



## Promoting Positive Relationships Framework and Guidance

Updated November 2021

This guidance provides an overview of the current policy and legislative environment providing the rationale for the development of positive relationships in schools, early years' establishments and wider children's services. It outlines the framework within which we operate in Highland and explains many aspects of child development that are critical to the understanding of the development of positive relationships.

### Introduction

National frameworks supporting education and children's services are consistent in their promotion of positive relationships being central to creating inclusive practices and the wellbeing and achievement of children and young people.

The *National Improvement Framework* sets out clear priorities to deliver excellence and equity and outlines a number of key drivers for improvement that also support inclusive practice ie authoritative and distributive leadership, the engagement of pupils and their parents/carers in the education process and the promotion of differentiated and developmentally sensitive approaches to curricular planning and delivery.

The General Teaching Council for Scotland's *National Standards for Teachers* expects all staff to be proactive in promoting positive relationships and behaviour in the classroom, playground and across the wider school community. It states that all practitioners have a responsibility for:

- Establishing open, positive, supporting relationships across the community, where children and young people will feel that they are listened to, and where they feel secure in their ability to discuss sensitive aspects of their lives;
- Promoting a climate in which children and young people feel safe and secure;
- Modelling behaviour which promotes health and wellbeing;
- Using learning and teaching methodologies which promote effective learning;
- Being sensitive and responsive to the wellbeing of each child and young person.

Children's wellbeing is at the heart of *Getting it Right for Every Child*, providing a focus on the wellbeing indicators to prevent or reduce the impact of adversity. The assessment and planning for children that forms part of the *National Practice Model* promotes early intervention and preventative strategies, as well as a focus on targeted support and also includes a commitment to developing positive learning environments at a universal level, underpinned by children's rights. A culture where children and young people feel included, respected, safe and secure and where their achievements and contributions are valued and celebrated is essential to the development of good relationships.

Where schools have attainment that is higher than expected for their catchment area, they also demonstrate positive relationships throughout the school community, and children and young people are involved meaningfully in decisions which affect them at all levels of the school. Research into authoritative school 'climate' indicates a balance between high expectations and structure on one hand, and warmth and support on the other. This authoritative 'climate' has been cited as reducing student dropout rates, improving attainment and leading to less bullying and victimisation in schools.

## Guiding Principles

These guidelines are rooted in a philosophical framework which recognises that:-

- The overarching aim is to support whole school communities, learning establishments and early years' settings, and their partners, to keep **all** learners fully included, engaged and involved in their development and education, wherever this takes place; and to improve outcomes for all vulnerable learners.
- A shared approach of agencies working together, and responding to the needs of learners early and effectively, in line with the principles within the Children and Young People's Act (2014), provides a model for best practice. In Highland, this is supported by the Lead Agency approach and the Highland Practice Model.
- Learning and teaching is most effective in environments where the ethos is one of mutual respect and where positive relationships are encouraged.
- Schools and early years' settings are most effective when understanding behaviour, building positive relationships and reducing the effects of adversity, are seen as key issues to consider and address, alongside the focus on curriculum development.
- Children/young people and staff have a right to learn and develop without having their learning disrupted.
- Children/young people have a right to feel safe – physically and psychologically.
- Staff have the right to teach and provide support in an environment which is not subject to disruption and aggression.
- Children/young people, parents/carers & staff all have a share in the responsibility to promote and maintain positive behaviour and positive relationships.
- All provision should have in place effective policies on building positive relationships and maintaining positive behaviour, which are developed in consultation with children/young people, parents/carers, and staff. They should be supported by all stakeholders in the school community and applied consistently.

**This guidance sits within the context of a strategic framework on promoting positive relationships, supported by the following documents:**

The Support for Learners Policy Framework (2017)

[http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/143/support\\_for\\_learners\\_policy\\_framework](http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/143/support_for_learners_policy_framework)

The Highland Practice Model – Delivering Additional Support for Learning (2016)

[http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/230/highland\\_practice\\_model\\_-\\_delivering\\_additional\\_support\\_for\\_learners](http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/230/highland_practice_model_-_delivering_additional_support_for_learners)

IEI Management of Exclusions in Schools ((2017))

[http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/212/exclusion\\_policy](http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/212/exclusion_policy)

The Use of Physical Interventions in Educational Establishments (2017)

[http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/12443/the\\_use\\_of\\_physical\\_intervention\\_in\\_educational\\_establishments\\_policy](http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/12443/the_use_of_physical_intervention_in_educational_establishments_policy)

Pupils not in full time education - Guidance for Schools (2015)

[http://www.highland.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/17934/guidance\\_on\\_pupils\\_not\\_in\\_full\\_time\\_education.pdf](http://www.highland.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/17934/guidance_on_pupils_not_in_full_time_education.pdf)

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## 1. Behaviour and the development of practice in Highland

Within the past 50 years, our knowledge of child development, motivation and theories of learning have matured significantly and have informed educational practices across Scotland. In the mid 1970s, it was considered acceptable to use corporal punishment to discipline children and young people and a system of behaviour management was prevalent across Scotland, based on controlling by fear.

As the ability to discipline children in this way was removed, with 'the banning of the belt', a different focus emerged, based on a more behavioural approach, managing children through sanctions and punishments. Stickers, reward charts, Golden Time, punishment exercises, the withdrawal of playtimes and the use of 'Time Out' rooms are all features of this era, with programmes and systems put in place to 'manage' behaviour in the classroom. These programmes all relied on a simple system of rewarding 'good' behaviour and punishing 'bad' behaviour, but they didn't take into account the complexities of human perception or an understanding of behaviour as communication. Individuals are affected and are motivated by different things and behave in different ways as a result. Simple behavioural approaches therefore have limited success because they don't take into account individual experiences, perceptions or needs. They also generally produce the same response for similar actions, regardless of the root cause of the behaviour. They therefore will at times discriminate against some children and young people with additional support needs and/or may make the situation worse for some by generating feelings of shame.

Our current thinking in children's services has been more widely shaped by an understanding of child psychology, child development and systems thinking, allowing the approaches we take within the classroom and in wider society to be more sophisticated and thoughtful. We now have a greater awareness of the importance of early development on the long term outcomes for individuals. There is a greater understanding of the impact of the behaviour of adults on that of children and young people. There is also a greater acceptance of a rights based approach and an understanding of the power differentials in any work with vulnerable groups, including children and young people. In drawing together relevant research and educational thinking, we now know that taking a more relationship-based approach, with a focus on self-regulation and co-regulation, is more effective in creating calm and respectful early years settings, classrooms and schools, and provides a hope that this will in turn create more respectful and responsible citizens for the future.

The drive towards a different approach to social and educational policy in Highland has been supported by a change in practice from traditional delivery models of education, social care and health, working separately in 'silos', only coming together where necessary in relation to individual children, to a more integrated approach to the delivery of children's services through a Lead Agency Model.

This integrated approach across different disciplines, has been supported by three things:

1. The integrated approach to assessing, planning for and supporting children in what has been established as the Highland Practice Model;
2. Changes in curriculum planning and delivery, through the Curriculum for Excellence; and
3. Changes brought about by key legislation to create an entitlement model for the education and support of children and young people with a range of additional support needs and protected characteristics.

The key “systemic” changes have been underpinned by the universal use of the concept of SHANARRI wellbeing indicators (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Responsible, Respected and Included) to provide the foundation to emotional wellbeing, active participation and achievement.

Education is a social endeavour. Children who are prosocial tend to have higher levels of attainment and achievement than less prosocial children. Research shows us that if our children and young people have high levels of physical and emotional wellbeing, they will have the resilience to both cope well with adversity and to achieve to the best of their ability.

The impact of having such an outlook has been found to be a protective factor from early years to secondary school and from low-risk to high-risk populations. The negative impact of not having the protection of the above outlook however, is thought to be greatest for children in areas of multiple deprivation.

We also aspire for our children and young people to be able to regulate their own emotions and seek support appropriately from others. When children can manage their own emotions well, known as the ability to *self-regulate*, they can:

- Accept challenges at school
- Raise academic achievement
- Manage anxiety in order that it does not interfere with learning.

This guidance draws on best practice and research to support staff in early years' settings and schools to understand and support distressed children, rather than taking a punitive approach that will often be shaming or re-traumatising. Increasingly the evidence points to the importance of school connectedness and school relationships in terms of long term positive outcomes for pupils and where the focus is on building positive relationships and supporting pupils, academic and social outcomes for all children and staff are enhanced (Learner and Kruger 1997, Bergin and Bergin 2009).

Universal approaches in Highland are underpinned by an ethos of restorative practice, being solution oriented and emotionally literate. This is supported by programmes such as Resilient Kids, Roots of Empathy, Rights Respecting Schools,

Nurture for All, Words Up, Emerging Literacy etc. These approaches have been implemented at key stages, from first booking in maternity services, through to transition from school to post-school. Such programmes support attuned relationships and stress buffering for all children and young people and support the universal services to identify where a more targeted approach may be required.

Targeted supports from specialist services, are complimented by programmes such as emotional coaching, parenting support, Growing2gether, Seasons4growth, nurture bases etc that can be offered to support children, young people and their families, where greater levels of support and more targeted interventions are required to address individual needs.

Over the past 10 years we have also increased the knowledge and understanding of staff through the delivery of an 8 day taught course in Emotional Literacy, which is GTCS and SCEL accredited and is offered to staff across children's services. This has complemented shorter, more regular training inputs for staff on embedding the essential principles of building positive relationships, understanding early and teenage brain development, building resilience through the use of the resilience matrix, understanding the effects of adverse childhood experiences and the impact of trauma, neglect and substance use on classroom behaviour etc.

To ensure consistency of the key messages for all staff in children's services, these are included in training for health visitors, early years practitioners and staff in both primary and secondary schools.

## 2. Our approach

The framework for building positive relationships in Highland is underpinned by 6 key, inter-related approaches that have a sound research base and have been central to the work we have been undertaking for the past decade. Evidence remains strong that these overarching whole system approaches are essential to support positive relationships within the context of a school or early years setting.

Emotional  
Literacy

Restorative  
Practices

Solution  
Oriented

Nurturing  
Approach

Building  
Resilience

Children's  
Rights

### Emotional Literacy

#### Summary

Emotional Literacy is widely seen as a set of skills and abilities to '...recognise, understand, handle and appropriately express emotions.' (Park and Tew (2009), a set of skills that are essential for the development of positive relationships and personal growth in each one of us. Without emotional self-awareness and self-management skills, learning and general development will suffer. Without awareness of the emotional state of others, the ability to manage relationships, friendships and social support will diminish.

All school staff can expect to be responsible for the education and support of children where barriers to their learning will include lower levels of emotional literacy, difficulties with impulse control, poor self-regulation, little empathy with the feelings of others and/or mental health issues. To address these needs appropriately, all staff have to be able to listen attentively and respond effectively to the pupils' emotional needs and to develop their own emotional literacy to enable them to 'recognise, understand, handle and appropriately express their own emotions' as a first step to understanding those of the children and young people they support.

#### Research

Much research into child development has shown that many young people come to school 'challenged and stressed' (Mosely and Sonnet 2012), which often results in verbally and/or physically challenging behaviour and disruption to the learning of the individual and to that of their peers. These individuals would be recognised as needing support to help them cope with the demands and difficulties they are experiencing and to develop greater levels of resilience and emotional literacy. This however requires skills that are different to those traditionally used for the teaching of literacy, numeracy and subject specific content.

### Restorative Approaches

#### Summary

Restorative Approaches build on the notion of positive regard for all. This moves our thinking away from only our actions/achievements having value and helps us differentiate between the person and their behaviour.

Restorative approaches are fundamentally grounded in relationships and in repairing, restoring and consolidating relationships when they have been harmed.

They are about:

- developing, maintaining and repairing positive relationships
- helping people learn and develop the skills to make good choices now and throughout their lives
- Enabling us to acknowledge when we have harmed someone and think about what to do to put it right
- Encouraging us to consider our feelings and those of others (emotional wellbeing)
- Encouraging us all to consider our behaviour and the effect it has on others

### Research

The research on Restorative Approaches shows evidence of:

- Positive impact upon relationships and behaviour
- Development of essential life skills
- Calmer learning environments
- Young people making more good choices, more often
- Higher self-esteem and increases in prosocial values
- An increase in willingness to take responsibility for misbehavior by young people
- A reduction in offending rates after targeted youth offending programmes
- Reduction in exclusions, when implemented effectively in schools

### **Solution Oriented Approaches**

#### Summary

Solution Oriented Approaches (SOA) have psychological principles that can be applied to a wide range of fields. The approach aims to help individuals, teams and organisations to develop constructive, customised solutions which have a higher likelihood of leading to change. SOA aim to reduce 'problem talk' that can become stuck. The approach tries to move from the usual default position found in individuals and organisations, where they repeat negative or dysfunctional patterns of behaviour, to considering those times when things work better or effective coping strategies can be identified. In these solution patterns are often found the solutions most likely to work in their unique context.

