



IMPACT REPORT 2023

YOU MATTER, YOU ARE LOVED, YOU ARE NOT ALONE



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'We teach our children to swim so they don't drown in deep water. Teaching our children about emotions doesn't prevent difficult things happening, it teaches them how to emotionally swim'

*-Jennifer Wyman
Founding Director*



AT A GLANCE



In 2023, a total of 191 children received one-on-one emotional literacy sessions with a practitioner.

We worked with 24 schools, delivering our award-nominated training, emotional literacy sessions and one to one support.

We've supported countless parents and carers through phone assessments, empowerment sessions and online content to support their child's mental health.



"I just wanted to thank you for your time and wonderful talk. It's thanks to you and charities like BTG that support parents and their children through the darkest and toughest of times. I've come away this evening knowing there is more support out there, and other parents are going through similar situations (it's comforting knowing we are not alone)."



OUR JOURNEY

BY JENNIFER WYMAN FOUNDRING
DIRECTOR

Jennifer Wyman creates
'Bridge the Gap' child
development for parents.

2017

Nikki Webster joins
Bridge the Gap and it
becomes a social
enterprise.

2018

Bridge the Gap
becomes a C.I.C. and
creates a city emotional
health hub.

2019

Team expanded and
widens offer of emotional
support to children and
parents.

2020

Bridge the Gap develop
a whole school
emotional education
curriculum.

2021

Bridge the Gap
enhance and expand
their community
provision.

2022

This year, Bridge the Gap has taken
further steps to a multidisciplinary
approach by bringing on board
three child wellbeing practitioners,
a social worker, and an
occupational therapist to support
our initiatives.

2023

MISSION STATEMENT

Bridge the Gap Child Mental Health C.I.C. is a non-profit organisation that provides mental health support to children and young people in the local community. The organisation has been operational as a C.I.C. since 2019 and has seen a steady increase in the number of children and young people accessing its services. This impact report highlights the positive impact of Bridge the Gap Child Mental Health C.I.C.'s support services for the year 2023.



AT A GLANCE

The impact of 1:1 support



89% of children rated an improvement in their mental health in just 6 weeks of support, **96%** rated an improvement in their mental health in 12 weeks of support.

(Figures taken from 93 children over 12 weeks)

96% of children stated that they knew how to use effective coping strategies to support their mental health after 12 weeks of support with a practitioner.

(Figures taken from 93 children over 12 weeks)

97% of parents would recommend our service to other people based on their child accessing one to one emotional literacy delivery.

(Figures taken from 22 parents after 12 weeks)

96% of parents felt that there was a significant change in their child's mental health after a course of just 12 sessions with a practitioner at Bridge the Gap

(Figures taken from 22 parents after 12 weeks)

100% of children stated that they enjoyed sessions at Bridge the Gap.



(Figures taken from 93 children over 12 weeks)

100% of parents stated their child enjoyed coming to Bridge the Gap.



(Figures taken from 22 parents after 12 weeks)



IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Bridge the Gap Child Mental Health C.I.C. has positively impacted the lives of children and young people in the local community. The organisation has provided 1:1 mental health support, delivering over 1,380 emotional literacy sessions to 191 children in 2023.

The organisation's support has helped children and young people in various areas, including anxiety, low mood, coping with anger, low self-esteem, trauma, and behavioural issues. The support provided by Bridge the Gap Child Mental Health C.I.C. has been crucial in improving the mental health and well-being of children and young people in the local community.

“Without you I wouldn’t be here, how can I possibly find the words to say thank you for that?”

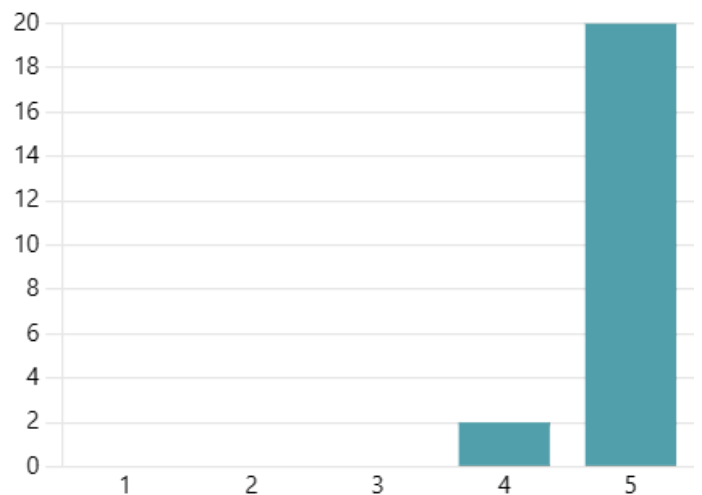
“We are sure that the true and lasting impact of your time together, will be felt by him for many years to come.”



IMPACT ON FAMILIES

Bridge the Gap Child Mental Health C.I.C.'s support services have also positively impacted the families of the children and young people who have accessed its services. The organisation has provided support to 225 parents through a variety of sessions, these include:, parent 1:1s, telephone assessments and parent empowerment sessions. There are countless more parents and carers who have accessed our provision in other ways through our website, phone conversations, webinars and our school online platform.

Please rate your overall experience with us at Bridge the Gap:



Data taken from 'Parent feedback form' following assessment calls completed in 2023.

"I AM SO THANKFUL TO BRIDGE THE GAP JUST FOR LISTENING AND BEING THERE. I HAD LOST MY WAY A LITTLE AND NOW I FEEL THE FIRST RAY OF HOPE IN A LONG TIME. THE VARIED LIST OF SUPPORT FOR BOTH ME AND FOR OUR SON IS JUST WHAT WE NEED. THANK YOU SO MUCH!"



