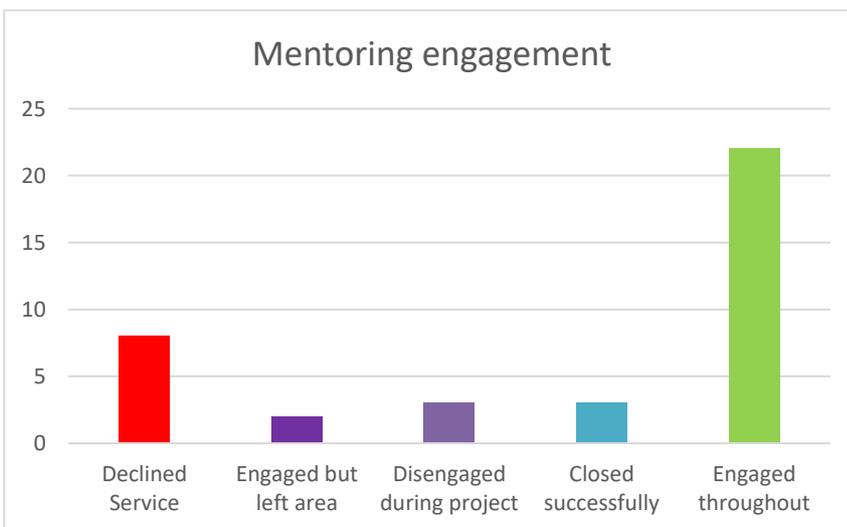
Our initial plan was to identify 25 young people who were vulnerable to criminal exploitation or becoming involved in criminal activity. They would then be supported through 1-1 mentoring alongside whole family support through Early Help Plus for a year. This was piloting a new whole family preventative approach. The aim was that this intensive and consistent approach would enable young people and families to make the progress they needed to safeguard the young people and enable them to make positive choices. This was designed to be an early intervention and as the family would need to be supported by Early Help, young people could not take part in the project if they were already being supported under a Child in Need or Child Protection plan or be Looked After.

At the start of the project, a group of young people had been identified by a range of professionals including Early Help, education/attendance, SEND and youth services. On approaching these families it became clear that having an established relationship with the family was key as those without keyworkers were more difficult to engage. When contacted directly by unfamiliar Children's Service staff, many parents declined the service either due to not wanting Children's Services involvement or they did not feel the service was needed. Those with key workers who could explain the benefits and facilitate introductions worked well. Delays to project start because of school holidays also proved to impede engagement in some cases. This reflected both that young people and families' needs can change in a short space of time, meaning a service needs to be responsive, and that the views of professionals and families often differ. Of the young people who participated, the vast majority were referred by their Early Help workers. These young people had recently been referred to Children's Services due to a safeguarding concerns, and suggests that finding the right time to reach a young person and their family is paramount, in these cases it provided a 'reachable moment'. The graph below illustrates the range of factors that were identified when an assessment of the young person and their family was completed. They have only been included where an assessment was completed either up to 3 months prior to the referral to the project or afterwards as part of the project. Eight young people had been open to Children's Services for some time, meaning their assessments were not up to date therefore they were not included.

The primary factors identified were socially unacceptable behaviour, substance misuse (young person) and domestic abuse (within the household).



Whilst the initial intention had been to engage young people for a full year, this was not what happened for many of the young people for various reasons. We had some young people end their involvement during the project due to moving away, disengaging or feeling they had reached their objectives. This in turn left capacity for further young people to be supported, albeit for a shorter period. Over the length of the project, 38 young people were accepted onto the project. Of these, 30 went on to meet with mentors and 8 did not progress due to either parents/carers or young people declining support. Engagement is detailed in the chart below. Whilst we had a range of providers, the level of engagement was consistent amongst them.



