

VRU Community Mental Health and Emotional Well-being Support Pilot

By The Coram Institute for Children

Good mental health and emotional well-being are key factors in the lives of parents, and those with significant caring responsibilities, and at the heart of parenting and supporting young people. Recognising this, the [Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit \(VRU\)](#) undertook a wide-ranging consultation to understand the needs of parents/carers in London.

Supporting a whole-family approach to reducing violence, the VRU identified a gap in the provision of culturally competent, community-based, mental health support services for parents/carers in underserved communities.

Addressing this gap in service provision, the VRU co-designed the Community-Based Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being Support Pilot with parents and carers, young people, and a range of stakeholders across the voluntary, community and statutory sectors. The VRU commissioned two grassroots organisations to deliver the pilot services across separate sites:

Groundwork's 'Strengthening Families' programme aimed to provide support to parents/carers of young people aged 11-24, to understand and manage their young person's well-being and challenging behaviour. The programme included peer support groups, skills-building workshops, and 1:1 support. The [Midaye 'Hope'](#) project also aimed to support parents/carers of young people, through 1:1, group and peer-to-peer support.

Coram carried out an **independent evaluation** of the pilot services, involving interviews, focus groups, surveys and analysis of service monitoring data.

They found that parents/carers in both services reported positive impacts on their well-being, including:

- Increased confidence and self-esteem
- Increased self-compassion
- Increased feelings of happiness
- Reduced stress, anxiety and isolation
- Improved ability to recognise and manage mental health issues in themselves and their children

Services supported parents'/carers' relationships with their children: building on parenting strategies, improving communication and focusing on children's positive behaviours. While not a focus of our evaluation, we found evidence of improved child outcomes, including improved family relationships and open communication, as well as improved school-related outcomes such as a reduction in school behaviour sanctions and an increase in attendance.

Additionally, the pilot services were seen to:

- Improve the perception of and access to other (statutory) support services
- Help parents/carers to meet, share experiences, and develop relationships with other parents/carers.

The **practitioner briefing** focuses on learning from the pilot for practitioners, particularly those supporting the mental health and emotional well-being of service users in minoritised and marginalised communities. **They highlight the following best practice:**

A relationship- and person-centred approach

- Build trust by treating service users with respect, empathy and compassion.
- Adopt informal communication styles.
- Be professional: responsive, proactive and follow through with

commitments.

- Offer flexibility, tailor services to individual needs, and empower service users to make decisions about the support they receive.

Cultural competency

- Recruit staff from the communities being served and with lived experience of the challenges service users are facing to increase understanding and relatability.
- Offer services in users' native languages to enable those without English proficiency to fully participate.
- Understand, respect and honour the cultures and values of the communities being served.

Community-led, empowering and holistic services

- Allow service users to share what they want and need from the service
- Support service users to form peer networks to create wide and sustainable support
- Encourage service users to play an active role through participatory services and voluntary and paid roles to build capacity within the community and to ensure the service is user-led.

[Read the full evaluation report here](#)

[Read the full practitioners' briefing here](#)

"I found [the Innovation Forum] a really inspiring event, and I returned to my day job the next day full of ideas to take forward."



**INCREASED
CONFIDENCE AND
SELF-ESTEEM**



**REDUCED STRESS,
ANXIETY AND
ISOLATION**



**IMPROVED ABILITY TO
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IN THEMSELVES AND
THEIR CHILDREN**