

## **Action Community Enterprise CIC**

### **Background**

Action Community Enterprise CIC (ACE) is a specialist education provider that supports young people to progress into further education, apprenticeships or employment. ACE received funding from the Norfolk Community Foundation and the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board (ICB) who were working in partnership to enable VCSE organisations to participate in the Community Voices programme focussed on children and young people's experiences of asthma care.

### **Approach**

The trusted communicators received Community Voices training and asthma awareness training to help equip them with the knowledge required to hold conversations with young people on this topic. ACE utilised posters and existing knowledge to engage young people in conversations around asthma: "As the organisation that we are, we have a lot of young person, parent/carer footfall. So we planned to do a lot of it internally and so what we did is we just generated some posters with the QR code which initially we put around the centres and anyone who saw them and had asthma could identify that and volunteer their time just to come and have a chat with us. I also spent a lot of my time informally, just going through our records as to who I knew had asthma, who didn't, seeing if they wanted to have a conversation."

As an organisation that works closely with young people, the rapport between trusted communicators and young people was key to engagement: "Because we're a small centre, we're really familiar with the people that come through our doors."

### **Learnings**

While the trusted communicators were able to observe traits and characteristics associated with asthma, they found that few young people had a formal diagnosis, with some facing barriers to accessing GP appointments.

One young person accessing the alternative provision, who had a history of poor school attendance, shared that both she and her siblings suffered from asthma, a condition exacerbated by their poor housing conditions. Despite exhibiting symptoms, this young person had not accessed their GP: "She's got babies and toddlers in the family and getting to the GP for her is just something that wasn't really on the cards, so it was a bit of a kind of 'put up with it' scenario."

From this conversation, the trusted communicator had a better understanding of the young person's situation, particularly the barriers she faced in managing her health: "I knew this girl quite well. And then also there was this other aspect that I've never really touched on with her before...because she never brought [an] inhaler in or appeared in any way breathless. But obviously that opened up a repeated conversation. So, you know, I did check in with her more." As a result of this discussion, the trusted communicator encouraged the girl to seek medical support: "The GPs are there for a reason, so I advised her to go to the GP and speak to her mum a bit more openly about that she'd like to do that. And we did some check-ins afterwards, you know, informally, not contributing to your guy's study, but yeah, she said she had managed to get to the GP, which was nice." This outcome highlights how the conversation not only raised awareness of the young person's health challenges but also led to actionable support.

## **East Norfolk Sixth Form College**

### **Background**

East Norfolk Sixth Form College (East Norfolk) are a state-funded 16-19 Academy in Great Yarmouth who provide holiday activities to children aged 6-12 through the Big Norfolk Holiday Fun scheme. East Norfolk received funding from the Active Norfolk and the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board (ICB) who were working in partnership to enable VCSE organisations to participate in the Community Voices programme, focussed on children and young people's experiences of asthma care.

### **Approach**

The trusted communicators received Community Voices training and asthma training to help equip them with the knowledge required to hold conversations with young people on this topic. East Norfolk found the training session helpful and fed back that the discussion with other providers helped them to plan the conversations – “you could kind of bounce ideas off each other.”

East Norfolk identified asthmatic children that were attending Big Holiday Fun sessions and targeted those children for their conversations about asthma. They talked to children during breaktimes when they were having a snack after observing that they were less engaged in the conversation while there were activities happening. This included one group conversation with three young children who all have asthma – “And I was asking specific children a question and then the others would chip in anyway, so it kind of ended up being a nice little group conversation, and they then learned that each other had asthma and they ended up spending the rest of the day together, which was really sweet.”

### **Learnings**

The trusted communicators noticed that there were lower numbers of children with asthma during the holidays when they held the conversations than they usually see. They found the process helpful for showing them the benefits of talking to children about conditions and health issues like this. Expanding on this, East Norfolk trusted communicator said that “it's just yeah built – definitely built – up their confidence and they'd come up to you at lunch and throughout the rest of the sessions that they joined in with.” They mentioned that parents are not always forthcoming with this information, and if a child is not coping well in future they would be more likely to ask them about this.