The mentoring project was designed to be a face to face service, but this became impossible during Covid-19, therefore 'engaged throughout' includes those who engaged well up to lockdown. Whilst mentors continued to try to maintain contact with young people during lockdown to deliver

mentoring virtually, engagement was variable, even among young people who had engaged well up until this point. Reasons for this included challenges for mentors with contacting families and young people as well as young people not wanting or feeling able to engage virtually, possibly due to not being able to speak freely at home where they may be overheard by other family members. This has highlighted to us that although there are many positives in the virtual world, most young people still really value in-person support.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, positive outcomes were still achieved and the majority of the young people engaged consistently with mentors, many who had not engaged well with professionals previously. This is a significant achievement. Ten mentoring relationships are being extended beyond the life of the project as lockdown eases. Whilst this is positive, this extension and the more sporadic contact with some young people during lockdown does mean that the end of support scaling is not yet consistently available at this time to provide any meaningful evaluation. We have data from outcome stars completed by Early Help workers with parents. The graph below shows the progression in four areas. As with other data, this is inevitably impacted by Covid-19; lockdown has been a challenge for everyone and it may have led to a deterioration in the circumstances of some families or left them feeling more negative about their circumstances.

***“It has become easier for me to open up more since receiving support from Shaz, especially as he is very easy going.”***



**Community Safety Maps**

**Target: 20 workshops delivered producing maps    Outcome: delayed due to Covid-19**

Our community partner had just started arranging workshops when the Covid-19 lockdown began. Unfortunately this work was not conducive to a virtual environment, so it was agreed that this work would be delayed until the work could be done in person. The deliverer is in discussion with schools about how and when this work can be done.

## Training for parents

### Understanding Teenagers sessions

**Target: 500 parents attend sessions Outcome: Exceeded. (Virtually)**

Understanding Teenagers is a programme developed by Family Links and educates parents/carers about the impact of brain development on teenagers. The training was delivered to a range of professionals across Central Bedfordshire including social care staff, youth workers and teachers. A 'train the trainer' session was then held for staff from agencies commissioned to deliver the sessions to parents and Early Help Staff. Objective of training was to broadly educate parents on how to understand teenage and build better relationships with them.

The original plan was for sessions to be held in community settings across Central Bedfordshire, such as schools, children's centres and youth centres, to reach 500 parents/carers. As Covid-19 restrictions came into force we quickly adapted plans. Our partners made a video presentation available on YouTube which was promoted amongst professionals and via social media to reach as many parents/carers as possible. To date the video has more than 2000 views. A written presentation was also circulated to be given to parents/carers. Whilst this was not how we had initially envisaged this aspect of the project being delivered, it has enabled us to reach more parents/carers than our initial plan. A small sample of 23 parents completed a survey (this was due to where the survey link was displayed on YouTube), and 100% of this group said they would recommend it to other parents and 73% said it would affect how they communicate with their child.



***"The video is a good reminder for me as a parent of a teenager that he is struggling too."***

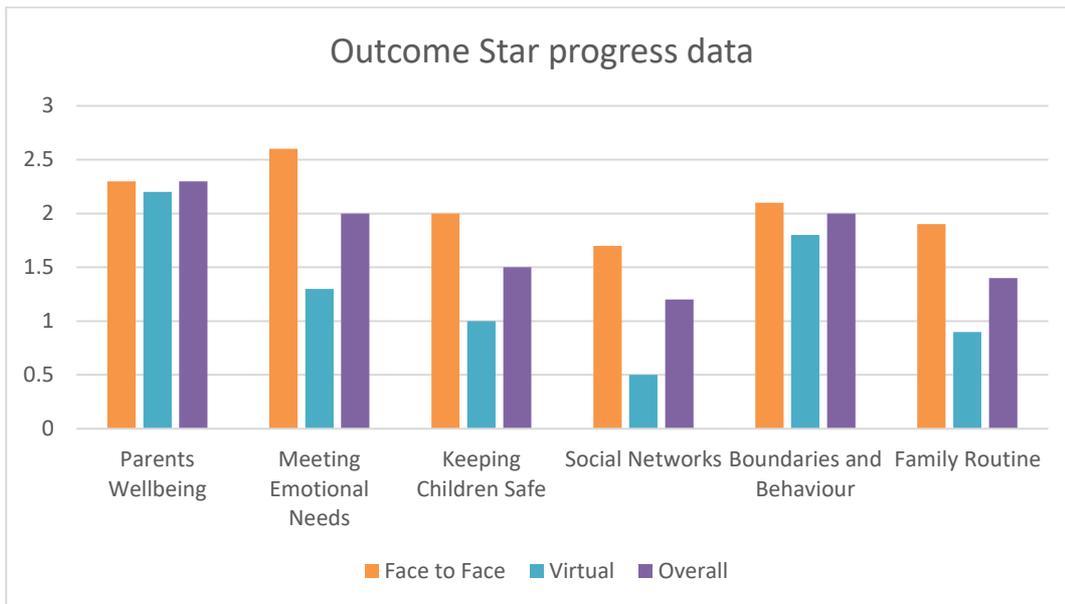
### Non-violent resistance parenting courses

