

SPECIAL EDUCATION  
SUPPORT SERVICE  
*building on ability*

# Promoting Positive Mental Health in Deaf Students

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# Irish Context



Government Policy - Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures; the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People [2014 – 2020]

Lack of mental health services for deaf children

Newly formed Multidisciplinary team in Deafhear

# School Context: Mid West School for the Deaf Limerick



## Vicky's story:

- Mental health problems became apparent at 12 years old
- Referral to National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS)
- Cycle of re-referrals between services – CAMHS, Disability Services and NEPS
- Vicky's mental health was deteriorating rapidly



# Where To Next?

- Work with Special Education Support Service (SESS)
- Application for funding for support from outside agencies
- Secured funding to develop a programme of work with National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)
- Work with Martin Brown – Training Officer (NDCS)

# Phase 1



## Development of seminar : 'Social and Emotional Impact of Deafness'

**Aim:** To explore the social and emotional issues that deaf children and young people may have

### **Learning outcomes:**

1. To have an understanding of the social and emotional impact of deafness
2. To be able to identify ways to support a deaf child's emotional wellbeing

# Content Part One



- What is mental Health?
- What is emotional health and wellbeing?
- Incidence of poor mental health in deaf children
- Contributing factors to mental health and wellbeing
- Theory of Mind
- What is good emotional health and wellbeing in Deaf children?
- Impact of poor mental health in deaf children
- Difficulties for assessments
- External factors which can impact emotional health and wellbeing
- What supports are available nationally
- Development of action plan with short, medium and long term goals

# Feedback



Extremely positive – 87% excellent

- Very interesting with lots of food for thought
- Very insightful – made a serious subject light and interesting
- Very good ideas presented for future work
- The seminar was thought provoking – we have a long way to go for service provision
- There is a need for this training to be rolled out to all schools

# Healthy Minds – Part 2



- 1. What is a healthy mind and why is it important?**
2. Developing good emotional well-being
- 3. Support mechanisms and networks**
4. Identity – who am I?
- 5. Owning and managing deafness**
6. I'm Ok being deaf ? Feeling good

[www.ndcs.org.uk](http://www.ndcs.org.uk)



## Phase 2



### Introduction to Deafness – SESS seminar

#### **Key Messages:**

1. Delays in the deaf child's social and emotional development are preventable
2. Establishing healthy social and emotional development is a critical foundation for life success

# Social and Emotional Development Risk Factors



- Early Identification
- Parent-Child Communication
- Establishing a positive early relationship between mother and infant
- Language Acquisition – irrespective of modality
- Development of Theory of Mind
- Incidental learning
- Language of emotions and expression
- Development of self-esteem and self-worth



I need to  
look after

My  
mind

My  
body



# A Deaf Child with Good Emotional Health and Well-Being



- Feels good about themselves
- Positive relationships
- Resilient – has bounce back ability
- Language and communication skills to express and understand emotions
- Acknowledges their deafness
- Confident in dealing with challenges
- Never says sorry for being deaf

# Feedback



- Should be a necessary requirement for all teachers to attend this course
- Course should be delivered as part of the induction of all newly qualified teachers
- It changes how I see specific students and the difficulties they have
- An eye opening session

**Success!**



## Phase 3

Rollout of Social and Emotional Impact of  
Deafness in Holy Family school for the Deaf,  
Dublin

Co-Presented by Maria Allen, SESS and Martin  
Brown, NDCS

Day 2 – Healthy Minds Training

# Feedback



A course for all?

Opportunities for ToD to:

- Refresh training
- Reflect on practice
- Share experiences
- Focus on Mental Health

***Healthy Minds development of strategies from day 1***

# Short Term Goals



- Focus on teaching the language of emotion and expression
- Assess for Theory of Mind
- Motivate the students to get involved in new activities
- Encourage students to talk to somebody if they are upset
- Circle time for teenagers – talking and sharing with each other



# Medium Term Goals



- Inviting Deaf role models into the school
- Use more visuals around the school in terms of expected behaviours, feelings etc.
- Introduce strategies into the SPHE curriculum
- Involve students in their IEPs

# Long Term Goals



- Develop a policy to strengthen a whole school approach to Mental Health
- Develop appropriate courses based on the abilities of the students
- Work closely with the Multi-Disciplinary teams from Deafhear
- Don't give up – keep trying!



## Phase 4

### Implementing strategies – How is it working in the classroom?

I am far more aware of building resilience in children in all my lessons

I place greater emphasis on identity and ownership of their deafness

We build self-esteem and confidence by focusing on their efforts made – praising the work not the student

# Implementing Strategies – How is it working in the classroom?



I have seen the student's empathy for their peers increase – I link this directly to their increased knowledge of the language of emotions

I use social stories and role-play to enhance class discussions when issues arise

I have adapted the strategies to meet the needs of students with comorbidities such as ASD, MGLD, ADHD

I have embraced the importance of incidental learning by allowing flexibility within my timetable to deal with issues as they arise.

# Phase 5



Extend rollout to staff of Special Classes for deaf children throughout the country

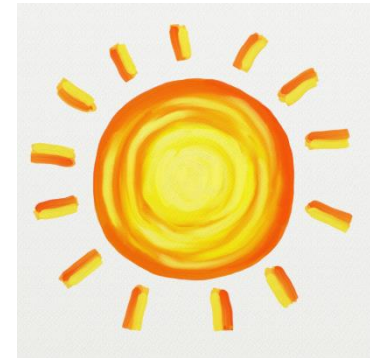
Maintain links with NDCS for further training

# The Future Looks Bright



“We believe our goal to improve positive mental health is achievable with the experiences, skills and willingness of staff, deaf children’s emotional health and wellbeing will be further supported”

Martin Brown NDCS  
Maria Allen SESS



Thank You