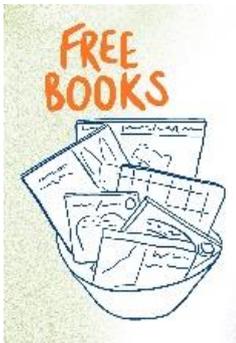


April to June 2020: Growing Minds steps up to COVID-19 crisis

Following the closure of educational and childcare services in March, think tanks and educators alike have predicted the widening of the attainment gap for disadvantaged children. Growing Minds has quickly responded, adapting the project to offer the best support to our families during lockdown, and planning for a more challenging future.

Progress



Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, Growing Minds is continuing to engage a growing cohort of families in a variety of interventions. Here are our headlines for quarter 2:

77 families are now receiving support from Growing Minds

38 families in Berinsfield, 39 in Littlemore

17 local professionals across the two communities have been trained through Growing Minds

Since our last report, children and family centres, schools, nurseries, birth registrars and health visitors have been in lockdown, running only minimal services (if any). In line with government guidance, Growing Minds partners were forced to cease face-to-face contact, including running groups and home visits.

The Growing Minds partnership quickly used its existing infrastructure and networks of relationships to provide what families needed most at this time:

- Personalised support from trusted practitioners by phone/online platforms
- A new guide to online resources for young children
- Weekly newsletters to families with inspiring home-learning activities
- Peep group sessions that were adapted to work in an online format
- Continued deliveries of monthly Imagination Library books to families
- Links with new and emerging community support to deliver a broader range of support amid lockdown (e.g. hot meals, food parcels, prescription pick-up, nappies etc).

GROWING MINDS IN ACTION

Case example:

One Littlemore mum's feelings of isolation are being reduced by weekly telephone calls with a Growing Minds practitioner. This support is also encouraging her to try new activities with her children. Growing Minds has arranged for free nappies to be delivered; linked her up with the local library and online support groups; and is helping with her housing situation.

Another mum was struggling to support her two children, suffering with her own mental health and the behaviour of her older child. The family started Peep sessions and began working together with a variety of professionals, receiving weekly support from the Berin Centre and Home-Start, helping to mitigate safeguarding risks to the younger child. Because Growing Minds has a multi-agency approach, the partnership was able to support the family in a holistic way before the problems became too severe.

The Growing Minds Partnership:

The Berin Centre, John Henry Newman Academy, Abbey Woods Academy, Oxfordshire Health Trust, Oxfordshire Birth Registration Service, Peep, Home-Start Southern Oxfordshire, Home-Start Oxford, Oxfordshire Community Foundation

Learning

- 1) This crisis has shown more than ever that the *relationship* between parents and early years professionals is key to providing effective and engaging support – and is even more important for struggling families who are isolated. During this period our practitioners have maintained regular phone contact with families needing additional support, and through the partnership have been able to refer them to additional services.
- 2) Families struggle to engage with online sessions due to a number of factors, so we are adapting our delivery to provide smaller, more personal online groups where trust can continue to be built.

Evaluation

The Growing Minds partnership has agreed that it is imperative to better understand the impact of COVID-19 locally, as well as which services make the biggest difference to families. We have therefore agreed to conduct a qualitative study on this subject with Oxford University's Department of Social Policy and Intervention. We are excited to understand more about how families have used online support, and to bring the learnings into our own interventions, broadening our offer and accessibility going forward.

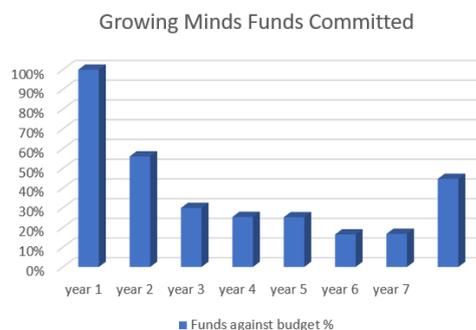
Research will begin in quarter 3, reporting in quarter 4. We have decided to postpone our original Storytelling Evaluation until early 2021 to optimise the meaningfulness of the evaluation.

Deliverables and funding

Since COVID-19 hit, we have continued to support our delivery partners as per our initial funding agreements. Due to the impacts of lockdown, expenditure for quarter 2 has been slightly reduced (due to fewer new sign-ups), at **£33,119**.



We remain grateful for those who have helped secure the funds needed to deliver our initial year of Growing Minds. We continue to look for like-minded philanthropists to help us secure delivery over the coming years, particularly in light of the unprecedented challenges brought about by COVID-19 – a time when investment in tackling educational inequality has never been more needed.



GROWING MINDS IN ACTION

"COVID-19 has made this Mum feel very isolated; working long hours from home while looking after three children and the household. I called mum weekly, allowing her to offload her feelings and begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel. I organised cooked meals, freeing mum up to spend extra time with the children. Mum now feels she is better able to cope again."

*Growing Minds
practitioner – Littlemore*

"During today's online Peep session, one mum was finding it hard to occupy her 11-month-old, who's on the move. She said he loved water play and that she had been filling her mop bucket with water. We spoke about everyday items you can find around the house and how experimenting with lifting and pouring and general water-play promotes healthy development."

*Family Practitioner – The
Berin Centre*

The Growing Minds Partnership:

The Berin Centre, John Henry Newman Academy, Abbey Woods Academy, Oxfordshire Health Trust, Oxfordshire Birth Registration Service, Peep, Home-Start Southern Oxfordshire, Home-Start Oxford, Oxfordshire Community Foundation