**Target: 50 parents/carers complete a course Outcome: Exceeded - 53 participants**

A group of 15 Early Help staff completed a 3 day course in the principles of Non-violent resistance parenting in order to deliver a programme to parents. The programme focuses on:

- Increasing parental presence
- De-escalating conflict
- Showing commitment to your child
- Reconciliation
- Identifying support
- Self care

Initially the programme was delivered to 4 groups of parents/carers in person. Following the Covid-19 lockdown, an in person offer was no longer possible so the programme was delivered virtually through Microsoft Teams. Each person attending completed an outcome star at the beginning and end of the programme and the graph below shows the progress made. It shows that those who attended in-person made more progress than those who took part in the programme virtually, but both groups benefited from the programme. However, it should also be noted that the in-person took place prior to the lockdown whereas the virtual programme was during lockdown, so this could also be a factor.



### **Case Study**

***J arrived for week 1 with the attitude that nothing would work but she would give it a go.***

***NVR is non-prescriptive unlike other Parenting Programmes J had attended and it was soon evident that this was far more suited to J's needs.***

***J listened, engaged, and by week 3 was first to arrive, last to leave and became a pivotal member of the group. Her enthusiasm, confidence and ability to put into practise what she learned each week was an amazing transformation from week 1.***

***J was able to share openly and honestly each week with the group and we would work with her to explore other avenues if certain aspects of the course were not suitable due to X's age (7). J accepted advice and suggestions given and did her homework every week.***

***J no longer said "nothing will ever work" or "I've tried everything", instead, J couldn't wait to tell the group how things had become less stressful with X and how she was able to follow the guidelines and use the tools she was learning.***

***J was able to show real emotion each week and became more aware of how things were not always X's fault and took away something new with every session. J was learning to enjoy her son more.***

***She embraced the self-care (a large part of this course) with an open mind, despite it not being something J wanted to participate in. J became confident and able to participate vocally in the sessions and by week 8, (final session) J stated that this was the best parenting course she had been on as it was not prescriptive and allowed her to challenge whenever she wanted and it gave her 'permission' to express herself freely with no time limit and without being hurried on to the next subject. J's relationship with herself flourished, in an appropriate way, which enabled her to confidently challenge her parenting and put into practice new skills learned.***

## Training for professionals

Target: 500 professionals access training

Outcome: 224 so far with further training planned

### County Lines

County Lines training for professionals had been planned, delivered by St Giles Trust. One virtual session was successfully delivered in July with 55 attendees and 2 further sessions are planned for November. Feedback from these sessions was excellent, with 100% of attendees reporting that they felt better able to spot the signs of exploitation and county lines involvement and provide support.

*“It was very informative and to hear from people who have been involved and lived it made the learning more real and it was easier to understand how young people can get involved and stuck in the system.”*

### Understanding teenagers

Ninety professionals attended the one day Understanding Teenagers training. Twenty of these went on to complete the Train the Trainer day which enabled them to deliver the training to parents.

