

The Mental Health Champions Project

Thank you for enquiring about the Mental Health Champions (MHC) project. This document aims to give you more information about the project, including what we do, what is expected of schools, and how your school can sign up.

Background Information

The concept of the MHC project was originally conceived by a Bradford Educational Psychologist.

In 2014 the UK Government established the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce to transform the way child and adolescent mental health services were delivered nationally, by bringing together the potential of the web, schools, social care, the NHS, the voluntary sector, parents, children, and young people. A key aim of the taskforce was to establish ways to make it easier for CYP, parents & carers to access help and support.

In March 2015 the taskforce published its report and recommendations, "*Future in Mind: promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing*". Each local area created its own development plans based upon this guidance document. In Bradford, the local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) liaised with the Educational Psychology Team to build upon the foundations of the original MHC project.

The CCGs (i.e. Public Health) continue to subsidise the project, and to commission the Bradford Educational Psychology Team to deliver each project strand. The Local Authority urges all Bradford Schools to join the project in order to access high quality, evidence-based training, support and guidance to meet the needs of children and young people with lower level mental health and emotional well-being needs.

Project outline

To access the project, Schools are required to nominate a 'Champion'. Ideally, this person should be a member of staff who is able to affect some level of change within school (e.g. Senco or member of the senior leadership team) and/or someone who works closely with children and young people experiencing mental health or emotional well-being difficulties.

Champions are required to attend a minimum of 6 sessions (the equivalent of one half-day per half term) to attend our 'Network Meetings', where they will receive training and supervision regarding a broad range of topics relating to mental health. At each Network Meeting, Champions will also receive key information and updates from both local and national perspectives regarding a wide range of issues, such as strategic developments, policy developments, key initiatives and services, and additional ways for schools, parents and young people to access further support for mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Schools that wish their Champions to access other strands of the project will need to release their Champion for further sessions, as required. (Additional strands of the project are described in more detail in the sections below).

Covid Recovery and Return to Wellbeing for Education

In the academic year 2020-21 the project will be even more critical as it will be one of the Council's key sources of information on mental health and Covid recovery, and will be the main vehicle for disseminating the DfE guidance and training in this area, the "Wellbeing for Education Return" programme, which will be delivered via the Network Meetings.

There will also be a link, via individual supervision for Champions, to the soon-to-be-appointed Education Emotional Well-being Practitioners. The EEWPs will be a part of the Educational Psychology Team, and will be providing direct support in schools to children and young people experiencing significant difficulties.

Project strands

- Network Meetings (essential)

Network Meetings are a core aspect of the Mental Health Champions project. Each half term Champions are invited to attend the network meetings, which consist of training, group supervision, and dissemination of key information and communication relevant to schools and practitioners working with CYP with mental health or emotional well-being needs. Recent training topics have included: Anxiety; Bullying; Working with Parents; Emotionally-based School Avoidance; Healthy Relationships; Self Harm; and Challenging Behaviours.

Champions are only required to attend one network meeting per half term, however the meetings are held eight times over the course of four days, offering champions the choice of the morning or afternoon session within their geographical hub (i.e. North, South, East, West).

- Individual Supervision for Champions

Each month an Educational Psychologist will be available to talk to Champions on an individual basis regarding their practice in schools. There will be three slots per month, each slot lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Champions must be able to demonstrate that they have sought parental consent to discuss any young person with whom they work with an outside professional.

- Parent support groups

These groups are soon to be up and running, and specific plans are being developed in conjunction with other local organisations to maximise support and avoid duplication. It is envisaged that parents will be able to access information and training on topics similar to those delivered to Champions.

- Resources for assembly presentations

The Educational Psychology Team will create 2 to 3 presentations that Champions can use to deliver assemblies within their schools and settings. Presentations will be adapted to accommodate primary and secondary school needs.

Joining the project

To join the project, all schools need to do is nominate their Champion, then get in touch with the business support team for Educational Psychology at MHChampions@bradford.gov.uk and ask for the school to join the MHC project. You will need to give the name and contact details of the person nominated to be your Mental Health Champion.

Your Champion will be added to the email distribution list, and they will receive invitations to book onto events as well as half-termly newsletters. Key information will occasionally be sent via email to respond to pressing local matters or share time-sensitive information.

Key dates and times

Network meetings are held each half term. Each Champion is invited to attend a session within their geographical area (North, South, East and West).

This year, sessions will be on-line at least for the Autumn term, and this will be reviewed. (If we are able to return to face-to-face meetings, they will either be held in a council venue [e.g. Margaret McMillan Tower] or a local school).

