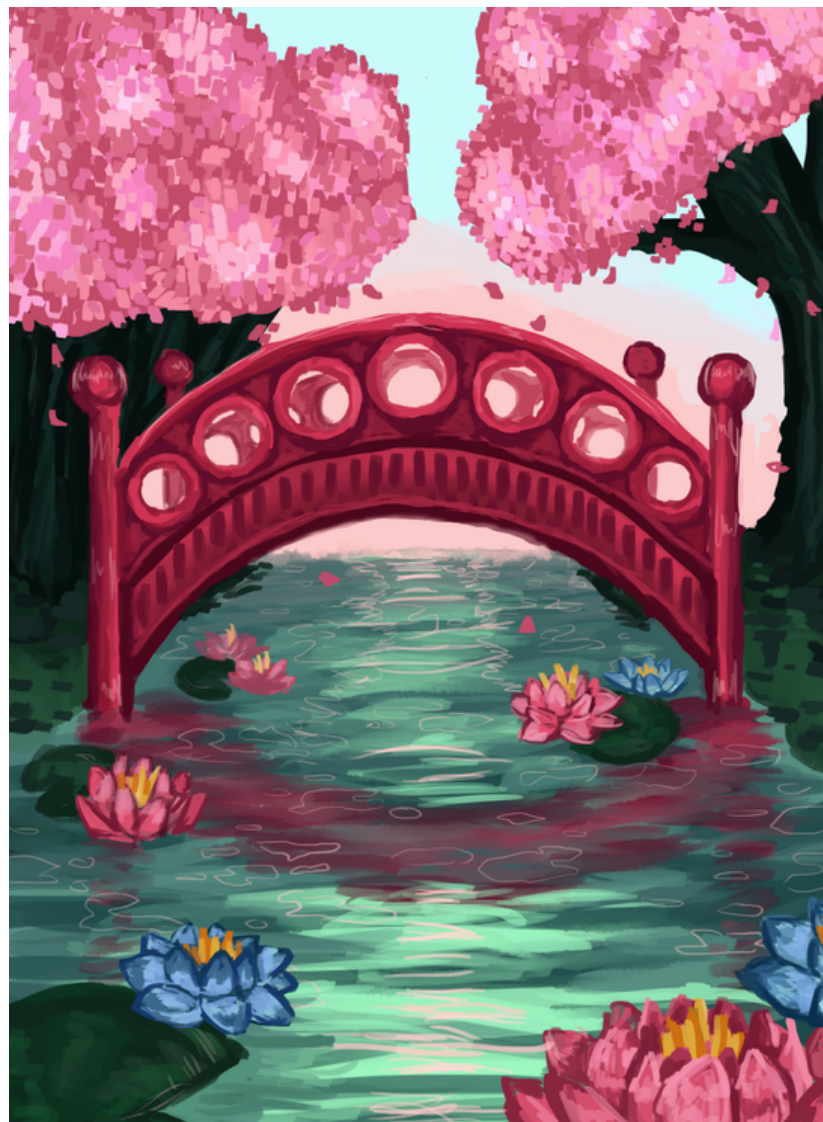




THE CHAMELEON



The Bedfordshire and Luton CAMHS magazine, created
by service users



Art by Az

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We have placed a number of tulips throughout the magazine. Can you spot how many individual tulips there are? Answer is on the last page





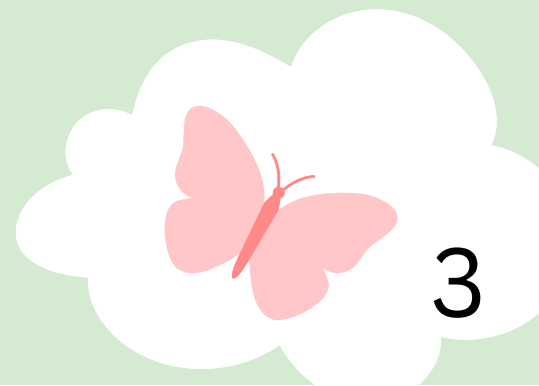
What is it like to join Participation?

