



SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT 2023

“ I'm not sure how to thank someone who has saved my life because thank you isn't really enough. My children still have their mum and that is something I will forever be grateful for.”

Welcome to our Social Impact Report

We're a Chester based charity offering free counselling, art and play therapies to adults, children and young people living in relative poverty and experiencing poor mental health.

Our charity helps people that often fall through the net, people who've had to face the most significant disadvantages in life including domestic violence, neglect and many kinds of abuse. People who can feel invisible and forgotten in society.

We help people who often feel utterly alone with their poor mental health and the impact of our therapy support is often life changing and for some life saving.

Our focus is on strengthening family relationships and creating more stable and nurturing environments for children. Ultimately, we're about ending the cycle of poor mental health being passed down from one generation to the next, and through early intervention, stopping it from becoming a life-long disability.

Whilst demand for our service continues to be high as more people need our support, securing enough funding to sustain and grow our work and ensure people continue to be helped as quickly as possible, is more challenging. We're smaller than many charities and perhaps not as visible but pound for pound, we pack a real punch and make a big difference.

This Social Impact Report tells our story over the last year, the clients and families we've supported and the difference we're helping them make in their lives. Reading their stories of hope and positive life changes makes me feel very proud to be a part of the Platform for Life team. If you'd like to find out more about how you can help us transform more people's lives please do get in touch. We'd love to have you onboard.



Ceri George
Platform for Life CEO

“ This is the only thing that's helped me in all the years I have struggled with abuse and mental health. My counsellor is amazing and I am truly grateful. They have helped me so much to see a light at the end of the tunnel and see that I can recover. ” Adult

This is what clients and referrers say about us

"This therapy has saved my life. If it wasn't for this therapy, I would have ended it a long time ago." Adult

"Unique service, dealing with both individuals and the family as a whole." Western Avenue Medical Centre

"Easy referral form, nice friendly staff and great service." Koala NorthWest

"My Counselling sessions helped me discover healthy strategies to deal with my emotions." Young person

Such a valuable asset to our school." St Clare's Primary school

"You helped me have a better life." Child

I don't have family, I'm isolated. Having someone who cares has made a massive difference to me." Adult

"My therapist's amazing and I know that I'm going to get through it. Things are looking up because of Platform for Life." Adult

"My therapist was class!" Young person

"The change in some of our young people has been amazing, cut down on self harm, drinking and anxiety." Bridge Foyer

"You've changed my life. Genuinely I wouldn't be where I am today without you." Adult

"Platform for Life have consistently supported our school and offered a high standard of provision." Highfield school

Our Theory of Change model

We've developed our theory of change model to provide direction and clarity and to focus our activities so that people can realise the change (outcomes and impact) they want to achieve. Our model will evolve through continuous improvement and learning to ensure we adapt to future demands and remain focused on addressing the problem we've identified.

People living with disadvantage within our communities are experiencing poor mental health and have difficulty accessing timely and suitable support.

This is the problem we want to solve

And requires investment in.....

Early intervention	Community based support
Innovative approaches	Bespoke services
Collaboration with local agencies	

Making change happen through....

Pre-therapy engagement

- Raising awareness of service
- Referral process
- Introductory phone call
- Assessment of needs and risk

Therapy support

- Counselling
- Art therapy
- Play therapy
- Parent work

Family support

- Practical advice and guidance
- Warm introductions to other services
- Advocacy
- Befriending

Helped by....

Our approach

Person centred approach	Family focused
Supportive environment	Flexible support
Not time limited	No threshold to meet
Client trust	Quick and easy access

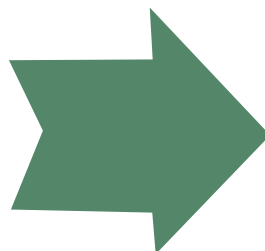
Working with

Clients/Families	Schools
Platform for Life team	Local Authority and NHS teams
Community groups	Charities including food banks

We've solved the problem when we've achieved.....

Client outcomes

- Engagement with Platform for Life
- Improved engagement with education
- More open to learning
- Reduction in unhealthy and risky behaviours
- Managing anxieties better
- Improved ability to make life changes



Longer term impacts

- Improvements in emotional wellbeing
- Improved relationships
- Feeling happier and more positive
- Able to deal with life
- Built up confidence and independence
- Reduction in social isolation
- Give people their life back

Sarah's story- she lived in fear every time there was a knock on the door.

Sarah lived in fear every time there was a knock on the door. She was referred to Platform for Life by her daughter Lexi's school. They had recently moved again after Sarah's abusive ex-partner tracked them down. This had happened many times over the years, causing them to move house and relocate several times. Social services had implemented a Team around the Family (TAF).

Despite police involvement Sarah shared that she lived in fear and felt unable to cope. Suffering from acute anxiety and depression, her GP prescribed medication, but it was having little effect as Sarah was often unable to get out of bed.

Sarah had suffered domestic abuse for most of her life. She felt that her confidence had been knocked out of her and she struggled with low self-worth. She would only leave the house with Lexi and this was placing a strain on their relationship.

Through therapy Sarah was able to put a voice to her trauma and acknowledge the impact it was having on her life. She was able to recall childhood experiences and appreciate how generational trauma had shaped her core beliefs and the choices she made in relationships. Sarah began to understand who she was.

With this new-found awareness Sarah implemented strategies to help her cope with everyday life. She was able to venture out without Lexi and explore her new community. This had a positive effect on her confidence and improved her relationship with Lexi. She built a network of friends, joined the local library, church group and gym. This gave her a sense of belonging, an anchor, that she stated she had not felt for many years. Sarah became confident enough to apply for jobs and was successful at gaining full time employment.

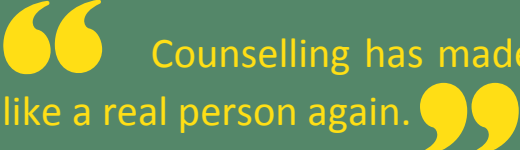
Daniel's story- we not only support clients but also Statutory Mental Health Services.

We often work with clients who have been referred to NHS Mental Health services. Sometimes we see them because they've not met the threshold for access, failed to engage, preferring to be seen in their local community and sometimes it's because their support ended after a fixed number of sessions. This was the case for 15-year-old Daniel.

Daniel was referred by his school due to his anxiety and paranoia. His paranoia had stemmed from trauma experienced in his earlier childhood. He often felt threatened and was suspicious of people's motives. He had recently ended with CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services) and whilst his paranoia had lessened, he was still finding it difficult engaging with his peers.

Using creative methods in therapy, Daniel used the sessions to identify triggers and events that had happened in his life. This allowed him to explore his anxieties in the present and how he thinks and feels in the moment. Through growing self-awareness, he was able to link his thought processes and reasoning and identify how he viewed himself in relation to others.

Daniel made the decision to end after 10 sessions. He felt more able to cope with everyday life now he had a clearer understanding of himself and those around him.

 **Counselling has made me feel like a real person again.**

All client stories are anonymised with names and identifying information changed to protect their identity.

Overview of local need

25% OF CHILDREN LIVING IN CHESTER WERE IN POVERTY IN 2021-22.

THIS EQUATES TO 5000 CHILDREN

65% ARE IN WORKING FAMILIES.

End Poverty Coalition

There's an inseparable link between poverty and poor mental health. Once established and left unchecked, it can leave people feeling trapped and disadvantaged throughout their life. All too often it becomes a negative cycle that's repeated through the next generation, sentencing their children to a life of difficulties and lost opportunities.

We work in three areas of Chester that fall within the bottom 10% on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Many of the adults, children and young people we support have experienced multiple life challenges and there are often intergenerational traumas and issues which may be negatively affecting them. Covid and the cost of living crisis have heaped further pressure on families and intensified matters for those already living in poverty and struggling with their mental health. Many report feeling invisible and forgotten in society.

