



**STOP.
BREATHE.
THINK.**

**IMPACT
REPORT**
2025

2025

733 children & young people accessed the service and received support

2,808 counselling sessions delivered

50 partnerships with schools & organisations nationwide

97% of children and young people would access counselling again if they needed it



“

I feel like before counselling I would get in a lot of fights with the people I loved because I was angry. Now I feel, I can manage it better and spend more valuable time with my loved ones. I feel listened to.



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WELCOME FROM OUR FOUNDER



This year has been a remarkable chapter in Stop.Breathe.Think's story. Across the UK, we have continued to provide fast, accessible and youth-centred mental health support, helping children and young people navigate the challenges of everyday life.

In 2025, we were proud to support 733 children and young people through counselling, with 78% reporting improved attendance at school, 80% feeling more confident discussing their feelings and 97% saying they would access counselling again. These outcomes reflect the real-life difference our service makes and the profound trust placed in us by the young people, families and professionals we work with.

We are particularly proud of reaching some of the most vulnerable and isolated families in society. Nearly half (47%) came from the most deprived areas and the percentage of neurodivergent young people coming through counselling with us, shows a growing trust in our work.

Our impact extends beyond individual counselling sessions. Through partnerships with schools and youth organisations, we have created safer, more supportive environments for

children and young people to thrive. Projects such as Access Rural Counselling, made possible by the National Lottery Community Fund and Tap to Unmute our video campaign, funded by David Riddell Memorial CIO, demonstrates our commitment to breaking down barriers and normalising asking for help.

As we reflect on 2025, I want to thank every donor, partner and supporter who has helped make this work possible. Together, we are not only supporting children and young people through immediate challenges, we are building resilience, confidence and brighter futures for them.

On behalf of the entire Stop.Breathe.Think team, thank you for helping us stand with children and young people as they take the brave steps towards better mental health.

DAN CHARLISH
FOUNDER

ABOUT US

Stop.Breathe.Think is a game changing mental health charity offering online counselling to those aged 8-21, who cannot afford or access support quickly. No wait times and available nationally, we provide vital support to those who need it right now.

Our mission is to support children and young people’s mental health by making personalised counselling accessible and available nationwide.

OUR AIMS

- Build** a better future for children and young people.
- Engage** them through a personalised, youth-centred counselling approach.
- Provide** safe, professional and welcoming online spaces to be heard.
- Empower** children and young people with skills to manage challenges and lead healthy lives.
- Connect** social care, healthcare and education to strengthen national mental health support.
- Ensure** a shared language for consistent mental health outcomes across sectors.

Founded in November 2020, in response to the youth mental health crisis, Stop.Breathe.Think provides rapid and accessible mental health support when other services are unavailable. We support families, schools and the health sector by ensuring young people receive the help they need - when they need it - enabling them and their families to lead healthier, happier lives.



SINCE 2020:

4K+ children and young people supported

24K counselling sessions delivered

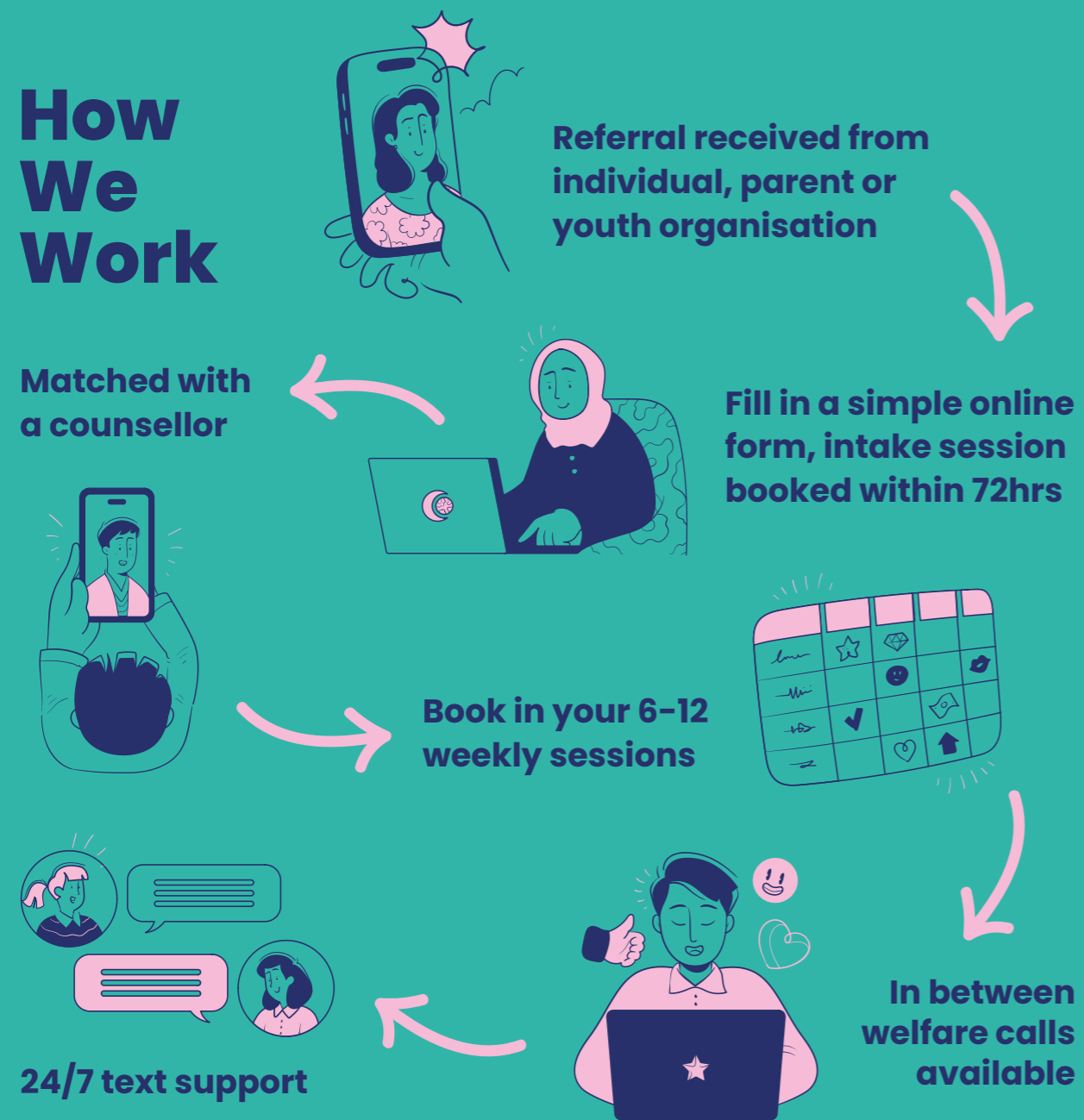
200+ partnerships with youth organisations

As an online service, we remove barriers to seeking help - no wait times, no stigma, just instant access to professional online counselling for children and young people who might not otherwise receive support. Our specialist, Level 4 and above, counsellors are matched to each individual with the right expertise, delivering potentially life-saving care.

This year also marked our first full year operating independently as a registered charity in our own right! As of July 1, 2024, Stop.Breathe.Think became an independent registered charity (No. 1206068), having previously operated as a programme under Switch180 (No. 1101030).

With everything in place for growth, we are ready to expand our impact and play a greater role in supporting children and young people’s mental health nationwide.

How We Work



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I have enjoyed my sessions as I feel I can say anything and Laura would always listen and understand what I'm saying and help me come to terms with things. It's helped me understand it's okay to need help and my thoughts and feelings are valid.

KL, age 15

When a young person finally has the courage to ask for help. They should not be told to wait.

The mental health crisis among children and young people is not something that can be ignored or delayed; it requires immediate action to ensure that individuals do not suffer in silence while waiting for the support they desperately need. The urgent need for more mental health support is highlighted by the latest NHS statistics, which paint a troubling picture of the current state of mental health services for children and young people. According to the 2023 report, 1 in 5 young people aged 8-25 are likely experiencing a mental disorder. This underscores the growing mental health crisis among youth. The issues faced by this age group are varied, ranging from anxiety and depression to more severe conditions and these issues are only becoming more prevalent as societal pressures and global uncertainties increase.

What's even more concerning is the average wait time for support, which now commonly exceeds more than two years for many hundreds of young people across the country. The urgent need for more mental health support is highlighted by the latest NHS statistics, which paint a troubling picture of the current state of mental health services for children and young people. According to the 2023 report, 1 in 5 young people aged 8-25 are likely experiencing a mental disorder and 70,000 under-18's are prescribed anti-depressants each year. This underscores the growing mental health crisis among youth.

The backlog is overwhelming and resources are stretched thin, leaving too many vulnerable young people without the help they need, when they need it most. Stop.Breathe.Think has no wait time and our approach focuses on the importance of early intervention and talking therapies as a way of tackling the mental health crisis we are seeing among children and young people.