SOA aim to:

- Offer a way of working described as 'solution-building'
- Offers principles and a structure for talking to someone who is experiencing difficulty
- Help people develop goals and solutions rather than analysing current

problems

- Focus on the present and future, on goals and how to achieve them
- Focus on 'what works' and amplifying strengths rather than analysing weaknesses

SOA have some of the following key principles:

1. People have the necessary resources to make changes
2. Everyone has their own ways of solving problems
3. Collaboration enhances change
4. Language shapes and molds how we make sense of the world
5. There are always exceptions to the problem
6. Small changes can lead to bigger changes
7. If it works do more of it; if it doesn't, do something different
8. The problem is the problem, not the person

### Research

De Jong and Hopwood, (1996) found SOA can be effective for depression, suicidal thoughts, anxiety, sleep problems, eating disorders, withdrawn behaviour, financial concerns, parent-child conflict, communication problems, family violence (actual or threatened), sexual abuse, physical abuse, marital/relationship problems, sexual problems, bereavement, self-esteem problems and sibling issues.

Solution Oriented Approaches in establishments involve a process that:

- reduces time spent reacting to indiscipline, by renewing whole-establishment efforts to promote positive behaviour and positive relationships
- improves learning, motivation, problem-solving and creativity – in staff as well as learners
- enhances relationships with parents and carers
- promotes the most effective partnership working on a multi-agency basis

### **Nurturing Approaches**

#### Summary

Nurturing approaches are based on psychological theory, including child development and attachment theory. The approach aims to provide children and young people with attachment figures from whom they develop safe and secure relationships. With this attachment securely in place, the child or young person can fully develop their social and emotional skills, which in turn impact on their academic attainment and mental wellbeing. Boxall (2002) suggests that when a child feels safe, these attachment behaviours are accompanied by explorative behaviours. Furthermore, once children successfully develop secure social and emotional skills, they can go on to develop effective cognitive functioning and successfully engage in learning.

Nurture has six underlying principles (Lucas, Insley and Buckland, 2006):

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally
2. The learning environment offers a safe base
3. The importance of nurture for the development of self-esteem
4. Language is a vital means of communication
5. All behaviour is communication
6. The importance of transition in children's lives

The above principles are based on Attachment Theory and child development and aim to support a child or young person develop self-regulation skills. Nurturing approaches aim to use these principles not only as part of a targeted intervention, but also to help create a nurturing and inclusive community. It works best when Nurture permeates the vision, values and ethos of the community and contribute systemically to supporting social and emotional development (Lucas, 1999; Doyle, 2003). It is also critical that adults use language that is at the child's level of understanding - both in length and complexity, with non-verbal communication often being more powerful and very important in supporting oral language.

### Research

Nurture has a growing evidence base with over sixty-two academic studies carried out over the past twenty years (Nurture Group Network, 2015).

Outcomes include

- long-term mental health improvements (O'Conner and Colwell, 2002)
- greater academic attainment (Reynolds et al, 2009; Seth-Smith et al, 2010) and
- improved attendance (Cooper, 2011)

Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) found that children with social, emotional and behavioural needs who received Nurture made more academic progress than similar children in a control group who had not received Nurture. They were also found to be more likely to remain within mainstream education.

Cooper and Whitebread (2007) found that significant improvements were demonstrated in social and emotional functioning. They also found stronger effects where Nurture had been established for at least two years.

Effects found in the research have shown to be sustained over time.

### **Building Resilience**

#### Summary

Resilience can be defined as

*'Normal development under difficult conditions'* (Fonagy et al. 1994)

A resilience-based approach fits closely with the aim of the Highland Practice Model, to build on the strengths in the child's whole world, always drawing on what the family, community and universal services can offer.

A child or young person's resilience is fostered when their internal and environmental protective factors are strengthened.

Ensuring that a child or young person's strengths and protective factors are realised to their full potential is likely to help to improve outcomes by building their protective network (Daniel and Wassell 2002) and supporting their capacity to cope under adverse life experiences and day to day stressors.

At the same time, it is crucial to be alert to whether any adversity or vulnerability is putting children's well-being at risk and whether these risk factors can be ameliorated by action at an individual or environmental level.

There are many factors associated with resilience, but Gilligan (1997) suggests that there are three fundamental building blocks:

1. A **secure base** whereby the child feels a sense of belonging and security
2. Good **self-esteem**, that is an internal sense of worth and competence
3. A sense of **self efficacy**, that is a sense of mastery and control, along with an accurate understanding of personal strengths and limitations

### Research

Resilience theory underpins the Getting it Right for Every Child approach and associated Children and Young People's Act (2014).

Research shows that promoting protective factors can buffer, ameliorate, and mitigate the effects of risk and stress, propelling the child or young person to academic and life success (O'Dougherty Wright, Masten, and Narayan, 2013). Conversely, it also shows that reducing risk factors can also have a significant impact.

### **Rights Based Approaches**

#### Summary

*Getting It Right for Every Child* translates the UNCRC approach to special care and assistance by embedding UNCRC Articles within the GIRFEC values and principles. Most importantly, GIRFEC requires every practitioner to apply a UNCRC approach in day-to-day practice by putting children at the centre.

Children everywhere have the right:

- to survival
- to develop to the fullest
- to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation
- to participate fully in family, cultural and social life

Although it is easy to acknowledge the importance of children's rights, it is more difficult to make sure they are reflected in the practical approaches we adopt every day to support children and families. Getting It Right For Every Child has 16 values and principles that endorse fully the UNCRC approach to the upbringing of children. Getting It Right For Every Child is the methodology for ensuring that any practitioners helping children and their families work in a way that fully embraces UNCRC.

Fundamentally, the approach requires practitioners:

- to consider each child as an individual with their own needs, risks and rights
- to engage and involve the child as far as practical in discussions and decisions which affect his or her future
- to seek out and consider the voice of the child
- to plan and review activity to improve outcomes, based on well-being.

### Research

The Wellbeing indicators, outlined by GIRFEC, capture the range of experiences that children should have in a society which values them and which properly respects their rights (Education Scotland, 2013). The CYP Act (2014) enshrines these indicators in statute and ensures that each child's individual rights are activated. See Appendix II.

Examples of this would be the statutory assessment of wellbeing that the CYP Act advocates. The following is taken from UNCRC The Foundation of Getting it Right for Every Child (Scottish Government, 2013):

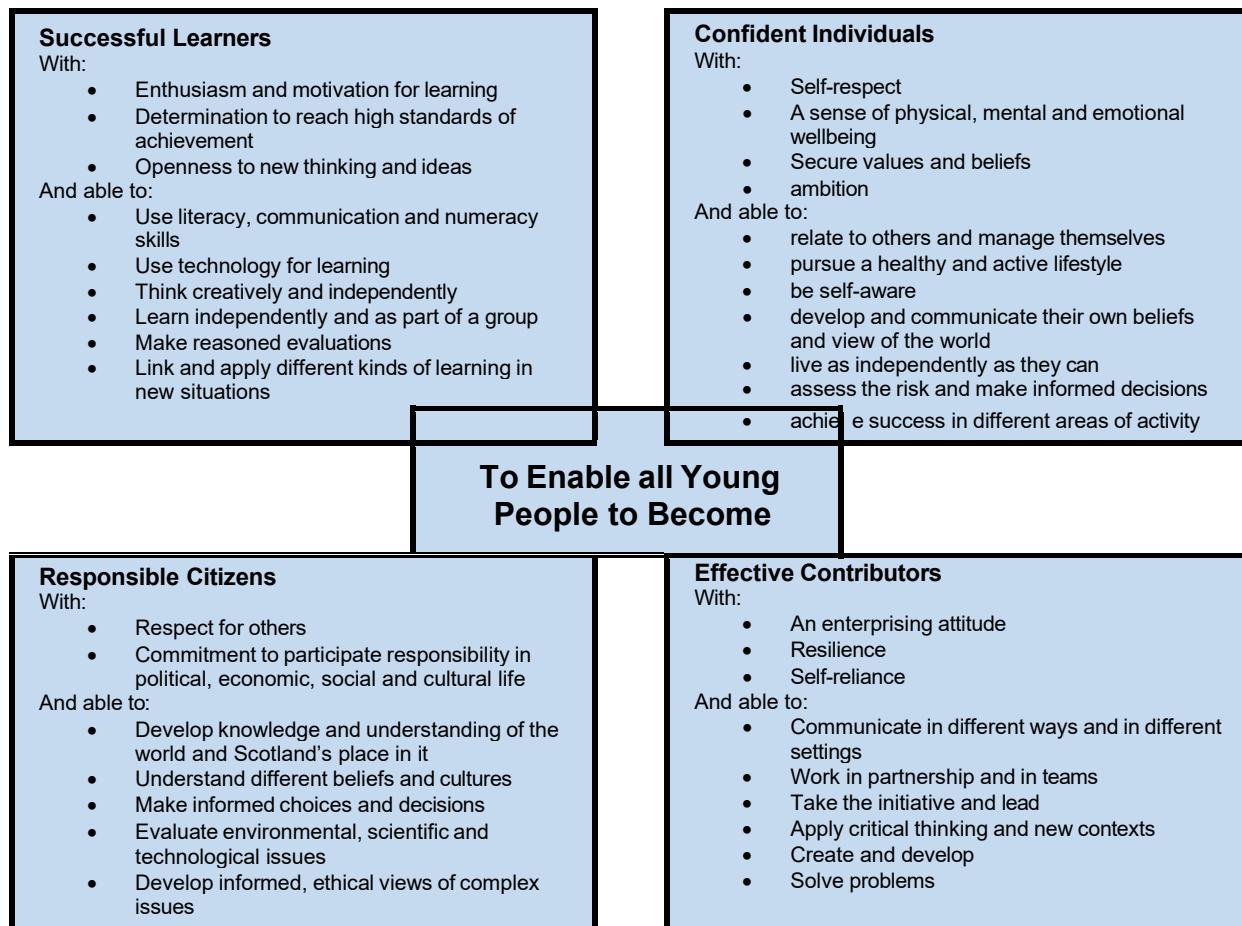
*Scottish Ministers have set an ambition for our country: that Scotland is the best place to grow up and bring up children.*

*To achieve that we require a positive culture towards children. One where children are welcomed and nurtured. One where we all are alert to their needs and look out for them. Where they are listened to – whatever their age – and where their views are heard and their rights protected. They should be respected as people in their own right. Not as economic units for the future. But as members of Scottish society now with rights to a present day life that allows them to fulfil their potential.*

### 3. Positive Relationships are integral to the Curriculum

The *Curriculum for Excellence* places Health and Wellbeing at the heart of the school education.

In particular, teaching and learning is expected to develop the 4 key capacities in children and young people – to be Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors.



A brief inspection of these capacities shows that many of them involve young people acquiring and utilising positive relationships. These skills and others therefore require an ethos of positive relationships to be available in every context in order to model and support the development and growth of self-efficacy and attuned adult-child, adult-adult and child-child relationships. For example, developing an “enterprising attitude” requires others to acknowledge and encourage small efforts so that children and young people can feel confident in building on their successes.

While there is currently a focus in the *National Improvement Framework* on attainment in Literacy and Numeracy, success in learning is underpinned and enabled by the development of the 4 Capacities, fostered through positive relationships. The contrast, sometimes raised, between curricular knowledge on the

one hand and skills on the other, is unhelpful. This guidance makes clear the links between positive relationships and effective teaching and learning – as well as with pupil and staff wellbeing.

The skills, dispositions and attitudes that enable the growth and maintenance of positive relationships are things that children and young people need to **learn**. This means that, as with other areas of the curriculum, they need to be taught, both explicitly and implicitly, through the normal course of teaching and learning.

It also means that where young people show difficulties in establishing positive relationships with each other or with staff, this is to be seen first and foremost as ***an issue of learning*** – with the same requirements for reasonable adjustment and differentiation as would be universally agreed to be appropriate for a difficulty in learning how to solve an equation or understand a new concept.

