

**catch
22**

**Stoke-on-Trent &
Staffordshire**

**Volunteer Mentor
Service Report**

2021 – 2022

April 2022

"My daughter has benefited hugely from the support from Catch 22, she is able to talk to her mentor using normal down-to-earth language rather than scientific terms used by professional.

She is able to talk about her interests and hobbies rather than just her mental health problems and is treated as an individual rather than a patient."

Mum of 13-year-old girl

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Introduction

Catch22 Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Missing and CSE Service

Catch22 are commissioned in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire to work with children and young people who have gone missing from home or care, or who are at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). We deliver bespoke support and interventions to children and young people to build resilience and aspiration, empowering them to take control of their lives and supporting them to stay safe.

From March 2020, we were also commissioned to set up a pilot CCE Service for children at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation in the city/county.

To support our commissioned casework, we have a Volunteer Mentor Service which enables us to

- Provide a gentle step-down rather than a cliff-edge exit
- Expand and extend the support we can offer
- Address some of the things that we are not commissioned to do but we know will make a difference to long-term change and recovery
- Respond to children who do not appear to meet the threshold for casework but about whom we have concerns
- Provide more intensive support where risks are high, we also have community champions to help us reach out to the people and communities we find it more difficult to support.

Volunteer Mentor Model

Catch22 have been commissioned to provide Missing and CSE Services in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent since September 2017. The Volunteer Service recruited its first volunteers in January 2018 and ran the first volunteer training course in March 2018.

Since that time, 64 volunteers have offered support to 92 children and young people; provided admin support; assisted with events, and championed diverse communities of people to help us engage better with them.

The Volunteer Service recruits adult mentors (aged 18+) from a range of contexts to support children and young people who have been reported missing or who are deemed to be at risk of exploitation. Referrals to the mentor service come internally from Catch22 CSE and Missing caseworkers. There is no standard support package. Support is tailored to the child in response to their expressed needs and wishes. There is no set timeframe, but we guarantee a *minimum* of 6 support sessions for each mentee. It is possible to extend support beyond this if it is deemed necessary. To enable gradual withdrawal of support, a mentor may complete a series of face-to-face support sessions, then offer a further period of telephone support before finally signing off a young person.

Referrals are made by Catch22 caseworkers for one of three reasons:

- Intensive casework has been completed but the child still wishes to have support.
- The child does not meet the threshold for casework, but concerns remain.
- The child is so vulnerable that additional support is deemed necessary alongside casework.

After children and young people are referred into the service by Catch22 caseworkers or Coordinators, we then match them with a mentor depending on availability, geographical location, needs and interests, and gender where appropriate. The caseworker facilitates the initial meeting to help the young person feel more at ease and to encourage trust and confidence in the mentor.

During that meeting, the caseworker, mentor, and young person come up with a support plan based on what the child wants and needs. The support plans are extremely flexible and largely driven by the young person themselves. The mentoring support is additional to our contracted service specifications so we can be very creative and responsive in what we offer.

Mentor duties can include:

- To attend an initial meeting with the young person, caseworker/volunteer coordinator. Young person to be introduced and a discussion and agreement about the plan going forward.
- To work with a young person to come up with a support plan (if appropriate). Some young people just want emotional support at the beginning and a support plan may be completed later.
- To take the lead in supporting a young person on a one-to-one basis and arrange subsequent sessions/contact
- To support with preparing CVs, job, and university applications etc
- To provide awareness of community, educational and economic resources available to young people
- To develop links and relationships with schools/colleges, community groups, other youth organisations and potential employers for supporting young people's progression
- To plan and deliver awareness and information sessions as required e.g., Internet safety, consent liaising with the caseworker and volunteer coordinator.
- To provide diversionary activities
- To inform the manager and relevant local and organisational safeguarding teams immediately of any concerns that arise
- To support with specific issues such as self-esteem, anger management etc.
- To advise/assist/support and motivate the young person into developing skills which will assist them in achieving and maintaining their goals.
- To attend regular support and supervision sessions.
- To advocate for a young person at external meetings e.g., social work/multi-agency meeting. (Three of our mentors are involved in Core Group Meetings regularly).

Mentor Recruitment

Mentors are recruited from local universities and Do-it.org, as well as word of mouth. Many mentors are students studying related subjects such as psychology, criminology or Social Work and considering future employment in Social Care, Children's residential care, Education, or the Police. Whilst by no means a pre-requisite, some mentors have lived experience of going missing, grooming, or sexual exploitation or living in care. Currently, 50% of volunteers are students from Keele or Staffordshire University. The remainder have been recruited from Dolt.org volunteering website or through the Civil Service Local scheme.

The recruitment and vetting process involves an application form, two references, an enhanced DBS check, an interview, and a volunteer training course.

