

Section 3 About Your Organisation

Name of Organisation Choices4Growth CIC				
What type of organisation are you (please tick)				
Registered Charity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unregistered Community Group/Club/Society	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other (please state): CIC				
Do you have a set of rules or a constitution (please tick)? (please supply a copy if this is your first application to BTC)	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where does your organisation work (please tick)?				
Just in the Berwick, Tweedmouth and/or Spittal area	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regionally in the North East and/or Southern Scotland	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Throughout Northumberland	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nationally	<input type="checkbox"/>	
For the most recent financial year please state:				
Income £66,201	Expenditure £80,129		Year end balance -£749	
What does your organisation do?				
<p>Choices4Growth work directly with individuals, children and families in the Berwick and surrounding areas offering counselling and support services. Our aim is to provide better mental health outcomes enabling individuals, children, and their families to improve emotional resilience and have the skills to address potential future problems.</p> <p>The work that we do at Choices4Growth is invaluable to young people and their family's lives. We provide a safe space - both mentally and physically - for them to come and share what they feel is having a negative impact on their mental health. We deal with a diverse range of complex issues including anxiety, depression, loss/bereavement, self-harm, suicide ideation, gender identity, eating disorders, abuse, challenging behaviour, relationships, and domestic violence. We provide vulnerable young people with the tools and skills to progress successfully into adolescence and adulthood and in doing so, increase self-esteem, give empowerment, and reduce the risk of suicide ideation long term. We believe that mental health support is a right, not a privilege and should be easily accessible.</p> <p>Our project is unique in the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed; Choices4Growth is the only organisation in Berwick supporting children from such a young age and working in-house with schools. Our aim is to focus on long term positive change based on a strategy that early intervention with mental health can provide coping mechanisms that span from childhood to adulthood and reduce long-term anxiety and suicide ideation. Children who have support and a safe space to discuss their feelings and emotions have greater chance of long-term success, and manifests itself through increased attendance at school, increased confidence and improved social skills, which ultimately lead to better qualifications. It allows for greater control and influence over their lives, both short and long term.</p> <p>We work with multiple agencies and cross refer. We feel sure you can appreciate a lot of the issues that we deal with stem from home life, and it is important to provide family mediation and refer parents/carers for support as and when required. We receive ongoing referrals therefore creating links and positive engagement with the wider community:</p>				

- School communities: Head teachers, staff, parents, carers, guardians, children who self-refer with parental consent.
- Children’s Services, Social Workers, Early Help Family Workers, Berwick Youth Project, DWP, Northumberland Recovery Programme, Crisis Team, GP’s. Young persons and Adults. Northumberland Healthwatch, RISE.
- We assess, support and where necessary signpost.

Choices4Growth has grown a team with multiple skills and qualifications to provide a broader range of mental health support to the children and now has one full time Counsellor, two part-time Emotional Support workers, and one volunteer Emotional Support worker. In addition, we have a part-time Fundraising Administrator and three Directors overseeing the project. We support those Emotional Support Workers whose aim is to become qualified counsellors by providing them with support, guidance, and clinical training hours.

QUOTE – Teacher from local first school

‘Choices4Growth is helping us to chip away at entrenched and deep-seated problems in a way that we could never do on our own, and as the demands and expectations on schools continue to rise, alongside the level of need in our communities, the role of Choices4Growth becomes increasingly important. They support the wellbeing of our school community, they support our staff, our parents, and all our children and help to nurture a climate for learning and aspiration’.

How many people take part in your activities each year?

Choices4Growth work on-site in five schools in Berwick-upon-Tweed consisting of four primary schools and two middle schools. From March 2023 we have been asked to work in an additional school covering ages 3-18 years.

We have worked with hundreds of families and children to date. We operate a drop-in service for shorter assessments and longer, one-one therapeutic support, which can go on for weeks and months. Our approach is tailored to fit the needs of the client.

We work across all key stages of child development within schools, spanning from primary to high school. We provide specific workshops and sessions to help the children who are transitioning from one stage to the next, for example the jump from middle school to high school can be very overwhelming for a 13-year-old. We also work closely with and support teaching staff with any needs that they may have. Our work also tends to involve family mediation where problems are stemming from home. We work very closely with children’s services.

