

Premier's Anika Foundation Youth Depression Awareness Scholarship

Scottish Approaches to the Mental Health and Well-being of Children and Adolescents

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Introduction

The Anika Foundation Youth Depression Awareness Scholarship is an inaugural award which provided school counsellors with their first opportunity to apply for a NSW Premier's scholarship. Regardless of the icy weather of a Scottish winter, I decided February in Scotland was the place to be, as there was to be a national review of improvements in mental health and well-being workers were unsure as to whether current projects would still be in existence if I left on my journey any later. As an addendum to my study tour of Scotland I was accepted into a seven day Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) Teacher Development Retreat in Northern Wales.

Rationale

In 2005 an alliance of 53 European Health Ministers, including the Scottish Minister, signed a declaration to promote emotional well-being in education. The Scottish Executive developed the *National Program for Improving Mental Health and Well-Being: Action Plan in 2003-2006*, with a national review being conducted during 2007. By June 2007 all Scottish schools completed a self-evaluation audit designed to indicate what they were achieving in relation to the six characteristics of health promoting schools described in the *Being Well, Doing Well* document (2004). Audits were reviewed by various councils and National Health Service (NHS) staff. Quality Improvement Officers then moderated the audits, giving feedback to individual schools. Feedback on general trends within clusters was conducted by councils and NHS staff throughout the Scottish autumn of 2007.

The *Health Promotion and Nutrition Act (2007)* sought guidance from all areas of health, resulting in a very comprehensive set of guidelines. It stipulates that schools are to 'promote the physical, social, mental and emotional health and well-being of pupils'. As a result of enhanced pay and conditions through the McCrone Agreement (2001), all Scottish teachers have a pastoral role within their work duties – 'promoting and safeguarding the health, welfare and safety of pupils'.

In October 2007 the Scottish Government's discussion paper *Towards a Mentally Flourishing Scotland: The Future of Mental Health Improvement in Scotland 2008-11* was published. This document was out for consultation across national and local organisations throughout Scotland and was to be forwarded to the Scottish Government in early March 2008. An Action Plan was to be developed by the Scottish Government for national and local implementation from April 2008 to March 2011.

Edinburgh

The first week of my study tour was centred in Edinburgh. Mary Sparling, the Lead Officer, from Heads Up Scotland was the first person I visited. Mary has a national role in championing *The Mental Health of Children and Young People: A Framework for Promotion, Prevention and Care*, and also facilitating co-ordination between the NHS, education, the voluntary sector and other partnering agencies.

Patricia Santelices and Naomi Stewart from the Growing Confidence project, City of Edinburgh Council, kindly organised my very comprehensive four day itinerary in Edinburgh. The Growing Confidence project is funded through The National Lottery and aims to promote positive mental health and emotional well-being by targeting four main areas: adults working with children and young people, young people, children and parents; and carers of children and young people. At the time of my visit Patricia was developing a multidisciplinary 25 hour *Continuing Professional Development (CPD)* program in key areas such as resilience, attachment and optimism to support the development of emotional well-being in staff as well as in the children and young

people with whom they work. Other areas Patricia was working on were one to one coaching and work-shadowing for staff.



Cathryn Bourne with Naomi Stewart, Creating Confidence Project, Waverley Court, Edinburgh.
The logo on the stained glass mural is 'Think global act local'.

Naomi and I visited the Dinosaur School and observed a morning session of *The Incredible Years* program. The session we observed was run by two workers, one of whom used a large puppet to teach social and behavioural skills to a small group of eight year olds. The Dinosaur Child Training Program targets four to eight year old children who are highly aggressive and display behaviours indicative of early onset conduct disorder. It involves weekly two hour sessions lasting over a twenty to 22-week period and is offered in conjunction with two hour weekly parent group sessions. It is a comprehensive and well researched Seattle based treatment program which strengthens children's social, emotional and academic competencies. It also includes teacher training and involves regular and close liaison between the therapists and each child's class teacher.

I then travelled out to Broomhouse Primary School, meeting Sascha Macleod from the BIG Project. The BIG Project is funded by Edinburgh Council and provides services to children and young people from across five secondary and six primary schools. The BIG Project is run outside of school hours and offers opportunities for personal growth, assisting children and young people to develop life skills, confidence and self esteem. The BIG Project runs a 'twin track' approach, having open access to all children and young people in the community as well as those experiencing difficulties in their lives or in the community.

