

Supporting Mental Health in our Schools

During adolescence, the need for independence increases due to the development and maturity of our brains. During the school day hours, teachers and other school staff take on the role of carer for children and Young People and it is not always easy to understand or read the difficulties and challenges a CYP could be experiencing. Add into the mix, a physical disability and/or complex medical needs – and an adolescents social, emotional, and mental health can be even more of a challenge.

As a child grows up, a rollercoaster of changing emotions and feelings that come and go are completely normal. Feelings and moods that become a problem are those negative emotions that are persistent, which last a long time. Negative emotions that become overwhelming and stop the CYP being able to achieve what they want in life are the behaviours that require support in order to help move the CYP forward in a positive way.

Allowing a CYP time to talk is imperative, to enable positive communication and a change for them to reflect on their needs. In the world of SEN, building resilience and independence is key to enabling a CYP to succeed in their life.

Top tips to support positive communication for CYP:

- Be fully attentive – active listening
- Availability – advertise around the school scheduled sessions where there is a trained support for students that need some place to go.
- Reflect – teach students ways to listen to themselves and learn from their worries. Ensuring that a supportive talking session ends with a positive outcome will skill up the CYP in order to support themselves through their own mental health journey.
- Empathise – CYP need the opportunity and security to be really understood. Knowing and trusting that they have been listened to will comfort them and hopefully have a positive impact on their wellbeing.
- Look after yourself – do not enter an emotionally charged conversation with a CYP when you are dealing with your own stresses and worries. Enabling a supervision style support network for staff will have a positive impact on the mental wellbeing of staff and in turn enable a grounded and emotionally available staffing body who is able to support the students that attend your school
- Timing – the right time to talk. Choosing a time when both parties can focus on the discussion that lies ahead. Is this a quick check-in, or a more in-depth intervention? Offering students, a variety of times and interventions to talk over their feelings will be the most beneficial course of action. Teaching a CYP that most of the time, class time is not the time to seek help will be beneficial to their long-term studies. Building capacity within the student's timetable – allowing support such as Keyworker check in (morning and afternoon, scheduled intervention as a withdrawn session from a lesson, break and lunch support groups are all ways to formalise and guide a student through a positive experience in school, whilst offering plenty of time to the CYP to speak to a staff member should the need arise.)
- Instant access - Of course there are always times when an unexpected need to talk is required. If a CYP is at crisis point, scheduling time within your staff timetables to enable a drop-in centre is imperative.

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- Support for families – below are some links to National support hubs for Families and positive mental Health. Share local and national support charities with families and encourage families to talk – keeping CYP talking is the most positive step towards increased wellbeing and positive mental health.

Advice and Guidance:

- Childline (for 18 years and under): 08001111
- [Effective Supervision in schools](#)
- Youth and Wellbeing Directory: youthwellbeing.co.uk
- Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families: www.annafreud.org
- Youth Minds Parent Helpline: 08008025544
- NSPCC: 08008005000
- The Mix: www.themix.org.uk
- MindEd for Families: www.minded.org.uk/families

National Mental Health Organisations:

- Clockwork – charity supporting Young Adults with depression: www.clockwork.org.uk
- Moodjuice – from this site you can print off self-help guides covering conditions such as depression, anxiety, stress, panic, sleep disorders: www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/professional/pdfGuides.asp
- Mindshift App – this is an app that is designed to support teens and young adults to cope with anxiety.
- OCD Action – an online or phone helpline to support for OCD: 08453906232, www.ocdaction.org.uk
- Cruse Bereavement Care – a National Charity that offers specialist support via telephone and email. They have a specific programme called RD4U which is aimed at helping CYP which are affected by the loss of someone close: 01737772834, www.cruse.org.uk/
- Jigsaw South East – grief support for children and young people, which have experienced death of a significant family member. It also offers support (in partnership with McMillan) to children and young people who a family member with a life limiting condition.
- Kooth – free, online and anonymous support for young people – www.XENZONE.COM, PARENTS@XENZONE.COM
- **Shout** is great as you can text **free** on **85258** www.giveusashout.org They have trained Shout volunteers and are available to help anyone with depression, anxiety, abuse, panic attacks, suicidal thoughts, self-harm, relationship problems and bullying.