



Because growing
up can be hard



“We can see them grow”: Celebrating a year-long partnership between North Tyneside Learning Trust and Children North East

Children North East and North Tyneside Learning Trust are celebrating the successful delivery of the BU wellbeing support programme to hundreds of pupils within the Trust’s partnership schools.

Research by the charity Young Minds revealed the extent of the impact of the pandemic lockdowns on young people’s mental health, finding that 83% of them felt it had made their mental health worse. Schools were on the frontline of navigating these challenges, even if it was from behind a screen. For many young people school was the only engagement they had during the lockdown outside of their family.

North Tyneside Learning Trust was motivated to act, partnering with Children North East to deliver a special version of our BU programme which supports young people to develop skills for social and emotional wellbeing.

Pupils from 16 schools were given the chance to undertake a bespoke version of our BU course, tailored to the challenges young people faced during and as a result of lockdown. Through creative activities and positive discussions, the programme supported children and young people to build resilience and develop positive techniques to manage their mental health. It covered diverse subjects that impact the wellbeing of young people, from friendship, self-image, communicating feelings and coping techniques.

119 students took part in courses delivered by the Children North East team, then Partnership staff were trained to deliver the programme, giving more students the chance to take part and extending the access to support for those who already had. Adapting to the challenges of lockdowns both face-to-face and remote versions of the course were offered to schools.

Staff from the schools have shared that BU sessions made a significant impact on many of the young people and saw them using what they had learned in practice, such as coping techniques during times of stress. Some said it was the first time they had seen a session delivered on mental rather than physical health, with one teacher happily surprised to see the quieter male students they had expected to shy away from the topic embrace it and speak freely about some of their experiences.



Gary Munday, Pastoral Guidance Officer at Monkseaton Middle School explains, “The children have responded well to the sessions, and we can see them grow into it as the weeks build up. The sessions have given the students the skills, confidence, and resilience to support them to achieve.”

One thing which shone through the feedback was the positive reflections of the pupils, with one even calling it “absolutely magnificent”. Many of the stories shared by the staff supporting the project fitted into three themes; it was helping the young people cope better, groups have developed strong friendships and they were enjoying the time spent exploring their emotions. Or, as one young participant explained, “...sharing feelings cos sometimes you don’t like to talk about them”. One pupil mentioned in their feedback that it had been a really important outlet to speak about their feelings as their Family Worker was not visiting during the lockdown.

Schools reported the programme had sometimes made a wider impact within their pastoral care. For example, one found that the materials could be used on an individual level with students being supported through difficulties, such as when a disclosure had been made.

Katrina Moffat, Project Manager at the North Tyneside Learning Trust shares how the programme created value for pupils, “The impact of Covid-19 on the young people in our schools reached beyond the classroom and it was important for North Tyneside Learning Trust to support the mental health of our young people. Through working with Children North East, we have been able to provide groups of young people with access to the BU programme and also provide training for staff in schools allowing them to continue to provide support. We’re really pleased to have been able to work with CNE and support North Tyneside Learning Trust schools in this important area.”

The 16 schools that took part were Valley Gardens Middle School, Denbigh Primary School, Hazelwood Community Primary School, Norham High School, Wallsend Jubilee Primary School, Benton Dene School, Monkseaton Middle School, Southlands School, Amberely Primary School, Percy Main Primary School, Richardson Dees Primary School, Westmoor Primary School, Wellfield Middle School, Rockcliffe First School, Ivy Road Primary School and Carville Primary School.

For more information on the BU Programme and other work by Children North East supporting the wellbeing and mental health of students, contact Paula Hamilton at paula.hamilton@children-ne.org.uk.