IMPACT ON LOCAL COMMUNITY

Bridge the Gap Child Mental Health C.I.C.'s impact goes beyond the children and families it directly supports. The organisation's presence has raised awareness of the importance of mental health support for children and young people in the local community. Our organisation has collaborated with local organisations throughout 2023 to provide mental health support, safe spaces and advice throughout the city.

In 2023 we have delivered Compassionate Craft projects in 5 different locations across Derby, allowing children from all walks of life to benefit from safe, supportive, emotional literacy sessions. We have worked with several organisations in Derby to deliver support to families.

BRIDGE THE GAP ARE A MEMBER OF THE YOUTH ALLIANCE IN DERBY CITY, NETWORKING TOGETHER WITH OTHER LOCAL ORGANISATIONS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN DERBY.

IN 2023 WE BECAME MARKETING DERBY BONDHOLDERS, ALLOWING US A PLATFORM TO LIAISE WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS TO MAKE A WIDER IMPACT ON THE CITY OF DERBY.

IN 2023 WE OFFICIALLY PARTNERED WITH DERBYSHIRE YMCA AND FAMILY HUBS DERBY.

WHAT WE DO

Our goal is to enhance the mental health of children residing in Derby city. Local statistics drive our commitment to this cause. To accomplish this objective, we have developed the following approaches:

- We adopt a holistic approach to working with children, emphasizing positive relationships at the core of our interactions while involving their networks.
- We provide emotional education and support, based on evidence, to assist children in developing emotional literacy.
- We support schools in gaining access to mental health professionals and high-quality emotional literacy resources, with appropriate supervision as necessary.
- We network and work closely with other partners in the city.
- To equip parents and professionals with current information and training on all facets of child development, with the aim of promoting better long-term mental health outcomes.
- To ensure children's safety at all times by enlisting a multi-disciplinary team with Level 3 safeguarding certifications and comprehensive enhanced DBS checks.
- To provide a child-friendly, non-clinical service that considers the child's perspective, enabling them to feel valued, loved, and supported.



OUR VALUES



WE ARE KIND

We show kindness and are empathetic to the members of our community, in person, in schools and online



WE ARE AUTHENTIC

We stay true to ourselves and our beliefs whilst respecting other people's values. We use our voices and advocate for changes that we believe in.



WE ARE ADAPTABLE

We embrace change and adapt to the needs around us. We are reflective practitioners.



WE MAKE IT HAPPEN

We plan well, stay organised and communicate effectively. We speak with our team to share ideas and to ask for support.

CHALLENGES AND OVERCOMING THEM

Challenges we faced last year.

1. Lack of funds to meet demand. Overcome by: Developing CSR package for business, holding a fundraising dinner evening to spread awareness and build relationships. We were also successful in our application to the HAF project which as a specialist provision we supported children with additional needs and SEMH needs. We also started work on the Family Hubs project with Derby City Council.
2. Increased running costs. We developed a stronger CSR package and have scheduled regular fundraising events.
3. Lack of awareness in mental health. We completed more community based work - coffee mornings, lots of networking with Youth Alliance, Marketing Derby, visiting schools, open days, events and more.
4. Facing barriers with other agencies (e.g. CAMHS) Training team with more in depth knowledge around Self Harm, Gender Identity, Autism Awareness, Transference and Endings training, RISE training, ELSA training. This is something we are continuing to build on and develop a career pathway for practitioners alongside an in-depth training portal. Recruitment of middle management structure.





95% OF CHILDREN FEEL THAT BRIDGE THE GAP HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE TO THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

100% OF SCHOOLS THAT WE HAVE WORKED WITH FEEL THAT BRIDGE THE GAP IS A NEEDED SERVICE IN DERBY THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

LOCAL ORGANISATIONS WE LINK WITH FEEL THAT BRIDGE THE GAP IS A MUCH NEEDED SERVICE.

“With the input from Bridge the Gap, as well as support from the family at home, L was open and honest about her thoughts and feelings in relation to her eating disorder. I believe Bridge the Gap’s work benefitted in helping her not to feel she had to be a perfectionist. They modelled to her healthy ways to support her mental health and furthermore she created some mechanisms for coping with different emotions through their support.”

CAMHS, Eating Disorder Team, Derby

“I feel safe at Bridge the Gap”

“I love the Rainbow Place, it makes me feel happy”

“I have been able to overcome my worries and feel able to now go back to school”

“BRIDGE THE GAP HELPS ME LEARN ABOUT MY EMOTIONS AND THAT IS HELPFUL TO ME BECAUSE SOMETIMES EMOTIONS CAN BE SCARY”

TESTIMONIALS



As parents, David and I are immensely proud of the work our child has done to start to understand, and voice, his emotions. Previously, emotions which our child perceived as 'negative' he would try to hide from everyone, at a great personal wellbeing cost to himself.

Following his 12 sessions with you at Bridge The Gap, he has become more at ease with not only speaking about he feels, but also beginning to identify root causes and issues which he would to address.

Whilst there is a still a long way to go until this is a secure literacy for him, the progress he has made is amazing. This is in no small part to the support he has received from you and the wider Bridge The Gap team; he met you during a very difficult period and you immediately created a safe space around him which has allowed him to explore the issues he feels most impact him. You've allowed him a sense of control during his sessions, always allowed him to set the pace and enabled him to feel and share without shame. For an individual with a social, emotional and communication disorder, the way in which you have created this safe space for him has been paramount to its success.

We are sure that the true and lasting impact of your time together will be felt by him for many years to come and, even though our child has decided not to proceed with any further sessions at this point in time, we are keen to 'leave the door open' should he ever wish to visit again.

Many thanks for everything you have supported our child with, and for being a part of his journey.

