

Community Networks Project

Executive summary Annual Report, April 2000 to March 2001

This summary describes the findings of the Community Networks Projects' annual report and the way forward for the project and its workshops.

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The Community Networks Project (CNP) was started by The Child Psychotherapy Trust (CPT) in April 1998 and is currently in its final year.

During 2000/2001 the CPT ran over 50 workshops and compiled a waiting list of a further 50 organisations. The stated objectives and potential outcomes of the project are to:

- increase understanding of the ages and stages of emotional development
- increase understanding of the causes of distressing/disruptive behaviour
- increase understanding of psychotherapy and how it can help
- enable parents to strengthen their relationships with children
- enable community practitioners to extend their skills and apply them
- enable local networks to be maintained that 'hold' the child in mind.

Priority groups were identified as those who work with children under eight in community settings, and the seminars were open to statutory, voluntary and private agencies. The groups are run by a child psychotherapist and focus upon topics requested by the community, they are free of charge and often information packs are provided for the participants.

One of the priority aims of the CNP (and the CPT) is increasing the availability of psychotherapeutic thinking to those who are unable to access it. The majority of provisions at present are based in London and the South East. The

CNP has addressed this imbalance whereby 71% of workshops were held outside London. The majority of workshops gave an outline of the emotional development of children and about a quarter focused on bereavement. Other topics covered were fostercare and workshops devoted to contact centres.

90% of participants were female, and 78% classified themselves as white Caucasians, 1% were registered disabled. In trying to address this under-representation of disabled participants CNP workshops have been successfully carried out with disabled groups in early 2001 in Camden with a school for the deaf and with mothers with mild to moderate learning disabilities.

Evaluation forms were completed by participants and it was found that 96% rated the workshops 'useful' or 'very useful'. Knowledge of what psychotherapists do and related theoretical approaches (e.g. emotional development, containment, projection, etc) were noted as being particularly appreciated by participants, as were case study discussions either relating to cases from the therapists experiences or from the participants themselves. Similarly observation skills and the ability to cope with challenging behaviours were noted as positive outcomes, as was a shift in attitudes towards parents, namely being less judgmental and acknowledging their need for support also. This latter point can be illustrated

from a quote taken from the evaluation forms from a family welfare assistant *'It is often easier to "take sides" with the child, and is not always easy to "love" a volatile parent who is probably feeling quite painful'*. The seminars were also seen to raise insight and help to draw boundaries.

The child psychotherapists also completed evaluation forms and it was noted that the groups seemed to work better when the participants were willing to join in, when case studies were used and when the level of knowledge within the group was of a similar level (i.e. not mixing parents and professionals). Professional participants also expressed a preference for having their own workshops. The therapists also reported upon a widespread lack of knowledge to what a child psychotherapist is/does as well as a level of anxiety relating to what they do. It was also noted through further evaluation that the optimum size of the workshop groups should be no more than 10 participants, larger groups were seen to be less successful.

The therapists also expressed a degree of frustration regarding the time constraints of the seminars (often three hours), feeling it was too short a length of time to convey theories and concepts which often benefit from reflection. In line with this the participants frequently showed dissatisfaction with the time asking for more teaching, feedback and discussion time.

A series of workshops could be seen to directly address these issues whereby concepts could be delivered clearer and fuller as well as being aided by reflection and questioning the learning of the participants could also be monitored using baseline details. Some examples of series workshops undertaken with Homestart in Leeds and with NEWPIN are

described in the full report.

Following these series the CNP has been re-focused to take the project forward. This new project has been organised through a flexible building block style and has been called **The Next Steps – Local Partnerships with Child Psychotherapists**. This project, which is in pilot phase until March 2002 has already begun to carry out series workshops with young parents (13 to 25 years), a Sure Start nursery and early years centre in Sheffield and with four schools within the Southwark Education Action Zone. Further details of these series are also described in the full report.

Through the evaluative procedure carried out and the refocusing of the project the style of workshops to be provided has been identified (work discussion groups, thematic groups and observation groups) and it is hoped that through these groups the project can meet its realigned goals of:

- targeting professionals and workers in community settings (and families when appropriate)
- working closely with local CAMHS
- working alongside partner organisations
- adopt and implement new flexible series model
- offer free and confidential telephone advice line to workers to supplement the series work undertaken.

Through these objectives and the goals already met through the CNP it is hoped that these pilots can be taken up and used as fully implemented models in the future.

For further information or a copy of the full report please contact: Louise Pankhurst, Trust Director