

2022 - 2023

IMPACT REPORT



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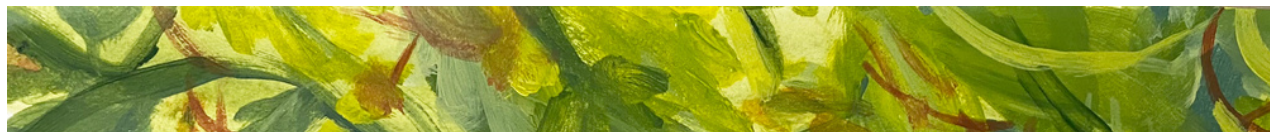
In 2022 – 2023 we have



provided long term support to more than 350 children and families



worked with children in 97 schools across Cambridgeshire



supported 11 training placements for therapy and counselling students

INTRODUCTION

Cambridge Acorn Project is a charity that provides therapeutic, structural, and enrichment-based support to children and families who have experienced trauma and/or abuse and are facing financial hardship. Our work is about breaking cycles of trauma and poverty, tackling inequality stemming from adverse childhood experiences, and promoting emotional recovery for children and families. Our services are predominantly based in areas of Cambridgeshire that fall into the 20-30% most deprived areas of the UK (Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2019). Moreover, almost 70% of Cambridge Acorn Project's child caseload access Free School Meals and/or Pupil Premium. Referrals for our support can be the result of complex trauma such as domestic abuse and/or experiencing sexual, emotional, or physical abuse. As well as this, we also take referrals for children and families who have experienced single-incident trauma such as house fires, floods, or traumatic loss. Cambridge Acorn Project works with some of the most complex cases in Cambridgeshire including children who have witnessed murder and similarly horrific crimes. In addition, many families who we support have experienced profound intergenerational trauma. We look to support children and families from disadvantaged backgrounds who struggle to access long-term, holistic, support elsewhere. In the academic year 2022 - 2023, Cambridge Acorn Project

“It helps because someone knew about my feelings and I could trust her” - Child (Case Study Research)



supported more than 350 children and families through long-term therapeutic work, group work, and through our anonymous drop-in wellbeing hubs which are part of our 'Street Level Trauma Response System' (SLTRS). As well as this, our school-level services have continued with therapists placed one day per week across nine schools in Cambridgeshire (both grant funded, and direct commissioned work). We have also continued to run 'The Moon Project' pioneering our panoramic support model which utilises flexible funding to put in place long-term, bespoke, needs-led therapeutic support. We have also expanded our enrichment projects including working with Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination on Artscaping projects, and delivered a BBC Children in Need funded project 'Conservation and Conversation' which supports attachment between children and parents/carers in a therapeutic forest environment. Across the last academic year we have also developed our research focus to grow our evidence base, strengthen our evaluation methods, and build research partnerships. This year we have begun a research collaboration with Anglia Ruskin University to examine the use of a block stacking mobile game as a preventative wellbeing intervention. This has been funded by Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Integrated Care System and Anglia Ruskin University.

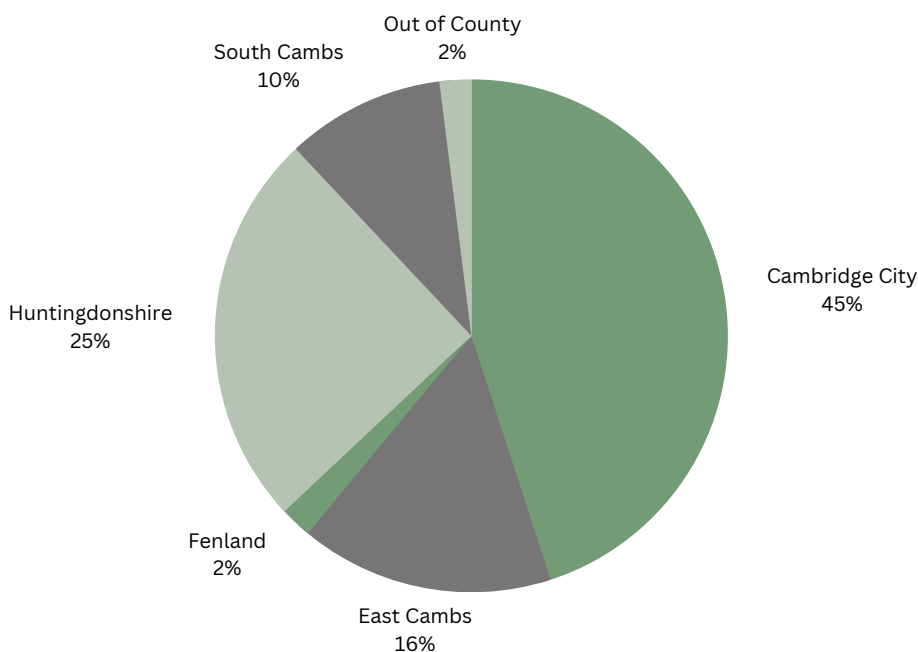
"My son became more resilient. He talked about his struggles and listened to how he could improve his life at school. He knew that if he was struggling, the door was open for him and he had a safe environment to chat. He felt calmer and appreciated the one-to-one sessions." - Parent (ESQ survey)



