

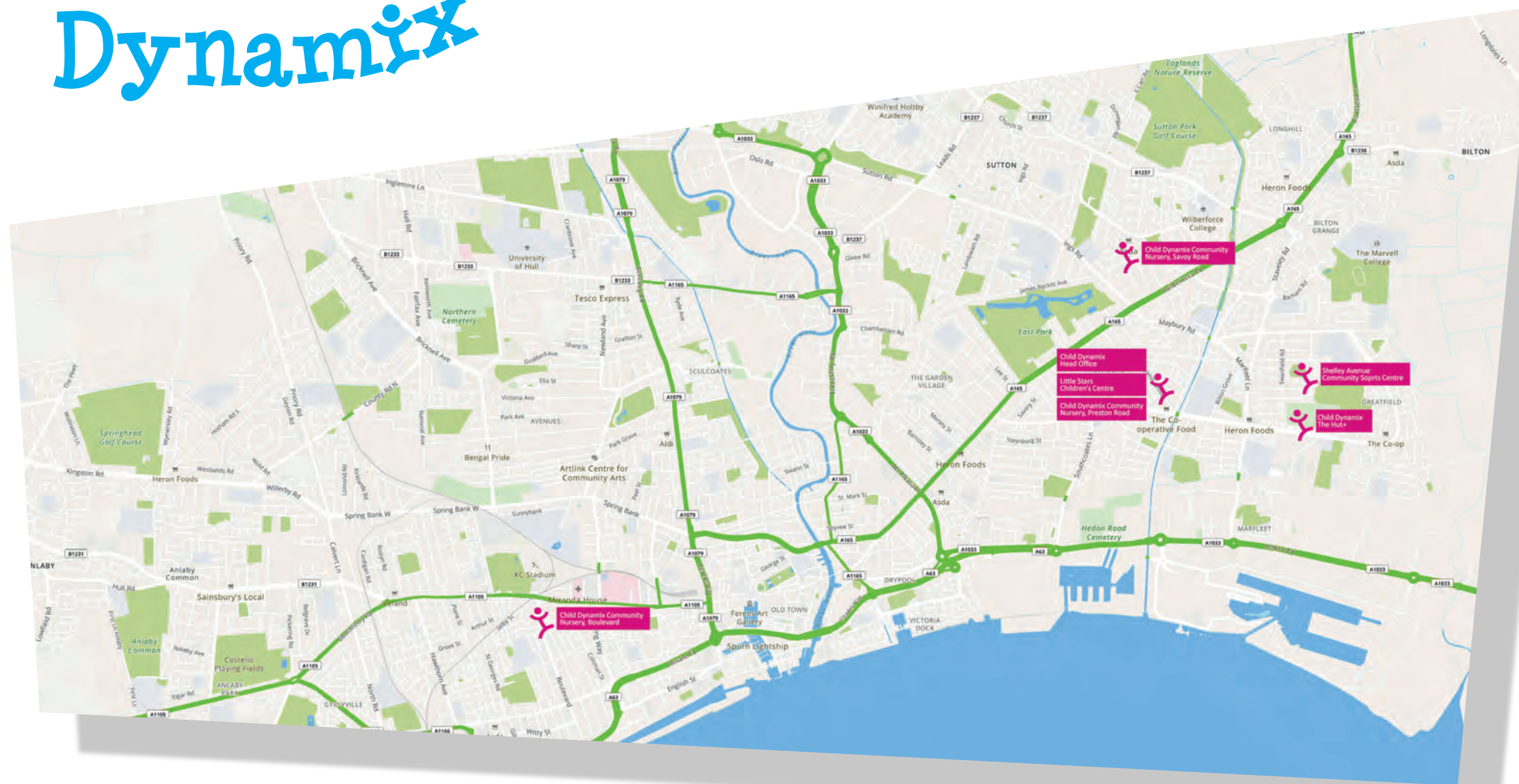
Child Dynamix



Our Impact 2020-2021



Child Dynamix is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee.
Company number 5389477 | Charity number 1109642



Hello and Welcome

Welcome to our latest social impact report in a year in which COVID19 presented significant challenges for Child Dynamix, and the children, young people and families who we support. The report intends to demonstrate the flexibility and determination used by our teams to ensure we continued to meet the needs of those people who rely on our services.

As a charity and social enterprise, Child Dynamix has always felt the connection to the communities it serves, and this relationship meant we were integrated in the immediate Covid response effort. As the year passed and various levels of restrictions were enforced, Child Dynamix adjusted its provision to suit the needs of local children, young people and families. Over the year, we saw increasing requests for help and demand for our services and we have responded to those needs.

I am very proud of our efforts and take pride in knowing that we continue to be so closely connected to our communities.

Bryan Bradley
Chair of Trustees



Child Dynamix is a social enterprise and registered charity founded in 2005. Our work with children, young people and families began before we became a registered charity. In 2001, we started with a day nursery on the Preston Road Estate in East Hull. Our focus was, and continues to be about social regeneration in areas of deprivation. Whilst we are known as an East Hull organisation many of our projects are city wide and our third nursery, Child Dynamix Community Nursery - Boulevard is in the West of the city. Over the years we have developed a range of services dedicated to children, young people and their families.

This report will share the day-to-day work of the Charity from March 2020 to March 2021.

- Three day nurseries providing early education and childcare
- Family support through Little Stars Children's Centre, the HeadStart Hull Parent Peer Mentor project and our ante-natal work – Bump 2 Baby and Beyond as well as;
- Provision for young people including one to one support, open access sessions, social action groups, sport and environmental work

As of March 2021, our staff and volunteers; together with our partners, have reached **1,989** children and young people and **880** adults/carers through our work.

1,989 children
880 adults/carers

Our vision is of communities where children and young people thrive.

Our core purpose is to create environments and deliver activities which enable children and young people to identify and realise both their aspirations and their potential.



Child Dynamix recognises the importance of understanding how well we are meeting the needs of service users and our local communities, especially in response to Covid and the affect this has for children, young people and their families.

