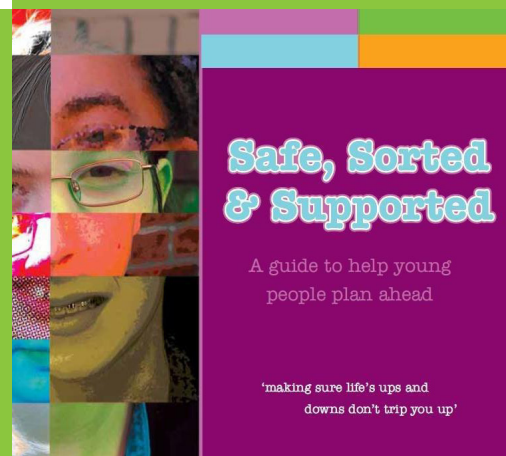


Whole-family involvement in young carer crisis plans



What is the initiative?

Safe, Sorted and Supported

Who runs it?

Gloucestershire Young Carers

Who does it benefit?

All young carers in Gloucestershire who may benefit from a plan in order to cope with the sudden absence of a parent, usually due to a health crisis, can benefit from the generic Safe, Sorted and Supported project. A mental health pilot provides support to families in developing a crisis plan for young carers who live with the impact of parental mental ill health.

What does it do?

Safe, Sorted and Supported is a child-friendly booklet designed with and for young carers to plan ahead in case of crisis. It is available to young carers in Gloucestershire free of charge and is available for purchase from Gloucestershire Young Carers by others. The family team at Gloucestershire Young Carers routinely uses Safe, Sorted and Supported crisis planning with the families they support.

A pilot project is currently underway with community mental health teams. This project trains adult mental health workers and social care professionals to help families to complete the Safe, Sorted and Supported plan together.

When did it start?

Safe, Sorted and Supported crisis planning has been used since 2011, and in January 2013 a mental health pilot began.

Why was it started?

The project is the result of a combination of the expressed need of young carers whose parents had experienced a health crisis or been hospitalised, knowledge of

good practice, and interest from the local authority to see the development of a young carer crisis plan. Prior to this project no formal crisis planning for young carers was in place in Gloucestershire.

As part of a larger project with 2gether NHS Foundation Trust to support young carers of a parent with mental ill health, Safe, Sorted and Supported is now being piloted within mental health teams. While appropriate for use with all young carers, Safe, Sorted and Supported was developed to ensure that the needs of young mental health carers were specifically addressed. It was piloted with parents who attended mental health parenting groups run by Gloucestershire Young Carers and Family Lives. Additional practice learning came from a number of Children of Parents with a Mental Illness Coordinators in New South Wales, on a Winston Churchill Travel Fellowship to Australia.

The incentive to train professionals to support parents to complete the Safe, Sorted and Supported booklets with their children was prompted by parents who reported that despite wishing to complete the booklet in the best interests of their children, it was difficult to talk about health issues and potential crises without some support. As a result, the training of health and social care professionals to aid the completion of the crisis plans is now a significant part of the project.

What are the aims and objectives?

Aims:

- To provide support plans for young carers in times of family crisis – both in practical terms and emotionally by enabling them to establish a sense of control over their lives.
- To develop resilience in young carers by supporting families to talk more openly about illness, disability and potential crises.
- To educate mental health and social care professionals about supporting young carers and their families in crisis.

Objectives:

- To support young carers and their families to develop plans together which address the needs of the children in the event that a parent experiences a health or other crisis which leaves them temporarily unable to care for their children.
- To work with young carers so they can clearly identify their support networks drawn from within their extended family, friends, community, school and health and social care services.
- To encourage young carers and their families to discuss the impact of illness, disability or substance misuse on the whole family.
- To increase the number of plans completed by raising awareness with health and social care professionals about Safe, Sorted and Supported and the need to support families in its completion.

How is it funded?

Initial funding was provided by The Princess Royal Trust for Carers The Innovation Fund and Gloucestershire County Council. Carers Trust is a new charity formed by the merger of The Princess Royal Trust for Carers and Crossroads Care. Subsequent funding has since been provided by Gloucestershire County Council. The mental health part of the project is part of the Integrated Intervention work with 2gether NHS Foundation Trust, funded by the Department for Education and managed by Carers Trust.

