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Why and How Schools Can Be Better Than CAMHS

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A little about me...

- Worked in NHS mental health services since 2002
- Qualified clinical psychologist in 2007
- Have worked in Nottinghamshire CAMHS since that time
- “Specialist” Community CAMHS / “Tier 3” for much of the time
- 2014, helped to set up the new “Eating Disorders” CAMHS



**Birmingham and Solihull
Mental Health**
NHS Foundation Trust



**Sheffield Health
and Social Care**
NHS Foundation Trust



The
University
Of
Sheffield.



Nottinghamshire Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust



The British
Psychological Society
Promoting excellence in psychology



A little about me...

- Summer 2015, moved to NTU as a psychology academic (teaching, research and practice)
- Governor for local NHS mental health trust
- Also a parent...
- Chair of governors for a local infant and nursery school

My agenda (1)

- Understanding what happens when a child goes to CAMHS
- Evaluating how useful this is
- Exploring critiques of the CAMHS model
- Exploring alternative to the CAMHS model
- Considering how this fits for schools



My agenda (2)



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- I'm not trying to put you off referring...
- I'm not here to criticise specific services or professionals...
- I'll try not to criticise funding issues...
- I believe that the current system can disempower school systems, but I genuinely believe that you hold the biggest key to wellbeing

Who are CAMHS, and what do they do?

- Imagine a child at your school, who either you know - or their teacher has told you - seems to be very sad
- They seem to be on their own more than normal, when they used to have a lot of friends
- Their performance in their work has dropped, particularly maths homework, which is never completed
- They've had to stop playing football for the school club because of pains in their stomach

From your experiences with CAMHS (and assuming they ARE accepted), what will they do with this child?

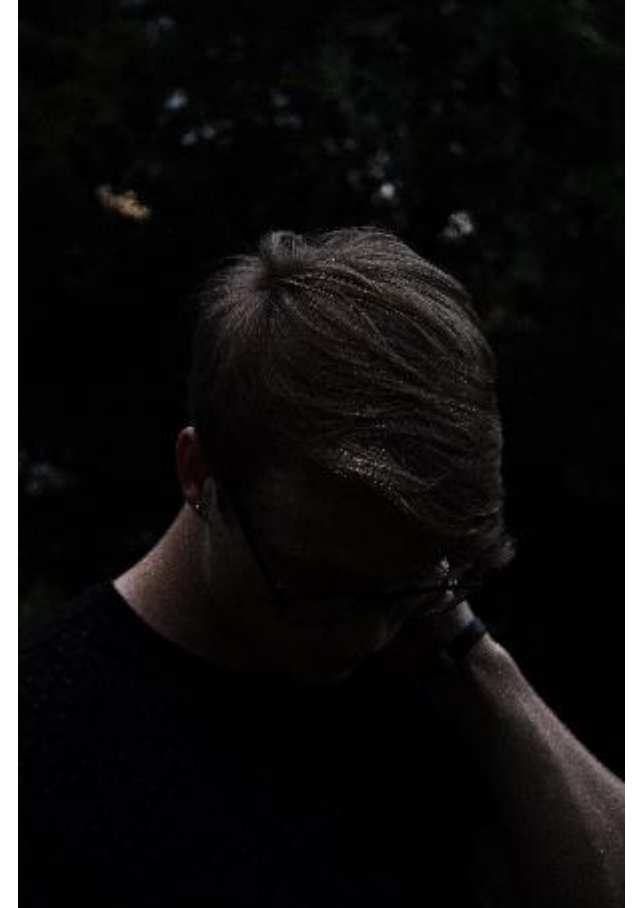


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Feedback

What it's like to come to CAMHS

For most young people who access CAMHS, they might have:

- Individual support or therapy
- Family support or therapy
- Medication prescriptions
- Group work (occasionally)

This work is provided by a mixed group of professionals from a variety of training backgrounds



What it's like to come to CAMHS



- Focus will be on risk management first in most cases
- Many will have to travel
 - The more “serious” your troubles, the further you’re likely to have to travel
- Very few are seen more often than weekly, very many are seen less regularly
- Rarely have open-ended support; normally work on assumption of discharge when possible

Does it work?

- Partially...

Fugard et al(2015)

(<https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12086>)

- 15,771 episodes of CAMHS care
- Change in questionnaire score
- 36% of children with “clinical” difficulties to start with were no longer clinical...
- ...64% remained “clinical”



Does it work?