There was one example of a conversation about asthma building a line of open communication between a trusted communicator and a young person which built confidence and helped the young person to feel calmer. The trusted communicator met the young person at a sports camp where they were having conversations about asthma; “We spoke about how it affects him, and they gained a lot of confidence from the conversation and spoke more openly with the adults and sports coaches about his asthma after this.”

Later in the week, the trusted communicator was visiting another sports camp to see how the session was going when the young person approached them and said that he needed his inhaler. “We went and sat down in the football stands to take a break and take his medication. He then proceeded to show me how he takes it and how he has a special bag for all his asthma things to live in so they stay clean. They showed me how they put their spacer together and click in their

inhaler to get ready to take it. Once they took it they did their 10 second timer in their head and then we had a chat about how the adults were really impressed with how they knew so much about their asthma and how to control it when they need to.”

The trusted communicator said that having an adult sit with him helped him to feel calmer while taking his medication. The young person and his parents have fed back that he is looking forward to summer camps with East Norfolk and his parents were “really appreciative about how we had built a relationship with their child to make them feel safe and supported.” This outcome highlights how the conversation built up trust and confidence for the young person to be able to access their healthcare in a sports setting.

## **Norwich Puppet Theatre**

### **Background**

Norwich Puppet Theatre is a theatre company that offers puppet shows for all ages and provides community outreach in the form of arts and cultural experiences to children and young people in Norfolk. Norwich Puppet Theatre received funding from the Norfolk Community Foundation and the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board (ICB) who were working in partnership to enable VCSE organisations to participate in the Community Voices programme, focussed on children and young people's experiences of asthma care.

### **Approach**

Norwich Puppet Theatre held group conversations in two schools during a break between puppet-making workshops. They often have conversations with children and young people as part of their workshops, and "the final outcome and some of the things that drive the project come from the young people themselves, so we can start a project with young people with quite a consultation process." However, they had not worked with either of these schools before.

The trusted communicator noted that a number of factors, like distractions or levels of teacher support, could affect how engaged children were in the conversation. For example, they said that some teachers "can't quite cope with kids with glue, scissors, paint, et cetera. For them, it feels like chaos," but at other times "you'll get another teacher who just thinks 'Oh brilliant. It's about time they did something like this.'"

### **Learning**

Norwich Puppet Theatre observed that children and young people were less informed and concerned about asthma than they expected. The trusted communicator observed a lack of awareness about the severity of an asthma attack, noting that children seemed to think that other illnesses and conditions were more serious. They reported that "there was quite a lot of apathy towards asthma, that it wasn't - the children didn't feel it was terribly serious. That they just thought it was just something that happened"

Despite the general feeling that asthma is not serious, there were two situations where young people in Year 7 shared distressing and difficult experiences of having asthma. The trusted communicator speculated that there might be a sensationalist element to narrating the distressing situations. One child shared their experience, saying that "he had nearly died from an asthma attack." Expanding on this, he said "that his breathing had been very bad and that he had to go to A&E with his parents. He said that it was very frightening. He said he hates asthma and wishes he didn't have it. He says that he has to take a brown preventative inhaler each day and use a blue one when he his breathing is really bad. He said he had seen doctors at the surgery and at hospital about his asthma."

Another child talked about the difficulty of having asthma as they struggle with their breathing and linked this to breathing difficulties in general. She said that "the summer months are bad for her, when she gets hayfever and her breathing becomes worse. She said that the farmers crops, especially oilseed rape, affects her. She said they were all worried that the oilseed rape fields run right up to the school grounds." These conversations demonstrate a significant contrast between

acute experiences of the severity of asthma alongside a general lack of concern for the condition in terms of its severity.

In response to the lack of awareness in conversations, Norwich Puppet Theatre equipped children with information about asthma, including handouts and instructions on how to respond if a child has an asthma attack. Norwich Puppet Theatre reported that “They were really lacking. Even the people who had asthma, and I don't know whether that's because they rely on parents or carers to do all of that for them and they don't have any direct conversations about it, or I mean presumably they have actually been seen by doctors, but they didn't seem to.” This outcome highlights the lack of awareness about asthma and the potential severity of the condition, despite young people having lived experiences of the difficulty of living with asthma.