As an online service, Stop.Breathe.Think carefully matches our team of Level 4 and above qualified counsellors to each young individual.

This ensures:

Addressing Specific Needs

Every young person's challenges are unique, so they are matched with a counsellor who has experience in their specific issues like anxiety, trauma or anger.

Counsellor Expertise

Counsellors have different specialisations, lived experience and approaches. Matching a young person with the right professional ensures more relevant and effective support.

Respecting Preferences

Young people may feel more comfortable with a counsellor of a certain gender, background or style, which helps build trust and encourages active participation.

By prioritising personalised matching, we create a safe and supportive space where we can ensure we are led by the young individual and that they feel heard and valued to navigate their challenges with confidence.

Furthermore, as an online counselling service, not only are we cost effective, we also offer the following benefits:

Accessibility and Flexibility

Young people can access therapy from home or anywhere, making it easier for those in rural areas or with transportation challenges. It also allows for flexible scheduling, so sessions can take place at times that work best and ensures consistent support for those who move, travel or face interruptions.



Comfort and Privacy

Many young people feel more comfortable discussing personal issues from home, which can reduce anxiety. It also reduces the stigma, making it more private and less intimidating, leading to higher engagement.

Broader Therapist Access

Online therapy allows access to specialists who may not be available locally, helping with specific needs or expertise.

Reduced Barriers to Communication

Many young people are comfortable with digital devices, making online therapy more engaging. Some also find it easier to communicate through a screen.

In summary, online counselling provides an effective, flexible and accessible way for children and young people to receive mental health support, offering comfort, convenience and greater engagement, all while reducing barriers to therapy.



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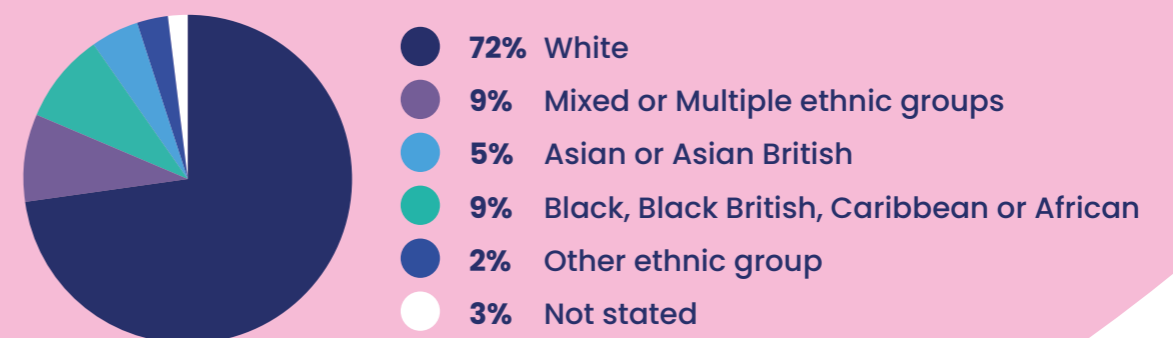
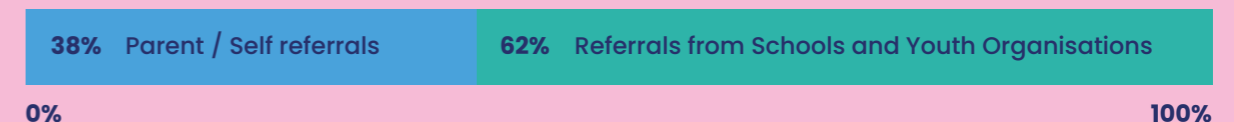
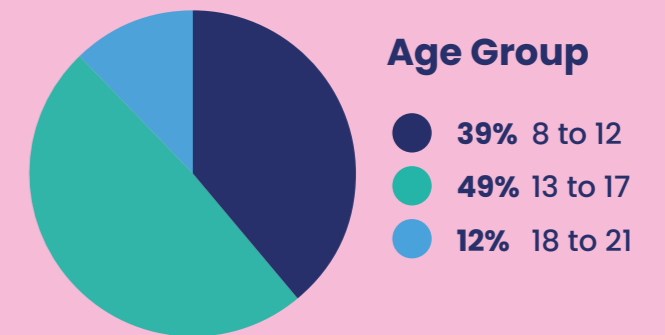
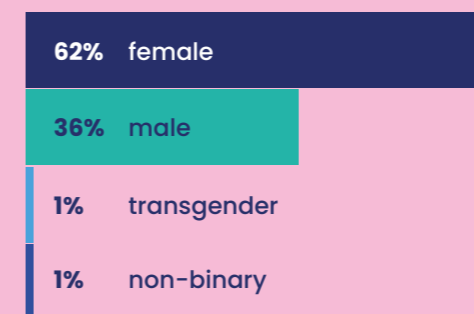
The benefits of Stop.Breathe.Think are how easy the referral process is, how quickly the students can be seen and the flexible structure; six sessions of counselling initially but the possibility for sessions to be extended if needed. Our students have loved engaging with Stop.Breathe.Think and the customer service has been second to none. Contact with admin has been very quick and they have always been very accommodating to our needs.

