

Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing in Schools & Colleges

Newsletter 6, May 2019



As we rapidly approach the end of the academic year, exam season is in full swing: a stressful time for school and college communities, and especially important to look after our mental health and general wellbeing.

Tips on supporting pupils with stress

1. Look after yourself first

Exam season is hard for teachers too. You are under pressure to achieve good results and will pick up on your students' stress. Make use of your own support networks about any worries and concerns, and make space for your own wellbeing, with loved ones, hobbies, good diet, sleep and exercise. See [NHS Choices](#) for staff tips. After a few nights of not enough sleep "Your brain will fog, making it difficult to concentrate and make decisions. You'll start to feel down, and may fall asleep during the day. Your risk of injury and accidents at home, work and on the road also increases." For students, see [Young Minds](#).

2. Acknowledge and normalise stress

Talking about stress and doing calming group activities can really help pupils manage it on a day-to-day basis. Teach deep breathing and visualisation techniques. Coping with stress is a life skill so if we teach children and young people how to do it early, it'll help them with everything from job interviews to moving house.

3. Reinforce basic health messages

Emphasize the importance of sleep and good routines. Are students eating healthily? Are they taking regular breaks and spending time away from their desks with friends? Are they getting enough fresh air and exercise? Are they avoiding substances like cigarettes, caffeine, alcohol and 'study drugs' that can become more common in secondary schools? Reminding pupils to prioritise their physical health might seem obvious but these basic things can have a huge impact on our ability to cope with challenges.

4. Use the experience that's already out there!

Guiding your pupils through their exams is a big responsibility – enlist support where possible. If you're a secondary school teacher, could you invite older students to talk about how they coped with stress during their GCSEs? Not only will they have helpful tips of their own, but seeing other young people who managed the challenge can be reassuring in itself. Digital tools can be useful too. Apps like Stop, Breathe & Think mean that children and young people can practice relaxation techniques everywhere.

Information and resources:

- [Stop, Breathe & Think app](#)
- Advice for children and young people from [The Mix](#)
- [Mentally Healthy Schools](#) (resources for teachers)
- [Stressheads app](#)
- [CALM app](#)

[FREE books](#) on attachment

from any Timpson, Max Spielmann or

Johnsons the Cleaners store



MHEW workshops

Audit review and action planning

To date, 18 settings have attended workshops to plan their next steps, as identified in their MHEW audit process, with a further 24 schools booked for the **6th June, 8-11am at Wellhurst Golf Club**. It's been great to have governors attending to discuss and plan with school leaders. There is still time to book if [you're quick](#)! Delegates fed back how valuable it was to have time to think and share ideas and practice with colleagues. Staff chose 3 priority areas to focus on; the most common challenges were:

- developing meaningful engagement with parents and carers
- making staff wellbeing a priority and embedding in management processes
- establishing regular staff supervision opportunities

Further workshops will be offered in terms 1 and 2 based on highlighted themes: dealing with parents with MH issues; using creative methods to support MHEW; supporting cyp* and parents/carers with anxiety; supporting staff with MH issues; the impact of early life trauma.

Dates to be published in term 6.

A WHOLE COLLEGE APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

2 X FREE WORKSHOPS FOR POST-16 COLLEGES AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

Wednesday, 12 June, 9.30 am – 1.00 pm:

East Sussex College, Lewes Campus, Mountfield Road

The Conference Room (Cliffe Building room CB303)

Digi Code: 2308*.

Topics: Leadership and Management, Ethos and Environment, Staff Development and Curriculum, teaching and learning



Tuesday, 18 June, 1.00 pm – 4.30 pm:

East Sussex College, Eastbourne Campus

Corporation Room, Tyler House (TH417)

Topics: Assessing need and monitoring impact, Targeted Support, Engaging Parents/Carers and Student Voice

Tea and coffee provided but please bring your own lunch as preferred.

To book your place, email: ISEND.comms@eastsussex.gov.uk indicating date(s) of attendance.

BOOKINGS CLOSE AT 5PM ON WEDNESDAY 5TH JUNE

Any queries, please contact [Judy Perraton](#), ESCC Schools' & Colleges' MHEW Adviser



It's here.... The
Yammer Group for
East Sussex MH
Leads!



Information and invitations are going out to all those MH Leads who've shared their email addresses with me. For anyone new to Yammer, it's like a closed chat room – members only, and is a great way to ask a question or share resources and ideas, a bit like a what's app group. If you'd like to be included, pls. email me: judy.perraton@eastsussex.gov.uk.

