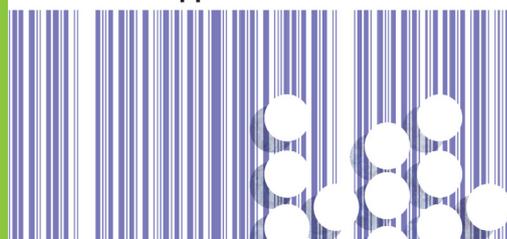


A range of family support
for young carers of
substance misusing adults



Positive opportunities for families



What is the initiative?

Roundhouse

Who runs it?

Switch, Cranstoun's service for young people, in partnership with Portsmouth City Council's Health Improvement and Development Service

Who does it benefit?

Young carers of alcohol and drug misusing parents, as well as other affected family members, in Portsmouth – a city with high levels of deprivation and substance misuse.

What does it do?

The project aims to support the whole family affected by substance misuse, as well as the young carer. Project Workers provide one-to-one support for both young carers and parents, and trips and activities are offered to young carers, both on their own, in groups and with their parents and other family members. Trips away not only provide respite, but also improve families' communication and relationships with one another. Groups for young carers additionally provide structured group work around relationships, feelings and self-esteem, while simultaneously giving attendees the opportunity to meet other young carers, make new friends, share experiences and have fun.

When did it start?

2012.

Why was it started?

Portsmouth is particularly affected by substance misuse; it has the highest number of alcohol related hospital admissions in the South East at over 4,000 per annum

and higher than average drug-related deaths for the South East of England. Tackling drug misuse is a long-term priority for the Safer Portsmouth Partnership as it aims to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

While there is a good young carers project in the city, very few of their young carers are from families where their parents have substance misuse issues. Aware that young carers affected by parental substance misuse can feel stigmatised and that Portsmouth has a particularly high number of substance misusing adults, this project was established to identify these young carers and provide a safe, supportive environment so that they and their families can get the help they need.

What are the aims and objectives?

Aims:

- To improve the emotional wellbeing, health and self-esteem of young carers.
- To increase the identification of hidden young carers.
- To improve communication and strengthen relationships between young carers, their parents and family members.
- To reduce substance misuse among those parents engaged with the project.
- To raise awareness of the needs of young carers of substance misusing parents.

Objectives:

- To provide structured group work sessions, information and advice sessions and access to counselling for young carers.
- To provide joint family assessments and family activities.
- To work with schools, agencies that do not typically make referrals, and other professionals in the substance misuse sector to raise awareness of young carers of substance misusing adults.
- To integrate a joined-up approach into standard working practices for both young carers workers and substance misuse practitioners.

How is it funded?

This partnership site is funded via the Integrated Interventions programme, managed by Carers Trust with funding provided by the Department for Education towards the delivery of the Government's Carers Strategy. Carers Trust is a new charity formed by the merger of The Princess Royal Trust for Carers and Crossroads Care.

What has it achieved?

“Our family has got into a lot of trouble from drinking, like having the police round. I would like to not worry about bad things happening. [Now] there will be less arguments in the family.”

Young carer

“I have been focusing on the delivery of service and chipping away to highlight young carers, while all along our Integrated Interventions partner sits on the boards with the other statutory agencies and therefore can make change happen quicker than us on our own.”

Service Manager at Switch

“Roundhouse have been invaluable to our school working with the parents and young carers together and have continued this work through the school holidays when we are closed and do not have access to the young carers at this time.”

Education Professional

Although this partnership was established less than a year ago, the outcomes of the project to date indicate improved outcomes for young carers and their families, integration with other established projects and increased awareness of the needs of young carers and children living with a substance misusing adult. So far, for example, there are increased positive outcomes of caring and decreased negative outcomes of caring, as measured by the tools from the Manual of Measures of Caring Activities and Outcomes for Children and Young People.¹ Additionally, it appears that across Portsmouth a consensus about the benefits of whole-family working with substance misusing families is emerging, due, perhaps, in part to the work of Roundhouse.

The M-PACT course, from Action on Addiction, has been effectively integrated into the Roundhouse offer for families and has proved to be really beneficial for the parents who have attended so far. The achievements of improved communication within families and self-esteem, for example, are crucial for families succeeding in the wider Roundhouse project, as well as being important achievements in themselves.

The project has expanded its awareness raising work in schools after the recruitment of a School Liaison Worker in December 2012. Currently, the young carers project delivers assemblies to each of the ten mainstream secondary schools in the city and works alongside these schools’ student welfare leads. It is now targeting those schools that have not yet referred to the project.

Raising awareness of the benefit of a whole-family approach and collaborative working between organisations has improved the links that were already previously in place between Cranstoun and other agencies in Portsmouth. Across the agencies of Portsmouth City Council it appears that a more whole-family approach with an emphasis on early intervention is emerging. Adult mental health services, for instance, have shown an interest in replicating Roundhouse’s whole-family approach working with young carers who have a parent with mental ill health.

How have carers been involved in planning and delivering this work?

The local young carers service was involved in the initial consultation of the development of the new service and has also been involved along with families in giving feedback through the external evaluation process and ongoing monitoring.

1 Joseph S, Becker F, Becker S (2012), ‘Manual for Measures of Caring Activities and Outcomes for Children and Young People’. Carers Trust.

Young carers' ideas from their own experiences have been included in the development of the school assemblies carried out by the project as part of its awareness raising work. Young carers are involved in this process through group discussion, one-to-one conversations, questionnaires, artwork and drama.

