

# Practice guide

SEND

Mental health – Branch, Wirral

## Background, purpose and rationale

Our needs assessment showed duplication, poor data and a lack of coordination when children and young people were accessing mental health support. 43% of referrals to local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) did not meet the threshold for support. Our vision is that children and young people in Wirral have good emotional health and know how and when to get extra support.

In November 2024 Wirral Children and Young People's Mental Health Alliance launched Branch - a single point of access for children and young people's emotional wellbeing.

## What we did to improve children's experiences

To optimise the contribution of experience, data and budgets we jointly commissioned a 5-year contract through the Integrated Care Board (at place level), Wirral Council Children's Services and Public Health. This delivered a competitive tender process that required an alliance of providers working in partnership, but not as a separate legal entity.

We built on existing foundations locally, recognising the achievements of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector and nurtured relationships through the local mental health provider forum 'Future in Mind' group.

Project management was key to ensure delivery on time and in budget. We engaged a digital agency to develop a website and algorithm to match children and young people to the right support. Additionally, the approach ensured resourcing of an in-person 'matching team' and designed operations, including daily multi-disciplinary team (MDT) panels for more complex matching and to enable robust safeguarding.

## What was the impact?

Joined up commissioning reduced duplication and maximised resources through creating a single point of access for mental health services. Branch led to the creation of a strong alliance, made up of five local and national providers - Open Door Charity, Action for Children, Koala NW, Utopia and Kooth. The approach has strengthened and developed relationships between CAMHS, the alliance and over 30 other support services, enabling whole system working and co-ordination.

Data collection and information sharing, led by Open Door Charity using the Beacon CRM system, is developing rich insight around need, demand, trends and gaps in provision. For example, this has helped us to understand the main area young people want support with is worry, anxiety and stress. We now know this is requested four times as often as the next major area, which is anger.

In phase 1 (months 1-6)

- 1044 platform accounts created and used, 625 of whom are young people.
- 544 young people matched to a service
- 237 young people supported directly by the matching team securing direct interaction
- Average time for contact made by matching team – 2 days
- Average time for a match made to a service – 3 days.

Phase 2: Months 7 onwards. Demand will further increase as CAMHS referrals come through Branch in addition to all others.

Feedback from a teacher supporting a student: *"I used Branch for the first time on Monday for a student who has been going around in circles looking for support. By using your new website, it helped him to focus on the most important things that are on his mind ... He matched himself with one of the services and was contacted by the agency 2 days later. It also gave him lots of information of other agencies that we didn't know about. Thank you so much, we were really impressed."*

## Resources

[www.branch-wirral.co.uk](http://www.branch-wirral.co.uk) If you want to test out the matching questionnaire for yourself click, Find Support. Use the word TEST when it asks you your name, so we don't capture you as a real user. At the end, when it recommends you a service match/es don't click continue.

[OOMOO by Open Door – move – make – be](#)

[Open Door Charity | Mental Health Support for Young People](#)

## Find out more

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