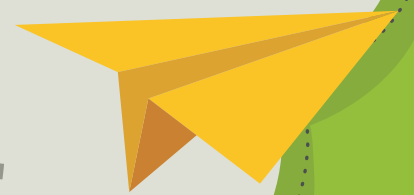


# Annual Report

2020 - 2021



**You've got this! We've got you!**

# Welcome From The Chair

## Welcome to another fantastic year for Calm Connections !

This year has been an incredible period of holding strong, adaptation and growth. We have maintained our core principles and values while our staff, volunteers and families have supported us in shifting online. We have done this quickly, listening and responding to the changing needs of our families and considering how to meet these in an evolving world. Over this period there has been a surge in referrals enabling us to support hundreds of families through mentoring, group drop-ins and longer programs.

The employment prospects of our parents and carers have increased through a 12-week employability program, anxiety around returning back to school following lockdown reduced through our Calm Communities program, increased awareness of mental health in general and specific organisations who provide wellbeing and support to parents, children and young people was raised through a 3-day conference. This event was attended by over 120 professionals, stakeholders, parents, children and young people who engaged with an array of powerful pieces of art, music, dance, awareness raising activities, presentations of research, organisational achievements and offers of support.

On our board we are sad to be losing Catherine who has been with us for over two years supporting our direction and fundraising activities. We warmly welcome Bridgette in her new role as Secretary. Bridgette has updated our policies and procedures and drawn funding for the 12-week employability program. We welcomed Jo our treasurer last year and she has since facilitated a much deeper understanding of our finances, systems and processes providing a focus on sustainable income streams.

We couldn't have done any of this without an amazing team of volunteers and facilitators who help with parent support groups and programs, family specialists who provide support and advice, administrator, graphic designer and more. We have become quite a team and we are very grateful to each and every person who has enabled our vision to become a reality. We look forward to the challenges that lie ahead!



Dani

# Who We Are:

Calm Connections CIC was established in January 2018 with the object of delivering activities which develop children's wellbeing. Our vision is to empower all families to feel secure, positive and connected to the people around them; to help them be healthy and confident to flourish in all areas of their life; and to create positive wellbeing for families in Trafford and beyond. We work towards this vision by drawing upon our own lived experience to provide the holistic support that families going through tough times really need: programmes developing communication and connection within the family; peer support and coaching; and provide awareness of the range of local specialist support. We have developed strong connections across Trafford and Greater Manchester and have a bank of professionals and experts in mental health and wellbeing to help meet the needs of the families we are working with.

Through our RESET event we have developed close local partnerships and an in-depth knowledge of the range of support available. We are part of several boards and working party's including (See Partnerships and Collaborations) in Trafford and greater Manchester. We regularly attend Trafford Community Hub meetings and are active members of the Trafford Collective, working alongside other Trafford VCSE organisations to identify gaps in provision and improve the experience of service users. We are supported by a highly skilled and effective board and team of 14 volunteers, who are experts by experience. All have received training around Trauma Awareness, Safeguarding, Mindfulness, NVC and a number of other areas that support effective communication and wellbeing.

“

Working to support families with Calm Connections brings me such an enormous sense of gratitude and wellbeing. I feel so lucky to be part of this amazing team and to be able to play my own small part in supporting others. - Julia

”

You've got this! We've got you!

# Why We Do What We Do

As an organisation built on lived experience, we have been aware of the rise in children and young people struggling with their mental health and this number has increased hugely during the pandemic. We have seen an increase of 267% for our support and services over last year.

Our own research with **69 families** across Sale showed that **55%** of respondents are concerned about their children's wellbeing; and referrals from local organisations shows an increased demand for support with anxiety (particularly school based anxiety), managing challenging behaviour and crisis situations. Other organisations have seen a surge in need and we are finding that many waiting lists for help are increasing and parents are feeling unsupported, anxious and frustrated. Our whole-family, user-led approach differs from other local provision in that we offer non-therapeutic support working with the whole family that is designed to fit round each family's needs. We co-design our support with parents and regularly undertake polls and surveys.

A recent survey indicates **81%** of our current families would like more access to workshops on developing positive coping strategies.