TESTIMONIALS



In summer 2023 I reached out for support from Bridge the Gap for my 8 year old daughter. As a family we have accessed supported through BTG for many years so it felt very natural to reach out when we were struggling.

My daughter was struggling to understand the big emotions she was feeling which in turn was impacting on her self esteem and self confidence. She also found it very difficult to be away from me (mum) as she would worry and over think situations.

I put her forward for 1:1 session however I really wasn't sure if she would leave me, how wrong was I!

From the first session Milly made E feel at ease and comfortable. E formed a connection with Milly straight away which meant she felt about to engage in sessions. Milly was so supportive and ensured that the sessions were planned around E's needs and interests.

The 1:1 sessions have had a positive impact on E's confidence and self esteem. She is able to talk about how she is feeling and can relate the physical signs to the big emotions.

Her separation anxieties have definitely eased and she is so much more positive about herself and that so can achieve.

She now talks to herself in a such a more positive way and when she's doing something new and is feeling anxious she's is tells herself she can do it!

Thank you again BTG for your continued services they really do make a difference.

TESTIMONIALS



Just wanted to say how wonderful Lucy has been with my child. She has seen Lucy six times now and she really looks forward to her sessions every Friday (not sure what we will do when this is over!). I have really started to notice a difference in my daughter and her opening up and talking about how she is feeling and what emotion is prevalent at the time. Her care for her brother has also increased, she has always been a wonderful big sister but she is somehow more attentive to his needs and recognises his emotions better too.

We began accessing the 1:1 service at a time where my daughter needed a great deal of emotional support. We had tried a different counselling service before but their approach had left my daughter hesitant about opening herself up. Lucy immediately put my daughter at ease and it was fantastic to see an immediate rapport. I have watched my daughter continue to open up to Lucy and look forward to their regular appointments. I know she thinks about what she and Lucy discuss and I can see a positive impact in how my daughter feels and reacts to situations. I am incredibly thankful we found Bridge the Gap and Lucy.

We felt almost at crisis point when we contacted Bridge the Gap for help with our 7 year old. Despite trying many different approaches, her behaviour was getting worse and was affecting our whole family and it was hard to see a resolution. We had a telephone consultation soon after and began weekly sessions. Our daughter sometimes seems like a different person now, such is the change over the last 6 months. Her ability to regulate her emotions, the change in her self esteem and overall happiness have had such an impact on our family. She enjoys her sessions, which allow a safe and nurturing atmosphere to explore some complex feelings and associated coping mechanisms. The sessions focus varies, but always relevant to her wellbeing and emotional development and our practitioner has revisited areas at our request and has focused sessions on particular things based on our current behaviours. Accessing Bridge the Gap has been the best thing we have done for our daughter, and I truly believe the skills she has learnt through them will help her throughout her life.

TESTIMONIALS



“Bridge the Gap very quickly became somewhere that my child felt safe and understood. For the first time she found people outside of her family who believed her and gave her space to explore how she felt instead of telling her that she was wrong or should just ignore it. We are very grateful for the space that was given to my child and for the unconditional love and support that she received.”

‘Bridge the Gap provided my course at **EMTTP** (East Midlands Teacher Training Partnership) with extensive and informative sessions discussing the importance of emotional literacy. Each and every one of our course delegates came away understanding how to support children in being aware of their emotions and knowing the most effective way to support children in coping with different emotions’.

“BRIDGE THE GAP ARE SUCH AN ESSENTIAL RESOURCE TO THE CHILDREN OF DERBY . WHAT IMPRESSES ME THE MOST IS THE COMPASSION THAT THEY HAVE FOR EACH AND EVERY CHILD THAT THEY HELP , THEY ARE TRULY INSPIRATIONAL.”

AMANDA SOLLOWAY, DERBY MP



CASE STUDY - 15 YEAR OLD

I first came to Bridge the Gap when ***I was 12 years old, I am now 15 years old.*** I have a diagnosis of autism and ADD and have always struggled with feeling socially anxious. I have had, ***in total 26 sessions*** so far and I wish to carry on my sessions with Nikki fortnightly for a further 10 sessions. I am so pleased that my mum and schools referred me to Bridge the Gap as ***my confidence has grown*** since I have had sessions here. I am a different person to who I was when I first started working with Nikki. I am lucky that the two school's I attended have funded these sessions for me to attend Bridge the Gap. I really struggled with school and felt like an outcast. This made me very low in confidence and I used to self harm all the time because I did not like myself. Nikki has helped me understand who I am better and I feel that coming to sessions has boosted my confidence in myself. ***I no longer self harm because I have found new and healthier ways to cope with my anxiety*** such as journaling, meditation and going for a walk regularly. I have learnt and practiced these strategies with the support from Nikki and I now feel hopeful about my future. ***I am now able to attend school full time.*** I continue seeing Nikki as I find it really helpful to chat about my feelings with someone I can trust.

PARENT'S VIEW

At the start ***I was desperate for help*** nowhere could offer the support my daughter so desperately needed services were overwhelmed and nowhere offered anything long term. My daughter was out of school with trauma from attending, suffering with her mental health and anxiety among other things she struggled to go anywhere or speak to anyone. Through Bridge the gap I began to see my daughter making progress until eventually, she was able to start at a new school and grow in confidence becoming happier and making her own world bigger. Still now Bridge the Gap is supporting and my daughter is able to continue at school, knowing she has that support, an open conversation and time to think through any problem she may have incurred is a blessing and I truly believe she has come this far thanks to the work both she and Bridge the Gap have done together, they are amazing at empowering not only the child but the parent too, whilst giving relatable and non judgmental advice on how to better support. I now have my son attending and again I've noticed change for the positive - he's more engaged with the family, he's closer and I can see the effort he's putting in.

