Developing a nature-based treatment manual for use within CAMHS community services

Morshead, Gemma

http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/19724

https://doi.org/10.24382/y255-h883

All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.
Developing a nature-based treatment manual for use within CAMHS community services

Gemma Morshead¹

¹CAMHS Team Manager. Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, BODMIN, PL31 2QN, UK.

Email: gemma.morshead@nhs.net

Submitted for publication: 03 February 2022
Accepted for publication: 03 March 2022
Published: 28 March 2022

Background

Children’s mental health services often rely on an evidence base created for a mainly adult population. Cornwall’s Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) utilise a broadly clinic-based approach to treatment. Evidence suggests that increased exposure and engagement with the environment through interventions incorporating nature-based approaches bring significant mental and physical health benefits (Mellor et al., 2021).

Review of the evidence

A literature review examined of full-text journal articles from the CHINAL database over the last 10 years were reviewed, focusing on the following topics:

- Health benefits from engaging in nature
- Outdoor exposure and child development
- Nature-based treatments for mental Illness
- Manual-based health treatments

Over 30 articles were reviewed. The literature recognised that exposure to the outdoors and to the natural environment has health benefits across all demographics. Evidence suggests that the value is greater for children, playing a key role in child development including neurological and emotional growth (Strife and Downey, 2009). There is also a growing body of evidence which highlights the significant positive impact that increasing exposure and connection to the outdoors and natural world in treating mental illness. This area of research has grown in the last two-years following the exploration of the impacts of the ‘lockdowns’ throughout the pandemic on the mental health of children and the disparity between different socio-economic backgrounds (Friedman et al., 2022). Although there has been an increase in delivering ‘ecotherapy’ to adults with mental health difficulties, both within public and private sectors (Wilson et al., 2010), there is empirical data relating...
to the public sector delivery or in the treatment of children with mental illness. Conversely, and often controversially, CAMHS services are seen to be choosing to follow a more pharmacological pathway in the treatment of mental illness and are prescribing increasing amounts of medications to children within specialist mental health services (Sivaprasad, 2005).

**Project plan**

The project utilises the JBI Evidence Implementation Model (Porritt et al., 2020) to understand opportunities for nature-based therapy within CAMHS, whilst simultaneously producing evidence informed nature-based treatment manual to inform practitioners. Using a service evolution survey, a local CAMHS will report the context of current practice with regard to nature-based therapy and identify opportunities for their introduction. This will be evaluated with a stakeholder group who will also oversee the development of an evidence-based manual, outlining nature-based therapy opportunities will be developed through a peer-review process involving CAMHS practitioners. Strategies for adoption will be tested and evaluated.

**References**


This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence (see https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/ ) which permits others to copy and redistribute in any medium or format, remix, transform and adapt on a non-commercial basis build on this work, provided appropriate credit is given. Changes made need to be indicated, and distribution must continue under this same licence.