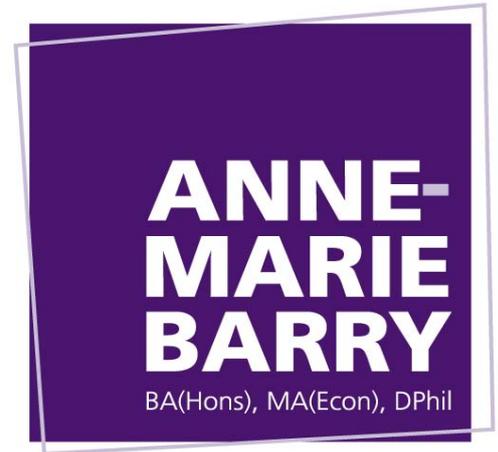




CALM PROJECT



Social Research and Consultancy

EVALUATION OF YMCA GLASGOW CALM PROJECT

Summary Report prepared for: YMCA Glasgow Calm Project

Prepared by: AM Barry Associates

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(artwork by Rebecca, aged 14)



FOREWORD

The Calm Project clearly demonstrates the caring mission of YMCA Glasgow in action. In this inspirational and landmark Project troubled young people and families are encouraged towards renewed hope and fuller lives. Dedicated staff commit to befriending and supporting some of the most deprived and vulnerable people in our community with positive results. As Anne-Marie Barry writes, “Calm is essentially a needs led and community based project which always places the service user at the centre”.

YMCA Glasgow acknowledges the support and collaboration of the many agencies and individuals who have made the work of Calm possible. Our continuing partnership will hopefully make it possible to achieve further development in Pollok and also introduce the Calm model into other areas of Glasgow and beyond.

William Harte
Chief Executive Officer
YMCA Glasgow

IMPACT EVALUATION OF YMCA GLASGOW'S CALM PROJECT: SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

The YMCA Glasgow's Calm Project was established by YMCA Glasgow in 2002. The project aims to develop and deliver a range of support services for Young People aged 12-21 years who live within Greater Pollok and whose mental well-being has been affected by violence or bereavement. The project has its origins in concerns expressed by young people, local agencies and individuals in the area about levels of violence and its impact on the community.

Calm was established at a time when central government were placing more emphasis on efforts to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. In 2003, for example the Scottish Needs Assessment Programme (Children and Adolescent Mental Health) established a number of national priorities in terms of access to services and treatment. These were:

- Recognition of the right of children and young people to be heard;
- The importance of mainstreaming mental health in communities, schools and families and;
- The integration of promotion, prevention and care.

Calm has successfully worked in line with these and other national and local policies to improve the wellbeing of young people.

Calm supports a range of services but its main focus is on the provision of one to one, issue based befriending. Service users can also use the one to one counselling and take part in a number of group sessions and courses.

Who uses Calm?

Services have been delivered at Calm since 2003. In its first year Calm carried out a Peer Research project to establish levels of need in the area and identify the most appropriate services.

Since the first operational year a total of 188 young people from Greater Pollok have used Calm's one to one services. The number of people going through the project has increased steadily over that five year period. Young women make up just over a half of all service users (57%) and young men 43%. Over half (51%) of all service users are aged 14-16, with 12-13 year olds making up 41% and those aged 17-19 8% of service users.

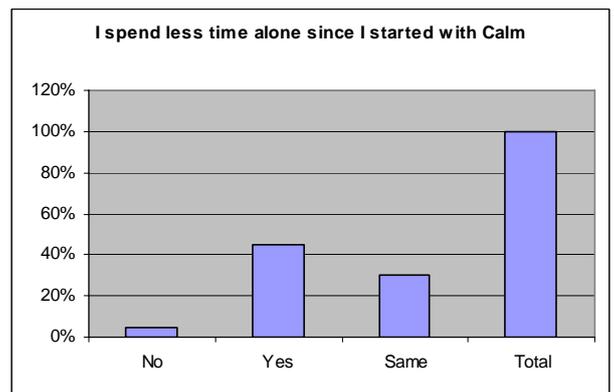
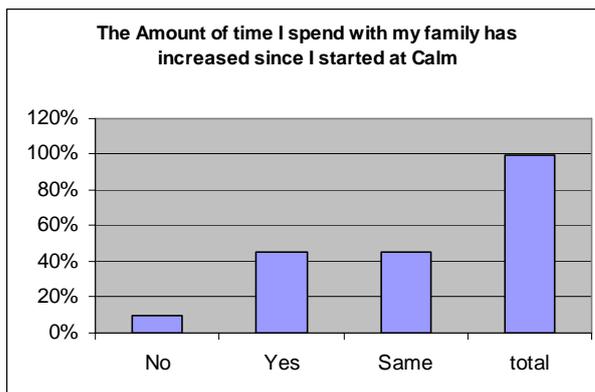
Making progress: How Calm impacts on young people