## 4. Key concepts

### a. Positive relationships

This is an intuitive concept that covers the many ways different individuals and groups relate to each other. As such, a single definition is not easy to provide, but general features of positive relationships are:

- Communicating respect and positive regard for others;
- Taking others' perspectives into account as valid and meaningful;
- Adapting to individual needs as they present themselves;
- Engaging in positive and attuned interactions;
- Accepting conflict and disagreement as inevitable, and acting to resolve this consensually;
- Being aware of, valuing and responding to the other's emotional state;
- Awareness of one's own needs in interaction and how these may be positively or negatively impacting on the relationship;
- Understanding the unique balance of support and challenge that every individual needs to grow and develop – both children and adults.

It should be noted that positive relationships do not imply total harmony or everyone being happy all the time. They are seen in how we respond and help in times of greatest difficulty as well as when things are going well.

### b. Child development

Children and young people have rights and agency in the same way as adults. In addition, they are both learning how to form positive relationships and still growing the brain structures and capacities that underpin appropriate actions. This impacts in three main ways:

- **Emotional regulation.** Children and young people may experience strong feelings that are hard for them to manage by themselves. These may be expressed in actions and behaviours that are not appropriate for the situation. Emotional regulation develops to an extent through maturation. The extent to which this occurs depends in large part on how well adults help children and young people to manage difficulties as they occur.
- **Inhibitory processing.** Children and young people can seem impulsive because the brain systems that inhibit actions are still developing. They may fully intend to perform an appropriate action, but struggle to stop themselves from performing an inappropriate alternative. A similar experience for adults would be the common failure to keep a New Year's resolution. Again, inhibitory capacity develops through maturation, but only to the extent that children and young people experience positive relationships.
- **Repertoire of actions.** Children and young people have less life experience, and vary in how thoroughly they have learned appropriate responses to stressors – if at all. Until an action is fully learned and “automatic”, children and young people may find it hard to effectively or reliably respond appropriately in social situations. This holds both for learning behaviours (such as settling to work) and more general behaviour (such as resolving disputes through verbal negotiation).

Every child, through natural and environmental differences, has an individual developmental trajectory. Effective schools recognise this and adapt to the children and young people on their roll.

The school day needs to take into account the developmental needs of children and young people of all ages for adequate self-directed time with their peers. For younger children, this may be through physical play activities and for older pupils, this will be time spent socialising and gaining peer support and approval. Play and free time with peers is therefore important in providing spacing for academic activity through cooperative learning and group work, but it is also an essential way in which pupils develop the key brain structures and capacities that underpin attainment and wellbeing as it includes physical activity and also opportunities to develop interests and relationships.

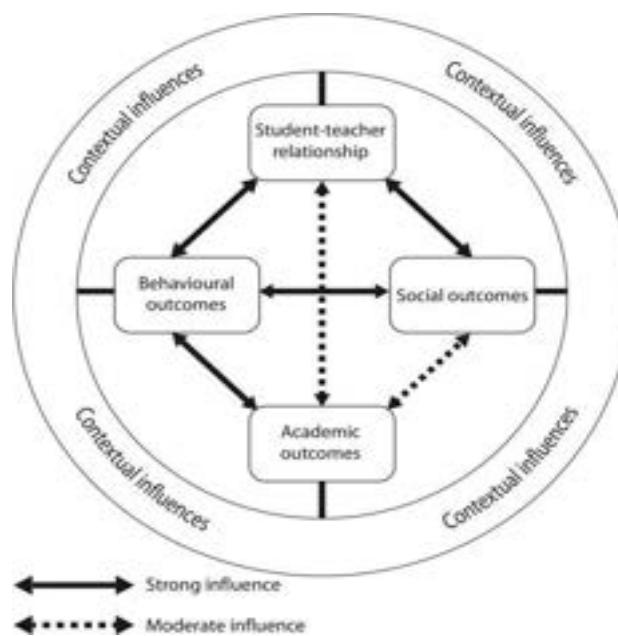
#### **c. Holistic and ecological thinking**

It is essential to recognise that events and issues in one aspect of life for the child/young person, will affect all other aspects, and so even apparently small incidents such as the loss of a pet will have an additional impact on major systemic threats such as domestic or community violence, or ongoing stressors such as being a young carer or living with the breakdown of a parental relationship.

The Highland Practice Model is based on this insight and also provides a simple way to characterise it, as well as assessing impacts and evidencing the need for 'reasonable adjustments' to be made. Each of the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators is linked to the others. Thus children will find it harder to Achieve if they are not Safe and Included in school. At the same time, when children do not feel Safe or Included in their wider lives, a sense of Achieving in school can provide both stability and a means of gaining a more positive future. The Wellbeing Indicators are therefore the framework around which all assessment and planning can be supported as it provides a way to both understand the presenting behaviours of a child and a means of effectively targeting specific interventions.

While schools and early years' settings play a vital part in the lives of children and young people, the limits of what they can do has to be acknowledged. Children and young people grow up in a complex set of interactions between home, school, peer group and society influences. This is recognised in the Highland Practice Model, which takes a holistic view of attainment and where different services and agencies work together within a single plan, to improve outcomes. The role of the school and Named Person is key in helping families and young people access services and also helping services understand and engage with young people and families.

Whatever the context however, the research is clear that schools can make a difference that potentially affects a whole life course for a young person. Figure 1 below shows the way in which positive relationships can support this, and the interactions that need to be considered:



**Figure 1**

McGrath & Bergen (2015)

**d. The potential of schools**

Many young people may not be experiencing positive relationships in the home or community. As such, they may present in school or the early years' setting with either externalising or internalising behaviours that make it difficult to form positive relationships with the adults around them or with their peers. These young people are more likely to end up in escalating cycles of coercive control (Decker, Dona & Christensen, 2007). However, when warm, supportive relationships can be established, this can lead to improved behaviour and attainment (Silver et al., 2005; Baker, 2006; Baker et al., 2008).

As children move beyond the early years', teachers and other adults in school have a high potential to "reset" acquired templates for relationships and behaviours. Although traditionally it tends to be assumed that parents have the most decisive influence, research evidence supports the many anecdotes that a caring teacher can be the source of resilience in a young person's life that can help "turn it around" (Pianta, Hamre & Stuhlman, 2003).

This does not mean that a class teacher is expected to, or should, take on inappropriate professional roles. They are not expected to "treat" mental health issues or resolve social care issues. But it is essential that they recognise that these and other issues impact on a child's learning and behaviour and adapt accordingly, as for any pupil with additional support needs. Making reasonable adjustments for positive relationships will lead to better learning and easier classroom management. Reasonable adjustments include the adults considering their own expectations first, especially in relation to the language used in communicating with the child. Taking time to pause and wait, when asking a question, or looking for a verbal response, allows the child to feel less pressure and more listened to/valued. Looking for the specific progression that relates to an individual child in a timescale that suits the child, would be an example of making reasonable adjustments within a classroom context or early years setting.

This approach may often go a long way to resolving issues outside the learning environment too, or in helping the child or young person to flourish, because issues, pressures and strengths, impact on the whole of a child or young person's world.

**e. Attachment**

The work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth in the 1960s and 1970s established the idea of attachment. In its earlier forms, this proposed that early relationships with caregivers established a template, or "working model" for future relationships for children. This template could be characterised as "secure", "insecure" or "disorganised", with different associated behaviours and implications for management.

Research has moved on considerably since that time, in two key respects. Firstly, attachment "types" are not stable traits – children can have very different relational

patterns with different adults and in different situations. Most importantly, these patterns can change. Although early care is very influential, difficulties can be resolved by consistent positive relationships in later childhood. Secondly, attention now focusses not on classifying children, but on recognising that we all vary in the following aspects:

- Strength of emotional reaction to stress and challenge;
- Effectiveness of self-soothing skills;
- Inclination or ability to seek help from others;
- Preferences for closeness or space in interactions;

Research has also clarified the processes by which these individual differences develop, through an interaction of genes and environment. While some aspects are heritable, children (and all people) in general benefit from positive relationships in a context of emotional and physical safety.

Some of the key processes are illustrated in figure 2, which may also be of help for individual and whole school self-evaluation:



Figure 2

These processes are what is meant by “attachment informed” practice. They are core to the ideas in the Nurturing Schools initiative, and are also core to what we mean by “positive relationships”.

A relationship with at least one caring adult can be the main factor in improving outcomes for young people with multiple risks, including adversity (Gambone, Klem & Connell, 2002). As children move from early years into primary and later schooling, parents become less influential as sources of support, in favour of peers and other

key adults, including school staff (Gunnar & Hostinar, 2015). Thus positive relationships with teachers can modify early “internal working models” even, or especially, when early experiences have been less positive (Buyse et al., 2011). These effects can be seen in behavioural outcomes (Baker, 2006; Baker, Grant & Morlock, 2008; Ladd & Burgess, 2001), the development of social skills (Berry & O’Connor, 2010; Gazelle, 2006), as well as in the prevention of school avoidance and anxiety (Arbeau, Coplan & Weeks, 2010).

**f. Childhood adversity and trauma**

Adversity during childhood, especially but not only in the first few years, can have long lasting effects on how children’s brains and bodies develop, with implications for behaviour, health and achievement seen well into adulthood. A significant portion of the burden of adult disease can be attributed to early adversity and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) of one kind or another contribute in large part to the various attainment gaps as well as to future parenting behaviour that maintains cycles of deprivation and harm. The causal pathways are to do with the developing stress system, but also with other impacts on development such as reduced language exposure and less access to healthcare and other services. Some difficulties may not present until the teenage years, making these issues important to consider for all age groups.

One key type of adversity is psychological trauma. This can occur as a result of any event or experience that involves feeling both very unsafe and out of control. The brain lays down traumatic memories, consisting of strong feelings, negative thoughts and actions that can be retriggered by experiences similar to the original trauma. A common trigger is a sense of uncertainty or lack of safety. Children who have experienced trauma are often “hypervigilant” to possible threats and can experience apparently safe environments (such as a well-managed classroom), as full of potential dangers.

School staff should be aware that childhood adversity and trauma is common. A study in Clackmannanshire found that around one third of primary school children had experienced more than 10 potentially traumatic events or issues. Many children do not develop post-traumatic reactions after difficult experiences, but a significant proportion of children and young people may need school staff to anticipate possible triggers for high states of fear in the normal course of the school day, and to help prevent and manage these. A working assumption for highly fearful or aggressive behaviour should be that the child or young person has, or is, experiencing trauma or adversity. It is important therefore to understand ‘challenging behaviour’ as signs of distress or fear, as this will lead to different reactions from the adults and ensure interventions that are supportive and nurturing, rather than punitive or shaming.

A helpful way of considering appropriate interventions would be to engage in what is sometimes called ‘Trauma Informed Practice’ ([www.70-30.org.uk](http://www.70-30.org.uk)). This can be characterised by:

- **Realising:** All school staff and Early Years Practitioners have a basic understanding and realisation about trauma and how it can affect individuals, families and communities;
- **Recognising:** Ensure professionals within schools and partner agencies are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of trauma;
- **Responding:** Programmes, schools and communities respond by building relationships, reducing stress and providing targeted support and appropriate interventions when required;
- **Resist re-traumatisation:** Avoid interactions and interventions that may compound trauma, either intentionally or unintentionally.

The infographic below may be helpful as a way to frame a self-evaluative conversation around what they currently do to support children, young people, families and colleagues who have experienced trauma in their lives.



### g. Window of tolerance

Humans experience a range of strength in the feelings they have in different situations. Lost car keys may give rise to mild anxiety or annoyance that prompt searching, while actual physical threat prompts stronger feelings of terror or fury.

For day to day functioning, we have an optimal range of arousal. Too little, and we are sluggish and slow and do not rise quickly to opportunities – too much, and our reactions become impulsive or disorganised. This optimal range can be shown as a “zone of tolerance” as shown in figure 3. This is a useful tool for understanding and managing the impact of emotions and stress on learning and behaviour.

Window of Tolerance		
Hyper-arousal Zone	‘Fight or Flight’ Response	Increased sensations, flooded, emotional reactivity, hypervigilant, intrusive imagery, flashbacks, disorganised cognitive processing
↑ Window of Tolerance Optimal Arousal Zone ↓	‘Social Engagement’ Response	Can state where emotions can be tolerated and information integrated
Hypo-arousal Zone	‘Immobilisation’ Response	Relative absence of sensation, numbing of emotions, disabled cognitive processing, reduced physical movement

Adapted from Ogden, Minton & Pain (2006) p. 27, 32, Corrigan, Fisher & Nutt (2010), p.2

Figure 3

Adults can be very effective in helping children stay within the optimal range – a little excitement and interest, but not too much, or coping with natural negative reactions to failure or frustrations. To do this, they need to be aware of how behaviours can be a cue to either over- or under-arousal. Intervening to alter the behaviour, without first addressing the underlying emotional state is likely to lead to escalation.

