

New Beginnings Greater Manchester Impact Report 2020



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Introduction

New Beginnings is a project that works with parents who have suffered significant trauma at some point in their lives. Its primary objective is to keep families together. However, it is a project that also recognises parents are not all the same. Different approaches work for different people and we understand that for some parents, who do make positive change and move forwards, it can take a while for us, and the parent, to feel confident that the progress made can be sustained and maintained. As well as therefore, considering the impact we have had on families in the child protection system we will use this report to reflect on and explore how parents have responded to our intervention and what learning can be taken forward.

New Beginnings began in May 2018 with Cohort 1. We are currently working with Cohort 5 - which started at the end of September 2020. This annual impact report will primarily cover families that have *finished the programme*: that is, Cohorts 1,2, 3 & 4. A brief overview of the families on Cohort 5, which is currently on its 14th week (due to finish early March), will be provided.

Of the 25 mothers who have completed the programme so far, 23 have remained or been reunited with their children. In two families, where the children have remained in the care of their fathers, the mothers have been given more contact. In addition, 17 of the 23 are either no longer part of the child protection system or the pre-court proceedings process. As a result, 40 children have remained with their parents.

Peer mentoring training is a part of New Beginnings that has been offered to parents who have completed the 24-week programme. Of the 25 mothers, 13 have completed the peer mentoring training. 7 parents have only recently completed and are at the stage where they are practising their mentoring skills on each other.

The primary objective of New Beginnings is not to find employment for parents. However, as a result of attending to previous trauma and creating structure and stability in their lives, parents have informed us that at the end of the programme they often feel ready to either return to work or start work. Of the 25 parents who have completed the programme, 7 have moved into employment and a number of others are actively looking for work.

It is important to note that there have also been an additional 10 parents who joined New Beginnings but did not complete the programme. There are a variety of reasons for this. These 10 parents have left either within the first few weeks or before the mid-point review meeting with their referring professional. If we are to better understand how we can improve our service, we need to examine the reasons why parents leave in the early stages of New Beginnings. We will also explore why 2 of the parents who completed the programme did not remain with their children.

On the 12th of March, 5 weeks after Cohort 3 had begun, we entered lockdown as a result of COVID-19. All the work that we do on New Beginnings (such as: group work, 1:1 work, peer mentoring and counselling) had to pause while we figured out how best to continue. The pandemic has without doubt significantly affected our families and our practice. This report will cover the impact the pandemic has had on both areas.

However, before going any further, it is important to acknowledge at this stage that none of the work we have carried out could have been achieved without the investment of our funders and supporters. We would like to begin this report therefore by expressing our gratitude to the Stockport Local Authority (health and social care services); The New Beginnings Board of Directors; Lancaster University; The National Lottery Community Fund; Stockport Local Community Fund; Forever Manchester and Winston Churchill Fellowship. We hope this report

demonstrates how your time and investments have provided the New Beginnings team with the resources required to carry out the work we do with families in the child protection system.



Primary Areas of Impact

The following areas have been identified as the principal areas of impact: **social welfare; mental health and welfare; economic and societal impact.**

1.1. Social Welfare Impact

Key data: Reduced or ended social care intervention (74%); Kept families together (92%); Improved confidence through peer mentoring (48%); Improved access to knowledge about rights and justice (100%); Improved access to opportunities such as employment and education (28%).

The main reason why social care intervention has reduced or ended for 74% of parents is because professionals have reported significant changes in parents' ability to parent, in their confidence, and in dealing with problems, such as drugs or alcohol, or troubled relationships with male partners and wider family. In some situations, as the mothers have stopped receiving social care intervention, they have informed us that they now feel more socially included and have a better understanding of their legal rights [S1]. One mother explained to us that she had self-referred into our project because she had lost her children and found out that she was pregnant with her third. She was aware that she needed to do something to turn the situation around if her children were to return to her care. She said:

"If it wasn't for New Beginnings, I wouldn't have got my children back and I would be dead - it's as simple as that" [S2].

