

TITLE OF REPORT: Emotional and Mental Health Support Worker – Interim Report

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Forum on the appointment, induction and any early impact of the Mental and Emotional Health Support worker (MEHSW) funded by Forum.

Background

2. Forum agreed to support a matched funding bid for two such workers to operate across Gateshead schools and within the Behaviour Support Service. The bid was unsuccessful but Schools Forum agreed to continue with the funding for one post.

Progress

3. Recruitment started just before the Easter holidays 2016 using an agency (for which there was no fee). The background of the field of 10 applicants varied considerably (some had applied for more than one of the posts we advertised at that time).
4. Seven candidates were interviewed and most were less "robust" or experienced than their applications suggested; an initial offer was made to a male candidate with mentoring and support experience with long term mentally ill patients moving from secure NHS care. This offer wasn't accepted.
5. A second round of interviewing took place and an appointment was made. The successful applicant is a recent graduate from a social work degree with experience of working with young people with poor mental health through the Princes' Trust and other organisations. Their induction took place later than two other support posts in the Service but was managed in time for the last week of the summer term.
6. Pastoral Deputies were told that support could be sought for students in secondary schools and criteria would be based on those used for referrals to the Emotional Wellbeing Team (i.e. students suffering from persistent low mood, the effects of bullying, indications of mild to moderate continuing distress rather than severe clinical-type issues).
7. The MEHSW contributed to running the summer holiday programme for BSS students and established working relationships with existing pupils.
8. The number of students being referred into BSS and the complexity of their needs has meant the MEHSW "in-house" caseload has been significant, leaving little time to support students still in mainstream schools. This is the case for all of our workers. Commissioned by the Council for 103 places, we are currently working with 170 students, 163 of whom are placed with BSS.

9. The MEHSW has made a significant contribution to engaging more students within the centre at Heworth Hall – more KS3 students attend well rather than remain on home tuition, and fewer students attend but fail to stay engaged in learning.
10. A case study: a Year 9 student who initially attended Emmanuel College but after concerns due to attendance and ongoing anxiety, moved to Cardinal Hume. His anxieties heightened and he appeared very low in mood. On referral his attendance was 46.4%. The MEHSW has worked extensively with this family to allay the fears and worries of both child and mother about being separated from each other. Attendance at Heworth hall is 88.7%.

A Further update for Forum will be made later in the academic year.

Proposal

11. It is proposed that Schools Forum notes the contents of the report and the positive impact the MEHSW has had within the Behaviour Support Service.

Recommendations

12. That Schools Forum notes the report and that further progress report will be brought later in the academic year.

For the following reasons:

To keep Schools Forum informed of the impact of the Schools Forum supported MEHSW.

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