In addition, children who are experiencing short term or long term difficulties may well have narrower zones of tolerance. They may be harder to “get going”, or need support to react less strongly to normal stressors in the learning environment.

Staff also need to be aware of their own states of arousal and how this affects their thinking about children and young people and their interactions with them. An adult who is anxious or fearful when interacting with a particular pupil, will not be able to help the child feel safe and is likely to heighten the child’s anxieties, rather than reduce them.

### h. Shame and shaming

Shame can be triggered when we break our own personal moral code. It can also be triggered by (the fear of) being judged, belittled or attacked. Shame is a normal human response to the threat of, or actual, detachment from our social group and as such is a stressor which can trigger the fight or flight stress reactions.

Shame is often felt by children when significant adults in their lives show displeasure or feign disappointment as a means of getting the children to behave or comply with an instruction. The physical effects can often be observed as bowed head, flushed face and neck and losing eye contact. It is a powerful emotion and one that can be recalled many years after an event. It is therefore important that adults do not overuse the affect of shame, but respond to the needs of the child and reassure them that they are still valued and loved, even in such situations when this has been used as an inhibitor to dangerous or inappropriate behaviours. For example, a parent may shout at their child to keep them away from the cooker. A common reaction would be for the child to loose muscle tone and cry. In an attuned parent-child relationship, the parent will pick up and soothe the crying child. Parent and child will then re-attune through another activity, thus helping the child learn that it is OK to make a mistake as they are still valued and loved. This patterning enables us to develop an understanding of social conventions, what is safe and what is acceptable and an intrinsic motivation to stick to social rules.

Where a child feels shamed on a regular basis, the hypervigilance and emotional reactions known to be associated with regular and high levels of stress, will be observed as depicted in figure 4 below. Signs of distress caused by the feelings of shame could therefore be where a child is observed to engage in behaviours that are harmful to others or themselves, or where the child denies their involvement in an incident, even in the face of evidence to the contrary, or withdraws from social contact. Understanding that these behaviours may be due to the stress caused by the feelings of shame should trigger the adults to respond by looking for ways to re-attune with the child and engage in restorative practices to repair the relationship, rather than engage in ways that will create further feelings of shame.

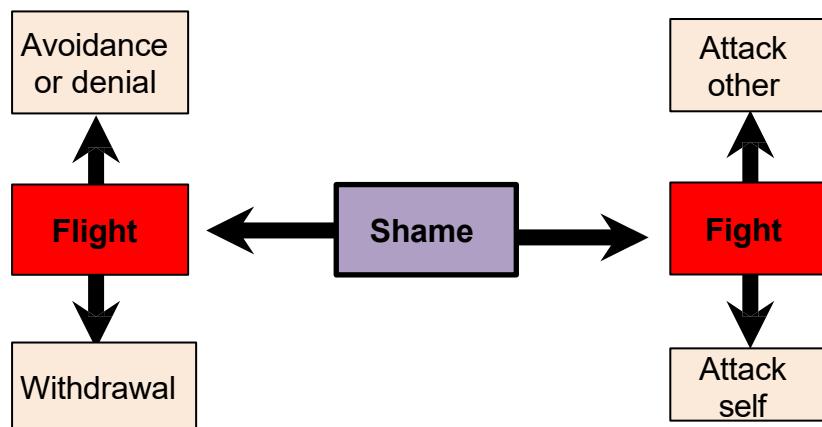


Figure 4

Adapted from Nathanson (1992)

## 5. Positive Relationships underpin effective teaching and learning

Discussion of positive relationships often focusses on behaviour, but there is evidence that warm and supportive relationships with teachers can improve children and young people's academic outcomes, especially for those who struggle with learning (Eisenhower, Baker & Blacher, 2007). Nurturing, establishing and maintaining positive relationships is a necessary part of efforts to raise attainment and neglecting this aspect of school life can be a key cause for limited returns from other educational interventions and reforms, no matter how well evidenced or costly.

Over many years international research has established the key connection between a positive school ethos and attainment and achievement. This is true with respect to so-called soft skills and also for indicators such as literacy and numeracy benchmarks and exam scores. This holds for secondary school (Murray & Zvoch, 2011) as well as primary. For example one study with young teenagers showed that perceived teacher emotional support explained 42% of variance in students' sense of belonging in school, 43% of self-efficacy beliefs and 32% of academic effort (Sakiz, Pape & Woolfolk Hoy, 2012). In general, the benefits of positive relationships with teachers can be seen in higher attainment and fewer social and behavioural issues (Crosnoe, Johnson & Elder; Ladd & Burgess, 2001; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004).

This confirms a common sense view that we all learn better in contexts where:

- We feel safe;
- There is encouragement to try, and positive feedback on efforts;
- Mistakes are not ridiculed but framed as natural parts of learning;
- We feel liked and valued and that someone who matters approves of our efforts;
- We are treated with respect.

There is not therefore a choice or dichotomy between "learning" and "behaviour" – the same aspects of school ethos and ways of teaching that encourage and foster positive behaviour are those that make such teaching effective.

### a. Raising Attainment and Equity Gaps

Positive relationships are particularly effective in improving learning and behaviour where students are at risk of difficulties in either area. One study found that while high achieving students tended to do well regardless of the relational context, lower achieving students performed well only when experiencing positive teacher relationships (Liew, Chen & Hughes, 2010).

By contrast, many students (and their teachers) can get into a negative cycle of failure where academic risk reduces the quality of relationships, which then reduces engagement, and then achievement – and so on ... (Demant & Van Houtte, 2012). As expected, the strongest links between teacher-student relationships and academic outcomes are found when the former are negative (Roorda et al., 2011). In

other words, low quality relationships in school can magnify the effects of risks for various groups, including those with poverty related attainment gaps.

**b. What does this look like in practice?**

i) Relational Environment and School Ethos

“The starting point for learning is a positive ethos and climate of mutual respect and trust based upon shared values across whole school communities including parents.” (<http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/345984/0115162.pdf>)

The ethos and culture of a school is communicated through the interactions as a person enters the front door and continues after they exit. A warm welcome and a good goodbye can contribute to the success of these transitions throughout the day.

How teachers and other staff think about students, and how that is communicated, can have deep and lasting effects for all pupils. The beliefs of teachers as to whether pupils are “teachable” can communicate in such a way as to reduce outcomes as all students feel less emotional involvement from adults (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012).

The corner stones of a relational approach are care and challenge. A relational approach in an education setting would see there being an attuned and trusted adult for each child to feel connected to. Bellis et al (2017) found that having a trusted adult in childhood is associated with significantly reduced impacts of adverse childhood experiences on mental and physical health across the life-course. Challenge is provided within the caring relationship, with the belief that the learner is capable of success. Hattie (2017) suggested teacher attitude, specifically estimates of pupil achievement, made a significant difference to pupil achievement.

‘Climate and ethos are key determinants in promoting social and emotional wellbeing and mental health for all in schools. This is described as core values, attitudes, beliefs and culture of the school and classroom; and includes school connectedness and a feeling of being accepted, respected and bonded to the school environment’

(Scottish Government 2018)

ii) Classroom ethos

Baumrind (1971) described four possible combinations of relational styles adopted by teachers.

		Care	
		Low	to
Challenge	Low	Permissive	Indulgent/Contingent
	High	Authoritarian	Authoritative

- Permissive teachers show low amounts of challenge and low amounts of care. This style is characterised by a lack of involvement. The environment is non-punitive, there are few demands on the learners and there is a lot of

freedom. These environments can lack structure and pupils often are unsure what the expectations are both academically and behaviourally.

- Authoritarian teachers show high amounts of challenge and low amounts of care. This style is characterised by behavioural regulation and is often seen as punitive and restrictive. Students have neither a say in their environment, nor are they seen to need explanations. Pupils in these situations lack autonomy and academically will look to the teacher providing all teaching and learning input.
- Indulgent teachers show a high degree of care but a low amount of challenge. This style is characterised by an environment which offers no demands on the learner, while they are actively supported in their efforts to seek their own ends. A lack of structure in these classrooms can create confusion and low stimulus for learning.
- Authoritative teachers show care for their learners while simultaneously challenging them to fulfil their potential. These teachers provide their learners with strong guidance (both academically and behaviourally), while also nurturing personal responsibility and self-regulation. They provide timely feedback against expectations which creates safety and confidence in the learner.

iii) Teaching and Learning approaches

“Visible Learning and Teaching occurs when teachers see learning through the eyes of students and help them become their own teachers” (John Hattie, *Visible Teaching*)

*Available and attuned*

When researchers ask pupils and teachers what are the characteristics of effective teachers, responses include subject knowledge and competence, but both groups tend to prioritise relational aspects, which can include communication strategies such as Pause and Wait and making use of facial expression to convey meaning (e.g. Beishuzen et al. 2001; Bakz et al., 2015). Research in Highland (McTaggart & Forsyth, 2012) showed the same, that teaching is felt to be most effective when teachers are able to:

- Show they are interested in pupils as people;
- Understand the relevance of pupils' lives for their learning;
- Be fair and acknowledge their own mistakes;
- Listen to what pupils have to say;
- Share enthusiasm;
- Help without judgement;
- Show, as well as expect, respect;

*Reflective and responsive*

Relational teaching is essentially another way of describing personalisation and differentiation, both of which are known to be effective ways to improve learning for

all. An essential difference is taking into account the pupil's internal worlds as well as assessment outcomes. This is required at two distinct levels – emotions and learning, and cognition and knowledge:

- Emotions and Learning
  - Understanding that learning can be a stressful experience and adjusting accordingly, differentiating and checking the use of language and vocabulary continually;
  - Seeing motivational issues as a communication about confidence or relevance;
  - Taking into account wider issues in a pupil's life and adapting levels of demand;
  - Setting subject content within the context of the 4 Capacities and choosing approaches that build confidence and resilience.
- Cognition and knowledge
  - Finding out and taking into account each pupil's understanding and vocabulary level and knowledge of a topic;
  - Adjusting pace and delivery so that all pupils can both keep up and be tolerably stretched;
  - Choosing programs and methods that support differentiation according to need;
  - Being aware of the potential to overload the pupil's capacities and adjusting ahead of difficulties;
  - Spending time teaching pupils meta-cognitive skills, such as managing their learning, etc.

iv) Self-evaluation

Adhering to the guidance in this document will not be intuitive for all staff members in schools and early years' settings. To support professional development and track progress in developing a more relational approach, the National Improvement Framework may be helpful, particularly in relation to *Parental Engagement, Inclusive Practice and Achieving Equity* (Scottish Government 2016).

One useful and simple framework for self-evaluation is provided by the authoritative/authoritarian contrasts in styles described above. Another is Deci and Ryan's (2017) tried and tested approach to motivation, called Self Determination Theory. This suggests that intrinsic motivation is based on three psychological needs:

- To be competent – having control of outcomes and experiencing mastery
- To have autonomy – to feel in control and having choices
- To have psychological relatedness – feeling connected and experiencing caring

It may be helpful to consider how these needs are addressed and balanced in a classroom and to reflect on how far off-task behaviours or withdrawn effort or participation can be accounted for as a result of gaps in these needs.

A fully relational approach would include an awareness and accommodation at whole school, class, and individual pupil level of possible gaps in a child or young person's learning needs across the range shown in figure 5:



Figure 5

More formally, school staff should consider the challenge questions in *How Good is Our School 4<sup>th</sup> edition* – especially those relating to Quality Indicators 2.1 – Safeguarding and Child Protection, 2.4 – Personal Support, 2.6 - Transitions and 3.1 – Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion. Self-evaluation should be an on-going process and involve the whole community, including staff, pupils and parents/carers. It should be rooted in the information already available and collated at school level and where appropriate, learning gained from also looking, with the link Quality Improvement Officer, at comparative data, which is available across the local authority or nationally. In addition, members of staff who have completed the Highland Council or NHS Highland Quality Improvement Network courses or the Scottish Government Children and Young People's Improvement Practicum, could assist in supporting focused improvement projects at the school level and the link educational psychologist from the Highland Council Psychological Service can support with action research and gathering evidence of best practice from research, to support behaviour change within a school or early years' setting.

