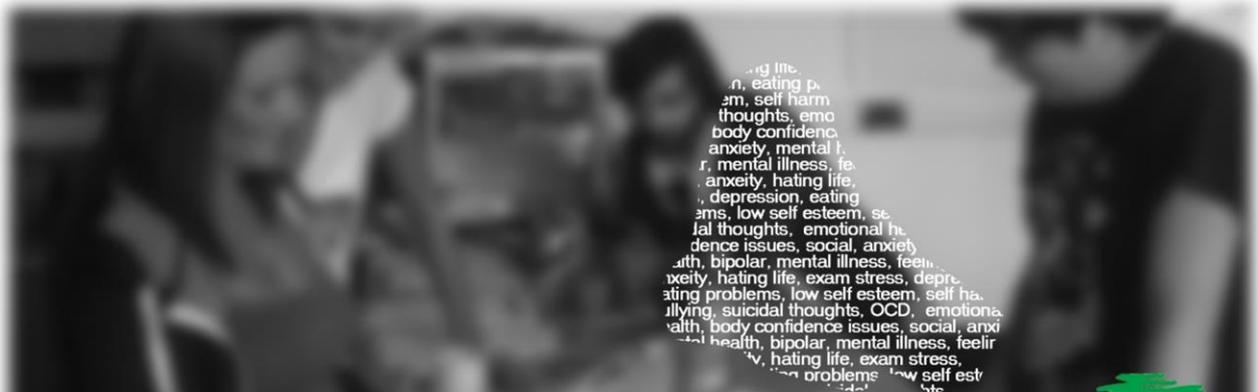


Welcome to the project

At The Project, we recognise that it isn't always easy to talk about our emotional and mental wellbeing. Fear about what other people might say, or of being laughed at, or not being taken seriously, can often stop us from taking that step ... and that can make us feel very alone.

The reality is you're not alone!



1 in 5 young people suffer from a mental health problem. We're here to help...



This information sheet hopefully answers some questions you may have about our groups, how we work, and what you can expect from The Project.

What is The Project?

Just as with our physical health, there are times when we can struggle with our emotional and mental health. Our mental wellbeing can be affected by all sorts of things – stress, exams, relationship break-ups, problems at home or work, the death of someone close to you, bullying. And sometimes, it is not clear why a problem has started – it just has!

The Project offers **free** peer support groups where you can meet with others who may be experiencing similar issues in a safe, friendly and non-judgemental environment. Run by a team of staff and volunteers, our sessions are an opportunity to talk and share experiences, whilst learning some tools and resources to build confidence and self esteem, and to help you cope better with life's ups and downs.



What is peer support?

Peer Support can be described as the help and support that people with lived experience of a mental health issues are able to give to one another, and is a system of giving and receiving help founded on the key principles of:

- Respect
- Shared responsibility

Peer support is not about joining a club for the mentally ill. It is not a competition of stories or symptoms or about being rescued!

It's about offering a culture of health and ability as opposed to a culture of "illness" and disability. We focus on your strengths not weaknesses, and work towards your wellbeing and recovery.

When and where do you meet?

Our support sessions are split into 2 age groups – 12-16s and 16-24s. Sessions take place at the Young People's Centre in Axminster on Thursday evenings, 6pm-8pm.

The groups meet on alternate weeks, so each group meets every 2 weeks. Our 12-16s generally meet on the first and third Thursday of each month, and our 16-24s on the second and fourth Thursday.

On occasions we may bring both our groups together for a joint session. This



may be because of a specific activity which is taking place, or other special event.

From time to time, we may also change the times of sessions or arrange days out, but you will be informed of any changes.

Who runs the sessions?

Our sessions are led by a Group Worker and a Mental Health Support Worker, assisted by a team of volunteers.

Everyone involved in our sessions has either had (and may continue to have) their own personal experience of mental health issues, or worked professionally with young people and/or mental health.

Our volunteers range in age from teenagers, who want to use their own experience to help others, through to retired men and women. Everyone is involved because they understand what it's like to struggle, and they want to help.

The Project is an independent group, and is not linked directly to mental health services, schools, GPs or any other services – although it may be that you are referred to us by one of these services.

How do I get involved?

To join The Project's sessions, you will need to be referred by a parent, teacher, GP, or anyone else who supports you ... or you can refer yourself if that is easier. Forms are available to download on our website.

Once we have received your completed referral form, we will make contact to arrange to meet you for a one-to-one informal chat. This is an opportunity for you to meet a member of The Project team, who will explain more about what we do, and answer any questions you may have.

This meeting will take place at the Young People's Centre, usually before the start of your first session, should you choose to join at that point.

There are a few forms that you will need to fill in on your first visit – a registration form, and a couple of questionnaires which will help us to better understand why you want to come to The Project and what you hope to get out of it.