It would be the first place I'd turn to get help and support. After dealing with many different professionals and services they really know how to work with the children and give the power back to them. Thank you Bridge the Gap for all the hard work you do and the lives you've changed and no doubt will continue to do so!

SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS

During 2023, our practitioners collaborated with 11 schools in Derbyshire to provide group and individual interventions, conducted in six sessions within their respective settings.

On the back of the pandemic our in-person services and training were restricted and it was also clear from the contact with our schools that teachers were having to deal with areas that felt outside of their professional area of competencies. Through the Opportunity Area programme in Derby, Bridge the Gap were funded to create online resources that could be delivered in schools that were previously delivered in person... This is when the 'school online platform' was launched and 14 schools across the city had access to this comprehensive curriculum and training.

To date our online school platform is ever growing in popularity with schools in the city and beyond. A further 7 schools have accessed our evidence-based emotional health curriculum in 2023. They each continue to utilise our resources for their pupils, parents and staff, allowing us to meet the need around 'whole school mental health'.



"I thought the course was brilliant, it really opened my eyes to the way I parent and the way I work with children at school."
Teacher - Anonymous

'WHOLE SCHOOL' MENTAL HEALTH

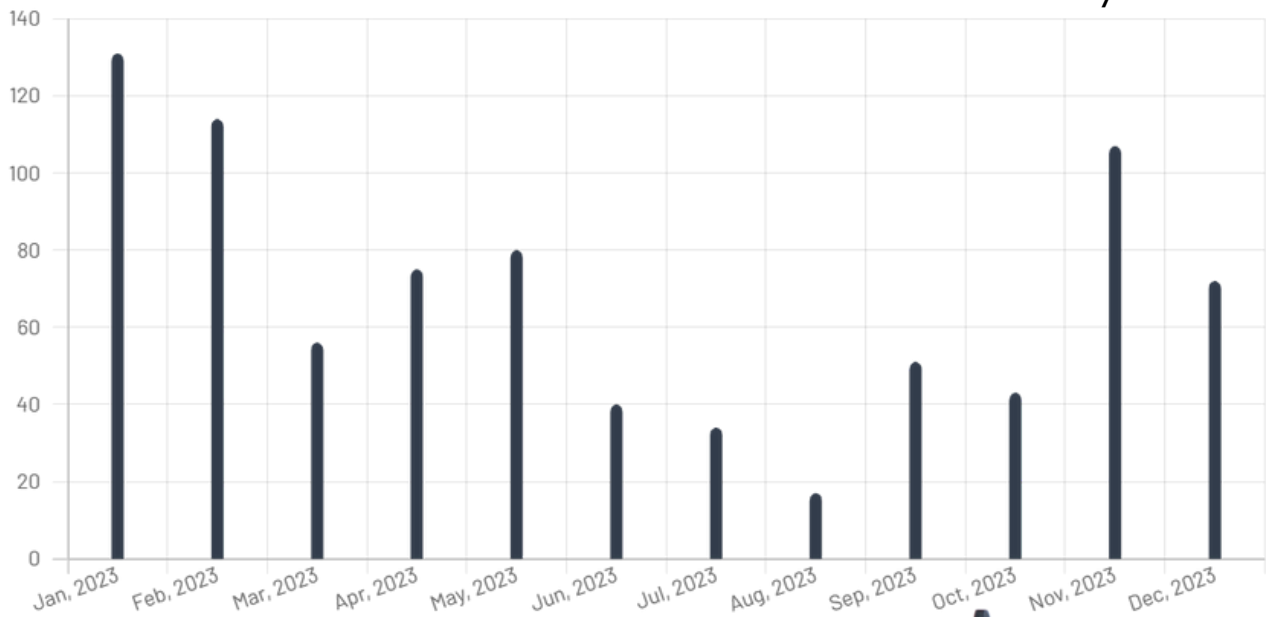


820 new enrolments onto the online platform

371 new accounts created on the online platform

"Oh my gosh. Such a massive relief having done this. I get it. I get my child, I know what I have to do to help him, I know HOW to do it. Thank you so much BTG"
Parent - Anonymous

"Whole School Platform" - Enrolments in the last year



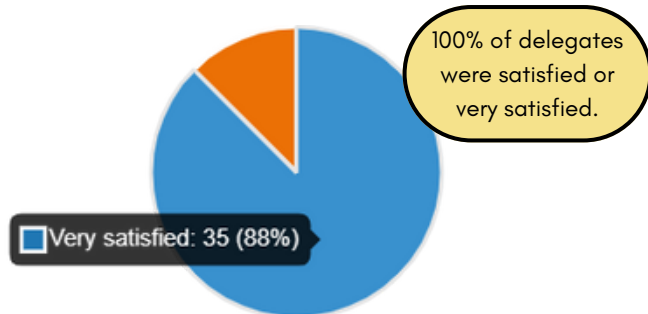
TEACHER TRAINING



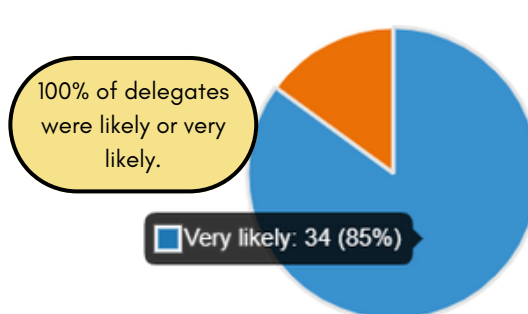
We've provided training sessions to various groups, including teachers in schools, student teachers at Derby University and the East Midlands Teacher Training Partnership. Our primary objective has been to aid in the development of children's emotional literacy while supporting teachers in comprehending behaviour, its manifestation, and links to mental health and sensory requirements.