### Protective behaviours

Protective behaviours training was delivered to professionals through 1 day workshops and 2 day courses. In total, 64 professionals accessed the training including social care staff, children’s centre staff and school staff. The training will be embedded in their practice to enable them to deliver protective behaviours work with children in their setting/on their caseload.

## Delivery summary

### Young People Reached

Activity	Young People Reached	Delivery
Knife Awareness Sessions	5,000	38 Sessions
Group Work	90	12 Programmes
Mentoring	25	25 Programmes
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,115</b>	

### Parents/Carers Reached

Activity	Parents/Carers Reached	Delivery
Understanding Teenagers Video	2,000 views	You Tube Video
Non-Violent resistance Parenting Course	53	4 Face to Face Programmes 6 Virtual Programmes
<b>Total</b>	<b>2053</b>	

## Professionals Trained

Activity	Professionals Trained
Non-Violent resistance Parenting	15
County Lines	55
Understanding Teenagers	90
Understanding Teenagers Train the Trainer	20 of the above 90
Protective Behaviours	64
<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>

## Delivery Successes:

- **Level of engagement with mentoring:** Of the young people who engaged with mentoring, 83% either engaged throughout the project or closed successfully during the project. Two young people left the area during the project, leaving the number that disengaged with the project at only 10%. Given that the young people engaging with this programme were often difficult to engage, this is an excellent success rate. This has included when cases have stepped from Early Help Plus up to Child in Need or Child Protection, meaning that keyworkers from Children's Services have changed, giving young people consistency. The success rate shows that young people really value having a mentor separate from any Children's Services processes who can provide consistent support. The outcome stars completed as part of the Early Help process also shows progress in key areas such as Behaviour and Boundaries and Meeting Emotional Needs.
- **School engagement:** We had significant interest from schools regarding Knife Crime sessions and very positive responses to the delivery. There was excellent engagement from our Alternative Provision in Central Bedfordshire and the Special Needs provision for Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. This enabled the St Giles Trust worker to build a relationship with the staff and students, delivering knife crime sessions, targeted group work and 1-1 mentoring. These schools provide for some of our most vulnerable young people so this relationship is essential. Following on from the SFAYC project, CBC is funding St Giles Trust until March 2021 to continue to provide this support.
- **Non-violent resistance parenting (NVR):** We were able to train a group of 15 Early Help staff in NVR to enable them to deliver this to parents. Staff were enthusiastic about the benefits NVR could provide to parents and feel that it complements the existing parenting support offer. Engagement from parents has been good, including parents who had negative views of parenting programmes and those who had found other programmes unsuccessful. Through training Early Help staff in NVR, CBC will now be able to deliver this programme routinely to parents on an ongoing basis. They have continued to deliver the programme

throughout the Covid-19 lockdown via Microsoft Teams and this has been accessed by parents who may not have been able to access a more traditional programme delivery in person for reasons such as child care and anxiety around group environments.

- **Building relationships:** The SFAYC project has enabled us to build on relationships with existing partners and develop relationships with new partners with whom we have not previously worked. We have in fact found that some of our new partners have provided the best delivery with excellent feedback and we are therefore more likely to work with them moving forward. We held regular operational group meetings and this enabled relationships not only to be built between us and community organisations but also between the community organisations themselves. We hope that this will lead to a more coordinated approach in delivering youth support across the Local Authority area.