Part of the New Beginnings approach is to offer parents who complete the programme an opportunity to share their learning and experience with new parents on the project. This has been beneficial for parents who feel that the core team do not have personal experience of their situation, so do not properly understand what they have been going through. For peer mentors this stage of the programme helps them to consolidate their learning and share their insight with others in similar situations. In turn, their confidence has improved and they have experienced a positive change in their outlook on life. In a recent evaluation, the peer mentors said they felt being a peer mentor and been life changing [S1]. The peer mentors also inspire the new parents. One parent said:

“(Look) how far she’s come; she’s got all her kids back, she’s on the straight and narrow, so that makes me see that there is a light at the end of the tunnel...we’ve all gone through the same problems and that helps an awful lot as well, knowing that there’s other people out there that...you’re not alone, basically, so I value her a hell of a lot” [S1].

The lead of the peer mentoring training programme said:

“The peer mentors are able to safely use their own stories to empower and motivate the women on the group....Story telling in recovery helps to reduce stigma, break communication barriers and also can be an empowering platform and catalyst for positive change” [S5].

In addition, the professional practice of seconded local authority workers has changed as some have rethought and adapted the way they have worked with families. One member of staff, who wrote a book chapter of her experiences, said:

“New Beginnings has made me think outside of the box, by trying something different and working with parents not against them” [S9].

Another member of the team talked candidly about what learning he gained from a peer mentor. Referring to a parent who had completed the programme, but who had struggled with alcohol all the way through and almost triggered court proceedings as a result, the team member explained that the situation could have been quite different if it had not been for the peer mentor’s involvement:

“Although [the case] is still in child protection, the social worker has told me that, if it were not for this insight from the peer mentor and the ongoing support, including her daily calls to Mum to see how she’s doing, how she’s getting on with her reduction to abstinence plan, her cravings, her coping strategies, how she’s planned her day to keep busy, it would be in court proceedings” [S1].

Parents have also noticed that their relationships with professionals have improved. One said:

‘I didn’t trust anyone before New Beginnings but that’s changed and me and my social worker have a good relationship now’ [S2].

Another parent said: “With professional I did find it hard to trust them but new beginnings has learnt me how to trust and not to be so defensive” [S2].



1.2 Mental Health and Welfare Impact

Key data: Reduced isolation and stigmatisation through group work and peer mentor support (100%); Reduced drug/ alcohol use (88%); Improved parents' emotional and well-being needs through therapeutic work and counselling (100%); Improved developmental and health outcomes for children (84%).

The part of the project that the women enjoy the most are the group work sessions, the maternal commons, where they meet other mothers. The women have said that being in the 'group' reduces their feelings of stigma and isolation as they build relationships with other mothers who are going through similar situations [S5]. One mother said:

"The girls on New Beginnings are special. I want to be there for them when they're having a hard time because none of this is easy. We aren't here because life has been easy" [R1].

Another said she felt a sense of pride and achievement once she had completed the programme but that the women, the group, gave her purpose. She said:

"I have two arteries that feed my heart with oxygen but what keeps my blood flowing is New Beginnings- it is the family I never had" [S2].

All of the women have benefitted from the 1:1 support provided by the peer mentors and this reduced feelings of isolation and stigmatisation. One mother said:

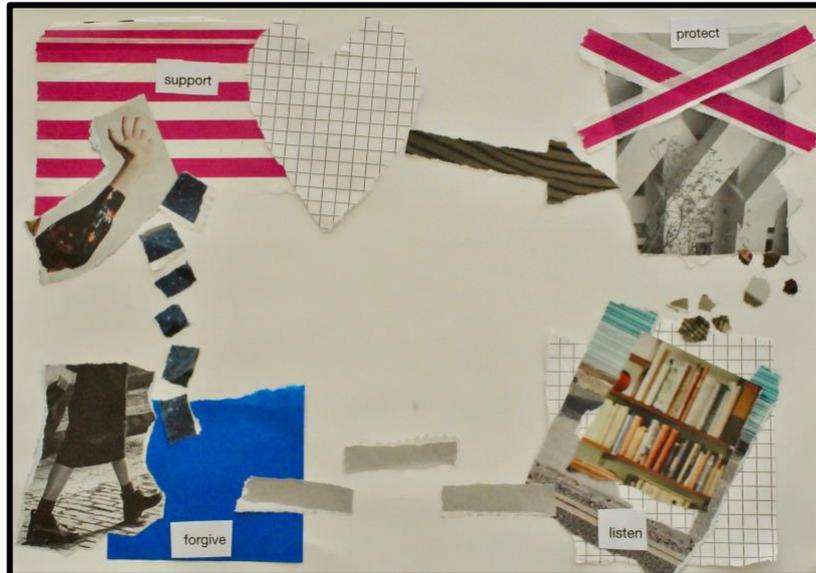
"My peer mentor gets me more than anyone else. She's been there, she's done it, she knows how not to do it" [S1].