In addition to supporting teachers in training through university programs, our directors provide supervision to teachers throughout Derby, as a means of promoting their wellbeing. Moreover, our directors visit school settings to conduct inset day training sessions centred around emotional literacy, supporting a child who is anxious, understanding behaviour, raising self esteem and more.

Overall, how satisfied were you with Bridge the Gap's training/workshop?



How likely are you to recommend this training to a work colleague/friend?



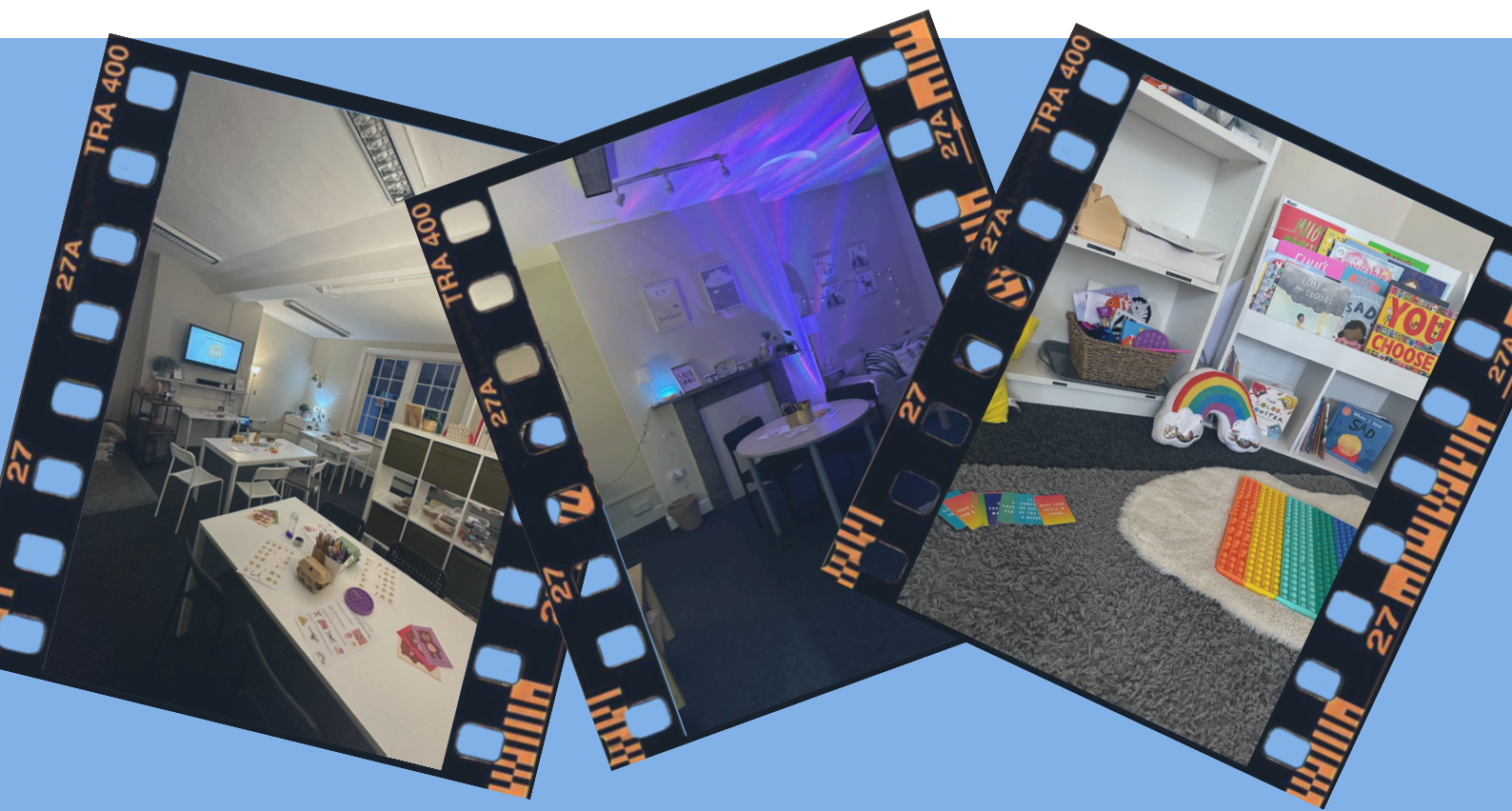
ADULT AND CHILD SESSIONS



In 2023, our adult and child sessions witnessed the participation of 48 adult-child pairs.

In June 2023, leader of these these sessions moved from Jennifer to to our lead practitioner, Lucy. From June to December, Lucy delivered a total of 22 sessions, covering a diverse range of topics, including anxiety, school based anxiety, bereavement, anger and self-esteem.

We know the need for these families is high - we liaise regularly with our stake holders within the community to gather information on what they would like to access for themselves and their children.



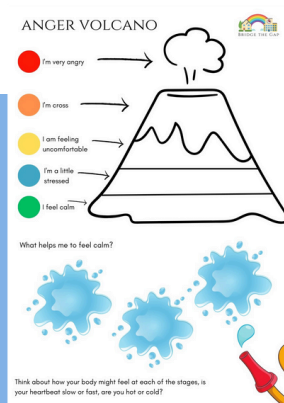
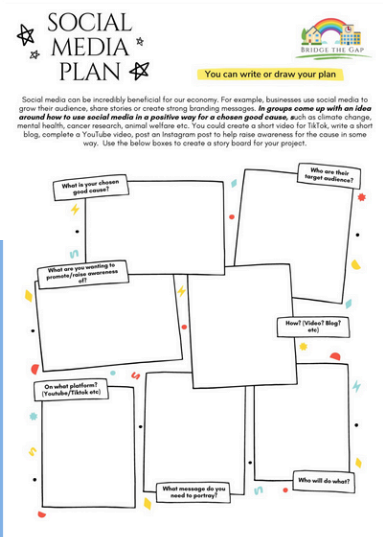
PARENTAL SUPPORT



According to the Mental Health Foundation (2019), an effective approach to mental health prevention involves **supporting parents in their parenting style with a non-judgmental and nurturing approach**. Studies by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (2023) have highlighted the correlation between parental and child mental health, emphasising **the importance of prioritising parental mental health support**. Through our parent support sessions, we offer a secure environment for parents of children within and outside our service to seek guidance from practitioners, receive practical advice, and be referred to relevant resources.