What will I get out of coming?

Every young person attending The Project has their own individual challenges, and therefore people will get different things from coming to our sessions.

What we hope to achieve together is that:

- You will feel healthier and happier
- You will have strategies to manage stressful life events
- You will have direction in your life
- You will know that people can recover
- You will reduce the time you spend with other services
- You will feel more connected to others

To help each young person get the best from The Project, we will work with you to set goals for yourself, so that there is always something you are aiming for, or working towards.

What can I expect from sessions?

Although our sessions are very informal, the purpose of you coming along to The Project is to help you find ways of coping better with any current issues you may be experiencing. Every aspect of what we do at The Project, and the activities we run, always have this in mind.

We encourage you to take part in the activities on offer; however you will never be made to do anything which makes you feel uncomfortable, or that you would prefer not to do. We want you to come to sessions because you enjoy them, and not because you have to ... so, this is not school or work, and it's up to you how involved you get in the things on offer.

Although The Project is **not** a counselling or talking group, young people are always welcome to share their thoughts and concerns with the group, or with a member of our team. However, you will never be made to talk about your issues in the group if you don't want to.

What sort of activities do you do?

We believe that many people experiencing mental health issues can often feel very isolated from their peers, and from their families, and can find themselves feeling very alone with their problems. The Project is about bringing people together, to meet others experiencing similar issues to break down that feeling of being 'the only one'.

The activities we run are many and varied, but all are intended to offer tools and skills which you can use in your everyday life to help cope with any difficulties you may be experiencing with your emotional and mental health.

Some of the activities you can expect might be: art, music, cooking, discussion groups, relaxation, stress management, team building, outdoor games, bushcraft ... or just simply chatting over a cuppa!

However, as we've said, whilst we encourage you to take part, you don't have to do anything you don't want to.

How long do I have to come for?

There is no time limit on how long you can come along to The Project – that is up to you! There is no minimum or maximum number of sessions, and you are free to leave at any time.

We understand that your lives are busy, and it may not always be possible for you to come along to every session. If you are unable to attend a session, if possible we ask that you let us know in advance (a quick text will do!). This helps us with the planning of sessions, and staff cover.

Due to the demand for places in our groups, we may have a waiting list. Therefore, if you miss more than 2 consecutive sessions, and *we do not hear from you*, then unfortunately you will lose your place in the group, and it will be offered to another young person who may be waiting to join.

If you wish to re-join the group, you will have to start the referral process again, and may be placed on a waiting list until a place becomes available.

What do I do if I want to leave?

If you decide that you don't want to continue attending our sessions, then please let us know so we can offer your place to another young person.

When you decide to move on from The Project, you will be emailed or sent a very short form which we ask you to complete and return to us. This is to give us feedback on your experience of attending our sessions, and why you have decided to leave. This will help us to improve our service for the benefit of other young people.



Confidentiality and behaviour

In order for us to create a safe space for you to come and explore your concerns, we recognise how important it is for everyone to be treated with respect – young people, staff, volunteers and visitors.

For The Project to work, it is also essential that our young people feel safe to talk, share and just to be – free from judgement! For this reason, we have strict rules around confidentiality and behaviour within the group. Every young person joining the group is given a copy of our Confidentiality and Behaviour guidelines, and you will sign a Registration Form, which says that you agree to abide by those.

The groups have also drawn up their own 'rules' for how they wish their group to operate, and you will also be given a copy of those rules. If, at any time, there is anything you would like to add to them, you are welcome to raise this with a member of the team.

If a young person, volunteer or member of staff observes anyone behaving in a way that goes against the rules of the group, we will flag this up to them and explain what the problem is. We want to give everyone the opportunity to learn and to change.

However, if having done this, a young person continues to behave in the same way, then unfortunately they will be asked to leave the group.

Giving us your feedback

To ensure that our groups are helping to improve the mental wellbeing of our young people, from time to time we will ask you (and where relevant, your parents) to complete feedback forms and questionnaires.

When you first start, you will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire about your mental health, and if you have been referred by a parent, they will also be asked to complete a questionnaire.

Every 2-3 months, we will arrange for you to have a short one-to-one meeting with our Mental Health Worker, when this questionnaire will be repeated, as well as revisiting any goals you may have set for yourself. This helps us to find out how things are going for you, and to see how we can best help you move forward.

A repeat questionnaire will also be sent to parents, and we may also contact the person who referred you to The Project, if relevant, for their feedback.

We look forward to welcoming you to The Project!

More questions? Just give us a shout ...

**Young People's Centre
Lyme Road
Axminster
EX13 5AZ**

t: 07970 167341 / 01404 549045

e: info@theprojectyp.org.uk

www.theprojectyp.org.uk



www.facebook.com/theprojectYP



@TheProjectYP