

The Background Story

In 2011, the Early Action Task Force brought together charity, business and government leaders to make the case for a shift in spending towards prevention. In response, a group of funders formed the Early Action Funders Alliance, which aims to make the public case for early action, help funders to embed it in their work, and ultimately help the shift towards early action. The EA Funders Alliance comprises the Big Lottery Fund, Comic Relief and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, with Barrow Cadbury Trust and the Legal Education Foundation providing additional support and guidance; they set up the Early Action Learning Fund and invited select organisations to propose a local Early Action Project.

MAP's Early Action Project

MAP considers itself to be an early action organisation. Our Mission is that "all young people will know what it is to be valued, and that they will have all the information and support they need to make a successful transition into adulthood." For 25 years MAP have been delivering professional **Advice, Counselling** and **Youth Work** for young people at their earliest possible point of need; whilst working across sectors to campaign for social justice and to influence improved services for young people.

Since 2015 MAP have been commissioned by the "Early Action Learning Fund" to undertake a 5-year Early Action programme, based in three Norwich high schools, and their local West Norwich communities. The project aims to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of students, and to support their schools to better understand and combat poor mental health. It aims to use evidence of its successes to influence local and national policy and spending on early intervention, youth mental health and wellbeing services.

This report summarises the outcomes and achievements over the first four years of this programme

"MAP was great - my counsellor was very understanding and we had great rapport. The way we were both able to break down things in my life really helped to see the roots of my mental health issues"

"Feeling less anxious, more confident and positive. Made some new friends"

"The people were willing to listen and actually seemed to care about what you've been through"



For the students - an illustration of what we have delivered to date.

In the first four years of the Early Action Programme MAP has delivered a significant intervention to **1591** individual young people, and through Life Zones, Assemblies and PSHE has reached many more young people.

Our school partners have reflected with us that the strength of this delivery model is in its multiple layers of provision. We aim to offer a broad selection of student support catering for all levels of need; from early signs of poor mental health, or challenging behaviour, through to support with diagnosable conditions and the need for professional advice.

*A big thank you to you! You have been amazing and the work/affect it has had has been so positive. The students prior to your input were challenging and really lacked self-belief and were reluctant to try new tasks ... Over the course of your input and the positivism you brought they started to think that they can achieve what they want. The students were keen to see you and wanted to chat to you about their work. It really transpired how much they needed that positive impact. **Teacher***

857 "Positive activities"

Facilitated by Youth Workers and attended by a total of **562** young people. **Including: 1-1 mentoring, after school clubs and groups and tailor made projects to address specific needs**

27 Summer Activities

27 summer activities took place over 3 summers, attracting a total of **87** different young people from the three Early Action schools and their local communities, with a total of **327** attendances.

657 Student advice or family-mediation sessions

A total of **657** face-to-face advice and family mediation appointments offered to **230** young people or their parents/carers. A further **340** pieces of non-face-to-face work were completed. **Subjects include: Work, further education and futures, exam stress, mindfulness, managing self harm, sex and the c-card, bullying and family mediation**

3905 Counselling sessions

A total of **3905** counselling sessions have been offered to **375** young people. Of these sessions **2722** were attended.

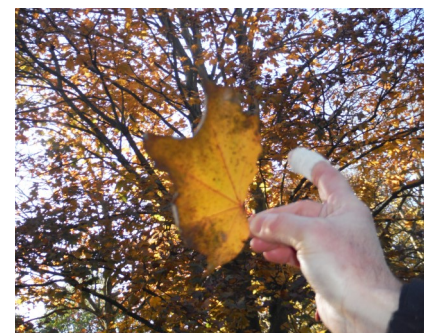
Counselling can be directly accessed by students and has comparatively short waiting times when compared to CAMHS services.

25 PHSE subjects delivered for whole year-groups

Each 'round' of PHSE involves between **8** and **10** sessions (1 per form group), reaching whole year groups of between **160** and **250** students each time. **Subjects include: Sex, Relationships and Consent, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Diversity and Extremism, Drugs and Alcohol, Identity and Self Esteem, Social Media, Sugar Smart.**

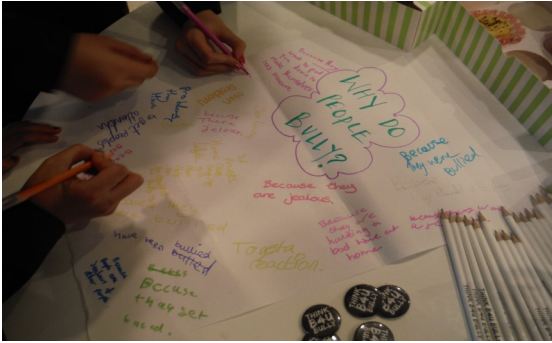
521 "Life-Zone" sessions

A total of **521** weekly lunch-time drop-ins have been offered in the three schools. On average, around **25** young people attend each Life-Zone. **These are where students come to request support, self refer and to get involved in activities, debates and consultations.**