CHILDREN

During the year 2022 - 2023 Cambridge Acorn Project recorded 356 inquiries for support for children with 303 of these inquiries taken forward and support provided. More than three quarters of children were provided long term 1:1 therapy, with the remaining children accessing support through group work or enrichment projects. In total, we worked with children attending 97 separate schools in Cambridgeshire.

Geographical spread of children accessing services



55%
of children were aged 8 to 11

17%
of cases referred by Targeted Services (Early Help)

- 51% of children identified as female, 48% identified as male, 0.5% identified as non-binary and 0.5% did not wish to disclose their gender.
- 2% of children were aged 0 to 4, 13% were aged 5 to 7, 55% were aged 8 to 11, 28% were aged 12 to 16, and 2% were aged 17 to 25.
- 1% of children identified as Black/Black British, 11% identified as having mixed ethnicity, 87% identified as white (with 0.5% of those identifying as Roma), and 1% identified as being Arabic.

The most common referrers were schools (65%), Local Authority (Targeted Services/Early Help, Social Care, LA-Other) (20%), and parents/carers (11%). Other referrers included CAMHS, Impakt, Centre 33, YOUnited. The most common reasons for referrals were anxiety, behaviour and domestic abuse.

- 22% of children had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), 11% were on the school Special Educational Needs (SEN) register, 23% had suspected but undiagnosed Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and 44% had no known SEND.
- 69% of children accessed Free School Meals, similarly 70% of children accessed Pupil Premium, and 66% identified as experiencing severe financial hardship.
- 2% of children had Child Protection Plan, 1% had Child In Need plans (CIN), 14% accessed Early Help and 16% were accessing Universal Services.
- 3% of children were a Looked After Child (LAC) and 1% of children were adopted.

“I’ve been having bad thoughts a lot less now. So, I think it has helped because I also now believe that I don’t think I need to continue therapy at secondary school. So I think it has helped a lot” - Child (Case Study Research)



“Thankfully it brought my daughter and her mother closer, they built a stronger bond and helped them immensely. I’m very happy with the service and end result. It’s helped so much” - Parent (ESQ Survey)

MEASURING IMPACT

To evaluate our impact, we use Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ; Goodman 1997) before and after our work. We do these with teachers and parents as well as directly with children over 12. This tool measures behavioural and emotional changes.

62% of cases show a positive change when comparing pre and post intervention scores



Where SDQs did not show a positive change, 86% of respondents reported that our work had helped 'a great deal' (18%) and 'a lot' (68%).

Using this tool to evaluate our work is a new initiative and this data is drawn from a small sample of 74 completed (pre and post) questionnaires across the academic years 2021 - 2023. We are now focusing on trying to increase the amount of returned questionnaires to more rigorously evaluate our work. Nevertheless, this positive change is significant given that we work with children who have experienced severe trauma, coupled with the fact that these children come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Importantly, completed data highlights the impact of our panoramic support with 93% of respondents reporting that our work helped in other ways. Notably, one young person who self-completed their SDQ did not show a statistically significant positive change, however, they did comment that our work had "made things more

bearable at home” highlighting the importance of our work going beyond the therapy room.

In addition, we used Experience of Service Questionnaires (ESQ) for the first time in 2022 - 2023 to understand schools’ views of our services. We administered these questionnaires to schools through an end of year survey and 21 schools responded (a fifth of all the schools we worked with in the year 2022 - 2023).

91% of responding schools reported it was ‘certainly true’ Cambridge Acorn Project helped children with their mental health



86% of responding schools reported it was ‘certainly true’ or ‘partly true’ that Cambridge Acorn Project helped children to increase attendance and engagement.



*“Fantastic service for our children, when mental health support is needed now more than ever, particularly when there is such a long wait for services across the region.
Easy to talk with practitioners, children, parents and staff all felt listened to.” - School (ESQ Survey)*

Parent(s)/carer(s) also completed ESQs when their child's case was closed. In the academic year 2022 - 2023, 49% of parent(s)/carer(s) responded showing very positive results.