Before joining the CAMHS participation group, I was struggling with friendships and socialising at school, I was also in a really bad state where I was really lonely and felt that no-one would like me or want to talk to me. But I am so glad I joined the group because it helped me accept who I am and it also helped me establish some great friends and people who I knew I could talk to anytime about anything. Everyone is so welcoming and friendly, even when I don't have my camera or microphone on. I feel accepted and listened to, and it is also a lot of fun! By joining participation, I have developed so much confidence and was even part of a podcast, which is something I never thought I would do. I enjoy every minute of the group and always look forward to upcoming events and the Friday meetings when I can attend.

~Zoë

“Since starting a couple months ago, I'd be eager to say that participating in CAMHS is a blast. Knowing I'm able to help young people like me is a dream come true. I only found out about this opportunity for my Duke Of Edinburgh awards, but I will most definitely continue to participate in any way I can once it's completed.”

~Maiya

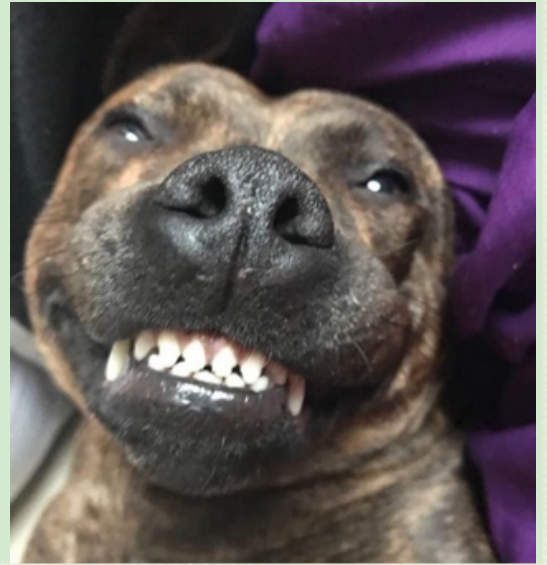




Pets Page



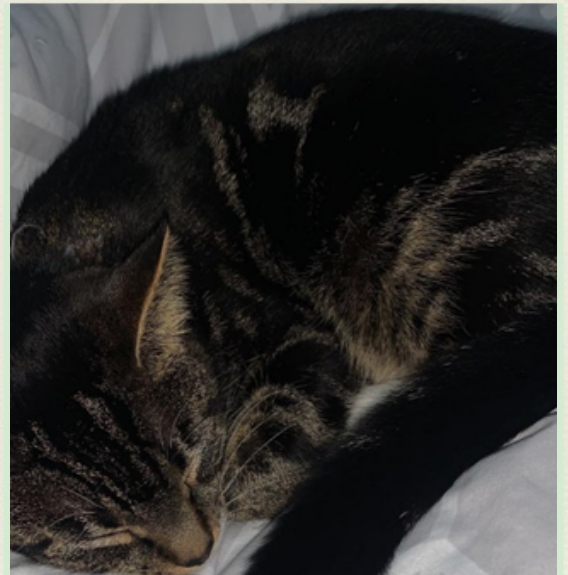
Pearl



Stella Bella



Peanut



Luna

If you'd like your pet to feature in the next edition, send us a photo and their name to Molly (details on back page)

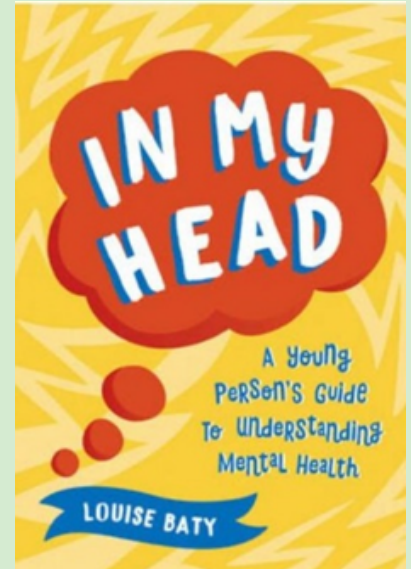


Book Reviews

In My Head by Louise Baty

In my head is a book written by Louise Baty to help people understand more about mental health.