Our organisation continuously updates its online free resources, **providing parents access to online courses and information to support their children** in a home setting. This comprehensive approach to supporting both the parent and child helps in achieving positive outcomes for the child working alongside our practitioner.

To address the needs of our community and parents, we have taken proactive measures this year by offering early support and creating **spaces for parents to access free resources**. We have established Early Support Hubs and partnered with schools in our community, utilising their facilities to host coffee mornings. These events have helped parents gain knowledge about our services and have **facilitated the exchange of valuable information**.



PARENTAL SUPPORT



Throughout the year 2023, our organisation extended parent support through various channels. One of these included **an assessment call**, which provided a platform for 114 parents to speak with practitioners about their children's need for support. This initiative aimed to provide parents with a chance to **express their concerns and receive practical guidance**.

Additionally, our directors conducted courses and workshops, which empowered parents seeking emotional support. These courses included week-long or four-week-long courses on managing emotions, anxiety workshops, and self-harm support workshops.

In **2023, 63 parents or guardians benefited from these initiatives**.



Emotions Workshop

Adult & Child Workshop

Saturday 23rd March
10:30am - 11:30am

Create a communication tool, a feelings thermometer, to explore basic emotions and coping strategies for challenging feelings.

BOOK ONLINE NOW! at jwbridgethegap.com

School Anxiety Workshop

ADULT & CHILD WORKSHOP

2-Week Course Thursday 2nd & 9th May
5:30pm - 6:30pm

A unique adult and child workshop designed to address school-based anxiety in both adults and children. Together, we'll explore anxiety triggers throughout the school day and discover practical coping mechanisms.

BOOK ONLINE NOW! at jwbridgethegap.com

'Learning together, helps us to know how to listen and respond to our emotions'

REFLECTING ON 2023 AIMS



One of our primary objectives for 2023 was to **provide access to green space** where our practitioners and the young people in our service could connect with nature, deriving the benefits of grounding and mindfulness.

We have been fortunate to partner with the **YMCA** to acquire a beautiful piece of allotment land at **Wilmorton Community Gardens**.

Our goal is to transform this space into a serene and therapeutic environment suitable for 1:1 and small group interventions, with the help of dedicated volunteers.

As part of our 2023 objectives, it was imperative for us to appoint a volunteer coordinator to oversee our community support initiatives and bolster our compassionate crafts project.

In 2023, we achieved the successful recruitment of a volunteer coordinator, who established and led **a team of 13 additional volunteers** to support our programs, exceeding our aims from 2022.

We aim to have 20 trained volunteers delivering early community support by the end of 2024



REFLECTING ON 2023 AIMS



Our **Compassionate Crafts** programme stood as a cornerstone of our community outreach initiatives in 2022. This meticulously designed program aims to engage with the community by integrating our expertise in emotional literacy into a creative, informal format over a span of six weeks with six children per session. Our volunteers and practitioners leading this program are carefully selected to **align with the values and mission of Bridge the Gap**, fostering a secure environment for young individuals to explore emotional concepts and coping strategies.

The training of our volunteers plays a pivotal role in arming them with the necessary skills and vocabulary to assist our practitioners across various settings. These **volunteers facilitate group intervention sessions in school environments, support our family hubs in Derby, and have progressed to autonomously oversee our Compassionate Crafts** program in Derbyshire. To enhance the capabilities of our committed volunteers, we are currently facilitating two volunteers' access to training through the RISE program. We have also begun the development of an **online training portal** for volunteers ensuring they feel skilled and confident to represent Bridge the Gap and support the children safely in sessions.

In 2023, we are delighted that our directors have continued to engage with local libraries in Normanton. By utilising our emotional literacy books, Bridge the Gap consistently contributes to story time sessions for the youth in the community. This ongoing initiative is essential for **community engagement, establishing Bridge the Gap and our practitioners as a welcoming and secure resource.**

Securing funding has posed challenges and remained a primary focus for us in 2023. We are actively pursuing additional National Lottery Funding after successfully securing various grants throughout the year. To ensure the expansion and consistent delivery of our emotional literacy expertise in the most accessible manner, we are considering the recruitment of a fundraising manager to bolster the sustainability of our practices. Concurrently, to streamline our operations, we are recruiting an Office Manager to support our practitioners and uphold the efficiency of our services.

AIMS FOR 2024



When we sit to write this part of the report we always feel full of hope, we have so many aims for 2024 and we feel as committed as ever to making these goals come to fruition.

We have six main aims:

1. To access a larger pot of **funding** for us to be able to offer 1:1 support for children who self-refer or who's families can't afford to access a private service.
2. **More space!** We would love an outdoor building on our Community Gardens that can be used for children needing 1:1 support, but also to be open so that families can access a safe and mindful space during challenging times. We would also like more space inside too - we have run out of rooms and our office is no longer big enough for the team we have.
3. **Compassionate Crafts** - we have hopes that this can be rolled out in other areas as our volunteer team grows, we hope to take some sessions into Staffordshire which is where some volunteers live. We hope the growth of Compassionate Crafts helps us to stay focused on the importance of proactive and preventative emotional learning and education.
4. An **office manager**. We have a lot of administrative tasks and we need someone experienced in being able to support the team when they work in the office and effectively manage waitlists and communications.
5. To **deliver and access more training**, we aim to have a full career and training pathway mapped out for practitioners in our service by mid 2024.
6. To **reflect and adapt on our processes** and how we record outcomes based on listening to stakeholders.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH



The **HAF project** by Bridge the Gap proved to be a resounding success in 2023, reaching out to a total of 36 young people across three different projects. Our initiative aimed to connect our community with the resources and practitioners available at Bridge the Gap, exploring emotional literacy through crafts and yoga, visiting Hannah Fields Community Gardens, and collaborating with external agencies such as Jo's Reptiles.

