



Evaluation of Barnardo's ReachOut Rotherham Project Year One Summary Report

Introduction

This report summarises the progress and achievements of the Barnardo's ReachOut project during its first year. It describes how the project's work has evolved and what has been learnt so far.

Barnardo's ReachOut is a preventative child sexual exploitation (CSE) project established under a partnership funding agreement between Barnardo's, the KPMG Foundation, Department for Education, Communities and Local Government and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC). An independent evaluation was commissioned from the University of Bedfordshire and DMSS Research both to evaluate the impact of the project and to provide ongoing learning and feedback to help shape its development. Most of the staff team were recruited in December 2015, work began in January 2016 and the project was launched at an open day in early February. The team consists of a children's service manager, two team leaders, 12 project workers and administrative staff. The recruitment strategy successfully created a diverse staff team with a range of professional backgrounds including criminal justice, social work, teaching and youth work. The team has remained largely stable over the first year.

'I don't think I've ever worked in a staff team that's so positive and willing to help.' (Staff member)

Multi-agency working is central to ReachOut and is reflected in the way it was established, including a project board comprising representatives of key agencies and an independent chair. The project has developed working relationships with a wide range of statutory and voluntary sector agencies. Evaluation interviews with partner agencies have elicited positive feedback about ReachOut's collaborative and inclusive style of working.

'[ReachOut has] been very proactive and sensitive about the impact on smaller organisations so they don't feel overwhelmed or overtaken.' (Partner agency)

The aims of ReachOut

There was no pre-existing 'blueprint' for ReachOut. At an initial workshop in April 2016 involving board members and staff, a theory of change was identified along with three core strands of activity:

- Outreach work to raise awareness of CSE and reach out to children and young people in their communities
- Healthy relationship education in schools and other settings
- One to one support for children and young people identified as at risk of CSE

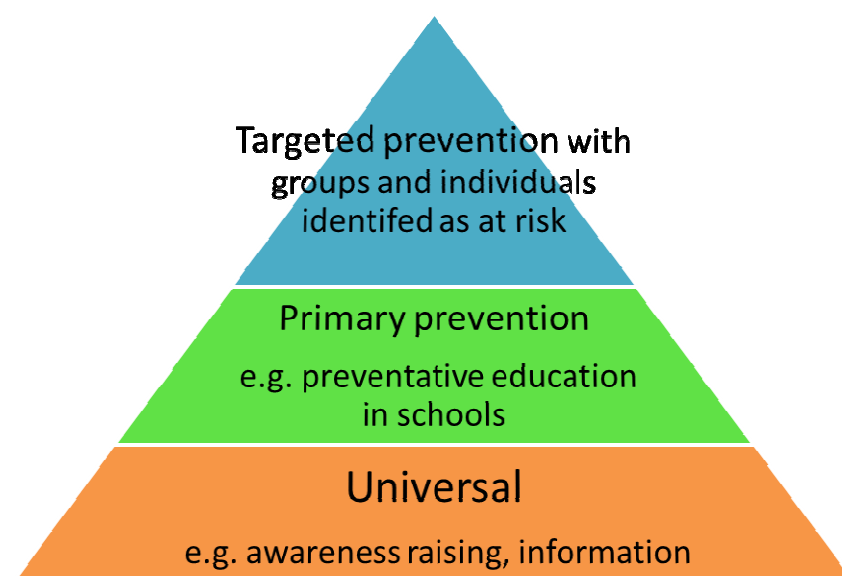
ReachOut's Theory of change (April 2016)

The ultimate goal of the ReachOut project is for Rotherham to be a safe and supportive place for children of all communities to grow up - a place where families and communities are confident in their ability to safeguard their children, and where young people make positive choices and enjoy healthy relationships.

In order to achieve this goal, ReachOut believes that all children and young people need healthy relationship education – while more vulnerable young people need targeted support to raise their awareness, aspirations and self-esteem and to access help before problems escalate.

ReachOut believes that both professionals and parents need information and support to build confidence in their own abilities in safeguarding across diverse communities and that schools offer a vital access route to parents and staff in daily contact with children and young people.

The three strands of work can be seen to operate at three levels of prevention as shown in the pyramid below:



The evaluation

Over the course of the year evaluators have: carried out interviews with ReachOut staff and managers and representatives from external agencies; observed sessions of ReachOut delivery and interviewed staff and young people involved; interviewed samples of young people and parents who have received one to one support; analysed feedback questionnaires from school students and staff; reviewed project monitoring and samples of case records.

The evaluation team has also produced three rapid evidence reviews on preventative education initiatives, outreach work and direct support for children and young people affected by CSE¹ to inform project development.

Summary of evaluation findings

Outreach

ReachOut's outreach work operates at all levels of the above prevention pyramid. At the universal level, workers use the ReachOut bus three nights a week and alternate Saturdays, sometimes to visit 'hotspots' where intelligence suggests there may be young people potentially at risk. Other uses of the bus include visits to schools and venues such as libraries, leisure centres, shopping centres and supermarkets. ReachOut has also been involved in a wide range of large and small community events and themed activities.