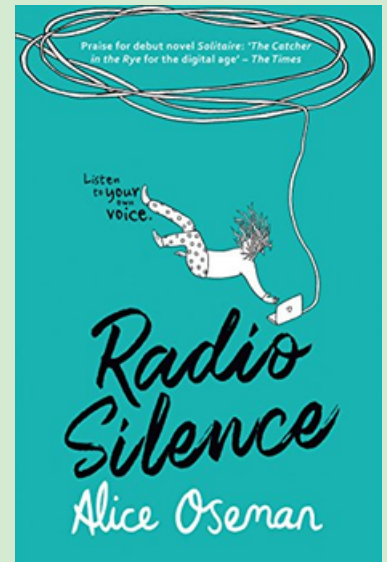
Not only is it good for people struggling with mental health but also for people who want to have a deeper understanding of what mental health is. I would recommend this book to anyone who struggles or knows anyone who does or wants to learn more about the different aspects of mental health. As well as information there are also journaling pages and helpful coping strategies and helplines you can use. This book has helped me learn more about myself but also keep me distracted and entertained at the same time. I hope this can help others too:)



By Keeley

Radio Silence by Alice Oseman

Radio Silence is a popular book by Alice Oseman, focusing on the subject of over-studying and keeping a school-life balance. The book follows the life of Frances Janvier. She's head girl, constantly studying for her exams, and is actively preparing for her Cambridge interview. Although Frances' school friends think all she does is study, Frances is completely obsessed with a podcast called Universe City, for which she constantly creates fanart for. After meeting Aled, she is unafraid to admit this 'nerdy' hobby — and maybe, just maybe, she'll admit to why Carys disappeared...



By Maiya

Covid-19 and its Effects on Mental Health in School



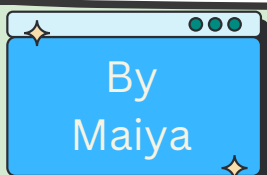
3 years ago, the infamous Covid-19 struck the UK, causing it to shut into a national lockdown. Soon enough, this lockdown became world-wide. Schools were temporarily shut, workplaces were closed, and human contact was to be kept at an absolute minimum. This impacted many people's finances (as hundreds of small businesses had been closed), mental wellbeing, studies for major school exams and more. This point in time inflicted harm upon countless young adults in vulnerable states. Perhaps affecting their mental health forever.

The website Young Minds conducted multiple tests since The Lockdown to document the wellbeing of young people. Using the results from their Autumn 2020 survey, and comparing to their January 2021 survey, we can decipher how the lockdown impacted young people during these times. Young Minds' 2020 survey reveals the impact that Covid has had on those in secondary school, and how they struggle to cope with everyday life. The survey has shown the underlying pressure teens have had when returning to daily school life after 6 months away. This, however, is combated by positive emotions emitted when those same teens returned to having a routine, seeing friends and teachers. The isolation of The Coronavirus had gotten to most people, but its effects seemed to begin withering away. The survey was carried out with 2,011 young people with a history of mental health problems between Friday 15th September and Wednesday 30th September, shortly after schools had reopened. Their findings were: 69% of respondents described their mental health as poor now that they are back in school. 40% of respondents said that there was no school counsellor available to support students in their school. 27% had a one-on-one conversation with a teacher or another member of staff. 23% (almost a quarter) of respondents said that there was less mental health support than before the pandemic – while only 9% agreed there was more support.

Their next survey was carried out after the second national lockdown and shows that multiple people found this lockdown harder to deal with due to the brief time they had to settle into a routine, only to be flipped upside down into a lockdown again. Some participants mentioned feeling deeply anxious and had started self-harming again, having panic attacks, or are losing motivation for their future. The constant pressure to commit to their schoolwork, whilst also staying in a lonely isolation, deeply concerned many. Lots of young people expressed fears of a future without covid and how the vaccine rollout would go. This survey was carried out with 2,483 young people aged 13-25, between 26th January and 12th February 2021:

