

## **Inclusion Service Covid Recovery Report for Schools**

### **1. Implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education (Wales) Tribunal Act 2018 (ALNET)**

#### **Guidance, training and support for schools in relation to the conversion of Statements of Special Educational Needs to Individual Development Plans.**

We are obligated under Welsh Government implementation timeframes to ensure that pupils in mandated cohorts are moved from the Special Educational Needs (SEN) system to the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system over the course of this academic year. We have provided support to schools / ALNCOs in terms of interpreting guidance and understanding how to conduct the Person Centred Review (PCR) and Individual Development Plan (IDP) meetings. Partnership officers have contacted every family and school to explain the new processes and roles and responsibilities within new guidance. Training has been provided to every school and documentation has been developed and shared. It is difficult to monitor the impact at this stage as we are still in the implementation phase of conversion. To date, the Local Authority is on track with the conversion timescales. ALNCOs are ensuring that PCRs are held for pupils early in the academic year and the quality of the paperwork being returned is enabling the Local Authority to produce person centred IDPs with appropriate outcomes. Schools are supportively challenged where the quality of paperwork needs further development and any schools causing concern are highlighted for discussion with the Coordinator for Inclusion and Education Support Officers. To fully evaluate the outcome, this would be appropriate at the end of the academic year. Local Authority Inclusion Managers attend regular regional implementation groups as well as meetings with the Welsh Government Transformation Lead for the Additional Learning Needs and Education (Wales) Tribunal Act 2018 (ALNET) and are in the process of considering a Quality Assurance framework around IDPs. It will be key to collaborate with Education Support Officers regarding this work.

#### **Online IDP platform**

As per Welsh Government requirements, the Local Authority has commissioned the services of a software company to develop an online IDP platform. A designated 'IDP Systems and Process Officer' has been appointed within the Additional Learning Needs Support Service to lead this piece of work ensuring the specifications requirements provided by Welsh Government are met. All schools in Neath Port Talbot have accessed the training for this platform and there is ongoing support and advice. It is anticipated that the system will go live imminently for Local Authority professionals with a view to school's accessing the portal towards the end of the academic year.

## **2. Support for Emotional, Psychological, Mental Health and Wellbeing**

(For further details please also refer to report shared at ESW on 8.12.2022)

### **Secondary School Based Counselling and Primary School Based Child Therapy Service**

During the academic year 2019/2020 and throughout the pandemic, the School Based Counselling Service (SBCS) delivered 3654 sessions to 551 pupils across Neath Port Talbot. This was an increase of 49 pupils and 1065 sessions in comparison to the previous year (2018/2019). It is worth noting that this achievement was in stark contrast to the trend across Wales during 2019/2020 which showed a decrease in the number of Children and Young People (CYP) accessing SBCSs nationally. This was possible due to the pro-active response of Neath Port Talbot SBCS in initiating remote therapy for secondary school pupils, with no gap in provision.

The academic year 2020/2021 saw the reopening of schools to pupils, however attendance at school for a portion of the client group was sporadic for various reasons, including isolation requirements and social anxiety. For this reason, engagement reduced to 3009 sessions delivered to 480 pupils (447 for Years 6-13, 33 for Years 1-5). In order to reduce the likelihood of missed sessions, the team adopted contracting for remote therapy at the first session so that pupils could access therapy remotely if appropriate. Average waiting times during this year were 4 weeks for initial assessment and 5 weeks for commencement of counselling.

Young People CORE (YP-CORE) is an assessment tool used to monitor change, i.e. improvements in emotional wellbeing. Scores above 30 are deemed to be indicative of severe emotional distress whilst scores below 10 are within the normal range. During the year 2020/2021, average Young Peoples' scores reduced from 24 to 14 showing a significant improvement.

During the academic year 2021/2022 the service delivered counselling sessions to 436 pupils across primary and secondary schools (406 for Years 6-13, 30 for Years 1-5). This equates to 2616 sessions which is a reduction compared to the previous year. This is a direct result of recruitment and retention issues which we hope to overcome. The additional staff recruited to date will help to alleviate this issue. Average waiting times during this year were 3.66 weeks for initial assessment and 6.77 weeks for commencement of counselling. The service accepted 578 referrals (346 secondary, 90 primary) meaning that 142 referrals were carried over into the following academic year. Of those referrals 103 were assessed and signposted to other appropriate services for the summer holidays. During the year 2021-2022, average Young Peoples' scores reduced from 25.10 to 13.3 which again is a significant improvement.