The women also have weekly sessions with the New Beginnings counsellor. As a result of engaging in peer supported group work and 1:1 sessions with their peer mentor and keyworker, parents were more aware of mental health and welfare issues [R1; S2; S3]. One parent said:

"I couldn't of [asked] for a better key worker...[my keyworker] was like a best friend to me...she helped me so much and supported not only me but my children's plans...I wouldn't of come this far [without her]" [S2].

Another said:

“[My keyworker] has been the best. He goes above and beyond what he should of and is there whenever I ask. [Knowing] he is there is what got me through the bad times and I can see me clearly now” [S2].



1.3 Economic Impact

Key data: Reduced financial spending of health and social care services (78%); increased income for families (33%)

As a result of all the families remaining together, foster care provision and legal proceedings costs have all been avoided [S3, S4]. It has been estimated that:

New Beginnings has saved Stockport Council circa **£245,532.83**. The local authority fiscal return has been valued at £2.15. Therefore, for every £1 Stockport has spent, New Beginnings has saved Children’s Services £2.15. The public value of return on Stockport’s investment in New Beginnings is circa **£670,942.89**. This means that for every £1 that has been spent by other multi agency services in Stockport, New Beginnings has saved them £6.13 (see p.10 of Source 6 attached). The public value figure includes savings to services such as police; housing; mental health; drugs and alcohol; education etc.



1.4 Societal Impact

Key data: Reached the public (20,370+ members of the public); Shared stories of change (2,985 views of blogs); Influenced better practice amongst the social work community.

When parents graduate from the programme, an exhibition of their artwork is displayed in a public space to celebrate what the parents have achieved [S7, S8]. In 2019, the 'Face the Feeling' exhibition was hosted at The People's History Museum in Manchester and an estimated 20,370 people visited [S8]. Feedback from visitors stated:

"I had never thought that mothers stuck in a cycle of deprivation could be supported to turn their lives around. I will never judge them again" [S7].

Parents have also shared their stories by publishing blogs on the New Beginnings website. To date, the blogs have been read 2,985 times. One blog, entitled Ordinary Magic and the New Beginnings Maternal Commons, about a mother whose child returned to her care received 534 views. The mother who contributed to the blog said:

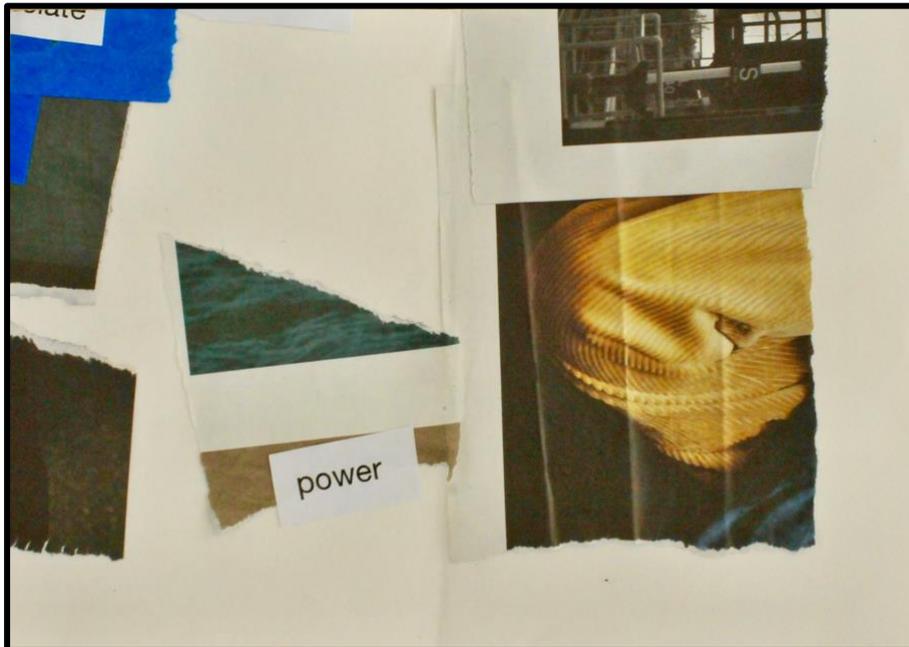
"To think that my story is having an impact on social work practice is mad. I never would have thought this could happen to me. I am so proud". [S10]

Although New Beginnings works with parents primarily, the team recognise that social workers are part of the team that supports the parent. The ethos of the project is to include the professional in the journey and work collectively with parents and their social workers instead of taking sides with one or the other. A parenting consultant said:

"New Beginnings forms an effective bridge between the women and their social workers...which helps parents and professionals negotiate and navigate difficult terrains" [S3].