Each area has a plan which sets out what we want to achieve and how. We don't just want to know how many people we are helping; we want to understand how we are making a difference. We measure our impact in lots of different ways. This is better than just using one type of measurement because it helps us to prove we are making a difference. To measure our impact, we:

- Work with agencies who offer external scrutiny such as: Ofsted, Investors in Volunteers, Investors in People, Investors in Children Award and the approved provider standard for Mentoring and Befriending. They evaluate our services by visiting, observing, looking at data and asking questions.
- Carry out an annual programme of surveys to understand better the needs of our customers, staff and volunteers. We are particularly interested to understand how they feel and for them to provide feedback.
- Record information for funders, like the numbers of young people attending a session and case studies to show how individual lives can be changed
- Invest in systems to track the progress of children, young people and families, and train staff and volunteers to use these systems

To share our impact we:

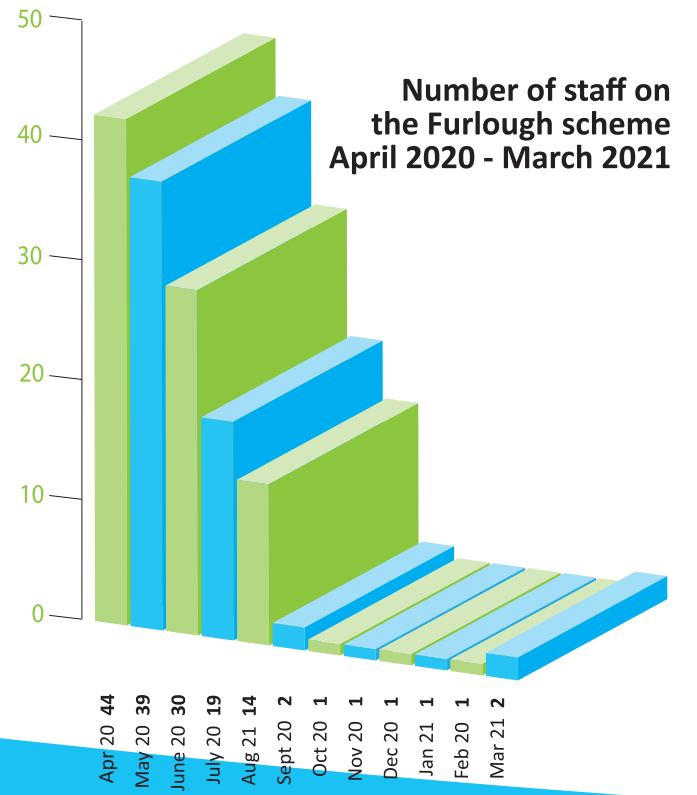
- Publish reports like this one,
- Send feedback to the people and organisations that fund us
- Share information online and through social media, like our website, Facebook and Twitter

We use the results of our impact measurement to improve our services



As of March 2021, we have 56 volunteers registered with the charity, representing 44% of our workforce. 70% of volunteers are mentors, this is the largest number we have ever had within one specific service area.

In the 12 months to March 2021, volunteers in the charity gave 881 hours of their time. Whilst this is a drop in time given from the previous year, it is representative of the reduced hours given due to Covid. In many ways the data masks the significantly increased hours given by our Trustees, also volunteers. They met virtually and engaged regularly as a group or individually with particular members of staff to navigate the various challenges Covid brought to the charity.



During this time, we arranged signed agreements for each member of staff and updated them as necessary for as long as they remained on the furlough scheme, we kept in touch with emails and arranged work patterns for those returning to the workplace. The charity needed to understand everyone’s personal circumstances and their ability to return to work which included things like transport, childcare, caring responsibilities and any health issues or concerns. With so many of the workforce on furlough at the start of the year and facing cuts to their income, we delivered food parcels to their homes. These were really appreciated at the time and messages that came back were heartfelt.

The mental health of everyone was affected in some way during the pandemic and was highlighted in the media as a real concern for everyone. We checked in with staff and offered support to everyone as well as we could, we also made Staff Mental Health part of our mandatory training requirements, which everyone has now completed.

New Funds

We encountered a lot of uncertainty surrounding the pandemic so we started searching for funds to mitigate the impact of loss of income and be able to continue to deliver all of our services.

We were successful with our applications for funds from Julia and Hans Rausing Trust, The National Lottery, Two Ridings and Power to Change for Covid specific activities and resources. These included salaries, furniture for working from home, Perspex screens and sanitising equipment, new software to enable online remote working, updating the website and parenting videos, mobile phones and laptops and funds for general resources to assist with adapting our way of working and helping beneficiaries with essentials.

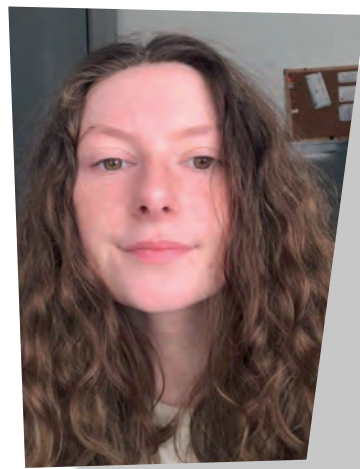
New Ways of Working

Zoom fast became our best friend in the first lockdown and continues to be so. Using this form of communication enabled us to continue to meet regularly and as frequently as needed and allows screen sharing and the ability to see people albeit remotely.

For those who were able to work from home, access to office furniture and equipment was made available and various different styles and colours of furniture was purchased to allow users to work comfortably and adequately from their homes. Hybrid working continues for those able to work from home and the office and for now there are no intentions to change this.

In the workplace, Perspex screens were installed at workstations and reception areas, sanitising rotas were put in place as well as signage and PPE made readily available.

“I started my apprenticeship in October 2020; I am due to finish my customer service practitioner level 2 qualification in the New Year. After this, I have the opportunity to begin my Level 3 in Business Admin, which will let me develop the skills I have built throughout the pandemic. I’m trusted with various responsibilities for each team I support and enjoy being challenged with new goals. Working across the Charity I’ve received extra support in all aspects of my role; I am also receiving ongoing support from my tutor.”



Rebecca Hartley
Customer Service Apprentice.



Matthew Thomson
Child Dynamix
Business Administrator
Core Team

Parent Peer Mentoring Staff and Volunteers

The Parent Mentor team and Parent mentors have shown amazing commitment, tenacity, flexibility and resilience throughout the COVID 19 Pandemic to ensure the continuing delivery of a high quality support service during a year that has challenged us all.