100% of responding parents would recommend Cambridge Acorn Project to a friend if they needed similar help



89% of responding parents felt it was 'certainly true' that the help they had received was good



"I have nothing but praise. You've changed his life" - Parent (ESQ Survey)

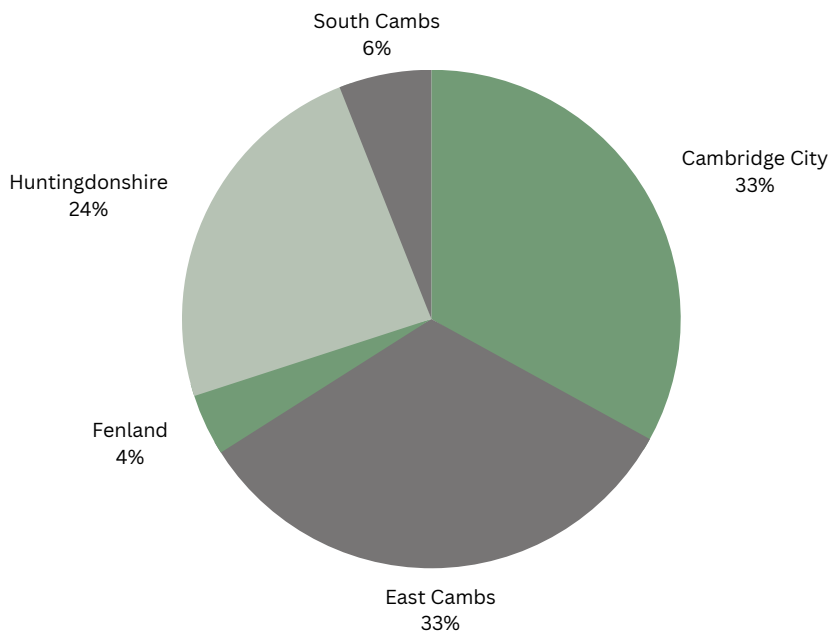


"The relationship between my child and her therapist was wonderful" - Parent (ESQ Survey)

ADULTS

During the year 2022-2023 Cambridge Acorn Project had 54 recorded inquiries for long-term support for adults. 47 of these inquiries were taken forward and long-term therapeutic support was provided. In addition, 13 of these adults were provided with legal advice through our legal clinic project, delivered in partnership with Tees Law. The data in this section does not include adults who accessed support only through the wellbeing hubs that are part of the street-level trauma response system - this is focussed on later in the report.

Geographical spread of adults accessing services



93%

identified as experiencing severe financial hardship

12%

of cases referred by Early Help

The most common referrers were internal referrals from our drop-in hub where it was identified further support was required (52%), self-referrals (34%), the Local Authority (Early Help) (12%) and their children's schools (2%).

- 85% of adults identified as female, and 15% as male.
- The adults supported were aged between 18 and 64 highlighting the range of adults supported including grandparents with Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs).
- 4% of adults identified as Black or Black British, 4% identified as having mixed ethnicity, and 92% identified as White.
- The most frequent referral reasons for adults were anxiety, domestic abuse and parental separation.



“You guys help me to keep it together when I didn't know what to do and where to turn. I cannot thank you enough. You all were my saving grace in times of huge distress and difficulty when I was not able to find someone to hear my concerns. I cannot thank you enough.” - Parent (Case Study Research)

STREET LEVEL TRAUMA RESPONSE SYSTEM (SLTRS)

The SLTRS is our local-working model which includes wellbeing hubs embedded in local communities in Huntingdon (Moody Mondays), Soham (Tea, Toast & Chat) and Cambridge (Frazzled Fridays). This system has



been developed through our National Lottery Community Funded Project Empathetic Communities which has run since 2019 and for which we received continuation funding in January 2023.

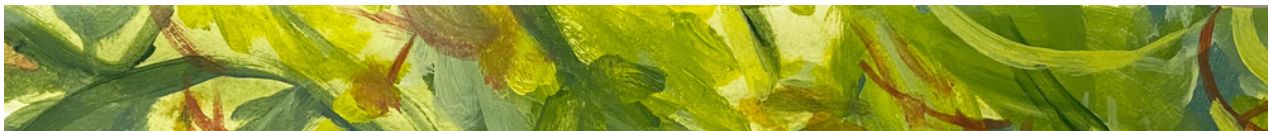
We run the hubs in collaboration with local partners to ensure that our hubs are sustainable and increase community infrastructure, for this project our partners include Huntingdon Community Action Project (in Huntingdon), Abbey People (in Cambridge) and Arts and Minds who provide a creative art project at our Soham hub. Linked to this, we have also recruited and trained seven hub volunteers, including training four of these as peer support volunteers through NHS Health Education England Peer Support training programme. This year we have delivered 34 weekly drop in sessions at each hub. Child mental health, schooling, domestic abuse, and children's behavioural difficulties were the most frequently discussed issues at the drop-in hubs. Other common themes were Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), housing and money, and emotional abuse. Across the final sessions of 2022 -2023 we administered an anonymous survey to measure the impact of the SLTRS.

“This service has saved my sanity and given us hope for the future. I don't know what would have happened without the understanding, support and encouragement I've gained.”
– Parent (Hub survey)

93% responding service users strongly agree that attending the hub has supported their wellbeing, the remaining 7% agree



81% responding service users strongly agree that they come away with a clear plan of action and know that there is continued support available if needed, 19% agree



88% of responding service users strongly agree that the hub creates a non-judgemental environment and a safe space to talk, 12% agree



“I have learnt about different groups that can help me. I've been able to talk openly and not be judged. I have anxiety around leaving my home with my baby but I know that at Moody Mondays there are professionals that can help, I feel safe. I've met other mums here and have formed a social group. We meet at the park with our children.” – Parent (Hub survey)

PRIORITIES FOR 2023 – 2024



No. 01 – Street Level Trauma Response System (SLTRS)

Families tell us that they need quick and easy access to support and we believe the best way to deliver this is through our local-working model. In 2023 - 2024 we hope to grow our SLTRS providing more quick, street-level access to support families and prevent difficulties from escalating, promote emotional recovery, and grow community infrastructure to build healthy communities.



No. 02 – Flexible Funding

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines recommend shared-decision making in children's treatment and we strongly believe in listening to children's views on how they want to access help. In order to deliver needs-led bespoke packages of therapeutic support we want to grow our ability to apply funding flexibly to deliver the support children tell us they want to access. In 2023 - 2024 we want to grow our evidence base around the efficacy of using flexible funding to support children and families who have experienced trauma.



No. 03 – Research and Advocacy

As well as growing our front-line work, we want to expand our structural work to support the system to respond to the current mental health crisis. In 2022 - 2023, we want to develop more relationships with academic partners as well as strengthening our own internal research and evaluation.

SUPPORT US

Businesses



By working with Cambridge Acorn Project businesses have the opportunity to make a real change to the lives of local children and families. Engaging with us has the potential to help build employee engagement, encourage personal and professional growth of employees, and enhance relationships with customers, suppliers and broaden networks. We are a small dynamic charity and we are able to provide excellent impact reports to highlight how your support has been used to change lives. If you are a business interested in supporting us please contact Hannah Golding hannah.golding@cambridgeacornproject.org.uk

Communities and Individuals



If you are an individual wanting to raise money (for example, by running in a race) or if you are a community group wanting to help your local area please get in touch with our fundraiser Hannah Golding hannah.golding@cambridgeacornproject.org.uk and we can support your fundraising efforts. If you have lived experience of the kinds of difficulties we help with and you want to give back to your community then we have a peer support volunteer programme that might be right for you. If you want to get involved please contact Hannah Chapman hannah.chapman@cambridgeacornproject.org.uk

“Cambridge Acorn Project provides essential services to those most in need in our communities. We all know that early and tailored intervention helps children and young people to develop the skills they need to live happy, healthy and successful lives. At the heart of Tees, is a passion to help people to a better future and so we are delighted to have been offered the opportunity to work alongside CAP to improve family relationships, increase educational attainment and support good mental health for generations to come.” - Janine Collier, Executive Partner, Tees (Legal firm providing pro bono support to Cambridge Acorn Project through our Legal Clinic project)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank every child and family who has engaged with our services this year. In addition, we would like to also thank everyone who has enabled our work by generously contributed funds or donated resources and time to support Cambridge Acorn Project in 2022 - 2023 including:

Grant Funders: The National Lottery Community Fund, UK Youth, Garfield Weston Foundation, Huntingdon Freeman's Trust, Orange Tree Trust, St. James's Place, Help For Children, Alan Boswell Group Charitable Trust, Birketts Community Grassroots Endowed Fund, Cambridge Community Foundation, BBC CIN, The Church Schools of Cambridge, Sport England, and Tesco Community Grants

Business Partners: Tees, Just Digital UK, volunteers from The Royal Society of Chemistry, Parker Clinical Psychology Ltd., and Laptops4Learning.

Voluntary Partners: Huntingdon Community Action Projects (HCAP), Abbey People, Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination, Fullscope, Huntingdon Parish, Arts and Minds, and all the schools we have worked with to support children and families.

Thank you also to the kind donations from: Music Ambassadors at Parkside Community College, Lush Cambridge, Wetherbys Hamilton, Teaching Staff at North Cambridgeshire Academy, Circle Wellbeing, Sing! Community Choir Cambridge, The Rudd Centre, and every individual who so generously donated in 2022 - 2023. Thank you for helping us to continue to tackle trauma and inequality.



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