Primary preventative outreach has involved engaging existing groups of young people or awareness raising with adults who may have contact with vulnerable children and young people and who might spot the signs of CSE. More targeted outreach with those identified as more vulnerable to CSE usually involves regular engagement with the same group of children and young people, almost always in partnership with other agencies. Examples include: regular drop in sessions at Rush House and youth work sessions in Eastwood.

'The fact that that Reachout come here is vital. It would not work otherwise, as young people would not go to ReachOut offices or anywhere else for this support.' (Partner Agency)

Whilst the nature of outreach work makes it difficult to evaluate the specific impact of outreach activities, the activities undertaken by ReachOut are consistent with the available evidence on effective approaches and the project has been successful in reaching large numbers of people with a CSE preventative message. The experience in year one has also generated some important lessons about what outreach activities work best in engaging young people and this learning is informing current priorities. In developing new outreach work, priority is being given to initiatives in partnership with other agencies, including those where ReachOut can 'piggyback' on and add value to current developments.

'History tells us that it takes time for victims to disclose. The work we're doing now is for the disclosures of the future.' (Partner Agency)

¹ Available on Barnardo's website

Preventative education

The main preventative education resource used by ReachOut in schools has been the Barnardo's 'Real Love Rocks' programme. From February 2016 to January 2017, a total of 1735 children and young people have received the programme.

Feedback from 351 secondary and 509 primary school students shows that most children and young people enjoyed the sessions and that the programme achieves its immediate learning outcomes for a high proportion of participants. Responses from 39 school staff indicate that teachers think that the quality and effectiveness of the sessions is very good. Key success factors have been the quality of the materials, the skills of facilitators, the role of outside expertise and integrating the delivery with the needs of the individual school.

'I think the class really engaged with the topic and this was down to the excellence of delivery of the sessions and interactions with the pupils'
(Teacher)

ReachOut have also targeted settings where young people may be particularly vulnerable including Pupil Referral Units and Special schools. In these settings, they have taken a more tailored approach which has been highly valued.

'Work like this is so important because many of these young people who are not accessing any other kind of support...ReachOut is working really well. They don't try to make something fit when it doesn't'. (College tutor)

The work in schools has been resource-intensive and would be difficult to sustain over the longer term. A current development, therefore, is the introduction of a 'training the trainer' approach to equip schools to deliver the Real Love Rocks materials for themselves.

Direct work with children and young people

Between the 1st February 2016 and 31st January 2017 ReachOut received a total of 160 referrals of individual children and young people. Almost half of referrals came from Social Care, a further 12% came through the Early Help Triage and a quarter from Education. There have been 3 self-referrals so far. 90% of those referred were girls and young women. Ages ranged from 8 to 20 years with the majority (69%) being aged between 13 and 16 years. The ethnicity of 85% of those referred was recorded as White British.

The majority of referrals had been triggered by concerns over young people's on-line behaviours (particularly sharing inappropriate images of themselves or contact with adult strangers). However, most were identified as also having a range of underlying issues that were thought to heighten their potential vulnerability to CSE.

Towards the end of year one, ReachOut's referral criteria were clarified to exclude children and young people with Child Protection or Care plans at the time of referral. This has reinforced the focus of the project as clearly preventative.

Worker assessment of core outcomes suggests that the project has successfully increased young people's ability to recognise exploitative behaviour – particularly when this occurs on the internet and thereby reduced their level of risk of exploitation. Qualitative evidence suggests that a wider range of additional outcomes have been achieved for some young people. These include considerable improvements in self-esteem and confidence, improved relationships with parents and re-engagement with education. All of which are important factors in increasing the resilience of young people.