However, the New Beginnings team has realised that if this form of practice is to continue, develop and be integrated nationally, it is important to share our approach with social work students as well as qualified practitioners. Peer mentors, along with practitioners, have been invited to deliver presentations at conferences, lectures and workshops and as a result, influenced positive changes in practice. Feedback from social work students who attended a session delivered by parents and a practitioner from New Beginnings was impressive. One said:

“New Beginnings session was fantastic! Hearing from the mothers involved in the programme was very valuable...It was a real-life example of what social workers sometimes get wrong and how it can negatively effect people, and what we can do better” [S4].



2. Detailed data of parents who have completed the New Beginnings programme

Key data: **23 mothers** have either remained with or been reunited with their children or, if children were with their fathers, their contact has increased. **17 mothers** are either no longer part of the child protection system or the pre-court proceedings process. **40 children** have remained with their parents as a result of New Beginnings.

The data in the following sections relate to the mothers who have been involved in the programme from **Cohorts 1, 2, 3 & 4**.

2.1 Parents who have completed the programme and remain with their children

Of the 23 parents who were referred to New Beginnings, **10** were in the pre-proceedings process, **3** were in the child protection process (children on CP), **3** were in child in need process (Team around the child Level 3), **4** parents were in the court proceedings process and **3** mothers had children on either supervision orders or Section 20.

At the point when the programme ended, the situation had changed for **23** of the parents:

- The **10** parents who were in the pre-proceedings process had **all** been stepped down:
 - 5** were stepped down to child protection
 - 3** parent was stepped down to TAC3
 - 2** parent was closed to social care altogether.

At the point of writing this report, **4** of these parents now no longer have social care involvement. **4** parents are in the TAC3 process. **2** parents still have children on child protection- 1 parent from **Cohort 3** and the other from **Cohort 4**. We are still providing the parents with support.

- Of the **3** parents whose children were on child protection plans,
 - 2** parents were closed to social care altogether
 - 1** parent is still on TAC3.
- The **4** parents who were in court proceedings
 - 3** parents have had their children returned to their care
 - 1** parent has increased contact with her child. The child resides with her father.
- The **2** mothers who had children on supervision orders had their supervision orders discharged and their children are now in their care. The **1** mother whose children were accommodated under Section 20 had her children returned to her care on a child protection plan. By the time the programme ended, both had been stepped down from child protection to TAC3. There is now no social care intervention at all.
- Of the **3** parents who were in the TAC3 process, all were stepped down and were closed to social care altogether.

2.2 Post programme support plans

It is important to note that *all* families that have completed the programme have required some form of post programme support. Following Cohort 3 it was acknowledged that this support needed to be formally recorded and each parent now has a plan in place. The reasons parents require post programme support is because they either require further support from us to help them end social care involvement altogether or because they have established a connection to New Beginnings that they do not want to end.

This additional support has been crucial in enabling parents to reach their final objectives which often are: to remain with their children or have them returned to their care and for social care involvement to end altogether. Therefore, whilst the programme is perceived to be 24 weeks long, it is as a result of our continued involvement that the goals identified at the initial meeting can be met. This involvement has generally meant continued 1:1 support from their keyworker (as and when required) and support from their peer mentor.



2.3 Peer Mentors

Once parents have completed the programme, they are offered the opportunity to carry out peer mentoring training. So far, **12** parents have taken up that opportunity. **5** have qualified as peer mentors. **2** parents from **Cohort 1** and **3** parents from **Cohort 2**. **7** parents (**2** from **Cohort 3** and **5** from **Cohort 4**) have completed the training and are practising their mentoring before qualifying. The **2** peer mentors from **Cohort 1** were our first peer mentors and it was unclear how they could or should give their support. It was evident that both wanted to continue to attend New Beginnings group sessions and they did so. However, it materialised that rather than mentor the parents by sharing their insights and experiences, they preferred to sit with parents and learn with them instead. At the end of **Cohort 2** both peer mentors were ready to move on. **1** has relocated and now works as a support worker, the other had another child with a new a partner.

