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Embedding Mental Health Provision Within Schools – Evaluation of a North East England Mental Health Support Team

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Abstract

Increasing levels of children and young people are experiencing mental health problems which can impact on educational attainment and increase the likelihood of risky behaviours. The aim of the study was to evaluate a programme that provides mental health support into local education settings within North East England. Qualitative interviews were conducted with school staff and a focus group was conducted with mental health support team staff to understand barriers and facilitators to the initiative. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Four themes were identified 1) Liaising with the school to meet the students' needs, 2) Importance of familiarity and consistency within the team, 3) Applying a holistic approach to mental health and 4) Streamlining of referrals and the service. Overall, the view was positive for the inclusion of a mental health support team within a school setting, not only with regards to tackling the current mental health levels within schools but also to change the culture within schools to incorporate mental health as a topic within the fabric of the school education system.

Keywords: Mental Health, Psychology, Education, Evaluation, Children, Young People, Support Teams