

Children, Education and Skills Sub-Committee

7 July 2022

Present: Councillor J Montague (Chair)
Councillors L Bones, V Jamieson, C Johnston, J
Mudzingwa, M Murphy, A Newman, R O'Keefe and E
Parker-Leonard.

Rev M Vine - Church Representative

Apologies: Councillors M Green, M Thirlaway, M Wilson
and Mr S Fallon.

CES1/22 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members

CES2/22 Declarations of Interest

Declarations of interest were reported as follows;

Councillor M Murphy – Item 4 – Non registerable personal interest as his wife is employed by a Learning Trust Special School and has been trained as a Mental Health First Aider

Councillor E P Leonard – Item 4 – Non Registerable personal interest as her wife is employed by Mind.

CES3/22 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 March 2022 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CES4/22 Children and Young People's Mental Health

The Sub-Committee received a report which provided members with an update on the universal mental health offer and the impact of this to date.

Two years of pandemic living had exacerbated the demand for an effective and impactful approach to positive mental health in Education settings. A team of Local Authority Officers devised a project to enhance the universal offer across education settings by embedding a whole school approach to promoting good mental health. Taking an evidence-based

approach to equip senior leaders with practical and sustainable approaches, that would put mental health at the heart of strategic school improvement.

The ambition in the first phase was to upskill, support and train all adults who work in schools with children and young people to have competence and confidence to discuss mental health and to better listen, reassure and respond to children, young people and their families.

Education North Tyneside were successful in bidding for funding from the Barnardo's Strategic Alliance to fund a universal mental health offer to schools in North Tyneside over a three year period.

Support would include early identification of needs and the ability to signpost to local support to achieve early intervention. Key to the success of the approach was the change in language used to tackle the stigma associated with mental health disorders.

A successful pilot was completed with 15 schools between October 2020 and July 2021 which drew from a range of types of settings in North Tyneside.

In Year 1 of the Project, trainers from MHFA England were used to deliver the training, they were both current senior leaders and had excellent advice on how to develop the approach in settings.

Impact evidence was collected through the mental health surveys, network meetings and school visits. The Local Authority drew on the evidence to inform how they recruited schools and how to sustain their engagement with the approach.

Staff from schools completed the Mental Health Awareness half day and MHFA first aid two day training courses and many schools went on to access further mental health training from other charities such as Anna Freud to have more skilled staff on site.

Three schools have contributed to network meetings for subsequent cohorts.

In Year 2, Cohort 2 began the project in September 2021 in 16 schools. They have completed School Audits, Baseline Surveys, initial training, action plans, 6 network meetings and a review of progress.

Cohort 3 began the project in November 2021 in 13 schools. They have completed School Audits, Baseline Surveys, initial training, action plans and 3 network meetings.

The project will be offered out to schools for Cohort 4 in September 2022.

The Baseline Surveys for the pilot group identified the need to work on Active listening skills and improve communication about the mental health offer in schools. This was a key finding for surveys completed by Cohort 2 and 3

In year 2 of the Project from September 2021 – July 2022, Education North Tyneside officers have delivered:

- Half day Mental Health awareness online for Cohort 2 and 3 staff.
- Bespoke in school sessions to have a wider impact on Mental Health awareness with 3 Secondary, 1 Special and 4 Primary Schools
- Adapted the course to meet the needs for Nursery and Childminders - 102 adults trained.

- Two day MHFA course has been delivered by Education North Tyneside Staff to 5 groups of 16 adults.

Impact evidence from Cohort 2 was collected and schools from cohort 2 have repeated surveys to have impact evidence. This has been challenging for schools to meet the timeline, 5 out of 16 schools will complete the surveys by the end of term.

The current data from 11 schools show:

- A 25% increase in staff being confident in identifying signs that a child is struggling with mental health
- 72% of staff plan opportunities to increase resilience and wellbeing in children
- 14% of staff can definitely recognise their own wellbeing and know what to do
- A 16% increase in Parents knowing what their child needs to do in school
- A positive increase in Parents knowing that their child has someone to talk to in school
- A 9% increase in pupils knowing that there was a quiet space they can go to in school.

The pilot schools have continued to develop their practice around positive mental health and supporting both emerging needs and those with a diagnosis of mental ill health or disorder.

The Next Steps would be to recruit schools for the last funded cohort to start in September 2022 start. They will follow the same project protocol with termly network meetings for all North Tyneside schools to share good practice, and develop a peer review model for mental health in schools, to develop excellence hubs and signpost schools to access further training

The Sub-Committee considered an update by Mrs Kate Wankowicz, Deputy Headteacher at Spring Gardens Primary School who took part in the initial Mental Health pilot. It was noted that:

- Spring Gardens Primary School has a high level of children of Key Workers
- At the beginning of the pandemic the children were frightened and the key priority was to keep the children safe
- The School were part of the initial pilot to train Mental Health First Aiders and there are now five First Aiders and four Mental Health Champions in school.
- The initial training has empowered the staff and given them a deep understanding of mental health and the impact it has on children, families and staff within the school community.
- The understanding of mental health has significantly improved in the School. There is an openness and it is discussed regularly in meetings, conversations and discussions both personally and professionally in school.
- The training has significantly impacted the School in terms of the language they use and the ethos that they instil and embed
- The school has a dedicated Wellbeing Group of staff which meet regularly with the Headteacher and they have used the audit from the Anna Freud Mental health national centre.
- Feel Good Friday emails are sent to all staff with a range of top tips to support mental health and wellbeing
- A holistic therapist came into the school over a half term to offer massage therapy to staff