## 6. Positive Relationships underpin effective behaviour management

Positive relationships are key both to preventing inappropriate behaviour from students and to addressing it when it arises (O'Connor, Dearing & Collins, 2011). Within a developmental understanding, it should be expected that any and all children and young people will, from time to time, struggle with following norms and rules. Positive relationships do not mean an absence of conflict and difficulty (McGrath & Bergen, 2015), but do mean that how the adult interprets issues and then acts on that interpretation are the decisive factors. Proportionate responses require an understanding not just of what is happening for the student, but also the assumptions being made by the adults.

There is abundant evidence that where students experience positive relationships with teachers, within a climate of high expectations, behaviour issues are reduced, and the effects of stress and adversity in students' lives are also buffered (see above and Baker, 2006; Baker, Grant & Morlock, 2008; Ladd & Burgess, 2001; Berry & O'Connor, 2010; Gazelle, 2006; Arbeau, Coplan & Weeks, 2010).

Approaches to managing behaviour in school can be roughly divided into three, overlapping, groups as shown in figure 6. The punitive and behaviourist models do not fit with the vision and values of this guidance and school staff should strive to promote a relational/developmental approach.

Behaviour Models			
	Punitive/ Rule-based	Behaviourist/ Consequence-based	Relational/ Developmental
<b>Main means of behaviour management</b>	Fear	Consequences	Relationship
<b>Children &amp; young people are</b>	responsible for their actions	learning	developing, error-prone & highly responsive to environment
<b>Boundaries are to</b>	indicate right and wrong	make standards clear	try to meet everyone's needs
<b>Rules should be</b>	enforced without exception	clearly communicated	developed together and adapted where needed
<b>Behaviour is something to</b>	control	manage	interpret
<b>Consequences are</b>	sanctions & punishments	ways to shape behaviour	a last resort, only used within a process of rupture & repair
<b>"Inappropriate" behaviour is</b>	wrong-doing, deliberate	learned, not necessarily voluntary	a sign either of an unmet need, difficulty coping, or lack of knowledge
<b>The causes of difficulties are</b>	lack of compliance, insufficient discipline	learned poor responses, lack of appropriate reinforcement	mostly in the environment, felt relationships or developmentally appropriate
<b>Solutions lie in</b>	the child	adjusting consequences	understanding what the behaviour tells us about the child & their needs
<b>Children who don't manage should be</b>	excluded or fixed	helped and given intervention	understood & included
<b>Policy effectiveness is measured by</b>	compliance	behaviour change	well-being

Figure 6

In **rules-based** models, there is a simple understanding that the rules are the rules, and that transgressions should be met with a stepped range of prescribed sanctions. All children are expected to follow the same norms without exception or adaptation. This, often seen as “fair”, is taken to an extreme in so-called “no excuses” approaches to school behaviour policies.

By contrast, **behaviourist** models are more flexible. It is understood that conforming to rules and expectations is not necessarily automatic or natural for all children. Instead, a carefully designed system of “consequences” is used to shape students’ behaviour, through the building up of either pleasant or negative outcomes. One example is the use of “golden time”, which can be earned by appropriate behaviour and “lost” through transgressions. It can be seen that a behaviourist approach can however adapt into a rules-based one if the positive consequences are lost, or punishment is over-emphasised.

Finally, there are approaches that are variously described as “developmental”, “relationship-based”, “attachment” or “trauma” informed. Whatever the description, these all have in common the **positive relationships** elements described in this guidance. There are four essential elements:

- Seeing behaviour as communicating a mismatch between a child/young person’s current needs and the environment or situation.
- Using a “mind-minded” stance to interpret that communication in terms of feelings, skill levels, or developmental state. It can be useful to use the SHANARRI framework to consider how, and whether, a student may be communicating a gap in their need for perceived safety, activity, nurture, responsibility and respect, achievement or inclusion.
- Responding, in partnership with the student, to adapt the situation or environment both to reduce the need for the present behaviour and the likelihood of a re-occurrence.
- Working with the student to identify long term issues or needs that can be addressed either in school, or through partnership working via the Highland Practice Model.

#### **a. Promoting positive behaviour**

Everyone needs a secure-feeling background of norms for behaviour, ensuring a well-ordered and predictable environment. Effective approaches to behaviour and rules also recognise that the people within the systems are human beings and as such prone to mistakes. In addition, children and young people who are still learning how to manage their feelings and what are appropriate expressions of them, need an environment that both reinforces success and scaffolds learning where needed. As with all learning, an individual approach that recognises and builds on where the learner is coming from – cognitively, emotionally, developmentally, attitudinally – will be most successful in bringing about change.

Relationship-based approaches to behaviour and discipline therefore go beyond systems of norms and consequences. The key difference is the recognition that when a child or young person does not follow a rule or norm, then this can be understood in terms of their internal processing of emotions and actions, as well as their developmental state relative to the complexity of the demands on them.

It should be noted that a relational approach to managing behaviour does not mean anything goes or that there are no norms or consequences. It does involve including students in the framing of school or classroom rules and regular review in consultation with them. In addition, where consequences are ineffective, or constantly being applied, then the relational approach is required to address the needs underlying the behaviour.

The following elements are key to promoting positive behaviour through a relational approach and can be used to evaluate the approaches taken in schools:

- Establishing school norms and rules based on shared values through:
  - Meaningful consultation with children and young people;
  - Allowing space to explore different viewpoints and needs;
  - Taking pupil views and feedback into account;
  - Deliberate efforts to include those for whom the systems are not working.
- Curriculum and informal learning includes building pupils':
  - Resilience;
  - Emotional regulation skills;
  - Knowledge of appropriate behaviours.
- An ethos of emotional and physical safety with approachable staff;
- Care for the wellbeing of all staff so that they can be available and reflective for all pupils;
- Close work with relevant advisory and specialist services to ensure needs are identified and reasonable adjustments made as per the Highland Practice Model;
- Respectful and positive engagement with families and communities;
- Stable routines that allow adequate time for rest and for active play.

### **b. Responding to inappropriate behaviour**

The human behavioural system is complex and still developing into early adulthood, but has the following essential components (see Child Development in the Key Concepts section):

**Emotional regulation.** Much inappropriate behaviour is an expression of a feeling that a child or young person is struggling to manage – these can range from fear and terror through to boredom and disconnection. When feelings lie outside the individual's Window of Tolerance, they will begin to "leak" as actions.

**Inhibitory processing.** It can be difficult in live situations and in real time to make accurate choices, even when the “right choice” is known. This is especially so when emotions are high (or low), when appropriate actions are recently learned or not sufficiently practised, and when pupils are feeling disconnected from key adults who they trust to help them self-regulate. It can also take some time and many attempts before a child is able to stop doing the previous behaviour in favour of a more appropriate one.

**A repertoire of behaviours.** Children and young people cannot choose behaviours that they do not know, or have insufficiently practised. It cannot be taken for granted that a given appropriate behaviour is securely in a pupil’s repertoire – this can range from how to wash hands to how to deal with a surge of fear on being given a worksheet.

While it is reasonable for staff to take whatever steps are needed to ensure safety and good order at the time of a behavioural issue, to help bring about change in the long term it is helpful to be curious about the function of the behaviour and what help the pupil might need to develop one or all of the key components noted above.

It is generally more effective to consider how the environment can be modified to prevent overwhelming challenge to the child or young person until they have come to be able to manage it. For example, low level fidgeting in class can start as an attempt to regulate feelings of boredom or disconnection that are uncomfortable. Requiring the pupil to suppress the behaviour may lead to continuance or escalation, while responding with adaptation of the task, or just making a connection may resolve the need in the first place.

Taking a developmental approach to understanding behaviour meets the legislative requirement to make reasonable adjustments to support pupils with additional needs. Understanding the function of the behaviour will inform the appropriate planning and intervention to support the continuing development of the child/young person at any age. In creating support plans for children and young people for whom there are significant or long term concerns, the key components of positive relationships outlined in this guidance should therefore be considered, alongside environmental factors and an understanding of child or adolescent development.

## 7. Summary

Every learner is entitled to support to enable them to gain as much as possible from the opportunities which *Curriculum for Excellence* can provide, wherever they learn. Support should be appropriate, proportionate and timely.

Early and staged intervention provides a framework for additional support where behaviour, for whatever reason, becomes more challenging and is the process through which assessment and intervention may move from universal to targeted services as described within the Highland Practice Model.

The ethos and values within schools are fundamental to, and permeate, every aspect of school life. To enable all children and young people to be included, engaged and involved in their education, schools must develop an inclusive ethos, where everyone's contribution to the school community is valued and everyone has a sense of belonging. School ethos and values heavily influence school policies and procedures, school rules and relationships and these also underpin relationships at all levels across the learning community.

Evidence from experience and research shows that effective schools value staff and pupil wellbeing, often seen as the informal or hidden curriculum, equally as well as the more formal aspects of learning and teaching. The aim of this guidance is to add to the current policy framework in Highland to support schools in this endeavour.

The Scottish Government document *Developing a Positive Whole School Ethos and Culture – Relationships, Learning and Behaviour* (2018), supports the need to be confident and transparent in the focus on building positive relationships and taking a developmental approach to supporting children and young people within schools and early years' settings. In order to remove barriers to learning and development, staff and parents must understand child development and the emotional and psychological impacts of adversity as core components in supporting behaviour change. The 'in child' model of blaming or shaming as a method of changing or shaping behaviour is ineffective and generally more damaging in the long run. This guidance provides a brief summary of the key concepts required to understand the function of behaviour and to encourage an acceptance that the approaches and the interventions taken by the adults around a child has the greatest impact on their behaviour, their academic achievement and their long term outcomes.

The role of senior managers in schools and early years' settings is therefore to establish a positive ethos and support professional learning communities that better understand child development, the effects of adversity and the impact of adult behaviour and language on children, young people and their families. To this end they can use a monitoring tool for considering the interactions of their staff, to support their ongoing professional development around language and communication. With this knowledge and understanding, staff will be more able to

build positive relationships with the children and young people in their care and within our staff rooms, with the ultimate goal of building resilience and improving outcomes for individual pupils.

## **Appendix 1 The Role of Specialist Services in Promoting Positive Relationships**

Support for children and young people is generally provided by those closest to them, usually their families, local communities and school staff. Schools and wider partner services often request support for their systems through advice, consultation and staff training. Within children's services, this is most often provided by a small number of specialist services as outlined below.

### **The role of the Pupil Support Assistant**

Pupil Support Assistants are employed in Highland Council schools to support specific named pupils with identified additional support needs, to ease workload and stress on teaching staff and the general teaching environment, to reduce classroom disruption and to allow teachers more time to teach.

Sometimes, the deployment of PSAs can increase dependency within the classroom, for both pupils and teachers and so there is mixed evidence to support the view that PSA support has a positive impact overall.

However, where PSAs are well trained, where they have time for liaison with the class teacher to ensure they are well prepared, where their input is focused on task completion and the needs of the individual, their support can be invaluable.

The effective use of PSAs under everyday classroom conditions:

- PSAs are NOT an informal teaching resource for low attaining pupils.
- PSAs should add value to what teachers do, not replace them.
- Use PSAs to help pupils develop independent learning skills and manage their own learning.
- Ensure PSAs are fully prepared for their role in the classroom and know the needs of the pupils and the expected outcomes of the lesson.

The effective use of PSAs in delivering structured interventions out of class:

- Use PSAs to deliver high quality one-to-one and small group support using structured interventions.
- Engage them in self-evaluation regarding pupil outcomes.
- Adopt evidence-based interventions to support PSAs in their small group and one-to-one instruction and ensure they fully understand the core principles.
- Ensure explicit connections are made between learning from structured interventions and classroom requirements. The aim is for pupils to develop skills that can aid their integration within the classroom.

Where PSAs are supporting pupils who often present as distressed through their behaviour, it is important that they are involved in the creation and support of any

behaviour protocols and agreed interventions and that these are reviewed regularly. Where they have supported a pupil through a particularly distressing event, they may need some time to reflect quietly, before going in to another task and where this has been a violent or aggressive incident, there should be time to debrief with a senior manager and to record the incident on the Council's reporting system.

### **The role of the Promoting Positive Relationships Team**

The PPR Team is a small Team supporting staff within children's services to build and develop positive relationships in their own settings.

The PPR team:

- Develops and delivers training in My Rights to Wellbeing, promoting positive relationships and resilience, including the GTCS and SCEL accredited 8 day course on Emotional Literacy;
- Co-ordinates, supports and delivers national programmes within Highland Council for example Roots of Empathy, Mentors for Violence Prevention, Restorative Approaches etc
- Offering support and consultation where changes or concerns arise from patterns of exclusion or pupil/staff incidents.
- Provides the local authority link for Armed Forces Families in Highland, supporting the needs of the Service Community in an educational context and working with the MOD through a Military Liaison Group.