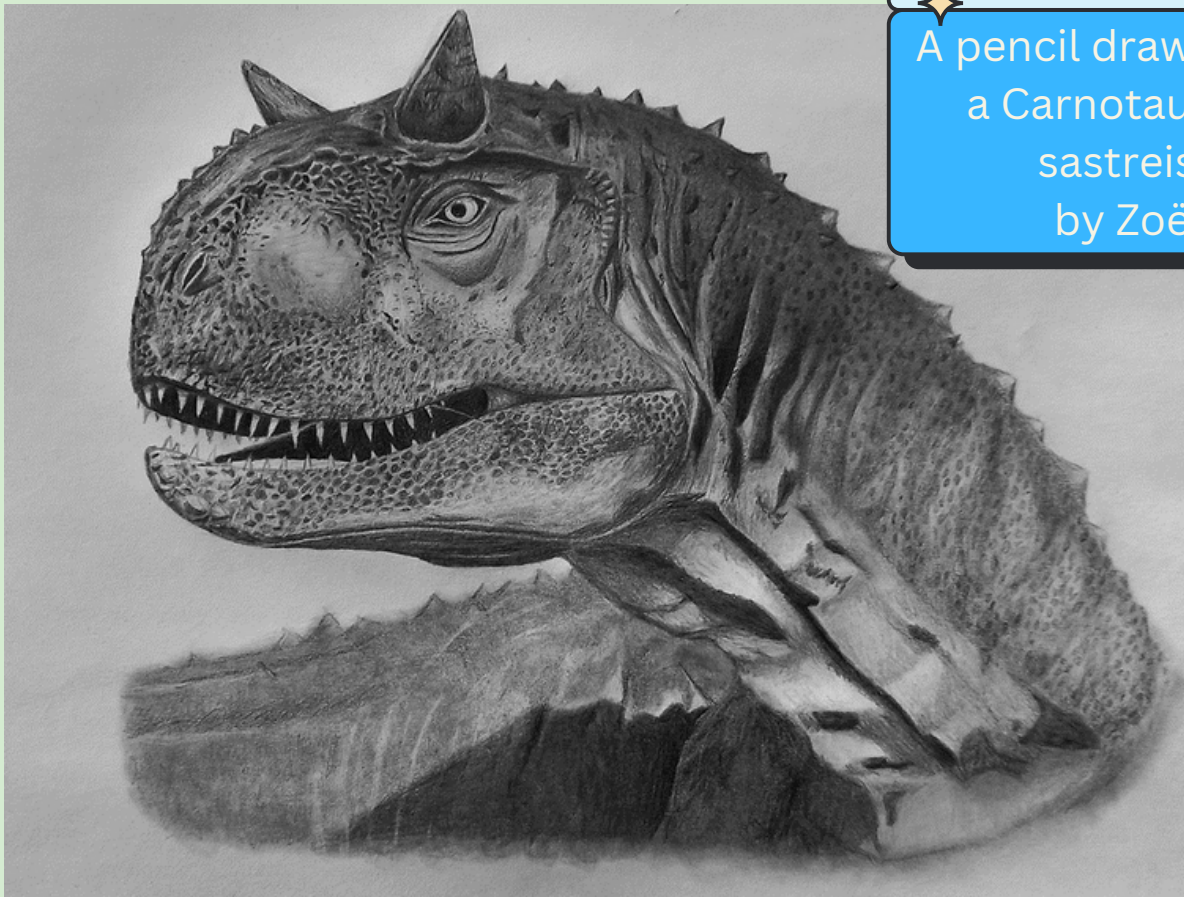
75% of correspondents agreed that they have found the current lockdown harder to cope with than previous ones (14% said it was easier, 11% said it was the same). 67% believed that the pandemic would have a long-term negative effect on their mental health. 79% of respondents agreed that their mental health would start to improve once restrictions were lifted, but some expressed caution about restrictions being lifted too quickly and prospects of future lockdowns.

Comparing these results, it is easy to see that the mental wellbeing of young people was much better when outside of lockdown, even though it was hard to develop trust back into a normal lifestyle and daily routine. Whilst inside the lockdown once again, many participants had more frequent panic attacks and anxiety attacks and expressed their concerns about future