The **3** peer mentors from **Cohort 2** took peer mentoring to a different level. It was agreed from the start that rather than sit and learn with the new parents, the peer mentors would contribute

to the sessions by facilitating part of them. In addition, after a few weeks the parents on **Cohort 3** were asked to choose which peer mentor they would like to be mentored by. After lockdown, one of the peer mentors became ill and was not able to mentor the parents. The other two peer mentors however actively took up the role and were provided with work phones and laptops to help them with their work. An evaluation on peer mentoring was also undertaken during this period (see S1 below) which has helped us learn what is working and what needs to change moving forwards.

Feedback from **Cohort 2** peer mentors has been helpful in that it has enabled us to understand that peer mentoring is not for everyone and not everyone is ready to be a peer mentor. Whilst peer mentoring provides parents with a valuable opportunity, it is a role that requires a lot of time and energy from the parent. This can be problematic for parents who are still in recovery and who still have struggles of their own that they need to work through. This means that in future rather than every parent being referred for peer mentoring training, careful consideration by the team will need to be given as to which parent should be nominated to do the training.

Furthermore, whilst the peer mentors all enjoy and benefit from the training programme offered by colleagues, all feel that there needs to be additional layer of training provided that will prepare them for the work they do on New Beginnings which primarily operates in the child protection arena. The details of what this additional layer of preparation for peer mentors will consist of is a topic that is currently being deliberated amongst the team and the peer mentors. More information can be found in 5.5 of this report.



3. Further learning from parents on New Beginnings

In this section, we will explore in more detail the situations of the parents who disengaged from New Beginnings. This is an equally important part of the impact report in order to understand how particular emerging themes might positively influence the future of our practice with parents.

3.1 Parents who do not complete the programme

In **Cohort 2**, there were **3** parents who did not complete the programme. **2** had their children removed from their care within the first 12 weeks. Although both attempted to continue attending the group sessions, they only managed to do so for a few sessions. One of the parents informed us that it was too painful to remain on the programme with other parents who still had children in their care. The other disengaged completely without explanation. Whilst we do not properly understand why both parents struggled to keep their children safe and in their care, we do know that both parents were former looked after children and were involved with children's services as a result of drug and alcohol misuse issues as well as concerns relating to either domestic abuse or neglect.

The third parent, in contrast, was stepped down from child protection at around week 10 of the programme. Although she promised to remain with **Cohort 2** in order to complete the programme, her attendance soon waned and then she disengaged altogether. It is important to note that the same parent, referred herself back into New Beginnings for **Cohort 3**. She had by this stage, 6 months later, had both of her children removed from her care and was in the midst of court proceedings when she returned to the next cohort.

In **Cohort 3**, therefore, in addition to the parent who re-referred herself back into New Beginnings, a further **3** parents left the programme. All left around the time of lockdown. The parent who re-referred into the project, left after week 5 because she felt the court proceedings process was too overwhelming. She was struggling with drug and alcohol issues and her mental health had deteriorated significantly. The **2nd** parent fell pregnant with her fourth child and encountered serious morning sickness. She found it difficult to look after her other children during lockdown and so asked to step off the programme and return at a later date. The **3rd** parent, disengaged altogether, citing online group work as an activity she was not interested in or prepared to partake in. The **4th** parent struggled with alcohol and struggled to engage with Change Grow Live, and later, Pathfinders. She left New Beginnings when she found employment.

