

North Yorkshire Virtual School Attachment & Trauma Aware Schools Project: developing trauma responsive practice

Simplified Summary 2021 provided by Senior Practitioner Educational Psychologists Marianne Doonan and Dr Clare Stephens

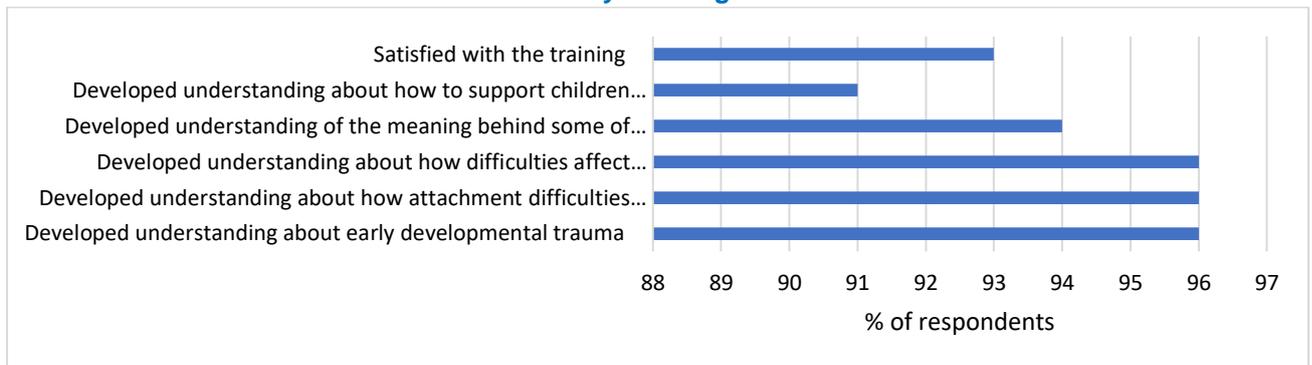
Introduction

The core purpose of North Yorkshire Virtual School's Attachment and Trauma Aware Schools Project is to support schools to work on development of their specific trauma responsive practice both systemically and individually. Following full school training in Developmental Trauma and Emotion Coaching, schools are supported to embed an aspect of practice using either Emotion Coaching or Circle of Adults. An audit is used to support planning and development. Schools are encouraged to develop Relational Behaviour Policies.

Aims of Attachment Trauma and Recovery Training

1. To increase awareness of Attachment, ACEs and Developmental Trauma
2. To increase understanding of the impact of early trauma experiences on development, behaviour and learning
3. To help adults explore approaches to support children with these difficulties

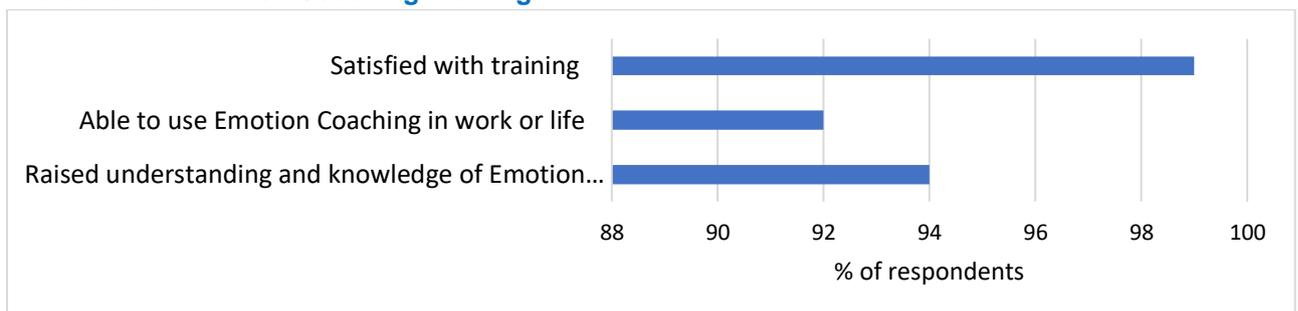
Evaluation of Attachment Trauma and Recovery Training¹



Aims of Emotion Coaching Trainings

To increase participant understanding and knowledge of Emotion Coaching

Evaluation of Emotion Coaching Training²



Aims of Emotion Coaching Champions Action Research

1. To develop adult confidence in practice, specifically in the areas of Emotion Coaching

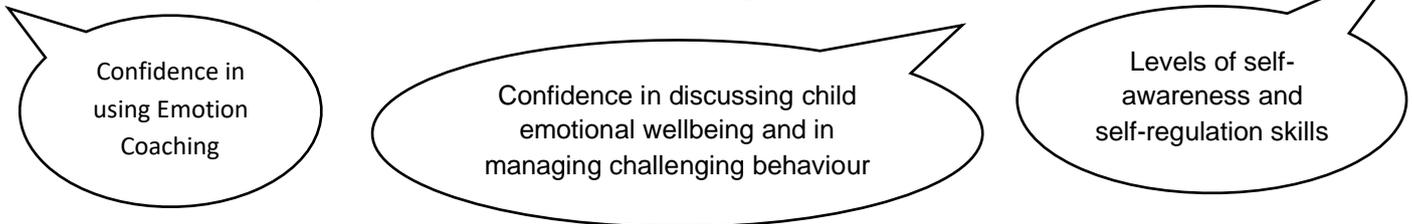
¹ As of June 2019, 38 schools (24 primary, 9 secondary, 2 special, 3 PRUs) with 984 participants (518 primary schools, 305 from secondary schools, 117 from special schools and 44 from PRUs) completed Attachment, Trauma and Recovery CPD evaluation form