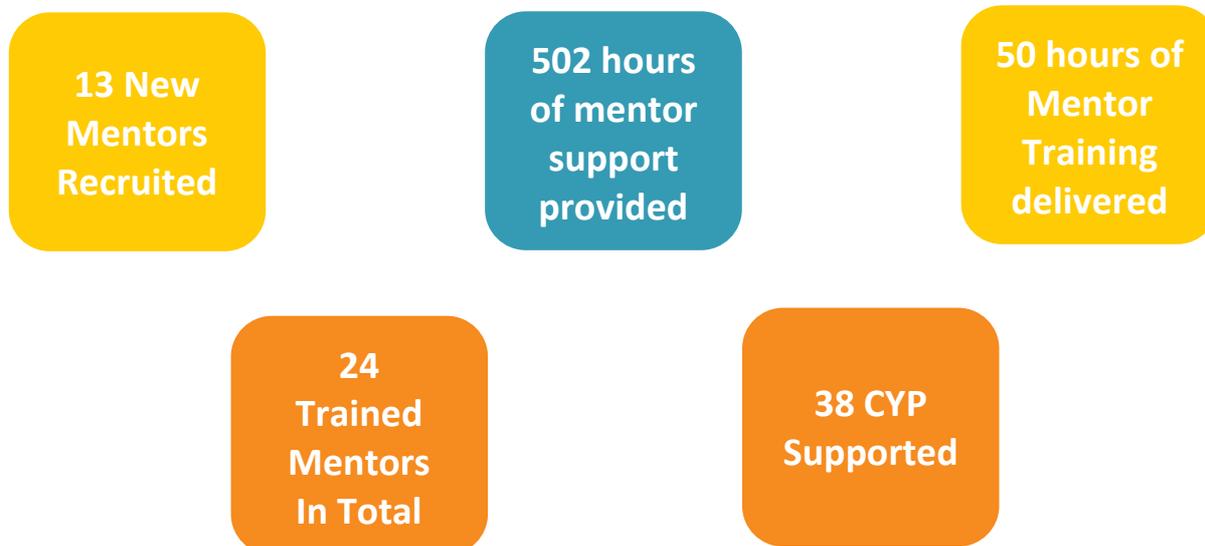
In total, 24 volunteer mentors were active in 2021-2022. These mentors have supported 29 individual children and young people, giving 502 hours of their time- equivalent to 14 full-time working weeks. A further 9 young people were supported by mentors with complementary support (additional low-level support such as online safety sessions to complement direct case work) from March-August 2021.

Volunteer training modules include:

- Understanding Young People's Needs & Challenges
- Young Peoples Mental Health
- Mentor Practice & Procedures
- Equality & Diversity
- Confidentiality
- Data Protection and GDPR
- Professional Boundaries
- Health & Safety
- Lone Working
- Listening & Communication skills
- Solution-focussed Practice
- Local SCB level 1 Safeguarding Training
- Catch22 Missing Training
- Catch22 CSE Training
- Catch22 CCE Training

We are currently working with the Learning and Development Team to upload these modules to our Moodle learning site and create a suite of accompanying resources which can be shared with the wider Catch22 team.

During 2020/2021, there were:



Parents' and Carers' feedback on the mentoring service

"My daughter has gained a lot of experience and learnt a lot of trust with her mentor"

"Nothing can be improved in regard to this service. It is perfect as it is"

"If it was not for catch 22, I dread to think where we will be now in regard to my daughter's mental health."

"I rate catch 22 better than the treatment my daughter has received before"

Children and Young People's feedback on the mentoring service

"I am really happy about the support i have been given."

"She has really helped me understand what to do if I am in a situation online."

"She is amazing! Always listens and never judges me."

"It's been so fulfilling to feel listened to"

All of the young people who responded said they benefited from having a mentor as it provided the opportunity to talk about things that are important to them.

85% said feeling listened to and taken seriously was another value from mentoring.

Half of the young people also felt that they received support in their relationships with friends, family and their mental health in general.

Other feedback said mentoring provided them with a chance to think about their choices and their future.

Catch 22 Team

The wider team appreciate and value the mentor service as it an additional offer of support to our children and young people. Our caseworkers said the following about the mentor service.

"I saw the disappointment in the young person's face when I said I was closing the CSE case. Then, I saw her face when I told her she would continue to be supported by Catch22 Mentor. She was so both relieved and happy"

"Their dedication and passion shine through and support for our young people and families contributes towards the amazing outcomes achieved by the whole service".

"Our amazing volunteers/mentors have played a critical role in ensuring the CYP we support are not left sitting on waiting lists".

"Great service - that step down the process, that additional person to speak to, it brings an added value".

"The mentors and volunteers are really valuable parts of our teams and to Catch 22, without them some of the young people would not the ongoing amazing support that they need".