Pam, Mental Health Lead

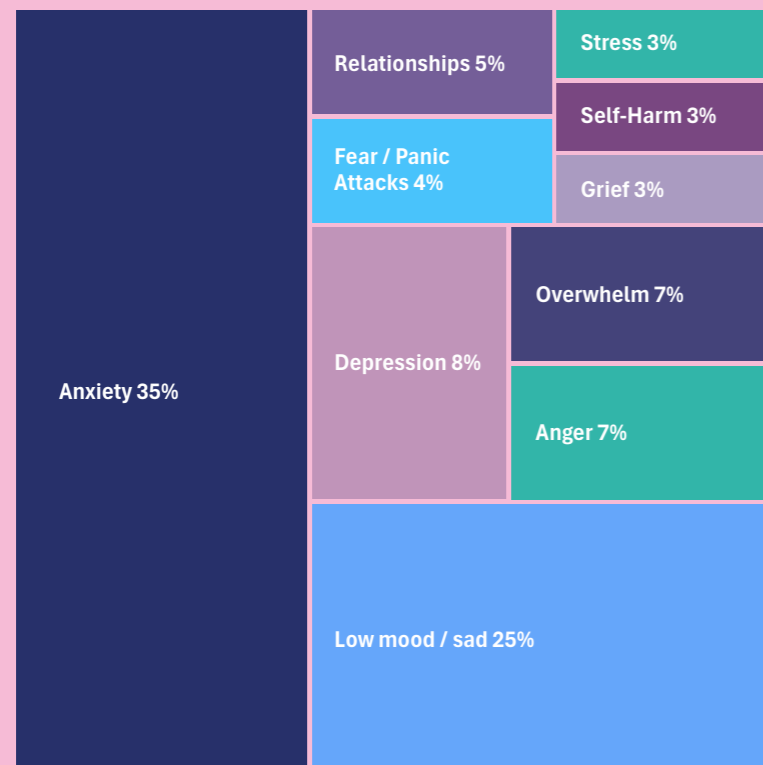
OUR IMPACT

We took action to break down barriers, ensuring those most in need could access our service free of charge through our means-tested model. We also expanded partnerships with schools and youth organisations, reaching young people facing adverse childhood experiences and those struggling with mental health stigma, social pressures or long waitlists.

733 children and young people received counselling with Stop.Breathe.Think



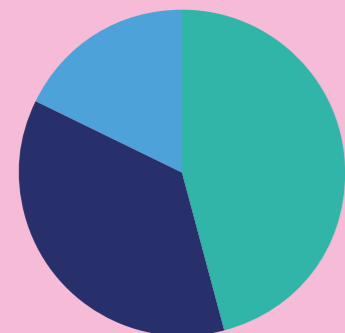
Presenting Issues:



30% neurodivergent 7% LGBTQIA+



We prioritise working with communities where the need is greatest, where families often experience financial hardship, long NHS waiting lists and limited local specialist provision.



Indices of Multiple Deprivation

- 47% were from areas measuring 1-4 on IMD
- 37% were from areas measuring 5-8
- 16% were from areas measuring 9+



“

The support given to me by Stop.Breathe.Think has helped me realise that there are ways that I can help myself when I feel in a bad place mentally or physically and I am now able to cope and understand my feelings a lot more.

SR, age 13

KEY OUTCOMES

Early intervention

Creating a culture where a young person feels supported, understood and empowered to take control of their mental health - without waiting until they reach breaking point.

Preventing escalation

Addressing concerns early reduces the risk of severe mental health conditions developing.

Empowering young people

Teaching coping strategies fosters long-term emotional wellbeing and self-management.

Reducing stigma

Normalising conversations around mental health encourages young people to seek help sooner.

Improving long-term outcomes

Early support enhances academic performance, social connections and future opportunities.

