



Sir Norman Lamb Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund: Keeping young people safe and well

A review of the difference our 2023 grant funding has made in 2024



Our Vision

When Norfolk Community Foundation and I established our Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund in 2019, we set a challenge as to what we could do to improve support for young people in the heart of local communities, so that we can catch them before they fall and end up requiring clinical intervention.

Existing challenges have only been compounded by the Covid-19 crisis, with 1 in 4 teenagers having a mental health difficulty, an increase from 1 in 6 in 2021.

Early intervention is key to prevent deterioration in a young person's mental wellbeing – with the

voluntary and community sector perfectly placed to address these challenges.

This report highlights just some of the innovative projects we've been able to support thanks to the generosity of people across our county. We know the need has never been greater, but I believe that by continuing to work together, we can keep young people safe and well.

Sir Norman Lamb

“ If I need someone to talk to then they are always here and help me make the right choice.

- Young person supported

“ Instead of holding my emotions in I can express myself without feeling trapped.

- Young person supported

The Sir Norman Lamb Coalition for Young People

The first task in understanding how we could improve community support was to go to the local charities and community groups and ask them what it was they needed to strengthen their services and support for children and young people. They told us they needed training for staff, that they'd like to join up with other organisations to refer to and learn from, that they wanted to work in partnership, and that they wished to become more visible. Underpinning all of this was regular grant funding to secure and develop their offer.

The Sir Norman Lamb Coalition for Young People was subsequently established in 2020 to respond to these needs and to help strengthen and develop community services for young people. Continuing to consult with the groups is vital to ensure that the work of the Coalition remains relevant, meaningful and adds value to their work.

“ Being part of the Coalition has raised our profile through networking, shared opportunities in terms of partnerships funding and relationship building.

- Community organisation

We've been delighted with the impact of the Coalition in its first four years; now supporting over 60 organisations across Norfolk working with children and young people, including those with special education needs and disabilities.

As well as funding opportunities, members get an opportunity to network, access shared resources and learn from one another.

Access to training, delivered by expert speakers, has enabled members over the last year to develop and upskill staff on a range of topics including Youth Mental Health First Aid and eating disorders.



What has your support helped us to achieve over the last year?

Alongside training opportunities, shared resources and partnership working, the Coalition has provided vital grant funding to meet the needs of youth work services.

The focus of the annual Sir Norman Lamb Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund grant programme is decided based on the needs of Coalition members and aims to strengthen their services.

Our members told us they wanted grant funding to focus on supporting the provision of counselling services or one-to-one therapeutic interventions for young people, as well as open-access and targeted youth work approaches that include interventions to actively support young people's mental health.

Here is a snapshot of just some of the projects funded with your support.



£76k
awarded to
17 groups



11,000+
hours of support
delivered
with an average of
8 hours of support
per young person



at a cost of
£115 per young
person



90%
reported
improved
wellbeing



83%
feel more
able to deal
with changes



80%
feel more
confident

About with Friends

About with Friends supports children and adults with learning disabilities to live the life of their choosing. They were awarded a grant to take young people with complex additional needs on mini breaks.

All the young people enjoyed a variety of activities, and making decisions together, including taking trips to the pier and zoo, a boat trip, BBQs, and playing games together. They were also encouraged to make and eat healthy food, get involved in prep and cooking, and help with their beds and tidying. Families felt that all the young people benefitted, and the team were able to meet all the young people's needs whilst encouraging independence.

Since the breaks the young people are meeting regularly, having closer relationships and many are visibly more confident. Some of the families also became friendly often having coffees out together before picking up their children.

Case study

H has very complex needs and has one-to-one staffing at all times. H's father was end of life after a long-drawn-out terminal illness and their mum was struggling to manage everything. H was understandably feeling low and depressed.

H was offered the break and whilst reluctant at first, came to About with Friends and talked to staff and peers. H quickly cheered up and decided to come along.

The trip was hugely beneficial to H but also their mum who was able to focus on her sick husband. H took part in two breaks, totalling five nights away from home. Whilst away, H was relaxed and able to talk about their fears for their dad. Since then, they have been attending other sessions and is more cheerful. About with Friends expressed that the grant made all the difference to H and his family.

Norwich International Youth Project

NIYP provide support for unaccompanied asylum seeking minors, those with refugee status, and otherwise displaced young people arriving in Norfolk. A grant enabled them to expand their support for over 250 young people in Norfolk.

NIYP ran a diverse range of activities across the period, all of which are designed to support young people's education, wellbeing and integration into UK life.

Some of the activities included: music workshops, cooking with a professional chef, dance workshops, canoeing on the river Wensum, visiting a local nature reserve, skateboarding, local museum visits, artist delivered creative workshops and a four-night residential trip to Dearne Valley in Yorkshire.

These activities were delivered alongside their usual offering of weekly drop-in sessions, where young people can socialise, play sports and games, and cook and eat a big meal together. Thanks to the grant, NIYP were able to continue providing a consistent safe space for those experiencing so much turbulence and instability in their lives.

I come to NIYP to learn, to get help with my uni work, to socialise and meet new people and friends, and get support with my personal life. NIYP makes me feel happy ... I feel at home.