What has it achieved?

“If you do nothing else for young carers, take half an hour to help our families complete Safe, Sorted and Supported.”

The message developed by young carers to send out with the booklet for professionals

“I think that it is really important for my child to have a plan like Safe, Sorted and Supported but I need someone to help me to have that first conversation with her.”

Parent

“Our team all rate Safe, Sorted and Supported and will use them.”

STARS Programme, The Children’s Society

“When I read through the plan with a young carer, they particularly find the page which addresses Things that my parent can do to help me really useful as they feel that it helps them to begin to address the issues that they have worried about raising for fear of adding to their parent’s existing worries. I have found it to be an excellent tool to promote communication between parents and young carers to help put a plan in place for when things go wrong. The young carers have also told me that because Safe, Sorted and Supported was written by other young carers it reassures them that they are not alone.”

Family Advocate, Gloucestershire Young Carers

Young carers from across Gloucestershire have completed the Safe, Sorted and Supported booklet with a parent and have identified emergency plans in the event that their parent becomes very unwell or temporarily unable to care for them.

This plan includes:

- Who will look after the young carer.
- Who will maintain their routines.
- Who will look after their siblings.
- Who will look after their pets.

- Who to contact at school.
- Where to get advice and support.
- What the young carer would like their parent to do for them.

Agreeing plans as to what will happen if a crisis occurs has improved understanding of what the child wants and needs from their parent. Young carers report that they have particularly appreciated the Things that my parent can do to help me section of the booklet as it has helped them express what they want from their parents, worry less, feel more confident about caring and improve dialogue about illness and disability at home.

Safe, Sorted and Supported has proved to be a helpful resource to use in conjunction with Minds, Myths and Me – a booklet designed with and for young carers who live with the impact of a family member’s mental ill health. Both are very effective in helping families to begin talking about difficult issues relating to disability, illness and mental health. Working through Minds, Myths and Me and Safe, Sorted and Supported may be the first time that a family has discussed the extent of their health problems and what has happened in the past.

The use of Safe, Sorted and Supported is expanding into community mental health practice. A pilot project is currently underway with community mental health teams working for 2gether NHS Foundation Trust, which aims to provide adult mental health workers with the knowledge and expertise in supporting families to complete the plan together.

An annual review of all the interventions for young carers is conducted, including quantitative information related to the number of Safe, Sorted and Supported plans requested, distributed and completed and hits to the Gloucestershire Young Carers website. Qualitative feedback from young carers and families is captured through reviews and in the form of narratives where a young carer has reported that they have put the plan into action.

An example of how the Safe, Sorted and Supported plan has been put into practice was the case of an 11-year-old young carer whose mother, who had cardiovascular disease, was admitted to hospital following a call to emergency services. Using his Safe, Sorted and Supported plan, the young carer contacted his auntie who had been identified as the person who would look after him in the case of an emergency. The young carer was also able to have his dog and three cats looked after by a neighbour for the duration of his mum’s hospital stay, as agreed in the plan.

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

Young carers have been involved in all aspects of the development of this project. Once a draft plan was established, young carers and parents were consulted and the Safe, Sorted and Supported booklet was piloted with their families. A group of young carers have been involved in developing multi-agency awareness raising around Safe, Sorted and Supported as well.

Since it has been up and running, two young carers and one parent have sat as ‘experts by experience’ on the NHS Foundation Trust’s steering committee for the

Family Mental Health Empowerment Project, which runs alongside this piece of work. Four young carers delivered a presentation to 2gether NHS Foundation Trust's board of governors, stressing that if healthcare staff did just one thing to support families like theirs it should be spending half an hour supporting them to complete the Safe, Sorted and Supported plan.

How is the initiative run?

Gloucestershire Young Carers employs four part-time workers in their family team and it is this team's remit to support families to complete Safe, Sorted and Supported where needed.