We are committed to strengthening our impact data by moving from single-point collection towards capturing both immediate outcomes and sustained life changes, building a longitudinal evaluation framework and measuring social value. As part of this we surveyed the children and young people accessing our service last year, 6-12 months post-counselling, which revealed:

80% now find it easier to talk about feelings or ask for help

78% find it easier to attend school or college following counsellor

70% engage more in wellbeing activities e.g. sport, hobbies, socialising

97% would access counselling again, if they needed it.

62% found it easier to have counselling online



Furthermore, our approach incorporates Brief Solution-Focused Therapy, widely used in mental health settings, including counselling for children and young people, as it is action-focused, often requiring only a few sessions to see meaningful progress. Stop.Breathe.Think provides 6-12 counselling sessions that focus on finding solutions, not problems. It helps young individuals identify their strengths, set achievable goals and develop practical strategies to improve their situation.

This approach offers several positive outcomes. It is more accessible and less overwhelming for young people and focuses on specific goals and solutions rather than prolonged exploration of problems. This tends to engage children and young people more effectively, particularly those who may feel reluctant to talk about their problems in traditional therapy. Brief Solution Focused Therapy is also highly adaptable to different issues, whether it's managing anxiety, depression, bullying, family issues or trauma. Its flexibility allows our counsellors to tailor the approach to each child's unique needs. Overall, helping children and young people to feel heard, supported and empowered to envision a better future and work towards achieving it.



OUR APPROACH

Early intervention is crucial in supporting young people's mental health, preventing challenges from escalating into crisis. Many young people struggle in silence, facing long wait times, stigma and barriers to accessing professional help. Without timely support, their difficulties can worsen, impacting their education, relationships and overall wellbeing.

Talking therapies, like Stop.Breathe.Think, help young people develop healthy coping mechanisms for managing stress, anxiety, depression and other mental health issues. These skills can be used throughout life, enabling individuals to navigate challenges without relying on medication which manages symptoms without addressing underlying causes.





COUNSELLOR MANAGER WELCOME

In 2025 we introduced our **Counsellor Manager Blog**. Covering everything from looking after mental health at Christmas, to bullying, to navigating the summer holidays. Lorraine Campbell's articles have been thoughtful and fascinating additions to our online resources. For our 2025 Impact Report, Lorraine, who manages our counsellors with her wealth of clinical experience, reflects on our model of Solution-Focused therapy and what it offers children and young people.

Let's talk about Solution Focused Therapy

In a world where counselling is becoming more normalised, the issue suddenly becomes 'what type of counselling is best for me or my child?' This is quickly followed by...what on earth is Brief Solution Therapy? Or Person-Centred Counselling, Psychodynamic Counselling or Systemic Counselling to name but a few. It can be overwhelming to wade through all this information and decide on what might be right for you or your child. Let's look at the Solution Focused model that our team of therapists use here at Stop.Breathe.Think.

What is it? Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) is a therapeutic approach that emphasises a client's strengths and resources to create positive change, focusing on present and future goals rather than past problems. It's brief, goal-oriented and emphasises solutions rather than delving into underlying issues. The focus is on the client's strengths rather than weaknesses or deficits. The aim is to focus on an individual's skills, resources and coping abilities that will help them to reach future goals.

How does it work? Clients describe what they want to happen in their lives (solutions) and how they will use personal resources to solve their problems. The practitioner and client will work collaboratively to set goals and find solutions together, to overcome the problem or issue. Clients are encouraged to believe that positive changes are always possible and are motivated to increase the frequency of current useful behaviours.

It's important to be realistic about what it can and can't help with. Signposting to more appropriate services is an essential part of our responsibility as care providers, where trauma, crisis and high-risk situations are involved. However, children and young people suffering from depression and low mood, anxiety, self-esteem, stress, emotional based avoidance to school and relationships, solution focused therapy can provide the support they need.

In summary, Solution-Focused Therapy offers a practical, hopeful way of supporting children and young people to move forward when they feel stuck. By focusing on strengths, possibilities and small, achievable steps, it helps young people recognise their own ability to begin taking positive steps toward a healthier, more hopeful path.



Lorraine Campbell
Counsellor Manager



EVALUATIONS

Gender and Mental Health

Boys and young men remain significantly less likely to seek mental health care, primarily due to the stigma attached to therapy and emotional literacy. However, we know that accessing early intervention mental health support dramatically reduces the risk of crisis down the line. Nationally, according to the ONS, women are three times more likely to access mental health care than men, but men are three times more likely to die by suicide, which remains the leading cause of death for men under 50.

Across our service, 62% of young people identified as female and 36% as male, with a small proportion identifying as transgender or non-binary. This has increased from 28% of referrals coming from males in 2022, reflecting ongoing progress in reducing stigma.

This year, we were fortunate to receive a grant from the David Riddell Memorial CIO, who have been instrumental in enabling us to launch our first video campaign, Tap to Unmute, aimed at getting boys and young men to break their silence on mental health and ask for help. We are also grateful to be working alongside our supporters at Heads Up Productions to help bring our campaign to life.

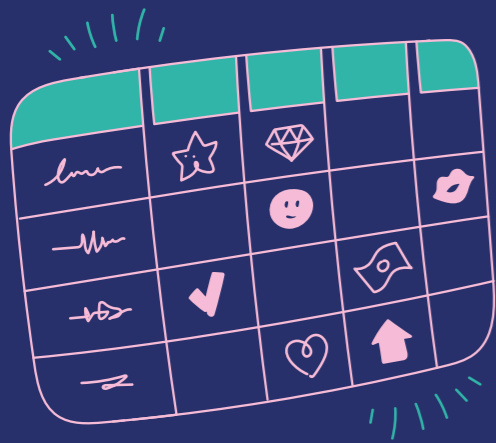


Our research shows that improving access to early intervention is one of the strongest protective factors in reducing the likelihood of reaching crisis point further down the line. Our campaign will fund a targeted outreach and awareness campaign designed specifically to engage boys and young men in a way that feels relevant, accessible and stigma-free.

The presence of transgender and non-binary young people also highlights the importance of inclusive counselling practice. Gender-diverse young people are known to be at significantly increased risk of mental health difficulties, often owing to their own experiences of stigma.

Stop.Breathe.Think are committed to providing inclusive counselling and continuing to understand the challenges all young people face.

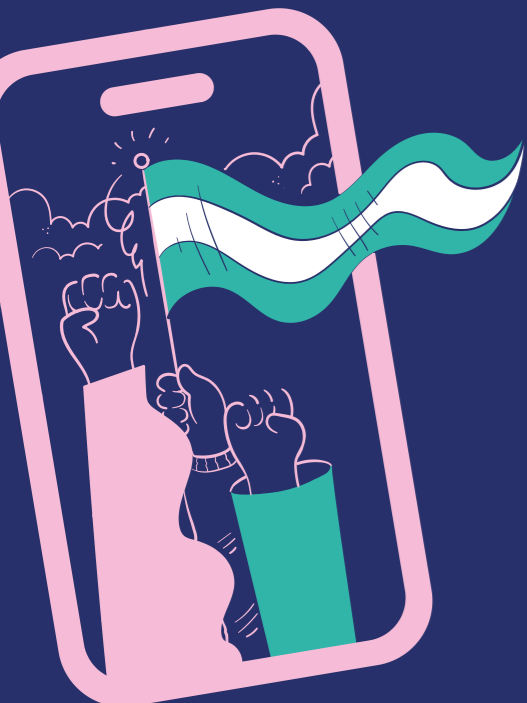




Neurodivergence and Mental Health

Neurodivergent young people are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, social isolation, school-related stress and overwhelm. They often face barriers accessing appropriate mental health support, which is evident from the high numbers of neurodivergent children trying to access mental health support. The Children's Society estimates that 15-20% of the population are neurodivergent, whereas 30% of our young people this year were neurodivergent.

This also underscores the importance of our flexible and youth centred approach and specialist training for counsellors. It also highlights the intersection between educational needs and mental health and the value of early, tailored intervention to prevent neurodivergent young people from falling out of education and becoming isolated from their communities.



LGBTQIA+ Mental Health

LGBTQIA+ young people face higher rates of bullying, discrimination and social isolation, all of which are strongly linked to poorer mental health. Research consistently shows elevated rates of anxiety, depression and self-harm in LGBTQIA+ populations. However, many LGBTQIA+ young people have also struggled to access mental health support when they've needed it. According to Stonewall Scotland, 14% have avoided treatment for fear of discrimination, 70% of trans people report being impacted by transphobia when accessing health services and 55% of non-binary people felt their health providers did not have a good understanding of their health needs.

7% of our service users identified as LGBTQIA+ in 2025, suggesting that Stop.Breathe.Think is perceived as a safe and accessible service. Continued inclusive practice, visibility and safeguarding remain essential to ensure LGBTQIA+ young people feel able to seek support with us.



Deprivation and Mental Health

The idea that mental health does not discriminate is widely acknowledged, however children and young people living in poverty face significant barriers to mental wellbeing. They are more likely to experience trauma, housing instability, food insecurity and social exclusion, all factors that can lead to poor mental health. Yet these same young people are often least likely to access help due to financial constraints. Stop.Breathe.Think exists to level the playing field, ensuring that emotional and psychological support is not a privilege.

UK waiting lists for therapy are exceeding 2 years in parts of the country. Over 2 years a child struggling with their mental health is likely to spiral, their illness becoming

increasingly more difficult, and expensive to treat, affecting their participation in school and wellbeing activities, with life-long implications. For those able to afford a £60 per hour private therapist, there is no waiting time and their poor mental health can be treated, but very few working families can afford £480 for eight sessions in a cost-of-living crisis.

Our focus at Stop.Breathe.Think is to ensure we are reaching the young people who would otherwise be on waiting lists or unable to pay for private therapy. According to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 47% of the young people we supported in 2025 were from areas ranked 1-4 (higher deprivation) and 37% from mid-range areas.



ACCESS RURAL COUNSELLING



Generously supported by the National Lottery Community Fund

Stop.Breathe.Think is proud to be delivering Access Rural Counselling (ARC), a new initiative made possible thanks to generous support from the National Lottery Community Fund in both Wales and England.

ARC was created to address an urgent and often overlooked inequality: the difficulty many children and young people in rural communities face when trying to access mental health support. Across England and Wales, young people living in rural areas experience distinct barriers, including long travel distances, limited local services, stigma and the lack of anonymity that can come with close-knit communities. These challenges are often felt most sharply by those living in poverty, which can be more hidden in rural areas and by young people with complex needs who face heightened risks of isolation and exclusion.

While rural communities are often perceived as healthier overall, evidence shows suicide rates are higher in rural areas, highlighting the importance of early, accessible intervention. New research also suggests that poor access to services is contributing to young adults considering leaving their communities altogether, underlining the need for stronger, more visible support for young people growing up outside urban centres.

Through ARC, Stop.Breathe.Think and the National Lottery has made 160 counselling places available for 8–21-year-olds living in rural constituencies across England and Wales. The project's aim is simple but powerful: to ensure that geography does not determine whether a young person can access timely mental health care.

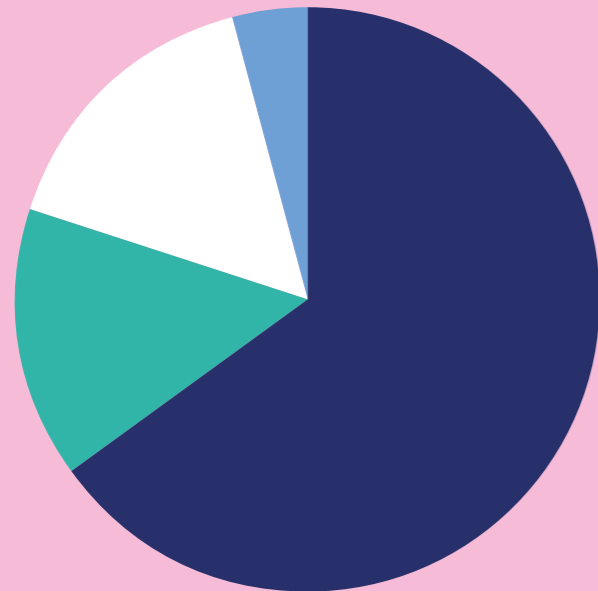
The long-term vision of ARC is not only to support individual young people through immediate counselling, but also to strengthen rural communities by normalising help-seeking, reducing stigma, and building networks of support around those who may otherwise fall through the cracks. By focusing on rural children and young people specifically, ARC recognises that mental health need is not confined to cities and that rural disadvantage, though often less visible, is no less real.

We are incredibly grateful to the National Lottery Community Fund. Their support is making it possible for young people in rural England and Wales to access the help they deserve, fostering resilience, wellbeing and hope in communities where support can too often feel out of reach.

OUR SUPPORTERS

All the Impact outlined in this Report is only possible because of the generosity of many amazing individuals and organisations.

In 2025, we raised £350,286. With a passionate staff team, a group of very special counsellors, our partners and our supporters we've continued to be there for children and young people nationally, maintaining our no wait times and providing vital support to those who need it right now. Together, with your support, we are so proud of what we've achieved.