How is the initiative run?

The project has two part-time workers who cover the service over four days of the week. One of the Project Workers is employed by Cranstoun and leads the substance misuse work; the other is employed by Portsmouth City Council and focuses on the work with the young carers. Each Project Worker is based at their own sites, although they also work jointly at both sites and in the community. The two Project Workers meet at the start of each week to go through each family's progress, look at new referrals and to plan for the week. There is also a volunteer who co-ordinates the activity programme where the families can go on trips and meet other families.

A flyer for Roundhouse and a leaflet for M-PACT, a side project of therapeutic group work, are distributed to as many agencies in the city as possible to promote the project. The workers at Roundhouse also promote the project at team meetings and through presentations at conferences and networking events.

Referrals are accepted from any agency or from families who wish to self-refer. As referrals are taken over the phone, this allows Roundhouse staff to get as much information as possible and check that the family is appropriate for the service. Switch and Cranstoun are also available to take referrals on behalf of Roundhouse, at times when their workers may be unavailable. After a referral, providing consent has been given, Roundhouse will then contact the family and arrange an initial assessment.

Initial assessments usually take place in the family home, with the whole family present. The Project Workers each focus on their specialist area and then bring the family together to share what has been discussed and from there a whole-family plan is created. The level of involvement a family has as part of its plan with Roundhouse is determined at this assessment and at subsequent reviews.

Services which are offered to families include one-to-one sessions for both the adults and children, access to adult substance misuse support groups, access to young carers groups and whole-family activities. Activities offered on an individual basis can strengthen relationships with the rest of the family and encourage family members to develop interests together. In addition, families can also meet other families on trips organised through the monthly activity programme. As the support offered by Roundhouse is holistic, Project Workers might also become involved with escorting the families to court dates they have to attend, advocating for them over welfare benefits or acting as the lead professional in liaison with a school, and not only be focused on issues which are immediately about substance misuse.

The delivery of the project spans across the city, and therefore can include one-to-one work in families' homes all over Portsmouth. Community locations, including Switch and Cranstoun premises and the Portsmouth Carers Centre, are also used. Young carers and their families are visited wherever it is most appropriate and effective for them to be seen.

Families can also join M-PACT, an eight week therapeutic group work programme for substance misusing parents and their children which is co-ordinated in Portsmouth

through Roundhouse. All families participating in M-PACT are asked to give detailed feedback as to their experience, learning and achievements on the course.

There is no time limit on a family's involvement with the project, although its progress is monitored through reviews. As well as whole-family assessments, the adults are assessed and monitored using TOPS and the Outcomes Star, while the young carers are assessed and monitored using the Multidimensional Assessment of Caring Activities (MACA) and Positive and Negative Outcomes of Caring (PANOC) tools.

The project keeps all paperwork including a database containing all the families' personal information and referral and closure dates, at the Portsmouth City Council base. It is hoped that each family supported will engage with the local young carers project and adult substance misuse services as appropriate in a more long-term way upon their exit from this more intensive project.

What methods have been particularly effective?

A whole-family approach when working with young carers affected by parental substance misuse is the most effective way of achieving positive outcomes. Often there are issues within the family such as neglect and domestic violence to be confronted; by taking a holistic approach and dealing with these issues the work with young carers can be more sustainable.

The format of the recently implemented asset based assessment, whereby attention is paid to not just risk and potential harm but also to the positive factors already in place with the family structure, has proved to be effective. Families are more willing to engage and it can help assessors gain a better view of the situation of the whole family from which to build on.

Using the Outcomes Stars, TOPS, MACA and PANOC tools in the review process allowed the staff to understand the strengths and the needs of the family as a whole and how each member is affected by the problems that are being addressed. This process also serves as an effective way to improve communication and relationships within the family.

Integrating M-PACT as part of the project offer has also been a very effective way of strengthening the relationships within families and boosting their wellbeing. Participants in M-PACT have shown improved communication, a better understanding of each other's point of view and increased self-esteem, which are all important for success with the wider aims of the project.

Have there been any challenges along the way?

When the project began, the natural split was for the Adult Worker to work with the adult, and the Young Peoples Worker to work with the children, which was not the true whole-family working as envisaged. This was overcome by ensuring the assessment and review process involved whole-family meetings, ideally in the family home, which included both workers each doing some separate work with adults and children respectively but always regrouping afterwards as a family to share goals.

The challenge of having two workers employed by different agencies with different line management and work bases has been overcome by meeting at the start of each week for a referral review and planning meeting.

Having different sites for working in a partnership caused some initial teething problems. Sharing confidential documents such as client assessments, reviews and case notes between the sites presented a challenge, so it was decided that all files and data requirements would be kept at one site.

What hints and tips might help me get started?

- Identify the key partners of the potential project at the earliest possible point and invite them to be involved in the creation and implementation of your project from the start. Consider voluntary organisations and agencies in the local authority as potential partners.
- When implementing a new project, having an implementation plan and a record of all meetings is a useful guide to ensure that the details that were presented in the original bid have been fulfilled. Keep up-to-date records of referrals and case closures so you can provide necessary data when requested or needed.

Are there any useful documents or resources that could assist me?

The **Switch** website.

Information on the M-PACT, or Moving Parents and Children Together, programme from **Action on Addiction**.

The YouTube video from **Switch**.

Where can I get further information?

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