Life-zones

Life zones have proved consistently well-attended by students. These are run by a Youth Worker and a trained Adviser, they respond to the issues young people raise. Issues and topics for discussion can include bullying, online pornography, self-harm, exam stress, sexual health and relationships. Activities provide informal education on these topics and 1:1 support is available if necessary. Life zones provide an easily accessible route for young people to self-refer to MAP's more specialist services such as advice, mediation or counselling. Having both Youth Workers and Advisors at the Life-zones has been crucial in helping young people identify what kind of support they might need, understanding the different roles, and helping to 'de-stigmatised' mental health support.



"We see it everywhere we go at the moment. We see the impact of MAP around the school. You see it in the Life-zone which is always bubbly on a Tuesday lunchtime - they are surrounded by students who are keen to get involved. It has raised the profile of mental health issues, made it acceptable to talk about" **Deputy Head**

"I can trust MAP completely and that's why I came to you for help"

Young Person

Youth Work

Our Youth Workers give young people opportunities to learn skills for life and to develop their character and strengths. Positive activities have planned learning outcomes and are a method of informal education. They all start with a positive relationship with a Youth Worker where the individual needs of a young person are understood. This leads to personalised activities (1:1 work), group activities and residential experiences. Learning is around confidence building, teamwork and communication. In small groups, young people are supported and encouraged to openly discuss themes through games, art and other activities. The small groups help young people to see that they are not alone in many of the problems they face and allows them to offer mutual support and understanding, developing social skills and building lasting friendships. In 1:1 "mentoring" sessions, young people are supported to set goals and aspirations and to identify the blocks that they perceive as preventing them from achieving those goals, e.g. problems at home, physical or emotional problems, bullying etc.

"I am writing to say how brilliant [my son] has been the past few weeks, he's been so happy and confident regarding school. He has spoke lots about the map youth worker and how he enjoys talking to him ... his confidence is so good to see as he is a changed child. No issues coming into school, does homework and is so bubbly and chatty at home." **Parent**

"Both students were very excited by the project and enjoyed the sessions. Both have gained in confidence, culminating in both doing a great job as guides on the Y6 open evening. I noticed both were more confident with peers who are not normally part of their friendship group. So very positive all round" **Form Tutor**

"Since participating in Boost sessions while in Year 7 this young person has increasingly matured and has been managing his anger in much more positive ways at school. There have been no further days in Seclusion or exclusions. In fact he only receives positive entries for his responsibility and leadership, along with excellent effort and contribution in lessons across all subjects. This is an incredible turnaround of which we are very proud." **Pastoral worker**

"I've gained more confidence and learnt a lot"

Young Person



"we had lots of fun and we're kind to each other"

Young Person



Counselling

The value of accessible counselling within schools cannot be overstated. Our Counsellors work with young people to overcome personal problems. A relationship with a Counsellor can help young people understand themselves, see problems more clearly and be empowered to make choices about their life. Counselling can help young people with resolving specific problems, making difficult decisions, coping with a crisis, or improving relationships with others.

Receiving counselling can be life changing. Dealing with anxiety or depression can really hold back a young person's progress through school. Receiving support early when you need it can save years of psychological problems. By providing 'open access' counselling young people can refer themselves without the need to approach a GP or other professional.

We have a wealth of evidence and feedback showing that counselling has had a positive impact. Over the 4 years of Early Action, we collected emotional wellbeing scores (using the WEMWS scale) from **304** young people who had received counselling. **72%** of the young people who received counselling reported an improvement in their wellbeing, with the average score rising from **2.79** before counselling to **3.31** after.

Of the clients receiving counselling through the programme a high percentage have reported feeling better about their education after counselling; with their average score for this question, of the **98** students asked, rising from **3.7** to **6.1** out of 10.

Young people who have experienced counselling report that it is easier to concentrate, and that they are better able to 'handle' their feelings. Pastoral workers, form tutors and parents have commented on young people's calmer attitude, improved social skills, and greater engagement with school.

I've become more optimistic about my future and because of that I can do a lot more schoolwork and clear out my mind of stress

I feel better. Calmer. Less prone to panic/anxiety attacks.

Suicidal thoughts stopped. A lot calmer. Finding ways to manage my anger differently.