Other feedback is:  
**99%** report improved relationships, communication and wellbeing  
**99%** would recommend us  
**96%** say they have learnt new skills

Our links with other mental health and education organisations puts us in the ideal position to support families into other specialist care such as family counselling where this is identified as a need.

## You've got this! We've got you!

# We Made It Happen!

1

Case Study



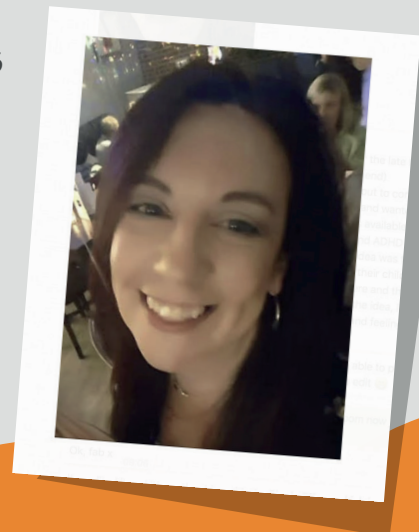
I'm Fiona and I met Emma a few years ago when she reached out to contact parents who had children with mental health conditions and wanted to learn more about their experience with the help that was available.

I have a son who is 17 and has High Functioning Autism and ADHD and my son has been involved with CAMHS for 8 years. Her idea was to help other parents who had been through difficult times with their children. She wanted to let parent know that there is help out there and that they are not alone. Calm Connections was born. I loved the idea, I had felt so alone in the past, not knowing where to get help and feeling as though I was a bad parent.

I joined Calm connections as part of their mentoring team. We have been very privileged to have professional, experienced mentors who provided training for us and using that training I have been able to mentor parents who have reached out, through Calm Connections for help.

We have a wealth of knowledge within the 'Calm Connections family' and I have learnt so much. I have also been able to provide training to the team.

Working with Calm Connections has not only opened up a world of opportunities to help struggling families but also for me to learn from them and help make families feel less alone in the jungle that is mental health and special needs.



# You've got this! We've got you!

# We Made It Happen!

1

Case Study



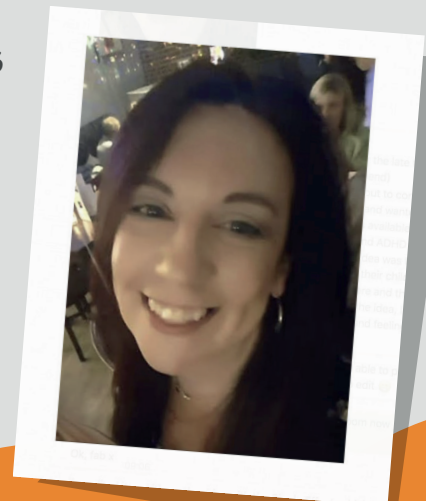
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# You've got this! We've got you!

# We Made It Happen!

2

Calm Communities



THE  
NATIONAL  
LOTTERY®

In response to the need of families, Calm Connections applied to the National Lottery Community Fund and was awarded the funding to run a programme of support for families across Trafford, whose children and young people were experiencing anxiety around returning to school after covid lockdown

This programme delivered a 6 week online Calm Families Programme, 6 hours of 1 to 1 family coaching for 10 families, access to peer mentoring and online parent support groups, as well as a variety of webinars and wellbeing resources and activities.

We found that we had a full list of attendees without the need to advertise, many families coming from other VCSE organisations in Trafford.

The impact of the programme was evaluated using the Warwick and Edinburgh Wellbeing Scales (WEMWBS) which showed an overall increase in positive wellbeing across the various programme elements.

“

“Quote “Calm Families” Rachel is organising these  
Quote “Family Coaching” Rachel is organising these

”

You've got this! We've got you!

# We Made It Happen!

3

## Finding The Balance



European Union  
European  
Social Fund

**WEA**  
Adult Learning Within Reach

Finding The Balance was a 12 week employability programme for parents supporting children and young people through tough times. Parents often find that managing fulltime employment and balancing appointments and meetings for their children,

alongside challenging behaviour can cause additional worry to the parent, regarding employment and finances. The two programmes in 2020 provided parents the space to look at alternative and more flexible employability - either through self employment or as an employee.

