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The impact of Trauma informed practice on outcomes across a MAT

Professional Development Group

Introduction

This case study highlights the impact of a Whole School SEND (WSS) Professional Development (PD) group for a trust SEND leader and their team.

The trust, comprising 20 primary schools across Yorkshire and the Humber, serves communities with high deprivation and mobility, with 95% of schools exceeding national SEND averages. Analysis of SEN identification data enabled the trust to understand the needs of their pupils and recognise the need for a trust-wide training initiative. The trust hired an Educational Psychologist to support early identification and complex needs, introducing SEND surgeries, targeted training, and family meetings. SENCOs across the trust received training on trauma-informed practice and wanted to roll this out across all the schools in the trust. To support this process, Whole School SEND led a professional development group for headteachers and SENCOs. The aim of the group was to refine policies, enhance stakeholder engagement, and improve student outcomes.

Implementation

The Professional Development group included the headteacher and SENCO from each school in the MAT. The programme comprised five sessions: three two-hour online meetings and two in-person sessions (a full-day workshop and a half-day presentation of findings and impact).

The first online session introduced the trust's vision for trauma-informed practice, grounded in SEND review data. Subsequent sessions facilitated idea-sharing in online breakout rooms. During the full-day workshop, participants used the EEF implementation cycle to develop action plans for their schools. The final online session focused on preparing case studies, which were presented at the concluding in-person event.

The WSS RSL leading the PD group offered regular check-ins with each school to support implementation of their action plans and provide guidance around challenges faced.

 Increased attendance of learners with SEND

 Better outcomes for learners with SEND

 Earlier and more accurate identification of SEN

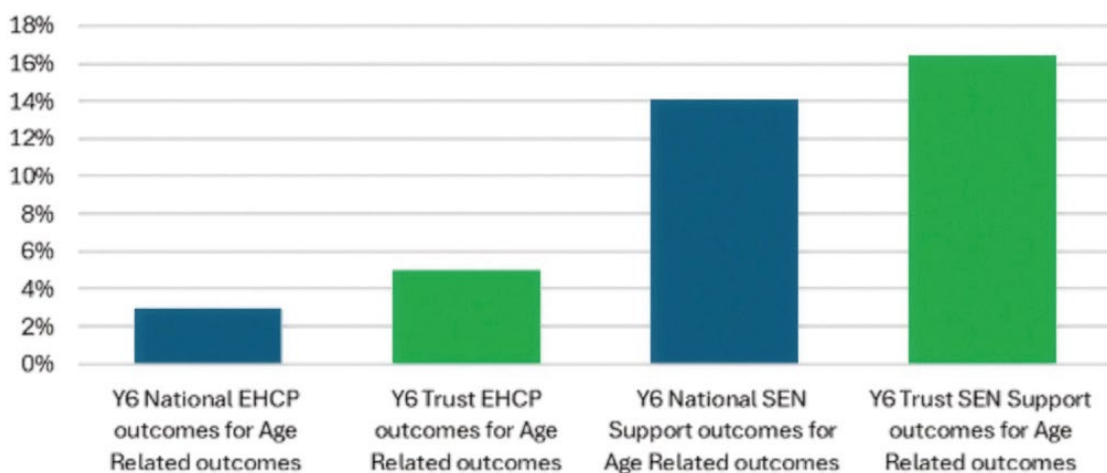
 Increased engagement of learners with SEND

Outcomes and Impact

The trust used data analysis from the KS2 SATs (2024) which have demonstrated:

- Significant improvement; 14 of the 17 schools either have higher than national average KS2 scores or have an improving attainment profile in reading and maths.
- 10 schools are either above the national average or have an improving attainment profile in writing and it has been identified as a priority for the trust.
- 13 of the schools are now above national averages in Y1 Phonics screening and have demonstrated a significant improvement.

Comparison of Trust Y6 Outcomes vs. National Outcomes (EHCP & SEND Support)



To support the rise in complex needs - including SEMH and attendance - the schools met the challenge to support and engage learners across their settings with a systematic approach, blending therapeutic work with tailored curriculum plans.

Using the data from Rotherham LA, Rotherham data saw a drop from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 of 6.75% in suspensions and 8.3% in exclusions. The trust in this time has seen a fall of 25% in suspensions and 71.4% in exclusions. This reflects a significant drop in learners reaching crisis points across the trust's schools.

2021-22 (18 Schools)		2022-23 (18 Schools)		2023-24 (18 Schools)		2024-25 (20 Schools)	
Number of Suspensions	Number of Schools	Number of Suspensions	Number of Schools	Number of Suspensions	Number of Schools	Number of Suspensions	Number of Schools
64	12	53	13	48	11	4	3
Number of Exclusions	Number of Schools	Number of Exclusions	Number of Schools	Number of Exclusions	Number of Schools	Number of Exclusions	Number of Schools
7	5	2	2	2	2	0	0

Outcomes and Impact (continued)

Schools have reflected and spent time scrutinising policies and practice which in turn has had a significant impact on relationships with all stakeholders resulting in a positive impact on attendance, suspensions and permanent exclusions. The trust's vision is to become a Trauma Informed Practice led trust which will continue to have a significant impact on the understanding and developing knowledge around SEND to ensure true inclusive practice.

The impact of the Educational Psychologist is continuing to develop and deepen knowledge and understanding around the highest areas of need. In turn, this enables a quicker response to individual learners and families.

As a result of participating in the PD group, one setting has developed the skills and confidence to create a 'hub model' to support the rise in complex needs. In addition to enabling a more appropriate provision and environment for the targeted pupils, other pupils have opportunities to join therapeutic interventions where appropriate. This has improved their ability to access learning in their mainstream classes.

The MAT have been recognised for their work around SEND by becoming the first mainstream trustee for the Equals charity and developing the bespoke curriculum pathways equals.co.uk

Next Steps

- Next professional development day will have a focus on the 'sustain' section of the EEF implementation cycle.
- All schools will review where they are on the trust's Trauma Informed Framework and will either create or add to a new action plan.
- In September 2024 one school employed a Speech and Language Therapist to pilot a different way of working across school to try and support the rising needs around SLCN. This is already having an impact as whole school, class, group and individual training has been identified and is being delivered. If successful it will be rolled out across all trust schools from September 2025.

Key Learning

- The key to success in sustained engagement was the support and investment of the core leadership team with the passion and drive of the CEO.
- The WSS Professional Development group has had a significant impact on schools at an individual school level but also across the trust. Schools network, share good practice and reflect which is something they are extremely proud of and will be continuing.
- It was identified by the core team that three of the schools were not in the position to actively engage in this priority due to a range of factors, but they were still encouraged to be part of the group in preparation for when they are ready.
- Having the time to meet enabled them as a group to identify possible barriers and collaborate to find solutions. This supported the feeling that they were all in this together, no one was on their own and the power of networking and sharing experiences was invaluable.