Forthcoming events

Invitation from the ESCC Open for Parents team



East Sussex County Council is working with partners to strengthen our shared understanding and ability to Reduce Parental Conflict and its impact. Healthy relationships between parents are an important focus for early intervention and family services. The quality of the relationship between parents has a significant influence on effective parenting and child outcomes.

As part of our 'Think Family' approach, we are keen to work with partners to strengthen our ability to reduce parental conflict.

We are holding Networking Events for practitioners and managers who work with children, young people and families in East Sussex. The events will bring together multi-agency colleagues and partners to share knowledge; develop a local approach to reducing parental conflict and to begin planning access to FREE multi-agency training in evidence-based interventions to improve outcomes for East Sussex families:

Monday 10th June: 9-12, Muriel Matters House, Birch Suite, Hastings
Monday 17th June: 9-12, Civic Centre, Council Chambers Uckfield
Wednesday 19th June: 1-4, All Saints Church, Eastbourne
Monday 24th June: 1-4, Charter Centre, Bexhill

Please contact: Lorraine.mcglone@eastsussex.gov.uk to book on to your local session.

Mental Health First Aid Training

You may recall that Fenella Tallon (post-16 EIP coordinator) and I secured funding from the EIP Executive for 64 school staff to attend a 1-day or 2-day MHFA course. We've been prioritising MH Leads, and schools who have received no training previously.

A 1-day course is running at Bexhill College on 7th June, and a 2-day at Alfriston Primary on 2nd & 3rd July, with 2 further dates being agreed. If you receive an invitation, please respond even if you are unable to take up the place, so that it can be offered to someone else: fenella.tallon@yahoo.co.uk.

Heads Together legacy project, **SHOUT!** launches in the UK

Heads Together are excited to see the launch of Shout, the latest in a series of Heads Together legacy programmes.

Thanks to public support for the Heads Together campaign, The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and The Duke and Duchess of Sussex have announced the launch of Shout - a new, free, 24/7 crisis text service being delivered by Mental Health Innovations.



Shout is a text messaging service, connecting people experiencing mental health crisis to trained volunteers who provide help at a time when it is most needed.

Please make your students, staff and parents and carers aware. Could you volunteer for SHOUT? See this [article](#) from Sunday Times magazine.

Hastings Academy

I enjoyed a quick visit to Hastings Academy recently. Having completed a teaching placement and my NQT year at this school (in its Hillcrest days), it was amazing to see how much change has taken place. Developing skills and aspirations in students is a key focus here, and a topic for regular staff discussion. Hilary Morawska, Head Teacher, will be sharing some of the strategies employed at the school at the forthcoming MHEW conference – see later item.



St. Pancras Catholic Primary

Innovative practice in a small school in leafy Lewes with its own foodbank. Creatively-skilled staff have developed an impressive board game to promote communication skills, developed with cyp* with autism. Small group work on Bereavement and Loss helps pupils to process and manage emotions, and staff show deeply empathic support for children with complex backgrounds – sitting

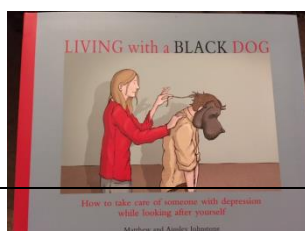
with the pain and demonstrating understanding of their hardships, rather than striving to fix them.

Langney Primary, Eastbourne

Another school working hard to develop their whole school approach to MHEW, using Thrive and nurture work and running inset sessions on Attachment. Staff wellbeing now has a regular slot in school professional development meetings, and has made great strides in uniting the staff community. Staff also told me about free art therapy available to cyp* in Eastbourne through the [Towner Gallery](#).

Book Review

Staff who attended earlier MHEW workshops may remember the video I referred to about depression: '[I had a black dog](#)'. I've recently read Matthew Johnstone's accompanying book of the same title, and another he wrote with his wife, Ainsley: '[Living with a black dog](#)'. This is an excellent insight into the daily battles faced by people of any age suffering with depression, with suggestions for what to say/not to say, and how to offer effective support. It could be helpful to you in the workplace or your personal life, and says so much in a non-patronising, accessible and succinct way.



Close colleagues of mine will know that I had toothache for several weeks lately following some routine dental work, culminating in a painful abscess, thankfully all sorted now. The repercussions were surprisingly wide: disturbed sleep and painkillers led to fatigue and low energy, not helped by having to adjust my diet and eat 'soft' foods - all because of my sore mouth! It made me realise how important my usual food is to me, and how important it is to invest in maintaining our energy levels.

How do you keep your wellbeing topped up?

It's highly individual, but here are a couple of things that work for me...