I can now ask people to leave us alone if they are bullying me and my friends

"M really struggled with his transition to High School and by week 3 of his first year his attendance had dropped to 84%. ...Once M was seen by the MAP counsellor his attendance improved dramatically. He appeared to be happy and the claims of bullying stopped. He finished year 7 with an attendance of 94.47%. M is now in year 8 and his attendance is 96.67% with 1 day of authorised absence. His progress is above expected and he has no negative marks with lots of positives for his effort and achievements. M is now a happy, positive young man who has grown in confidence, made positive friendships and relationships with staff and when seen running around school, always has a smile on his face" **Pastoral Worker**

"We have got a young lad who the only thing that keeps him coming into school is seeing his MAP worker" **Deputy Head**

My perspective on school is more positive - work more - sense of achievement- getting on better with other people now

Every session I feel better afterwards but I am not sure why. Talking through things every week means it doesn't accumulate. I don't have so many 'blips'

My anxiety is a lot more manageable and I am able to do a few more things that I would not have been able to do 1-2 years ago. I have grown in confidence and even though I get anxious I still try to push myself but there is still big challenges I need to overcome

Advice

MAP's Advisers talk through options and legal rights and help young people make their own decision based on full and accurate information. Young people in the schools have really benefited from the opportunity to build rapport with MAP Advice Workers at lunchtime Life Zones, via Sex and Relationships Education workshops, PSHE delivery, assemblies, presence at events such as careers fairs and involvement in community projects.

All of these activities have enabled young people to talk with an Advice Worker and get to grips with the concept of advice giving and receiving - and how and when to request this type of support. MAP Advice Workers have been actively involved in developing a service that is based upon the feedback from young people. So far, there has been a demand across all schools for advice support around careers, anger management, building self-esteem and bullying/relationships with friends. Students have especially highlighted more of a need for support around exam stress, SRE and support around substance use.

I now completely believe in myself and wanted to say thank you so much for all the help you have given me over the past few months, I can't tell you how much you have helped me!

I was able to relax and learn about ways to help myself in stressful situations

Helped me to sort out a plan and clear my head. Made me feel less anxious and stressed

I felt really listened to and was given really helpful advice

Helped me with finding apprenticeship

Mediation

Family Mediation is a voluntary process by which an impartial third party helps family members to explore and understand any differences that they may have which are causing conflicts in the household. This may help them to come to a mutual agreement in settling these differences. Mediation provides a safe and neutral space, which can help maintain better family relationships.

The MAP mediation worker is also trained as an Advice Worker, so is also able to offer specialist advice to parents and carers. Social welfare advice can be life changing for families. Financial pressures, unemployment and debt can be a major cause of family stress which always has an impact on by the family's children.

MAP has made me realise that I don't always listen to my child and that I need to be more aware of her feelings and needs.

Parent

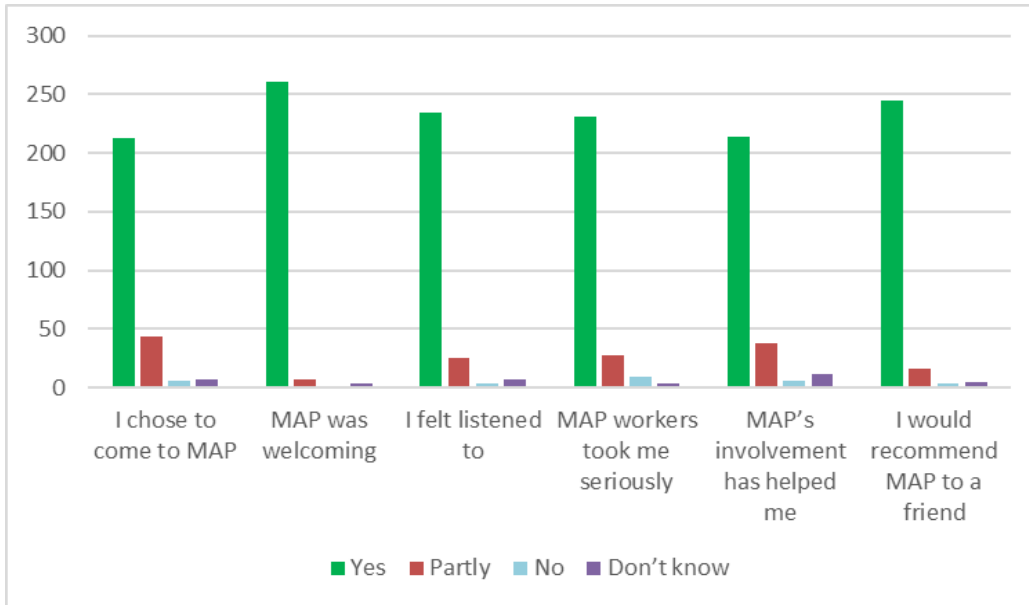
Its been good to have the time and space to talk about things in depth. Also to do it with someone who takes what is happening seriously and to come away with genuine options, ideas. ...The most useful person by far who we've ever spoken to about all this - so helpful.

Parent

"I've been working with a Year 10 pupil who was skipping lessons and displaying challenging behaviour at home. I referred him to a MAP careers advice worker, who helped him with careers and got him a college interview doing what he wants (bricklaying). Without this he would have been NEET. After 3 mediation sessions, Mum reports things have improved at home. The young person has been able to state his needs and has asked for anger management support. He and his mum are starting to communicate with more respect and say they feel more positive about his future" **MAP Mediation Worker**

What do young people think of our services?

We collect feedback from young people in a number of ways, including informal verbal feedback, interviews, focus groups, electronic surveys, and 'Have Your Say' feedback forms. Over the four years, we have collected **734** pieces of feedback from young people receiving a significant intervention (counselling, advice or youth work). We also collected **402** feedback forms from summer activities and **over 2,500** feedback forms from PSHE sessions. Below is a selection of the consistently high feedback we receive.



Of the 276 young people completing our 'Have Your Say' feedback forms, 245 (89%) would recommend MAP to a friend and 261 (95%) found MAP welcoming. 205 (74%) rated MAP '5 out of 5'

Being accepted and allowed to have our/my say in a conversation

They were very helpful and understanding

They listen to you. They let you say what you want to say

I felt listened to. I wasn't judged. Top notch service, has helped me a bunch

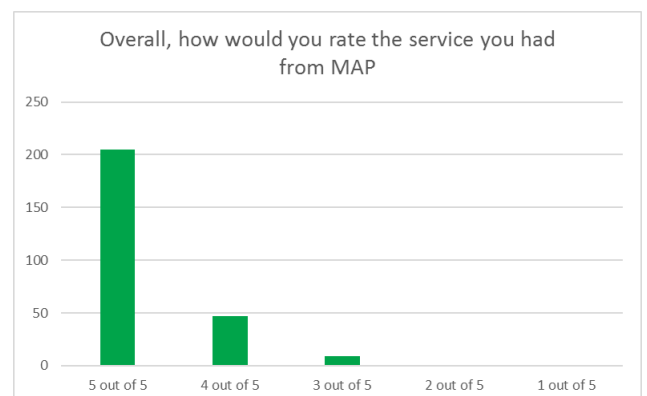
it was fun and encouraging to work with MAP

A comfortable and helpful environment that makes it easy to open up and talk about issues and feel listened to

Amazing people to talk to and to be around

It was very welcoming and the youth workers were cool

I would rate MAP 1000/1000



For the schools and communities: The support that Early Action provides to professionals.

Since the programme started we have trained and supported around **400** professionals to improve their knowledge and skills to better support local young people's wellbeing and mental health. These professionals come from within the EA school and their local communities.

We work with each school to develop practical wellbeing strategies and to appoint and train wellbeing leads. Part of our remit is to influence and educate staff practice in all areas that relate to wellbeing.

40+ CPD training sessions

402 attendances

An annual programme of CPD training is delivered for local professionals and school staff.

Subjects have included:

Understanding self harm, Youth Mental Health First Aid, Staff Wellbeing, Drug and Alcohol Use, Social Media and Online Safety, De-escalation, Domestic Abuse, LGBT+ awareness; ADHD; Autism ..and much more.



"I feel I have used the knowledge gained on the course already when I have been working with young people who have had thoughts of suicide in order to establish the level of need and risk. I found the ALGEE tool particularly helpful and follow this in my head like a checklist when it has been appropriate to do so"

School pastoral worker after attending 'Youth Mental Health First Aid'

"Brilliant course! Excellent knowledge of facilitator and style of delivery was brilliant! Loved the humour - made it much easier to take information and made the time go really quickly" **Feedback on '#Trending Drugs' training**

"I found the cycle of self-harm really useful and interesting. Exploring reasons for self-harm, what self-harm achieves for young people, how other people in a young person's life might react to learning they are self-harming and ways to support a young person both in your reactions/interactions and in offering practical support. All really, really useful." **Feedback on 'Working with Young People who Self-Harm' training session**

"The most enjoyable (as can be) training in a very long time. The way the session was delivered was brilliant. Wish more training was like this. Great job by the trainers "

Feedback on 'Educating with Pride: LGBT+ Awareness' training session

236 Early Action Network

members

Representing over 100 different organisations who all support young people locally. Members include The Matthew Project, The Garage, Open, Norwich International Youth Project, The Prince's Trust and many others.