Most mornings involved the practicalities of establishing and setting up a business while the afternoon focussed on the personal attributes needed, such as confidence building, and managing negative self talk. All attendees were offered 5 sessions of 1:1 coaching and long term support. 17 parents enrolled and completed the programme, which was fantastic as most also had to home school during the second lockdown. Our overall findings were that the programme worked well and all the participants made great progress, with 15 parents now in self employment and one parent starting a new job in September.

“

This course seems to be perfect timing for me. Everything that was touched upon was exactly what I need to move forward and exactly what I have been struggling to do for myself, but without support I haven't been achieving. Really pleased to have the support for this and I loved the pace, discussion time, self-reflection, setting goals and loving that the 'answers' aren't given to u - that we have to think, talk and work that out for ourselves. This is where the best kind of learning takes place (in my opinion)

”

# You've got this! We've got you!



# 4 We Made It Happen!

Parents  
Support Group



TRAFFORD  
COUNCIL

In May 2020 we received funding from Trafford Council to offer support to parents across Trafford experiencing challenges around maintaining good mental health and emotional wellbeing for their young people and themselves. We ran fortnightly meetings to offer the opportunity for attendees to share experiences, as well as meet other families in similar situations, reducing the feeling of isolation and helplessness. We provided a range of self-care tips and invited other professionals to share tips and tools that support wellbeing, such as a sleep consultant from Sleep Tight Trafford, a SEND consultant and support from SENDIASS and Trafford Young Carers.



## 40+ PARENTS ATTENDED THE GROUP

and 3 of our volunteers supported to facilitate.

“

It feels the group are a very safe place to share my thoughts and worries. The others in the group also are very respectful of each other, taking time to listen and comment but not necessarily advise. I've missed a few through being very busy at work but know I need and want to reconnect as I benefit from the space to be me. *JG, Mum*

”

“

I love the group for many reasons. I love the open communication without judgement. I appreciate the chance to listen to how other parents are dealing with situations they're involved in and I do use the strategies in my own parenting too. *L, Mum*

”

# You've got this! We've got you!

# We Made It Happen! Summer Programmes



# 5

**During Summer 2020 we ran a series of activities to support connection and wellbeing in families.**

Activities for our summer programmes were designed to enable PCE's (Positive Childhood Experiences) and the families that attended enjoyed the sessions, children reported that they were fun and helpful. We worked in collaboration with Beyond Baked Beans, Media Cubs, Teen Talk and forest school practitioners to run 16 online sessions.

We had become aware that many children (and their parents) were feeling anxious about the return to school after the first lockdown:



we responded by running a series of drop-in Q&A events for families with a panel of experts including MP Kate Green, Infectious Disease specialists, 42ndStreet, Trafford's Director of Education, local head teachers and SEN staff and parents who were key workers and their children had been attending school. These sessions were felt to reassure many parents and had highlighted some of parents' concerns, which professionals were then able to address. The drop-in sessions were recorded and made available to families online.

# You've got this! We've got you!

# We Made It Happen!

1

## The Ripple Effect



The 'Ripple Effect' was funded by Awards for All (National Lottery) to train 10 parent volunteers with lived experience of supporting their children with mental health challenges. The volunteers received 18 hours of training, were DBS checked and are now Peer Mentors. They have supported xxx parents in the last year, at various stages of need. Our mentors, have a wealth of knowledge in many different areas of mental health challenges; angry and violent behaviour, substance misuse, missing from home, self harm, eating disorders, psychosis and suicide behaviour. They offer their help with support groups, provide training to other volunteers and help to co-design and create our programmes for families.

All mentors work with families for a minimum of 3 months and are provided with ongoing supervision. Peer Mentors have enabled parents to feel supported while waiting for other services to help them.

“

“The mentoring has really helped both ) and me....  
We now have social work involvement which has been  
positive so far and there are other chinks of light...  
You have done a wonderful thing in creating  
and running Calm Connections.”

Parent Feedback

”

# You've got this! We've got you!

6

RESET2020

We Made It Happen!



RESET was a 3 day event held in November 2020, bringing services in Trafford and greater Manchester together to share how they support children, young people and their families with mental health and wellbeing challenges. Services provided an online marketplace to meet families, a series of 100 Voices presentations from young people and their parents.