#### Request for Support

Support from the PPR Team is coordinated through liaison with the Area Additional Support Needs Managers, partner agencies or school managers.

### **The role of the Educational Psychology Service**

Educational Psychologists (EPs) have extensive training and experience working with children and young people. They apply psychology and research to understand behaviour, feelings, thinking and relationships. This occurs at the individual (child & family) and systemic (Local Authority and school) level. Educational Psychologists have 5 core functions: consultation, assessment, intervention, training, and research.

#### Consultation

- Individual level—The Psychological Service works collaboratively to identify needs and how best to meet them, using a solution focused approach within the staged intervention process.
- Systemic level—EPs work alongside schools to support the implementation of their improvement plans and explore the development of systems and evaluation processes.

#### Assessment & Intervention

Assessment and intervention is a collaborative process and a range of assessment approaches or tools may be adopted to gather information from a variety of sources. The choice of intervention is informed by the assessment process.

- Individual level—the EP role will be flexible to ensure the unique needs of the individual and situation are met.
- Systemic level— the EP role also allows identification and sharing of good practice across Highland schools, and the identification of needs within

individual educational provisions and across associated school groups.

### Training

Drawing from psychological theory, EPs deliver training on a range of topics including; Resilient Kids, Improving Literacy with Parental Involvement, Nurture for All and Ways to Wellbeing.

At an individual level EPs deliver targeted training to meet the needs of specific pupils. At a systemic level EPs offer a variety of training opportunities to build capacity, knowledge and skills of those working with children and young people.

### Research

EPs engage in research in two ways. Firstly, practice is informed by current research. Secondly, they undertake research to evaluate educational practice and contribute to the development of Local Authority policy. At an individual & systemic level EPs draw on research to deliver evidence-based practice across their role.

### Request for Involvement

Following the staged approach, requests for involvement typically come through the Child's Plan process. EPs can provide informal consultation, however more direct involvement is negotiated with the Educational Psychologist in a Solution Focused Meeting or Child's Plan Meeting. Training and advice can be discussed and arranged through direct requests to the service. Intervention can be requested by contacting the link Educational Psychologist for the school or by contacting Highland Council Psychological Service on 01463 644400.

## **The role of the Primary Mental Health Worker Service (PMHW)**

PMHWs provide early-stage (Tier 2) mental health interventions through liaison, consultation, supervision and training to universal services. PMHWs also provide direct clinical time with children and young people.

The service seeks to build capacity within universal services for children, young people and their families by mobilising and enhancing the skills and resources of the local community and specialist services to better address mental health need. In addition, the service provides an important interface with the Tier 3 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and serves as a hub for all those involved in children and young people's services where there may be a concern over mental health and wellbeing.

The overall purpose of the PMHW service can be seen through the application of the five principles of Primary Mental Health Work:

1. Supporting and strengthening Tier1 CAMHS provision through building capacity and capability across children's services.
2. Promotion of the mental health of children, young people and families.
3. Identifying mental health problems early in the life of the child and /or the development of the problem.
4. Facilitating decision making to support appropriate access to a relevant mental health provision according to level and nature of need.
5. Providing a direct therapeutic service to children, young people and their families to address their mental health needs

### Requesting Assistance from a PMHW

The PMHW service can provide advice, support and training to schools and services on request. In relation to individual interventions, the service works within the Highland Practice Model and as such accepts request for assistance through the child's plan process. All requests for assistance will involve a consultation with the relevant service in the first instance.

### **The role of the Children's Services Worker (CSW)**

Where a need is identified within a Childs Plan, a CSW can undertake focussed work with individuals or groups in relation to supporting the development of social skills, self-awareness, developing self-regulating behaviours, making and sustaining relationships, group and teamwork etc.

CSWs build relationships with individual children to enable trust to develop. This will encourage children to feel safe to work with the CSW on the issues identified within their Childs Plan & Assessment. Their core activities will always be in working with children who have assessed needs and that require support from a targeted service.

CSWs can work with both individuals and groups who present emotional needs and issues as well as those who need support to make changes to their behaviour - this is often in partnership with the pupil support team in schools and the parents/carers.

Addressing their issues entails the child having the space and opportunity to talk about the things that worry them. A CSW will help them to explore alternative and more appropriate responses and behavioural choices as well as assisting them to use acquired coping strategies and positively self-regulated responses in managing potentially difficult situations.

CSWs will establish links with the parents/carers of children with whom they are working – the purpose of this is to further encourage their participation and support for a Child's Plan and to involve them in the decision making and review of the support. CSWs will also collate information to assist with planning and reviewing progress of a Child's Plan and to enable the parents to have an understanding of what is being offered and provided to their child in terms of support and assistance.

### Requesting Assistance from a CSW

Usually a CSW will become involved after a decision made at a Child's Plan meeting/solution focused meeting in school. They work in schools but are managed by the Family Team and so the Practice Lead (schools) will generally be able to assess the need.

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## Change Management

### Lead On

The 'Lead On' Programme enables participants to choose their own pathway to leadership learning and development. The focus of the programme is on leading a change initiative in school, establishment or setting. Many change initiatives are embarked on every term in our schools and these require to be effectively led if they are to be successful in improving the educational experiences and contexts for our children and young people. This programme is [GTCS and SCEL accredited](#).

The programme supports the process of distributive leadership within schools and across teams and also establishing an excellent process for succession planning, providing future managers and Head Teachers with key, core skills in effectively leading teams in a culture of change.

**Who is it for?** Those interested in developing their understanding of leadership and change.

**How long does it last?** 8 days over 15 months

**How to access it?** Booking through the Education Service CPD Calendar or in discussion with the Principal Educational Psychologist.

### Visioning

Visioning has been designed to support staff teams within schools and other establishments to identify important values, team character strengths, existing good practice and desirable future practice. The information generated can contribute to improvement and review plans and be used to create a vision statement.

Visioning follows a solution focused approach, drawing upon elements of appreciative inquiry and positive psychology. Reigeluth (1999) suggests that in order for a vision to become both powerful and influential whilst overcoming resistance, it must be owned by those who have an investment in the establishment.

Visioning incorporates a variety of activities and staff discussions. It poses questions such as: What does our preferred future look like? What is currently going well in the organisation? What skills and resources do we have?

Visioning can be tailored and delivered flexibly to suit the needs of individual schools and establishments. To date, it has been used successfully in the following contexts:

- When new members of staff join a school team
- In response to frequent changes in staffing
- A new school building
- School mergers
- A new enhanced provision within a school
- Creating a school vision for supporting pupils with ASN
- A new children's residential unit

**Who is it for?** All members of staff in schools, services or teams.

It can be tailored to include wider school community.

**How long does it last?** Half-day or twilights

**How to access it?** Contact the Psychological Service

### **Consulting about and with children and young people**

#### **Consulting about children and young people**

Consultation enables the joint consideration of appropriate ways of meeting the needs of a child/young person, in partnership with professionals already working with them. This ensures that appropriate interventions are put in place to meet the needs of the families, children and young people and prevent duplicate or inappropriate referrals or interventions.

In relation to mental health concerns, professionals are welcome to contact a Primary Mental Health Worker (PMHW) to arrange a consultation. It may be appropriate to consider the appropriateness of requesting a service from CAMHS or to discuss ideas for ongoing work with the child and their family.

For issues relating to education and learning, professionals can contact the link Educational Psychologist to arrange a consultation that may be undertaken as part of a solution focused meeting.

In relation to school support and additional resource, professionals should contact the Area ASN Manager or ASN Officer, who are available to discuss concerns and additional supports that may be available in particular situations.

Where there are concerns about health or social care needs, professionals can contact the appropriate member of the Family Team – Practice Lead, Health Visitor, school nurse and where appropriate, social worker or learning disability nurse.

The consultation may include:

- Advice or signposting to an appropriate service.
- Support to help you reflect and continue in your work with the young person.
- Space to consider additional supports or planning that may be helpful in meeting the needs of staff, the young person or the family

#### **Consulting with children and young people**

It is important for consultation to be appropriate to the need and pitched at the right level to support the age and stage of development of the child/young person. There are a range of approaches to do this successfully and a leaflet has been produced by the speech and language therapy service to advise on appropriate ways of engaging with children. This leaflet can be found here:

<http://www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/media/CLT/ResourceUploads/4090745/69e675f5-c22a-4e4a-b01b-5f7b9b7dfb63.pdf>

Information on gathering the views of children and young people has also been collated by the psychological service and can be accessed here:

<https://education.gov.scot/media/zzwandoz/highland-council-psychological-service-tools-for-gathering-the-views-of-children-and-young-people-may-2020.pdf>

A session to look at these further can be arranged with the Psychological Service.

**Who is it for?** Anyone wishing to involve pupils

**How long does it last?** Approx. 1 hour consultation

**How to access it?** Contact the Psychological Service

## Managing Challenging Behaviour

### Functional Analysis

Functional Analysis is a process for developing an understanding of a pupil's distressed or challenging behaviour and how it is influenced by external events. At the end of the assessment we hope to generate some theories about the function that the behaviour serves and identify what need is being met for the pupil through their behaviour. Information gleaned from a functional analysis would be incorporated into a Support Plan. This is a strengths based approach so that the pupil can develop better self-esteem and staff have the opportunity to form a good relationship with the pupil under positive conditions.

**Who is it for?** Children's services staff

**How long does it last?** Varies dependent on need

**How to access it?** Contact linda.thom@highland.gov.uk

### De-escalation

It should always be a priority for staff to attempt to de-escalate confrontation where possible. Preventative approaches should ensure that this is not a frequent occurrence. However, it is helpful for staff to be aware of specific strategies that can help. This training looks at de-escalating confrontation from an emotionally literate standpoint. It looks at the confrontation continuum, understanding the effect of poor levels of emotional literacy on behaviour as well as looking at strategies using solution focused emotional coaching.

**Who is it for?** Teaching and support staff working directly with children and young people

**How long does it last?** 90 minutes

**How to access it?** Contact linda.thom@highland.gov.uk

### CALM (Crisis, Aggression, Limitation & Management)

CALM is model of intervention training that reflects 'best practice principles' in de-escalation and physical intervention. The course is delivered over 3 consecutive days, the first day is theory based to enable staff to participate effectively in the organisational arrangements for the assessment and management of challenging behaviour, this is followed by two days physical intervention training.

CALM Training would only be provided to a school where there is a known risk that might be supported by staff having skills in safe physical restraint. This judgement will be made following robust risk assessment and will form part of a clear and agreed protocol for specific situations. It should be seen within a continuum of staff interventions used to prevent or reduce violence and aggression in schools/units and to promote positive relationships at all levels.

**Who is it for?** Staff in schools or residential care settings

**How long does it last?** 3 consecutive days

**How to access it?** Contact [bill.couston@highland.gov.uk](mailto:bill.couston@highland.gov.uk)

## **Emotional Literacy**

### **Emotional Literacy Awareness**

The training highlights and gives an outline of why emotional literacy matters for all, the development of sense of self and how we can support the development of resilience. It creates an awareness of brain development, the impact of adverse childhood experiences that may cause barriers to learning and how we as practitioners can support the C&YP's emotional needs to reduce barriers and increase engagement.

**Who is it for?** Children's services staff

**How long does it last?** Minimum 1 ½ also offer 1/2day and Full Day

**How to access it?** Contact [linda.thom@highland.gov.uk](mailto:linda.thom@highland.gov.uk)

### **Emotional Literacy Programme**

Emotional Literacy is widely seen as a set of skills and abilities to "... recognise, understand, handle and appropriately express emotions" (Park and Tew, 2009), a set of skills that are essential for the development of positive relationships and personal growth in each one of us. This programme is [GTCS accredited](#).

**Who is it for?** Children's services staff

**How long does it last?** 8 days over 12 months with an Action Learning Task month

**How to access it?** Contact [linda.thom@highland.gov.uk](mailto:linda.thom@highland.gov.uk)

### **Why Relationships Matter**

This training introduces a 'tool kit' of ideas that help us to understand and explore the key role relationships play in development and mental health particularly in relation to;

- Emotional regulation (managing anxiety)
- Development of positive sense of self, resilience and problem solving
- How fragile, anxious relationships increase vulnerability
- Understanding challenging behaviour
- Using relationships to support children and young people in distress

The input is based on ideas that come from theories of attachment and inter-subjectivity but is rooted in day to day practice.