The team responded quickly to the first lock down adapting to the difficulties of working at home alongside supporting parents and volunteers. At this point staff took over all support offered within the project as restrictions prevented Mentors undertaking their home visits. This often meant long days undertaking calls and case recordings.

The team adjusted their work to accommodate parents including the Project Assistant who made welfare calls to Mentors and used WhatsApp groups to encourage volunteers to stay connected to the project. Staff posted positive messages and links to support, advice and training for mentors and their families.

Initially staff and mentors were apprehensive about relying on telephone or Zoom support and questioned if it would be as effective as the more personal home visit model. Many of the service user's chose telephone support over Zoom citing that they did not feel comfortable using the virtual platform, or did not have the technology to support it.



As restrictions changed in late spring, staff and Mentors began garden visits to parents and socially distanced welfare walks. Additional funding from HeadStart meant we could purchase more project mobile phones to enable Mentors to begin their weekly support sessions via the phone. Simple things such as purchasing garden chairs meant garden visits were safe and created opportunities for face-to- face meetings which many had missed. These changes also meant the project could get back to parents supporting parents and eased some of the pressure on the Parent Peer Mentor team.

Some parents also declined garden visits as they felt neighbours or children who were at home would overhear conversations. This resulted in parents completing the programme with the staff or mentors never meeting parents in person. This felt odd and again discussion took place about the possible impact of the faceless support.

As 2020 drew to a close Covid 19 restrictions tighten once again as infection rates began to spike and a further full lockdown in January was imposed. With the blue print from the first lockdown and systems already in place, we were able to maintain seamless support.

Feedback from service users over the year has been extremely positive and in some cases the changes imposed have become a permanent feature and will stay in the Mentor offer.

"The telephone support has been really helpful and supportive [especially] during lockdown having that reassurance."
Mum daughter aged 13 years and son aged 16 years

"I've looked forward to our conversations, given me the opportunity to sort my head out."
Dad, daughters aged 12 years and 14 years

"It's been a big help in a difficult time"
Mum, daughters 12 years and 16 years

"Telephone support was just as valuable as face to face, I look forward to the phone call each week. My mentor was great and had children with similar issues, there was no hierarchy we could speak openly and honest and sometimes had a giggle."
Mum daughter aged 16 son aged 14 years

"Bearing in mind Covid-19, can't have been easy for you and I have appreciated your support, you have remained professional and positive throughout. Even though the service was different due to the lockdown (contact was via telephone) sessions were structured and consistent, well planned and had direction. It was good to talk to another adult. I would definitely recommend the service."
Dad, son, aged 12 years

"Telephone support has been great and the worker has been very kind. Having another adult to speak to during two lockdowns has been valuable. When you are on your own with things all you can do is think."
Mum, son aged 14 years

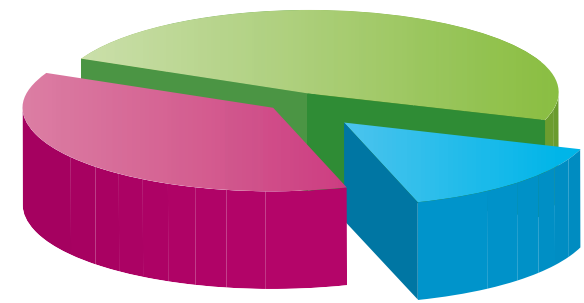
Melanie Lowe
Parent Peer Mentor Worker



Over the course of the last year the project has undertaken:

- 625 hours of Telephone support
- 47 hours of Virtual support via Zoom
- 47 hours of Garden visits
- 26 hours of Welfare Walk and Talks
- 44 hours of face to Face support

Support
provided by Voluntary Mentors
(number of hours) April 2020 - March 2021



- 87 Supervisions, initial assessments and introduction meetings (socially distanced garden visits and welfare walks)
- 216 Mentor training (including online Talking Teens, Domestic Abuse (online) and Safeguarding)
- 286.5 1:1 Zoom and telephone support sessions

Case study - Mentor

Jon (not his real name) is a Dad who we met through a coffee morning at Cleeve Primary school in Feb 2019 who completed the Mentor and Safeguarding training in April 2019 and began mentoring for the project.

Since then he has also undertaken training in Becoming Culturally Competent, Substance misuse – Drugs and Alcohol, MIND Self-harm, Anxiety and Depression, Yorkshire Ambulance First Aid and Neglect Awareness. He has completed 103 hours of volunteering, supported 3 other dads and helps at our POTS (Parents of Teens) group. Before mentoring with us, he had been a stay at home Dad whilst his wife worked full time, however in 2020 he applied to go back to university and told us:-

'I really love mentoring and it has given me the confidence to go back into studying and re-evaluating my career choices. I have now secured a place on the Physiotherapy Course at Hull University with the help of the Parent Peer Mentor Team's reference and I am really enjoying the placement at the hospital.'

Parent group work

The team were unable to deliver the same amount of Talking Teens workshops as in previous years in particular the Group work we offer in schools. However, in Sept 2020, they delivered two small COVID19 secure groups adapting activities and creating packs for parents and in Feb/March 2021 delivered two Virtual Talking Teen Workshop groups via Zoom posting out packs and doing pre course paper work via the phone.

Whilst the team were apprehensive about running virtual groups the feedback was positive. Parents mentioned that anxiety would have prevented them attending a face to face meeting and therefore an online session was more accessible to them. Other parents said that their commitments meant they were unable to attend groups and online was much easier for them to attend.

Feedback and outcomes from the group work: -

- 100% of parents made a gain using the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale. The average gain was 6 points with the largest increase at 10 points.
- 100% were satisfied and would recommend the group work support.
- 88% felt closer to their children and better able to support their child's emotional needs.
- 88% felt less stressed and that things had improved at home.
- 94% felt more confident.
- 88% felt less socially isolated.

"Really, really enjoyed doing the course online. Face to face I would be more withheld and not share my thoughts and ideas. I've been talking about doing this course since my daughter had trouble at school with her anxiety because there wasn't enough time to attend in real life. You have reached out to people who may not have been able to attend."