- You will often hear about “Evidence-based” therapies in CAMHS
- The evidence does suggest that specific therapies can help (e.g. CBT with depression)
- But this evidence is largely not based on real-world conditions
 - Very specific and controlled therapists
 - Specific issues of being able to access therapy

Theoretical Critiques of CAMHS Model

- An adaptation of adult models of mental health treatment
- ...which are contentious in their own right
- The paradigms of healthcare treatment are not necessarily appropriate for human distress
- The primary agent of change comes from outside of the child's world
- Child/family have to fit CAMHS



Elizabeth Gregory: The Country House Metaphor

<https://weneedtotalkaboutchildrensmentalhealth.wordpress.com>



<https://pixabay.com/en/users/iankelsall1-7126962/>

- We focus on the beautiful, special, expensive parlour
- We miss the chance to make other rooms nicer
- People don't feel like the place belongs to them

Culture-bound (<https://underthebluedoor.org/2014/08/18>)

“Their practice did not involve being outside in the sun where you begin to feel better, there was no music or drumming to get your blood flowing again

There was no sense that everyone had taken the day off so that the entire community could come together to try to lift you up and bring you back to joy

Instead they would take people one at a time into these dingy little rooms and have them sit around for an hour or so and talk about bad things that had happened to them.

We had to ask them to leave.”



What else can help with mental health problems?



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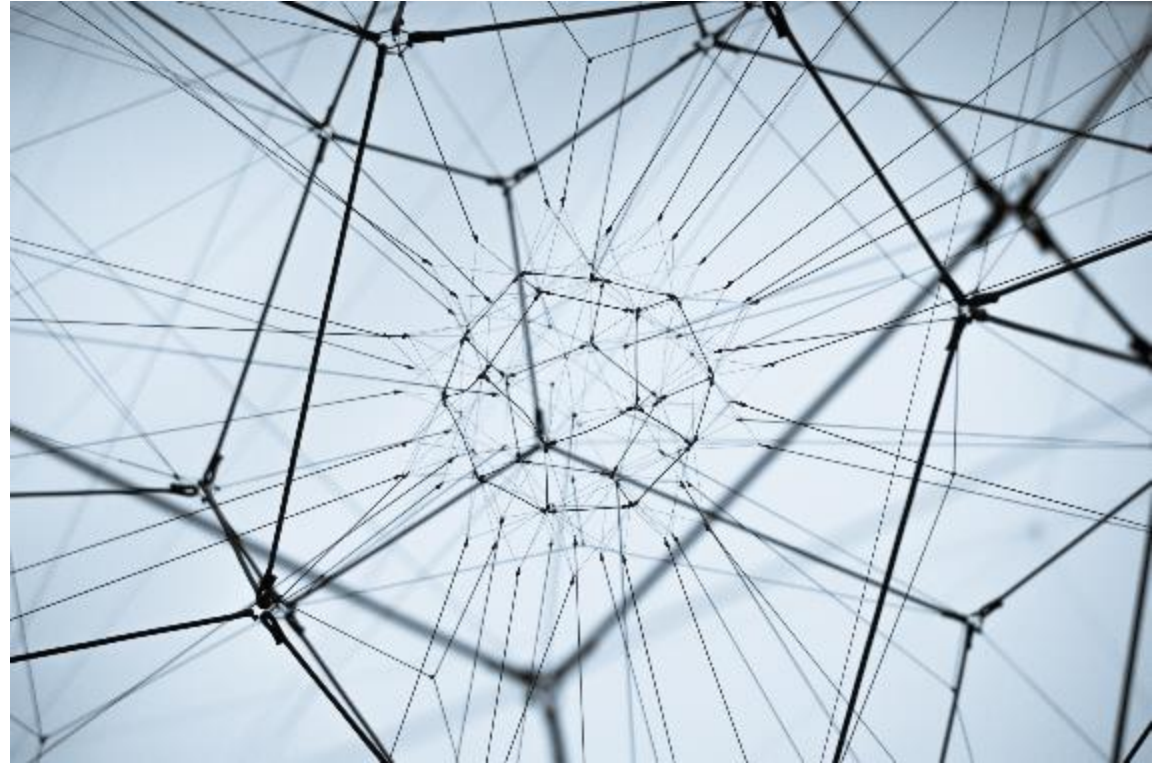
- Social psychology shows us that a sense of identification with our social context improves mental health (Sani et al, 2015)
http://irep.ntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/5256/1/220487_2567.pdf
- Family identification predicted up to 40% of mental health status
- Army identification amongst soldiers predicted 18% mental health status, and 46% life satisfaction status

And schools?