"They ensure that children receive additional support when due to time pressure they could have been exited from the Catch22 service. The added value this brings is reassurance for the children and contributes greatly to the risk reduction and improvement in children's general wellbeing. Volunteers also support the service to achieve exceptional outcomes by going above and beyond what we are contracted to do which in turn then gives confidence to our commissioners to continue to support our service".

"They make a huge difference because they allow the support to carry on after the intervention has been complete".

"Volunteers and mentors can make a huge difference, as the young person can feel as though they have someone to talk to without them always having to be professionals".

"Volunteers and mentors make such a difference as they provide additional support that is extremely important (especially when casework comes to an end and there are no other services involved). Caseworkers primarily provide CYP with the tools and knowledge they need, however, volunteers provide CYPs with the emotional support they require to overcome difficulties and prosper!"

"Some of the mentors that have worked with the young people that I have referred to have made such a difference to those young people, they have also given me reassurance that the young people still have someone in their lives who they can talk to and receive ongoing support from, sometimes after work is completed by the caseworker the young people still need someone involved, the mentors and volunteers provide this making it a special support service they provide".

"Volunteers often make it easier to close a case as we can be confident that a family and a young person still have someone to turn to should they need to, and we know that they will still be in good hands and not alone".

Community Champions

In addition to the volunteer mentor role, we now have several lived experiences champions who enable us to connect more effectively with certain communities of people that we sometimes find difficult to support.

To date, we have:

- A Pakistani Muslim Community Champion (Urdu speaking)
- A Trans Champion
- A Disability Champion
- A Care Champion (former service user)
- An Albanian Community Champion (Albanian speaking)
- A Romanian Community Champion (Romanian speaking)
- A Parent Champion

The Champions help us understand the needs of that part of the community and suggest ways we might be able to support them. It sometimes means accompanying staff on visits to help engage people and explain how we can help, and it sometimes means supporting that young person themselves. The champions also advocate for the communities they know and understand to help us ensure we get our response right and the needs of lesser-heard voices are amplified.

In July, one of our caseworkers was unable to complete a RHI as the young person was a Romanian speaker who was unable to speak or understand English. Our Romanian Champion, who had mentored previously, was able to complete the RHI with him. The caseworker said it “was so comforting to hear his native language after what a very difficult experience for him”.

Social Value

Volunteering is an important part of the social fabric of this country. The value of the Mentor Service can be measured in various aspects:

The economic value of the support offered to young people in avoiding the need for further referrals to professional support. 502 hours of support at median minimum wage equates to an economic contribution of £ 6,109.34 of saved salary costs given by volunteers. This does not include costs saved when young people’s needs are met, and other services are then not required as a result.

There is also added personal value to the young people. Mentoring has both a restorative and preventative impact for young people, some of whom would not reach the threshold for professional services and some of whom have already received support but did not find it was effective or sufficient. The value to their wellbeing and that of their families is significant.

The wider social value of volunteering activities.

Academic studies suggest the overall societal benefits could be anywhere between 2 to 10 times that of the economic and private benefits. Also, 5 individuals who have volunteered with us to date are now ambassadors for young people in their communities and have increased awareness and understanding of the risks of going missing, grooming and child exploitation.

2021-2022 Mentor Satisfaction Survey Results

100% of mentors strongly agree that they have personally benefited from volunteering.

All our mentors who responded to our annual satisfaction survey were happy, felt supported in their role and felt included in the wider Catch22 team.

When asked what their highlights so far, the mentors said

“It is just so rewarding to know you are helping others, even if it is just listening and being there”

“I love engaging the young person and seeing the relationship and trust develop over time.”

“It has been wonderful to see the mood and motivation of my mentee improve week after week; it has been slow and steady and i am so happy for her.”

“Getting to know my mentee, all that she has overcome and seeing her go from strength to strength has been lovely to experience.”

“i have changed my career part and i am just about to start working for catch22, i know i can bring my experience of being a mentor to supporting other young people.”

“i feel like my mentee really trusts me now and can share things that she needs help with or just needs off her mind.”

“I have mentored young people before, but this has stretched my usual approach as the scope is much broader and focuses on many areas of a young person’s life.”

When asked how the young people benefited from the mentor support

100% felt that support with their mental health, overall wellbeing and being listened to and taken seriously were the main benefits.

75% felt that the chance for young people to ask questions about things they did not understand and the opportunity to discuss their choices and options were beneficial.

Some of the ways mentors have benefited personally from mentoring

90% of the mentors felt that mentoring increased their awareness of issues affecting young people and how to engage with young people in general.

Over half felt that mentoring was a way that they could put their learning into practice.

All the mentors felt that their communications skills improved.