- 65% Trusts and Foundations
- 15% Corporates
- 16% The National Lottery
- 4% Individuals

Our expenditure is analysed into two main categories; charitable activities and raising funds for the charity with the charitable ratio being calculated as charitable activities expenditure as a fraction of total expenditure. Stop.Breathe.Think's charitable ratio stands at 84% with 84p of every £1 spent directly on children and young people.



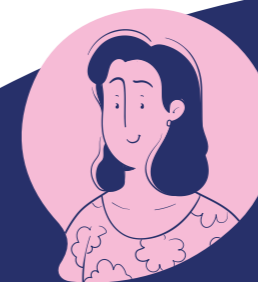
We are only able to do what we do thanks to the generosity of our many wonderful supporters.

Thank you so much for supporting us over the last year.



Sashton Family Foundation

A very big thank you and special thanks to all our event attendees, fundraisers and monthly and individual donors too!



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One of our year 11's used to turn up every single week just before his allotted time to pick up a laptop for his sessions. He had previously really struggled to engage with other support but attended all of his 6 sessions of counselling. It was exactly what he needed, at the right time with the right person. Thanks to the support from Stop.Breathe. Think we saw a real change in that student.

Sacha, Year 11 Support Lead



WHAT'S NEXT



The past year has shown both the scale of need in a service like ours, but significant progress in our goal to reach the children and young people who would otherwise be struggling on long waiting lists, or unable to reach out.

We also know demand will continue to grow. Our focus therefore remains on responding quickly and developing inclusive approaches that reflect the diversity of the young people and families we serve.

Families are central to everything we do. When a child is struggling, the whole family feels the impact. By providing timely support, we reduce stress and worry for parents and carers, improve communication at home and help families feel better equipped to support their child's mental health. We work closely with families, schools, social care and health professionals to create joined-up care and a shared understanding of each young person's needs.

Over the coming year, Stop.Breathe.Think will continue expanding our School Partnerships to ensure more young people can access timely, professional mental health support. By working directly with schools, we can provide every referred pupil with free one-to-one online counselling delivered by qualified counsellors. This flexible service complements existing pastoral provision, reduces pressure on school staff and enables pupils to access support in a way that many report feeling more comfortable with.

Our goal is to help schools respond earlier to emerging mental health needs while supporting improved wellbeing and attendance.

As expectations around pupil wellbeing increase across the education sector, we will further align our partnerships with national guidance and Ofsted inspection frameworks, supporting schools to demonstrate a proactive and effective whole-school approach to mental health. Alongside counselling sessions, partner schools receive safeguarding-aligned referral pathways, staff onboarding, resources for pupils and families and anonymised impact insights. By strengthening these partnerships, we aim to reach more schools, support more pupils before issues escalate and contribute to a culture where every young person knows where to turn for help.

We are also proud to be delivering our new campaign Tap to Unmute to encourage more boys and young men to access early mental health support, made possible thanks to generous funding from the David Riddell Memorial CIO and the support of Heads Up Productions, Really Good Films and Roman Kemp.

The progress of 2025 means we can be hugely positive about 2026.

THANK YOU!

Increased investment in mental health services and expansion of resources are essential to ensure that children and young people have timely access to the care they deserve. Moreover, a focus on early intervention and preventative measures could help reduce the number of young people reaching the point where they need clinical support.

Now more than ever, children and young people need the right mental health support and with strong foundations in place, we are ready to expand our reach and impact, but we can't do it without you. Your generosity ensures that no young person is left struggling alone.

**For every £30 donated,
a young person is supported.**

Every contribution makes a real difference:

£30 provides a 1:1 counselling session for a child or young person in need.

£100 funds a counsellor for welfare check-ins, offering extra support between appointments.

£250 covers the Stop.Breathe.Think service for one young person, including intake, six counselling sessions, drop-ins and 24/7 text support.

£2.5k will help subsidise a partnership with a local school, supporting their mental health provision and giving students access to the Stop.Breathe.Think service.

For every £1 donated, 84p goes directly toward supporting children and young people, with 16p invested in essential fundraising and support costs.

Thank you for choosing to support Stop.Breathe.Think. Together, we can make sure no young person faces their mental health struggles alone.



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After three years of trying to get my son help, Stop.Breathe.Think finally provided the support he needed. They supported him more than anyone else had done. Thank you so much!

Parent



Get in touch

Scan the QR code to visit
stopbreathethink.org.uk,
follow us on social media or email
hello@stopbreathethink.org.uk

Search **Stop.Breathe.Think** Charity