- In adolescents, greater levels of social identification are associated with better mental health (Miller et al 2015)

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2015.05.088>

- 1111 secondary school pupils, assessed level of mental health difficulties (self-report questionnaires) and levels of family, friend, and school identification
- Stronger identifications correlated with better mental health
- The more groups identified with, the better
 - 71% “disturbance” with no identification
 - 17% “disturbance” with 3 strong group identifications



And schools?



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- There is evidence that a sense of social identification with a school improves mental health (Miller et al 2018, paper from author/Twitter...)
 - 409 pupils, monitored for change in mental health difficulties over time (self-report questionnaires)
 - Assessed levels of family, friend, and school identification
 - Greater school identification predicted better outcome in terms of mental health than either other concept

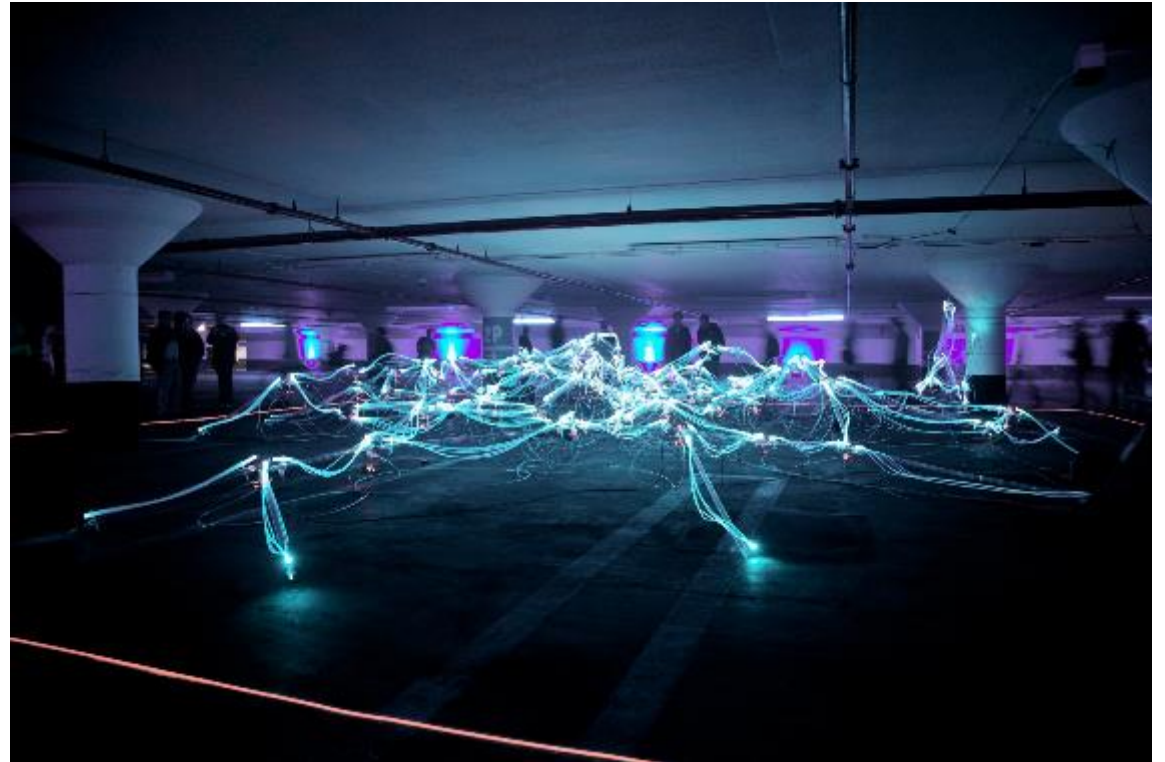
What could a school do to help build a restorative sense of community around a child?



Feedback

In Summary

- Whilst CAMHS has its place in the world of supporting childhood mental health, that place is limited
- Childhood well-being would benefit from a greater focus on building social connectedness and a sense of integration
- Schools can be powerful agents in this, and have greater powers than CAMHS as a result



Any final questions?