The next day I met Sally Wills, a clinical psychologist from Young Minds. Over an 18 month period Sally has been piloting a systemic approach to developing emotional resilience in the Denny cluster of schools in Falkirk. The focus of the project is supporting the transition of students from primary to high school. For students in the Primary 7 (P7) which is equivalent to NSW Year 6, the class teachers implemented the *Creating Confident Kids* program as part of *Personal Health and Social Education Curriculum*. A universal transition program was also implemented prior to entry to high school and a

targeted project was implemented to support the ongoing transition of vulnerable students.

A series of training workshops for P7 and Secondary 1 (NSW Year 7) teaching staff was implemented to promote confidence and understanding of emotional well-being of self and others. A heightened awareness and knowledge of resilience and emotional well-being was also provided to relevant teaching staff through professional development in the area of emotional literacy. Staff from other agencies were also provided with information sessions on the content and purpose of the project and offered participation in the teaching staff training. Parents and carers were provided with information sessions and a series of workshops to raise awareness of resilience and emotional well-being. Workshops were also provided for all Head Teachers (Principals) on *Building a Resilient School Culture*.

I then met with Julia Johnson, an educational psychologist who described her role as focusing on learning and behaviour - including consultation, assessments, intervention programs, research and training and evaluating programs. A number of schools in Julia's area were implementing the Australian program, *Seasons for Growth*. Naomi was also working with a number of schools which were using this program.

Margo Morris, the Youth Services Manager-Strategic Planning - Children and Families Department discussed the *Youngedinburgh Strategy 2006-2010*, *Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership*, *Action Research Toolkit* and research findings on the views of young people living in Edinburgh. The Edinburgh Youth Council (EYC) has over one hundred active local groups, one representative from each local EYC is on the Executive EYC group and EYC representatives have a voice in full Council Meetings, as well as sitting on several Council committees, such as the Young Edinburgh Youth Services Advisory Committee.

The next morning I visited Mags Carmichael, Principal Teacher Pupil Support (NSW Head Teacher) at the Behaviour Support Base at Firrhill High School. This program offers both *In Class Behaviour Support* as well as a Support Base for students with a wide range of individual needs. Mags allowed me to sit in on her class, observing and assisting students when needed.

Later, I visited Gracemount High School and participated in the final session of a Multi-Family group run by a guidance teacher, social worker and youth worker, Iain Twaddle. The group comprised six Secondary 8 (S8) students with a broad range of needs (school anxiety, depressive behaviours and disruptive behaviours) who were considered at risk of dropping out of school. Groups run for one session per week for the term and both students and parents are encouraged to attend. One parent was present at the session I attended and held an active and respected position within the group.

Both parents and children are surveyed at the beginning of the program to identify their needs and goals. Rather than using a structured program, the content evolves each week and focuses on addressing both the ongoing and more immediate needs of individuals within the group using high interest materials and activities. 'Getting to know you' activities play a big part in initial group sessions. Attempting to improve communication and understanding between the parents and children, as well as improve parents' knowledge, perceptions and understanding of the role and workings of the school are key aims of the group. Each session includes a brief self-assessment as well as feedback from class teachers on each student's progress in meeting identified individual goals throughout the week.

Naomi and I attended an evening presentation to Edinburgh Nursery (Preschool) staff by Patricia Santelices on the importance of nurturing the whole child, raising awareness of the importance of emotional well-being and connectedness between the child and parent. Patricia also offered staff and parent training through the Growing Confidence project.

On my last day in Edinburgh I visited Moira Hood from the Place2Be project at Canal View Primary School. Place2Be (P2B) is a charity based service and was set up in the United Kingdom (UK) in 1994, reportedly in response to a young child disclosing to his principal that he was having suicidal thoughts. Moira explained Place2Talk which operates during lunchtimes. Children refer themselves by posting a referral form in a dedicated P2B letterbox within the school. There are lower and upper primary referral forms - younger children just write their name, class and there is a face on which to draw how they're feeling. The children are all given referral slips by Moira at the beginning of each school year.