Absent/missing parents
Poverty **Loss** **Neglect**
Family imprisonment **Abuse**
Domestic violence **Mental illness**
Bereavement **Young carer**
Separation **Substance misuse**
Difficult family relationships

Some of the key challenges clients experience

Those who are most in need of help to address mental health issues often find themselves unable to access suitable and timely support. There are often too many barriers put in their way. These include high thresholds for access, extremely long waiting times to be seen (several months or longer is not uncommon), inflexible session times, lack of childcare, transport costs and an overall lack of trust in statutory services. Platform for Life exists to fill this gap.

THOSE WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE MORE LIKELY THAN THOSE WITHOUT TO LIVE IN POVERTY, HAVE EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS, PRISON, SOCIAL ISOLATION OR UNEMPLOYMENT.

Public Health England 2018

We know that people experiencing the most significant disadvantages in life face the greatest risks to their mental health. This is why we are removing the barriers faced by people and improving access to mental health support for those who struggle to access and engage with statutory services.

Our service is based within the communities we serve and is designed to be easily accessible. We recognise that everyone has different needs, some more challenging than others, and we offer flexibility to people who may need longer term support to recover from traumas they have experienced.

CHILDREN FROM THE POOREST 20% OF HOUSEHOLDS ARE 4X AS LIKELY TO HAVE SERIOUS MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTIES BY AGE 11 AS THOSE FROM THE WEALTHIEST 20%

Morrison Gutman et al 2015

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

Many of the clients we work with have experienced multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES). These are defined as stressful experiences that occur during childhood and directly hurt a child, for example maltreatment or which affect them through the environment in which they live such as growing up in a house with domestic violence.

Compared to those with no ACES, people with 4+ ACES are:

- 4X** more likely to be a high risk drinker.
- 6X** to have sex under the age of 16.
- 15X** to have used crack cocaine or heroin
- 14X** to have committed violence in last 12 months
- 20X** to have been incarcerated during their life

Public Health Wales Study of ACES 2016

In 2022 nearly half the children referred into Platform for Life experienced one or more ACES. We work in partnership with local schools to identify early intervention opportunities for children and young people who may be in family situations that expose them to risk of of abuse, parental separation and parental struggles with addiction.

Children are profoundly affected by the mental health struggles of a parent and a key element of our support is a family focused approach. We recognise the impact parental trauma and adversity can have on children and this means we sometimes try to work with a parent to affect change and make a difference for a child.

Young people are often referred to us because of risky or challenging behaviours including self-harm and suicidal ideation. These behaviours often stem from earlier trauma or difficulties with attachment due to parental trauma.

Abuse

Physical



Emotional



Sexual



Neglect

Physical



Emotional



Household dysfunction

Mental health



Divorce



Domestic violence



Substance abuse



Relative in prison



Main categories of adverse childhood experiences

A number of studies suggest a strong relationship between the number of ACES experienced during childhood and the risk of chronic diseases and mental health problems in adulthood, ultimately leading to premature mortality. Early life trauma can affect an individual's emotional regulation and fear responses and increase the odds of them taking up health-harming behaviours.

Macy's story as told by her therapist- sometimes we do all we can and still feel it's not enough

7-year-old Macy was referred by school because she was becoming increasingly withdrawn. Macy had witnessed her step-dad hitting her mum on several occasions. School told me she rarely played with her friends and 'looked sad most of the time.' School were concerned as mum struggled with her mental health and Macy had no contact with dad.

Macy had difficulty engaging initially but over time she enjoyed playing with the resources in the room. Eventually she began to share things that were on her mind. The situation at home was worsening and a Child in Need plan was put in place. I noticed Macy sometimes came to school wearing dirty or inappropriate clothes or hadn't eaten.

It was becoming clear Macy was tending to herself and mum's mental health was deteriorating. Macy always attended our sessions when she was in school but her absenteeism increased. Despite Macy's home life being chaotic she had a safe space when we met to talk about her worries and fears. She enjoyed painting and drawing and was able to voice her thoughts about the trauma she'd experienced. This had a positive effect on her wellbeing and teachers said she was happier and more engaged in school. Although the sessions with Macy ended well, I fear what the future will hold for her. Mum's ongoing mental health issues meant she was unwilling/unable to engage with services and this led to the escalation of need from Social Care.

Domestic Abuse

**CHILDREN BETWEEN 0-5 YEARS
ACCOUNTED FOR 44% OF ALL CHILD
VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE IN
CHESHIRE WEST IN 2020-21.**

Cheshire West and Chester Council data

Domestic abuse involves incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence. In the majority of cases such abuse is carried out by a partner or ex-partner although it can also involve other family members or carers. Over 70% of domestic abuse incidents in the UK in 2022 were against women.

**IN 2022 19% OF ALL POLICE RECORDED
CRIMES IN CHESHIRE WERE CLASSIFIED
AS DOMESTIC ABUSE RELATED.**

Office for National statistics

Nearly 40% of women referred into Platform for Life in 2022 had a history of abuse. This included sustained physical attacks, rape within marriage, psychological abuse involving intimidation, control and harassment. Many of these women are the main caregivers to their children, some of whom may be in danger of social services removal due to the violence they have witnessed or endured. For those children who continue to live in a home where domestic abuse is prevalent, their emotional and physical health is impacted, with anxiety, depression and self-harm featuring highly.

We have recently started the Reframe project which focuses on empowering families to recover from abuse. We offer long-term psychological support to help women and children to reframe and rebuild their lives once they're safe or help them build the confidence to leave safely.

Danielle's story- she was so overwhelmed she had thought about putting her children into care

Young mum Danielle approached her 9-year-old daughter's school for help. She'd recently split from her partner and wasn't coping. She often felt suicidal and worried about the impact on her children. Team around the Family (TAF) was in place and we arranged to see her as a priority.

Danielle had a history of abuse. She'd experienced emotional and physical abuse from both parents and their partners. Her relationship with her ex-partner was emotionally and financially abusive. His coercive and controlling behaviour had cut her off from family. He also manipulated their children, telling them their mum was mentally ill.

Danielle's childhood trauma was often triggered if she felt people were judging her or being unsupportive. Sometimes this caused her to become aggressive and verbally abusive, followed by remorse and suicidal thoughts. When this happened, she felt so overwhelmed that she had considered putting her children into care.

Danielle could see the impact this was having on her daughter and worried about history repeating itself. She wanted stability in her life and to feel in control. Through counselling she began to understand the long-term impact of her abusive relationships, past and present, and developed strategies to regulate her emotions. She was able to see that she was in fact a good mother and cared well for her children, a fact supported by Social Services.

Danielle referred her daughter to Platform for Life. She is currently working with a play therapist, who has also forged a good relationship with Danielle, which is supportive in strengthening the family unit and reinforcing positive parenting skills. By the end of our time working with Danielle the TAF was closed and she had started a GCSE maths course with the view to returning to work. After a lifetime of abuse, counselling helped Danielle create a better life for herself and her children.

Autism

IT IS THOUGHT AROUND 40% OF PEOPLE WITH AUTISM HAVE ANXIETY COMPARED WITH 15% OF THE GENERAL POPULATION

National Autistic Society

Autism, often referred to as a 'hidden' disability, is a lifelong condition that affects how people interact with the world. Whilst people with autism may share similar traits, they will be affected in different ways. Some may have difficulties interpreting and processing spoken words, understanding tone and body language etc. Others may struggle with sensory overload and feel overwhelmed with noise, sound, touch, smell etc.

Dealing with communication and sensory differences can be challenging and anxiety provoking. Which is why people with autism prefer routine and consistency and often struggle with change.

At Platform for Life we support people with autism in the following ways;

- We help them to understand why they find some things more difficult than others.
- We help parents and carers understand how an autistic person may experience the world and can help them learn how best to help.
- We can signpost to Cheshire Autism Practical Support and other specialist organisations to help families engage with people with similar experiences.

Alex's story- as told by their therapist "Being autistic is a key part of my identity."