- Young person supported

Case study

M is 21 and from Eritrea, Africa. He arrived in Norwich as an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child but has now left foster care and lives independently. He has attended NIYP regularly for several years. NIYP has helped to bridge his transition towards independent living - previously he accessed the group for activities, English skills and friendships, whereas they now also provide him with signposting and support, and university assignment advice.

Thanks to NIYP's support with his admissions to university, M has just completed his first year of a nursing degree, highlighting how support provided early on can lead to lifelong positive outcomes.



St Edmunds Society

St Edmunds Society (St Eds) runs an accredited vocational training centre in Norwich for young people. Many of these have struggled in or been excluded from mainstream education, come from disadvantaged families, and often living in poverty.

A grant awarded to St Eds helped to continue and strengthen their vocational training for local young people, which not only developed their employment opportunities and life prospects, but provided support with their mental health, including check-ins, referrals for counselling support, GP referrals, body positivity, self-confidence and sleep support, as well as housing support and drug and alcohol support.

Case study

N began at St Eds in September 2022 after being home-educated for several years. She struggled with emotional regulation, often having loud outbursts, and needed a tailored approach to reintegrate into education. The welfare team conducted a home visit and liaised with N's mental health nurse to understand her background and create a support plan that would address her needs.

Through building rapport, N began sharing details about her past trauma, which helped the team better understand her behaviour. A structured timetable was developed to provide stability and predictability, with scheduled breaks and methods to help N regulate her emotions. Enrichment activities were included to help build life skills.

The team also identified that N was not eating enough, so a food bag was arranged to be kept at the college. N started eating regularly during breaks, helping her to develop a better routine. Additionally, N struggled to communicate with male staff and students. To address this, a game was created where N interacted with both male and female staff members to gather information, helping her build confidence in communicating with men.

By the end of the year, N had built strong relationships with staff and peers, including male students. She is on track to complete her course and has made significant strides in socialising outside of St Eds. N has grown in confidence, gained life skills, and overcome several personal hurdles. Her journey highlights the impact of a personalised and supportive approach to education, helping her to thrive academically and socially.

Sunbeams Play

Sunbeams Play supports children and young people with autism, as well as other related conditions such as ADHD, Dyspraxia, anxiety and mental health. They received a grant to fund over 100 counselling sessions for young people with autism.

One of six groups funded to help provide counselling services, the community group had previously recognised a need for the sessions. Sunbeams had been working with an accredited psychotherapist with a specialism in autism, however the service was oversubscribed. The grant allowed Sunbeams Play to continue and expand the service, with sessions catered to meet the needs of each individual to ensure full engagement and participation. The ability to help fund counselling sessions was crucial at a time when statutory services are stretched with long waiting times, highlighting the vital role community groups can play in intervening early and provide support close to home.

Case study

S came into counselling for support with their anger issues, particularly towards their young brother.

To support S they explored emotions by using the Zones of Regulation resource. S enjoys arts and crafts so was able to visually use this to help them understand their emotions. Other activities included creating models and pictures of what anger looks like, or drawing round their whole body and identifying symptoms they experience when angry, anxious or worried.

S was engaged throughout the sessions, and was keen to deal with her anger and take on strategies.

Since then, S has made massive improvements and is now more aware of the early signs of any heightened emotion and puts the strategies into practice. Their relationships with their family and peer group have improved and they have even made new friends.



Looking ahead

To help inform our funding priorities in 2025, we recently provided extra funding for Coalition members to ask and listen to what matters most to young people, what gaps there are in support they are receiving, and what changes they want to see.

Across 14 focus groups, young people across the county shared their thoughts with peers and trusted adults in a familiar setting.

Young people surveyed face a range of challenges in their lives that contribute to mental health difficulties, including poverty, disability, displacement, caring responsibilities, substance abuse, and more.

Groups took a variety of creative approaches to making their focus groups engaging and adapting them to the young people they work with, ensuring they felt valued and safe to share their views, worries and hopes for the future.

They value safe spaces for support and self-expression

Young people emphasised the importance of safe spaces where they can be themselves, connect with peers, and access support. They appreciate the youth spaces provided by Coalition groups but are concerned about the decline in such spaces.

They feel unsafe in their local areas

Physical safety is a significant concern, with young people citing issues like antisocial behaviour, knife crime, and unsafe environments. They feel there are few places to go where they feel safe.

Young people told us

They want more opportunities for fun and affordable activities

Young people expressed a desire for more free or affordable activities, like park equipment, gyms, and community spaces. Due to the cost of living crisis, many are missing out on the opportunity to try new things or access activities they know they like.

As we continue to be evidence-led in our funding, the top three themes that emerged from the focus groups have shaped the priorities of our 2025 funding for Coalition members, supporting:



Core costs for open-access and targeted youth spaces to continue to offer these vital spaces.



Costs associated with delivering a range of interventions to help young people feel safer.



Youth spaces that provide access to activities and trips.

Coming together to make a difference

We know that the need for young people to receive both preventive and crisis support has never been greater. But through the work of the Coalition, Norfolk is leading the way in demonstrating how coming together can make a difference to youth mental health.

Thanks to the support of local people and businesses, we're helping to ensure organisations have the funding, resources and network they need to grow and innovate.

By providing support in a safe place, from people they can trust, close to home, we can help young people manage their mental health proactively in their community whilst also reducing the pressure on overwhelmed local mental health services.

Together, let's continue to create and develop environments where young people have the support they need to thrive.



Find out more or get in touch

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