**Who is it for?** Useful for anyone who works with children, young people and parents.

**How long does it last?** Minimum of 2 hrs. It can be extended to a full day or delivered over 2 to 3 sessions

**How to access it?** Primary Mental Health Worker Service

### **Words Up**

Words Up is a universal approach which provides the adults around the child (parents and staff) with the knowledge and skills needed to facilitate language development for all children. It gives the adults the information about the most appropriate way to interact with children for both effective interaction and conversations, as well as to help facilitate the child's language development.

It covers information on the 6 key messages for language learning in the early and primary stages. This is to develop a deeper understanding and knowledge of the 6 key messages as well as tips and advice on how to implement them in practice.

Words Up focuses on developing high quality adult-child interaction through these six key messages. This supports the development of positive, attuned relationships and is key to supporting both academic and social skills.

Following the training, staff are expected to embed the knowledge they have learnt in the training by focusing on a key message and changing their practice.

**Who is it for?** Any staff working directly with children and young people, particularly those staff working in early years and early level classes.

**How long does it last?** One and a half hours training session.

**How to access it?** Contact the Speech and Language Therapy Service

### **Loss and Change**

#### **Change, Loss, Bereavement**

There is increasing concern about the emotional needs of children and young people experiencing bereavement and loss. There is also evidence that some children and young people who have experienced the death of a parent are at increased risk of developing mental health problems. While most do not require professional help, they do need support with the process of grieving and adjustment. Such support will reduce the potential social and academic effects of feelings that may not have been expressed.

This programme raises awareness of change, loss & bereavement (C,L&B)

- To think about our own responses and understanding of C,L&B
- To consider our ability to respond appropriately to those experiencing C,L&B

- To consider the impact these events can have for a child and their resulting ability to engage with learning and day to day activities.

For participants to leave feeling more confident in responding to C,L&B issues and to be aware of resources to support them in doing so. Please be aware that for some people the content of this course may impact on their ability to engage with some of the activities/discussion.

**Who is it for?** Staff working with CYP & Families, third sector partners.

**How long does it last?** 3 hours

**How to access it?** Contact Highland Council Psychological Service. The Highland Council Policy on Palliative Care, Change, Loss and Bereavement can be found here [www.highland.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/18031/trauma\\_loss.pdf](http://www.highland.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/18031/trauma_loss.pdf)

### **Emotional Cycles of Separation**

There are an increasing number of children from the forces being identified and this training highlights some of the unique challenges faced by learners. It raises and increases awareness of issues and emotional impact when a parent is deployment or away on training expeditions. Strategies of how staff can support and meet the learner's needs are explored through activities focusing on protective factors, positive interactions and strategies. Part of this training involves listening, discussion and activities around the "Forces Kids – This is My Life" DVD – hearing direct from children and young people.

**Who is it for?** All staff and particular staff from schools with service children.

**How long does it last?** approximately 1½ hours

**How to access it?** Contact louise.kinnear2@highland.gov.uk

### **Seasons for Growth**

Seasons for Growth is a loss and grief education programme provided to children and young people between the ages of 6-18. The core element of the programme is the social and emotional wellbeing of young people who have experienced loss, for example, due to death or family breakdown. There is now substantial evidence indicating the programme makes a very positive contribution to the social and emotional wellbeing of children.

There is also an adult programme available. Seasons for Growth aims to build resilience and bring hope and confidence to adults who have experienced significant change or loss.

Notre Dame Centre is the national license holder for Seasons for Growth

**Who is it for?** Adults who work with children/young people who have dealt with loss, change and / or bereavement would undertake the Children /young people programme. Adults who support adults who have dealt with loss, change and or bereavement including but not exclusively the parents of children who are /will attend the children/young people programme would undertake the Adult programme.

**How long does it last?** 2 full days followed by re-connectors

**How to access it?** Contact Highland Council Psychological Service

### **Seasons for Growth Awareness Raising**

This session will raise awareness of the Seasons for Growth programme. Senior Managers having an understanding of the programme will ensure that it is appropriately and correctly run in schools and establishments. The raising awareness session will support Senior Managers to:

- appropriately support staff who are companions
- identify a wide range of children and young people who might benefit from attending this programme
- understand the expectations of the programme and expected outcomes

This session will also provide Senior Managers with information on how it is possible to track and monitor changing outcomes for children who have attended the programme. It is highly recommended that managers attend this training prior to companions attending the Seasons for Growth training.

**Who is it for?** Anyone who has responsibility for managing a companion e.g. SMT of schools, Managers of CSWs

**How long does it last?** 1 ½ hours

**How to access it?** Contact Highland Council Psychological Service

### **Transition**

Transition is part of the 'Building Positive Relationships' series. The purpose of this programme is to provide pupils with the skills and confidence to facilitate transitions from primary to secondary school. The programme comprises a series of six lessons which are intended to be used as an integrated programme.

**Who is it for?** Pupils

**How long does it last?** Approximately 6 hours.

**How to access it?** Contact Highland Council Psychological Service

### **Welcome Pack – positive transitions**

Moving school has been identified by John Hattie as having a significant impact on the learning of children and young people. Research tells us that for some groups moving school can happen more frequently. Groups such as EAL pupils, Gypsy/Traveller pupils, Care Experienced pupils, pupils with parents in the military forces etc. Much emphasis has been placed on transition in recent years and positive work has been done around the usual nursery to primary, primary to secondary and secondary to post-school transitions however much less has been done around transitions out with these times. Research tells us that the welcome and goodbye that a young person experiences can make a huge difference to them.

This session explores some of the psychology behind these transitions as well as looking at practical strategies.

**Who is it for?** Staff working with children and young people

**How long does it last?** Approximately 2 hours.

**How to access it?** Contact Highland Council Psychological Service

## **Mental Health**

A range of helpful resources to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people can be found on the education Scotland website here:

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/resources-for-school-staff-to-support-positive-mental-wellbeing-of-children-and-young-people/>

### **ASIST**

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) is intended as 'suicide first-aid' training. ASIST aims to enable helpers (anyone in a position of trust) to become more willing, ready and able to recognise and intervene effectively to help persons at risk of suicide. As a suicide intervention programme it is based on certain fundamental assumptions about suicide:

- suicide is a community-wide health problem
- suicide is not mental illness
- thoughts of suicide are understandable, complex and personal
- suicide can be prevented
- most people with thoughts of suicide want to live
- most people with thoughts of suicide indicate, directly or indirectly, that they want help to live
- help-seeking is encouraged by open, direct and honest talk about suicide
- the best way to identify people with thoughts of suicide is to ask them directly about their thoughts
- relationships are the context of suicide intervention
- intervention should be the main suicide prevention focus
- cooperation is the essence of intervention
- intervention skills are known and can be learned
- large numbers of people can be taught intervention skills
- evidence of effectiveness should be broadly defined.

**Who is it for?** Children's services staff

**How long does it last?** 2 days

**How to access it?** Primary Mental Health Worker Service

### **Mental Health Awareness**

The course offers basic general information about mental health issues. It does not train people to be mental health workers. The knowledge presented and understanding developed in the course helps to remove stigma and fear and to give confidence in approaching a young person in distress. Mental Health First Aid is an initial response to distress and all participants on the course understand that this help is given only until other suitable or professional help can be found

**Who is it for?** Children's services staff working with children and young people

**How long does it last?** 3 hours

**How to access it?** Primary Mental Health Worker Service

### **safeTALK**

safeTALK is intended as "**suicide alertness**" training. safeTALK teaches you to recognise persons with thoughts of suicide and to connect them to suicide intervention resources. It is designed for communities or organisations that already have ASIST trained helpers in place to maximise intervention as the main suicide prevention focus. safeTALK complements ASIST and other intervention training courses.

Participants learn how to provide practical help to persons with thoughts of suicide. safeTALK prepares participants to activate a suicide alert by following the TALK (Tell, Ask, Listen and KeepSafe) steps.

**Who is it for?** Children's services staff

**How long does it last?** approximately 3 hours or a half day

**How to access it?** Primary Mental Health Worker Service

### **Understanding and responding to Self-Harm**

This programme provides an opportunity to explore:

- What we mean by self-harm
- Why young people use self-harm
- Pressures that may lead to young people using self-harm
- How to respond to and support young people who are using self-harm
- 

**Who is it for?** It is ideal for those working with young people who would like to develop their understanding of self-harm and how to support young people in distress.

**How long does it last?** 1-2 hrs

**How to access it?** Primary Mental Health Worker Service

### **Understanding Depression**

This programme offers an opportunity to explore:

- Definitions and up to date evidence base
- National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines
- Anxiety and depression manifestations
- Helpful strategies

**Who is it for?** It is ideal for those working with young people who would like to develop their understanding of depression and how to support young people in distress.

**How long does it last?** 1-2hrs

**How to access it?** Primary Mental Health Worker Service

## Nurturing Approaches

Nurturing Approaches is a means of supporting both Health and Wellbeing and attainment through a balance of care and challenge. A whole school Nurturing Approach is a helpful framework for schools to enhance their knowledge and understanding of how all children and young people develop and learn whilst focusing on those who need specific targeted support.

### **Nurture for All**

Nurture for All is a programme developed from the Education Scotland whole school nurture CPD programme. It includes eight modules aimed at implementing this relational approach at a whole school level and includes; Introduction and the evolution of nurture, Attachment and Resilience in the Early Years, Nurturing the developing brain, Nurturing Principles, Targeting support through a nurturing approach, implementation, self-evaluation. Following each module, there will be opportunities for small test-of-change projects to support the implementation of theory into practice. The programme is currently in its second wave of piloting.

**Who is it for?** All adults in the school community including; Early Years Practitioners, Teachers, PSAs, janitor and clerical.

**How long does it last?** minimum 26 hours.

**How to access it?** Contact Highland Council Psychological Service

### **Nurture Group**

Nurture Group training explains the psychology behind nurture, as well as offering practical advice for how it works in practice. It is essential for any professional who wishes to set up a nurture group or wishes to develop their understanding of nurture and for those planning to promote a whole school nurturing ethos as part of a Nurture for All implementation team. It is also useful for educators who are working with, or who come into contact with children with social, emotional and behavioural needs.

**Who is it for?** School SMT, Nurture Group teachers, and support staff.

**How long does it last?** Approximately 12 hours. Delivered over two consecutive days.

**How to access it?** Contact Highland Council Psychological Service

## Reflective Practice

### **Coaching and Reflecting**

Coaching is most successful when it encourages reflection by both the coach and coachee. Based on solution focused thinking the emphasis of this course is a positive way to ask thought provoking questions in a safe environment. It can be

helpful when working with children, parents and colleagues. The programme provides participants with tools such as looking for 'preferred futures', 'exceptions', 'scaling' and the 'miracle question' to enable high quality, thoughtful dialogues. Reflection is linked to this as coaching techniques allow both coach and coachee to develop a shared understanding through meaningful interactions. By goal-setting and developing solution-focused approaches participants are encouraged to enhance coaching in their own setting. This programme is [GTCS and SCEL accredited](#).

**Who is it for?** Helpful to Headteachers, SMT and those working in our learning communities

**How long does it last?** minimum 12 hours. Delivered as a two day training centrally and can be arranged as ASG training over 4 after school sessions

**How to access it?** Contact Highland Council Psychological Service

### **Working reflectively with Children and Young People**

This training programme aims to raise awareness of the difficulties vulnerable children face and the importance of building positive and attuned relationships as well as exploring strategies for Pupil Support Assistants to use to support learning. Session one considers the theory behind solution focused approaches and communication, particularly interaction, while session two looks to apply solution focused approaches through introducing tools and strategies. Session two also considers risk and resilience and the effect poverty can have on learning.

**Who is it for?** PSAs

**How long does it last?** 2 x 3 Hour Sessions with a break of at least two weeks between sessions, with ideally 60 minute reconnectors at 6 week intervals. The interim period is for staff to implement and reflect on the theory and suggestions.

**How to access it?** Contact Highland Council Psychological Service

## **Resilience**

### **Feelings and Friendships**

Feelings and Friendships is a programme of six lessons about emotions and six lessons about friendship, with the final lesson being a certificate and celebration session. These lessons have been developed to help provide pupils with the skills and confidence to develop friendships. The lessons are suitable for middle and upper classes (8-11 years) with only an adjustment of language and depth of discussion needed to suit the different stages.

**Who is it for?** Pupils

**How long does it last?** Approximately 7 hours.

**How to access it?** Contact Highland Council Psychological Service

### **Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Scotland**

The aims of the MVP Programme are simple and straightforward, They are: to raise awareness, to challenge attitudes, to open dialogue and to inspire leadership.