1) Eating well: a rainbow every day and avoiding refined sugar, my frequent foods include:



Breakfast:

Home-made
muesli with fruit
& yoghurt



Lunch:

Crunchy raw salad
including protein

Fresh/dried fruit



Dinner:

Spicy lentil & vegetable dahl,
beetroot quinoa & coleslaw;

Mango & passionfruit tart
with date & cashew crust*



**This is a sugar-free recipe from a magazine at the dentist! A lot of chopping and chewing involved in my diet but it really works for me! The process of making and baking is very absorbing, like gardening is for some, plus I get to eat (and share) the results! Win: win...*

2) Walking



Thanks to Hayley Martin from ESCC Public Health for promoting the 'Lighthouse Challenge' organised by Eastbourne Rotary to raise record funds for repainting Beachy Head lighthouse and other charities: a truly special, shared experience to walk around the lighthouse at low tide with 2,000 others!



The mental and physical health benefits of [being in nature](http://www.mind.org.uk) are well documented – see www.mind.org.uk. For children with ADHD, see this [research](#) on the benefits of green play settings as opposed to medication, and how [walking](#) in the green helps. In general, being in green spaces in urban settings is evidenced as [reducing stress](#) levels, particularly in deprived communities.

Many East Sussex schools have Forest School provision, and make use of beautiful grounds for outdoor learning and fun activities, all of which are vital for wellbeing and activating the learning brain. See these tips on creating a [biophilic educational environment](#). What can you do in your setting?

MHEW Survey results

Thank you so much to everyone who completed two recent MHEW surveys: a Head Teacher questionnaire and a more general one to compare with last year's. Your comments will continue to inform my work and future training events. Here are some highlights:

- 83.33% of East Sussex schools now have a MH Lead
- For Head Teachers, the top priorities for a whole school approach to MHEW are:
 - Working with parents and carers – reflecting the overall East Sussex staff view
 - Curriculum, teaching and learning
 - Staff development jointly with provision of targeted support
- The preference for training is through countywide workshops rather than EIP clusters, with managing parents' and cyp* anxiety remaining the number one training need.
- The general survey attracted fewer respondents than last year, which could be attributed to initial interest in a new project for the 2018 survey and the timing of this year's survey (sandwiched between a late Easter break and the end of term 5).
- Proportionately we saw an increase in responses from head teachers and DSLs, but fewer Sencos. Sencos are still predominantly overseeing MHEW in schools, and this has risen by 8.3% in the last year, though there has been a significant increase in Head Teachers (a rise of 18.66%) and DSLs (a rise of 21.49%) overseeing.

I am aware that Teaching Assistants and other support staff are in the frontline, yet miss out on many learning opportunities, and will be conducting a new survey next term in order to elicit the training and support needs of this valuable part of the workforce.

MHEW Conference – Wednesday 26th June, University of Brighton, Falmer – 8.30-4.00pm

Places are going fast for the first MHEW conference for East Sussex schools and colleges.

Please book your place by 12th June [here](#). It is going to be an action-packed day of fascinating, thought-provoking and practical talks, with information, resources and support from service providers in the marketplace – a great day out, plenty of networking and essential CPD!



The conference will take place in the Asa Briggs Auditorium in the Checkland Building.

Here is the entrance from the car park via steps/ramp



There will be plenty of signs and helpers to guide you!

Here is the entrance from Falmer railway station



Amex Stadium



Workshop choices will be circulated in the next few days. Delegates will select 3 from the following:

- Developing self-awareness and confidence through aspirations
- Talking to cyp* about emotional distress/suicide
- Setting up a student wellbeing ambassador scheme
- Managing self-harm
- Ready to Learn: smooth transition from foundation years to KS2
- How school staff can support MHEW: first public showing of a film made by East Sussex cyp*
- A whole school approach to gratitude
- Partnership working to make the transition from Primary to Secondary school a smooth one
- The Academic Resilience Approach
- Using the digital age appropriately to instigate positive social change
- How to support secondary aged pupils with mental health/anxiety to achieve in school

I heard [Jonny Benjamin](#) speak at the University of Brighton in mental health awareness week and he speaks bravely and eloquently about his own mental health and our collective responsibility to each other – it is a real privilege to have him speaking at our conference. Don't miss him!

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to organising the conference so far.

And huge thanks, as always, to all of you in our schools and colleges who do so much for cyp's* MHEW.

I look forward to seeing you in due course.

Judy

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NB: Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that information provided about other services available in East Sussex is correct, we cannot guarantee their quality, nor take any responsibility for any services they may provide.

**cyp = children and young people*