Dad, daughter aged 12yrs

Parenting Teenager Short Films

After receiving funding from the National Lottery Community Fund and the continuing support of HeadStart Hull our **Parent Mentor Project lead, Liz**, created six videos to help parents of teenagers get through what can be a challenging phase. The aim is that they are stand-alone films but can also be utilised as a teaching aid when working with parents. The films are around 3 minutes long and cover:

- Being a Parent of a Teenager
- Teenage development
- Teenagers and Sleep
- Teenagers and Emotions
- Teenagers and communications
- Teenagers Rules and Boundaries

These films can be accessed at <https://www.childdynamix.co.uk/teenagers-it-can-be-a-difficult-time-for-you-and-them/> and also HeadStart Hull via the How are you feeling? Website www.howareyoufeeling.org.uk

This QR code can be scanned to access the video playlist.



Little Stars Children's Centre

Little Stars Children's Centre sits in the Early Help provision within the City of Hull. The team provides family support and a range of services for local families including parenting support, understanding children's behaviour with courses to help with parenting, child safety, infant feeding, budgeting, cooking and providing healthy meals, accessing early education funded nursery places and promoting parents' understanding of early childhood development.

Throughout the pandemic and national restrictions, the team has continued to provide all services to children and their families. During this year the team have taken some novel approaches, including online stay and play sessions and garden visits. Adapted ways of working ensured continuous support to parents to enable them to make the changes needed to improve outcomes for their children. The team approach of working closely with other professionals was a real strength in tackling the challenges that Covid brought. Their connections with Woodland School to joint visit local families and conduct welfare checks was a strong local piece of work. The team responded to unprecedented numbers of referrals and requests for support as families continued to feel the impact of Covid on their lives.



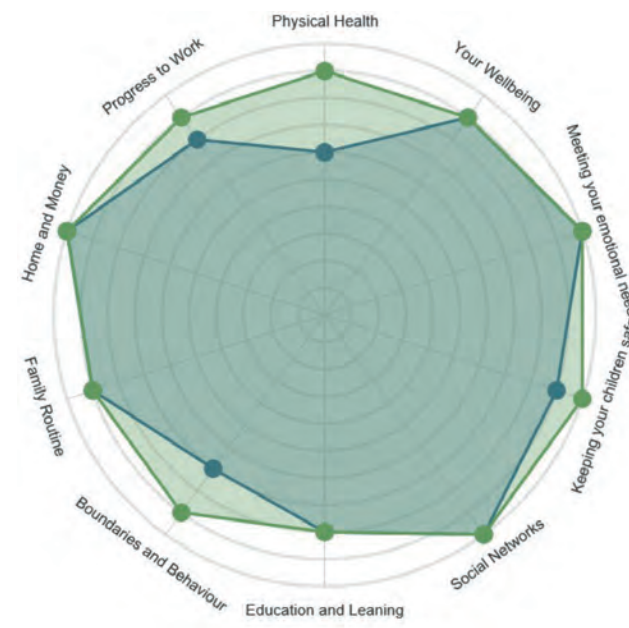
This graphic shows the sources of referrals received by the Little Stars Children's Centre Family Support Team during the year April 2020 to March 2021. The numbers represent individual children.

In the graphic below, we can see the reasons for referrals, it was in March we had an increase in referrals from schools. We know we had many self-referrals throughout January, February and March 2021, higher than at any other time of the year. In the final quarter of the year the main presenting issues were **Parental Substance Misuse, Abuse and Neglect, Parenting Issues and Children with a disability.**



At the point of referral we record the main presenting issues which are the reason for the referral. In this year these were:

- 37 children in referrals where there are parenting issues
- 32 children involved in referrals that have a disability or special educational need
- 30 children involved in referrals where there is domestic abuse
- 26 children in families where there is family dysfunction
- 26 children involved in referrals where there are concerns about a young person's emotional health
- 9 children in families experiencing acute distress
- 6 children involved in referrals that are accessing general family support
- 4 children involved in referrals where there is a risk of homelessness or housing issues
- 4 children where there is parental emotional health
- 3 children involved in referrals where there is a vulnerable pregnancy



This diagram is the **Family Star** – an assessment tool used by the Family Support Team to identify needs of the family.

When a decision is made at EHASH that a families' needs meet requirements for Early Help, Family Support are allocated the case. An initial Family Star is completed involving all the family and agencies working closely with them. The Family Star is a holistic view of the family and covers 10 areas of parenting that are essential to enable children to thrive, each area is scaled from 0-10 with 0 being the family are stuck in this area to 10 where there is effective parenting.

An action plan is completed with an emphasis on the areas that have scored the lowest. Action Plans are reviewed with the family as an ongoing process and more actions added as necessary. When all actions are met and the family feel things have improved for them a final Family Star is completed. At this point the team and family like to see an improvement in comparison to the initial scores to show how support has made a positive change.

100% of respondents said they felt they were fully involved in the outcome star assessment and when the final star was completed were clearly able to see improvement for their family.

Responses from the Early Help Client Satisfaction Surveys – October 2020

100%

of respondents felt their support needs were understood

felt their family received support quickly enough to meet their needs

of respondents agreed that the support/services have had a positive impact on their safety or the safety of their child, children or unborn child



Case Study Stories for Talking sessions

The initial referral was made by the local authority's Early Years team to Little Stars Children Centre Family Support Team. The member of staff from the Early Years team described how she had received a phone call from a Mum who had received a letter regarding a 2 year funded nursery place. She described how upset Mum was and how she has separation anxiety and did not want her child to attend nursery because of this. A request was made for a member of the team to explore this with Mum and discuss the benefits to her child of attending a nursery setting.

At our initial visit Mum described her anxiety and how it affects her; feeling worried when meeting new people or taking her child out, and feeling anxious when needing to make phone calls and going out alone. After a long discussion about the positive impact of children's centre sessions, we agreed it would be beneficial for her and her child to attend the 'Stories for Talking', a weekly stay and play session at the Children's Centre. We discussed how these sessions support social and communication skills.

Mum attended the session the following week. The Family Support worker noticed how the child was hitting other people and hitting mum, how he was reluctant to share and would not sit down for the story at the end of the session. Throughout the session the staff acted as a role model ignoring negative behaviour and praising his positive behaviour and that of other children in the session. The Family Support Worker explained to mum not to force sitting down at the end for the story, instead that she sits with the group and joins in therefore role modelling the behaviour she would like.