The MVP Programme is a peer mentoring programme. It is a leadership programme and provides an excellent opportunity to develop leadership skills amongst young people. The programme seeks to inspire individual leadership from people faced with challenging situations. After discussing a particular issue the bystander is offered with a range of safe and realistic options they could use to prevent an escalation in behaviours. Further information can be found here:

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/practice-exemplars/mentors-for-violence-prevention-mvp-an-overview/> and here: <https://youtu.be/wIuJ5QqVAPo>

**Who is it for?** Staff and Pupils

**How long does it last?** Once schools receive the initial two day training, the next task is to recruit and train a team of MVP mentors from the upper part of the school.

**How to access it?** Contact linda.thom@highland.gov.uk

### **Resilient Kids & Resilience 4 Life**

Resilient Kids currently comprises of four resource packs which have been developed by educational psychologists in conjunction with children's services colleagues. The packs have been written and piloted in collaboration with schools, seeking feedback from colleagues and young people. Each course takes a universal approach targeting all children in a class, rather than just a small group, and involves the participation of the class teacher where possible. The underlying ethos of Resilient Kids is that every contribution is valued and where focused group work is offered effectively without excluding or stigmatising vulnerable groups. All children in classes are taught important skills in a context where empathy and positive attitudes are fostered. The packs are for use at different times: nursery to primary transition; middle primary; primary seven (pre transition to secondary) and lower secondary school (called Resilience 4 Life).

**Who is it for?** Teachers, CSW, YDO,

**How long does it last?** Approximately 6 hours or 1 day

**How to access it?** Contact Highland Council Psychological Service

### **Roots of Empathy**

At the heart of the program is a baby and their parent who visit the classroom nine times over the school year (once per theme). In Highland we run the program from October through to the following June. A trained Roots of Empathy Instructor coaches pupils to observe the Baby's development and to label the baby's feelings. In this experiential learning, the baby is the " Teacher" and through the baby the Instructor helps the children to identify and reflect on their own feelings and the feelings of others.

The programme aims to foster the development of empathy, develop emotional literacy and in turn reduce levels of bullying and aggression. It increases emotional

and social learning preparing pupils for responsible citizenship and responsive parenting.

**Who is it for?** Pupils

**How long does it last?** The programme runs on a weekly basis for 27 weeks, covering 9 different themes.

**How to access it?** Contact [linda.thom@highland.gov.uk](mailto:linda.thom@highland.gov.uk)

## **Restorative Approaches**

Restorative approaches can change the emotional atmosphere in a school and lead to more positive relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff. Conflict should be reduced and resolved more quickly.

**Conflict Resolution**

The purpose of this programme is to help children learn how to reduce the number of conflicts in which they may become involved and how to avoid the more destructive / serious aspects of them. Conflicts are defined as (usually sudden, sharp) arguments, clashes or disagreements between people. Conflicts, whilst being a normal part of everyday life, can have a negative and destructive effect on it. The programme comprises a series of seven lessons which are designed for upper primary school pupils, aged around 10 to 11 years (primary 6/7), but can easily be adjusted to suit other age groups.

**Who is it for?** Pupils

**How long does it last?** Approximately 6 hours.

**How to access it?** Contact [linda.thom@highland.gov.uk](mailto:linda.thom@highland.gov.uk)

**Peer Mediation**

Peer mediation is a process where children and young people are offered the opportunity to act as peer mediators. The peer mediator takes responsibility for supporting younger children in the school to find a solution to their issue. Training is available for children or young people who volunteer to become a peer mediator. They will learn invaluable skills eg listening skills and understanding feelings, and contribute to more positive relationships between pupils with a focus on strengthening and repairing relationships.

**Who is it for?** Pupils

**How long does it last?** minimum 3 hours.

**How to access it?** Contact [linda.thom@highland.gov.uk](mailto:linda.thom@highland.gov.uk)

**Restorative Practice**

Training is available for adults to support the restorative approach and will include developing listening skills, empathy, use of language including body language and understanding situations from another person's point of view. Through the help of

trained practitioners who facilitate the process in a carefully scripted approach, pupils accept responsibility for their actions, recognise the harm and upset caused and are supported to find restorative responses to harmful actions. Developing positive, supportive relationships is key and these can be developed through activities such as circle time and peer support. As part of the restorative approach, schools will decide on an appropriate timescale to review incidents, check that issues have been resolved and that children and young people are happy and progressing well.

**Who is it for?** Teaching and support staff

**How long does it last?** Approximately 6 hours.

**How to access it?** Contact [linda.thom@highland.gov.uk](mailto:linda.thom@highland.gov.uk)

## **Solution Focused Approaches**

### **Solution Focused Practice**

Solution focused practice consists of a range of approaches to solving problems that are both effective and rewarding. By emphasising strengths and resources, it has a natural appeal to families and young people in difficulty. The Solution Focused Practice training covers many aspects of work where a solution focused approach might be helpful. In the morning there will be an introduction to solution focused principles and tools, and opportunities to practice these in ways that are relevant to participant's profession. The afternoon will look at formal solution focused meetings, and how to make these effective.

Solution focused working can be effective as a way of: structuring formal meetings, having short conversations with colleagues or children and young people, in-depth work with an individual over a period, or one-off sessions, changing the ethos of a group, class or organisation, building team approaches, providing staff support and development.

**Who is it for?** Those in Family Teams, ASN teams and work in schools.

**How long does it last?** minimum 6 hours.

**How to access it?** Contact Highland Council Psychological Service

## **Video Interaction Guidance**

This is training for professionals to become Video Interaction Guidance (VIG) guiders. VIG is a technique which aims to improve communication and relationships between participants. It involves participants viewing and discussing very short recordings of their successful interactions with a video interaction guider. AVIGuk is the professional body for VIG.

### **VIG briefing session**

Briefing sessions are also available for those interesting in learning more about the approach before attending the initial training.

**Who is it for?** Any staff teams working with children/young people...

**How long does it last?** minimum 2 hours.

**How to access it?** Contact Highland Council Psychological Service

### **VIG initial Training**

The initial training is a two-day course. Thereafter, the guider will be offered supervision, if they wish to use VIG in their practice.

**Who is it for?** Staff who work directly with children/young people and who therefore would be able to use VIG in their day-to-day practice. Management support in advance is essential...

**How long does it last?** minimum 12 hours.

**How to access it?** Contact Highland Council Psychological Service

## **Wellbeing**

'The concept of wellbeing comprises two main elements: feeling good and functioning well. Feelings of happiness, contentment, enjoyment, curiosity and engagement are characteristics of someone who has a positive experience in their life. Equally important for wellbeing is our functioning in the world. Experiencing positive relationships, having some control over one's life and having a sense of purpose are all important attributes of wellbeing.' (Huppert, 2008)

### **My Rights to Wellbeing**

This co-operative learning programme is universally targeted for P6 pupils. The aim is for pupils to gain a deeper understanding of their own whole wellbeing through self-reflection and making links to UNCRC to increase their responsibility and engagement with their Rights. It is underpinned by the principles of the Highland Practice Model and develops self-awareness and confidence in self-assessing and increasing pupils own wellbeing. The programme promotes positive interactions, relational trust, gains voices safely and creates opportunities to understand and share feelings and identify ways that can increase their own wellbeing. It embeds the language of wellbeing and emotional literacy organically grows.

**Who is it for?** Pupils

**How long does it last?** It runs weekly for a full term and is delivered and modelled to school staff by a member of the PPR team.

**How to access it?** Contact [louise.kinnear2@highland.gov.uk](mailto:louise.kinnear2@highland.gov.uk) who can deliver Train the Trainers courses and once trained, staff can then deliver the programme as required.

### **Ways 2 Wellbeing for staff**

Staff wellbeing is critical to effective, positive relationships in our learning communities and ultimately for children's learning and development.

This training has been designed for adults and is based on the 'Ways to Wellbeing' handbook. The workshop provides information and activities taken from positive psychology and the psychology of wellbeing. It can be used for rating and improving five key aspects of individual wellbeing, team and organisation wellbeing and that of client groups. It is therefore useful for personal and Continuing Professional Development.

**Who is it for?** Children's service staff

**How long does it last?** Approximately 3 hours.

**How to access it?** Contact Highland Council Psychological Service

**Wellbeing - staff and pupil wellbeing go hand in hand**

Staff wellbeing and pupil wellbeing are complementary to each other; both are needed for a school community to flourish socially and academically. This works best when wellbeing is seen as a proactive and universal approach to pupil experiences in school and with Curriculum for Excellence it is the responsibility of all staff to promote this.

This workshop builds on the positively evaluated 'Ways to Wellbeing' pack and is targeted at those with a responsibility for wellbeing. The session considers the importance of a whole school approach to wellbeing and how schools can make a difference to pupil wellbeing. It also enables participants to reflect on their own wellbeing and how they might make a difference in their own setting.

**Who is it for?** Children's services Staff particularly those in a position to influence policy and practice in schools

**How long does it last?** Approximately 3 hours.

**How to access it?** Contact Highland Council Psychological Service

**The training programmes listed above are all offered on a regular basis. In addition, bespoke training is available on request, following a needs analysis.**

**Each training programme will have its own requirements and the named service can be contacted to clarify these details.**

**If you require any further information regarding training in promoting positive relationships, please contact: [linda.thom@highland.gov.uk](mailto:linda.thom@highland.gov.uk) who will direct your message to the relevant person.**

**Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** - a wide range of circumstances and experiences that impact on a child's development through heightened and unsupported stress, gaps in care and stimulation, or material deprivation. The term is used in some studies in a more restricted sense – in Highland we take an adverse experience to be any that in an on-going or severe way compromises whether a child is safe,.

**Attunement** – being attentive, sensitive and empathetic to another person; noticing emotions and cues, and being able to adapt their response in accordance.

**De-escalation** – the adult managing their own emotions and then, from a position of calm, helping the child or young person to manage theirs so that positive relationships and learning can be maintained

**Distressed behaviour** – behaviour that is an expression of an emotional state of distress, usually resulting from an unmet need or the experience of not being at least one of safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible or included

**Emotional Literacy** – being self aware ie able to understand and manage your own emotions, as they impact your day to day life and understand and manage other's emotions linked to this. (There's a table from EL 8 day course which it might be good to insert)

**Loss and Change** – the most frequently thought of example would be bereavement (family, friends, pets etc) but this covers a much broader area. Other examples would be moving house, changing school, parental separation, forces children, offshore workers.

**Nurture** - 'the care and attention given to someone or something that is growing or developing' (Merriam and Webster, 2016)

**Nurture Group** - The emphasis within a nurture group is on emotional growth, focusing on offering broad-based experiences in an environment that promotes security, routines, clear boundaries and carefully planned, repetitive learning opportunities. The aim is to enable children and young people to fully meet their potential in mainstream schools.

**Nurturing Approaches** - recognises that positive relationships are central to both learning and wellbeing, with a key focus on the school environment. These emphasise the balance between care and challenge which incorporates attunement, warmth and connection alongside structure, high expectations and a focus on achievement and attainment

**Resilience** – the gradual development over time and through experiences of positive relationships and support of an ability to recover from mental, physical or emotional crisis.

**Restorative Approaches** – a relational and solution focussed way of repairing relationships after conflict.

**Solution Focused Approaches** – a positive way of reframing problems to help people move towards solutions rather than getting “stuck” in the problems.

**Trauma informed practice** – based on the recognition that many children, families and staff have experienced psychological trauma that may affect their day to day coping in a wide range of ways. Curriculum includes self-regulation and classroom practice is sensitive to relations between emotions and learning. Behaviour is understood in terms of emotion and intervention aims to reduce feelings of unsafety and help people manage strong emotions. Also includes strong links with effective support specialists.

**Toxic stress** –when children have experienced psychological trauma, or on-going high stress, in the absence of support and positive relationships. They may in future react to an apparently "normal" or "safe" situation as if it is repeated trauma.

**Unmet need** - behaviour can be a communication of unmet need: meeting the need will result in improved behaviour, as will helping the child learn and practice more adaptive ways of communicating need.

**Wellbeing** – Nationally agreed indicators of a child experiencing wellbeing: Safe; Healthy; Achieving; Nurtured; Active; Respected; Responsible and Included. For more, see Practice Model Guidance

**Wellbeing indicators** – SHANARRI

**Visioning** – an approach to change management to help shape a positive school ethos – see training directory for more information

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