

Sue Bell

Sue Bell founded Kids Inspire in 2007, a not-for-profit organisation providing mental health and trauma recovery support for children, young people and their families. It is a unique organisation with over 100 paid or voluntary staff working across Essex, and beyond. Through a range of therapeutic and community activities the charity promotes resilience, self-awareness, and relationship building to empower more positive life choices with those that it works with.

Sue's vision for the charity inspires all those who work for her. She is committed to helping as many young people and their families who have suffered trauma as possible. Over the last five years she has qualified as the only Somatic Trauma Therapist in Essex. Sue continues to progress on her professional journey and is planning to embark on her doctorate later on this year which she plans to base on the model of what is practised at Kids inspire.

Likewise, Sue encourages her team to share best practices and continue their training meaning that the charity has an extremely qualified and experienced team. Through her leadership Kids Inspire has become the service of choice for referrals from local schools, GP's, and social care.

Sue is extremely well known in her community for her support of children's mental health. She has the backing of her local MP, local authority and numerous community groups including the Rotary, Lions and Round Table.

It is unimaginable to think what might have happened to all the thousands of children, young people and their families that are supported by Kids Inspire every year. Sue continues to support the most complex cases herself and always has a large caseload as well as her duties as CEO. Her ability to diversify meant that she swiftly mobilised her qualified, accredited team to deliver therapeutic provision remotely via videocall and telephone; enabling the charity to continue supporting children, young people and families throughout the Coronavirus pandemic.

Their story

From a young age Sue had an interest in human behaviour: having been a studious, yet rebellious teen herself, she often related to the young people she worked with throughout her teaching career. Despite the authority that more senior educational positions brought with them, Sue still felt powerless to put a child at the 'centre' of a case regardless of her role.

In 2007 it became clear to Sue that there was nowhere for children who were victims of distress, abuse or neglect to turn to for support. As a result, children who she worked with were engaging in self-harm and risky behaviours, such as alcohol/drug abuse, abusive relationships, educational exclusion, and social isolation, instead of receiving positive intervention.

Distressing situations of intergenerational family child abuse and flippant remarks from those in a position of power about “children being sorted out once they were in the criminal justice system” were the final justification Sue needed to set about change.

Already a qualified counsellor – working with behaviour support – and training to be a child and adolescent psychotherapist, Sue opened Kids Inspire, and for two years worked unpaid to prove how these children could be helped. In collaboration with a consortium of local schools, in the first year alone the newly founded children’s charity received over 250 referrals. The work did not stop there, with Sue working tirelessly fundraising and securing grants all alongside seeing her clients.

Early in the foundation of Kids Inspire, Sue identified the importance of family inclusive treatment, an approach which meant families often received therapy alongside their child to support long-term sustainable outcomes for all. The aim for Kids Inspire has never changed – the charity’s goal is to meet the needs of the child at the centre of each case in order for the child to thrive once completing a bespoke treatment plan.

Most recently, during challenging, unprecedented times delivery of mental health services – that are needed now more than ever – Kids Inspire remained open, adapting and shifting services online to continue offering seamless support. More recently, as demand for services increased and as schools reopened, the approach for service delivery has adapted again to a hybrid

model – offering online or face to face bespoke treatment, responding to each child’s presenting issues on a case by case basis.

Their impact

The aim of Kids Inspire is to support disadvantaged children, young people and their families to build resilience, heal from trauma and reclaim their lives. The team treat each referral individually to understand the root of the problem. The clinical thinking results in targeting the intensive support to the family members that need it the most, while keeping the whole family in the treatment plan through regular consultations.

Numbers below are from April 2019 to March 2020:

- Total number of Individuals supported therapeutically: 2797 (797 more than the year previous)
- Intensive support: 1162 individuals (462 more than the year previous)
- Family members benefited by the treatment plan: 1635 individuals (335 more than the year previous)

Analysis: Last year, Kids Inspire, led by Sue Bell increased its beneficiaries by 40%.

Covid-19

The role of Kids Inspire throughout the pandemic has been on the frontline – helping individuals to adapt and cope. Sadly, the heart-breaking truth is that cases of childhood trauma in the past year have more than doubled with children and young people being triggered by the impact of the pandemic.

Kids Inspire, led by Sue Bell, played a huge role in protecting children, young people and families, making sure they were safe and that they had access to the best support for their long-term wellbeing. In the year following 30 March 2020, the team at Kids Inspire offered therapy to 2,539 children/young people and parents/carers.

Childhood trauma is an important topic and Covid-19 has reminded us of what vital services organisations like Kids Inspire provide. Whether that support comes via; Therapy, Mentoring, Coaching, Community projects, the Christmas Appeal or Lunch Club, they all go a long way to empowering children, young people and their families, and to easing the impact of childhood trauma and anxiety.

Funding and national recognition

Led by Sue the Charity has been extremely successful in applying for contracts with the local authority, National Lottery and other large grant funders. The charity has recently been awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service thanks to the committed volunteers that choose to support the charity.

Sue was delighted to be a finalist of The Most Enterprising Women Award at the 2019 Essex Business Awards. The charity also won the 2019 Not for Profit Organisation of the Year at the Brentwood Business Awards. Sue has also been a runner up in the Clarin's Woman of the Year Award and received a Mental Health Hero Award from the previous government.

“Sue was the one there for me when I truly had no one else. All others around me were either falling apart, pushing me away or simply not listening. Sue gave me space and time in which I finally felt heard, supported and safe to express myself however I could without fear of judgement. She gave me permission to fall apart with her and was there to help me pick up the pieces of myself when I was ready. Sue did nothing less than save my life, and I will never forget that.” – Young service user

“Your wonderful project and the incredible work that you do has been the pivotal catalyst for her growing self-esteem and capacity to enjoy life once again.” – Parent/ carer

“Sue's vision for the charity inspires all those who work for her. She is committed to help as many young people and their families who have suffered trauma as possible.” – Paula Ashfield, Head of Fundraising and Communications, Kids Inspire

“The value, expertise, support and the social impact you have on children and their families has been there to see for many but getting this level of recognition (QAVs award) tops it all off for you all in an unbelievable way.

Well done to you all at Kids Inspire and well deserved. It has been great to be able to play a small part in fund raising to allow you all to do what you do.” –
Lee Elliston, Corporate Supporter

“Amazing, the lifeline we needed to make sense of things. Wonderful, kind support can’t thank you enough for helping to guide us together as a family.” –
Parent/ Carer supported during Covid-19