Integrating the Safe, Sorted and Supported crisis planning initiative into mental health care is an important aim of the project. As such, all mental health and social care teams in Gloucestershire have received copies of Safe, Sorted and Supported with advice on how it should be used. A Family Mental Health Empowerment Worker, working across Gloucestershire Young Carers and the 2gether NHS Foundation Trust, is responsible for modelling the use of the plan on joint visits with community mental health workers with a view to those workers taking on that responsibility in the long run. Support is provided by a manager from within the trust and a mentor from Gloucestershire Young Carers. As part of this implementation, young carer champions or link workers who have been identified in every mental health team in the trust, and community mental health workers are trained on how to use Safe, Sorted and Supported.

The Safe, Sorted and Supported booklets are usually completed by young carers at home, where needed with a professional or otherwise by themselves. Completion of the booklet can be over one or more sessions. For instance, a young carer may be introduced to the idea of crisis planning by a Project Worker and then helped to fill in parts of Safe, Sorted and Supported at school followed by a session with the parent and child together. While a young carer may gain benefit from completing some sections away from the parent it is crucial that the parent is involved in other aspects. The completed plan is kept by the young carer to be put into effect should an emergency arise.

It is impracticable to support all 830 young carers known to Gloucestershire Young Carers with completion of Safe, Sorted and Supported. As such, it is the most vulnerable young carers, supported by the Family Team, who are prioritised. Support with completing Safe, Sorted and Supported has also formed part of a common assessment framework action plan.

What methods have been particularly effective?

Seconding a Project Worker who is a 2gether NHS Foundation Trust employee and who understands the challenges faced by mental health practitioners has proved to be beneficial. Having someone from within the trust, who is already known and accepted, is helping to embed the Safe, Sorted and Supported practice with frontline practitioners.

Some parts of the plan must be completed with parent present in order to benefit from a family discussion and to be sure that what is planned in the event of a parent's absence is with their agreement and viable.

Have there been any challenges along the way?

Gloucestershire Young Carers' pilot study indicated that many families needed support to complete the booklet. It is crucial that professionals avoid the presumption that families will complete Safe, Sorted and Supported without support. It is equally important to ensure that crisis plans are not completed with the child alone. While there may be some benefit to the young carer in thinking through their own strategies and plans, parts of the plan will be ineffectual in circumstances where a parent has not agreed to the detail.

Feedback forms were included within Gloucestershire Young Carers' resource booklets, however this proved to be quite ineffectual at soliciting responses. At present, annual reviews with young carers are undertaken, with requests for feedback on the many services offered by Gloucestershire Young Carers, in addition to Safe, Sorted and Supported but this can be confusing for families. It is hoped that over the coming years the use of new technology will provide a quicker and easier alternative to gaining outcome information from families who are currently struggling to complete all the paperwork sent to them.

What hints and tips might help me get started?

- Believe in the whole-family approach. Be able to communicate sensitively with both adults and children and be able to build relationships with frontline practitioners and bring them on board by recognising the challenges they face in adapting to a new approach.
- If working in partnership, ensure that you factor in plenty of time. The wheels of large organisations turn far more slowly than those of small voluntary sector organisations. Perhaps start with a small pilot at first and then cascade the learning.
- The booklets are intended for families to be able to complete independently, however many families find it helpful for a professional to assist them. If, for instance, it is the first time a parent and child have talked about a previous mental health crisis or the parent has wanted to protect the child from knowing much about their health problems, then it can really help to have an expert on hand. Ensure your staff have the time and training to do this.

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

Safe, Sorted and Supported is available to view in PDF format and can be purchased from Gloucestershire Young Carers.

Minds, Myths and Me is available to view in PDF format on Gloucestershire Young Carers website. It can be purchased from **The Royal College of Psychiatrists**.

Barnardo's Action with Young Carers in Liverpool inspired Gloucestershire Young Carers to create Minds, Myths and Me. Take a look at their Message in a Bottle emergency support initiative for young carers that is mentioned in the practice example Young Carers Pathway for the Common Assessment Framework Process.

Where can I get further information?

Contact Gloucestershire Young Carers.

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Tel: 01452 733060

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