- The School has a Wellbeing rescue kit in the staffroom and a calm room which is specifically for children who are struggling to self-regulate and need a calm safe space.
- A Happy Head Hub has been developed which is a multi-purpose room that can be accessed by anyone in need and two staff have been certified as Thrive Practitioners
- The school's website has a dedicated area for mental health and wellbeing which includes signposts to services and agencies where families can access support
- A Wildlife for Wellbeing club is held in the wildlife garden every week after school and the School has become a link school to the Mental Health Support Team and are running a Happy Children, Happy Families - Friends Resilience group in the autumn for children and their parents/carers.
- The School hold solution circle meetings every two weeks and has introduced a personal development 'RESPECT' element of the school behaviour policy and empathy and self-awareness is promoted and celebrated
- The School has secured a place with the Anna Freud Centre for Senior Mental Health Lead training in the autumn and has secured funding from the Department for Education DFE to do this
- Spring Gardens Primary School was part of the School Development Partner programme and shared practice at network meetings in secondary and primary schools

A Member referred to support offered to a child impacted by bullying and it was noted that schools will have a wellness recovery action plan and policies on peer on peer abuse, safeguarding, relationships and behaviour. The Senior School Improvement Officer explained that the Mental Health Project was about improving children's well-being, confidence, self esteem, belonging and self worth and the ambition was for all schools in North Tyneside to be part of the Project.

Members noted that in response to parent complaints regarding behaviour at a school, the school improvement team would discuss behaviour in the school with the School Leaders.

Reference was made to the support offered in schools for child refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine and the Senior School Improvement Officer stated that via the Fair Access Protocol, information on a child prior to starting school would be gathered to determine what support the child might need. If a child had been through a traumatic experience fleeing a country the school could receive support for the child from the Psychology Service.

The Deputy Headteacher at Spring Gardens Primary School reported that the situation in Ukraine was openly discussed at assembly and positive messages given to welcome refugees and uniform and food packages offered to make the transition into school as smooth as possible

The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Children's Services commented that the Council were currently caring for 15 unaccompanied/separated children whose support included access to therapeutic services.

Members welcomed the report and the Chair thanked the Senior School Improvement Officer and Deputy Headteacher at Spring Gardens Primary School for the informative report and for attendance at the meeting.

CES5/22 Ofsted Focused Visit to the Front Door

The Committee considered a report on a focused visit carried out by Ofsted to North Tyneside's Children's services in April 2022 in line with the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. Two Inspectors looked at the local authority's arrangements for the 'front door' through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Social Work Assessment Teams (SWAT).

The inspection visit concluded that there is a good range of early help support for children and their families. Stringent efforts are made to work with families at an early stage by social care and the wider partnership which is providing support to children and their families as soon as problems start. This enables families to become involved in the decisions which affect them at the earliest opportunity. When families no longer need interventions from social care, decisions to step down to early help are timely and appropriate. When needed, families continue to receive support that meets their needs at the right level. This means that families are not subject to statutory interventions for unnecessary periods of time and for many families this prevents concerns re-emerging.

The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Children's Services gave an outline of the main findings of the Report. There is a clear commitment to working with families and their support networks. Social workers effectively analyse risk and protective factors to inform future planning and have a good understanding of children's identity and cultural needs. When child protection concerns are identified, strategy meetings are timely and are well attended by the relevant agencies. Multi-agency information sharing is highly effective and leads to a good understanding of risks and children's lived experiences. Direct work captures what children think is working well for them and their family and what worries they have. This provides social workers with a good understanding of children's experiences and influences planning and interventions.

The Designated Local Authority Officer (LADO) service provides a robust response to concerns and allegations about individuals working with children and young people.

Strong and effective senior leadership has led to sustained improvements in both the quality, and impact of social work practice at the front door. A wide range of performance data is used effectively to monitor and scrutinise 'front door' activity. This assists senior managers to understand children's experiences and improve practice.

The inspectors made no recommendations for improvement to practice with regard to the Front Door arrangements in North Tyneside. However, Front Door arrangements are a critical part of the system for meeting the needs of children and keeping them safe. As such the senior manager team continue to meet every fortnight to review and analyse data, performance information and quality of practice. This enables the team to continue to be responsive to issues and understand the practice and areas for improvement

A Member asked how social work staff were supported in their demanding and stressful roles and it was noted that many teams had arranged informal breakfast meetings to support

teamwork during the pandemic and a social work supervision meeting was about workload and an opportunity to ensure staff health and well-being. Staff had been impacted by two recent bereavements and had taken up the offer of counselling and a forum such as Schwartz rounds used in the health service to support staff well-being, to come together and reflect on experiences was being explored.

Members welcomed the report and the Chair thanked the Assistant Director Safeguarding and Children's Services and Service Manager for the informative report and for attendance at the meeting.

CES6/22 Work Programme 2022/2023

The Sub-committee received a report which asked Members to consider and agree a work programme for the municipal year 2022/2023.

Members of the Sub-committee were invited to raise any other topics relevant to the remit of the Sub-committee that they thought should be included in the work programme and the following were suggested:

- How are social work staff supported to fulfil the professional and organisational requirements placed upon them by their work roles and what support is provided for the emotional, health and well-being of staff
- Independent review of children's social care led by Josh MacAlister and implications for social care
- Update on the outcomes of the Children, Education and Skills Working Group recommendations to Cabinet in June 2017 in relation to Elective Home Education
- How are Foster Carers coping with the cost of living crisis
- How are schools dealing with gender-specific and gender-neutral toilets provision

It was agreed that these topics would be scheduled accordingly in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair.