

Attachment aware School project: Interim evaluation report November 2020



Walsall Council



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Summary

Building Resilience & Inclusive Communities & Schools (B.R.I.C.S) project was developed by Walsall Council to promote inclusion in their schools. This evaluation includes from December 2018 – Summer Term 2020. Imagine Inclusion were asked to assist with the Attachment and Trauma Informed strand of the project.

The aim was to develop and embed attachment and trauma aware practice across Walsall by providing support from Imagine Inclusion to Walsall schools. The aim was to empower the schools to use and develop their knowledge of trauma and attachment into practice. The purpose was to explore and develop different practices in schools to support staff members with de-escalation and strategies when faced with complex needs and help them to understand what to say and what not to say when in difficult situations.

Desired Outcomes:

- Decrease in escalated incidents.
- More young people in school.
- Alternatives to purely Behaviourist or punishment based practice across Walsall schools.
- Develop staff members empathy in complex situations and help understanding of individual early life experiences.
- To develop a bespoke Walsall Attachment Aware and Trauma informed Framework for Walsall Virtual School for Standards of Practice with accredited Awards.

How will we do this:

- For each school to complete the Mental Health Charter Mark (MHCM) to gain a baseline of whole school strength and area of need.
- For each school to have a face-to-face visit from Imagine Inclusion.
- For each school to complete Emotion Coaching training.
- To discuss other training options with schools such as Impact of Attachment and Trauma on Learning.
- To offer termly ½ day CPD workshops.

Introduction and content

Walsall council devised the B.R.I.C.S project to support schools across Walsall to become more attachment and trauma informed in their practice, to include more nurture, use restorative approaches within schools focusing on positive relationships and support the inclusion of children and young people with SEMH needs. The focus was on behaviour as a communication and how emotional well-being impacts on children and young people's learning.

Schools have been found to be an important place for prevention, identification and treatment of mental health issues and disorders (Bruns, Walrath, Glass-Siegal & Weist, 2004). Exposure to trauma in childhood has been found to be associated with mental health difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties, substance use, academic problems and sexually risky behaviour. Children who are exposed to chronic trauma are at an increased risk of developing a mental health disorder and also negatively impacts school achievement. Mental health disorders also have a negative impact on social and academic functioning (Larson, Chapman, Spetz, et al., 2017).

Attachment theory describes that the experiences we have in early life with primary caregivers powerfully influence our perceptions of our self, others and the world (Bowlby, 1969, 1973). It is also well researched that there is a link between attachment styles and mental health. Attachment style is said to be a determinant of mental health (Bowlby, 1988). An insecure attachment may be at a greater risk for emotion regulation problems and can lead to a greater risk of internalising or externalising disorders being present in adulthood (Riggs & Jacobvitz, 2002).

This part of the project used this link between trauma, attachment and mental health focusing on developing knowledge in these areas and raising everybody's awareness of the topics. Young-people's views about mental health promotion in secondary schools supported the development of the Ecological Model for Mental Health Promotion in Learning Communities (Aston, 2012). In conclusion the research highlighted that in order for schools to show that they are promoting mental health they need to be demonstrating the following three concepts at three levels.

Concept One. (Macro Level)

Society and School Cultures need to promote listening, participation and mental health by providing appropriate information, services and systems to enable authentic Listening and Participation and Mental Health Promotion.

Concept Two. (Meso Level)

School Culture and Ethos need to provide supportive elements to create an inclusive and mentally healthy environment, organisational climate. Essential features are shown in Figure One. Meso Level segments 3 to 8.

Concept Three. (Micro Level)

The importance of adolescent development, experiences and relationships need to ensure a child-adolescent-centred approach is maintained valuing everyone as a 'unique individual' by recognizing the importance of identity and development; promoting positive, appropriate relationships and support.

The 10 theoretical categories (elements) that are housed within each concept are:

1.	Listening and Participation
2.	Mental Health and Promotion
3.	Adult Skills, Knowledge, Attitude and Adult Wellbeing
4.	Curriculum, Teaching and Learning reflecting pedagogical knowledge and approaches
5.	Inclusive, Physical Environment, customized to meet a variety of needs
6.	Safe, Friendly Ethos, with Anti-Bullying Commitment
7.	Good Organization, Systems, and Management to support implementation of policy, procedures and change
8.	Social, Equal, Cultural, Fair Opportunities and Partnerships reflecting social inclusion and promoting community unity
9.	Recognizing the importance of identity, child - adolescent development
10	Promoting positive, appropriate relationships and support

The Ecological Model has evolved and provides an Ecological Framework for settings as communities to develop knowledge and understanding about social, emotional, mental health and inclusion. Embedded in the Ecological Model and Framework are the views and opinions of young people. The 10 theoretical categories (elements) have been used with many evolutions to develop The Mental Health Charter Mark and Resources (2012, 2017, 2019, 2020), comprising a self-assessment audit for evaluating the community regarding (Social Emotional) Mental Health and Inclusion along with various surveys and questionnaires. Young people and professionals have been involved in the generation of these materials, which are a product of the original Constructivist Grounded Theory research. Young people that took part in the research were insistent that their views and opinions would be heard. Learning Settings have used the materials with positive effect.

The schools involved in this project were invited to use the materials to focus is on what works well. An Action Plan was also completed to work on positive actions in order to promote and develop a whole community Ecological Approach to Mental Health and Inclusion that fosters good connections and positive relationships. This forms the basis of the Bronze Award. Influential are other research projects that seek young peoples' views about inclusion (Aston, 2006) where young people consulted stated for schools to be happy and positive places they needed to be providing good inclusive environments, fun engaging learning, and have understanding teachers.

This current project is using the 10 categories of the Mental Health Charter in order to:

- Evaluate where the school is currently in these categories.
- Empower schools in the project to develop an Action Plan after completing the Mental Health Charter for their organization.
- For each school to develop an understanding and awareness of a trauma informed and attachment aware approach and to embed this new knowledge into practice.

What we planned

Selection criteria for schools included in this strand of the project included a focus on the LAC high need schools in each locality, one secondary and two primary schools chosen from a review of available data. This data considered average number of LAC, number of exclusions, attendance figures from the last 3 years, current Ofsted rating, details of reduced timetables and schools RAG rating.

The aim given to Imagine Inclusion's was to embed the principles learned through the training, deliver the training and conduct individual school consultations.

Timescale for Cohort 1:

Dates	Details of Stage in Project
December 2018 – January 2019	Survey sent to all settings and analysed. Schools selected.
April 2019	B.R.I.C.S project details shared with Heads and Governors.
May 2019	Email sent out to all schools with information and an invitation for the Attachment Aware project.
June 2019	Schools were shortlisted. Half a day briefing for Heads and Governors to gain further information regarding the project.
July 2019	Final school selection. Full day training for two members of staffs about the impact of trauma on trauma, how to use specialist approaches to support this and knowledge & skills regarding Action Research Approaches. The outcome being a development of a research question.
Autumn term 2019	Consultation Support from Specialist Service to embed principles learned in training. Time allocated for each individual to develop an Action Plan to begin the research process. Conference to include the launch of Action Research projects in schools.
February 2020	CPD Workshop: Continued development of Action Research Project including problem solving using group support through group consultation. Development of tools including: learning walks, qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and sharing of interventions.
April 2020	CPD Workshop: Finalising Action Research projects through group consultation.
Summer Term 2020	Data analysis for all strands of the B.R.I.C.S project.

what we did

Ten schools took part in this part of the project. These were:

- Delves Infant School
- Delves Junior School
- Woodlands Academy
- Edgar Stammers Academy
- Chuckery Primary
- Shire Oak Academy
- Greenfield Primary
- The Shepwell Centre
- Brownhills West
- Walsall Academy

Prior to the visit all schools had email or phone contact with Imagine Inclusion and were sent the Mental Health Charter Mark to complete for their setting. Woodlands Academy, Greenfield Primary, The Shepwell Centre, Chuckery, and Brownhill West all completed this audit tool and sent this back to Imagine Inclusion.

These four schools were sent the Action Research template to fill out using the scores from the audit tool. These were all sent back completed. Action Research planning was also started in Walsall Academy and Shire Oak Academy. These schools made scrapbooks with evidence to support this Action Research in practice.

All schools had a face to face visit in October or November 2019. A network meeting was held in February 2020 which 6 schools attended. The remaining 4 were given a follow up.

Each school was offered training and explored what training would be most beneficial for each individual setting. Most schools asked for the Emotion Coaching training. One school did not get back to Imagine Inclusion in regard to training. Seven schools received Emotion Coaching training. Alongside this training, one school opted for Trauma, Circle of Adults Action Research and Reflective Teams training. Another school opted for Voice, Tone and Communication alongside Emotion Coaching.

Achievements:

- Four schools completed feedback forms in regard to the emotion coaching training. The average scores of the items ranged from 8.72 to 9.52 out of 10. This indicates that the training was successful in terms of being engaging, meeting expectations, learning new information, using what was learnt, likely to recommend the training and the useful training materials. Appendix 1 shows a table of comments from the Emotion Coaching training across schools. Appendix 2 shows comments around how they will use this training going forward.
- Feedback forms from training were completed by 181 people across the schools. Please see Appendix 3 for a graph of averages from the feedback received. The overall average of all the scores combined was 9.24 out of 10.
- Beacon schools (Short Heath Juniors, Rose Dale Infants, Lane Head Nursery, Lower Farm Primary and St John's Primary) all achieved Bronze, Silver and Gold awards due to prior work already carried out.
- Delves Infants, Delves Juniors, The Shepwell School, Woodlands Academy, Edgar Stammers, Chuckery Primary, Greenfield Primary and Brownhills West all achieved their Bronze award. Walsall academy is to be signed off November 2020.

What we are continuing to do

The ten schools involved in cohort one are continuing to work towards their Bronze, Silver and Gold status. This includes continuing to work on their action plans, putting these in place with action research and continuing their CPD and embedded this knowledge into practice.

The Mental Health Charter Mark (MHCM) audit tool used in this part of the project appeared too broad for the aims of the project and from the feedback received it seemed more in keeping to have a more specific tool to reflect what the aims of the project. We have now created an Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed audit tool based on the MHCM specifically for Walsall schools to complete. This is now accessible online through www.imagineinclusion.co.uk and will produce a spreadsheet with all the schools scores available see. This will then be used to develop an Action Research project and determine further training needs.

Cohort two will be using this new product and will be beginning the process of working towards their Bronze status.

Time scale for cohort 2:

Dates	Details of Stages in Project
August 2020	Invites sent to schools for Attachment Aware project.
September 2020	Half a day briefing for Heads and Governors to gain further information regarding the project.
October 2020	Full day training for two members of staffs about the impact of trauma on trauma, how to use specialist approaches to support this and knowledge & skills regarding Action Research Approaches. The outcome being a development of a research question.
October/November 2020	Whole school Emotion Coaching. Consultation Support from Specialist Service to embed principles learned in training. Time allocated for each individual to develop an Action Plan to begin the research process.
February 2021	CPD Workshop: Development of Action Research projects, peer support networks and analysis of case studies to support increasing knowledge and skills
May 2021	CPD Workshop: Continued development of Action Research Project including problem solving using group support through group consultation. Development of tools including: learning walks, qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and sharing of interventions.
July 2021	CPD Workshop: Finalising Action Research projects through group consultation. Attachment Aware School Bronze Award Accreditation

What we learned along the way

Shire Oak Academy employed a new head teacher during the project. This created a delay in continuing with the project. This will be followed up in November 2020.

Covid-19 created a barrier to the project being completed. Schools shut from end of March 2020 till the new school year meant that the project was put on hold or took a back seat in the planning of the return for all pupils. The pandemic has caused a major disruptions for schools and families, and this project is no difference causing a delay for all schools.

The project was on a relatively short time scale. This made it difficult for the schools to have enough time to prioritise the project and embed their new skills and knowledge into practice. The schools however did manage to complete the training and thoroughly engaged in each session.

Communication around the project seemed to differ between settings. This caused some anxieties and uncertainties around expectations of the schools. Two of the comments from the Network meeting held described that this meeting helped them to clarify many areas of the project and that they became much clearer around expectations. It would be beneficial for each school to have consistently clear ideas of the project and work they will need to complete for it before accepting the invitation.

Recommendations

- All schools taking part in the project to complete wave 2 using the new Attachment Aware Trauma Informed audit tool and complete an action plan.
- Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed Audit tool to be evaluated at the end of year one. This is to see if it is relevant and fit for purpose. It will also highlight any challenges and barriers the schools have faced while using it in their settings. An evaluation tool will need to be developed for cohort one and two.
- Support given to schools to hold a Parent information evening / workshop around Emotion Coaching.
- Support given to the Virtual Schools in order to continue to develop the pathway.
- Continue to support cohort 1 to reach Gold standard.
- Develop buddy system between cohort 1 and 2 which includes on-going training for cohort 2.
- Virtual Schools to have the same products and resources for all schools (e.g. a training pack specifically for Emotion Coaching and Becoming Attachment Aware). This will allow consistency across cohorts and settings.
- Evaluation to be complete for both cohort 1 and cohort 2.

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Walsall Educational Psychology Service

Appendices

Appendix 1

A table of comments from the Emotion Coaching training across schools.

A fantastic course.	I feel inspired to research further into this topic to enable to support children fully with their emotions.	great to see the importance of attachment awareness being brought to the front of understanding.	Very interesting and extremely useful. Thank you.
Interesting and informative.	Useful interesting information, will use techniques in work place and home.	Relatable videos, realistic and adaptable approaches to implement and very engaging. Thank you.	Very useful can see straight away where could be used.
Fantastic! Important, deep messages delivered clearly and engagingly.	This was the best emotion coaching training to date. Thank you for adapting 'endings' to suit the school.	Good training and we will put these in to place.	Fantastic! Useful, deep important messages delivered clearly and engagingly-Thank you!.

