



Anglian Gateway Teaching School Alliance Conference:

‘Getting to Grips with Social, Emotional and Mental Wellbeing, a collaborative approach.’

Tuesday 12th June, 2018 at The Maltings, Ely.

A year ago we began, with a team of dedicated professionals, to put together a strategic school improvement fund bid to make mental health everybody’s business. We had 57 schools named on the bid across the eastern region, primary, secondary and special schools.

Nationally, there have been no successful bids submitted to the SSIF with a focus on mental health and wellbeing; ours included. Disappointment aside, we soon realised just how valuable to the whole project team, the process of working together on and for the bid had been. We were determined to maintain the momentum created by the bid and to nurture the relationships that we had formed through our collaboration over several months and so the idea of a conference emerged.

The proposed outcomes of the bid essentially shaped the conference with an obvious agenda, driven by genuine need and compassion. For example:

- improved understanding of social, emotional and mental wellbeing, school and community wide; ‘It’s everybody’s business’.
- improved knowledge, confidence and skills of wellbeing champions.
- improved relationships between schools and mental health services.
- improved social, emotional and mental wellbeing, and other factors affecting attainment such as behaviour, attendance and staff retention.

The main purpose of the conference was to support key colleagues with an explicit role related to mental health, to make decisions about what they need to do next in their own school context. It was a practical and hands-on day, with time to hear about and share a range of experiences, to reflect and to set up action points. The programme attracted 130 delegates from across the region; 67 schools were represented - primary, secondary and special schools – as well as expert practitioners from a range of related fields.

Our keynote speaker launched the day: Professor Colleen McLaughlin, University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. Colleen’s focus was ‘Young People, Mental Health and Schools: Reimagining and questioning.’ She reminded us that teachers must reflect and understand their own practices for things to improve and how it is the quality and nature of the interactions we have at home and at school, that make the difference.

Tom Hughes, Educational and Child Psychologist followed up Colleen's message and contextualised the rest of the day with his address 'Creating a whole school framework for emotional health and wellbeing'. This included a Q/A session with a panel of school practitioners with relevant and recent experience of doing just that.

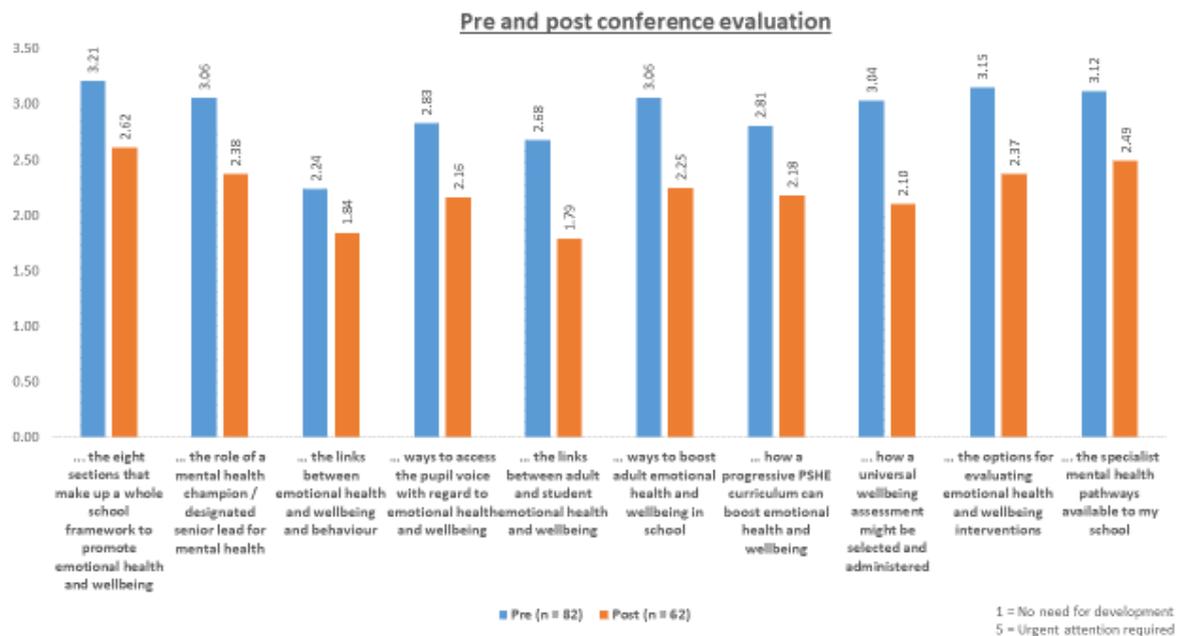
There were six workshops from which all delegates chose four; these were led by in-school and external practitioners with expertise in the given area:

- Senior designated lead for mental health in your school.
- Using whole school wellbeing assessments to inform interventions.
- Staff wellbeing.
- Evaluation of mental health initiatives / projects in school.
- Developing a therapeutic approach to behaviour: Cambridgeshire Steps.
- Teaching and learning about mental and emotional wellbeing.

The workshops offered an ideal opportunity for informal networking, with delegates setting up social media groups and we are following up with specific requested support. The materials and resources from each aspect of the day are on the Keep Your Head website, including those to support planning for change: the NCB whole school framework, the target setting and action planning documents.

Work is ongoing to evaluate the conference, with reference to feedback provided on the day A Guskey's model of evaluating professional development is being used in order to establish how knowledge and understanding gained during the conference has been applied back in schools. Accordingly, participants have been asked send through a short summary of what's changed or been done since the conference, or, an updated copy of the documentation completed on the day related to target setting and action planning.

At the start and end of the conference, participants were asked to assess their understanding of ten key areas linked to mental health. The results are below:



The data from the pre and post-conference evaluation suggests that there was, on average, a 24% improvement in attendee's understanding of ten key areas based on their attendance at the conference.

Following the conference, a network of lead practitioners and lead schools has been established whose purpose is to develop a strategic joint vision steered by working groups and ready to influence regional practice and staff training in this vital area.

We are indebted to arm and Microsoft for their financial support and encouragement. The mental health and wellbeing of our young people sits high on the agenda of these workplaces, anchored by their belief in the power of collaboration.

Sample feedback from delegates' general evaluations:

'Thank you very much. It was stimulating and well organised and has helped me gather my thoughts and plan for the future.'

'A great and inspirational time – some wonderful speakers.'

'This information needs to be aimed at the Head Teacher conference next year as they need to hear key messages.'

'Very useful day. Highlighted the growing importance of WB amongst not only the children but staff. Good to have websites and resources to go away and look at.'

'Very informative and thought provoking. Provided guidance on areas to consider for next steps.'

'Wonderfully well organised. Inspiring. Can't wait to share all I've learnt today.'

'Very interesting, lots of information with lots of detail. Thank you.'

'So much to think about – great day. Useful contacts and links to training and helpful publications and websites.'

'A really fabulous conference which gave a real insight in how to move forward with WB in my school and not just give 'lip service' to it. Great resources and good discussions. Lots to move on with. Thank you!'

'Really enjoyed the format of Tom Hughes and the panel in the first session.'

'The whole conference was very enlightening and it was useful to see a whole school approach to SEMH and how everyone works together. The workshops gave lots of practical ideas for future developments within school and I am feeling positive about taking these back to our SLT.'

'Interesting and helpful, particularly Colleen's talk and the STEPS workshop.'

'It was a fantastic conference. Thank you.'

'Designated lead workshop was really useful to hear specific advice and strategies used in school. STEPS workshop – already had STPES training as a school but really useful to have time to reflect with another school in a similar position.'

'Very informative. STEPS workshop was very powerful.'

'It was great – I thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of the day. I know that this kind of thing takes lots of organisation and preparation – very slickly done! Thank you!'