

Kingston Carers Network:

“Kingston Carers Networks support some paid carers who are supporting someone who couldn't manage without their help, because they've got a disability and illness, mental health problem or have a substance addiction. And we're supporting around 4000 people in the borough of Kingston.

The carers in Kingston face a number of different issues, it is often tied up with the issues of the people they're caring for. And we support adult carers and young carers, and their issues will be very different. So, for a young carer it might be that they're missing out some things that their peers enjoy. They may have less time to do schoolwork homework, they may not be able to participate in things that their friends can, like enjoy extracurricular activities, there's often poverty linked to being a young carer as well as being an adult carer. It's really important because of the impact that caring can have on young and adult carers in terms of their mental and physical well-being. Caring can be very tiring, takes up a lot of time, people are often exhausted, they're often very stressed, very high levels of anxiety, high levels of depression. Often carers don't see a very positive future, often caring will become more difficult over time. So, it's really important that they can access the support and advice they need.

Demand is growing. Last year, we had over 1000 referrals, and more and more carers are needing more support. And then they're needing much more advice and advocacy so that the issues around funding become compounded by the fact that we need more funding.

We know that a lot of hidden carers that that may need our support as well. So, we can never sort of relax and think we're doing everything we could be doing. We need to be actually reaching those carers. We'd like to do more in terms of their well-being, we'd like to help carers get back into work. We need to make sure that more young carers are accessing our service.”

Partnership for Children:

“So, I'm Hannah, and I'm a product manager at Partnership for Children. And I work on particular projects within the charity, mainly working with children with special needs.

So, we promote the mental health of children with special needs. And I think a lot of the difficulties that children with special educational needs may face around things like anxiety, and friendships, that comes up quite a lot. And also, they may have difficulties in regulating their emotions. So, a lot of the work we do is around supporting children with special needs to be able to recognise and deal with their emotions. And in particular, they told us about one person age 10, who since taking part in his friends, was now able to identify and communicate his feelings, and he also learned strategies on how to calm himself down. So, prior to diffuse friends, he'd often been removed from the classroom due to disruptive behaviour or aggression. And he found friendships quite difficult and got into quite a lot of arguments. But the teachers highlighted a turning point for him when he learned about the emotion jealousy through the programme. And now he was able to recognise and

explain that he felt jealous of other friends playing with each other, rather than just sort of lashing out. So, he was able to regulate his emotions as he learned the skills as a piece friends.”

Man and Boy:

“We've got loads of stories of the impact that we've had. One in particular, I remember is a family who I went to visit on a visit every family beforehand. But I think that's the key with engaging with the families is to engage with the man and get alongside them, to encourage them to start the programme. Once they're on the programme, then it's fine. It's so we meet them in a coffee shop, we have a chat, we talk about what the banner boy does.

This particular man, he wasn't very interested. I think he was just a little bit depressed. And I went away. And we decided that we wouldn't take it any further. Three or four months later, he texts me and asked for my help. And he asked if you'd come on a camp because things had gone wrong at home. We took him on, he came on a camp, and we use some therapeutic questions on the camps, questions that the boy can ask the man and the man can ask the boy just to help each other, perhaps open up a little bit in a safe sort of environment. And afterwards, we follow up the men and the boys to see how the camp went. And a couple of weeks after that, I found to ask how it was. And to my surprise, the boy beforehand, he was self-harming, nine-year-old boy self-harming and not coming out of his bedroom, getting into trouble at school. And he the man said I can't believe the change in this boy. He was able to talk to me for the first time about how he was feeling on the camp. And now he's engaging with a family, is coming down, doing the washing up and playing in the garden. And he's stopped the self-harming and he's doing really well at school. And just I'm not saying that we are the answer because we're not on it. There's lots of other things that impact but sometimes we are a catalyst for some change in that boy's life just giving them space and time to say how they're feeling in a sort of safe environment. So that's a really encouraging story for me.”

