

## Our Aims and Ethos

We are a small charity working in Cambridge City, **The Kings Hedges Family Support Project (KHFSP)** was set up in 1995 to provide family support to families in need, initially in the Kings Hedges area of Cambridge. It now runs in three separate Wards in Cambridge City, chosen for their high levels of deprivation in a comparatively prosperous city and county. Cambridge city has one of highest levels of wealth disparity in the UK. Cambridgeshire receives one of lowest amounts per child in school in the country. We offer support and play sessions for families with under 5's.

We believe that 'confident parenting makes for happier children'. We aim to help parents to feel confident to make the choices that are important to them and their children. We work in a welcoming and non-judgemental way. Our staff are kind, approachable and knowledgeable. We help to reduce feelings of isolation and increase a sense of community and offer a high quality, safe place to play, relax and talk. We work actively with partners and connect families to them, ensuring they have access to relevant information and advice. Our families grow to trust us and therefore we dive deeper into helping break cycles of behaviours which can be generational.

Many of the families who access our project are from low economic households, we support families with many issues. Our family support workers can be helping with lack of food, fuel insecurity, mental health, domestic abuse, child development concerns (to name just a few) and helping families access other organisations such as women's aid, health visiting and legal advice.

## What we do and our People:

Running our Together sessions 3 days a week from community venues within the heart of the communities we work with, makes us accessible to all and free. We offer the bridge from families to statutory services, which many families in the demographic who attend can feel very anxious to engage with.

We work from a place of prevention and support and consider the child needs (graphic below shows the areas that our families need support and for us to safeguard children)





## MAGIC



We also work with other organisations this can be social care, early help team, other charities and organisations within the city such as food bank, Cogwheel and HomeLink to name a few.

Our staff team comprises of a Project Manager, Finance officer, Grants officer, administrator, 2 Family Support Workers, Early Years Play Worker and 3 volunteers and well as 10 trustees.

Our staff and volunteers are not only familiar with the demographics of families and the reach areas, but some have also become staff members and volunteers after attending groups. This is our superpower; they can earn the trust and understand families lived experiences. We involve our families changes and ideas, by asking them in our snapshot surveys to give feedback, take suggestions and see the needs changing via our feedback sessions. Our magic Parent wellbeing program was born from a Case study.

*'I was a young mum at 18, I grew up in Chesterton and my mum had heard about "the group" (KHFSP) and made me take my son there, so, he could play with other children, and I could meet other mums. Although my parents were great in their own way, I like many others in my area grew up in poverty where alcohol and domestic violence was the norm! There were things my parents got wrong and there were some they got right.*

*It was something I really hated at first, I was anxious and felt inadequate compared to other mothers. As time went on, I slowly grew in confidence as I got to know the staff and the families who attended. Over the years, I went on to have 2 more children and as they grew, I did too.*

*Attending the group was the weekly thing and all my children looked forward to it and so did I. It was almost a little community in the community. We would always be greeted warmly, we were fed and watered, such a simple dish of cold pasta and tomatoes with a sprinkle of cheese was swallowed up and is still to this day is my youngest favourite dish! It was a healthy lunch crossed off for that week.*

*Most importantly though over the years I have had my ups and downs and the 3 Family Support Workers and Julie always offered me a safe space to talk, a non-judgemental responses /advice and care they about me and my children.*

*They gave me the ability to learn from them, I gained new knowledge, like healthy eating, budgeting, parenting and much more, they also showed me how to believe in myself and they had my back. Their support helped me to reach a place of confidence in myself, also opening my brain new ways of thinking and practical tools in own positive choices. It made me realise I didn't have to become what I grew up around, I was given knowledge and power to make changes, important changes which have changed a dysfunctional generational cycle. The staff who worked at the group at that time, will never understand the impact they had on my life.*

*When my mum passed away, I went into a bad place of grief, and I had a mental health crisis. I did not know how I was going to come through it. It had been few years since I attended KHFSP, as my children were now at school. However, years later I still knew in my mind, I could turn to the ladies at KHFSP, I knew they would never turn me away. They kept me afloat with all they had given to me in the past without even knowing.*

*I now have the privilege of working as one of those family support workers at KHFSP. I am doing what I love, and I am supporting people who need it the most. I have insight and understanding, and I am honoured to give back. I call it the magic support because when you are the middle of your crisis or issues, the project helps you at your pace, you might not know it but the magic happens and it's only when you look back you can say wow!*

Karen is now a family support worker with us and has a huge amount of passion for empowering others! From this case study MAGIC and Mini MAGIC was born – We used our feedback percentages to gather evidence to what support we were giving and what families said had helped them.

Mental wellbeing, child development and parenting and budgeting and finances were most needed and included in feedback on parent feedback, end of session evaluation and through conversations with families and other organisations in the charity sector.

We knew that to reach our families, we would need to create a holistic, parent lead with strong facilitators to make the sessions successful. We use our staff for this as we already have trust and mutual respect with families.

### **What is MAGIC ?**

M=Mental wellbeing

A=Attachments, Routines and Behaviours

G=Growing in confidence and self esteem

I= I can play too

C=cooking and budgeting

The sessions are accessible and flexible to the group's needs, we use a closed group ethos, where each week the same parents attend for 4 weeks and build a peer support system, which can reduce isolation and create new friendship connections.

We have staff running the sessions who have far ranging qualifications and experience.

Parents can sign up to course whether they attend group or not, all parents of any age children are welcome.

### **What parents say about our MAGIC program:**

'I enjoyed hearing from other parents and being able to ask specific questions'

'it was like a mum reset button'

'staff are great at facilitating and answering questions'

'it helped me start to unravel issues and I got extra support from staff'

'I didn't want it to end, it was so helpful, and I felt comfortable

### **Why We feel MAGIC is important.**

Sometimes families have so much going on, they cannot untangle on their own, but breaking it down week by week and getting them to make connections between their own mental health and their children's attachments, for example, can be a starting point to moving forward.

### **The Outcomes!**

- Better mental wellbeing for parents
- Knowing where to go for help what's on offer from KHFSP and Abbey People
- Making connections between parenting and child behaviours
- Positive self esteem and how to give those skills to children
- Better control over finances and budgeting
- Children attain some school readiness and learning through play