



Greater Manchester Mentally Healthy Schools and Colleges Programme: An individual School Perspective

The programme as a whole

What we really valued more than anything about this programme was multi-faceted approach which ensured really meaningful support at all levels. The other notable strength was the leadership, communication and oversight of the teaching school 'the Alliance for Learning'. Having a school led system ensured a deep understanding of the sector, the natural rhythms of the school year, improved communication as it was 'school to school' and meant there was always somebody we could talk to who would understand the 'school based issues' whether these were strategic education changes or really practical operational things. It was refreshing to see a 'cross sector approach' and to see the different sectors being honest about their learning from working with each other.

One to One support

The provision of a **42nd street** counsellor on a regular basis has been hugely beneficial to our school. The impact on pupils has been immensely positive and all those involved have benefited from the additional support. The knowledge and skills used by the counsellor to encourage dialogue with the young people was individually tailored and ensured that the pupils (who all have severe learning difficulties) could also recognise and share their feelings and concerns around mental well-being. The range of approaches meant that each session took a different slant according to individual need. The pupils demonstrated an increasing self-awareness and improved confidence in talking about these issues as the term progressed. Staff noted improved resilience in dealing with peer group issues for two of the pupils involved.

The model used was a mix of sessions including one day per week (Friday) with regular morning sessions across the term for named pupils and a drop-in session in the afternoon. Some pupils used the drop in sessions more than once, depending on their need. Other sessions were 'one off's' for pupils who had been recommended by staff.

The flexibility of this model allowed a longer time for pupils with communication and cognitive difficulties to build relationships and to process complex information.

Overall, feedback has been excellent from all involved with the provision. Pupils are aware of our 42nd Street Practitioner and her specific role with an increased understanding of their own mental health and well-being.



Pupil feedback

If I worry about something now I feel like it is OK to say so.

Jo was easy to talk to. It's important to have someone who is not a teacher.

I felt like I could actually talk. Most times my mum doesn't really understand but Jo really did.

I want to keep talking to Jo cos we can play at the same time. It's better.

The athlete sessions were so cool, I learned loads about my body and mind.

Jo is good to talk to about what's happening in my life outside school.

My teachers have a better understanding of mental health now.



Staff feedback

M used to find talking about problems very challenging and would become very angry or emotional. These sessions have been really beneficial and he is now open about his feelings and what is bothering him. *Form Tutor*

W is so much better at coping with peer conflicts. Instead of becoming frustrated he will try and resolve and then ask for help if he can't find a way. *Teaching assistant*

M seems to realise his own well-being is of actual importance. He seems happier and is approaching others more and opening up about personal matters. *Teacher*

The combination of the senior leadership training with Place2be and the MHFA training means our staff are really aware of the issues and we plan for them. *Leader*



Parents feedback

I am so glad XX has had this opportunity. I know he tries to talk to me but I'm never sure what to say to him. He seems so much happier and more relaxed recently.

XX always keeps the different aspects of her life compartmentalised. It's good to know that she is using the counsellor as a safe place to discuss them.

We have been so impressed with all the training teachers have had both the MHFA and the senior leader training with Place2be.

Mental Health First Aid

The delivery of Mental Health First Aid to over 8 of our staff through this programme has allowed our staff team to gain a much deeper understanding of some of the mental health themes and has hugely increased confidence in this area too. It sounds really simple but having a framework for helpful conversations does give confidence to staff and the message in MHFA is all about none-judgemental listening and empathy which is important. Some less serious wellbeing issues have been dealt with earlier and 'nipped in the bud' as a result of the training. We have been able to raise the profile of Mental Health through having 'visible' Mental Health First Aiders just like physical 'First Aiders'. Our trust has a new mental health policy in place and MHFA is referenced in this too.



Comments from delegates on the MHFA courses:

I feel much more confident with these issues now, and although the topics were serious the trainers made it fun learning.

I can't wait to use these skills in and out the class room with my students.

This course came just at the right time for me, it has really made me reflect on my own wellbeing.

This course has made me really think about the students with anxiety I work with and how best to support them.

A month after the course

In practice we have really used MHFA as a staff, those of us who did the training re able to liaise and really improve our 'first response' to children. There are some real examples where we can demonstrate we have intervened earlier due to the training and really helped.



Youth Sport Trust – Athlete session

"WOW, never have I thought about how connected the body and the mind are but it makes total sense that moving more, being active and playing in an active way makes us feel better. From now on the first thing I am going to do when I don't feel happy is take some exercise.

The Athlete showed me how to control my breathing when I am really anxious and stressed, we used a mindfulness technique which I will try in the classroom.

The athlete's personal story was so inspiring about never giving up and resilience."



Summary Comments

As a school we have benefited so much and are so grateful for the courage of leaders in Greater Manchester to try something bold, innovative and different. We are looking forward to working in our locality now and hope to be able to continue to be part of this wonderful approach moving forward in a more place based way. We will most definitely keep our relationships going with all the partners involved and have been incredibly impressed with the quality of the whole package.