How many people are involved in your organisation? **5**

Committee & Volunteers **3 Directors**

Paid Staff (FTE) **3**

Section 4 Your Project

Describe your project [Continue on a separate sheet as necessary; include any drawings or plans of your project that will help explain what it is about]

We are the only mental health organisation in Berwick specialising in working with school-aged children.

Choices4Growth has strived to build and grow a team with multiple skills and qualifications to allow us to provide mental health support to the children and families of Berwick and the surrounding areas.

Our Clinical Lead and Founder of Choices4Growth, Jacqueline Davison, set up the project over five years ago. She has used her qualifications, knowledge and experience to deliver the project and support to the community of Berwick-upon-Tweed and surrounding areas. Graduating from Sunderland University as a Person-Centred and Psychodynamic Counsellor, Jacqui predominantly practiced within the North of England but then gained additional training and qualifications in London with Place2Be in clinical leadership, safeguarding, project managing, supervision, and specialising in working with children. She then became (speech, language and communication needs) SLCN School Project Manager Champion for the North of England.

Jacqui has worked with organisations that support those affected by drug and alcohol misuse, children excluded from mainstream schooling, and trauma. Issues supported include emotional abuse, domestic violence, suicide ideation, self-harm, sexual abuse, anxiety, transgender, depression and loss and bereavement. This led to working with couples and as a family mediator.

In 2010 Jacqui began working for Place2Be, the country's leading London-based children's mental health charity. During her time with the charity, she managed several projects across Northumberland, Sunderland and the North East of England. She took lead with clinical supervision of counsellors on placement, supported the school community and delivered one-to-one counselling and drop-in sessions. As well as presentations and training to potential partnerships, Jacqui took an active role when the first Children's Mental Health Week went live in London in 2015.

Our Emotional Support Worker, Kelly, began working with the project in 2021 and she brings experience, knowledge and understanding to her role working with children and adults when supporting their mental health. Qualified to Diploma level in Counselling, Kelly has gained NUCO FAA Level 3 Supervising First Aid for mental health and has experience with The Youth Drug and Alcohol Project. During the past 10 years Kelly has worked with relevant organisations in the Champions Network to end violence against women and girls. This area of work and her continued personal development has resulted in her bringing added strength to other areas of our project especially when working with adults in conflict.

Our Emotional Support Worker, Beverley, has lived in the area for 25 years and joined the project in 2021. She brings with her 18 years of experience and knowledge of working with children and adults. She gained much of her experience supporting children in a home environment and in school settings. Beverley is a qualified pre-school assistant and has worked in this role for the past 12 years and continues to gain additional required qualifications, including Level 3 in children's care, learning and development and safeguarding of children, to fulfil her additional school role. She is currently working towards a Degree in

Counselling and her understanding of working within school environments brings added strength to our project.

In addition to the day-to-day counselling support that we provide, we also ran a couple of separate projects; an Art Pilot and also a week of activities in schools for Children's Mental Health Week.

Aside to the referrals coming in from schools, we also support RISE with their local Berwick programme as they refer males aged 16-30+ suffering from complex mental health issues. We work closely with Children's Services, Social Workers, Early Help Family Workers, Berwick Youth Project, DWP, Northumberland Recovery Programme, Crisis Team, GPs, and we sit on several steering groups such as the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Group, Healthwatch and the North Northumberland Voluntary Forum. We are very much part of the network in Berwick providing support to children and their families in the town. We assess, support and where necessary signpost.

Why is it needed? (include details of any research you have carried out to identify the need and describe any specific benefits for the people of Berwick, Tweedmouth and Spittal)

Our primary beneficiaries are children aged 3-18. However, the complexity of issues addressed often results in engagement with additional family members and therefore reach the wider community of Berwick-upon-Tweed. Due to compelling research that early intervention at this critical stage in development improves mental health outcomes, Choices4Growth is the first and only organisation working with this age group in Berwick-Upon-Tweed.

According to past research, the North East is the suicide capital of England as figures have risen during Covid. Figures released by the Office for National Statistics showed the number of suicides rose by 11% from 2019 to 2020. The North East of England had the highest suicide rate (13.3. per 100,000) in 2020, which has been the case in five out of the last 10 preceding years and saw an increase of 15.7% compared to 2019.

