**Whole School Approach: Supporting the Emotional Wellbeing of Young People in Suffolk**

**The Thurston model**

A two-year programme at Thurston Community College sought to coproduce a model that would meet the needs of stakeholders. The feedback from children, parents, teachers and other school staff was that they valued an approach that allows them to:

* Learn how to take care of their own wellbeing
* Have easy access to high quality mental health guidance and assessment within a non-pathologising and non-stigmatising community setting
* Feel that the care is coordinated around them as an individual and in a context where they feel comfortable.

These aims were achieved by Thurston employing a full-time NHS Clinical Psychologist based within the school, who was able to work with the entire school community of students, parents and teachers. The programme included a range of interventions, all formulation-based and psychologically-informed, oriented towards developing a ‘whole school community’ which promotes mental health and emotional wellbeing. This included:

School culture and leadership

* Developing a school culture that promotes emotional wellbeing and maintaining this through the relationships, values and attitudes of school community members
* School leaders and managers prioritising emotional wellbeing within the school’s aims

Curriculum

* Emotional literacy and mental health awareness running throughout the curriculum, (not limited to PHSE)

Staff development

* Consultation offered to Teaching Assistants, Teachers, Pastoral Care and other school staff in relation to supporting specific students with emotional wellbeing needs
* Continuing professional development workshops for school staff in understanding mental health concerns and effective ways of supporting emotional wellbeing in the classroom

Identifying need, targeted support and access to services

* Evidence-based therapeutic interventions offered as part of the curriculum during the school day
* Screening, assessment and formulation leading to a plan for young people presenting with specific emotional wellbeing difficulties
* Where required, streamlining the referral process to specialist services (particularly for high risks groups, such as Eating Disorders and First Episode Psychosis)

Staff wellbeing

* Working with the school leadership to develop policies that support the wellbeing of staff and improve their capacity to support the emotional wellbeing of students in turn
* Staff supervision and consultation that offers a reflective space to understand their own reactions to interactions with students

Community relationships

* Supporting parents and carers to create a bridge between emotional wellbeing at school and at home
* Training and consultation offered to staff from feeder primary schools to improve early intervention

**Proposal**

The West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group has committed funding to pilot a scaled-up model of this whole school approach over a period of two years with four additional secondary schools and their feeder primaries in west Suffolk. The aims of the pilot project are to:

* Test the effectiveness and feasibility of a scaled-up model that could be integrated with the Green Paper proposals
* Further evaluate the model in terms of its impact on outcomes that are meaningful to children, parents, teachers, school leaders and commissioners
* Identify the key ingredients within the whole school approach that contribute to positive outcomes

The two-year pilot programme will be funded, and the four participating schools will be selected based on their interest and readiness to take part. School leaders who would like to submit an Expression of Interest on behalf of their school will be required to commit to the following requirements:

* To engage with and support the programme in its efforts to improve emotional wellbeing through developing the school culture and community
* To be able to recruit or commit dedicated time from an existing member of staff from Student Support or Pastoral Care to deliver interventions alongside and under the supervision of the programme team
* To involve and provide access to feeder primary schools
* To be able to offer office/desk space for two members of the programme team within the school

Schools that are selected to participate will benefit from:

* An identified mental health clinician dedicated to the school as key contact and offering consultation, training, support and evidence-based interventions within the school
* Intensive professional development and supervision for the pastoral support team
* A bespoke approach to service evaluation, providing valuable feedback and data for future development work

Potential outcomes include:

* Improved health and wellbeing of the student population
* Increased confidence in school staff to address emotional or behavioural issues related to emotional wellbeing
* Streamlined access to specialist mental health support for students when needed
* Improved staff wellbeing and morale

If you are interested, please discuss with your school leadership and complete the attached Expression of Interest form.

**References**

Department of Health and Social Care and Department of Education. 2017. Transforming Children and Young People’s Mental Health Provision: a Green Paper. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/transforming-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-provision-a-green-paper>

Public Health England. 2017. Promoting Children and Young People’s Emotional Health and Wellbeing: A Whole School and College Approach.  
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414908/Final_EHWB_draft_20_03_15.pdf>