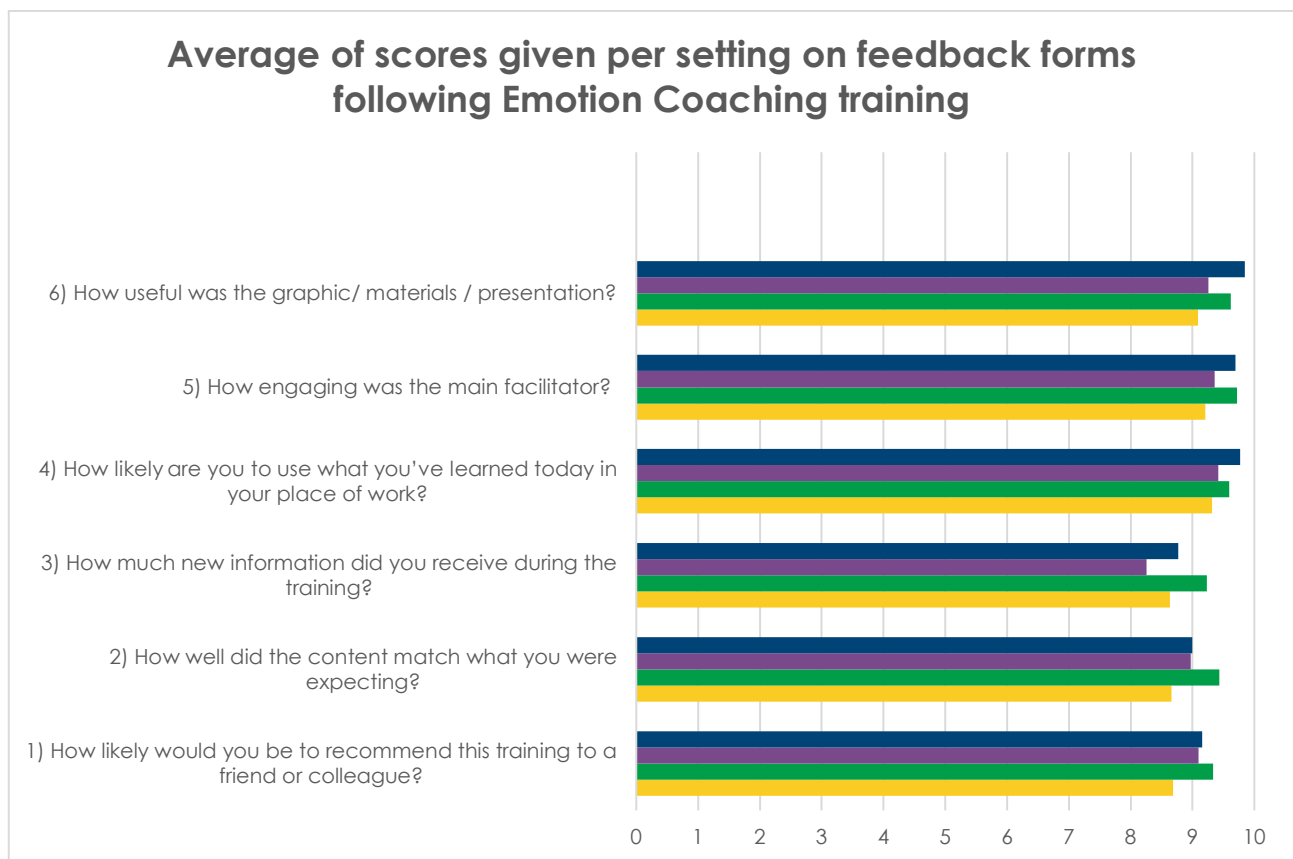
Appendix 2

A table of comments around how they will use this training going forward.

Being able to recognise situations when children need help regulating.	Through my teaching/with the students I teach.	Building relationships with children.
Coping with my own emotions- other techniques to help children cope with their emotions.	Verbalising children's behaviours. Understanding how to de-escalate behaviours.	Understanding and response to children
In the way I respond to 'negative' behaviours and in fostering an empathic culture in my team.	Using new knowledge in my daily work life.	Show more understanding and use more empathetic language.
Show more empathy with children and peers. To take time to understand the emotions behind actions.	I work as a pastoral mentor and will find what I have learnt to be really useful with the children I work with.	Giving children time to calm down before talking about appropriate behaviours.
Discussing feelings with children in class. Etc. Dealing with challenging behaviour.	Everyday	To recognise emotional situations and feel able to cope successfully. Understand what you feel imagine how the young person feels. Empathise to help.
Conversations with children. Calming corner.	How I respond to others.	Home life in understanding development of children.

Appendix 3

Graph to show feedback averages from Emotion Coaching Training across the schools.



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