Alex didn't always feel confident and self-assured with their diagnosis. In fact, when we first met, Alex was a young person struggling with overwhelming anxiety and low self-esteem. They had a long history of engagement with mental health services and other agencies but said they 'felt failed by all.'

Initially reluctant, Alex self-referred to Platform for Life on the recommendation of a friend. Alex spoke of a lack of confidence in statutory services and how, this time, they wanted to have a positive experience of therapy. They hoped it would give them a better understanding of what it means to be autistic. Alex felt they had missed out on so many opportunities over the years because of a fear of failure for being different.

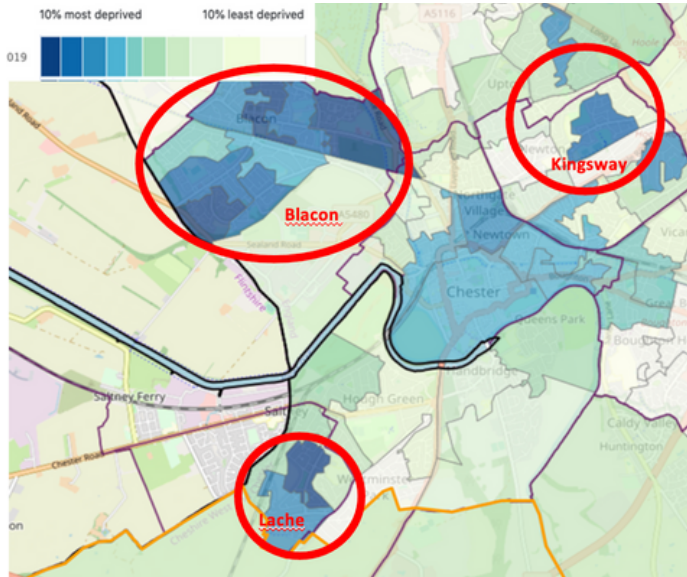
We mutually agreed to work in a way that would explore how Alex felt and reacted in certain situations, usually to do with relationships at work and with friends. We also agreed to review how each session was experienced by Alex to ensure they felt listened to and understood.

In time Alex explored their perceived sense of failure and began to see themselves in a more positive light. Alex became more hopeful and self-confident. They spoke about 'believing in themselves for the first time in a long time.' Alex was able to identify sources of distress and find ways of eliminating these from their life. They became more self-assured, both in work and relationships. So much so that Alex resigned from their job, interviewed for a different one and was successful in securing this.

“This has been the only time that someone has actually listened to me.” Young person

Support we offer

We offer a variety of therapeutic services including counselling, play and art therapies in three high need areas of Chester; Blacon, Lache and Kingsway.



Source: England Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019

Platform for Life has been referred to as a priceless resource and our service is designed to make it as easy as possible for clients to access and engage support. We want to support each of them to achieve real long-term healing rather than just short term symptom reduction and help bring about a positive change for the client and by association their family.

“Platform for life has literally been a life saver for the young people from Bridge Foyer. It has been easy to refer in and the young people have been seen quickly.”
Bridge Foyer assisted living 16-25

Key elements of our approach

- **Family focused** recognising that parental trauma and adversity can have a profound effect on children. We work with all age groups and often receive referrals for more than one family member.
- **Early intervention** working with clients at an early stage before their mental health issues become acute or long-lasting.
- **Accessible** no thresholds for clients to access, lots of different ways to approach our service.
- **Community based** working in multiple local venues where our clients live and attend school, making it easier for them to attend appointments.
- **Flexible and accommodating**, recognising the challenges our clients face and not penalising them if they are unable to attend every appointment.
- **Client focused** recognising every client's needs and challenges are individual. Working at a pace they are comfortable with and not limiting the number of sessions they can access.
- **Open to clients re-accessing** our service again in the future should they need to. They may suffer a setback, experience new trauma or require help with a historic trauma they weren't previously able or ready to address.

Being based in the heart of the communities we serve, has helped us forge a relationship of trust with them. We work really hard to ensure every client who accesses our service feels visible, valued and cared for and we always look for additional ways in which we can meet their individual needs.

Our work was recognised by NHS Cheshire Wirral Partnership in 2023 through a Community Star award. Whilst no part of the charity's work is currently commissioned by Cheshire Wirral Partnership, this award provides an important endorsement of the services we offer and our impact at a local community level.

Our team

We have a team of highly qualified therapists with experience of working successfully with clients with multiple challenges. With a majority of our clients having suffered significant traumas, abuse and other adversities, we believe it's important that therapists have the appropriate level of qualifications and experience to work with this level of complexity. Our team is managed by a Clinical Lead with over 20 years experience and a deep understanding of our client needs.

Whilst striving to provide an excellent level of support for all clients, we aim to do the same as an employer. We are an accredited Living Wage Employer and believe in paying our staff fairly for the work they do. We offer all of our team flexible working options and foster a compassionate approach to leadership.

“ PFL is a great organisation to work for. We have a supportive work environment where all team members may feel valued. ”

“ It's a crucial service for families who are facing difficulties and are unable to fund their own counselling. ”
Starting Well Service



“ It chimes with my ethos of helping others to then help themselves. ”



“ Together with the links we have with other charities, schools, and services it's great being part of a team that plays an integral role in the needs of people living within the community. ”

Using creativity

Art therapy

Art Therapy can offer a creative way of exploring difficulties that a client may be experiencing.

Finding words to describe feelings can be a struggle for some people. Art therapy can offer a creative way for them to explore their experiences, particularly traumatic events where they may have no words, using art materials to produce images. Art Therapists offer support to help clients process trauma, think about current challenges or begin the task of working towards change. It can be helpful to clients of any age. It can sometimes feel safer and less intense for clients to explore traumatic experiences through creative means.

“Your body holds trauma. Art therapy or play therapy can enable people to express anger. It's not about how good you are at art.”
Platform for life Art Therapist

Play therapy

For children and young people finding the words to describe how they are feeling can be a challenge. Also, they may not be able to recognise what they find difficult or why they behave the way they do. Being able to understand and explain emotions can be a real challenge.

Play therapy can be a helpful approach for children and young people. Through creative play they can express their thoughts and feelings in imaginative ways without having to use words. At Platform for Life we've seen children go from strength to strength through play therapy.

Art therapy examples

This is an example of how a 10 year old client was able to begin to process their experiences. First in the form of an image and then into words.

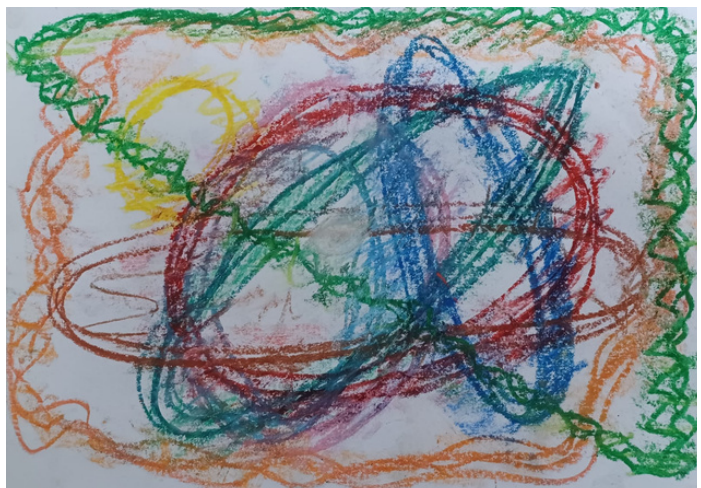
The image is called 'The Venus Fly Trap'.

“I'm in a fiery place and I'm one of the insects trying not to get caught.”



Below is an example of how an adult client used art to process their experiences.

The client spoke about how creating the image was cathartic at a time of considerable stress due to life events. The different colours they used in their artwork created hope for them.



Josh's play therapy story- Josh felt safe hiding under the table

Josh (9) was referred to Platform for Life by his school. He was struggling to control his behaviour, both at home and in school. Often Josh would hide under the table and not participate in class, and be disruptive. In his early years he had experienced trauma and now lives with adoptive parents. Josh also has severe speech and language difficulties.