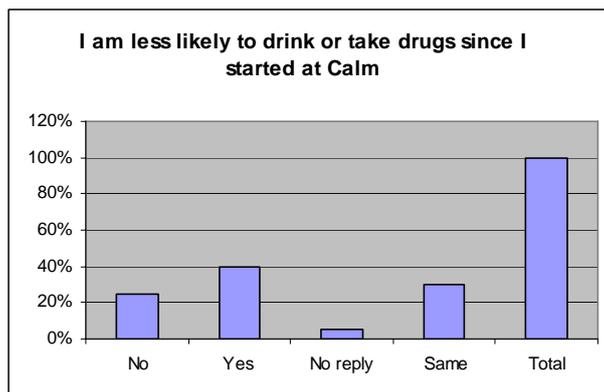
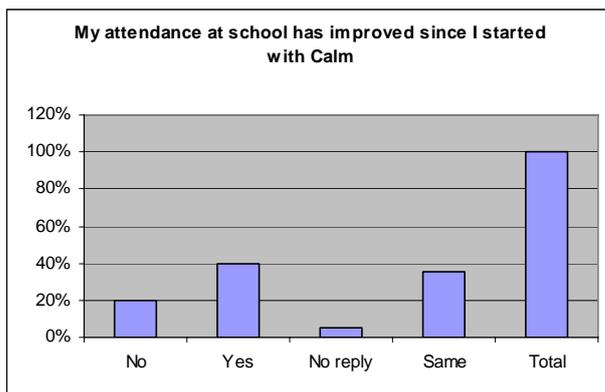
This evaluation concluded that Calm has a positive impact on young people in the following ways:

One to one befriending offers young people the chance to develop a relationship with a person who can offer them a positive role model,

- who is organised and committed to them. This helps young people to deal with their issues in a supportive atmosphere.
- Young people who use Calm’s services are likely to increase in confidence and have a stronger sense of self-worth. Both factors help people feel better in terms of their general well being and ability to cope.
- Working with Calm helps young people and their parents/carers to have a better relationship by dealing with the issues that cause arguments. Teachers and other adults who know the young person also say that their relationships improve and that, for example, young people are better behaved at school.
- Calm helps young people deal with and understand their emotions. The project offers young people a range of ways to learn how to express themselves without harm to others or themselves.
- Young people are offered the opportunity to develop new skills and do activities that they might not otherwise have the chance to do. These activities help develop confidence and give people the chance to show what they can achieve.
- This evaluation showed that young people are more positive about the future when they have used Calm’s services compared to when they started.

This evaluation of Calm also demonstrated that the project has a positive impact on young people’s relationships in the wider community (e.g. school) and helps reduce potentially harmful behaviour (e.g. drinking alcohol). The tables below are example of the findings, which came from a community engagement questionnaire given to some of the service users.





Further evidence of the positive impact of Calm can be found in the 'good news stories' presented at the end of this summary report.

Meeting community needs: Why Calm has been successful

Calm has been successful in working in partnership with young people to change their lives because the project fills a vital gap in services. The project provides an extra layer of support to young people who may not be in a crisis situation but who still need someone to support them.

The young people from the project respect, trust and like the staff from Calm because they are not required to or in any way forced to use the services; the decision to do so is entirely theirs.. Using Calm's services is voluntary unlike going to school or using social work services. Calm sits outside statutory services and can develop a very different relationship with the young person because of this.

Calm is committed to supporting young people to change their lives and because of this the service is not seen as threatening. Staff are able to help young people to deal with issues like bereavement, lack of confidence and feeling down in a relaxed way. Calm's focus is on helping improve people's mental well-being and not on dealing with 'mental illness' and because of this young people are not frightened to make use of the services.

Where does Calm want to be in the future?

There are three ways in which Calm would like to develop:

- by providing services to more young people. Calm and other agencies know that there is great demand for Calm's services and that young people who need that support can't get it.
- by working outside the Greater Pollok area. The project is aware that young people in neighbouring areas would benefit from this service.
- by providing more support to parents and carers so that the project can work with the family unit and not just one member.

Conclusion

Calm occupies a unique position as a service provider. The project is vital to the delivery of support services to young people in Greater Pollok but it is an informal as well as a professional service. The advantage of this position is clear in as far as the project offers young people the opportunity to engage with non-threatening adults. The disadvantage of being a voluntary service is that the project is dependent on short term funding and, therefore, lacks stability. If the project could secure core funding this would make a substantial difference to its long-term future.

