

Trailblazer Mental Health Support Teams:

Summary of engagement during implementation across Newcastle and Gateshead

Executive Summary

June 2019



Involve North East

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- changes to care pathways
- locating new services

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Executive Summary

1.0 Introduction

In December 2017 the Department for Education published a green paper entitled: *'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision'*. It announced three core proposals for working more closely with schools and colleges to provide earlier mental health support for children and young people.

One proposal was to fund new Mental Health Support Teams (Trailblazers), to provide extra capacity for low level, wellbeing and emotional support in schools. In December 2018, NHS Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group (NGCCG) was announced as a pilot area for the implementation of Trailblazer teams.

Recruitment and training of 12 Education Mental Health Practitioners (EMHPs), in four teams, began in January 2019 with initial delivery beginning in May 2019. Three teams are based in Gateshead and one in Newcastle. They are employed by Newcastle Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (NTW) and managed by NTW mental health clinicians.

In Newcastle, EMHPs will focus on providing support across all year groups to a small number of schools with high levels of deprivation. In Gateshead, they will focus on providing support for pupils during transition from Year 6 to Year 7 in three school clusters. In addition, EMHPs will also support schools in the Jewish community.

Involve North East was asked to engage with key stakeholders during the implementation of the Trailblazer pilot across Newcastle and Gateshead. The aim was to engage with key stakeholders to understand how the Trailblazer teams could provide the most appropriate support. The key objectives are to:

- Identify how EMHPs could provide the most appropriate support to their designated schools
- Explore what the different types of support might look like
- Produce a report detailing the engagement activity undertaken with schools, wider services and children/young people between January – June 2019

The views of school staff, Early Help teams, Educational Psychologists and Youth Councils were gathered. Feedback was given by:

- Twenty one schools (Two secondary and 19 primary)
- Twenty one young people from Newcastle and Gateshead Youth Assemblies
- Team managers from Newcastle and Gateshead Early Help teams
- Team managers from Newcastle and Gateshead Educational Psychology Services

Whilst ongoing engagement with children, young people and parents at the Trailblazer pilot schools is now underway, due to logistical issues and time pressures, the following views are not included in this report.

- Other wider services (e.g. Health Visitors, School Nurses)
- At the time of writing this report, no feedback had been received from staff at schools within the Jewish Community

It is acknowledged that feedback from these people and services is important and may be different from those already gathered. Their views will be sought as part of the Trailblazer implementation review during September – December 2019.

2.0 Findings

2.1 Schools

Schools in the Trailblazer pilot areas in Newcastle and Gateshead are reporting an increasing need for mental health and wellbeing support among their pupil cohorts. However, reductions in funding means many of these schools have lost or experienced reductions to their pastoral workforce.

The same budget limitations also mean that these schools are often unable to buy in external mental health and wellbeing provision or purchase staff training, therefore, the majority of this support is being provided by core teaching staff. And whilst schools recognise the great work being undertaken by their colleagues, they recognise that staff often feel poorly equipped to deal with the range of social, emotional and wellbeing issues their pupils present with on a daily basis.

In addition, curriculum pressures and the time taken to address high level mental health and wellbeing issues, means as well as lacking confidence, core staff often do not have the enough time to provide the amount, range and depth of emotional and wellbeing support that they would like.

Schools hope the Trailblazers teams will be able to offer quality training and produce resources around specific topics such as: Attachment Theory and emotional Regulation and also offer, advice both for identified children and general queries regarding mental health and wellbeing provision. By offering this support, schools feel that staff will have increased confidence to deal with emotional and wellbeing issues among their pupils.

The role of Trailblazer teams is not to replace any existing provision. As such, schools also hope their designated EMHPs will help them to deliver and expand their existing mental health and wellbeing provision, allowing them to provide more of what is needed and freeing up staff time (e.g. SENCOs, Family Support Workers) to provide more intensive, high level support where it is required.