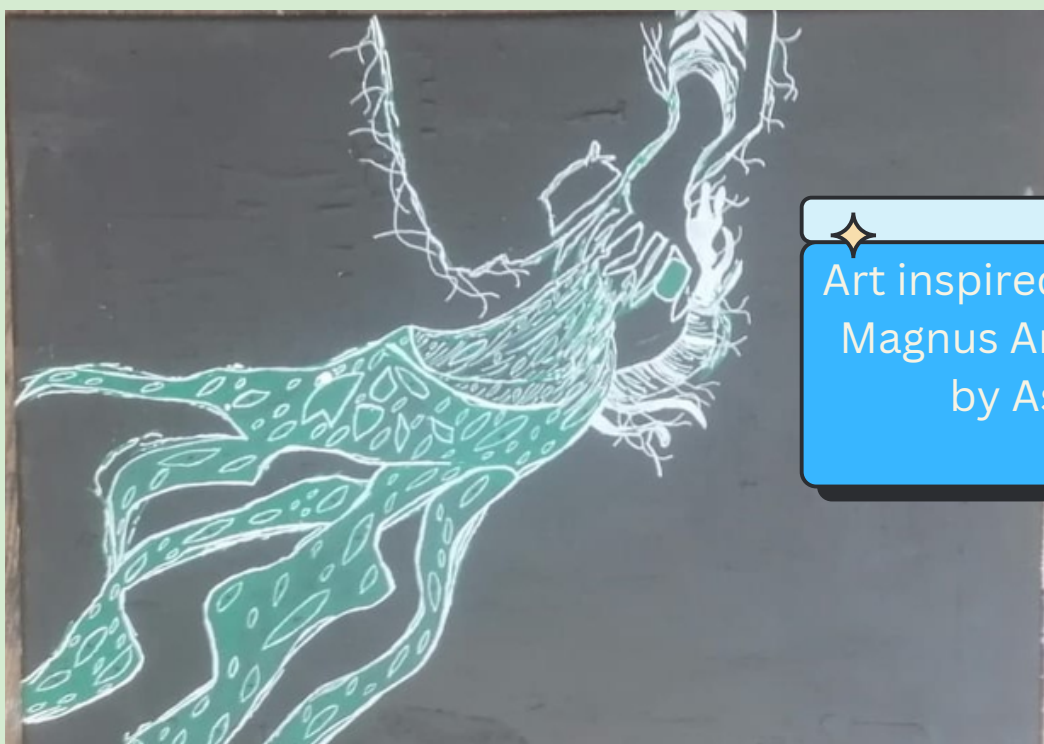




Artwork by Young People in Participation



✦ A pencil drawing of a Carnotaurus sastreis by Zoë ✦



✦ Art inspired by the Magnus Archives by Ash ✦



5 Items That Help Me as an Autistic Person

I was recently diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at 17 years old. Here are some items that have helped me even before my diagnosis.

1. Ear defenders/ Noise cancelling headphones

I struggle with loud noises, crowds and everyday background noise since discovering ear defenders and noise cancelling headphones. They have helped me massively and have lessened sensory overload in public. I own both ear defenders and noise cancelling headphones.

There are pros and cons for both of them. The main difference between them is that the noise cancelling headphones can play music and ear defenders do not. I also find that ear defenders work slightly better at blocking out loud unexpected noises whereas my headphones are better at blocking out everyday background noises. A con of my ear defenders is that they tend to feel quite bulky and put pressure on my ears if I wear them for long periods of time.

I have also tried loop ear plugs. They personally didn't work for me and took a couple weeks to ship from Germany at the time but I know a lot of people who use them and love them. It's just down to personal preference.

Loop earplugs:

<https://www.loopearplugs.com/collections/all>
Amazon

Noise cancelling headphones (The ones I use):

https://www.bose.co.uk/en_gb/products/headphones/noise_cancelling_headphones/quietcomfort-headphones-45.html#v=qc45_black

Ear Defenders:

Amazon
Sensory Direct



2. Oodies/Blanket hoodies

Sometimes I have days where I really struggle with the feeling of clothes or tags in my clothes. Blanket hoodies are a great choice for days when I feel like that, they are so comfortable and soft. I find them brilliant to relax in after an overwhelming day. They come in loads of different colours and patterns. You can also purchase them in pretty much any shop nowadays as well!

3. Communication Cards

Communication cards are a good alternative way of communicating when talking feels too overwhelming or you are unable to talk. I have lots of different varieties with different words, phrases and also ones prepared for situations that come up often. You can buy them but the great thing about these is that you can make them at home as well.

