



## THE LISTENING POST

### LISTENING & MENTORING SERVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

#### Introduction

DACYM (Darlington Area Churches Youth Ministry) is a community based youth-focused outreach initiative, looking for funding to develop a specifically tailored listening and mentoring project for young people aged 11 – 18 year old: 'The Listening Post'.

Originally established in 2007, DACYM became an independent charity in 2010. DACYM work from an inclusive value base, through social and educational networks in the Darlington and surrounding villages. Within the team there are specialist skills in engagement and emotional/ behavioural support for young people. The ultimate aim is that through this work, the lives of young people will be transformed educationally, socially and spiritually, thus empowering them to achieve their full potential.

#### Why the Listening Post?

*'500,000 children in the UK, in the 8- 15 age range, have low well-being at any point in time'* - The Good Childhood Report 2015 (p4)

Early intervention in Young Persons Mental Health is key in preventing unnecessary escalations. 'No health without mental Health' DOH 2011, identified that some problems are becoming more prevalent: for example, more young people are having behavioural and emotional problems. DACYM are aware that early intervention can be difficult to access. Anecdotally a local social worker recently commented that a 15 year old female student only started to self-harm, because she knew that was the only way she was going to be able to get a referral for help.

*'It is absurd to suppose that we are educating when we ignore those matters that lie at the very heart of human existence'*. Noddings, N.1984, p184.

M.A. Research within a Darlington Secondary School (250 students 11-16yrs old) highlighted that 'being heard' was extremely important to the wellbeing of young people, and those students who considered themselves happiest were those who felt heard. It was noticeable that those that felt they weren't listened to tended to be older and female students, as also highlighted by the Good Childhood Report (Gwyther, R.G. et al 2012. p15, 20 &21).

Many local schools, due to budget constraints, are simply unable to provide the levels of early intervention pastoral support that students require as schools have to give precedence to government priorities of progress and attainment. Young people are, therefore, forgoing the opportunity to talk about their problems, emotions and fears, which can develop into mental health problems lasting into adulthood. Young people get stuck – talking can help turn it around.

It is for this reason DACYM are looking to establish the 'Listening Post' service for young people.

*Study after study in the field of youth development makes it clear that the single most important thing that can make a positive difference in the life of a young person is the presence of a caring adult. In spite of that, research shows that most young people don't have enough caring adults in their lives.*

Mark Yaconelli.

#### Listening Project Proposal

As part of our work DACYM are looking to establish a specific community and schools based Listening and Mentoring service to providing 1-1 'listening' time for young people. As well as self-referral it will be a service that schools, G.P's and Social Workers can refer students/young people to for support. It is proposed that the listening service will be delivered in educational establishments, community facilities and, if possible, GP Surgeries.

The Listening Project seeks to be a first point of call for young people (and those working with young people) to help them with low-level mental health and emotional disturbances thus providing the much needed early support and intervention. Recognising the therapeutic limitations of a listening project, it will also help provide an effective and efficient signposting service for those young people who might need additional interventions (e.g. G.P's, CAMHS, Counselling, CYPS).

Each young person will be allocated to a dedicated DBS and trained adult 'Listener', and will have the option of up to eight 30-45 minute sessions as part of the listening service.

The service, initially, will be provided through existing staff members and by recruiting, vetting and training volunteers locally.

## Why DACYM

DACYM have worked in local schools, providing various services and activities for students and staff. We see the need for a specialised listening and mentoring project every day. We currently have weekly activities with students in Hummersknott Academy, Longfield Academy, St Aidan's Academy and Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College. We have previously worked on a regular basis in the Education Village. We also have contacts with other local schools. DACYM are therefore in an excellent position to utilise these links to establish a specific Listening and Mentoring Project.

## Outcomes

Our focus for outcomes is the young person and an improvement in both their short-term and long-term emotional well-being.

*Counselling never worked for me, but listening did. Being able to be fully in control of the conversation and what you wanted to talk about that day actually made it enjoyable. Some days you want to focus on the positive, having someone there just to listen means that every session you don't have to talk about everything that is going wrong, you can be grateful as well which I found rarely happened in counselling. This also let me build up a relationship with someone in school who I could talk to, which made me more likely to open up and sometimes even catch a problem before it escalated.*

*Having somebody in school who wasn't a teacher to talk to is a lot less intimidating as well. Some stuff you just don't want teachers to know, I know loads of people who struggled with things because they were scared if they told someone they would get in trouble. I never had this problem as I was given a safe environment which was the only place I ever got to fully focus on me.*

*I wouldn't have gotten through my GCSE's without this support, just an hour a week to unload to someone stopped everything building up and seeming overwhelming. I had someone there to listen, not everyone is that lucky. – Young Person, aged 16.*

The other outcomes (intentional and unintentional) from the 'Listening Post' would be:-

- prevention of escalation of mental health issues;
- cost effective approach, saving unnecessary expenditure later;
- prevention of time consuming appointments for health professionals esp. G.P's (e.g. by young people attending appointments with no real health issues but just needing to talk).

## Proposed Kick-Start Budget

Senior Project Worker salary (20 hours)	- £18,200.00
Contribution to core administrative costs	- £1,000.00
Recruitment and Training of Volunteers	- £350.00
Publicity and Promotion of service	- £300.00
Professional Supervision	- £400.00
Contingency	- £500.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>- £20,750.00</b>

## Conclusion

DACYM are looking for grants towards the required funding of £20,750 to kick-start this crucial project. Funding would be used to cover salary costs, volunteer listening and safeguarding training, supervision and a contribution to core administrative costs. We aim to ensure the long-term viability of the project by using the kick-starter phase to collect relevant data and evidence, whilst seeking further funding through individual donors and/or other funding streams.

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