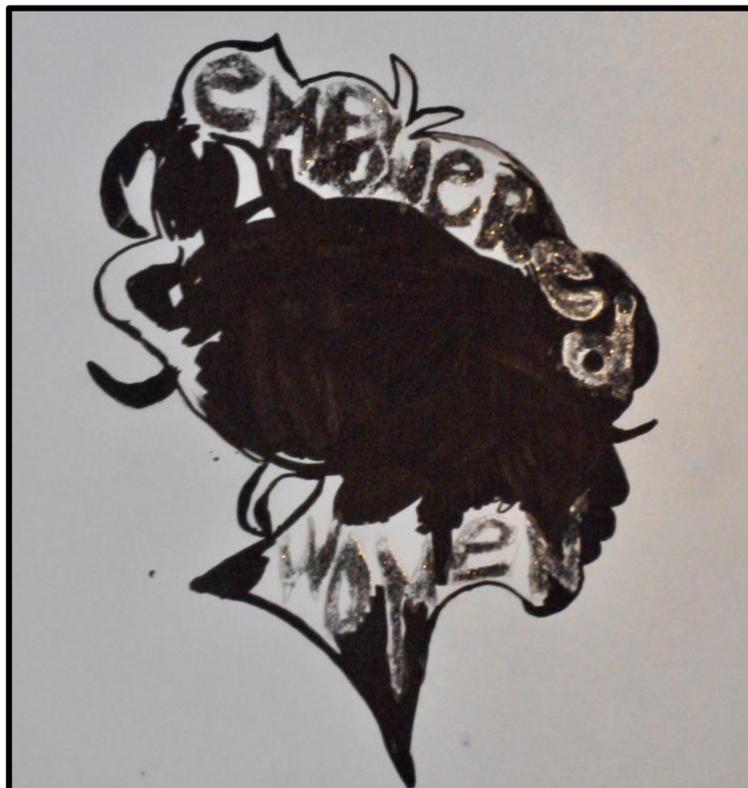
It is important to note that **3** of the **4** parents no longer have children in their care. A theme that connects all three parents are issues of drug and alcohol dependency. Although all parents were encouraged to work with appropriate support agencies (such as Change Grow Live, Pathfinders or Mosaic) whilst they were with New Beginnings, they were unable to maintain engagement or reduce their substance usage. The **4th** parent who was in the TAC3 process remains in TAC3.

In **Cohort 4**, 3 parents disengaged from the programme before the mid-point review. All three parents were in proceedings. One mother was working well with CGL and had reduced her drug dependency, she had ended a violent relationship, secured accommodation and was attending contact with her daughter regularly. Unfortunately, however, she was unable to

sustain her progress due to Covid restrictions. Another parent left to start a new job. And the third parent struggled to engage with the programme content due to her learning disability.

3.2 Parents who do complete the programme but who do not remain with their children

In **Cohort 2** and **Cohort 3**, there were **2** parents who completed the programme but who have not remained with their children. The situations the parents found themselves in were different and so it is beneficial to explore them briefly here. Both parents were drug dependent but it only became apparent that their usage was more than we were aware following the removal of their children. One parent moved to rehabilitation and has completed 8 months. She has moved into semi supported living and is hoping to return to New Beginnings to use her learning and insight as a peer mentor. The other was significantly impacted by the pandemic and has been trying hard to make the necessary changes in order for her children to return to her care. Both are still actively seeking support and on-going contact with the New Beginnings' team, their peer group and the peer mentors.



4. Impact of COVID-19

On the 12th of March, 5 weeks after **Cohort 3** had begun, we entered lockdown. All the work that we do on New Beginnings (group work, 1:1 work, peer mentoring and counselling) had to pause while we figured out how best to continue. The first couple of weeks involved us attempting to provide all our support through 1:1 keywork sessions. However, it soon became apparent that this was not going to be effective especially as the mothers missed having contact with other women from their group.

The mothers' feedback helped us to recognise the importance of the group and gave us the impetus to re-establish the group sessions online. We were fortunate to be awarded COVID-19 Emergency Funding from the Community National Lottery Fund and this helped us purchase the technology required for our peer mentors and parents. Moving online was beneficial for many of our women as they were able to look after their children and continue receiving their own therapeutic support from us. Other advantages also emerged such as the online forum proving to be a safer space for the women to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences.

However, whilst being beneficial for some, we soon learned that it also became a place in which some parents could hide with some choosing to either not contribute or turn their camera on for whatever reason. When group took place in person, it required parents to be present in the physical sense and that presence helped the New Beginnings team to not only gauge how they were grasping the material content but also how they were feeling personally. This level of insight is no longer available, and so it means that as a team we need to be the ones who adapt and learn to manage engagement with parents more effectively. In addition, as restrictions continue to be implemented it is unlikely that group work will return to normal until later in 2021. We have therefore agreed that it is the responsibility of the programme lead and co-ordinator to ensure that those who do engage with the online work are provided with the right kind of technological support and are encouraged to engage and contribute as much as possible.

