

Sunbeams

Strategic Plan 2024-2027

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Foreword

Since 2013, Sunbeams has been a trailblazer in the community, transforming attitudes and the quality of early support for the social and emotional wellbeing of girls and young women. What started as grassroots efforts by two young women with lived mental health experience - literally a laptop in an attic bedroom - has now become a trusted community organisation and the go-to place for all things related to girls' wellbeing.

But with a rapidly growing young population and a sharp rise in mental health issues amongst children and young people, we know we need to do more. Behind the numbers on our waiting lists are stories of children and young women whose conditions will deteriorate if we don't step up and bridge the gap in low level community intervention

This strategy sets out how we will build on our experience and resilience to extend our help with a significant increase of 15-20% of users per year especially in our 1:1 mentoring, the new keyworker service and parent engagement programmes.

The vulnerable girls, young women and families we serve are still living with the impact of the pandemic while the cost-of-living crisis poses new challenges for them, partnering schools and LA's services and for our charity, staff and volunteers. Yet as we have seen in the past three years, the new challenges make us come together to find solutions and so we are seeing new opportunities for partnerships, marketing and rapid expansion.

Over the next three years, we will focus on dismantling systemic barriers and generating sustained transformation around mental health. In particular, we will work closely with those most marginalised in the community with a focus on reducing widespread stigma and improving not only their wellbeing but their emotional fluency, voice, confidence and leadership skills.

We will continue to work closely with 22 local schools to develop and improve school-based mental health provisions so that all pupils, parents and staff have access to good mental health and wellbeing support. And using our unique and trusted position in the community and our established partnerships with statutory services and local council working groups, we will work hard to improve referral pathways, build trust and confidence in mainstream mental health services and increase cross-agency co-production to ensure the needs of girls and young women are identified, met and supported at the earliest stage.

To meet these ambitious goals, Sunbeams will continue to improve and evolve its operating model, diversify and increase income streams, extend our partnerships with local mental health services and increase development capacity.

We remain passionate about providing targeted, holistic and early support. Most importantly, we are committed to delivering support services that are run by and for girls and young women relying on their voice, their ideas and their feedback for service design and delivery that is completely user-led.



Our Mission:

To empower girls to develop their character, grow in confidence and resilience and overcome challenges.

Our Vision:

Vulnerable and disadvantaged girls in the community are supported through tough times and empowered with the skills and emotional resilience to confidently face whatever life throws at them and succeed.

Our Values:

At Sunbeams we are:

- Pro-active: we are passionate about prevention and providing effective early support before problems escalate into complex mental health issues.
- Child-centred: listening to children and young people's voices about what they know and think and about how we can best support them.
- Solution-focused: empowering children and their parents to keep on doing more of what works well.
- Collaborative: working in partnership with schools, community and statutory services to achieve the best results.
- Inclusive: valuing diversity and ensuring equal opportunities for all.

Our Strategy for 2024-2027

In designing our strategy, we consulted with over 300 staff, pupils, practitioners, volunteers, trustees, parents, users and partner organisations through surveys, interviews, focus groups, events and workshops.

We listened to their voice, their opinions and their stories to gain deeper insight into the challenges facing girls and young women and the community at large, to understand what we must continue to do and to learn what we should do differently.

This strategy gives us a clear direction and plan of how we will achieve our mission and our vision and is underscored by our core principles and values. It outlines how we will do everything in our power to empower girls to develop confidence and resilience and to thrive despite adversity.



Resilient Children and Young People:

Early support to help children and young people develop coping strategies and thrive despite adversity.



Resilient Parents and Families:

Holistic support that provides parents with guidance and improved confidence to navigate crises and adversity.



Resilient Schools and Community:

Professional support to help schools implement a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Partnership work with local welfare organisations and statutory services to provide teamed-up support and to highlight and challenge inequalities.

High quality work experience, training and supervision to upskill young volunteers and improve their career opportunities.



Resilient Charity:

Improving and evolving operating model to ensure that we can carry out our mission, vision and strategy and continue to be responsive to needs of users' and the wider community.