You can purchase them off Amazon or Etsy. I love my stickman communication ones as well. They have a variety of communication cards for not only autism but for other conditions too.

<https://stickmancommunications.co.uk>



4. Led Lights/projectors

I find Led lights or projectors make a space/room much more comfortable to be in. I get overwhelmed with the main light in a room or sometimes the light feels too bright for me. Led lights help create a relaxing dim environment.



5. Squishmallows/soft toys

I may be a little biased on this one as I collect squishmallows. I love them they come in all different types of animals and they are super soft and squishy. I love cuddling them at the end of a long and sleeping on them. They help me regulate and calm down. Any soft toy that you like could help do the same thing.



Holocaust Memorial Day: Remembering Ordinary People

Holocaust memorial day happens every year on the 27th of January. It is a day where we remember the lives of those lost to genocide. This years theme was “ordinary people”, in essence remembering that the stories we hear and the people lost were real, human everyday people. People like you and me.

To commemorate the day I created two portraits.

The first being Leo Kok, an artist who was imprisoned at Camp Westerbok by the Nazi's, during this time he drew what he saw. He was liberated from this camp but passed a few days after. Kok's paintings can be seen at the Jewish Museum in Amsterdam.

The second portrait is of Anne Frank. She lived in hiding with her family in Amsterdam where she wrote her Diary, until her and her family were captured by the Nazi's. She was taken to Bergen-Belson concentration camp where she passed away.



Continued on next page

Holocaust Memorial Day: Remembering Ordinary People

Holocaust memorial day is more than the history of genocide it is a day to question the genocide happening all over the world even today. Since 2003 Darfur a civil war has been erupting which so far has led to the death of up to or over 400,000 civilians. The Arab Militia – the Janjaweed have destroyed villages and murdered thousands, this has been condemned as genocide by the International criminal court.

Genocide is not a thing of the past, it is happening right now! We need to be informed and do what we can to stop this.

For Information and resources:

<https://www.hmd.org.uk/>

<https://www.holocaust.org.uk/>

<https://jck.nl/nl/jhm>

<https://youtu.be/rnJUeAL5Oxw>



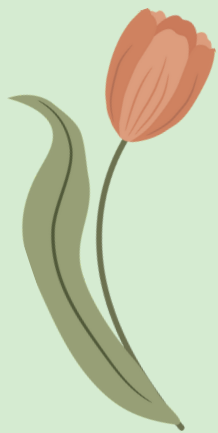
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
DAY TRUST



THE NATIONAL
HOLOCAUST CENTRE
AND MUSEUM

Joods
Cultureel
Kwartier





Inside Our Autistic Minds: TV Review

I will be reviewing the 2023 BBC TV series Inside Our Autistic Minds. This two part documentary led by Chris Packham explores four different autistic individuals, who open up about their journeys through short films. Each short film created was really moving and helped me to reflect on my own autism diagnosis. It is very important to understand that autism shouldn't be looked upon in a stigmatised manner, every autistic person is unique and that we have different coping mechanisms.

Autism is a spectrum condition that influences neurological pathways and development. It involves how people view and process things around them.

The documentary is available on BBC IPlayer
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/p0bbnh47/inside-our-autistic-minds>



Inside Our Autistic Minds

Chris Packham helps autistic people connect with their friends and family in a new way.

 BBC iPlayer

Research on the Mental Health Support Teams in schools

School is hard. Having mental health issues and attending school is daunting. Having depression and thinking about school is excruciating. This was my experience a few years ago when I attended high school and college. I loved college, I loved my classes, but I had a problem. I didn't know how to get support or who to turn to. I now wonder how my experience would have been different, how my friends and classmates' experiences would have been different if we'd had such supports, especially during Lockdown.

Us young people spend a lot of time at school/college and so staff may be the first people that we turn to for support when things are difficult. School staff may notice when things don't seem right for us, for example they may notice changes in our concentration levels or that we are not socialising with our friends. Schools are therefore, in a helpful position to refer young people for support. So, the government decided to bring together mental health and education services to help us young people gain quicker access to mental health support. To achieve this the Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) were developed. When I heard about the MHST's within CAMHS I was ecstatic about the possibilities and the crucial support that could be offered.