It took lots of encouragement but gradually we saw a change. The child began sharing and even seeking out other children to play with.

By week 3, there was still some reluctance to join the end of session story, but mum shared how she has observed her child retelling and acting out the story at home to her and to other members of the family. The child used toys to retell the story of The Three Little Pigs and would say 'I will huff and puff'. The Family Support Worker and Mum recognised the progress and even though still not sitting and joining in with the story, we can see the child is interested and is listening.

We are so pleased that Mum and child continue to attend the session and how this has become a part of their usual routine. We can see a change in listening and attention skills, social skills and the ability to recall and re-enact stories.

Mum received other support around her well-being. Now she feels more positive and we are discussing which Primary School she would like to apply to. Previously she felt unable to make the call and request an application pack. Mum has a lot more confidence, she chats with other parents and is often the person who seeks out new parents to welcome them to the session. '

Bump to Baby & Beyond

The Bump to Baby and Beyond project focusses on improving outcomes for babies by ensuring a personalised, tailored package of support provided by a dedicated project lead from the second or third trimester of pregnancy through to the child's infancy. Due to the individual nature of the support provided, the work is varied, dependent upon the individual baby's needs and those of their parents. The project aim is to reach the babies that need it most.

The project has a second focus to improve the skills and understanding of the wider family support team of the needs of babies and infants by sharing the skills and knowledge gained through the project by the lead worker.

The project sits within the Early Help team in the East of the city and referrals are received through the city's Early Help and Safeguarding Hub. Sources of referrals include Midwives, Health Visitors, other Children's Centres, the Perinatal Mental Health Service, Social Workers and parents themselves. Some of the reasons for referral include teenage and vulnerable parents, parents in abusive relationships and parents with mental health issues.

There have been 1028 attendances in the duration of the project (target 350) with 472 sessions delivered (target 250) and 78 unique participants (target 70)

On average the project lead makes 258 one-to-one contacts every month, these include telephone calls, text messages and emails. Throughout the duration of the 3-year project, over 500 text messages have been sent.

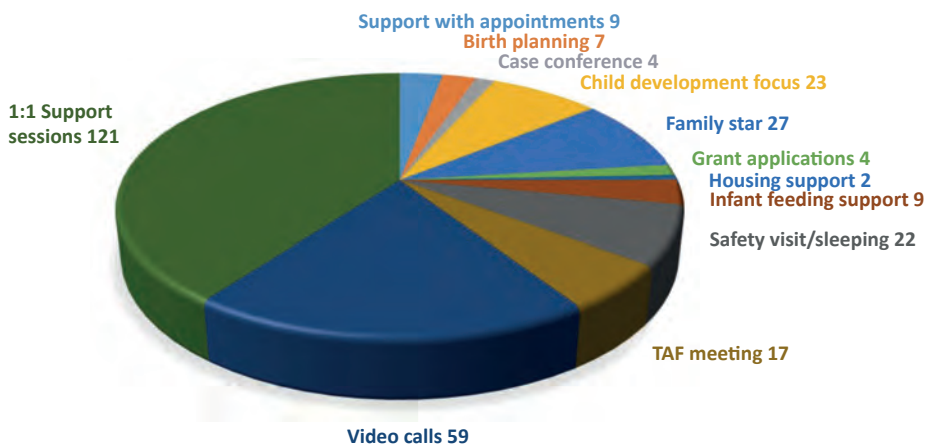
As the project approaches the end of the current format, the Project Lead is working towards the closure of the second cohort of families ensuring they have ongoing support through their local Children's Centre.

We are delighted to share that we have secured funding from Henry Smith Charitable Trust which means we can plan for a smooth transition from Sylvia Adams Charitable trust who have supported the project since 2018.

Summer 2020: With restrictions still in place, each child within the project received sensory activity packs to support individual learning and development and take advantage of the different experiences summer can bring. Instructions were included to offer parents a step by step guide how to use the sensory materials and understand learning opportunities for their children.

We often included items easily found in the home, or things that could be used many times with hints as to how the activities can be differentiated to provide more learning experiences.





This chart shows the variety of parent support offered by the Bump to Baby and Beyond project. We can see that video calls have become a significant platform for support during the Covid 19 pandemic representing 59 hours. 1:1 support sessions came to a total of 121 hours.



Networking & Partnerships

Creating good professional relationships and partnerships with other agencies has been key to providing the best possible support. Links with the Healthy Lifestyles team meant parents could access cooking courses, engage in activities around health eating and preparing meals with fresh ingredients on a budget. The lead worker showed families how to cook in a safe clean kitchen environment and were able to make a full meal as well as purées for their babies.

The project has been closely aligned to ‘Us Mums’ and ‘House of Light’. ‘House of Light’ is an antenatal and post-natal depression support group in Hull. The lead worker and parents have participated in walks and other physical activity along with conversation that informs families, and mums in particular, how to recognise signs and symptoms and the support available in Hull.

Relationships with social work teams ensure the needs of babies and infants are met. The lead worker attends various meetings including core groups and Child In Need meetings. The tailored support offered through the project enables families to make and sustain change. The lead worker’s views and opinions are valued by other professionals and influence assessments to that the child’s voice is being heard.

Feedback from professionals about the project lead – **Sophie** (not her real name)

“Sophie remains in regular contact with me and attends core group meetings and is able to give valuable contributions to the meetings and to the plan to move forward. Sophie is able to comment on baby’s development and on Mum’s engagement which are all vital in informing my decision making in respect of the family. I have a positive working relationship with Sophie and am able to approach her to carry out various tasks within the plan that are all aimed at reducing risks and supporting the family.”

Sophie also works in line with other professionals who surround this family and we have a very good core group who are all very much ‘on the same page’ and clear on what the plan is moving forward.”
Feedback from Social Worker

Parent feedback:
We are also proud to know that 100% (24 individuals) of parent/carers who responded to our questionnaire said they felt supported during the Covid 19 pandemic.

