

## Art sessions made a difference

JAMIE\* was a 14-year-old boy who struggled to focus on lessons, which was affecting his attendance at Charter Academy.

He has special educational needs and found it hard to express his emotions, especially around his own identity.

He was referred to a four-week creative art session led by Lydia Galloway from our diocese's Council for Social Responsibility (CSR). The idea was to provide a gentle, supportive way for him to re-connect with his classmates and explore his own identity in a safe environment.

The programme was called 'Gather and Create' and was designed to help students with their emotional wellbeing. It included sessions in which they created masks and clay sculptures, designed symbolic stones, and took part in creating a collaborative mural.

Each week there was a different theme, including 'connection', 'identity' and 'hope', and each was designed towards increasing emotional growth. Jamie was

among those who began speaking more during the sessions and sharing insights about his artwork.

He said: "I loved the ideas, I was sad we didn't get to do the friendship bracelets again. I did love the clay."

And Lydia Galloway, the CSR's Programme Manager for children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing, said: "Jamie's feedback showed clear enjoyment, engagement, and a desire for more time – a strong indicator of success and personal connection to the workshop.

"This case demonstrates the power of consistent, expressive environments where young people can grow emotionally through

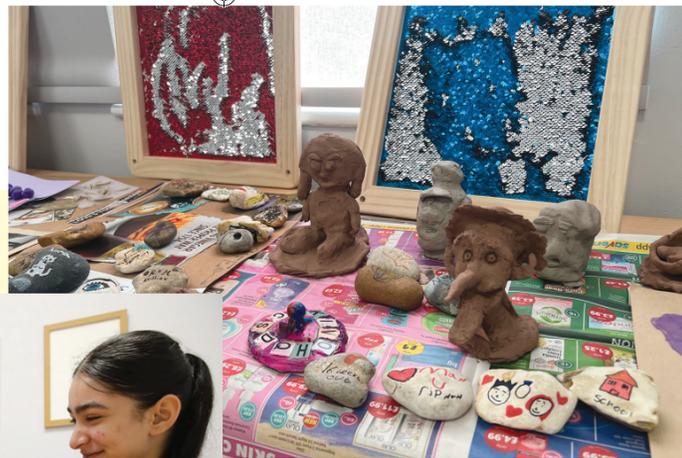
creativity – even if their self-reported "wellbeing" level doesn't shift on a scale, the internal growth is clear."

The sessions took place in the Jonathan Centre within Charter CofE Academy, which was officially opened by Bishop Jonathan two years ago and bears his name.

It's a therapeutic learning centre that aims to help students to overcome barriers to learning.



Above: Art therapy at the opening of the Jonathan Centre in 2024; top: some of the work from the creative art sessions



It offers creative art therapy, alternative provision, Lego therapy and a communal space where parents can sit with any children who need encouragement to go into the main school.

Up to 70 students a week are currently being supported in various ways, including Lego therapy, attendance mentoring and creative arts therapy. There's a drop-in at break and lunchtime and counsellors from Place2Be are among those based there.

Jade Leggett, deputy director of inclusion at Charter Academy said: "The centre has done an enormous amount of good to help students and their families. They see this place as a safe area.

"And the sessions led by Lydia were really valuable. The students will be excited to see her come back after maternity leave."

\*Jamie's name has been changed

three areas identified as priorities by Bishop Jonathan when he was originally announced as our new bishop. Poverty and the environment were the other two.

He said: "Frankly, there is a widely acknowledged system-wide crisis in the provision of mental health services. So many children and young people in distress simply do not receive the support they need at the time they need it, with utterly tragic and life-changing consequences for too many. How then will we respond?"

The Children's Commissioner for England's 2024 report noted average waiting times of six months for mental health referrals, with nearly a third waiting over a year. In 2023/24, over 60,000 children were referred for crisis-

level support, with nearly 40,000 children waiting for more than two years. Meanwhile, 52 per cent of 17 to 23-year-olds report their mental health getting worse, according to the Children's Society.

**'God has a plan. He meets you in your tears and uses it for good.'**

Bishop Jonathan is president of our diocese's Council for Social Responsibility (CSR), which is addressing this issue. The CSR, led by Canon Nick Ralph, recognised that our local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) providers are in crisis and therefore undertook some consultations over the summer of 2023.

That led to the CSR commissioning a report on children and young people's emotional health from Andrea King, formerly the UK clinical director of the Anna Freud Foundation - a leading UK mental health charity. She recommended prevention work with children, young people and their families, long before they might need help from CAMHS.

Among other things, that led the CSR to employ Lydia Galloway as their programme manager for children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing.

She has led therapy sessions in Charter Academy for students with specific needs, as well as launching a podcast addressing mental health issues, alongside young people themselves.



Compass Counselling in Central Library, Portsmouth

## Counselling service is a safe space for you

IT'S a new counselling service that offers a welcoming and inclusive space to help adults with their mental health and wellbeing.

Compass Counselling Service in Portsmouth has been launched by our diocese's Council for Social Responsibility, within Central Library.

It provides a blend of in-person and online appointments to ensure accessibility for all. Each new client is offered a free initial assessment, giving them a chance to discuss concerns, explore options and determine the next way forward.

After that, ongoing sessions are available via a tiered pricing system based on income, with fees ranging from £20 to a maximum of £65. This means higher fees can subsidise lower-cost sessions.

It's available to support all those aged 18 or over, regardless of their needs. Those under 18 can be signposted to other services.

Siobhan Butt, counselling service manager, said: "We are recruiting counsellors trained in a variety of approaches, enabling us to offer help with

issues such as depression, bereavement, addiction, trauma, and relationship difficulties.

"Sometimes in life we all feel a bit 'stuck' and find ourselves caught in a repeating pattern. Compass can help you explore your feelings and give you the space so you can understand and navigate yourself towards a place that feels best for you.

"Talking therapies, such as counselling, provide a structured space to express thoughts and feelings, explore challenges, and develop coping strategies. Research shows this can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, improve self-esteem, and enhance relationships.

"By working collaboratively with a trained counsellor, individuals gain insight into their experiences, develop practical tools for managing life's difficulties, and build resilience for the future.

"Compass Counselling Service is committed to creating a safe, non-judgemental environment where adults from all walks of life can receive the support they need."

More details are available on [www.compasscounselling.uk](http://www.compasscounselling.uk)