Another aspect of COVID-19 that needs to be considered is the impact that it has had on contact sessions, or rather parents time with their children who are not in their care. The court proceedings process is recognised as being highly challenging for parents but coupled with the issues that have been emphasised as a result of the pandemic, there has never been a time when it has been more difficult. Parents have always struggled with the limited time they see their children. But of late they have had to cope with spending their precious 30 minutes wearing gloves, an apron and a mask. In addition, they have had to cope with being told that contact has been cancelled as a result of a foster carer, or member of their family, being contacted via track and trace and being told to self-isolate or the parent being told when they arrive at the contact centre that they do not look well enough to enter and see their child.

Whilst the rationale behind these situations is understandable, it does not ease the pain our parents experience when they are told contact has been cancelled parents spend their time after contact looking forward to their next one. For many, although offered words of support and empathy from professionals, those missed contact sessions are not replaced and some, if not all parents, are close to giving up. Indeed, when 1 of the mothers from **Cohort 4** was told she could not see her baby as she looked too ill, she did give up after weeks of making consistent progress. Another who was doing extremely well and was close to her final hearing was close to giving up also. She managed to hold on by using the group to talk through her feelings and by watching the videos from her video interactive guidance sessions of her and her son.

5. Moving forwards: what we have learned and how we will change.

5.1 Common themes and research

Two common themes that have emerged from the parents who have disengaged from New Beginnings or who have completed the programme but not remained with their children are:

1. They are former looked after children
- 2: They have drug and alcohol dependency issues.

These findings strengthen Pat Crittenden's (2016) argument that yesterday's children are indeed today's parents. In other words, if we are to break the cycle and prevent further parents losing their children to the care system then we need projects like New Beginnings to work intensively with those parents who are on the brink of care proceedings.

However, whilst it is relatively simple to identify the factors that link those parents together, it is acknowledged that these themes are far more complex than the two points outlined above. We recognise that if we are to better understand why some of our parents succeed and others struggle to navigate the child protection system, we need to conduct the right kind of research to find out why. Two of the New Beginnings directors intend to carry out this research (Jadwiga Leigh and Lisa Warwick) and they have recently obtained British Academy Leverhulme Funding to do so. Along with the support of their research assistants, who are peer mentors (Mellissa Hempenstall and Lynn Baxendale), the researchers will carry out life story work with **16** parents: **6** parents who no longer have social care involvement and **6** parents who have had their children removed from their care. Their study will begin in November 2020 and it is hoped will conclude in March 2022. It is hoped that their findings will contribute to the development of New Beginnings.

"I think New Beginnings is amazing. I wish I had taken a lot more notice sooner. I've learned so much from my key work sessions and the group sessions. I only wish I had taken it seriously from the start...but what I love about New Beginnings the most is the support you get afterwards. Like the support doesn't stop when the course finishes and that is really good as it means we haven't just been left and forgotten about. Despite all I have lost you haven't given up on me and I love you all for that"

[Message from a parent who completed the programme but did not remain with her children]



5.2 Restructure and Cohort 5

As this report demonstrates, providing parents with the intensive support they require is not as straight forward as it seems. Whilst all parents have experienced significant trauma at some point in their lives, each parent is individual; they have their own ways of coping, understanding and responding to the information they are provided with. This means that we need to ensure our team is able to meet their needs accordingly. In order to do so, we have decided to draw on the strengths the team currently has and to use these skills differently moving forwards.

At present the core team consists of: Jadwiga Leigh (Programme Lead); Matthew Purves (Programme Co-ordinator); Kath and Di (Programme Facilitators); Mellissa (Peer Mentor Lead). For **Cohort 5**, it has been agreed that Di and Kath will focus solely on providing the therapeutic 1:1 key work sessions. Matthew will co work the families with Di and Kath, but rather than provide the therapeutic element, he will use his social work skills to support the parents who are in the child protection or pre proceedings or proceedings processes. This will involve Matthew attending meetings, providing advice, support and attending to any other practical issues that emerge.

In terms of Cohort 5, we began the group with 15 parents. However, 3 parents attended the first session and then left. In the past few weeks, we have lost 3 parents. Despite a lot of investment from the team, the parents felt too overwhelmed by what was happening in their personal lives to properly engage in New Beginnings. They have been encouraged to self-refer in the future when they are ready to receive support from us. The remaining 9 parents are however doing well. 3 parents have been stepped down from TAC3 (or are due to be shortly) and will no longer receive social care intervention at all. Another who was in pre-proceedings, due to serious concerns, has recently been stepped down to child protection. One mother had her children returned to her care shortly before Christmas. And another mother, who was with us in Cohort 2 but left when her child was removed from her care, self referred back onto the programme for this cohort. She is making good progress and we are hopeful that her child will be returned to her care in the near future.