When we received Josh's referral we spoke to his Mum who feared that if Josh didn't receive support appropriate to his needs, his behaviour would deteriorate, and eventually he would refuse to attend school.

Play therapy was the most suitable approach to help Josh explore his feelings. For the first few sessions the therapist had to encourage Josh out from under the table. Eventually Josh became enthusiastic with the choice of resources but found it challenging to stay within the boundaries of the room. His play was energetic, physical and vocal, often calling out and shouting. The toy characters Josh played with would sustain injuries and this type of play continued for many weeks. During this time, he shared many frustrations; not being understood in class and sometimes at home, how difficult friendships were, how he felt that he had no friends and not feeling confident with anything he tried to do.



During therapy Josh was given the space to express his frustrations safely using the toy characters. He slowly became less physical in his play; he stopped the characters fighting and instead they began to nurture each other, cooking and making food. Josh became more able to regulate his emotions and began to explore practical ways of communicating when he didn't feel understood.

Play therapy gave Josh a voice. He no longer felt the need to hide under the table. Teachers reported he was more confident and able to let others know when he didn't feel understood. He was able to concentrate and participate in class, improving his ability to learn and develop friendships.

For Josh's Mum she shared her relief that Josh was a happier and more confident child who now enjoyed going to school.

“ I cannot put into words how truly grateful we are for the time, patience and kindness they have shown my child. My child struggles to make relationships with people away from their comfort zone but from the offset I knew they were comfortable working alongside their therapist. The sessions have been amazing. ” Parent

“ Great you offer play and art therapy for the children. They don't feel as though they are receiving therapy just see it as playing but it helps them so much. ”
Koala NorthWest

Clients' journey through our service

01 We accept referrals from local schools, GPs, health visitors, midwives and other community based agencies who our clients interact with. We also accept self-referrals.

02 We make contact with the client who's been referred very quickly to tell them a bit more about our service and let them know what happens next. We'll also give them an idea of the wait time. We aim to build a relationship of trust that can continue into therapy.

03 We arrange a telephone assessment so we can understand more about a client's circumstances, support networks, medical concerns and any other needs they may have such as neurodiversity. We also consider their current level of risk and any potential safeguarding concerns.

Clients attend 1-2-1 therapy sessions weekly and work at a pace they feel comfortable with. We don't limit the number of sessions although we do manage feelings of dependency in clients. Our focus is on helping them achieve real long-term healing.

If a client is struggling with practical issues, they can be referred to our Family Support Worker for additional support at any time during their journey

04 Once they are allocated a client, our therapist will make contact with them by phone to introduce themselves and arrange a first appointment at a time and date that suits them both.

05 Therapist and client will jointly agree when to end therapy and how to best achieve this. Sometimes clients struggle with endings and may not attend their final session to avoid saying goodbye.

06 All clients know that they can re-engage with our service again in the future if they need to, in exactly the same way as they would if they were paying to see a therapist privately.

07 “Every time I have counselling I feel like a weight has been lifted from my shoulders.”

Adult

“Waiting lists are much better than PCMHT and they are there when adults need it most.”

Starting Well Service

Hannah's story as told by her counsellor- she wanted to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma

Hannah grew up without the love and support of her parents. Her mother struggled with alcoholism and her father left before she was born. She wanted a different life for her daughter.

Hannah, a young mum to 4-year-old Evie, was referred to Platform for Life by a Health Visitor from the Starting Well Service. She suffered a miscarriage during Covid and had separated from her partner. Her life since has spiralled into one of debt and anxiety.

When I first met Hannah, she was behind with her rent, had major credit card debt and was struggling to afford heating and food. It was clear Hannah felt overwhelmed and worried about the future. Her anxiety and lack of trust made it difficult for her to reach out and ask for help.

At Platform for Life we acknowledge that unless a person's basic needs are met they are unlikely to be able to address their emotional needs. Within the communities where we work we are able to make referrals to neighbouring charities for clients to receive support. At Hannah's assessment we recognised she needed help consolidating her debts and managing her bills. We also arranged for her to receive support with food and clothing.

During our initial sessions Hannah's anxiety remained high. She was still finding it difficult to trust and accept help. Gradually, as she began to experience positive change with her basic needs, her anxiety lessened and she began to share aspects of her past.



She told me her childhood was one of neglect. Often she came home from school to find the house full of strangers, drinking and taking drugs. Weekend parties were the worst, often violent, where she witnessed her mother being abused by different men.

One of the benefits of being a Platform for Life counsellor is that we are not restricted with the number of sessions we offer. This was so important for Hannah, as the trauma she experienced in childhood had resurfaced. She believed she was failing Evie, just as her mother had failed her.

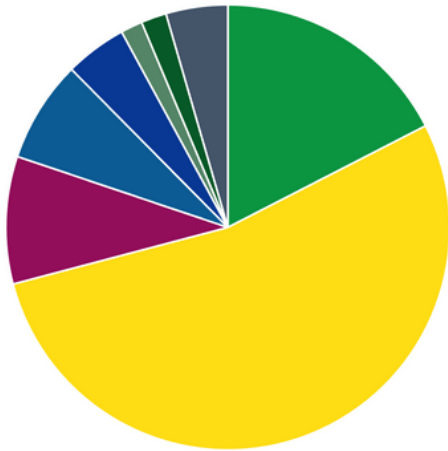
Hannah spoke at length about being involved in a controlling relationship with her ex-partner. When she suffered a miscarriage, she felt alone and unloved, except for the unconditional love from Evie. Leaving a toxic relationship had not been easy, her ex emotionally and financially abused her, all of which triggered feelings of being judged as an unfit mother.

Hannah and I worked together for 7 months. During that time she was able to gain confidence and trust by engaging with people who were helping her. Through talking about her childhood trauma and its impact on her beliefs, she was able to re-frame her perception of her parenting and appreciate she was undoubtedly a good mother to Evie.

“ I was in a really bad place and I was hurting myself and wanting to end my life all the time. I think it was more talking about my issues rather than avoiding them which helped a lot. ”
Young person

Our year in numbers (April 2022 to March 2023)

293 REFERRALS

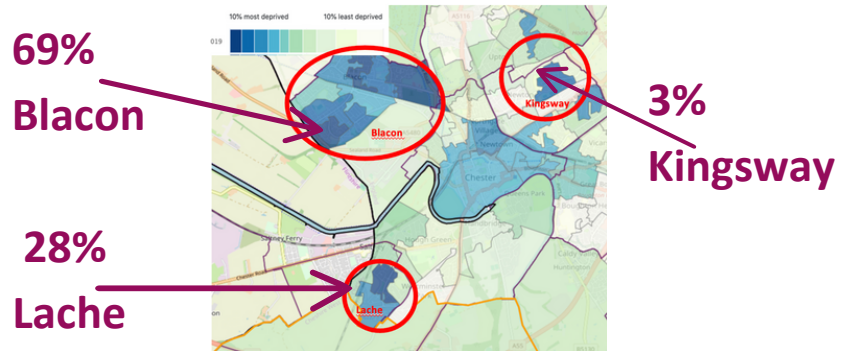


- Self referrals
- Medical centres
- Parental Referral
- Children In Need Team
- Schools
- Health visitor/Starting Well
- Family Intervention Worker
- Other

18

Number of different referrers

Location of referrals



310 active clients



42%
Adults



38%
Young people



20%
Children

3205

community based
therapy sessions
offered



Average number of
sessions clients attend
before finishing **12**



Attendance rate
80%



Other client contact
hours
460

Number of different venues
we work from **13**

100% adults and young people would
recommend Platform for Life to others

Annie's story- Annie feared what people might think about her going through puberty as a male but identifying as a female.

17-year-old Annie had always felt different. As a boy she hated her body, preferring to identify as a girl. As a teenager she felt out of place and knew she wanted to transition. Whilst most of her friends were supportive, some laughed and called her names. She became isolated, rarely leaving home and dropped out of college.