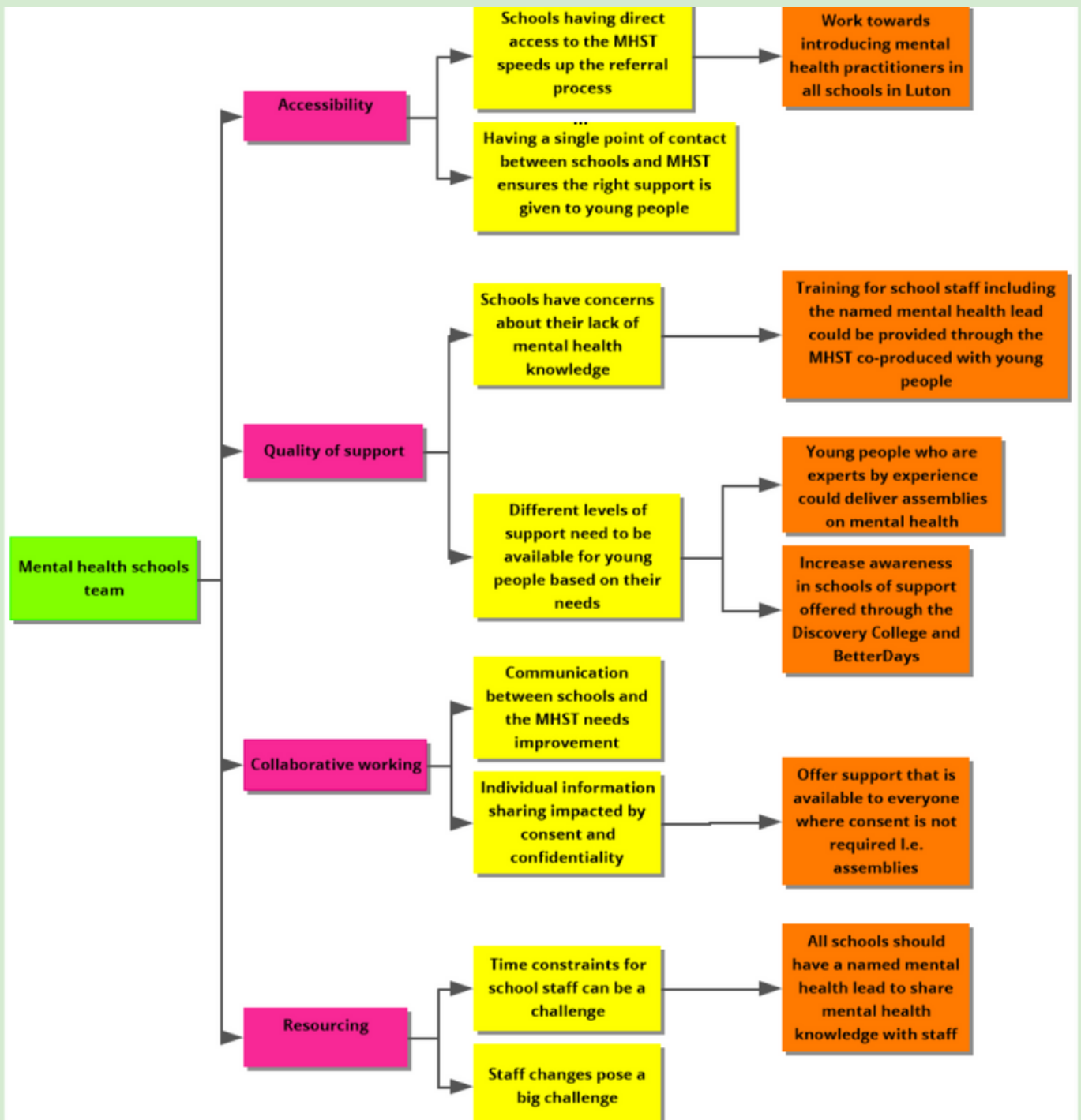
Mental health in schools has been a high priority for CAMHS over the past few years with the MHST being a huge step in a hopeful direction. Each team is made up of a number of qualified Mental Health practitioners who offer evidence-based interventions within schools. They also liaise with school staff, offer advice, and provide general wellbeing support to all pupils to help prevent, identify and support mental health difficulties. Young people in Bedfordshire could now access high-quality support as quickly as possible, as referrals are sent directly to the MHST from the school.

When I was asked to help out on a research project focused on evaluating the joint-working approaches between MHST and school staff, I was incredibly interested to discover what it could mean for the future of the MHST and what young people themselves could do to help improve the process. With help from the author of this research (Louise) we will draw out key findings of interest to us young people:

The research processes.

Schools and CAMHS have traditionally worked in very different ways and therefore whilst introducing MHST's in schools is a fantastic idea to improve access to mental health support for young people, it is not without its difficulties. Obviously, the better we can understand the differences between how schools and CAMHS work, the more we can do to improve the service, ultimately supporting young people. To do this, staff from schools working with the MHST, completed questionnaires to share their views on what they felt were some of the strengths and challenges of working with the MHST.

Continued on next page



Using the diagram above we have depicted the themes (pink bubbles), key findings (yellow bubbles) and possible next steps (orange bubbles), that we feel young people would be most interested in. Overall the research showed that the MHST's are having a "positive impact on the mental health needs of pupils", as quoted by one participant of the study.

Following this research and the fact the MHST has a huge positive impact, it is my hope more schools will have access to this service.

The findings also point towards a need for improvement within the service, and I believe young people can help with that in many ways. Training for school staff about mental health could be provided by the MHST alongside young people. Co-production is crucial to this process. I believe this can make a huge change and build a sense of understanding about mental health in schools for staff, and ultimately improve the mental health and wellbeing of all young people.



Bird Photography



This is a Common Chaffinch.



This is a Robin.



This is a Blue Tit.



This is a Goldfinch.

BETTER DAYS

Better Days for BLMK is an exciting new project made up of a year of creative workshops for Children and Young People in our local communities

Working in collaboration with young people, local creatives and services we aim to promote conversations around mental health - helping to reduce stigma and improve well-being

**Want to know more?
Find us on social media:
@BetterDaysBLMK**



**Or send us an email at:
Betterdaysblmk@hotmail.com**



Trans Social Group

A safe space for trans and gender questioning service users to connect with other people and get support

A safe space

We know how important safe spaces are for members of the trans community. It can feel really isolating at times, and quite scary too.

We wanted to create a space for you to meet other people like you, where you can just feel relaxed and be yourself



Trans Rights

You're not alone

The groups will be a mix of different activities from crafts, quizzes and games to discussions and advice on living as a trans person.

Facilitated by staff with lived experience, we just want to create somewhere you can feel accepted, understood and connected



When and Where?

First Monday of the month: online (zoom)
Third Thursday of the month: Rush Court
(Bedford CAMHS)
4.30-5.30pm

For more info, contact:
Jay - He/Him - jay.worthington1@nhs.net
Sassie - They/Them - saskia.lawrence1@nhs.net
or speak to your clinician

CAMHS Updates

CAMHS Talk



CAMHS Talk is produced by the staff and service users of Bedfordshire and Luton CAMHS. Listen to conversations about CAMHS, other services that support young people with their mental health and things we can do to support ourselves. Our latest episodes discuss autism in females and people assigned female at birth.

Rainbow Bedfordshire

Rainbow Bedfordshire has set up trans inclusive LGBTQ+ swimming sessions. It is a safe space where you won't be judged, where you can enjoy having a swim and meeting people. The details are in the flyer on the right, or you can get in touch with us for more information.

Elft.rainbowbedfordshire@nhs.net



The Discovery College

The Discovery College aims towards improving well-being and positive outcomes for all young people in Beds and Luton. The workshops and courses are educational, co-produced in a cultural sensitive way on themes like Healthy Relationships, Life Skills, Creativity, Mental Health and Well-being and Personal Growth. Come and join The Discovery College this Spring Term starting with the 20th of February!



Get Involved

CAMHS is changing and developing all the time, and learning from young people and their parents experience is more important than ever. You can have your say in how CAMHS develops, make new friends, take part in our podcast or write articles for future editions of the Chameleon by getting in touch using the details below:



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Get Involved



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Sassie Lawrence
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Suicide Prevention Lead
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There were...
27 tulips!
Did you get it??