



# Longdendale High School's whole school curriculum to support the emotional health and wellbeing of students, staff, and the wider community

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The Greater Manchester i-THRIVE Programme team spoke with Julie Noble, Senior Inclusion Lead and School Mental Health Lead at Longdendale High School in Tameside, to discuss their whole school emotional health and wellbeing curriculum.

## Background

**Julie Noble:** Current research from [Public Health England](#) highlights how the culture, ethos and environment of a school influences the health and wellbeing of its students and their readiness to learn. Research has also shown that students with better emotional health and wellbeing are likely to have effective social and emotional skills, better achievements and be associated with greater health and wellbeing.

## What steps were taken to create a whole school emotional health and wellbeing curriculum?

**Julie Noble:** As a school we saw the importance and value of investing in a robust whole school curriculum that covers various areas of emotional health and wellbeing. We were keen to support our staff, young people and their families to be resilient. Outlined below are the different features of our emotional health and wellbeing offer.

### 1. Raising awareness and understanding with students:

We wanted to offer all our students support in maintaining good emotional health and wellbeing through effective prevention and promotion activities. As a school we have various themed weeks, assemblies and workshops with students that we use to discuss a number of topics such as exam stress, anxiety and managing feelings. Emotional health and wellbeing sessions have been embedded into the PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) curriculum. Our students have access to mindfulness sessions and other self-help resources, as and when they require them.

### 2. School Mental health Lead:

I am the Senior Inclusion Lead and designated School Mental Health Lead. Part of my role is to support the emotional health and wellbeing of our staff and young people. We secured some funding to enable me to undergo further training in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) to help support our young people's emotional health and wellbeing. I am now trained to deliver evidence based interventions with young people experiencing mild to moderate low mood, anxiety, phobias and emotion regulation.

During the training course I received supervision from a Clinical Psychologist from Tameside Healthy Young Minds (HYMS, local CAMH service). As a result of building relationships and increased partnership working with our local HYM service, I have been able to continue receiving supervision from HYMs even after completing the course. We have a reciprocal agreement between the school and HYMs, that in return for supervision I support HYMs deliver anxiety groups and clinical sessions. Continuing to receive supervision from HYMs has been very helpful in enabling good partnership working with local mental health services. Supervision has allowed for continual embedding of my newly acquired skills and knowledge, as well as building confidence when working with young



people and families needing support for their emotion health and wellbeing. Continued supervision has also allowed for the sustained use of outcome measurements to support ongoing work with young people, and to track progress so that the help and support plan can be modified as needed.

Young people are able to self-refer for support, with parents/carers and teachers also able to refer young people who may require support. Access arrangements such as rest breaks, smaller class sizes and exam support can be made available for young people who may require this.

### 3. Parent and carer support:

We have continued to invest in a holistic support for our students and have incorporated family and parent/carer support within our offer. We have developed resources and signpost parents and carers to available local and national resources. We also run a 6 week 'Surviving Teenagers' parent training programme at the school, with emotional health and wellbeing embedded within the training programme. Parents and carers have given feedback on how much they value the support provided by school.

### 4. Staff wellbeing and information sessions:

As part of our holistic integrated emotional health and wellbeing offer, we have a staff offer embedded within our curriculum. This includes after school training sessions to empower staff to have conversations with young people about their emotional health and wellbeing. The school has invested in Mental Health First Aiders offering peer support to staff. Staff have access to an external helpline for support with job related stress, and managing their own worries and anxieties. We also have mindfulness sessions available to staff to help support their emotional health and wellbeing.

## What have been some of the advantages of building a whole school emotional health and wellbeing offer?

**Julie Noble:** We have seen an increased partnership working with local services. Having a working knowledge of the other agencies offering help and support, and ways of linking in with them has helped to significantly improve our Getting Advice and Signposting offer. Also building a rapport with our local HYMs provider has enabled us to have pre-referral conversations, and put clear plans in place to help support young people and their families within school.

## How has the whole school emotional health and wellbeing offer affected students, staff, parents and carers?

Here is a sample of feedback we have received from staff:

“I was able to offer a young man a number of appointments, and I believe this stopped us from having to refer him to HYMs...”

“We have changed the way we work with local agencies - not *telling* young people to go to their GP for a referral to HYMs [as] we are able to ring HYMs for advice and directly refer young people if appropriate”

“Having pre-referral conversations with HYMs has been invaluable in knowing right steps to take”



## What have been some of the challenges you encountered when trying to build a whole school emotional health and wellbeing curriculum?

**Julie Noble:** I am the school Inclusion Officer and also the Mental Health Lead within the school. Mental health support is not always my primary role, and it is sometimes challenging to find the time to allocate our resources. At times there can be a role conflict, for example having to cover disciplinary aspects of school life such as detention, which may at times affect a therapeutic relationship. However, we are currently reviewing my daily activities to find ways to best balance my roles in order to try and combat some of these challenges.

We have a number of young people and families who choose not to engage with the support offered, we continue to monitor and minimise risk, whilst referring to appropriate services if required. Our wellbeing offer is an open door policy and young people and families know they can access support when and if they are ready.

## How does the school emotional health and wellbeing offer align with the [THRIVE Framework for system change](#) (Wolpert et al., 2019)?

Longdendale's whole school curriculum is aligned with a number of the THRIVE Framework needs based groupings:

### Thriving:

Longdendale emotional health and wellbeing curriculum aligns with the Thriving needs based grouping, by supporting young people and their families in maintaining positive emotional health and wellbeing through providing effective whole school prevention and promotion activities.

### Getting Advice and Signposting:

Longdendale emotional health and wellbeing curriculum is aligned with the Getting Advice and Signposting needs based grouping by supporting young people, families and staff to navigate services to support their needs. Supervision supports us to think holistically about the services family's might benefit from, providing signposting to apps, online resources, evidence based websites and specialist services when needed to support shared decision making.

### Getting Help:

In school, the delivery of evidence-based interventions would fall within the Getting Help needs based offer of the THRIVE Framework as it provides help with clear aims and outcomes. Outcomes informed practice is core to the delivery of the intervention with a range of goal based and outcome monitoring tools used to assess whether the aims are being achieved on an ongoing basis, and alternatives to be considered where appropriate. This helps build greater capacity in the wider children and young people's workforce regarding emotional health and wellbeing.

## Next steps

We are continuing to expand and reconfigure our emotional health and wellbeing curriculum. We are currently updating our resources, and our school environment to enhance our safe spaces. We are hoping to start introducing parents and careers to the language of the THRIVE Framework. We would also like to develop a wellbeing hub in school for young people, their families, and staff to access for emotional health support.



If you would like further information, please contact Julie Noble at [j.noble@lhs.aspireplus.org.uk](mailto:j.noble@lhs.aspireplus.org.uk).

Edited by the Greater Manchester i-THRIVE Programme Team and National i-THRIVE Programme Team.