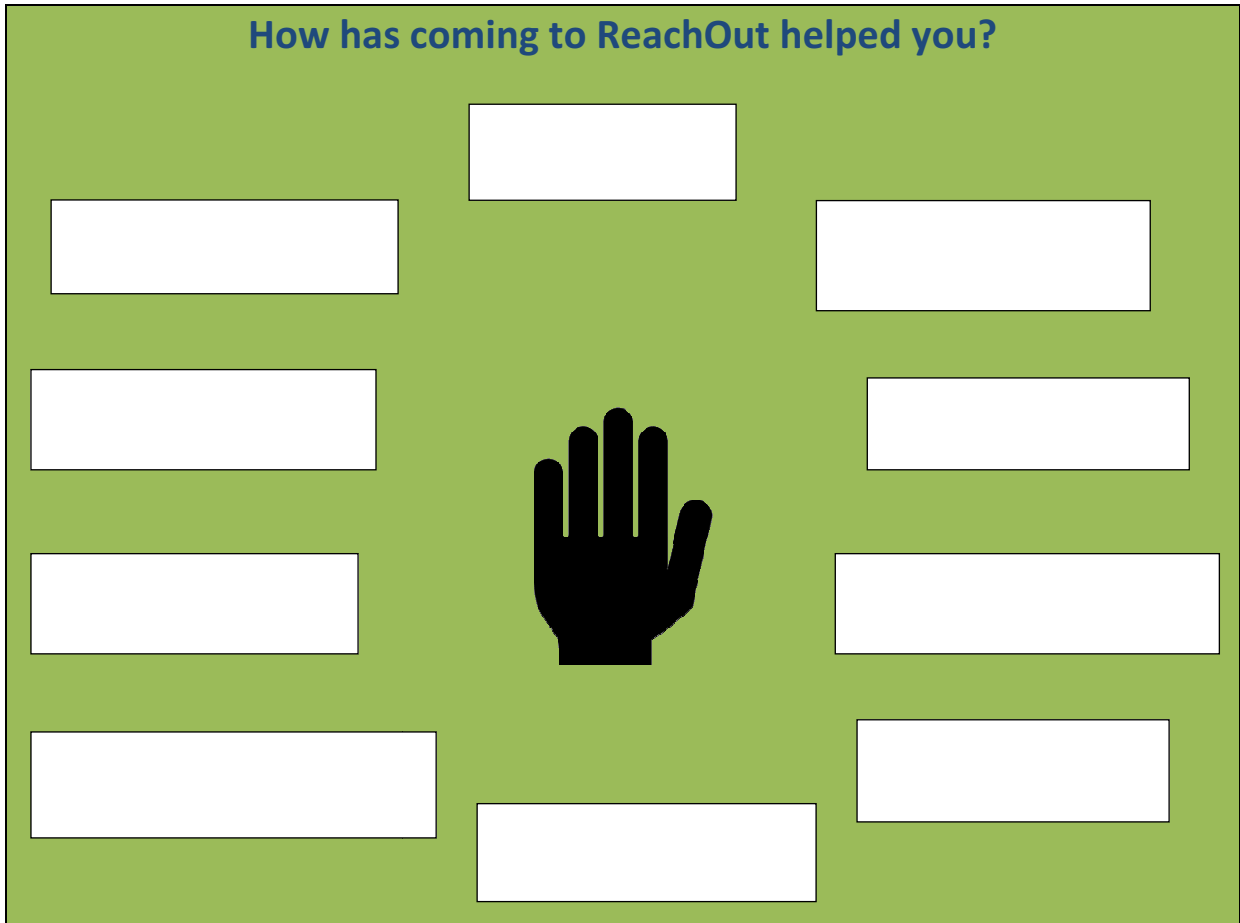
'When I look back 6 months ago I feel like I was a different person. If someone I didn't know had messaged me back then I'd have messaged them back. Now I block them straightaway...I've learnt loads of self-respect since working with ReachOut. I cared about others more than about myself, now I have learnt to put myself before other people.'
(Young person)

Feedback from young people and parents has been extremely positive about the quality of relationships with ReachOut staff and the support they have received.

'Working with X has helped us communicate where we just used to argue. Now if we have a row we know how to handle it... It's changed the way we see each other, we have become friends. I know when to be there for her and when to leave things...I've learnt strategies...We needed someone neutral and from outside...it has made family life so much easier'. (Parent)

A current initiative is the development of a groupwork programme intended to complement ReachOut's individual work, where young people are assessed as likely to benefit from a group intervention either instead of, or as a follow up to, one to one support.

How has coming to ReachOut helped you?



A green rectangular box containing a central black silhouette of a hand with fingers spread. Surrounding the hand are ten white rectangular boxes for text input, arranged in a circular pattern: one at the top, one at the bottom, two on the left side, two on the right side, and four in the corners.

In conclusion

During its first six months, ReachOut established itself with remarkable speed, not only undertaking plenty of outward-facing activity, but also ensuring the essential building blocks of a healthy organisation were in place to underpin that activity. At the end of year one, ReachOut has sustained that momentum. The project has maintained a stable staff team which has retained its enthusiasm and developed a strong, supportive culture.

ReachOut's 'listening, learning and helping' approach has been well received by partner agencies and ReachOut's contribution to CSE partnership work in Rotherham is widely appreciated. Developing its targeted outreach in partnership with local organisations has proved to be an effective strategy.

ReachOut's preventative education programme has been highly acceptable to young people - and to school staff. This work has raised the project's profile, established relationships with Rotherham schools and has generated appropriate referrals for one-to-one work. The bespoke programmes offered to non-mainstream settings have also been greatly appreciated. The new 'training the trainer' approach to build the skills and capacity of school staff to deliver the programme is widely welcomed.

ReachOut's direct work seems to have reached the 'right' children and young people i.e. those at risk of CSE at the 'right' level i.e. targeted prevention. Evidence so far suggests that

positive outcomes are being achieved, both in terms of reducing immediate risk and in positively impacting on resilience factors in young people's lives.