We have also been attending **local libraries** to introduce emotional literacy based stories to children under 5, helping them to build a connection with Bridge the Gap from a young age.

As we reflect on our values and objectives from 2022, we remain committed to engaging with our community and providing proactive early intervention throughout the city.

Our compassionate crafts project, led by trained volunteers, is a prime example of our efforts to achieve this goal.

Our practitioners and volunteers provide a six-week emotional literacy program for young people, to be delivered through crafts in various settings including schools, community centres, and our hub. This program aligns with our 2023 objectives outlined in our 2022 impact report, and will leverage our volunteers to facilitate the initiative. The compassionate crafts project has been complimented by our **"Early Intervention Emotional Health Hubs"** initiative, which is funded by the National Lottery. These drop-in sessions provide a secure space for parents and young people to seek advice, information, resources, and guidance from our practitioners.



FAMILY HUBS



This year, our community outreach efforts have received funding via the ***Family Hubs initiative, specifically under the peri-natal mental health umbrella.*** Our goal is to leverage our expertise in emotional literacy and creative expression to connect with our community. Our family hubs provide a safe and non-judgmental space for new or expectant parents to access advice, decompress, and engage in creative activities. In 2023, our reach spread across Derby, holding these sessions in Sinfin, Derwent, Mackworth, and Rosehill. Addressing post-natal and peri-natal depression is critical, as research has shown that it can adversely affect a child's long-term development due to poor attachment (Derbyshire County Council, 2023).

Given that ***10-20% of women and 10% of men may experience mental health issues while having a baby (Derbyshire County Council, 2023),*** it's crucial to provide support to these families through early intervention programs such as family hubs.

In support of this initiative, we have recently brought on board a Creative Expressive Practitioner to cater to the needs of our community's parents and provide them with an outlet. Our Creative Expressive Practitioner collaborates with our volunteers and wellbeing practitioners.

One of the ongoing challenges we face at Bridge the Gap is reaching a broader audience. To address this, we have introduced flyers in various languages, seeking to improve our accessibility as a service. The disparities in the demographic we serve are evident in the inequalities in maternity health highlighted in the **NHS CORE20PLUS5 (2021)** approach. To address this, we are collaborating with local Iman's and mosques through our family hubs to spread our message and continually enhance our accessibility.



FamilyHubDerby

Stronger families through support & friendship

WHY?

A recent report co-signed by the Director of Public Health for Derbyshire and the Assistant Chief Constable of the Derbyshire Constabulary emphasises the significance of proactive and preventative early interventions in our community to ensure the safety of young people from serious and violent crimes. The report, titled "***Serious Violence Strategies 2024-2026***" (2023), builds upon the approach developed by ***Christmas and Srivastava (2019)*** that prioritises preventative measures and protective factors over post-crisis responses. Such ***protective factors include emotional regulation skills and positive relationships with adults within and beyond the school environment***, both of which are supported by our daily emotional literacy interventions at Bridge the Gap. Our work at Bridge the Gap involves connecting with young people and the adults in their lives, not only at our Hub but also through our collaborations with schools to promote the wellbeing of their students. According to the ***NHS's Mental Health of Children and Young People 2023 Survey (2023)***, research indicates that one in five children and young people have probable mental health disorders this year alone.

These figures align with the observed rise in mental health conditions in recent years from 2017 to 2020. Studies consistently show the importance of early and proactive interventions to support the long-term well-being of young people. Research indicates that half of all mental health issues in adults began before the age of 14, underscoring the need for investment in young people's health and social systems to prevent potential mental health and emotional challenges throughout their lives (***Derbyshire County Council, 2023***). Reported levels of anxiety among primary and secondary school-aged children have increased in comparison to previous years, based on the latest data from 2023 (***UK Parliament, 2023***). The ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been noted as a contributing factor to a decline in social and emotional skills among children within the education system across the country (UK Parliament, 2023).



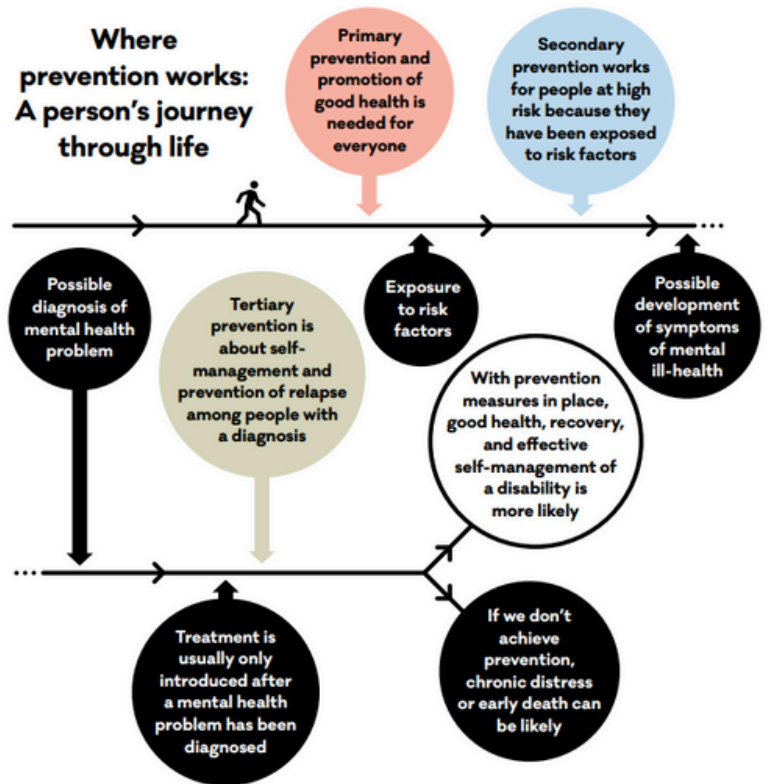
Why?

WHY?

The ***demand for mental health services in our city and surrounding areas is surpassing their capacity***, leading to a rise in waiting lists. According to a review conducted in ***March 2023, 32% of children referred for mental health services, such as CYPHS, were unable to receive the necessary support or treatment (Children's Commissioner, 2023).***

Kousoulis' report, published in 2019 by the Mental Health Foundation, outlines a range of risk and preventative factors. The report emphasises the significance of ***childhood emotional literacy as a protective measure against Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)***. This report calls for preventative work that is happening at Bridge the Gap, educating and equipping parents, teaching our young people about their emotions with supporting strategies and building meaningful connections.

According to ***Gilligan's (2003) research, building resilience in children and young adults is reliant on fostering a sense of belonging and cultivating supportive relationships with parents, teachers, and other influential figures.*** At Bridge the Gap, we offer comprehensive support services for a period of twelve weeks or more, aimed at creating strong connections and enhancing the resilience of young individuals through our tailored sessions.



Source: Mental Health Foundation (2023)

Why?

'Bridging the gaps in services means keeping reflective and adaptable to the needs of our city.'

DERBY CITY COUNCIL COMMISSION



Bridge the Gap, commissioned by Derby City Council, has initiated a program to provide support for inclusion in schools. The program involves placing a practitioner within school settings to work closely with children who show signs of being at risk of exclusion.

The aim is to provide **holistic support** for their emotional wellbeing, working alongside teachers, parents, and external professionals.

These sessions provide a safe space for young people to access therapeutic support from a trusted adult, allowing them to explore emotional literacy and support their outcomes. Our **values of adaptation** ensure that the child's needs are met within their setting, with reasonable adjustments made to facilitate their attendance, belonging and wellbeing in school.



S seeks out a connection with me - although the way that they are doing it is really impressive and very different to previously! S was able to tell me about how they had been feeling and use words to do so. They are also now able to accept praise - praise in the past was something that would often be rejected from me, or lead to dysregulation. I feel that your sessions have really helped them to be able to talk about what they are feeling and what they need.



Testimonial - Inclusion Officer
Dale Primary



Derby City Council

GROUP SESSIONS



Throughout this year, we have observed the continued success of our group interventions, designed to support young people's emotional intelligence and foster connections between the youth and their trusted adults. From **June to December**, **Bridge the Gap facilitated 22 adult and child sessions**, covering a wide range of topics, including anger management, anxiety, and attachment.

As an organisation, we remain committed to reflecting on our language and practice, and we have recently made changes to our previously named 'parent and child' sessions. To ensure inclusivity for all dynamics, we have amended the session name to 'adult and child'.

At Bridge the Gap, we are continually adapting our outreach efforts. Notably, our girls' group for years 7 to 10 has been transformed into '**Radiant Resilience**,' providing a weekly space for young girls to access support for self-esteem and healthy interpersonal and online relationships. This setting encourages discussions and creates comfort while unifying young girls who face unique challenges in today's world with the proliferation of social media platforms. To increase accessibility and to reach a larger audience we **introduced a free weeks taster session** to allow young people to enter our space with no commitment or financial ties to accommodate their needs and anxieties.



We extend a warm welcome to **all feminine-identifying and/or non-binary children** to attend our sessions, with a focus on supporting their unique needs. Our organisation is committed to inclusivity, and this value is embedded in our ethos and approach. During the period of June to December in 2023, we provided support to 12 young people through these sessions.

Our girls groups in 2023 also catered to younger girls in years 5 and 6, assisting them with the transition to secondary school and promoting their overall well-being. We utilised engaging activities like crafts and games to foster a supportive network for these young girls.

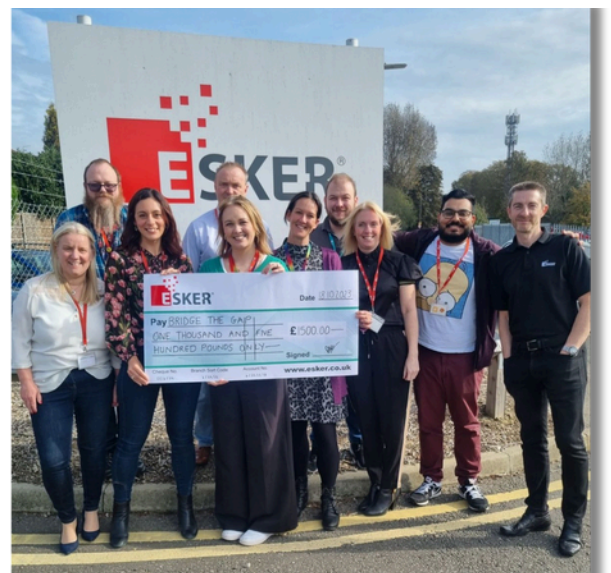
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Bridge the Gap Child Mental Health C.I.C. expresses its gratitude to the following supporters for their contribution towards our important work in 2023.



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CHILD MENTAL HEALTH

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