The current average waiting times at the time of writing (22/11/2022) are 4.33 weeks for an initial assessment and 12 weeks for commencement of counselling in secondary schools. There is no waiting list for the Primary School Based Counselling Service at the present time.

Since the pandemic, the highest presenting issue for counselling is 'Anxiety'. Prior to the pandemic, the highest presenting issue was 'Family'. This is a trend which is consistent across Wales.

## **School Staff Wellbeing and Consultation Helpline**

In recognition of the increased pressure on school staff during lockdown, the SBCS offered a wellbeing and support call back service for school staff. This service had two purposes:

1. To support the emotional wellbeing of school staff.
2. To provide consultation for staff who may be supporting CYP presenting with complex difficulties either at the hubs or in the community.

During 2019/2020 this service supported 11 staff over 16 sessions and during 2020/2021 supported 12 staff over 15 sessions.

## **School Staff Counselling Service**

During 2020/2021 a School Staff Counselling service was created in order to further support staff in recognition of well documented low levels of school staff wellbeing. This service replaced the School Staff Wellbeing and Consultation Helpline.

Since its implementation, Neath Port Talbot has supported 26 members of staff over 165 sessions. Outcomes are extremely positive.

## **School Staff Supervision Pilot**

The creation of a School Staff Supervision Pilot began in 2020, with one to one, monthly clinical supervision being provided for pastoral school staff in three secondary schools. This was in recognition of low staff wellbeing levels in the education sector and the link between this and pupil wellbeing. This work also recognised the formalisation of the responsibility of school staff in regards to emotional wellbeing as highlighted in The Together for Mental Health Plan, the 'Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being' (Welsh Government, 2021) and the Mental Health Measure Wales (2011) as well as the low levels of confidence of school staff with regards to work of this nature.

Supervision is able to address two issues in the education sector through supporting the wellbeing of staff and upskilling them in their pastoral role which has increased in complexity over time.

Supervision was provided by qualified counsellors and supervisors. This work was underpinned by academic research, the aim of which was to evaluate the efficacy of the pilot and is now being used to inform future work in this area. During 2020/2021, this service provided 142 supervision sessions to 34 members of school staff. During 2021/2022 51 school staff over 91 sessions benefitted from the service. Additionally, 2 primary schools received training in 'Peer Supervision Skills' and 10 staff received group supervision from the SBCS.

Feedback from the project has been positive and the service is currently reviewing more sustainable arrangements for supporting staff wellbeing in schools. Supervisees' report improvements in wellbeing with the average score on the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale increasing from 51.8 to 54.9. The vast majority (81.8%) of supervisees showed elevations in levels of wellbeing, and 72.72 % demonstrated meaningful change of three points or more.

### **Primary Parent Support Service**

During 2019-2020, throughout periods of lockdown, the SBCS created a Primary Parent Support Service. The aim of the service was to support parents in supporting the emotional wellbeing of their children. This was achieved through telephone support and parent-child/parent programmes which were delivered online. During 2019/2020, this service supported 28 parents over 42 sessions and during 2020/2021 9 parents over 9 sessions. During the academic year 2021/2022 the service supported 9 parents over 13 sessions. Parents reported that the service helped them in supporting their children throughout the pandemic.

Due to the creation of the School Based Child Therapy Service, there has been less of a need for this service although, it is still available to parents.

### **Emotional Health and Psychological Wellbeing Forums (EHPW)**

Neath Port Talbot have established, in collaboration with the Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and wider Inclusion Service staff, regular multi agency cluster forums to support the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people. The Emotional Health and Psychological Wellbeing (EHPW) forums are coordinated and chaired by the Educational Psychologist (EP) linked with the school cluster. These forums provide universal provision in the form of advice and consultation to schools and provide a reflective space for schools to discuss emotional health and wellbeing related issues. This might include discussions in relation to staffs' wider skills, knowledge and understanding of emotional health and wellbeing / mental health (i.e., discussions that have a professional development focus); classes or groups of pupils' individual pupils. The 'consultation team' will ordinarily consist of school-based counsellor (SBC), a wellbeing service (WBS) practitioner, an EP and a practitioner from CAMHS. Through this collaborative working, stronger links have been created between Health, Local Authority and schools, ensuring a holistic package of support is provided for children and young people, as well as upskilling staff to meet the needs of learners within the school setting. Where targeted support is required, this approach ensures that this is provided through the most effective and efficient means and in line with the 'No Wrong Door Approach' recommended by Welsh Government.

