Title: Fife Educational Psychology Service

Development of a contextual assessment tool to build the capacity of Named Persons in secondary schools to contribute to multi-agency assessment and intervention planning for young people with mental health issues, specifically anxiety.

What did we ask?

1. Can we evidence that the use of a specifically developed assessment tool will increase the reported confidence of Named Persons in the systematic identification and assessment of anxiety in young people?

2. Can we evidence that Named Persons, in consultation with their Educational Psychologist, make informed decisions about the need for multi-agency intervention for young people experiencing anxiety using the principles of GIRFEC?

3. Can we evidence that following the use of the contextual assessment tool:
   - Young people will report a greater sense of emotional well-being and a more positive school experience.
   - Named Persons and teachers will report young people to be more effectively engaged with their learning.
   - Families and carers will report greater confidence that their young people are more effectively supported in school.
   - Data on engagement, attendance and exclusion triangulates with the views of all.

What is the evidence base?

"The majority of young people will face difficulties as they grow up: it's a given. Most are healthy, despite these expected highs and lows."

"All young people need the support and guidance of friends, family, teachers, youth workers and others to enjoy and sustain a healthy lifestyle. In most circumstances these people support young people to maintain their well-being even when they face significant problems: for families this normally happens instinctively; for professionals it should be a core part of their role" (Making Sense, 2016).

Research findings consistently indicate that children and young people experiencing emotional well-being or mental health issues will, in most cases, be best supported by adults who know them well and with whom they feel familiar, comfortable and safe to talk e.g. parents or carers, other family members, peers and/or school staff

(Bowlby, 2005; Hattie & Yates, 2013).

School staff have key roles to play in both protecting and promoting children and young people's emotional wellbeing, and also in preventing, identifying and managing young people's mental health difficulties. However, not all young people feel confident in approaching school staff for support with mental health issues.

"It is no surprise that nearly two-thirds of young people (64 percent) said that they would turn to their friends if they started experiencing problems with their mental health" (Making Sense, 2016).

In addition, the Scottish Youth Parliament (2016) indicates that:

▪ The majority of young people do not know what mental health information, support and services are available in their local area.

▪ One in five young people do not know where to go to for advice and support for a mental health problem.

▪ Young people feel that there are a range of barriers to talking openly about mental health, including embarrassment, fear of being judged and a lack of understanding about mental health.

By reducing anxiety and helping to improve mental health, children and young people are more likely to engage in school and achieve more. Vulnerable children, young people and their families are at particular risk of experiencing poor mental health. To tackle the poverty-related attainment gap, interventions, systems and processes which improve mental health are therefore important.

What did we do?

As a first step towards supporting Named Persons' responses to young people presenting with anxiety, we developed and delivered training about anxiety to Named Persons in four pilot High Schools. At the same time, we asked the Named Persons to complete a measure we had developed to gauge their confidence in responding to pupils presenting with anxiety, using scaling questions[1].

We also developed a School Experience Contextual Assessment Tool (SECAT) [1] which provides a framework for Named Persons to complete in discussion with young people presenting with anxiety related issues. The SECAT supports the gathering of information about different aspects of the YP's school experience whilst allowing Named Person's to build on their relationships with the young person. The assessment information can then be used to engage pupils in a discussion about

their anxiety and to assess and identify how best to intervene.

The SECAT was introduced to Named Persons participating in the pilot intervention. The Named Persons are currently piloting the tool with a sample of young people in their schools and consulting with their link Educational Psychologists for advice as appropriate. We have developed a draft Staged Intervention Model at the request of Named Persons to guide the assessment and intervention process for young people presenting with anxiety.

[1] *Available on request from Fife Council Educational Psychology Service*

What have we found so far?

Named Persons in the 4 pilot schools welcomed the opportunity to engage in additional training about anxiety and provided positive feedback. They are currently participating in a pilot project designed to support them to become more confident and systematic in their assessments of anxiety in young people.

Named person confidence levels prior to the intervention varied widely (e.g. from 9-1 on a 10 point scale) suggesting that there is a need for support and training.

From an implementation science perspective, staff changes have impacted on the implementation of the pilot in 3 of the 4 selected schools. Changes in Guidance Staff and in Depute Head Teachers have required additional dates to be sought for reruns of the training or the project to be talked through with new staff members.

What do we plan to do next?

- Re-evaluate the confidence of Named Persons to systematically identify and assess anxiety in young people and to make decisions about the need for multi-agency involvement.
- Ask Named Persons and young people to provide feedback about the SECAT and amend it as appropriate.
- Compare SECAT scores and feedback for young people pre and post intervention.
- Compare attendance and exclusion figures and feedback about pupil engagement for those young people participating in the pilot, pre and post intervention.
- Further develop the draft Staged Intervention Model of support for young people presenting with anxiety and develop a bank of resources for staff and young people to use.
- Ask young people and, where appropriate, their parents/carers to provide

feedback about the intervention and any support they have received.

References

Bowlby, J. (2005). A Secure Base. Oxon: Routledge

Hattie, J. &Yates, G.C.R. (2013). Visible Learning and the Science of How We Learn. Oxon: Routledge.

Making Sense: A report by young people on their well-being and mental health, HAFAL group: For recovery from serious Mental illness, (2016).Scottish Youth Parliament (2016) 'Our Generation's Epidemic: Young people's awareness and experience of mental health information, support, and services'

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