

SUBJECT:	Support for Vulnerable Learners
MEETING:	Performance and Overview Committee
DATE:	14th May 2024
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide an update to members as to the effectiveness of a number of our approaches in supporting the needs of vulnerable learners in our schools and settings. We would like to draw attention to the work and evidence base for approaches including;
- the development of Trauma Informed approaches;
 - the Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) programme embedded in our schools;
 - the Monmouthshire's Specialist Teaching Service (MoSTS);
 - the new Education Support Team (EST).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 Members of this committee note the content of this report, together with Appendices, which outlines some of our approaches to supporting learners in schools and settings. Members are invited to comment accordingly.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The areas of work highlighted in this report support the aims of the Community and Corporate Plan (2022-8) to: *develop and achieve a truly inclusive educational system that recognises learners' starting points, strengths and educational needs; and to improve school attendance and reduced levels of exclusion which remove barriers to learning for pupils.*
- 3.2 Our approaches support MCC's aim to develop an inclusive education system which gives all children the best start in life, and to provide high quality support and provision for vulnerable learners.

3.3 **Trauma Informed Approaches**

- 3.3.1 Trauma Informed approaches form part of a universal, whole- school, preventative approach, supporting school communities to become trauma informed and mentally healthy places for all. Trauma informed or relational practice are recognised by the Welsh Government throughout a range of guidance/ legislation including; [Belonging, Engaging and Participating \(gov.wales\)](#) and the [Building Blocks Report \(childcomwales.org.uk\)](#). In particular this approach aligns with the statutory [Framework on embedding a Whole School Approach \(WSA\) to emotional and mental wellbeing](#) which states that effective learning can only occur when children/young people are in an emotional state where they are receptive to learning. *'Developing trusting relationships is central to the whole-school approach. Being taught by highly trained, highly motivated, trauma-informed teachers who are aware of the impact they have on the young person's*

overall development, inside and outside the classroom, is central to promoting emotional and mental well-being.'

- 3.3.2** By being trauma informed, or relational in our approach to children and young people, we are also far more able to meet the needs of all vulnerable groups, including Children Looked After (CLA), and those who have experienced ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) in childhood.
- 3.3.3** In MCC during 2021-22, a cross-directorate group (Family Support Services, EPS and Healthy Schools) allocated part of the Welsh Government Wellbeing Grant to offer Trauma Informed Schools (TIS) training at three levels of 1) a whole staff 2) a 2-day training for Senior Leads, and 3) a 10-day course for Diploma level. This was provided by [Trauma Informed Schools UK \(TIS UK\)](#).
- 3.3.4** Between 2021-2023 over 500 MCC staff accessed the Whole Staff Training, around 68 MCC staff accessed the Senior Leads Training, and 16 professionals completed the TIS Diploma. As well as school-based staff, around 21 different services across Education, Social Care and Health have accessed the TIS training, including staff from Youth Service; SHIFT and Education Welfare Service (EWS) and Primary Care Mental Health.
- 3.3.5** Training Evaluation data (2021-23) was extremely positive, with 100% of Senior Leads agreeing or strongly agreeing that the training was relevant to their needs and priorities in their school/setting. A strong theme which emerged from the qualitative data gathered related to requests for further training, i.e. training for all; the need for whole school approach; refresher training. A second theme related to whole school policy/change.
- 3.3.6** A TIS Working group was set up in July 2023 to further develop and embed trauma informed/ relational approaches in MCC in a way that could be sustained into the future without the reliance on external providers and the use of grant funding.

3.3.7 Risks

The potential risks to the success of embedding these approaches throughout our schools include;

- 3.3.7.1 Schools having the time, capacity and leadership commitment to embedding this as a whole school approach, alongside a commitment to changing culture and ethos;
- 3.3.7.2 A commitment to changing processes and policies, such as Behaviour policies and exclusion processes so that they align with a trauma informed/ relational approach;
- 3.3.7.3 Reliance on grant funding to ensure the development of a sustainable model and ensuring this approach is fully embedded across our schools/settings, and Local Authority.

3.3.8 Going Forward

- 3.3.8.1** The focus currently is that TIS-UK training has continued to be delivered for the academic year 2023-24 utilising the Wellbeing Grant.
- 3.3.8.2** A project plan has been developed for 2023-24, which includes: the development of 'in-house' MCC Training for schools/settings to further embed their trauma informed/ relational practice; to create a guidance/framework for schools/settings; to develop an internal MCC TIS supervision model, as access to TIS Supervision is a requirement for those who have completed the TIS Diploma; to support the Pupil Referral Service to continue to develop their trauma informed/ relational practice to become a centre of good practice for the approach; to understand the evaluate the impact of the introduction of trauma informed approaches in MCC.
- 3.3.9** A multi-agency TIS Steering Group has been established to achieve these aims, led by the Educational Psychology Service.

3.4 Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA)

- 3.4.1** ELSA is a school based targeted, evidence-based intervention designed to build capacity of schools to support the emotional needs of their learners from within their own resources. This is achieved by training teaching assistants (TAs) to develop and deliver individualised support programmes to meet the emotional needs of children and young people in their school (or setting). This recognises that children and young people learn better and are happier in school if their emotional needs are also addressed.
- 3.4.2** As well as providing time-limited ELSA intervention for individual learners, ELSAs often also offer preventative and universal support across the school, for example, check-ins and early support for pupils experiencing school worries/emotionally based school anxiety.
- 3.4.3** ELSA was first established in MCC in 2016, it is widely implemented across the UK [ELSA Network](#). During academic year 2022-23, MCC had over 70 active ELSAs. This model is led and delivered by Educational Psychologists.
- 3.4.4** Teaching Assistants complete six days of initial training, before working as ELSAs in their settings. They receive ongoing, half termly Educational Psychology led small group supervision, as well as a yearly Educational Psychology led CPD day.
- 3.4.5** There is a wealth of published research around the impact of ELSA, this is highlighted in Estyn's 2019 report [Healthy and Happy \(gov.wales\)](#) which highlighted (a Monmouthshire) primary school's use of ELSA. In MCC three pieces of in-depth research around ELSA have been completed by Trainee EPs associated with Cardiff University.
- 3.4.6** As a result of evidence of high standards in training and supervision of ELSAs, in November 2023, Monmouthshire was awarded the ELSA Quality Mark.
- 3.4.7** We now charge our schools for the training and supervision, partly in recognition of the increased demand for the EPS as the numbers of ELSAs continue to grow. This did not negatively impact on interest, or numbers being trained, and is in line with most other LAs who offer the programme. Schools are currently charged £424 for the 6-day initial ELSA Training. Supervision, which is an essential part of the ELSA programme, costs schools £120 per year for six ELSA supervision sessions and a CPD day. In 2023 our secondary ELSAs evaluated supervision highly – averaging a score of 9.13 out of 10.
- 3.4.8** Feedback from Schools in the EPS Annual Evaluation 2022-23 showed that 100% (of respondents) had an active ELSA and 100% agreed or strongly agreed that the ELSA had made a *positive impact on the wellbeing* of CYP in their school.
- 3.4.9** Risks
The potential risks to the continuing success of the ELSA programme in Monmouthshire include high staff turnover and reduction in numbers of TAs in schools; continued commitment of EP time to offer the Initial ELSA Training, Supervision and CPD given risks nationally to EP recruitment and retention; the levels of administrative/ logistical time needed to maintain high standards with high numbers of ELSAs, this is currently managed by the EPS.
- 3.4.10** Going Forward
High quality Initial ELSA Training will continue to be offered by the EPS, with the aim of maintaining at least one ELSA in each school; high quality supervision and CPD will continue; and evaluation of the impact of the ELSA intervention in MCC schools will be further developed.