Resilient Children and Young People

Over the years, we have seen the transformative power of support. We have seen how therapeutic activities and a dedicated mentor can bring about results that no one would have expected. Real and lasting change like newfound happiness, hope and healing. Confidence, positive relationships and reengagement with education. And that is why we remain steadfast to our mission of reaching out and supporting even more girls and young women at the earliest stage so they can develop coping strategies and thrive despite adversity.

We will:

- Provide a solution-focused volunteer mentoring service for 200 vulnerable and disadvantaged girls and young women so they have improved confidence, happiness, relationships and academic performance. And we will increase that number by 15% each year with widespread promotion of this service to ensure that no girl or young women is missed.
- Provide opportunities for youth voice and youth action and greater emotional literacy and fluency via our Youth Network.
- Expand our key worker service for girls who require more specialist and intensive support with excellent systems work to achieve goal-based change.

"We talked openly and honestly in the group sessions about the issues we were facing and all of us were having issues. That chance to have these really honest discussions and venting time was the best part of the group sessions. It made all my nervous and tense feelings disappear."

-Sunbeams User

"She changed from being tense and uptight with her neighbours to happy and carefree."

-Mother of Sunbeams User



Resilient Parents and Families

Some of our mentees shared that often they return from the 'magical place called Sunbeams' and the chaos and stress of their home environment hits them even stronger. Others told us that they wished their parents had better skills and knowledge on how to support them. Clearly, there is a need to provide parents with guidance, knowledge and skills and help them play their crucial part in their child's journey to success.

We will:

- Offer holistic support that provides parents with guidance and improved confidence to navigate crises and adversity. Whether it is a one-off meeting with our consultant clinical child psychologist, a four-week block of family therapy sessions or frequent check-ins by the Programmes Manager – we'll do whatever it takes to make the mentoring experience and outcomes achievable and sustainable.
- Use our extensive networks and established partnerships to guide parents with onward referrals to food banks, welfare advice, CYPMHS and local welfare organisations.



Resilient Schools and Community

The girls and young women we support are part of a community and we need to work in a holistic manner to ensure that they get targeted, professional and consistent support across the board – from their parents, teachers, peers and local community. Using our established partnerships with 22 local schools, welfare organisations and mainstream services, we will continue to facilitate multi-disciplinary working around vulnerable and disadvantaged girls and young women.

We will:

- Provide training and professional support to help schools implement high-quality and effective school-based emotional wellbeing services incorporating a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing.
- Deliver ongoing professional development trainings and workshops to staff across 22 schools so that they have improved understanding, skills and confidence to support pupil's mental health and wellbeing.
- Partner with local welfare organisations and statutory services to provide teamed-up support and to highlight and challenge inequalities.
- Provide high quality work experience, training and supervision to upskill 200+ young volunteers and improve their career opportunities.





Resilient Charity

We believe that our charity must continue to be there for girls and young women and for the parents, teachers and community leaders who rely on our services to build young people's resilience. Along the way, we want to expand our operations, increase impact and improve service delivery and we know that will only be possible if we as a charity are resilient. Covid-19, followed by the Cost-of-Living Crisis has highlighted how crucial it is to invest in our people, systems, data, technology, funding and resources to ensure we are adaptable, sustainable and crisis-prepared. We recognise that strong foundations will result in a strong offer and even stronger results.

We will:

- Analyse our board's skills and leadership and its relationships with executive staff to ensure robust governance with clear roles and responsibilities, strategic management and sustained involvement.
- Invest in monitoring and evaluation of our services and how we present our data so that we can drive performance, highlight impact and articulate our value.
- Use a distributed approach to leadership with opportunities for succession, empowering staff and teams to do their best for the charity and for the girls and young women it serves.
- Safeguard the charity's future by significantly increasing and diversifying our income streams.
- Put data and technology at the heart of how we operate.



Our principles:

Early intervention: working equally on promotion and prevention of good mental health and wellbeing as on solutions.

Whole systems approach : holistic and cross-sector approach that recognises and works collaboratively with all who work for and with children and young people.

Responsive support: systems that are person-centred, promote choice and are co-designed with stakeholders

Evidence-based approaches: to mental health and wellbeing policy development, service planning, resourcing and delivery

Forward thinking: creatively looking at ways to adapt and grow our programmes, whilst continuing to deliver best practice.