5.3 Additional resources

Group work sessions will continue to take place online for the time being with Kath leading on the self-care sessions and Matthew leading on the therapeutic group work sessions. To accompany the therapeutic work, each parent will be provided with a workbook in their welcome pack. This will help them keep their work in one place and help key workers keep on top of the homework parents need to carry out after group.

In addition, New Beginnings has started to accept social work students. This additional support has not only given the core team more time and space to concentrate on their work but it has also brought a fresh perspective to the way in which we practice. The two students we have with us at present are persistently offering constructive challenge as well as making suggestions that offer new and easier ways to the way we work. All the team agree that their presence and contributions are welcomed and it has been a pleasure to work with diverse and exciting individuals.

5.4 Team training

For New Beginnings to continue to support parents as best as it possibly can, the core team have attended further training to improve on their skills and expertise. Recently, Jadwiga and Di undertook Video Interactive Guidance (VIG) training. It is hoped they are able to use this strength-based tool with parents who are struggling to parent or bond effectively with their children. Kath has been carrying out *Caring Dad's* training - a programme which works with fathers in the child protection system - in order to better involve the fathers with whom we work with in our practice. Mellissa has started her Level 3 in Education and Training with the hope

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of developing the peer mentoring part of the programme. And finally, Jadwiga and Matthew are due to train this year in Adult Attachment Interviews (AAIs) (see Pat Crittenden, 2016 as well as Clark Baim and Tony Morrison, 2011 for more information). It is hoped that the AAI process will help us better understand the attachment behaviours of those parents we have found difficult to keep engaged with New Beginnings. Parents who tend to have encountered particularly complex upbringings and who we refer to in 5.1 of this section.

5.5 The Butterfly Project

We have learned that when parents complete the programme, their journey with New Beginnings does not come to an end. Instead of leaving and starting afresh, many of our parents ask to remain connected to us either for support or because they want to help other parents who join the programme. As mentioned previously, whilst there is the opportunity for parents to become peer mentors not all parents want to be peer mentors in the traditional sense. Some want to run art groups, cooking sessions, exercise classes and more.

The peer mentors we have at present all enjoy and benefit from the peer mentoring training programme that has been offered previously but in addition, they all feel that there needs to be additional layer of training provided. They feel this will better prepare them for the work they do on New Beginnings which primarily operates in the child protection arena. Following the evaluation, we have agreed that more time and energy now needs to be spent on this part of the programme which our peer mentors have decided to call, *the Butterfly Project*. We are in the early stages of this development, but more information will follow in due course.



6. References

Research [R] and sources [S] to corroborate the impact

- [R1] Leigh, J. & Wilson, S. (2020) 'Sylvia's Story: Time, Liminal Space and the Maternal Commons'. Qualitative Social Work. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325020915777>
- [R2] Crittenden, P. (2016) Raising Parents: Attachment, Representation and Treatment. Second Edition. London: Routledge.
- [R3] Baim, C. and Morrison, T. (2011) Attachment Based Practice with Adults Shoreham: Ashford Press
- [S1] Evaluation Report of the New Beginnings Maternal Commons, Greater Manchester by Kings College London <https://www.newbeginningsgm.com/evaluation-report-2019>
- [S2] End of programme evaluation feedback completed by parents (2019 & 2020)
- [S3] Testimony from Registered Nurse, Health Visitor & Parenting Consultant
- [S4] Feedback from social work students at Lancaster University
- [S5] Testimony from Chief Executive Officer of Society Inc.
- [S6] Outcome Data and Cost Benefit Analysis Spreadsheet, ratified by Stockport Local Authority
- [S7] Feedback from visitors to the Face the Feeling Exhibition at the People's History Museum, Manchester (May- July 2019)
- [S8] Testimony from Exhibitions Officer at People's History Museum
- [S9] Chapter written by seconded worker in Working Towards Accreditation Putting the Pieces Together <https://siobhanmaclean.co.uk/publications/working-towards-accreditation-putting-the-pieces-together>
- [S10] Ordinary Magic and New Beginnings Maternal Commons <https://www.newbeginningsgm.com/single-post/ordinary-magic-and-the-new-beginnings-maternal-commons>