



VICTIM SUPPORT



***“I felt welcome and safe
and I’m a lot happier now.”***

Rachel, 15.

WeMatter is Victim Support’s online service which is aimed at children and young people who have been affected by domestic abuse.

Over eight weeks groups of up to 12 meet on Zoom to help each other understand their experiences and learn about strategies to cope with their emotions. Each group is overseen by two experienced facilitators, including Vanessa, Mandy, Elijah and Grace who recently worked on the pilot project.

“We have already seen huge outcomes which is brilliant,” said Mandy. “One seven-year-old, Michael, was quite angry when we started the sessions. His dad had done some nasty things at home but by the end he said he didn’t feel sad or angry anymore and his confidence had improved greatly.”

“I feel better about myself,” agreed Michael. “And I deal with things better and feel calmer at school which I’m enjoying more. I liked everything about the sessions and Mandy and Grace became my new best friends.”

Michael was referred to the service by his mum, Maria, who wrote in her feedback, *“You’ve done him the world of good and I’d like to thank you from the bottom of my heart. He’s so much more confident and is better at communicating his emotions. He is a much happier boy and you have both played a big part in that journey.”*

Michael attended the sessions at home after school but many are conducted in school time with the support of school staff who arrange a quiet room for the Zoom call to take place to ensure confidentiality.

Rachel (15), Emily (13) and Bex (11) recently completed their eight sessions facilitated by another specialist, Vanessa, who was helped by Mandy. The hour-long sessions took place from October to December last year and their ten-strong group, featuring young people from different parts of the country, used to meet every Tuesday after lunch.

“I was recommended it by the school because I was having different kinds of episodes,” said Rachel. “And when they gave me the choice I said, ‘Yes. I would love to because I want to sort my life out’ and have a much easier life than I was living.”

"And the school was absolutely fine with me taking time out from school lessons because this is about our lives and they wanted to support us in helping get our lives a lot clearer."

"It's different talking to people your own age than adults and this was the first time I'd been able to do that," added Bex. "In the first session it was more about getting to know each other and Mandy told us about her baby chickens!"

"When I found out Mandy had a pet chicken I could relate to that because I used to have a pet chicken!" said Rachel, laughing. "And we were the Noodle Group because we all loved noodles! Mandy and Vanessa were really nice and welcoming and made me feel comfortable."

Each session would have a different topic such as exploring self-esteem, handling difficult feelings or examining what healthy relationships look like.

"And you didn't always have to say something," said Emily. "If you didn't want to speak you could use the Chat function on Zoom and type in something which was good."

For Rachel a focus on breathing techniques in one of the sessions has helped her considerably.

"I didn't know how to calm down and I would panic and stop breathing altogether. I used to have episodes where it feels like everything is going fast and it stresses me out. But it really helped talking about this with the group and now I use these breathing techniques which Vanessa and Mandy taught me."

"I've used them with my girlfriend – she suffers from anxiety and she's really grateful for them – and I recently comforted someone who was crying their eyes out at school. I showed this person these techniques, so they have not just helped me but others too."

Emily and Bex remember a session which focused on ANTs (automatic negative thoughts).

"There are lots of different types of ANTs which we get in our head," said Emily. "And we talked about what we can do about them. Some you can relate to and some you don't and it was just good to discuss them."

"I had never heard of ANTs before but it was very helpful to me chatting about them," added Bex.

"We also used to play games in the sessions which I enjoyed. My favourite one was called Guess the Logo."

All three participants agreed that the sessions had been very positive. They had not only been taught various techniques to help them day-to-day but had helped their self-esteem and confidence.

"Sometimes I would come to the sessions and be angry or frustrated but by the end I was happy because the group had changed my mindset," said Rachel. "We did have the option to go off into a private chat room with Vanessa and Mandy if we were upset but I never needed to because once I was in the session I felt relaxed and safe. I knew I was with people who weren't there to annoy me but were there to help me."

"Right at the start I felt nervous. But after the first session I realised I had nothing to be afraid of and whenever one of these sessions were coming up I felt happy because I knew I could just talk... and talk... and talk!"

"I feel much better and happier now and I feel all the weight that has been on my shoulders has been taken off. I now feel like a brand new person."

"I felt good because Vanessa and Mandy always made the sessions fun," added Bex. "We would always be doing something different and it also really helped me. I had never done group work before but you can share things and you learn a lot and if anyone is wondering whether this is for them or not I would say, 'Go for it!'"

Funding for WeMatter Foundations project has been announced for Children and Young People across the whole of England up to 31 March 2025.

The WeMatter team welcomes referrals from professionals, parents and/or carers. Children and young people aged 13 and above can also self-refer.

For more details call: 0300 373 0258 or visit: [WeMatter – Victim Support](#)