**18 presentations** from organisations who provide support around CYP Mental Health in Trafford and Greater Manchester plus **3 KEYNOTE presentations.**

192 people booked to attend the event and 122 people including Parents, Charities and VSCE Organisations, Commissioners and people from LA and CCG attended over the 3 days.

Think Outside the Box workshops were designed to get feedback from families, community members and the CYP workforce about what is working well in Trafford, what still needs improvement and solutions suggestions. Each group was made up of a mix of attendees including parents, professionals and volunteers, and findings were shared with other agencies and commissioners. Calm Connections has already started to use this data to inform new programmes and support.

100% wanted RESET to become an annual event, and this was supported by the responses submitted in post-event evaluation.

“

I found it useful both professionally and as a parent and have already referred someone on as a result of information from a presentation

”

“

Thanks so much for hosting this event, great hosting, great professional information. I had not appreciated how much support there is for mental well-being as a non medical approach

”

“

Hearing and learning about the services already in place to support young people, seeing how much support available and how vents such as Reset can help to share their messages to reach those who are in need more easily.

”

You've got this! We've got you!

# We Made It Happen!

7  
Supporting Families  
During  
the Pandemic



Forever Manchester funded us to recruit and train 10 volunteers to work with families throughout the pandemic. The volunteers are an essential part of our core service and Volunteers have supported families online or via phone. We have recruited highly skilled team members, who have complimented and worked closely with our trained Peer Mentors, and they have also supported some of our family programmes and RESET event.

Some of their skills include being a Just Relax programme facilitator, children and adults mindfulness practitioners, management skills, family liaison workers, a former headteacher and teachers, ASD and PDA specialists and a parent volunteer working with the Anna Freud Centre. We have provided a series of coping strategies and information videos, such as Sleep Tight Trafford and Exploring the Teen Brain, as well as promoting the work of other organisations across Trafford and GM, so as families know what support is available to them.

All volunteers have had a full induction and are trauma informed, many have gone on to complete further mental health training. Their work with families has led to families feeling less alone and overwhelmed.

“

I really enjoy being a volunteer with Calm Connections, the team really welcomed me straight away and it felt like a family. I've made new friends and connections through the other volunteers, they offer so much opportunity for growth and learning through training opportunities. One of my roles was to deliver Just Relax classes to 12 children and their families, it was all via zoom and such a new concept for the families. It was lovely being part of their journey and having the opportunity to help them along in difficult times. I feel really valued in my role and supported and looking forward to all the great things to come.

Bianca, Volunteer

”

You've got this! We've got you!

# Snap shot of our finances

Our next set of annual accounts will be available to download from Companies House from 31st October 2021 and will cover the 12-month period from 1st February 2020 to 31st January 2021.

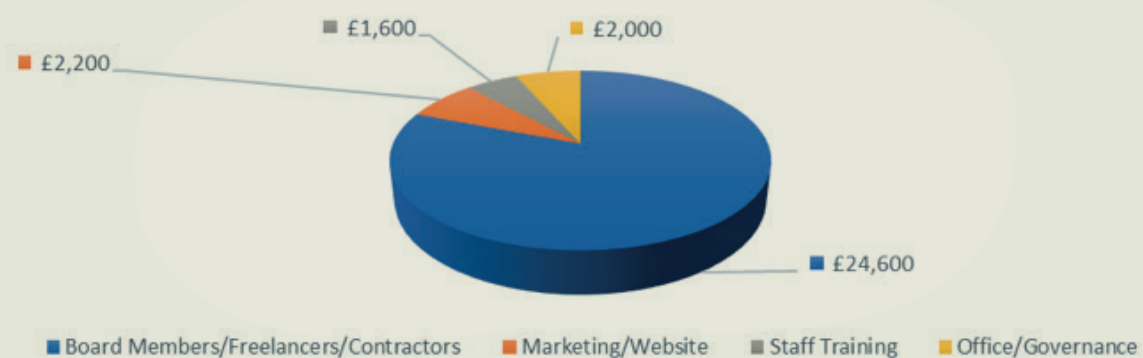
The following charts provide an overview of our awards in the 12 months to 31st January 2021 and our expenditure.