Network Meeting weeks will be as follows:

1. w/c 12th Oct
2. w/c 30th Nov
3. w/c 25th Jan
4. w/c 22nd March
5. w/c 24th May
6. w/c 5th July

Dates and times for individual supervision sessions are:

1. September – Wens 30th pm: 1-1:45pm; 2-2:45pm; 3-3:45pm
2. October – Wens 14th am: 9-9:45am; 10-10:45am; 11-11:45am
3. November – Tues 10th pm: 1-1:45pm; 2-2:45pm; 3-3:45pm
4. December – Mon 7th am: 9-9:45am; 10-10:45am; 11-11:45am
5. January – Wens 13th pm: 1-1:45pm; 2-2:45pm; 3-3:45pm
6. February – Tues 9th am: 9-9:45am; 10-10:45am; 11-11:45am
7. March – Mon 8th pm: 1-1:45pm; 2-2:45pm; 3-3:45pm
8. April – Wens 7th am: 9-9:45am; 10-10:45am; 11-11:45am
9. May – Tues 4th pm: 1-1:45pm; 2-2:45pm; 3-3:45pm
10. June – Mon 7th am: 9-9:45am; 10-10:45am; 11-11:45am
11. July - Wens 7th pm: 1-1:45pm; 2-2:45pm; 3-3:45pm
12. August – Tues 3rd am: 9-9:45am; 10-10:45am; 11-11:45am

Mode of booking:

Champions are asked to book onto Network Meetings and to book supervision slots using the Skills for Bradford (S4B) website, which is administrated by the BMDC Business Support Team.

FAQs

- Who manages and delivers the project?

Although the project is fully funded by Health it is managed and delivered by Bradford Educational Psychology Team. Training is written and delivered by members of the Educational Psychology Team, and we also facilitate formal reflective supervision groups for MHCs.

- How are schools expected to fund this?

Our intention is that the cost to schools will be minimal, and limited to the time out for Champions to attend the training and supervision.

- Who is best suited for the role of Mental Health Champion?

The role is for people employed in Bradford Schools who have an interest in mental health. Ideally, this person should be a member of staff who is able to affect some level of change within school (e.g. Senco or member of the senior leadership team) and/or someone who works closely with children and young people experiencing mental health or emotional well-being difficulties.

- Are MHCs expected to deliver support and interventions in school?

Intervention delivery is not mandatory, but in an ideal world, the MHC would be a member of staff whose job role already includes this kind of work, and these Champions can access supervision from an EP regarding their practice.

MHCs will be given guidance at network meetings regarding the evidence bases and critical evaluations of resources and interventions. This information will help to inform SLTs in school in selecting effective resources with reliable evidence bases for other members of staff in school to use.

- How will the limited training enable the practitioner to be sufficiently trained to deal with mental health when specialists train for several years?

The training is supposed to give all staff skills for dealing with low level mental health concerns. The general idea is that school staff are already dealing with low level mental health and emotional wellbeing issues - this is just a way to feel more skilled and confident in doing so. The project is intended to be a source of useful information and free training to schools rather than being onerous.

- Is this role instead of a referral to CAMHS or counselling.

No. As in the above point, the aim is at a lower level of 'need'. The Champions will also receive training in where they can refer CYP on to, if they feel this is necessary. It is not an expectation that the Champions will be solely responsible for making such referrals, the intention is just to get that kind of information out to school staff to use in their usual working roles.

- What monitoring is required?

We ask schools to ensure that the Champions get some form of line-management/supervision from a member of the school's SLT, and as such this should not be too far removed from usual practices.

- Is the Champion expected to liaise with other agencies e.g. High Incidence Team.

No, unless the individual school defines that as a part of their MHC's wider role.

- Can we have more than one MHC?

Only if these people are sharing the role. Each school may only send one person per half term to network meetings and supervision as we do not have the capacity to double up. You may have more than one person sharing the role, but they would have to attend different meetings. The only exception to this would be for larger schools which are split-site, and this would need the prior agreement of the Project Manager.

- Can one MHC represent more than one school?

In theory yes, if the MHC is able to fully disseminate information to each school they represent. However, we do not feel schools using this arrangement would fully benefit from this model.

- Can other members of staff or other professionals participate in the project or attend the training?

Only if they are a member of school staff and are representing (i.e. attending in place of) the nominated MHC. Due to capacity, schools may not send more than person to any meeting or to a different meeting within the same half-term. Network meetings are not an open invitation to other professionals, even if they are sub-contracted or commissioned to work in a school. In some exceptional circumstances, guests may be invited to an event at the invitation/discretion of the project manager, but this would always need to be negotiated in advance.

- Who provides business support to the project?

Business support is provided by staff at Bradford Council who work alongside the Educational Psychology Team. (Please note, in previous years this role was fulfilled by Relate, but this organisation are no longer involved in the project)

- Is there a Young Champions project for pupils?

The organisation Relate, who were previously involved in the MHC project, began work in this area. However, this was never under the governance of the Educational Psychology Team. The Educational Psychology Team have no plans to develop such a strand to the project at the current time.