We have seen a huge increase in suicide ideation and self-harming referrals, both from external organisations and self-referrals. On average there are two/three suicides recorded each day and these figures do not include attempted suicides as there is no way of recording these. We alone have an average of four self-harm referrals per day and one admitted to hospital with a suicide attempt, within the age range discussed.

Recent support provision is indicating that the mental health of children and families has been significantly impacted by the COVID pandemic, and the need for one-to-one counselling is increasing significantly. Berwick has also seen an increase of applicants for Universal Credit (the Government no longer publish unemployment figures since UC was introduced) and we are receiving many referrals from DWP and 90% of those referred are experiencing mental health/suicide ideation thoughts as they experience loss of employment or the need to leave their paid role due to anxiety and stress.

When comparing socio-economic factors for Berwick-upon-tweed to figures for Northumberland and nationally, statistics show historically Berwick is a poor area and how hard it is to get a job. Health statistics show Berwick residents rate their health as 'very bad' which is more than the national average, suggesting that the health of the residents in Berwick is generally worse than the average person in England. Berwick has a higher level of residents with either no qualifications or qualifications equal to 1 or more GCSE at grade D or below, than the national average.

The parents/carers of 72% of the children using our service are unemployed and in the age range 24 years – 36 years, 50% of these same parents are engaging with our service addressing their own mental health deep rooted issues, the remaining 22% have seen better relationships with schools and engage in a more positive manner within the community.

We work closely to target those at risk of suicide and develop flexible, innovative, and creative ways of addressing their needs. We work with clients in a safe environment, developing therapeutic transparent relationships, creating a working contract and include confidentiality clauses ensuring safeguarding is always paramount, for both client, and therapist. We work within our professional body framework (BACP) and work within our professional limitations and partner and signpost to relevant organisations when necessary. For example, following an assessment, a client may benefit support from a substance misuse or alcohol dependency and with consent we would refer to a local project such as Northumberland Recovery Partnership.

Our work includes therapeutic one-to-one sessions, group, or individual drop-in sessions and family mediation, face to face or online. We are schools based which creates awareness opportunities, building trust with pupils and their families, and we are readily accessible to the children in an environment that is comfortable and familiar to them. We can also see those clients not wishing to visit a school environment in our Berwick based office.

We will also work closely supporting staff in schools to provide them with the tools and resources that they need to create a safe healthy workspace and environment for all. We provide and share professional ways to work with challenging behavior within the classroom and provide safe confidential spaces to discuss personal issues that may be affecting their professional role. We attend staff meetings and training days delivering and presenting mental health awareness.

Through data and ongoing evaluation work done in schools pre and post commencement of support, consultations with parents and school staff we have a clear understanding of the needs of the community and the positive impact our services can have.

Working with other local organisations and charities has also provided a stream of feedback on the needs of the community in relation to mental health support. Responses from local families, who have experienced bereavement, depression and/or suicide, tell us that there is a real need for this service.

Project scope

Our aim is to expand our remit so that we can accommodate more children throughout the school system in Berwick which this would allow us to increase our work with young adults up to the age of 18 and their families. This is the group where we have seen a 400% increase of referrals with a recurring theme of self-harm and attempted suicide. This problem needs to be addressed through our continued support, delivering of training and awareness in schools and community engagement. This is a massive problem in the area and potentially impacts 40+ people when one person commits suicide.

Our aim is to roll out our service, and increase suicide prevention, by growing the number of counsellors we have and therefore the number of schools and families that we can support. Our framework gives cause for better relationship building for parents/carers/guardians with schools and we see positive school attendances, better lesson engagement and less classroom challenging behavior.

How will you measure the success of your project?

One of our support materials include the SDQ – which there are six variations (parent-report and youth-self report) currently used for reporting with an additional four versions (teacher-report) used at clinical level. There are base line (children 04-10) and follow up versions (11-17), depending on the type/complexity of the referral and the information provided by the referrer.

Information gathering current and historical is paramount to form a picture of the clients needs. In school we use three separates SDQ's: children, parent, and teacher. Pre and post counselling results are looked at alongside academic, attendance and any other ongoing assessments (e.g., SEND) that may have been acknowledged during support.

Headteachers use our data to report back to their individual governing bodies sharing impact and outcomes. Together we learn from the data which forms future delivery of therapeutic support.