### **Barriers (pre-Covid-19):**

- **Project implementation:** The timescales between grant award and delivery start date was short and came in the summer term. Given the focus on secondary age children, this is a challenging time of year to implement a new service given that this is the exam period. It also meant that we were trying to start mentoring going into the summer holidays. A preferable situation would have been to have a lead up to implementing the project in September, enabling a robust communications plan to be put in place and to schedule implementation in a logical manner.
- **Obtaining referrals to a new service:** Ideally, we wanted to offer a full year of support, meaning that referrals would have been needed at the start of the project. In reality, referrals took time to come through, as the understanding of the project developed and professionals heard positive feedback. We also received referrals where professionals and parents were keen for the support to be provided and the referrer stated consent was given, but the young person then did not engage with support. It became clear that these young people had been persuaded to agree to the support, rather than their own commitment to it. Throughout the project we have reinforced the need for the young person to want to work with a mentor. Invariably where a young person has wanted the support it has been successful.
- **Impact of Children's Social Care thresholds:** In a number of cases, young people were accepted to the project at Early Help Plus stage, only for the risk to quickly escalate, leading to them becoming a Child in Need. This meant these young people were then open to social work teams, which required a change of keyworker and whilst we were able to keep the early help worker involved for 4 families, the combination of child in need key worker and early help key worker added complexity to the delivery model. A number of these young people did not engage as well with mentoring. Typically these young people were engaged in more high risk activities so it also suggests that this project was better suited to supporting young people at an earlier stage of prevention rather than intervention.

## **Challenges of Covid-19**

Inevitably the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact, occurring at a key point in the project. We have worked with our partners to continue to deliver the programme through a blended offer of ongoing face to face delivery with virtual delivery and, where unavoidable, delay pending schools

reopening support. Whilst the pandemic has of course been hugely damaging in many ways, it has given us the opportunity to do some things differently in ways which work better for families, such as delivering parenting programmes virtually.

- **Group work:** One of our partners attempted a group work during lockdown virtually. They found that this was not as effective as in person as the young people didn't necessarily know each other and building relationships online was challenging. It was also difficult to maintain the groups concentration when they were possibly out with friends, playing video games etc and not in a focussed environment. Most of our partners decided to postpone their delivery until they could go into schools.
- **Mentoring:** All of our partners continued to offer virtual mentoring support. The general feedback was that despite common perception that young people are comfortable with technology, in most cases they struggled to engage with mentoring by phone or video call. However mentors made every effort to maintain contact with young people where the young person consented to this happening and some young people really appreciated this ongoing contact. One young person who had been out of school prior to Covid-19 and therefore lacked relationships outside of his family had Zoom calls with his mentor twice a week and his mum reported that he really valued and looked forward to these. Some mentors delivered doorstep activity boxes to keep contact with young people which were much appreciated.
- **Community Safety Maps:** These workshops are based around a group of young people looking at and annotating a physical map of their area. This meant that this work could not be done meaningfully in a virtual environment. The partner is therefore going to complete this work when they are able to hold these in person; either in a school or youth group.
- **Parenting groups:** We were able to convert both our parenting groups to a virtual offer. We have reached more than 2,000 people; far more than we could reached with physical sessions, albeit it is more difficult to measure impact with the online sessions. One round of our NVR parenting groups had already been delivered in person but the second round was delivered through Microsoft Teams. This enabled parents/carers who may not normally access an in person group to access this group and it was so successful that our Early Help teams intend to continue a virtual offer to complement the in person offer post-Covid-19.

Covid-19 has given us the opportunity to pilot new ways of delivering services which we may not have tried outside the pandemic, but that we will now continue to use. However it has also demonstrated that technology cannot replace in-person support, even for young people who are perceived to prefer using technology.

## Conclusion

The Supporting Families Against Youth Crime fund has given Central Bedfordshire Council a great opportunity to pilot new approaches, build relationships with community organisations and develop skills amongst professionals that will have a lasting impact. Overall, the feedback from young people, parents/carers and professionals has been excellent. The timing of the project has unfortunately meant that we have not had the opportunity to see the true impact of the interventions due to Covid-19, however it has also given us the opportunity to think creatively in order to continue to deliver services. As a result of the project, the successful NVR approach will continue to be delivered to parents/carers online with a view to delivering in-person as well once guidance allows. Our

relationship with St Giles Trust is set to continue, allowing some of our most vulnerable young people to access valuable mentoring from someone with lived experience. Other mentors will be continuing to support the young people they have worked with, and the willingness of the mentors and mentees to do this demonstrate the value they see in the relationships built. We are grateful to have received the SFAYC grant and the benefits will continue for the young people of Central Bedfordshire beyond the end of the project.

# **Central Bedfordshire in contact**

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