**Mental Health Participation Session report for the Spring term 2025**

**Background**

Whilst encouraging co-production in all areas with partners delivering services across Health, Education and Social Care we found that uptake at focus groups was low as parent carers were being asked to attend too many sessions. To ensure that parent carers voices continue to be heard directly by those providing services, we now hold thematic participation sessions with one being held each term for each of the following themes – Health, Mental Health, Education and Social Care (What other help is available). This round was held virtually.

*There were a number of professionals in attendance at the session who heard these voices including Nicola Greaves and Amy Phillips, Cambridgeshire Commissioning Group - Commissioning managers, Blue Smile, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust, Younited, Centre 33 and Nessie. These professionals were all asked to take back issues to their teams that they need to manage and support with.*

*We continue to regularly attend a number of monthly strategic meetings with colleagues in health, education and social care as well as those in the private, voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors where we raise parent carer voices with the professionals involved.*

*We continue to offer weekly Tii hubs for peer support.*

The meeting focused on supporting children with mental health and developmental needs, with professionals from various organizations sharing their roles and services, including Blue Smile, a children's mental health charity. The group also discussed the challenges faced by children with situational mutism and anxiety disorders, and the need for alternative communication methods and support for parents. The group discussed the importance of considering the child's perspective and suggested indirect communication methods.

Cambridgeshire Commissioning Group highlighted the importance of parental mental health and resilience and shared these resources the might be helpful:

* Shout – Text 85258, no cost, confidential 24/7 help for anyone struggling with their mental health. Connected with trained professionals who can provide help and help you plan next steps [Shout: the UK's free, confidential and 24/7 mental health text service for crisis support | Shout 85258](https://giveusashout.org/)
* Qwell – No cost digital mental wellbeing support for adults in the UK, no waiting list, no referral needed, chat to professionals through instant messaging [Home - Qwell](https://www.qwell.io/)
* Keep Your Head – Brings together reliable information on mental health and wellbeing for children, young people and adults across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Search resources from parent/carer perspective [Keep Your Head – Mental health and wellbeing information for children, young people, adults, professionals, and schools across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough](https://keep-your-head.com/)
* Lifecraft – Any adult in Cambs and Peterborough can access. Support/help includes counselling, groups & activities, coaching and a free [Lifecraft - taking care of our mental health together](https://lifecraft.org.uk/)
* NESSie – Helping parents of children who are struggling to attend school and who have emotional & mental health needs. Parent support line, 1-1 sessions, free webinars and parent forums [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough parents - Nessie](https://nessieined.com/cambridgeshire-and-peterborough-parents)
* CPSL Mind – Resources about wellbeing, and a great section on parenting support CPSL Mind
* HAY (How Are You) – Creative solutions to mental health and connecting the local community to improve wellbeing and mental health [How Are You Cambridgeshire and Peterborough | About](https://haycambspboro.co.uk/about/)

Nessie discussed their parent support service which offers single sessions and a 12-week program for parents of neurodiverse children. She encouraged feedback on the resources and services presented [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough parents - Nessie](https://nessieined.com/cambridgeshire-and-peterborough-parents).

Anita, a child and adolescent psychotherapist, discussed her work with Blue Smile, a children's mental health charity. She explained that Blue Smile offers long-term therapy to children aged 3 to 13, using various art forms to help them express their thoughts and feelings. The therapy is conducted in schools, with the therapist working closely with the child, their parents, and teachers. Blue Smile also offers group therapy sessions for children dealing with specific issues like anxiety or exam stress. The charity is part of the Full Scope collective, working collaboratively with other organizations to provide comprehensive support for children's mental health.

Sophie and Anita suggested some resources like Center 33, Ormiston Families, and Cogwheel Therapy. Parents shared challenges with professionals not understanding autism and feeling blamed. The group discussed the importance of collaboration between parents and professionals, and the need to fill gaps in support for families.