“Sophie’s support did not stop during the pandemic, she rang regularly, arranged group Zoom calls and when it was safe to do so came for a socially distanced visit. She also regularly dropped off activities for the boys”

“I have had food parcels and messy play activities provided during lockdown and one to one home support”

“Sophie would come out as much as she could. She would bring activity packs and food parcels, these were great. Sophie would come in to the garden so we could still meet up”

“Sophie has made a difference to my emotional wellbeing. The WhatsApp group has been and continues to be very supportive and always makes me smile”

“Overall it’s a really fun and safe baby group where we are all accepted from any background and we are allowed to express our options with no judgement. If we have any problems or concerns the project lead worker is always there to listen even if it is gibberish. I’ve finally settled here in Hull and I don’t think I would if I didn’t go to group or have the support and help. I’m really grateful for the help and I would recommend the group. Our babies always are happy when they go to group too.”

The biggest area of support that you have provided though has to be your home visits. You probably aren’t fully aware of just how much these have helped me, but I have to say that these have been the most useful part of the programme for me. You have helped me through some of the most challenging times I have had this past year.”



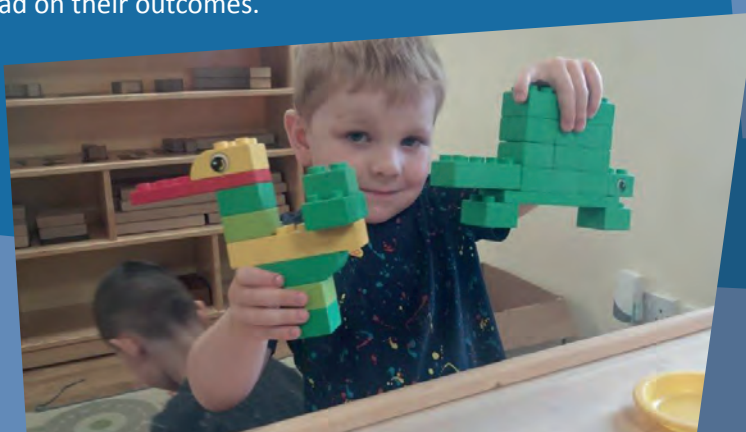
Covid 19 brought a range of challenges to our day nurseries with significant impact on the youngest children in our communities and their families. Our nurseries played an essential role in enabling key workers to continue to work, and support vulnerable children in incredibly challenging times.

Early years care and education received national focus at a time when quality, flexible childcare was critical in the local and national effort. From April to July 2020 only children of key workers and vulnerable children were entitled to access their nursery place. Across our three nurseries, 230 key worker families and their 236 children were entitled to access their place.

Over the year, our teams worked tirelessly to provide a safe environment, and minimise the impact of restrictions upon our young children aiming to provide a 'normal' day in a time that was anything but normal!

Funding from the National Lottery enabled us to transfer two nursery practitioners into family support roles providing additional help to local families. This critical change increased support to families helping them access local foodbanks, food parcels and activity packs. As familiar people, they were able to alleviate worries and concerns that parents had. When children did not attend, teams provided home learning and additional 'welfare' checks to ensure children and families remained connected to their nursery and offer additional help were necessary.

Throughout this period, the nursery teams continued to monitor children's learning and development to ensure we could minimise the impact restrictions had on their outcomes.



Analysis in October 2020 demonstrated that many children were not achieving age related expectations, as they been absent for much of the year. With close observation, and implementation of an exciting and stimulating curriculum, alongside more consistent attendance through the academic year, we see more children achieving their developmental milestones.

Across April 2020 to March 2021 – 366 children on roll in our settings, 14% identified with an additional need or disability.

"Starting nursery was the first time our child had really spent any time away from us as parents, so we were naturally apprehensive about leaving her. However we were reassured that we had made the right decision. The staff were welcoming and supportive and offered taster sessions to ensure our child enjoyed it. Our child always looks forward to the nursery and always talks about how much she enjoyed her day and the activities. Were really happy with everything"
(Nursery parent feedback – February 2021)

"Current situation aside I am and always have been in love with this nursery, both my daughters have attended and I wouldn't want to send them anywhere else"
(Nursery parent feedback – February 2021)

"The updates I receive whilst he is at nursery are fantastic. I feel he is included in all activities and is exposed to new things"
(Nursery parent feedback – February 2021)



"My son is very reserved and doesn't like going with people other than me and his dad and they give him the time and patience to come out of himself and he now loves going to nursery"
(Nursery parent feedback – February 2021)

Case Study

Our diverse communities

The Child Dynamix Community Nursery—Boulevard is based within the St Andrews and Docklands ward of Kingston upon Hull. This ward is in the top 10% of deprived communities in Hull and is very diverse in terms of families and homes of origin. This means we work with families from different countries who speak many different languages, making English an additional language for them and their children.

We have 2 staff members who speak second languages which has helped enormously with communicating to parents and children. We have used google translate and translate apps to help us to communicate with families who really struggle with their English. We have supported parents with childcare so they can attend ESOL (English as a Second Language) classes which in turn helps them develop their own communication skills and be a part of their local community.

We have built up great relationships with families who then support us to communicate with new families.

We have strong bonds with our families and have been able to support them with their childcare needs and access their local community. We have been able to offer free childcare places and support with benefits with childcare (30 hours free childcare, tax free childcare, universal credit support) and other local community groups and charities.

Case Study

Offering flexible childcare

Mum was working in a care home during the pandemic lockdown period and her shifts were very sporadic and Dad was teaching each day online. Due to this and the restrictions in place, finding childcare was particularly challenging and stressful. Usually family and friends supported with the irregularity of shifts and he attended nursery on set sessions. Obviously this was not an option due to restrictions. It was also not practical for Dad to teach whilst caring for his son who was under 2 years old.

In our Savoy Road nursery setting, we could accommodate him for a full week as this would cover all of mums shifts. However, this would more than double their childcare fee's which was something they expressed was not within their budget. Due to their circumstances, they were not eligible for any financial benefits. Following discussions between nursery management and parents it was agreed that nursery would accommodate him attending alternate days over a two-week rota, throughout the pandemic.

This kept the childcare costs for the family as low as possible. It also relieved the family of the extra stress this could have caused on top of the already stressful times we all found ourselves in.



Youth Team

Child Dynamix provides a range of opportunities for young people including youth sessions, music and sport. Young people can take part in events and sessions which are creative, thought-provoking and help develop life skills. We are the lead organisation in a partnership providing an offer for young people in the east locality. We work with a range of other organisations and charities to ensure young people receive the help, support and advice they need as well as opportunities to participate in sessions and events that are fun and engaging.