² As of March 2020, 709 participants (403 from primary schools, 181 from secondary schools, 72 from special schools, 47 from PRUs and 6 from the Virtual School) completed Emotion Coaching training evaluation questionnaires.

2. To promote adult self-awareness and self-regulation
3. To increase adult confidence in discussing child emotional wellbeing
4. To increase adult confidence in dealing with and understanding the meaning behind challenging behaviour
5. To contribute to the evidence base

Evaluation of Emotion Coaching Action Research³

Emotion Coaching Champions reported statistically significant increases in:



- **Over 93%** of Champions felt that Emotion Coaching had a positive impact on their professional practice⁴
- **75%** reported a positive impact on child behaviour⁴.

Staff reported the following ideas about Emotion Coaching⁵



Needs to be a 'whole school' approach



Being willing to make mistakes



Self-reflection is essential



Improves ability to stay socially connected when under stress



Builds adult confidence and trust in themselves



Unlocks adult emotional awareness



Positive impact on child self-understanding, self-regulation & well-being



Process provides psychological containment



Emotional well-being of the adult and self-care is important



Impact at individual, interpersonal and system levels



Builds stronger relationships

Some challenges identified include:



Time, balancing competing demands



Staffing ratios



Tight budgets



Physical space

³ As of March 2020, 117 participants (14 primary, 2 special and 2 PRUs) completed action research looking at the impact of Emotion Coaching on professional practice. Following training, three coaching (Champion) sessions were delivered by a Virtual School EP to groups within each school. Questionnaires were used across three time periods, over an average of 16 weeks.

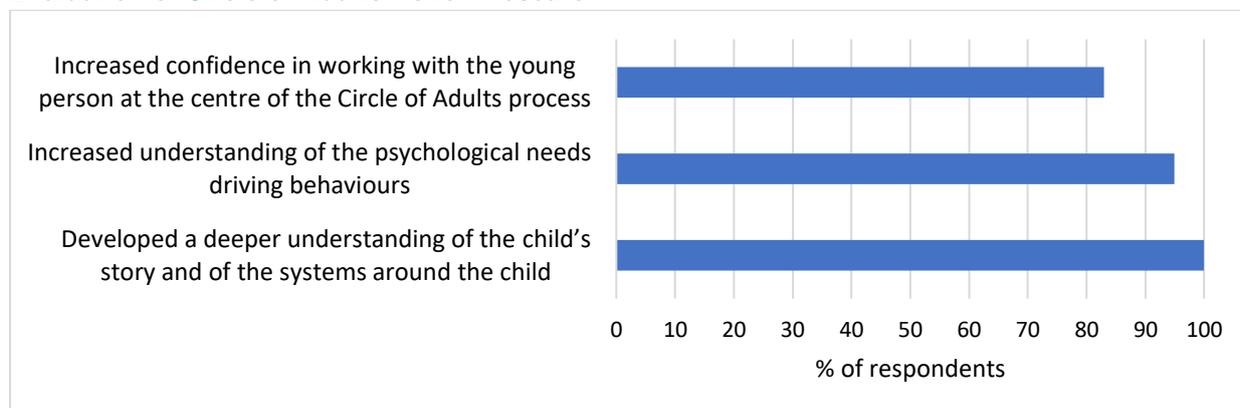
⁴ 128 participants (94 from primary and 34 from Special schools) completed Emotion Coaching Exit Questionnaire

⁵ Open questions within the Emotion Coaching Exit Questionnaire were analysed to identify benefits for staff, relationships and pupils. Use was made of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to gain a richer picture from the data

Aims of Circle of Adults Action Research

1. To facilitate deeper understanding of the child's story and of the systems around the child
2. To increase a deeper understanding of presenting behaviours in the context of unmet Psychological needs
3. To increase the confidence of participants in working with the young person

Evaluation of Circle of Adults Action Research⁶



Staff reported the following ideas about the Circle of Adults approach⁷

-  Helps moving forward in complex cases
-  Making connections between past and present in the child's story
-  Stepping into the shoes of the child
-  Feeling safe in the session supports collaboration
-  Psychological containment from the approach
-  Building a shared understanding
-  Seeing the child differently

-  Changes in practice
 -  Deeper understanding can influence system change
- Some challenges identified include:**
-  Getting the time for staff to attend the circle meeting
 -  Money to release staff
 -  Getting the right people to attend the meeting is critical to success
 -  Skill of the facilitator is key

⁶ By March 2020, 85 participants completed the Circle of Adults evaluation questionnaire. Data is based on complete sets of 12 Circle of Adults action research sessions in four secondary schools.