In the six schools that we currently work, we are invited to attend meetings where the panel consists of all recognised agencies who contribute towards the wellbeing and safeguarding of those children and families on our case load. We use SDQ for the age range 3-16 years to monitor pre, during and post support. The outcomes measure emotional/peer symptoms, externalising problems, and conduct/hyperactivity symptoms. We ask the children who feel emotionally equipped (on average 11-16-year-olds opt to complete their own). Parents and school also complete an SDQ for the referred child to monitor behavior within home and classroom environments.

The work that we do is critical for the town of Berwick as we are so far from many other forms of support in the Northeast. We have spent years building up a network and trust with people in the town and we cannot simply stop offering the services that we have in place. We have received many phone calls from people asking for help for themselves or for their children who cannot get support from anywhere else or who have been on long NHS waiting lists. Word of mouth is very powerful in a community such as Berwick and we are recognised as an essential organisation who can provide face to face support when people are in crisis. We have been told 'we trust you' 'we feel valued'.

Demand for our services continues to increase and we need more counsellors to be able to support this. Funding would allow us to maintain the natural progression and growth of our team, but more importantly it would allow us to provide additional schools with in-house support. This is coming at a time where school budgets are being squeezed and staff are being lost – schools don't have the budget to fund us, but the need for our support is even greater with the stress and anxiety brought about by these changes. Staff use our services as a means of support too.

We would like to provide more voluntary positions and we would also like to be able to support the wider community through the families of the children that we work with.

We have the potential to continue to grow and development and to offer more schools and families the support that they need and want. This will directly benefit the community of Berwick and help us to support the partner organisations that we work closely with.

We have learnt that face to face sessions are an essential request and that online support was not a platform that works well for our clients' complex needs. We have also learnt that it is good to look at a holistic approach with sessions including art and dance. The pilot that we

ran shows an appetite for this work and that it allows us to safely reach those children and others in the community that otherwise would not have the ability/confidence to initially vocalise their thoughts and feelings. Group work is something we will take forward as part of our assessment process.

Our aim is to focus on long term change. We believe that early intervention with mental health can provide coping mechanisms that span from childhood to adulthood, reducing long term anxiety and suicide ideation. Children who have support and a safe space to discuss their feelings and emotions have greater chance of long-term success. This is mainly shown through increased attendance at school, the ability to increase self-esteem and improve social skills, which ultimately lead to better qualifications. It allows for more control and influence over their lives, both short term and long term.

Moving forward, and to build on current skill sets, we aim to provide relevant ongoing CPD training to all the team. The current Emotional Support Worker who is wishing to take their Counselling Diploma to degree level will eventually change roll to reflect a qualified therapeutic counsellor. This in turn increases the level of support for families in Berwick, as well as providing volunteering opportunities. With the increased workload, it has been acknowledged it is necessary for the working hours of our Fundraising Administrator to increase from 16hrs to 20hrs per week.

What is the total cost of your project?

Please provide a project budget

Total costs for C4G to run for one year are £98,537 - please see attached budget.

Have you asked any other organisation for help to fund the project?

If yes, please give details below

Yes

No

Organisation	Amount requested	Outcome
LNER	£74,615.	Unsuccessful
COOP	£3,000	Unsuccessful
The National Lottery Community Fund (continuation funding)	£340,000 (for 3 years)	Unsuccessful
RISE	£6,000	Successful

Section 4 Your Project (continued)

What will the Town Council grant be used for?

Here you should list either individual items you want the Town Council to help pay for e.g. Toilets or insurance or areas of expenditure you want help with e.g. printing or publicity.

Do Not provide a list of unrelated items and a single cost for them all.

Item	Cost	Purchased or hired?	Town Council Contribution
Part-time Emotional Support Worker (0.5 days per week)	£2,500 (Based on pro-rated salary of £22,660)		£2,500
Total requested from Town Council This box must be filled in and not exceed £2500			£2,500

How will you publicise the Town Council's assistance (for example at the event and/or in publicity or other material)?

We can publicise the Town Council's assistance by putting a statement on email signatures, social media and on our website.

We will include a feature in our newsletter which is distributed widely through our own contact list and through other partners such as the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Steering Group.