### **Assistant Educational Psychologist for Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA)**

The Local Authority, through grant money, has recently successfully recruited and appointed an Assistant Educational Psychologist (AEP) with responsibility for working with students who present with Emotion Based School Avoidance (EBSA). The function of this role is to help reduce persistent absenteeism and re-engage CYP back into education.

Since the AEP has come into post, they have been working both directly and strategically to support CYP, families and schools facing EBSA. The role offers three levels of support, including empowering professionals, schools, individuals and their families.

As a result of this demand, the newly appointed AEP has taken on a consistent and ongoing caseload of approximately 10 children and young people who are persistently absent due to EBSA and requiring intensive support. This caseload is based on a priority of need and reviewed half-termly. As part of this caseload the AEP completes face-to-face work around unpicking the reasons for persistent absenteeism, putting support in place within school and or learning environments pertinent to specific need, and advising schools and parents on EBSA strategies. They also contribute

to Person Centred Reviews (PCRs), providing support to families, and introducing or beginning to facilitate transitions back into the learning environment. As part of this support, the AEP has also set up a referral pathway to their services and building and strengthening working relationships with a range of agencies who are involved with EBSA work including CAMHS in-reach, the wellbeing service, ASD advisory team, educational welfare service, school based counselling service and other inclusion service teams. More strategically, the AEP has begun raising awareness of EBSA needs across schools and the wider local authority, with leaflets being sent out detailing the support the AEP role provides and how it can be accessed.

Furthermore, the AEP has been creating an EBSA guidance and designing an accompanying toolkit for Schools and the Local Authority, with contributions from various key agencies (including safeguarding, Education Welfare Service and ASD Advisory Service). Alongside this, they have also been creating a guidance for families who are facing EBSA, with the aim to complete and release both guidance's during the spring term. Moving forward the AEP has set up an EBSA forum which will be attended by a number of agencies who have involvement or experience of EBSA. The aim of this forum is to provide schools with a space to discuss specific cases and receive appropriate support and advice from relevant agencies on a termly basis. The first meeting of which will be held in January. Raising awareness of EBSA and providing guidance to schools is set to continue, with an initial training day being provided in January (for 30-35 staff members). The aim of this work is to ensure early intervention and secure appropriate support in schools which will ultimately reduce rates of persistent absences. Training is also being set up for specialist intervention staff. By raising awareness with such staff, they will be able to provide specific EBSA support as part of their intervention, again contributing to early intervention and support for those who are persistently absent. The AEP will be continuing to provide parent/carer training both within schools and the wider community, with established links with school family liaison officers and CAMHS in-reach. To further support parents, the AEP has also begun to gather interest from families for an EBSA parent/carer coffee morning, which they are looking to begin in the latter half of the spring term. The aim of this coffee morning is to allow parents/carers to connect and support each other in their EBSA journeys, share best practice in addressing/supporting EBSA in the home and also gain an idea of their experiences to inform guidance and support.

### **Assistant Educational Psychologist for Electively Home Educated (EHE) Children**

The Local Authority, through grant money, has recently successfully recruited and appointed an Assistant Educational Psychologist for children who are Electively Home Educated. This post holder will work closely with the Education Welfare Service and Additional Learning Support Service to ensure that the needs of all EHE CYP are catered for. Working alongside the EHE team, this post holder is supporting the well-being of families through signposting to support services, providing psychological advice, and offering relevant training and workshops to pupils and parents. Additionally, this post holder will be conducting multi-agency Annual Reviews with EHE pupils with ALN, offering specialised advice and support for families. Within this post, guidance for parents, schools and the Local Authority is currently being updated with respect to EHE. This will support understanding of the difficulties faced by the community, and will clearly outline the processes to EHE as well as how to access support services.

## **Motional**

18 schools, including primary, secondary and a special school, across Neath Port Talbot are trialling a tool to inform and track support for pupils with behaviour, emotional and social development needs. Motional is a suite of evidence-based, easy-to-use tools designed to measure, positively impact, and report on emotional health across the whole school or setting. It supports access to healthy life and learning through improved emotional wellbeing, offers guidance, activities and resources for intervention work with individual pupils or whole classes, and data to provide a 'whole school' approach.

