

Case Study: Specialised support for children and young people's mental health in schools

'I like the journals because they help me to calm down when I am excited.'

'It helps me be calmer'

'It helps me with my self-esteem.'

'It helps me to get all my stress out on the paper.'

'The journals and lessons help me see Y7 in a positive way.'

'I really really like writing in my happy journal and I feel happy and confident putting all my thoughts in there.'

'It helps to calm me down.'

'I am really enjoying my journal because it gives me a voice but on a piece of paper.'

'It has helped me think about my worries for Y7 & what I can do to help me feel more confident.'

'It helps me get my worries out onto paper.'

The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted the lives and education of children and young people and impacted on their mental health and wellbeing. Research with local school children and young people has shown increased levels of anxiety and stress after the first six months' of the pandemic, with a decline in young people feeling positive and managing problems well and an increase in young people feeling confused, uncertain and sad.

The Council's Children and Young People Services have responded to these worrying results by developing targeted support for children and young people in schools. They developed a Team Around the School (TAS) model of working, working with schools and creating new resources based on their needs, with a focus on mental health wellbeing, transition and including recovery from the impact of Covid-19 on pupils' wellbeing.

The project began to work with identified schools in early November 2021. A wide range of teams within Children's Services (Attendance, Inclusion, SEND, Early Help, Educational Psychology, Data and Finance) are working together with partner organisations, such as Rotherham Parent and Carers Forum and Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR). Schools were selected based on need, for example those with a high percentage of most vulnerable pupils. The TAS group have created a tailored offer for each school to support young people and families to promote mental health and wellbeing, particularly at times of transition.

Programmes that schools have been using most to date are

- myHappyMind, an NHS and Ofsted endorsed wellbeing and healthy relationships programme for pupils
- Remote workshops for school staff to access support from the Educational Psychology Service within Children's Services to address individual or cohort needs in a timely manner, as well as providing bespoke training for school staff, including emotion coaching, staff wellbeing, trauma informed practice and bereavement support
- Weekly workshops provided by the Specialist Inclusion Team to promote awareness of mental health, wellbeing and relationships through transitions, which will be delivered in all target schools to the school lead and cohort of pupils.

So far, informal feedback from schools has been very positive: 'Coleridge Primary School has benefited immensely from the TAS programme and it's really supported our children, staff and families. The work conducted with our Y6 children with the myHappyMind programme has really started to support our children's wellbeing and mental health and seeing themselves in a positive light. We have witnessed some marked improvements with some social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) children with their self-esteem and confidence. The TAS programme has been well organised and is going to have a long-lasting impact on our children over the next six months.'

Schools reported that improving the knowledge of staff around social, emotional and mental health has made a difference to date. While the evaluation is still ongoing, some schools have reported seen a reduction on fix term exclusions and an improvement in relationships with staff and their peers. The impact of the Team Around the School project will be measured through pupils completing pre and post Warwick Wellbeing Survey, as well as adult stakeholder pre and post surveys. The learning and impact from this whole school approach will be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board in the coming year, as well as to primary headteachers in summer term 2023.