⁷ The qualitative aspect of the evaluation questionnaires and exit questionnaires were coded as one data set using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Emerging themes arising in qualitative feedback Circle of Adults exit and evaluation questionnaires are combined into one data set.

Conclusion

Evidence suggests that the North Yorkshire Attachment / Trauma aware schools project offered to schools is highly effective for developing staff understanding of early developmental trauma and developing understanding and knowledge of Emotion Coaching. Both the Emotion Coaching and Circle of Adults action research has proved highly effective in supporting schools to begin to embed an aspect of practice with deeper understanding. Both Emotion Coaching and Circle of Adults enhance staff reflective processes regarding both intrapersonal and interpersonal development. Evidence also suggests that this can provide psychologically containing processes, which can support staff and student wellbeing. Evidence suggests that this may also contribute to staff self-efficacy. Emotion coaching when used across the school over time becomes a way of communicating and can support positive relationship development, hence contributing to positive school ethos. The value system of both approaches are based on empowerment and work best when they align with the meta-emotional philosophy of the adult and SMT. Both approaches can operate at many levels systemically, providing ecologically embedded interventions.

[Hyperlink to Executive Summary needs to go in here](#)

Glossary of terms

Attachment Aware Schools Project

An Attachment aware Schools Programme was developed in partnership between Bath Spa University, Bath and NE Somerset Council and the National College for Teaching and Leadership (2016). This research was premised on the basis that 'an attachment-informed approach for all professionals working with children, including those within the universal services, offers the best prospect for effective early intervention for children, whatever their age or family situation' (Furnivall et al., 2012). The Rees centre was involved in evaluating a number of projects (Rose et.al, 2016, Sebba et.al., 2018, Kelly, P. et.al., 2020). A number of local authorities now carry out their own version of the project. The emphasis currently is on a broader term of trauma awareness and responsiveness, which incorporates attachment linking in with the latest Neuroscience.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), such as trauma and loss can negatively affect children and young people's (CYP) emotional regulation, ability to form social relationships and make good academic progress (Cook et al., 2017; Currie & Spatz-Widom, 2010, DfE, 2019, Sebba et al., 2018). Longitudinal research by Kaiser et.al., in the USA later replicated by Ford, et.al., (2016) by John Moores University Liverpool demonstrated the health, emotional and social impact of ACEs can last across a lifespan.

Circle of Adults

Circle of Adults aims to support adults in forming a deeper, richer understanding of the underlying issues, which may be triggering and maintaining difficult behaviours. The approach has its roots in Psychodynamics. The emotion, which a child can evoke in an adult, is openly explored and normalised. Adults gain increased confidence in managing pupils with challenging behaviours within mainstream settings. This allows the emergence of rich, and wider ranging practical strategies to effectively impact behaviour, a deeper understanding of inclusion of challenging pupils and opportunities to reflect on professional practice (Newton, C. et.al., 1995, Stockley, S. 2003, Turner et.al., J 2020) within a structured forum (Stockley, S., 2006).

Emotion Coaching

Emotion Coaching is an evidence based high guidance, high empathy universal approach developed to support young people to increase self-awareness and self-regulation skills. It works with the anatomy and physiology of brains and the body to support the development of emotional regulation helping children to understand the different emotions they experience, why they occur and how to handle them. From the original research by Gottman J. et.al., (1996) it was found that emotion coached children: Achieve more academically in school, are more popular, have fewer behavioural problems, have fewer infectious illnesses, are more emotionally stable and are more resilient. (Gus, L., et.al., 2015, Gus, L., et.al., 2016, Gilbert ,C.L., et.al., 2018, Rose, J. et.al., 2019).

The Alex Timpson Attachment and Trauma Awareness in Schools Programme

Building on the earlier Attachment Aware research the Alex Timpson project is a 5-year research programme, working nationally with schools to evaluate use of training and development in schools in this area. Schools receive training in attachment and trauma organised through the local virtual school or educational psychology service. This is followed by detailed evaluation follow up to explore the impact of whole school attachment and trauma training on the experiences of and outcomes for vulnerable young people.

Trauma

Bruce Perry notes that there are many definitions of trauma. Here we will use the definition by Margot Sunderland (2019), 'Trauma is not an event itself, but an emotional response to an overwhelmingly painful and stressful event/s where there was no one there to help you with what was happening at the time'. It is the alteration of the core regulatory networks, which provide the most significant impact of trauma. It is our history of connectedness and not adversity which provides a better predictor of our health (Perry, B. 2020)

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