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Title Edinburgh Psychological Service

Emotionally Based School Refusal – A Collaborative Approach

What did we ask?

Do shared approaches and resources across partner services and educational establishments improve consistency, confidence and appropriate early intervention in relation to emotionally based school refusal?

What is the evidence base?

The mental health needs of young people have been increasingly recognised in Scotland as an area of concern. 'The Scottish Needs Assessment Programme (SNAP) Report on Child and Adolescent Mental Health (2003)' and 'The Mental Health of Children and Young People: A Framework for Promotion, Prevention and Care (2005)' recognised the need for a shared multi-service approach to mental health and made clear links across prevention, promotion and care. This has continued to be a priority area in national policy and guidance over subsequent years. The Scottish Government Mental Health Strategy for Scotland 2012-15 stated that the strategy;

'... reflects the mature development of mental health policy in Scotland in the context of a population that increasingly understands mental health and mental illness, service user and voluntary sector engagement and leadership in taking forward improvement and change, and a Scottish Parliament that recognises the importance of the issue and regularly debates and considers mental health.'

Policy and practice encourages all services working with children and young people to take collective responsibility in addressing the mental health of Scotland's young people. National strategy continues to have a

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significant focus on “prevention, anticipation and supported self-management”. In particular evidence based early intervention aims to reduce the numbers of children and young people who require specialist mental health services. Schools, educational psychologists, social workers and the third sector are central in providing early support and preventative interventions.

Within the policy context of the 2005 mental health framework the Scottish Executive set out the expectation that all children should be Safe, Nurtured, Healthy Achieving, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included. We now immediately recognise these expectations as the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) SHANNARI wellbeing indicators. The national Getting it Right framework has been rolled out across Scotland over a period of 12 years. The 2015 revised draft statutory guidance continued to promote a child centred approach involving collaborative and partnership working across services to ensure a shared understanding of individual support needs and the timely availability of appropriate supports. The GIRFEC principles continue to drive an agenda of collaboration and joined up approaches to child wellbeing.

It is within this national context of collaborative working to address both individual child needs and national mental health priorities that Psychological Services, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, schools and partners are working together in Edinburgh to improve mental health outcomes for all children and young people.

What did we do?

Needs Analysis

Local authority data gathered between 2013 and 2015 in relation to specialist secondary placements showed an on-going demand for small specialist placements related to Emotionally Based School Refusal (EBSR).

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A survey of the local authority psychological service (2015) showed that all psychologists were working with some children and young people who had EBSR. Most psychologists felt that they had the skills to offer appropriate individual support and advice and also identified whole school approaches to EBSR as an area that schools needed support with.

At the initiation of the working group in January 2015 all service representatives felt EBSR was an issue regularly presented to their services. For the individual pupils concerned this had a significant impact on their engagement in school and as a result their progress and attainment. There was agreement that a collaborative approach across services could improve the consistency of best practice.

Cross Service Working Group

City of Edinburgh Psychological Services co-ordinated and led a short life EBSR working group. The aim was to improve the implementation of best practice and early intervention. The approach the group adopted was to collaboratively develop best practice resources and guidance to ensure consistent approaches and advice from partner services to schools, families and young people.

The cross service working group had representation from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Barnardo's, Psychological Services, Edinburgh University Clinical Psychology, Family Solutions, Educational Welfare and Additional Support for Learning Service.

Resource Development

The group looked at cross-service approaches to EBSR and developed the following shared resources;

- Pathways to support
- Guidance for parents / carers
- Guidance for schools
- Worksheet resource for adults working with young people

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In March 2016 the final resources were disseminated across all of the partner services through their group representatives and directly to schools through their Educational Psychologist and via a virtual Inclusion Hub managed by Psychological Services.

What have we found so far?

Stakeholder Feedback

Immediate evaluation at a launch of the draft resources to Support for Learning Leaders (2015) showed an average ranking of 8.3 out of 10 in terms of anticipated usefulness of the resources. A subsequent launch of the draft resources to school Additional Support for Learning team leaders and partner services (2016) indicated attendees were very positive about the forthcoming resources.

Qualitative evaluation at both events indicated that colleagues felt the materials would be useful and they anticipated applying the guidance to their practice and the practice of their schools. Feedback from the consultation and dissemination of draft materials was incorporated into the final materials.

Pupils (3) from a small independent school used by the Local Authority to support pupils who have struggled with EBSR were asked to comment on the draft youth worksheet. They gave the following feedback;

- (I) would have been able to complete it
- very helpful
- good idea
- quite straight forward to complete
- allows a young person to see for themselves what problems they have
- useful
- well worded, clear
- very helpful if done from the very start (of concerns)
- would be helpful for other people and it would have helped (me) a

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few years ago.

Working group representatives were asked to cascade the materials through their services in March 2016 following the dissemination event. All EPs were asked to cascade the resources to their allocated schools.

Since the dissemination of the materials education staff have been able to complete an online survey as part of the ongoing evaluation of the materials. There have been 13 completed surveys from a wide representation of staff (Primary, Secondary and Special School staff, Educational Psychologists, Education Welfare and parent).

All the resources were rated as being very helpful. The young persons' resource had an average score of 4 out of a possible 5 and all other resources scored an average maximum of 5. When asked if they thought using the resources had a positive impact, respondents also rated each of the individual resources on average between 4 and 5. Although this is a very small sample this has also been reflected through informal feedback from schools and partners.

What do we plan to do next?

Long term evaluation will continue through the online survey.

Feedback on the survey suggests a similar model of resource development would be useful for other topics. This could be further explored in the future.

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References

Scottish Executive, (2003). The Scottish Needs Assessment Programme (SNAP) Report on Child and Adolescent Mental Health

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Scottish Government, (2012). Mental Health Strategy for Scotland 2012-15

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