14 networking events

48 Regular bulletins for training, funding and opportunities

170 Facebook Posts

16 Bulletins for school wellbeing leads



"I am a Youth Arts Worker and have been a member of MAP's Early Action Network for the past year and a half. The Early Action Network meetings have been a great way for me to be able to share opportunities and to network with other organisations. As a result we have had a number of new referrals to our confidence-building programme. It has also helped me understand more about other organisations and the support they can provide to the young people we are working with. The meetings are a good way to talk with like-minded individuals and organisations and see how we can all work together to provide better support for young people in need. The network has also provided the opportunity to share our latest news with regular bulletins that are emailed out to all the members enabling us to reach more organisations. I have also made use of the fantastic opportunity to access free training opportunities. All the training I have attended so far has been invaluable in supporting the work I am doing as a Youth Arts Worker. It has all been of a high standard and I have many great takeaways from the training that I have been able to use to improve the support that I can offer. As I am working for a charity we have a limited budget for training. Therefore it being free has meant I have been able to access training that I would otherwise have not been able to attend."

MAP's **Therapeutic Services Manager** provides regular **clinical supervision within schools** for key pastoral and management staff

"I have found having supervision really important as it gives me a chance to talk in a free, non-judgemental space and allows me to ask if what I am doing in practice is correct. I am given a new way to look at a challenge when I feel bogged down. I would really miss supervision and find it invaluable having someone from outside school who understands our requirements as Pastoral Managers in an otherwise very challenging role"

"The network has been a great way to find out what other organisations are doing in terms of outcomes measurement, and to share ideas. [MAP's impact and outcome officers] are both very knowledgeable and have introduced us to new data sources that we have been able to use to gain a greater picture of youth work in Norfolk and better demonstrate our own impact."

Our **Outcomes and Impact Officer** has created a regular **"Data Leads Network"** which supports other local organisations, institutions and statutory bodies to better evaluate and present the impact of their work.

A recipe for successful Early Action— the key lessons learned.

Our experience of this project shows us that local secondary schools have the potential to be a truly effective base for the provision of innovative early intervention support and social opportunities. Despite this, the Pastoral support teams within schools are often adversely affected by the tightening budgets, soaring levels of need from students, and growing waiting lists for community services. Collaborative projects like Early Action represent a significant increase in schools capacity to meet the increasing demand for social and emotional wellbeing support from students; whilst allowing those schools to receive a personalised service that is tailored to their systems, process and the needs of those students. Our school partners have all reported their preference for this collaborative, in-house service that they know and trust when compared to their alternative of time consuming external referrals and communication.

Collaborations between experienced youth-supporting organisations and schools can clearly be effective and become part of an integrated student, school and family support system. To truly benefit from this potential however, any schools considering such collaborations must be committed to providing the leadership, advocacy, resources and opportunities that are *absolutely* needed within their own system. High staff turnover, a lack of influential key contacts, poor communication, limited access to students and poor referral processes can be major barriers to effective support of students. They also need to be willing to consider improvements to their own policies, systems, processes and training commitments. By preventing young people's mental state from worsening; by actively looking to address the triggers of poor wellbeing and by promoting learning and personal development; this type of provision in schools can also vastly increase the school's ability to support their students holistically to reach their individual potentials within their education.

We feel that any future Early Action work must maintain the identity of an influencing service, as well as one that delivers support and additional capacity to schools. With increasing statutory guidance for schools in around the necessary provision of wellbeing support we believe there is an important role for voluntary sector organisations who are experienced in supporting and advocating for (and with) young people.

In order for any future Early Action work to be successful, it also needs to maintain its focus on evidence gathering and analysis. The needs of students, schools and communities change regularly, and any organisation delivering this work in partnership with schools will need to observe these changes and adapt to them. The available funding from national funders, trusts, local authorities and mental health services are also limited. Any future Early Action work will also need to continuously present evidence of the effectiveness and value for money of their work and to use that evidence to improve and adapt.

As an organisation that believes in Early Action, MAP will continue to use our knowledge and the evidence we have gathered of this service's positive impact to influence schools, local statutory services and health services to contribute a larger proportion of their funds towards early wellbeing support in schools. We also aim to use our knowledge and evidence to continue to educate and train our existing and future partners and stakeholders, so that we all better understand mental health and the importance of social opportunity

“...it is important to remember that true early action for the benefit of young people is not simply providing quality early intervention services but also means striving to influence purposeful change within the existing systems and communities that they live in”

Dan Mobbs - Chief Executive, MAP