In this year the youth team have worked with 281 individual young people aged 10 – 13 years and 194 young people aged 14- 19 years.

The pandemic, restrictions and lockdowns brought many challenges for the team but they adapted and worked creatively and flexibly to provide this important service to meet the needs of our young people in the most challenging circumstances.

At times, it required us to work with young people remotely and utilise Zoom. This included one to one work, quizzes and games, arts and crafts, and cooking activities. The team dropped resources and activity packs off to young people or arranged for them to be collected.

We had some very successful outcomes on Zoom including song writing sessions and creating a piece of music, and The Hut even held its 2nd birthday party celebration virtually! We also kept

a presence on social media – uploading activity videos, sharing sources of support, and positive messages.

When there were restrictions on working indoors, we used outdoor spaces such as outdoor sports and games facilities, and outreach working. Indoor activities and sessions were adapted to allow for social distancing, reduced numbers and reduce sharing equipment. We had to rethink how we did things with smaller group sizes but ensure we could still see the same number of young people.

We have seen an increasing number of referrals and requests for help. We found that young people were signposted to us because they were struggling with their circumstances and mental health issues. This resulted in us setting up support groups, increasing our one to one work, and providing more phone check-ins and home visits. We increased our ability to provide food parcels and activity packs to young people and their families

Case Study

Ben is a 13-year-old male and regularly comes to The Hut for one to one support from a youth worker to help his emotional wellbeing. He attends a local school but struggles to meet their expectations. Ben has attended The Hut for the past two years and has built a good trusting relationship with the team. He is currently undertaking an Arts Award, he is creative and has a talent for music.

The positive relationship with Ben enables open conversations about mental health, his experiences at school, and how he manages



his behaviour and feelings. This links into conversations about his confidence and self-belief, as well as his home circumstances. One to one time with a youth worker is planned in a way that enables him to take the lead and decide what he wants to do in the session or what he wants to get out of them.

There has been some positive impacts and notable changes in Ben during the sessions. He initially had low confidence and self-belief but this has improved. His confidence in DJing developed quickly and this has improved his overall confidence, skills and abilities. He now believes he is a musical person, and we see that through DJing he is focussed and has developed resilience when there is a problem.

Ben tells us he is often grounded and not allowed out. We know that his mum lets him attend the sessions because she is pleased that he is doing a focused activity that he gets a lot out of. She is very proud of him, and the team offer a lot of praise, which helps his confidence. When we have shared his work we have received lots of positive comments, and his friends and family have shared how impressed and proud they are of what he has produced.

Ben will continue to attend his sessions and complete his Arts Award and he wants to create a DJ mix of inspiring music for other young people that "feel alone".

What's Your Game?

Is a project funded by Sports England Families Fund and sees four community organisations from across the country working with the lead organisation Sanctuary Housing to help communities become more active.

Child Dynamix is one of those community organisations and we employ a Community Facilitator who supports the local community. The project recognises that sport is not for everyone but there are lots of ways you can move a little more, and make small changes which could help you become healthier and more active. We know that families are the experts when it comes to their own lives and want to encourage them to come up with ways to make themselves, their family and their community more active.



We share these experiences, and the knowledge and learning from the project Sports England to develop a greater understanding around how best to engage families.



Our Community Action Projects (CAP)

are funded by Clarion Futures and is part of the #iwill campaign and began in October 2020.

The campaign aims to increase social action in young people through volunteering, campaigning and fundraising projects. The CAP and mini CAP projects offer opportunities for young people aged 5 to 18 to become a Community Ambassador. This means taking on an important role, to lead and support local people, friends and neighbours to become involved in new opportunities – all of which are ideas from the community! We recently started to think about creating a community garden as a suggestion made by a local resident. Other young people have tidied and developed green spaces at The Hut and at a local residential home.

We regularly consult with local residents and young people. At our Litter Pick day at the Shelley Avenue Community Sport facility, 7 young people spent the full day tidying up the site, had a go at walking football and planned more social action ideas!

In December 2020, our outreach work attracted 8 young people to our Community Ambassador Programme. The group developed a community garden and enhanced links with a local residential home by writing postcards to the residents.

We worked differently from January to March due to the lockdown and a change in restrictions. We remained connected to the group through activity packs and online sessions to ensure they could continue their social action work and sustain their enthusiasm.



Plastic Citizens

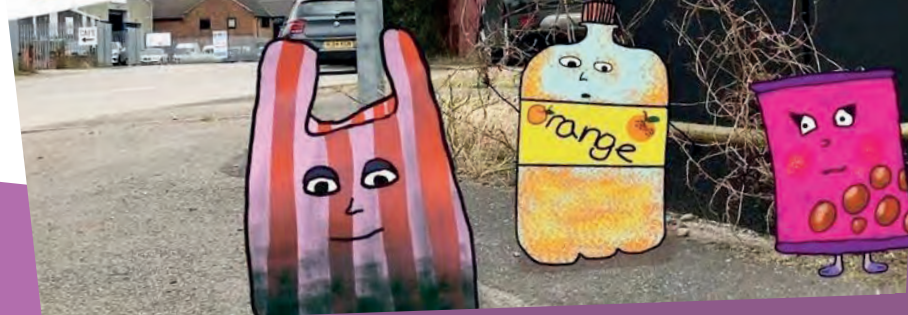
The Plastic Citizens project began in November 2018 as part of Youth in Nature and a citizen enquiry research project with the University of Hull to raise awareness about single use plastic.

The project has seen some wonderful outcomes including young people producing a music video, and the collation of a range of website links related to the issues of single use plastic. This resource has been circulated to schools globally. They have also produced a quiz which was shared online with the National Geographical Society. Feedback tells us that the quiz went far and wide with young people in Equador taking part.

Please scan this code to see the Plastic Citizen music video produced by the young people in the project.



+R+R+R+P
THE PLASTIC CITIZENS



Case Study (support provided October – December 2020)

This young person is a 15-year-old female. She has been attending our youth project for a number of years and has a background of medical issues, including kidney problems which makes regular hospital trips a normality in her life. This makes her quite vulnerable, particularly during the covid-19 pandemic. This young person is in her final year at school and her mum was becoming worried as she would often have aggressive outbursts both in and out of school, which was only heightened when mum said she had to shield due to the pandemic. In agreement with mum, and keeping with guidelines in terms of 1:1 support, mum has been dropping off, and picking up this young person at our youth project to engage with one of our workers.