Increasingly worried her mum contacted Platform for Life. Annie wanted support, but when the time came she was extremely anxious and worried about meeting her counsellor. Annie wasn't used to talking about herself and needed to experience a safe and trusting relationship.

Annie had strong feelings of self-hatred and felt judged by other people. Her goals were to reduce her social anxiety and gain confidence. Annie was very clear; "I want to be able to go out wherever I please and whenever I want without having to worry about anything."

With the help of her counsellor Annie made a list of activities that would challenge her. Each session began with an activity; such as a walk, a trip to the shops, coffee in the local café. Annie's anxiety was measured before, during and after each activity.

“Coming to Platform for Life has really changed my thought pattern. I'm able to handle situations better and recognise when I'm feeling anxious. This has helped me want to live and enjoy life again.” Adult

Together they developed strategies to challenge her negative thoughts; Annie believed people would stare and shout nasty things. Annie thought about what she could say or do if this were to happen. She felt prepared, which helped reduce her anxiety. After the activity Annie was asked; how many people stared at you? How many people said something nasty to you? From this Annie was able to identify these were fears not facts.

Being able to recognise her negative thinking resulted in major changes in Annie's life.

- She is back in contact with 3 of her closest friends and is socially active.
- Annie has a more balanced lifestyle, achieving tasks including exercise.
- Turning 18 and she is now able to progress the transitioning process.
- Annie plans to return to college, with the aim of getting a job.

Annie is well on her way to achieving her goal.

“ I felt comfortable during the sessions and it felt like a safe space to talk about everything that I wanted to talk about.”

Young person



Feedback about our service

From clients

Clients we work with are asked to rate different aspects of our service in a feedback form at the end of therapy. Not all clients complete these as some find endings difficult and avoid attending final sessions. The feedback form for children uses a more visual smiley face rating and has simpler questions.

	Adults	Young people
The appointment system worked well for me	100%	94%
I felt comfortable how and where my sessions took place	100%	100%
The sessions gave me greater understanding of myself and situation	96%	88%
I was able to talk about my thoughts and feelings in the sessions	100%	100%

“ I felt welcomed and relaxed. You helped me see stuff that I couldn't see. My anxiety is much less and I'm more positive. I know that I can always come back and that's really good to know. ”

“ I have felt a lot calmer and not been as angry since counselling. Both my mum and college tutors have noticed that. ”

	Children
I felt comfortable in my therapy session	100%
My therapist helped me to understand my situation	93%
My therapist helped me to understand my thoughts and feelings	93%
I would tell my friends about therapy if they needed help	100%

“ My therapist helped me with thinking and understanding about my dad. ”

From referrers

We capture formal feedback from referrers about Platform for Life service through an annual survey.

100%	rate Platform for Life's therapy service highly or very highly and are satisfied or very satisfied with the service
82%	believe there are no other agencies providing the same sort of service as Platform for Life in our area for children
88%	believe there are no other agencies providing the same sort of service as Platform for Life in our area for adults
100%	observed positive changes in all/some children and/or young people who've received therapy from Platform for Life.

“ Platform for Life are consistent and deliver what they say they will, they do not give up. The staff are very kind and keep confidentiality. This is very important to our young people. ” Bridge Foyer Assisted Housing

“ I receive a lot of good feedback from other colleague and parents regarding the Platform for Life support. ” Social Services

“ Bespoke counselling sessions which are not time constricted. Easy referral process. Easy to liaise with staff. No limiting criteria and having to meet a threshold. An agency which will support the whole family and provide wrap around care. ” Highfield Primary School

“ Platform for life work with a variety of needs and without the service, there would be a huge gap in the mental health support we can offer in school. The counsellors are great and work within school very well. ” Blacon High school

Measuring our impact

We use a mix of quantitative and qualitative data to assess the impact of our service on clients at an individual, family and sometimes community level. Changes are individual to each client and however big or small, we celebrate them all.

We know that positive changes to a person's mental health can have significant benefit for the rest of their family. This means the impact of our service can be further amplified by 3-4 times. Based on our support of 310 clients over the last year, this means over 1200 additional family members have been positively impacted by our service.

Clinical outcomes in routine evaluation (CORE)

This is a standardised assessment tool which measures risk and emotional wellbeing of a client at the beginning and subsequent points during therapy. The adult version contains 34 questions and a simplified version for young people asks 10

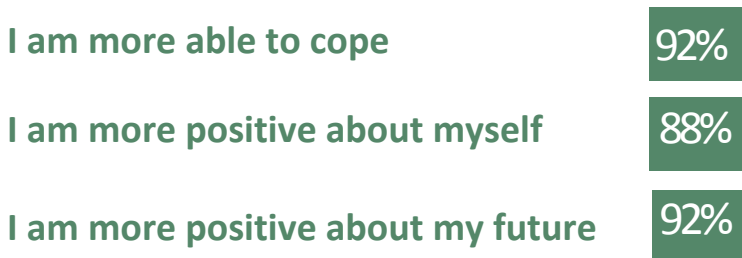


Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

This is completed by parents and sometimes teachers and assesses before, middle and after therapy emotional health needs. We find parents sometimes struggle completing this form and are looking at alternative tools for assessing impact on children that are easier for them to understand.

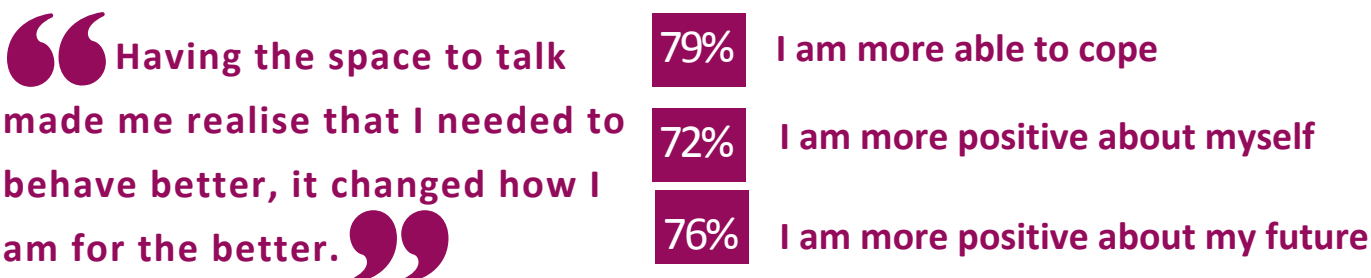


Client feedback Adult

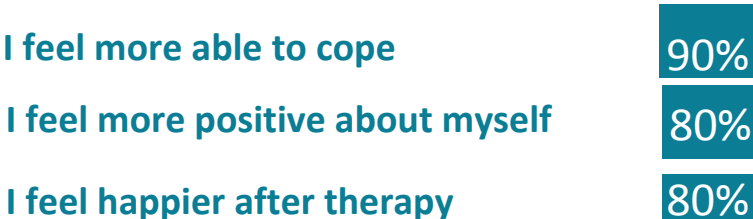


“Sessions have made a massive difference to my mental health and have helped me gain a more positive outlook and greater understanding about myself.”

Client feedback Young person



Client feedback Child

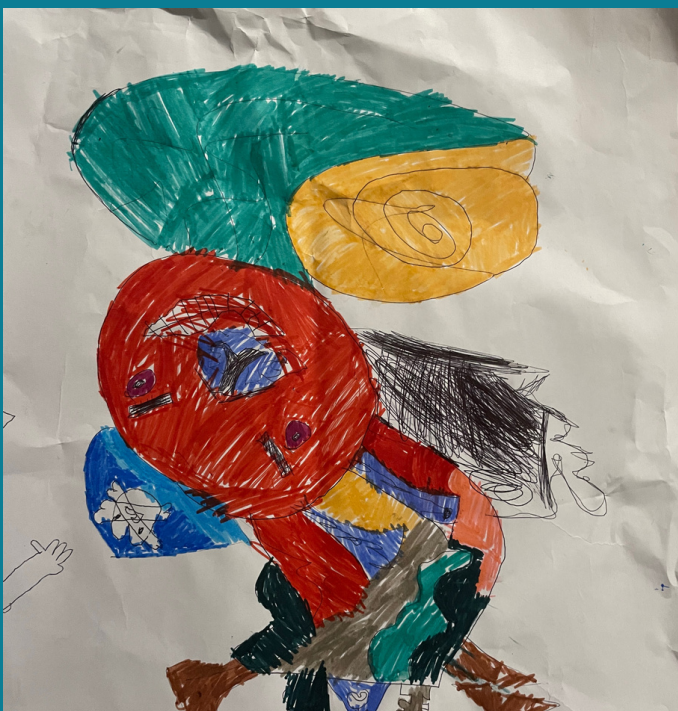


“I didn't think I needed to come. But it was good to come.”

Lucas and Alice's story- Alice feared for the future when Lucas could overpower her

Lucas, 9, was referred to Platform for Life following discussions between school and mum Alice. Lucas was displaying aggressive behaviour, both in school and home towards mum and his younger siblings. His therapist met Mum and Lucas together to understand the needs of the family as a whole. Alice had recently separated from Lucas's dad and she was overwhelmed by Lucas's 'meltdowns,' which were becoming more frequent and physical in nature. Lucas had been diagnosed with autism and the family had received very little information or support.

His therapist arranged to see Lucas at school and also met with Alice to provide information about Cheshire Autism Practical Support. Alice shared how the impact of Lucas's behaviour was stressful for her as she didn't know how to deal with it on her own. It was having a major impact on her mood, self-worth and confidence in everyday life. She feared for the future when Lucas could overpower her and worried about the affect this would have on her family. The therapist discussed the option of Alice having her own individual counselling with a different therapist but Alice wanted to wait and see how Lucas responded first.



“ I think I'd probably be further on in life now if I'd decided to process my trauma earlier in life, regardless of issues that are going on now. I might have been able to handle the issues I'm facing now if I'd had Platform for Life earlier.”
Adult

It can sometimes take a little bit longer for people with autism to feel comfortable and engage but much to the therapist's surprise, Lucas was eager to understand his reactions and what having autism meant. Using creative resources they helped Lucas talk about what triggered his 'meltdowns.' He was able to share his confusion and how he felt 'out of control' in stressful situations. Lucas had experienced a lot of change and his therapist recognised he was struggling to cope with a lack of routine and consistency in his life.

During the sessions his therapist helped Lucas understand his emotional responses to challenges and learn strategies that would help him cope better. Together they spoke to mum about his need for routine and consistency where possible. Alice began to appreciate how Lucas's view of the world differed from hers and how simple things like knowing who was taking him to school and at what time mattered.

After the sessions had ended Alice told Lucas's therapist how she and Lucas had created timetables and rotas to help with routine. There had also been a noticeable improvement in Lucas's behaviour. He was no longer aggressive towards her or his siblings. He still had the occasional 'meltdown' but Alice felt better equipped to manage now that she understood his needs.

Longer term impacts

The way in which Platform for Life works, gives clients the time and space they need to process and heal from their traumas and experiences. We know from client feedback, that for some, therapy is quite literally life saving. It also leads many clients to feel more empowered and able to make specific changes in their life.

- ✓ Strengthening or re-building relationships with family, friends and peers.
- ✓ Applying for work for the first time or after an absence.
- ✓ Pursuing opportunities to volunteer.
- ✓ Having the confidence to seek increased responsibility or promotion at work.
- ✓ Making lifestyle changes, including taking up exercise and eating more healthily.
- ✓ Accessing school or college when this has previously been difficult or not possible at all.
- ✓ Making successful transitions from the nurturing environment of primary school to high school where more independence is required.
- ✓ Breaking free from abusive and negative relationships.
- ✓ Stopping destructive and risky behaviours, including self-harm.
- ✓ Pursuing new hobbies and interests.



Feedback from longer term client interviews

As well as capturing adhoc feedback from clients who keep in touch after therapy has ended, some consent to providing more formal feedback after 6 or 12 months.

When you ask a client, 9 months after counselling ended, what difference did it make and they say, "I'm still alive", you know the service is improving the lives of those who need it.

Clients who gave permission to be contacted 6+ months after their sessions ended, shared these comments about the lasting impact accessing Platform for Life has had on their lives.

“I'm still alive! Not only am I alive but my outlook and zest for life is back.”

“I feel more confident and have been applying for new jobs.”

“Day by day I am finding joy in pretty much everything.”

“I was in an abusive relationship for many years, with high levels of anxiety and unable to cope. I now have a happy relationship with a nice person.”

Positive changes

Having a positive experience with Platform for Life, has led some to go on and seek further support for themselves or their families.

- One client attended a well man clinic, agreed to see a dietician and now understands how to follow a healthy diet with regular exercise.
- Another client is now under assessment for bipolar with an NHS psychologist
- A client with autism now understands what it means to be autistic and feels confident enough to engage with all services for the benefit of his son, who is also autistic.

Throughout this report you will have read stories about people who have accessed our service. Their shared experiences demonstrate the need and lasting impact of our work to break the cycle of poor mental health being passed down from one generation to the next.

All the clients we interviewed said they would recommend therapy to friends and family. This long-term benefit shows we are removing the barriers faced by people living in the lowest socio-economic groups and improving access to mental health support for people that typically exist outside of clinical settings.

John's story- he knew his anger was destructive but didnt know how to control it

John, in his late fifties, was referred to Platform for Life by his family support worker. He was involved in angry disputes with neighbours and family members. Along with several medical issues, his mental health was suffering and he wasn't coping well with life. In his own words his 'anxiety levels were through the roof.'

Initially, John thought counselling was going to be a waste of time. He'd only agreed to be referred to please his support worker. John described himself as having a 'short fuse,' even as a child. His counsellor decided to use psycho-education to explain the different causes of anger to John, explaining how sometimes the anger we feel in the present can be triggered by situations in the past and familiar, but uncomfortable, feelings will rise to the surface, especially if the anger wasn't safely expressed at the time.

John's counsellor asked him if he could recall any of his triggers and it was a lightbulb moment for John. He recalled his traumatic childhood and how he felt vulnerable and out of control, causing him to be confrontational and get into fights. He began to understand why he reacted the way he did in the present and how it was from learnt behaviour from his childhood.

With this new-found awareness he began to see things differently and was able to remain calm in stressful situations. He felt more in control of his life and able to make some life-changing decisions. He began to enjoy life again, reconnecting with family and enjoying being in their company.

“You've given me them extra weeks and time to help me through the healing process. This has led me to go back into society and start helping towards getting back into work and coming off benefits.”
Adult

Looking ahead

We're incredibly proud of what we've achieved as a charity. Over the last six years we've directly helped nearly **1400** people on low incomes and struggling with their mental health and positively impacted nearly **6000** other members of their family.

We're fully committed to the communities we serve and our goal is to stop the cycle of poor mental health being passed down from one generation to the next and through early intervention, stop poor mental health becoming a life long-disability. It's only by working in these communities over the long-term that lasting change can be achieved and the negative cycle can start to be broken.

Demand for our service continues to grow and we are continuously asked about extending our geographic coverage. We need to ensure we can expand in a sustainable way; one which broadens our geographic coverage but doesn't overwhelm our service; that we can resource sufficiently to ensure wait times remain relatively short; and for which we are able to source funding.