3.5 Monmouthshire Specialist Teaching Service

- 3.5.1** MoSTS aims are to improve outcomes for CYP with literacy difficulties in primary schools in Monmouthshire. In 2021 the Principal Educational Psychologists took over leadership and line management of MoSTS (then Specific Learning Difficulties SpLD Service).
- 3.5.2** Currently Monmouthshire Specialist Teaching Service (MoSTS) consists of two Specialist Teachers, one of whom is Welsh speaking (1.4FTE) and two Higher Level Teaching Assistants (1.6FTE).
- 3.5.3** Every Primary School has a named link MoSTS Specialist Teacher. MoSTS provide support to all primary schools, and via a Service Level Agreement they also provide support into King Henry VII (secondary phase).
- 3.5.4** Since 2021, a number of changes were made including: changes to the intervention model, to ensure it was robust and evidence based; changes to expectations of schools; the development of processes to ensure and strengthen equity, consistency and transparency of offer; clear documentation to schools; the development of an MCC Literacy Practice Guidance.
- 3.5.5** In light of these changes, a renewed commitment was made to self-evaluation, including developing and trialling measures and processes to evaluate the impact of the MoSTS intervention/model.
- 3.5.6** MoSTS provide direct intervention and support to identified pupils (agreed via a MoSTS Panel); assessment and advice to schools around individual pupils; and Literacy Training and systemic support to schools focused on building capacity and improving the effectiveness of literacy interventions, identification and support.
- 3.5.7** During academic year 2022-23, MoSTS provided intervention to 157 pupils. The impact of the MoSTS intervention was evaluated using both qualitative and quantitative information. Data with regards to pupil progress following the short-term intervention was very positive – with pupils making pleasing progress across all targeted areas. Pre/post pupil ratings of confidence across these targeted areas was also positive, with an increase in pupil confidence in all areas following the period of intervention. Feedback from parent/carers and school staff was extremely positive and changes to MoSTS have been valued. There is a desire to increase the collaboration between MoSTS and school staff, and to increase/develop the advice and support provided to parent/carers. Both school staff and parent/carers would value increased time with MoSTS to develop their understanding of how to support their child/pupil's literacy skills, and this aspect of MoSTS work was valued where this occurred.
- 3.5.8** All of the data, measures and evaluations from stakeholders fed into service improvement and has helped shape service delivery, including developing the advice, support and collaboration with school staff and parents/carers.
- 3.5.9** Risks
Potential risks for MoSTS include the impact of a reduction in the FTE of the service due to the retirement of a 0.6FTE HLTA in December 2023 due to budget constraints. This has resulted in the service holding a waiting list for direct intervention and teaching, for the first time.
- 3.5.10** Going Forward
The service will continue to offer high quality advice and support to schools to build their capacity to identify and meet the needs of CYP experiencing literacy difficulties. MoSTS will continue to offer a high-quality bespoke evidence-based literacy intervention. The service will need to develop a robust approach to managing waiting lists and to supporting our schools to meet the needs of these learners, through developing the advisory element of the team. A number of schools have approached MoSTS enquiring

around support/advice with regards to supporting pupils experiencing numeracy difficulties. Further exploration around the needs of schools in this area will be completed.

3.6 Education Support Team

3.6.1 The Education Support Team was set up in April 2023 and became fully staffed in September 2023. The team consists of one Lead Teacher and three full time Practitioners.

3.6.2 EST aims are to support schools to meet the needs of primary aged children presenting with behaviours that challenge, including those with ALN, neurodevelopmental differences, and those at risk of exclusion. They also support schools to meet the needs of Children Looked After (CLA).

3.6.3 The EST was developed and continue to receive leadership and line management from the Principal Educational Psychologist, with support from the Vulnerable Learners Lead.

3.6.4 Involvement from EST for individual learners is accessed via a request for support from the OASIS panel (Outreach, Autism Support and Inclusion Service).

3.6.5 EST work collaboratively with the Vulnerable Learners Lead, the Educational Psychology Service, and Lead Teachers in the Specialists Resource Bases (SRBs), to support schools in a joined up and coherent way.

3.6.6 Since their establishment, early feedback from schools has been extremely positive, and the model continues to develop across this academic year.

3.6.7 Risks

The potential risks include the ability to continue to meet the high demand for support from schools, often in a responsive manner, whilst maintaining a high-quality service, with a preventative and capacity building focus, all of which requires staff with relevant skills and experience.

3.6.8 Going Forward

EST are developing preventative strands of work, including work around CLA and children experiencing EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance). A report detailing the work and impact of EST will be shared at a future Performance and Overview Committee, following the completion of a full academic year.

4. REASONS:

4.1 To provide the committee with an update on progress being made with regards to delivering the commitments set out in the Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28, alongside compliance with ALN legislation and the Principles of the Code.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 Trauma Informed Practice. To date the training by TIS-UK has been grant funded but led by the EPS.

5.2 ELSA. Schools and setting currently pay towards Initial ELSA training and ongoing supervision and CPD, which supports the use of EPs to deliver the programme.

5.3 MoSTS and EST. Both MoSTS and EST have team budgets, supported closely by the PEP, with oversight of the Head of Service for Inclusion. The MoSTS budget reduced recently when member of staff retired.

6. CONSULTEES:

- Reports were presented at Engagement and Collaboration on 11th December 2023.

- CYP DMT on 29th April 2024.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- [TIS Report 2022-23 Powerpoint.pptx](#)
- [202307 TIS Training Evaluation Data.docx](#)

- [ELSA Report 2022-23 PowerPoint .pptx](#)
- [20231108 ELSA report.docx](#)

- [MoSTS Report 2022-23 Powerpoint.pptx](#)
- [End of Year Review 2023 MOSTS \(1\).docx](#)
- [Teaching CYP with Literacy Difficulties. Practice Guidance for MCC Schools ENG.pdf](#)
- [Teaching CYP with Literacy Difficulties. Practice Guidance for MCC Schools CYM.pdf](#)

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