Initial reports from schools are positive with the tool being used in a variety of ways including one to one, nurture groups and whole classes. Secondary schools are however reporting that some of the interventions recommended are more primary focused. A review meeting will be held in January with schools and a representative from Motional to identify what works and what doesn't with the tool. Motional as a company are keen to work in collaboration with schools to improve the tool where needed.

### **3. Training for Schools**

Throughout the pandemic and post Covid, the Wellbeing and Behaviour Service (WBS) have provided a comprehensive training offer in response to need, which includes, Youth Mental Health First Aid, Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD), Trauma Informed Approaches, Attachment Awareness, Forest School/Outdoor Learning, Restorative Approaches, Boxall, nurture, Relationship Based Play, developing skills workshops- wellbeing carousel (see below) This facilitates supporting school in supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils.

The WBS has extensive experience and knowledge in relation to supporting CYP who have experienced trauma. As a result they have developed an innovative Trauma Informed Approach and Relational Health whole school training package. This has been a significant focus since the pandemic and following positive feedback from schools who have received the training, an increased number of new schools have signed up and received it since September. It is also to be rolled out to all primary and secondary schools in NPT. To date, 8 secondary schools and 4 primary schools have received the full days training.

Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) has been another training focus, all primary, secondary and specialist SEBD provisions all now have at least 1 member of staff who is an accredited youth mental health first aider. This means that the identification process, advice giving and signposting to the relevant support services, via the ALGEE model by the YMHFA, ensures that the CYP's mental health needs are met.

All Inclusion teams offer training, support and advice in relation to Inclusion and wellbeing of children and young people and collaborative and joint working practice is embedded. Inclusion teams offer joint training to ensure consistency and avoid duplication. High quality training for all school based staff is available throughout the academic year via the multi-agency Inclusion Service Training Menu. Feedback from training is positive. Strong support is provided for Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCos) with termly ALNCo training events held for both current and new

ALNCos. Evaluations illustrated that nearly all participants (97.3%) rated the training as being at least 'good' with regards to the level to which stated objectives were met.

Due to the COVID pandemic it has become evident that there is a high level of need within the Early Years with regards to young children displaying emerging Social Communication and/or Speech Language & Communication difficulties, along with challenging behaviour. A bespoke and targeted package for Early Years practitioners in Nursery school settings has been arranged for Spring Term 2023 as part of a successful grant bid. This training will enable Nursery school settings to access a range of specialist training from Inclusion Service teams which will upskill staff and provide support for the settings. Training identified for all staff will include sensory needs, play and other identified areas of need e.g. Total Communication. This is to ensure that universal and targeted provision is embedded into all Nursery school settings.

Training has been extended to the Early Years Sector with both the Sensory and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) teams delivering training to early year's providers to ensure an understanding of sensory needs, the importance of early identification and emerging Social Communication difficulties. Evaluations illustrated that nearly all participants (97.8%) rated the training as being at least 'good' with regards to the extent the event/training stated aims and objectives were met.

#### **4. Support for Transition**

##### **Key Worker posts for Children Looked After, Exclusions and Mover in.**

Grant funding has been secured for the employment of the three key workers who started in August 2022. The role of the keyworkers is to support transition for complex managed moves, complex movers-in to the authority and children who are looked after (CLA). They support CYP in a person centred approach, with the aim of facilitating a successful reintegration to education. The workers plan and take part in thorough multi-agency meetings and transitional support. They also contribute to the formulation of school based and LA maintained IDP's by attending the PCR meetings as Local Authority Officers.

The posts are in place to meet the growing need for children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties to transition successfully into schools. NPT also has a significant number of in year transfers and movers into county.

The aim of these posts is to:

- To work in collaboration with the admissions service to identify movers in and in year transfers who require additional support, improving transition and engagement and reducing risk of exclusions.
- To communicate and liaise with all stakeholders to ensure necessary timescales are adhered to e.g. admission to school/provision, ALN assessment.
- Gather essential evidence/information to make good decisions regarding appropriate school placement/provision. This would include attending information exchange meetings, person centred reviews, home visits and completing PCP work with the child/young person.
- Support appropriate smooth transition planning with receiving schools. Support the child/young person during initial integration.
- Promote stability of learning. Be mindful of the holistic life picture of the child and promote the importance of safety.

- Support the identification for wider support for the family, linking in with Early Intervention education screening post.