



# ANNUAL REPORT 2017 / 2018

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JULY 2018

A Mindsight Surrey CAMHS service  
provided in partnership with

Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS  
NHS Foundation Trust

With an increasing focus on academic achievement in schools and new challenges emerging from the rise of the online world, childhood and growing up now is very different from in the past. Traumatic childhood experiences – including abuse, neglect, bereavement, violence or prejudice – can also have a huge impact on mental health, often several years down the line.

A recent report commissioned by Young Minds a leading mental health charity found that one in ten children – that's around three in every classroom – has a diagnosable mental health problem and one in four have experienced emotional distress. This includes depression, anxiety and conduct disorder, and are often a direct response to what is happening in their lives.

The emotional wellbeing of children is just as important as their physical health. Good mental health allows children and young people to develop the resilience to cope with whatever life throws at them and grow into well-rounded, healthy adults.

Things that can help keep children and young people mentally well include:

- being in good physical health, eating a balanced diet and getting regular exercise
- being part of a family that gets along well most of the time
- going to a school that looks after the wellbeing of all its pupils
- feeling loved, trusted, understood, valued and safe
- being hopeful and optimistic
- being able to learn and having opportunities to succeed
- accepting who they are and recognising what they are good at
- having a sense of belonging in their family, school and community
- having the strength to cope when something is wrong and the ability to solve problems

Learning Space recognises the importance of these protective factors and seeks to get involved early when children and young people are struggling to cope with life.

We provide children and young people with a worker they can trust and who they can talk to. We help them build their confidence and self-worth. We also work with their parents, making sure that parents feel supported. And we stay in close touch with other professionals.

Our unique offer is a therapeutic mix of solution focused coaching, mentoring and creative activities which is customised to the individual needs of the child or young person. These are delivered by our skilled team of experienced practitioners. Our sessions provide a safe, non-judgemental space to explore past experiences and events which continue to cause difficulties. Alongside this our solution focused approaches are future driven and look at where the child is now and where they want to be by emphasising visible goals and building on personal strengths and resources.

I hope you enjoy reading about the work we have done this year.

**Rev Nelson Porter**  
Chair of Learning Space Management Group



### What We Do

#### Individual support for children and young people    Support for families

.....whose achievement or relationships in school are causing concern

.....who are anxious, isolated, bullied, unhappy, angry or bereaved

.....who are finding it difficult to settle in school

.....when relationships in the family are difficult

.....joint sessions with children and their parents / carers

.....parenting skills

#### Group work with children and young people

.....developing social skills, friendships and building confidence and self-esteem

John, age 15

John was referred to Learning Space by his head of year in school because he had multiple difficulties in life: major health problems, some learning difficulties, he is a young carer and he has witnessed domestic violence. It was felt that he would benefit from having someone to talk with.

At first, he wasn't sure how our sessions would help him, he wasn't sure what their purpose was, or what he wanted to say. Soon however I noticed that he came prepared each time with something he wanted to talk through. He began to say at the end of sessions that he felt better just for sharing with me what was on his mind. It seemed to me that he was well able to organise his thoughts, he just needed a space and someone to listen, to decide for himself how to move forward.

Initially he wanted to talk about his family relationships. He wanted to understand his own role within the family, and to be able to respond more calmly in family situations.

Later he began to talk also about school pressures and exams, and to talk about his dreams for next year; college will be a major step for him out into the world.

More recently John has talked of how some people in his life seem, with the best of intentions, to focus mainly on his health difficulties, and how this limited focus annoys him. He wondered if it was ok for him to feel annoyed like this, and we discussed how he is so much more than a sum of his problems, he is a young person with a life to live, a person who happens to have significant life difficulties to cope with as well.

He loves the idea that he may simply be behaving like a normal teenager when he feels annoyed about being over-protected. It is new for him to focus on how it feels to be a teenager, with all the challenges of adolescence, and he is enjoying a new sense of freedom.

He says he feels more in control now, calmer and happier, at home and in school.



### 121SPACE

This is our mentoring project which runs across the two boroughs of Reigate and Banstead and Tandridge. Since April 2017 we have supported a total of 86 young people between the ages of 11 and 17.

We are currently working with 14 schools and where young people are not at school or choose to be seen outside of school, we will support them in and around the community.

Our participatory offer is now well established and is open to all young people. We had another successful summer activity week in July 2017 and currently looking forward to working with our youth council to develop this year's programme.

Our youth council welcomes the opportunity to talk about their involvement with 121SPACE and has been delighted this year to have been asked to present to Learning Space trustees and Surrey County council partners.

121SPACE continues to deliver excellent outcomes for children, young people and families.

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[www.learningspace.org.uk](http://www.learningspace.org.uk)

## Thomas, aged 9

Since starting school in Thomas had always been an easy going calm and happy boy. He was a high achiever at school and was popular with the other children. This all changed in when he reached year 5.

Thomas was referred to Learning Space because he was showing uncharacteristic aggressive and challenging behaviours both at home and at school. He was finding it difficult to concentrate at school and his progress had slowed. At home he was becoming withdrawn from the family and had frequent outburst of anger – he would sometimes hurt his younger brother and kick his mum.

Thomas started having weekly 1:1 sessions with the initial focus on self- esteem and self- confidence. He began to express his burden of worries and stress caused by the impending separation of his parents. Both parents were still at home but the atmosphere was strained with frequent arguments. Thomas knew that Mum and Dad were going to sell the family home and find separate places to live. Mum and Dad were unaware of the worry and strain that this was putting on Thomas and he didn't feel that he could talk about his worries because he did not want to upset them.

He was keen for me to ask Mum to join us for a paired session so that he could begin to share his feelings and worries. Mum agreed to join us. We made a 'Best Hopes' potion and Thomas and Mum took turns to choose and add ingredients; each time they added an ingredient they shared a best hope.

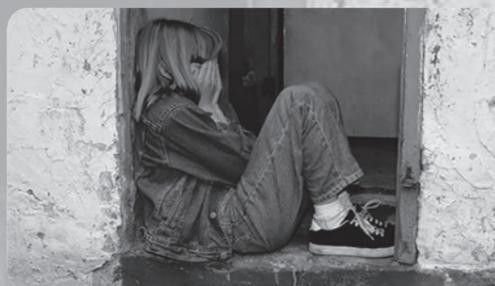
Thomas managed to say how he was feeling and Mum realised how much the uncertainty and separation was affecting him. Mum and Dad then worked together with the children to draw up a contact plan for the future that would work for them all. They made sure that the children knew what was happening and found other ways to sort out issues e.g. emails rather than arguments

Things at home have now changed – the family is working together to find a positive way forward. Thomas is able to talk to both parents and they are open and honest with him. Thomas is happy at school again and he is doing well in lessons.



## Hannah, age 8

Hannah was referred to Learning Space through Mindsight Surrey CAMHS because of difficulties managing her emotions. Hannah had just received a diagnosis of autism and it soon became clear that this was impacting hugely on her every-day life. Hannah, like many girls on the autism spectrum, tried hard to conform in school and attempted to 'mask' her need to move around regularly. Mum reported that school had not noticed that Hannah appeared particularly fidgety, yet Hannah felt that she was often being told off for fidgeting. Hannah responded well to a selection of fidget tools trialled during our sessions.



Mum explained that Hannah would nearly always come home from school and 'fall apart'. The effort of not overly fidgeting, as well as managing the playground, with all its' social subtleties, was huge for Hannah. I spoke to the SENCO at her school and emailed them some suggested strategies to try. If Hannah could have support with her sensory overload, such as regular movement breaks, use of fidget tools; and a quiet space to unwind during unstructured times this would help her manage better in school. This in turn could make Hannah's behaviour more manageable at home. Such support was put in place and mum and Hannah noticed improvements.

Hannah is an identical twin who is not on the autism spectrum and she was often at the receiving end of Hannah's frustrations. At Hannah and mum's request, Amy joined us for two sessions and Hannah was able to explain her frustrations and show her sister her appreciation of her understanding and patience.

Whilst exploring triggers and strategies for Hannah's anger it became clear that she was craving a quiet, safe and private space to calm herself down at times. Mum had been reluctant to let Hannah be alone at these times, preferring to try and discuss the situation. Mum agreed to try this strategy and it proved to be beneficial. We also did some work around Hannah's autism and looked at some relevant books.

Hannah and her mum fed back that the intervention and contact with the school had led to significant and positive changes in Hannah's self-esteem, confidence and her ability to regulate her emotions.

## Adam age 12

Adam is a 12 year old boy with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). He has a difficult relationship with step dad and can often have angry outbursts at home. With a new baby in the house mum was struggling to manage his behaviour. He was also facing some bullying at school.

The Learning Space sessions included time for him to talk through and recognise things that made him feel sad and angry and find strategies to help him cope, express and manage these safely. At the same time Adam was able to explore, use and celebrate his strengths which in turn built his understanding of himself and boosted his levels of confidence and self esteem.

At the end of the sessions Adam said....

*"Talking about things and making things has been useful for me. I thought I was a terrible person before, now I realise I'm ok and I know that I have strengths."*

*"I'm not kicking my bed anymore and I will take myself to my room and play with my cars when I feel angry or frustrated. This helps me think."*

*"It has helped with my learning too. I was a 2/3 and now I am an 8/9."*

## Outcomes

Learning Space evaluations identify positive change.

At the end of the work when we asked "what's different?" all the children and young people taking part reported an improvement in at least one area of their lives and the majority reported four or more improvements.

The most common areas of improvement were better able to manage feelings (84%), managing school better (80%) feeling happier (75%), and increased levels of confidence (74%).

	% of cyp reporting improvements
Reporting a least one area of improvement	100%
Managing school / college	80%
Attending school / college	19%
Learning	51%
Confidence	74%
Getting on with others	66%
Feeling happy	75%
Behaviour in school	43%
Behaviour at home	57%
Managing feelings (anger etc.)	74%



## Seb age 10

I worked with a 10-year-old who has very severe OCD and significant phobias. Both were mainly related to thunder, lightning and the moon and the sun. His phobias were so severe that they had started a compulsion to look out the window almost constantly and to check weather apps. The fear was so great it was affecting the whole family and overwhelming everyone and everything.

On appointment number 4 mum brought him and showed me a recording of him standing on a picnic table during a storm with both thunder and lightning in the background he was smiling and feeling very proud of himself.

I have referred him to a specialist at the hospital to manage his ongoing obsessions and compulsions but his whole family all feel that the work has given them hope and allowed them to move forward and to become unstuck. Everyone feels things are much better.