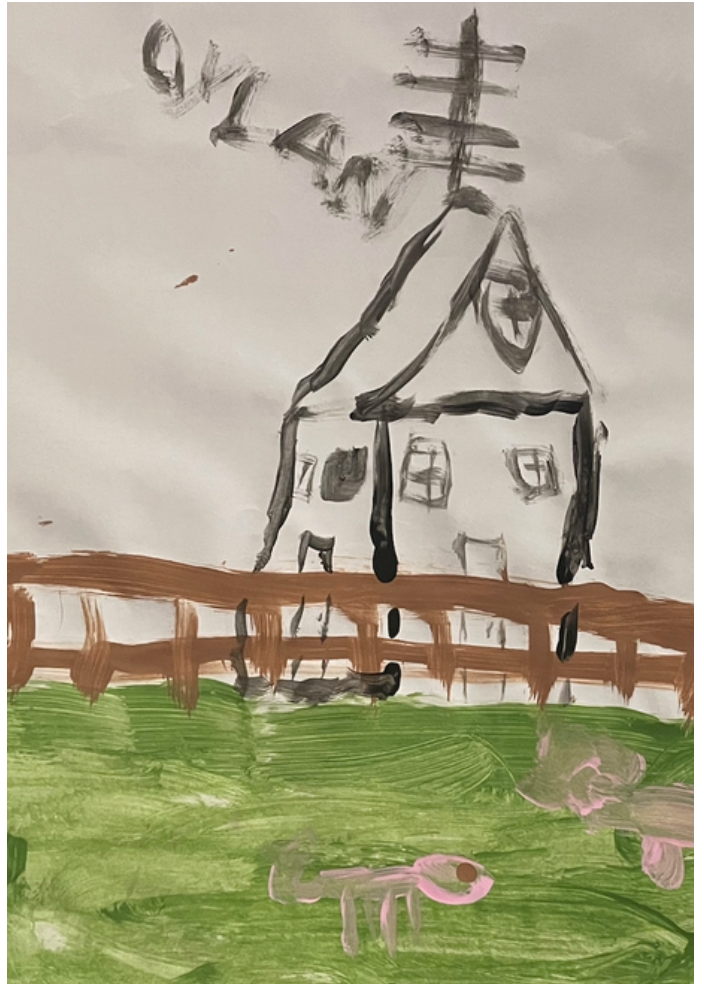
“ It's helped the healing process, it's helping it a lot. It's just good to be listened to.”

Young person

Family Support Worker

Poverty and other adversities mean many of our clients need support with practical needs as well poor mental health. This can be time consuming for our therapy team, meaning less hours available for therapy work. We have recently secured funding to appoint a Family Support Worker to support individual clients address more practical issues they may have such as debt, food poverty and social isolation.

Having established and grown our service in Blacon and Lache, we have now extended into Kingsway and hope to be open to all low income families across Chester City in the next two years subject to funding.



Whilst we already link in with a number of local agencies, we've found signposting doesn't often work with our client group, who need a more personalised introduction to take action.

The new Family Support Worker will make warm in person introductions to relevant local services and advocate for clients where necessary. As well as helping clients address some of their daily stressors, we hope offering this level of support will ensure they can more fully engage with therapy.

Suzanne's story- Jack refusing to go to school was the last straw.

Single mum Suzanne was at her wits end. Her son Jack, who is autistic, was finding the transition to secondary school difficult. Since Covid his anxiety had worsened and he was reluctant to attend school. Most mornings were a battle for Suzanne and when Jack's school referred him to Platform for Life, it was suggested Suzanne refer herself for support too.

In her first session Suzanne was able to offload how Jack refusing to go to school was the last straw. She was struggling with her own health issues, in pain, her mobility impaired. She was also dealing with Housing over the anti-social behaviour of her neighbours. Her stress levels were overwhelming her, causing familiar feelings of helplessness to surface.

Suzanne previously had counselling with us some years ago, when she broke free from a controlling and coercive relationship. She found herself revisiting those complicated thoughts and feelings she had towards that relationship. As the sessions progressed she began to realise the sense of powerlessness she felt in the present belonged in the past. The anxiety provoked by her current issues had triggered familiar feelings that made her feel vulnerable.

Once Suzanne made sense of and worked through her feelings, her confidence grew. She began to trust herself again and felt able to deal with the challenges in her life.

“ I was extremely grateful I was able to access the service again and that it was also available for Jack. I can't thank you enough. ”

Sophie's story- anxiety and thought of self-harm were threatening to overwhelm her

Sophie was referred into Platform for Life by her mum who was worried about her mental health and well-being. Sophie was having panic attacks, intrusive thoughts and wanting to self-harm.

She was anxious to begin with and felt uncomfortable opening up. However, in time she was able to explore her anxiety and feelings of depression and low mood. She had tried to cover this up in school but was finding it hard and disliked being in school. She has problems with her eating and is body conscious.

In time Sophie began to relax in counselling sessions and felt comfortable and safe to explore what was going on for her. Using visual aids and tasks in sessions, she was able to identify the causes of her anxiety and the issues she was dealing with. She talked through relationships with family and friends, situations in school and how they had affected her. Sophie felt listened to and understood.

Counselling helped Sophie build her inner strength and resilience. It helped her consider the changes she needed to make and she was able to identify positive outcomes to situations, which gave her a different outlook. She reached a point where she felt happier and was coping better in school. Relationships with family and friends had improved and she felt ready to end counselling.

“ My therapist was great and helped me through many issues and worries. ” Young person

Our supporters

As well as our a committed team and Board of Trustees, we would like to thank the following people and organisations for their support over the last year.

Funding support

- Albert Hunt Trust
- Ardagh Group
- Artbox
- Avenue Services
- Cheshire Community Foundation
- Cheshire Freemasons
- Chester BID
- Chester City Club
- Chester Football Club
- Chester Races
- Chester Bluecoat Charity
- Decibellas Choir
- Development Youth of Chester Fund
- Earl of Chester Fund
- Grosvenor Centre
- Huntriss Family
- JDM Charitable Trust
- Kelly Family Charitable Trust
- Mitchell Group
- Nuffield Health
- Pixel Fund
- Ring O' Bells
- Sanctuary Housing
- Santander
- Severn Trent Community Fund
- Steve Morgan Foundation
- The Architect
- The Ship Inn
- Welsh Water
- Westminster Foundation

“Thank you for filling a gap in services in Blacon.”
Starting Well



“It was a pleasure to be asked to facilitate a strategy day for Platform For Life. They do such an amazing job and make a real difference. For us business is all about making a real and positive impact in the world.”
Graham Wilson Success Factory

Business support

- Kings school- IT support
- Success Factory- team strategy day
- Sykes Cottages- marketing support
- Miltec- website support
- Kualo- website hosting

“Children I've referred to your service all enjoy the sessions. They seem calmer and less worried about life events.”
Koala NorthWest

Other support

- CAH Electrical- PATS testing
- Chester Races- bonfire night tickets for clients
- Fuchsia Property Maintenance- furniture moving
- Grosvenor Estate- room hire
- Haines Watts- Christmas hamper
- HM3 Legal-room hire
- Innovent Recycling- IT equipment
- Sanctuary Housing- office furniture
- Sykes Cottages- office furniture



“ We chose to work with PFL because of the charity, its purpose and what it provides to people in need within communities that we have close connections with. It was easy for us to help and we wish to help out more in future. ”

Thomas Hughes, Director Fuchsia Property Maintenance

“ Platform for life’s absolutely changed my life. It’s allowed me to regrow myself as a human again and start to feel feelings and emotions that I’ve been missing in my life and to find positive connections with people. ”

Adult

Dani’s story- telling a story of trauma through art and play

Dani (11) was referred to Platform for Life following a traumatic incident that saw one parent sectioned to a mental health in-patient unit. The other parent felt that Dani needed to be encouraged to talk about what happened.

Dani was enthusiastic about attending sessions with an art therapist. Initial sessions involved non-verbal play. Dani created peg dolls and a doll’s house with many characters, using the dolls to talk about feelings. Sometimes when it was too much for Dani they would begin to sing and draw until they had calmed down.

As the sessions progressed Dani created paper representing friends and family, including the parent in hospital. Dani began talking about the incident at home and could name what happened with the parent in hospital.

Once Dani had expressed and named the trauma experienced, with the remaining weeks of therapy they began to create a self-portrait. Dani asked for artistic support to be able to create it as if looking in a mirror. Dani referred to their self-portrait as ‘lovely and beautiful’, evidence of a developing sense of self and increasing self-esteem.