The service provided by Calm makes a significant contribution to the Executive's aim of supporting vulnerable young people and especially those with mental health concerns. It is widely recognised by local partner agencies that Calm provides the opportunity for early intervention and diversionary work, without which some young people may well reach the point of coming before the Children's Panel and/or being taken into care. Partner agencies recognise the value of the work done by Calm in terms of its impact on individuals as well as the projects potential to save additional money and resources being put into statutory services for young people.

**To obtain a copy of the full report contact either
YMCA Glasgow's Calm Project on 0141 892 0430
or
YMCA Glasgow's Head Office on 0141 557 2355**

GOOD NEWS STORIES: POSITIVE IMPACTS ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES

Steve

A few years ago Steve's Mum died, leaving him, his brother and Dad to cope. At this point his Dad was drinking heavily but in Steve's words he "...wasn't nasty with it..." His Dad started to let the house go and the drinking became worse but this time it was nasty and his Dad started getting aggressive.

Throughout this period Steve managed to get himself to school most of the time and do reasonably well. He had a few runs in with the Police because they found him and his mates drinking when they were underage.

Gradually, Steve's family and eventually his guidance teacher noticed the difference in him because of his Dad's behaviour. The school referred him to Calm and he was allocated a befriender.

Steve has been with the project for a year and a half now and has established a good relationship with his befriender: "I tell her stuff and it was alright when I was doing it...I tell her everything, I can trust her..."

Like most young people Steve likes to be taken out bowling and to see a film but Calm has made him recognise the importance of just talking about problems. Sometimes he likes nothing more than getting taken out and sitting talking.

Steve has begun to address the two main issues in his life, bereavement and aggression. The bereavement counselling has helped him understand and normalise his feelings even if it has not made them go away. The anger management training has been successful in helping him think why he gets frustrated and has helped him calm down. "...they suggested I count to ten...to walk away..."

Steve's aggression extended to him in the form of self-harm. Calm has helped him address this by attending a specialist course. "...they taught him how to draw pictures instead or rip up paper...now I don't even think about it...I am just much calmer..." The self-harming has stopped completely.

Calm have not been able to change Steve's home situation; his Dad still drinks and is aggressive but has been getting some support through the addiction team and through the Calm counselling service. When I met Steve he was staying with his cousin because things have broken down between him and his Dad. Steve doesn't want to go back just now but does want to keep in touch with his Dad. Calm has given Steve the confidence and level of understanding to know why his Dad drinks but can't make him live with the consequences. "...I understand it...its not that I don't. Its that I just can't stand it..."

Kenny

Kenny came to Calm two years ago, referred by his Mother's social worker. For the first seven years of his life Kenny lived with his mother but from ages seven to twelve he lived with his maternal grandfather. Most weekends he would visit his Mum, his little sisters and his Step Father.

Kenny describes life with his grandfather as good; he had plenty of friends and the two of them enjoyed going to the cinema together. That life came to an end in 2003 when Kenny's grandfather died. The night his Grandfather died was the night he moved back to his Mum's house for good.

Kenny has some good memories of the early days and of his Step Father taking him and his little sisters out for the day and for treats. However, it soon became clear that the Step Father was a violent binge drinker. Kenny tried to help his Mum but he could not stop the violence. One morning in 2005 Kenny's Step Father died suddenly in the family home.

By the time Kenny was 14 he had experienced two major bereavements and dramatic changes in terms of where he lived and with whom.

Although Kenny was initially nervous about meeting someone from Calm, his concerns were short lived when a worker came out to explain what was involved. Kenny's memory is that she told him that the "...befriender can take you anywhere..."

Kenny quickly bonded with his befriender, helped by a shared interest in wrestling! Soon he found someone he could talk to and someone who offered the opportunity to get out of the stresses and strains of his home situation. His only complaint is that the befriending had to end, "...he was a good guy...a real laugh..." Calm has helped him significantly by developing his sense of confidence and self esteem. Asked where would he be without Calm, Kenny replies "...in a lot of trouble..."

Kenny takes part in the boys group and had developed good relationships with some of the other participants and the staff who take the group. Calm believes that, in the future, Kenny has the potential to be involved in Peer Support within the Project.

Elizabeth

In 2005 Elizabeth was a 13 year old who lived with her mother, stepfather and her 8 year old little sister.

She had an extremely difficult relationship with her family, most especially her stepfather, she didn't attend school, she regularly ran away from home and spent time on the streets, she was misusing drugs and alcohol and was often in trouble with the police. She had spent some time in a secure unit to keep her from absconding.

Elizabeth was a very disaffected young woman who came across as hostile, she couldn't engage with her family, her school or her social worker. She said of herself at this time:

"I was heading for drug addiction and a life on the streets aged 13. I had no aims or goals, I felt unstable emotionally and had blocked out all thoughts of the future".