As this young person has been coming to the project for a while, we were familiar with the best way of engaging with her, she enjoys helping around the building such as tidying up, organising storage rooms, and packing weekly food parcels that go out to our most in need families.

"I like organising the food room, it makes me feel useful"

After some conversation, this young person opened up about feeling trapped and wrapped up in cotton wool, even more so during the pandemic. She felt as though she could not see her friends or her boyfriend, even socially distanced. She explained that she was becoming stressed with school, struggling with online lessons and preferred to be in a classroom, and after receiving a bad grade on a mock exam, it added even more pressure to her already low confidence

This young person's behaviour at home and school has improved, she feels more confident in her school work. Her understanding of why she must shield and the importance to her health are also improving, and she has developed new ways of contacting her friends and boyfriend, such as face time. Although she is still frustrated that she can't see them face to face, she is more understanding of the situation and mum's perspective.



Green Influencers Scheme Astra Youth Centre's Zen Garden

We have just completed our third 'green influencers' project working closely with young people from Astra Youth Centre. The young people, supported by our Green Mentor, discussed a number of ideas that they would like to be the focus for their project.



Following discussion and debate, the group agreed their preferred idea – they named it the Zen Garden Project.

The Zen Garden project developed into the creation of a garden located at Astra Youth Centre. The group felt it was important to ensure the garden would be accessible to young people, staff and visitors. The garden includes a living roof which has a water system that catches rain water for the purpose of watering the plants, and a seating area that is a space for people to sit and relax whilst being close to nature.

The group created a number of bamboo wind charms that they believe add to the sounds of nature to produce a space that is peaceful and relaxing. The garden also includes a water feature located along a pathway with solar lights. This water feature attracted more wildlife to the area providing a source of water for native and potential migrating birds.





The garden is a wonderful habitat for local wildlife in an otherwise urban environment.

The young people plan to create a living wall that would include their own inspirational quote.

“Nature is like Wi-Fi, you need to be connected to feel the energy”

The group researched and produced the costings for all the materials they would need in order to complete the project.



The group have achieved so much in this time working together to complete the project, sharing different tasks along the way and quite rightly, they are very proud of what they have achieved.



The Hut+

The extension and redesign of the layout of The Hut+ has really provided the flexibility needed to respond to the changing restrictions we have faced over the year.

As restrictions lifted, The Hut+ saw a flourish of activity as meetings resumed, bookings returned and youth sessions restarted. During the lockdown, youth sessions were moved predominantly online, including The Hut's 2nd birthday! This year, the birthday celebration was a low-key event in comparison with previous years but still a success! Young people who usually attend group online sessions joined a modest (but just as fun!) online celebration.



Youth in Nature

Youth in Nature Project (YIN) is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund as part of the Our Bright Future programme.

Northcott Academy

During this year, the YIN team contacted local schools and youth groups to ask if they could provide some outdoor/wildlife activities for their students, and were approached by Northcott Academy. After a number of conversations and meetings it was agreed the team would deliver a 2 week block of sessions that would focus on replenishing 2 outdoor spaces used by the pupils. The sessions would lime to year 7 and year 8 students.

For year 7 students this would include the creation of a sensory and growing where they planted edible fruits, salad and herbs as well as a rock garden.

The year 8 students also chose to develop a sensory garden. They planted over 600 flowers, bulbs and herbs and made a water feature to create a sensory experience and to encourage wildlife.

The YIN team also support Northcott Academy students to plant native trees which would help to reduce flooding on the field during periods of heavy rain.



7 Alleys ... or the Lozenge!

Locally known as 7 alleys or the Lozenge, this woodland has a poor reputation with regular anti-social behaviour and drug use. The YIN team with the help of local young people, cleared the area and created a unique space in the hope of encouraging local residents to use this space more often. The team created a Bug Trail with ID boards for children to recognise any creatures they might see on their adventures.

In the Lozenge the team planted lots of wild flowers which will thrive and spread throughout the woodland – enhancing the space for local people to enjoy, and increasing biodiversity by providing a food source for insects and bees.

This space also provides us with a unique resource and a space for us to deliver more outdoor sessions to local young people including bush craft and forest school sessions. We can also have one to one or small group sessions in a very different space in comparison with the environment where young people usually spend their time. Or simply, young people can meet up to socialise with their friends, or the general public can stop to take a rest and tune in to the many birds and animals that call this beautiful space home.

Northcott Academy and The Lozenge are the latest and last wildlife zones created by the Youth in Nature project. The team and young people have created or enhanced 25 areas including gardens, woodlands and allotments.



Nearly **3000** young people have been engaged in the project, of which **800** attended regular sessions.

260 young people have attended one of the many trips organised by the team.

175 young people have achieved a qualification or external certificate of achievement.

The young people have learned so much about biodiversity, wildlife, recycling, food miles and plastic pollution.

Through Youth in Nature young people have challenged themselves in many ways, made a significant contribution to the local environment, and proved just how capable they are. We believe we have created long lasting experiences for hundreds of young people that have taken part or in some way influenced the success of the Youth In Nature journey.

We hope to see more families using spaces such as the Lozenge over the coming years and helping us to protect this for future generations and for our local wildlife.



Reflecting on the year, the impact and difficulties that Covid brought cannot be underestimated, but it was those very challenges that have also brought our teams and communities closer together.

The children, young people and their families have fought those challenges together; indeed many chose to help others. Therefore, in a year of difficulties we can see the generosity of others, and look ahead knowing that Child Dynamix will continue to be there for those who need us.

As always, we are grateful for the support we receive to accomplish our work. We are funded through a variety of ways and I'd like to thank customers, grant-makers, commissioners and donors for their support over this challenging time. Your flexibility and confidence in us has enabled Child Dynamix to meet the needs of its beneficiaries in the most turbulent times.

I have to express my pride, and give thanks to our trustees, staff, volunteers, children, young people and their families who together help make a difference and ensure our vision can be realised #communities where children and young people thrive.

Caroline East
Chief Executive Officer

Caroline East



Child Dynamix



Our Impact 2020-2021



Child Dynamix is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee.
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