P2B works with children in a small group one hour a week over an 8 week period. Dependent on need children may be also seen on a 1:1 basis for 45-50 minutes a week for anything from eight weeks to 12 months. Canal View Primary has a substantially sized room dedicated for P2B with a large number of resources, enabling play, art and music therapy to be conducted. As manager Moira provides daily supervision to new therapists, reviewing their therapeutic practice and allowing them to externalise issues which may have arisen during the session. P2B has a very positive impact on students' learning, school attendance and behaviour.

I then travelled to James Gillespies High School to meet a guidance teacher and school counsellor, Susan McIvor. Susan is very highly respected in the 'helping' community in Edinburgh. At James Gillespies she has both teaching and school counselling duties. James Gillespies has a vertical roll system, which allows teachers to become much more familiar with whole family groups and maintain a relationship with students as they grow through their high school years. Students at James Gillespies have *Personal Health and Social Education Curriculum* lessons taught by the same teacher from the commencement of high school through to S6.

Falkirk

Graeme King, Principal Educational Psychologist at Falkirk, detailed the following initiatives in which he is involved:

- *Healthy, Active and Happy Children*, an annual parent conference held in the last term of P7 prior to children's enrolment in high school. As well as the more practical sessions on daily high school life, sessions were presented on stress management, adolescent brain development, mental health and mental illnesses and parenting teenagers.
- *Psychology for Life*, a one day conference for S6 students on topics which promote life-long resilience and well-being.
- **Infant Mental Health: Observational Skills Training* focused on increasing workers skills in making more informed assessments of parent and young child relationships.

Graeme also described the structure of Falkirk educational psychologists' Peer Supervision. He gave me a brief overview of the self-evaluation toolkit and self-evaluation for quality improvement documents for educational psychologists in Scotland.

Aberdeen

In Aberdeen I visited National Development Officers, Gill Scott and Terry Ashton from Personal Support in Schools. Gill's role is to support local authorities to implement the ten standards of personal support within the *Healthy, Safe and Achieving Their Potential* (HSAP) framework, as well as collect and disseminate information on interesting practice in Personal Support. I attended a volunteers interagency meeting with Terry, this included information on the Neighbourhood Network structure established by Aberdeen City Council. Neighbourhood Networks aim to ensure people and communities are genuinely engaged in the decisions made on public services which affect them.

Glasgow

In Glasgow I visited Susan Dobson at Childline, a help line service run by trained volunteers for children and young people. Childline has very strong links with social work, education and police. It provides an outreach service to schools, running programs for students, teachers and parents in areas of identified need. Susan reported that about a quarter of Childline's referrals were in relation to bullying. Susan also mentioned research Childline commissioned which indicated Solution-Focused therapy was the counselling technique most preferred by 10-16 year old males experiencing mental health issues.

I then visited Nicola Backler from Choose Life, *A National Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent Suicide in Scotland*. Choose Life focuses on preventing suicide across all ages within communities, educating and raising awareness of suicide prevention, delivering prevention and intervention actions, providing practical support to those affected by suicide and achieving wide ownership of suicide prevention and involving a range of partners both at a national and local level through Community Planning Partnerships (CPP). Suicide is the biggest killer of young people in Scotland. The Scottish Executive has set a target for this national strategy of a 20 percent reduction in suicide by 2013.

Scotland seems to have an open approach to training people in suicide intervention; examples of such programs are Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) which has trained over 8,000 people and SuicideTALK.

Dumfries and Galloway

In Dumfries, Jocelyn Rose from Choose Life, facilitated my attendance at a Health Promoting Schools Steering Mental Health Subgroup where I presented information on the NSW Premier's Anika Foundation Youth Depression Awareness Scholarship, the role of school counsellors in NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) and the welfare structure within NSW DET schools.

I met with Lynne Cuddihy, a Primary Mental Health Worker with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Lynne's role incorporates educating, consulting and supporting workers in the field as well as providing therapeutic intervention to children and adolescents. I also attended the Dumfries & Galloway consultation on *Towards a Mentally Flourishing Scotland*, presented by Gregor Henderson on behalf of the Scottish Executive. David Mackie, Education Officer, Dumfries and Galloway Council, then explained *Being Well Doing Well*, a Dumfries & Galloway program for 'Primary Head Teachers to consider issues of Personal and Professional Well Being' written and presented by Joanne Johnston, an educational psychologist and Anne Minto, an education officer with previous Head Teacher experience. Through solution oriented approaches the program explores the challenges to Head Teachers' emotional health and

well-being of being at work, it also provided practical relaxation sessions and the opportunity to meet and gain support from colleagues.