In addition to this, schools see a key role for the EMHPs in helping them to embed and promote a positive emotional health and wellbeing culture in their schools.

EMHPs are now working in schools and are supporting or shadowing delivery of existing interventions and providing additional support around transition. At this stage (June 2019) the role is developing organically, with schools in the process of identifying what their support needs are. The positive attitude of schools towards the EMHP role and an ongoing dialogue with staff, young people and parents

means each school is beginning to identify more clearly what support is needed and what their ongoing EMHP provision might look like.

2.2 Young people

Twenty one young people from the Youth Councils in Newcastle and Gateshead also shared their views. Whilst their feedback should be considered generic as not all participants attended schools included in the Trailblazer pilot, their views echoed those of school staff.

Young people who shared their views reinforced the sentiments shared by school staff. Like teaching staff, young people are also feeling the effects of the limited provision available for wellbeing support in their schools. Long waiting lists for school counselling, school nurses only being available on certain days and pastoral staff time being taken up with behaviour issues means support is often only available when issues escalate.

With the majority of wellbeing support now being provided by core teaching staff, young people highlighted that staff often don't know how to help when offering mental health support and have limited understanding of their issues. However, they noted that expertise in mental health is not a pre-requisite for providing good emotional and wellbeing support and the value of simple understanding and flexibility should not be underestimated.

In addition to staff training, young people also highlighted that their own awareness of mental health and wellbeing was often limited. They value the opportunity that PSHE lessons present to address this and would welcome lessons being more inclusive and relatable, with less focus on the extremes of poor mental health.

2.3 Parents

Ninety seven parents of children and young people at 11 schools also provided feedback.

Whilst just over half of the parents were unaware that their child's school was linked to a mental health support team, 61.9% expressed an interest in being involved in shaping the service with a further 24.7% stating they may want to be involved. These parents were asked to provide contact details to enable the Trailblazer teams to contact them with further information about their involvement and in total 66 parents provided contact details.

When asked what the term 'Mental Health' meant to them, parental responses fell into two main categories. Eighty nine parents provided feedback and the majority (70.8%) viewed the term holistically as a person's emotional wellbeing and resilience and as something which everyone has be it good or poor. However, for 27.0% of parents 'Mental Health' was expressed negatively as an illness and described using diagnostic terms such as depression and anxiety.

2.4 Early Help and Educational Psychology

Whilst the focus of the EMHP role is to provide low level mental health support in schools, the value of EMHPs working holistically with other teams providing support

to children, young people and families is also recognised. Positive discussions with Early Help and Educational Psychology have begun in both Newcastle and Gateshead with both services recognising the benefits of sharing knowledge, resources and ideas and the mental health 'lens' that the EMHP role can offer.

Educational Psychology raised concerns about the potential overlap between its traded provision and the role of EMHPs but are keen to explore how the two roles can co-exist. The development of a Terms of Reference to formalise how the Trailblazer roles will work with other services has been proposed with agreement from Newcastle EP staff to offer their expertise to facilitate this process. In Gateshead, Trailblazer clinical staff have been invited to attend EP staff meetings to facilitate information sharing.

Much positive progress has already been made in embedding the EMHP service within wider provision. Professional links are being made with Early Help teams and Educational Psychology with discussions underway to identify opportunities for sharing of information, knowledge and resources.

3.0 Next steps

Ahead of further roll out of EMHP support to additional schools across Newcastle and Gateshead, a review of the implementation is planned for September – December 2019. The review will seek to understand what worked well during the first Trailblazer pilot implementation and what could be improved for future schools.

In addition to seeking feedback from the groups and services which contributed to this review, the list of participants will be expanded to widen the engagement.

Feedback will be sought from:

- School staff
- Early Help
- Educational Psychology

In addition to:

- Jewish school staff
- Children and young people at the pilot schools
- Parents and carers of children and young people at the pilot schools
- Trailblazer staff (EMHPs and clinical leads)
- Health visitors
- School nurses