Case Study- Isla*

Isla* has been supported by Catch22 since January 2021 after being referred with low risk CSE concerns. Isla completed sessions around healthy relationships, self-esteem, internet, and online safety as well as risks and dangers. Isla was referred into the Catch22 mentor service for additional support after she completed casework as she had anxiety, had previously self-harmed and refused to engage with CAHMS anymore.

Isla was raped by a known male early in 2020 when she had just turned 14. Isla did not want to inform the Police about the incident and later changed her mind saying she “wanted to make sure it didn’t happen to anyone else”. Isla believes the man who raped her had raped someone else in the past. Shortly after Isla started working with her mentor, police dismissed the case due to lack of evidence. This devastated Isla and in the words of her mum Irene “really set her back”. Isla’s attendance and behaviour in school deteriorated significantly following this news.

Isla’s mentor, Paula*, continued to meet her both in and out of school. Isla was angry and her mentor supported her around exploring this and how she could best express this.

In the summer, there was an incident in a supermarket where an older man made sexually suggestive comments to Isla, grabbed her arm, and asked her to go home with him. Isla was distraught by this and especially by the fact that “everyone just watched and did nothing”. Paula asked her if she wanted to report the incident. Isla said she didn’t as “the police didn’t do anything when I was raped, so they definitely wouldn’t do anything about this”. Paula assured her if she changed her mind, Catch22 would support her. Her mentor supported her to develop a safety plan and was supported in understanding that the incident wasn’t her fault. Isla was also receiving support from Savana (sexual assault counselling service) following the rape in 2020.

Around this time, Isla’s mum Irene* started to struggle with her own mental health, and she took some time off from work. On reflection, Irene believed her daughter’s rape traumatised her, but she did not have an opportunity to process it at the time. Isla started to miss more school and when she did get there, she spent most of the time in isolation.

Isla’s mentor advocated for Isla in school, as her mum felt unable to do so. School was understanding and supportive. Isla was allowed to come in a slightly later, as her mum could no longer drive. Isla also had some sessions with the school counsellor which helped with her behaviour. Paula worked with Isla on goal setting and future planning. They spoke of her aspirations and discussed possible pathways This helped to increase Isla’s focus and motivation to continue to attend school and complete her exams.

Isla has been matched to her mentor for over a year. This is longer than average, but Isla wanted and needed the continual emotional support and encouragement from her mentor.

Isla’s mum is back in work and has been engaging with the school and her mentor. Mum recently sent this message to Isla’s mentor:

“She (Isla) seems brighter, so that’s so encouraging. Thank you so much for your support. I don’t think I realised how much support I need with her. Your empathy and understanding are invaluable to us, you have helped me & Isla. Your guidance has given me different ways of looking at things which lifts the fog a bit”

Isla is doing exams in May, and she has said she thinks she might no longer need mentoring support after these are finished. She has been accepted into college and is looking forward to a “fresh start and leaving all the bad stuff behind”.

*** Isla’s name has been changed to protect her identity.**

Further Development

We regularly have around 20-24 active mentors at any given time. We aim to lower this slightly to ensure training, management, and supervision is manageable within the current capacity of the team.

Safeguarding and other information-sharing

Our mentors have made four safeguarding referrals in the last year and one police intelligence report. The quality of the relationships that our mentors build with children and young people enables them to disclose issues that were previously unknown. Two mentors have also attended professional meetings including core groups and CP Conferences.

First Time Missing

When first time missing incidents have occurred, a volunteer follows up with a call within a week after the Return Home Interview. This has assisted with case workload, and we have always received a comprehensive overview of how the young person has been since the RHI. The volunteer has on many occasions offered advice or contact numbers for the parent or carers. Any concerns are relayed back to the team immediately. Over 200 of these calls have been made in the last 12 months.

Recruiting Mentors into Paid Roles

Four of our mentors over the last 2 years were recruited into paid caseworker roles. They had already completed our full volunteer training programme, had been matched with young people previously and knew some of the staff well. These factors along with understanding the values of Catch22 meant that their induction time was reduced, and they were all working with cases much more quickly. The mentor programme is therefore a helpful screening opportunity for finding excellent staff who embody and support Catch22 philosophy and values.

Technology

All mentors now have Catch22 volunteer email accounts. This was a crucial introduction in the first Covid-19 national lockdown so they could contact young people safely through MS Teams, emails, and chat. All active mentors now also have a smartphone so they can fully utilise the functions of their Catch22 email and give flexibility to the young person. Parents and carers and the young people themselves have given feedback that it is best when they can contact the mentor directly in this way.

Support to complement Casework

As a part of our service coordinators' management of waiting lists, some of us mentors have delivered safety sessions with children and young people at low risk on the RFM to ensure the risks do not escalate while they are waiting for a caseworker. Nine young people have been supported in this way.