A social worker suggested to Elizabeth that she tried the befriending service at Calm and although Elizabeth thought it was "worth a try" she didn't hold out much hope.

Elizabeth said she approached the first meeting with a casual and rather surly attitude, she said "I wasn't really bothered about it". At first the meeting went badly, Elizabeth asked the befriender to take her to a fair ground but this was not possible in the time available and they went for a burger at MacDonald's. Elizabeth sulked through the first part of the meeting, however the befriender managed to tease her out of the sulk and the meeting was a moderate success, with Elizabeth admitting that the befriender made her laugh, a very rare occurrence.

Elizabeth saw something different in the Calm service from other services that had tried to help her before, she said

"My befriender was the only person who ever treated me with respect".

She began to engage with her befriender on their second meeting and from then onwards looked forward to their time together. The service addressed a number of Elizabeth's needs, she said:

"I looked forward to getting out, relaxing, getting away from my worries and troubles"

After a few meetings Elizabeth found she could talk to her befriender, she said

"I told her things I would never tell another soul"

Things did not instantly go smoothly from then onwards, Elizabeth still did not attend school and started to run away again. She was once again placed in a secure unit. This was a long distance away from her home and the Calm Befriending service. The Calm Project was sure that although Elizabeth was still not coping with her life that they were making a breakthrough and despite the distance and difficulty attending a secure unit, the befriender continued to visit Elizabeth.

Elizabeth said of this time

“she was the only visitor from a service provider I had, none of the other service providers came to see me. My befriender never gave up on me, she stuck with me and always believed in me and respected me”

This is when things began to change, Elizabeth began to take responsibility for her actions, she says

“My confidence had already started to improve but this is when I began to realise that my behaviour was not only hurting myself but also my family”

When Elizabeth was released from the secure unit she turned over a new leaf. She realised that she could not get on with her stepfather and that this was making life very difficult for her mother and young sister. She was placed in foster care so that she no longer causes these difficulties. She visits her family regularly and has an excellent relationship with her mother.

Elizabeth is attending college currently and has plans for the future, she said

“I’m going to do a social care course full time starting after the summer, if I do well I hope to get into university. I would like to work with young people like myself who have difficulties in their lives”

I hope soon to get my own house or flat, at first I think I’ll go for supported accommodation so that they can help me learn how to look after myself. I would love to learn to drive.

Elizabeth said if it hadn’t of been for Calm she would have been a drug addict living on the streets by the time she was 14 years old and probably dead a few years later.

Lauren

In 2003 Lauren was a fifteen-year-old living in extreme domestic circumstances. She was shy, withdrawn lacked confidence and had a sense that she was powerless to help herself. She said of this time:

“I didn’t feel I had a future, I was careless of my life, I often thought of suicide, I used to punch walls until my hands bled”

Lauren regularly self-harmed as a means for coping with her issues.

Her behaviour was giving cause for concern, with truancy, drinking on the streets, and cannabis use, she describes it as follows:

“I had no friends just people to hang about with, we drank, smoked hash and were always getting pulled up by the police and booked”

By the time Lauren was 16 she found a sympathetic youth worker at a local drop in centre. She started to tell the worker about the issues she had experienced, the worker immediately suggested Calm and made a referral to the Project on Lauren’s behalf so that she didn’t have to tell her parents.

She took to the Calm workers right away, she says

“I didn’t really know what the project was about but when I met them I thought they were dead nice, they seemed a good laugh”

Lauren got into a very easy relationship with her befriender almost immediately, she said

“ my befriender was one of those people who were really easy to get along with, she was quite funny, we would have a laugh, it wasn’t dead serious, it made me feel better”

Lauren was into skateboarding so her befriender took her to skate parks, and arranged snowboarding lessons with her.

Key to Lauren’s acceptance of her befriender in her life was the befriender’s attitude, she said:

“My befriender said we could do what ever I liked, and I could talk about stuff if I wanted to or not if I didn’t want to. This meant I could go out with her and forget about my troubles or I could burst into tears or talk to her about things, whatever I needed, there was no other relationship like this in my life”

Lauren found that she could talk to her befriender and told her about her circumstances, she said:

“I told her what had happened to me and she helped me, she was an adult and had authority, before I had felt powerless, but this gave me strength.

It took a while for Lauren's life to improve, she said:

"I changed after about a year I could see the difference, I was cheerier, I started being able to talk and express myself, I wasn't so withdrawn and nervous, I felt better about myself"

Lauren had regular meetings with her befriender for about two years in total and then always felt she could phone up for help and advice after she had finished with the service. She said:

"I sometimes still felt low, but I could just phone them up and chat and I would feel better"

Lauren is working as a security guard and now has friends that she can really talk to; she no longer takes drugs and limits her drinking to an occasional one. She has plans to join the police service or to become a youth worker.