Dani decided to end saying “I’m not worried anymore.” The Deputy Head commented that Dani was talking openly about home life and their feelings. Dani was overheard being empathic with another child saying, ‘it’s okay to be worried,’ when they described a worry of their own. Both children then talked openly about feelings.

The last piece of artwork Dani produced was a series of thumbs up and a quote about art therapy, “it was so gooooooood.”

Supporting our work

There's lots of ways you can support us to continue our vital work improving the mental health of adults, children and young people from low income families.

Trusts and Foundations

These play an important role in funding our work and providing long-term support. If you're a trustee or are connected to a trust or foundation we'd love to hear from you. If we fit with your charitable giving objectives, please consider extending support to Platform for Life and help us make a positive difference to people's lives.

Corporate sponsorship

We're keen to develop relationships with local businesses who want to invest in the future of Chester City's children and young people.

- Strategic partnerships that help to deliver business social value goals.
- Corporate donations either one-off or as part of regular giving.
- Selecting Platform for Life as your charity of the year.
- Offering match funding for fundraising initiatives we undertake.
- Introductions to other local businesses who might want to invest in the mental health of Chester City.

Donating

Big and small donations can make a real difference to people's lives and change them for the better.

- Make a single or monthly donation online via our website.
- Make a personal major gift.
- Remember us in your will.
- In memory donations for a loved one.
- Give whilst you earn through Payroll Giving scheme.

“This therapy has saved my life. If it wasn't for this therapy, I would have ended it a long time ago.”
Adult

Fundraising

Raise money through fundraising activities or events to help support our work improving the mental health of adults, children and young people from low income families.

- Organise your own fundraising event in support of Platform for Life or take part in a sponsored one on behalf of the charity.
- Organise a fundraising event in work and involve your colleagues. They can be great for team-building



Volunteer with us

We've had help from volunteers to improve our business skills, bucket collecting at fundraising events and even transporting donated furniture to our office. We're always looking for volunteers to help the charity and with the appointment of the new Family Support Worker, will have additional opportunities focused on providing practical support for clients in areas such as form filling and letter writing, helping them to settle into social groups such as mother and toddler, attending appointments and advocating for them where necessary.

Poppy's story (as told by her mum)- Poppy was struggling to settle back into school after a significant change in her life.

During the summer holidays six year old Poppy's father and I separated. It was a difficult time for us all, but especially for Poppy. When she went back to school she was really struggling. Most mornings she didn't want to go and she cried when I had to leave her. Her school work suffered and she went from being a happy confident child to being quite anxious about anything to do with school, including her friends.

Poppy's anxiety, and her lack of interest in school, really worried me. I felt she needed professional support to help her cope with change. I spoke to the school and they told me about Platform for Life.

She was referred to Jenny, a Platform for Life counsellor, and very quickly I began to notice positive changes in Poppy. She was much happier, enjoying school and had also re-engaged with her friends, much to my relief. I asked Poppy if she wanted to tell me what she liked about her sessions and she said, "I like sitting on the bean bag and talking to Jenny." I knew then that Poppy was able to make sense of what had happened and the sessions were meeting her needs.

Initially Poppy didn't want the sessions to end but Jenny prepared her well for the final session. Poppy was extremely pleased that she was able to bring all her artwork and drawings home. Since the sessions ended Poppy has made one request....for her birthday she wants a bean bag for her bedroom. A small price to pay to see her happy.



“ Thank you Platform for Life I can't tell you how relieved I am that your service was available for Poppy and I. ”

“ Counselling is not something I would be able to ever afford, so I am beyond grateful this was something I was able to receive. I know that I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for having the sessions. ” Adult

Chloe's poem

Chloe was referred for art therapy by her primary school as she seemed withdrawn in class and struggled to speak to teaching staff even when asking for help. During therapy she was able to explore the anxiety she felt and find a voice to explain how she experiences the world.

Sometimes therapy can be about empowering a client to speak for themselves and Chloe wrote this poem to tell others about herself.

The Layers of Me

All you see is the outside me: my brown hair,
The frog freckles, beaming grin
The cheerful and jolly side of me.

But inside there's another me, the animal lover girl.
Researching till dawn.
The learning part of me.

And inside there's another part of me, daydreaming
in lessons.
In my own world, sitting so very still.
The frozen statue kind of me.

And inside there's another kind of me,
All anxious about different things.
A mishmash jumble-mumble sort of me.

And inside there's another me,
frustration heating my head.
The boiling as hot as a kettle type of me.

And inside there's another me,
Fidgety, fiddling and wriggling in my seat.
A squirming and scrambling sort of me.

And now, you know all of me!



Emily's poem

Emily has been working with Platform for Life for some time. She's worked courageously through past traumas she's experienced and through therapy has identified deeper wounds that she needs to heal. This has often felt overwhelming and Emily has found writing poetry a powerful way to articulate her experiences and feelings.

Are you proud of me now?

Thirteen years have passed already,
Alone in this world, no one to call Daddy.
I left at seventeen, because you didn't see me,
This weird little girl, you couldn't relate to,
The cause of all your problems, the person that
hates you.

You never really saw me, heard me, or held me,
But the hardest part is, you never really loved me.
Always felt unwanted, unseen and a nuisance
But oh, how I tried to make you proud of me,
At least just once.

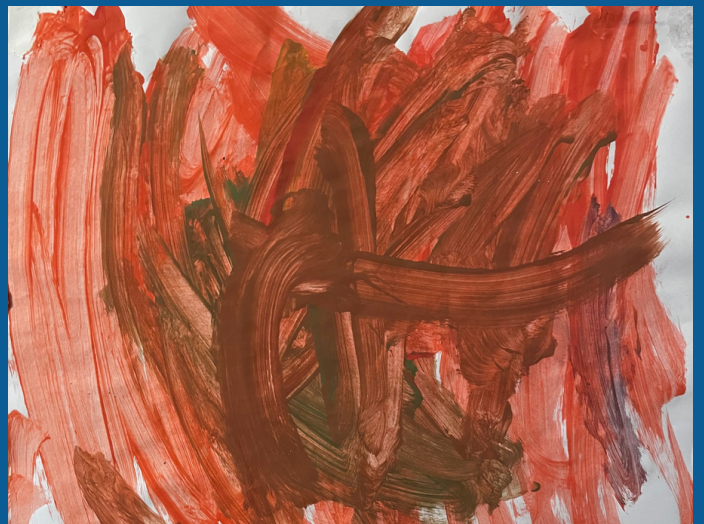
I tried in school, as much as I could,
My report wasn't great, but my grades were good.
Thinking one day, you would come home and say,
I'm proud of you daughter, for your persistence and
strength,
I'm proud to see you grow, achieve and advance.

That day didn't come, instead I let you down,
That A isn't enough, why are your grades down?
Well maybe Dad, if you were home,
I wouldn't have to deal with mum alone,
You say I cause you problems,
Then help me solve them.
You are the parent, the guardian, the adult,
Not the little girl that's such a problem.

Now I'm an adult and do you know what you gave
me,
Low self-esteem, sadness and hate.
I look in the mirror and see your pain.
That's not saying I understand you,
That's saying I'm disappointed too.
Not in me or who I am, but in the person, you made
me believe I am.
I'm disappointed in you and the way you are,
You've gave me such an emotional scar.

I do not trust or love the same, because of you I feel
constant pain.
So, tell me Dad are you proud of me now?
I've proven you right, I've let you down.
Oh, but that's what you wanted, a sad little girl?

Sorry to disappoint you just look at me now.
I can succeed and laugh, I have people that care,
I'm getting the help; I am so self-aware.
I love, I feel, and I genuinely care.
Tell me Dad are you proud of yourself?
Look in that mirror, you need some help.
The person I am is all down to myself.



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 Platform for Life

 Platform4Lifer

 platformforlife



Scan QR code to donate online

“ I don't think my daughter would have been here for her 18th birthday if it wasn't for you. ” Parent

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