All figures are to the nearest £100

## Income

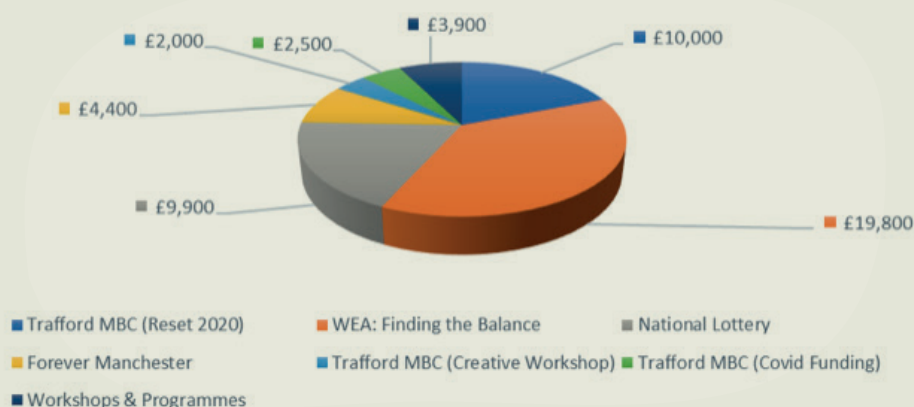
During the 12-month period from 1st February 2020 to 31st January 2021 we were awarded over £52k of income from a combination of grants for specific events and donations for smaller workshops. Some workshops continued into the financial year 2021/22 and therefore for statutory accounts purposes this income has been deferred.

### Calm Connections CIC Expenses 2020/2021



## Expenses

### Calm Connections CIC Income 2020/2021

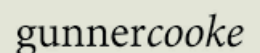


# Collaborations and Partnerships

As a voice for Parents and Families we attend several boards and working party's within Trafford and Greater Manchester. These include;

- Trafford Early Help Board,
- Trafford Collective (Plus reference groups for both Children and Mental Health),
  - Greater Manchester VCSE Mental Health Leadership Group,
  - GM iThrive working Group,
  - GM CYP Crisis Care Board
- PLACE National Network of parent support groups.

We have worked closely with, and have been supported by many organisations within Trafford and Greater Manchester, including:



You've got this! We've got you!

# Where we go next:

## Message from CEO Emma Lenihan

This past year, while having it's many challenges, has been an amazing opportunity for growth and recognition for us within Trafford and beyond.

We have achieved many of our objectives from last year, strengthening collaborations and partnerships, increasing our offer, identifying methods to collect data and impact, creating a new website and developing our unique brand. Looking ahead we intend to build on these achievements in several ways;

### Securing premises

Planning and presenting another successful RESET 2021 event with a working group from The Trafford Collective, parents and young people,

co-designing programmes from families needs, offering a consistent programme of support groups, workshops, and programmes to offer information and coping strategies, both online and face to face,

Building on our trauma awareness programmes for parents and organisations, delivering activities and interventions that support PCE's (Positive Childhood Experiences),

Growing the infrastructure of the company to employ a programme and education lead and develop the communications and volunteer side of the organisation, while retaining it's personal, compassionate and non judgemental approach and ethos,

Developing the board further to increase the voice of young people and their families,

Strengthening our reputation as the voice of families dealing with mental health challenges, across Greater Manchester,

Supporting and helping young people and their families who are disengaged from mainstream education.

We know this is going to be a difficult year for many families as children and young people adapt to the new world we find ourselves in. Our brilliant team of enthusiastic and knowledgeable facilitators, peer mentors, volunteers and board members are ready to jump into action and offer as much help, reassurance and support as is needed. If we can't help, we will probably know someone that can. We hope that you will join us.



# What others think!

“

Since accessing Calm Connections myself, my kids and my husband has benefited from a more supportive and emotionally aware atmosphere. The techniques and experiences are helping and we dip into them constantly. I can't remember life before meeting Emma and don't want to imagine where we'd be if we hadn't reached out when we did!

”

“

Your support has been amazing in a time when we have been waiting for CAMHS and struggling to keep going - it has kept us sane!

”

“

I love the services you offer and your ethos!

”

“

This was a very informative and interesting especially about sleep, my son has always struggled with this also. Thanks!  
Feedback from The teen brain workshop!

”

You've got this! We've got you!

contact us

[emma@calmconnections.org](mailto:emma@calmconnections.org)

07919 848558

[rachel@calmconnections.org](mailto:rachel@calmconnections.org)



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