Trigonos – Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy Teacher Development Retreat

A pre-requisite for my attendance at the Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) Retreat was to independently complete the eight week course, as presented in *The Mindful Way through Depression* by M.Williams, J.Teasdale, Z.Segal and J.Kabat-Zinn , as well as reading two other texts on MBCT and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction. MBCT is a blending of mindfulness meditation and cognitive behaviour techniques and has been proven effective in preventing relapses in depression. In order to teach MBCT techniques it is expected the practitioner understands and practises meditation and mindfulness in everyday life. David Elias and Annee Griffiths from the Centre for Mindfulness Research & Practice, Bangor University, were the instructors for the course.



MBCT Instructors Annee Griffiths, David Elias with Cathryn Bourne at Trigonos

The retreat included 58 hours of teacher training in Mindfulness-Based approaches, including meditative practice throughout the day, periods of silence, journal writing, modelling of the teachings of the eight week MBCT for Depression course, role play and practice teaching MBCT techniques.

Conclusion

I believe the Scottish Executive's enactment of legislation addressing the mental health and well-being of children and young people has endowed agencies with the authority to continue their leading edge work. The workers I was privileged to meet during my study tour were genuinely inspirational, in their passion, innovation and dedication to the mental health and well-being of the young people of Scotland. As well as interest in specific individual preventative programs, the aspects which are currently impacting on my thoughts and work practice are:-

- actively working within an interagency framework to collaboratively identify and address the needs of children and adolescents through appropriate interventions,
- taking the time to survey young people's needs and evaluating the effectiveness of preventative programs,
- working from an holistic viewpoint which actively includes parental involvement into the spectrum of support for young people
- the importance of an effective state or regionally based supervision framework for school counsellors which is developed and monitored by personnel with extensive guidance experience, and incorporates reasonable time allocations for both peer and executive supervision. I believe such a collegial and professional framework would heighten counsellors' effectiveness, particularly when working on difficult cases.
- emotional literacy training to educate and raise awareness within teaching staff of their own emotional literacy levels and training staff to teach emotional literacy to students.

I have incorporated MBCT within my counselling framework and use it when working with students displaying depressive behaviours. The MBCT teachings and its belief that the therapist needs to practise meditation and mindfulness within everyday life has confirmed in me the importance of school counsellors maintaining healthy levels of emotional and mental well-being in order to best help students achieve optimum levels of mental health.

Resources

www.youngedinburgh.com

Viewfinder 2 Youngedinburgh surveys, City of Edinburgh Council.

Campbell, R. and Berry, H.A (2001) *Action Research Toolkit, Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Program*

www.youthinclusion.org

Being Well-Doing Well a Framework for Health Promoting Schools in Scotland.

www.scotland.gov.uk

Moving Forward. A Strategy for Improving Young People's Chances through Youth Work. Scottish Executive. www.scotland.gov.uk

Personal Support in Schools HSAP. www.scotland.gov.uk

Emotional Literacy in Action. DVD - Faculty of Education, University of Strathclyde.

Quality Management in Local Authority Educational Psychology Services. Parts 1 and 2. (Self-evaluation for quality improvement and Self-evaluation toolkit) HM Inspectorate of Education 2007.

www.depressioninteenagers.com (interactive computer program)

www.sparklebox.com.uk (free feelings cards)

www.fischy.com (positive music for children)

www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness

The Mindful Way through Depression, Williams,M., Teasdale,J., Segal,Z. and Kabat-Zinn,J., 2007, The Guildford Press

Full Catastrophe Living,Kabat-Zinn,J., 15th Edition, 2005, Bantem Dell

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression, Segal,Z., Williams,M., and Teasdale,J., 2002, The Guildford Press

Mindfulness and Psychotherapy, Germer, Siegel,C., and Fulton,P., 2005, The Guildford Press.

Prevention of relapse/Recurrence in Major Depression by MBCT, Teasdale,J., etal, Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 2000, 68, No.4, 615-623