

Collaborative Action Research Inverclyde Attainment Challenge

Assess Plan Do Review Recording Form



Name of Establishment: Inverclyde Educational Psychology Service	Key Contact: Karen McPherson, Andrea Montgomery and Katarzyna Wojtyniak
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AIM What are the main question(s)? What are we trying to achieve?	Start Date	Review Dates
Aim: To improve health and wellbeing outcomes for children through the implementation of the Seasons for Growth (SFG) programme. Main Question(s): 1) Is there an improvement in the pre- and post-intervention rating scores in relation to the health and wellbeing of children who have experienced loss and change and attended a SFG group? 2) In what way is the SFG programme viewed as impacting on children's health and wellbeing and learning?	06.06.16	03.10.16 18.05.17 19.09.17 19.02.18

Assess
What evidence do we already have and what does it tell us? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research evidence shows that there is a strong relationship between health and wellbeing and learning (Suhrcke and Paz Nieves, 2011). Brooks (2013) proposed that the promotion of health and wellbeing in schools underpins pupil attainment and achievement which subsequently improves their wellbeing now and in later life. Significant loss and change, such as bereavement, can impact negatively on children and young people's emotional wellbeing (Jones et al., 2013). Dyregrov (2004) outlined some common grief reactions which children and young people can experience including anxiety, sleep disturbance and difficulties related to learning. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009 recognises that a wide range of factors may give rise to children and young people requiring additional support including experiencing "bereavement" (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2006). Creating opportunities for children and young people to share their thoughts and feelings in relation to grief and learn new ways of thinking and responding to change can be a key factor in promoting their wellbeing. It has also been proposed that learning how to make sense of the changes that have occurred is best achieved through conversations and social interactions within a supportive peer group facilitated by skilled adults (Theis, 2009).

Assess

- SFG is a grief and loss programme for children and young people (aged 6-18 years) who have experienced significant change and loss (Graham, 1996). The eight-week programme is facilitated within a small group setting by two trained adult Companions and employs a range of activities to help children and young people explore their feelings, thoughts and reactions to change and loss.
- The programme has been evaluated and findings indicate that it helps to strengthen peer support networks and increase resilience and self-esteem (Newell and Moss, 2011).

What else do we need to find out?

- Staff commitment to attend a two-day SFG Companion training workshop.
- Staff commitment to implement the SFG programme within primary schools as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge initiative.
- The impact of participating in the SFG programme in relation to children's health and wellbeing and learning.
- Sustainability of the SFG programme within schools and across the local authority.

Plan

What is the intended outcome? What evidence will we gather in order to measure impact?

- For Educational Psychology Service to build capacity across Inverclyde Council through the provision of SFG Companion training for education staff and partner agencies and to continue to offer support to implement the programme.
- For Companions to facilitate SFG groups in six primary schools with the aim of improving health and wellbeing outcomes for children who have experienced change and loss.
- For Educational Psychologists to develop pre- and post-intervention questionnaires for children, parents/carers and teachers to measure perceived changes in relation to health and wellbeing. The scaling statements will be designed to correspond with the Curriculum for Excellence Health and Wellbeing experiences and outcomes (Scottish Government, 2009).
- For Educational Psychologists to develop semi-structured interview schedules to record the views of children, parents/carers and Companions in relation to the impact of the SFG programme on health and wellbeing and learning. Focus group interviews will take place following completion of the SFG programme.
- For Companions to be awarded certificates of Full Accreditation following the implementation and evaluation of the programme.

Plan

How do we plan to implement this change - who, what, when, where, how?

What	When	Where	Who	How	Impact Data Gathered
Educational Psychologists to deliver 2-day SFG Companion training workshops	Workshop 1 6 th and 7 th June 2016 (13 adult participants) Workshop 2 2 nd and 3 rd November 2016 (10 adult participants)	Local training venues	Education staff and Project Workers from Barnardo's Nurture Service	Following training, Companions will plan and facilitate SFG groups across 6 primary schools (37 children)	Pre-post-intervention questionnaires completed by children, parents/carers and teachers Post-intervention focus group interviews with children, parents/carers and Companions

Do

What happened during implementation - reflections on what went well, any changes made?

- Training workshops attended by school staff (senior management, teachers and classroom assistants) and Project Workers from Barnardo's Nurture Service.
- Training resources funded through Scottish Attainment Challenge.
- Training from Educational Psychologists was evaluated positively by participants.
- Challenge: on the morning of the training staff cover issues within some schools impacted on workshop attendance from school staff.
- Education staff prepared to co-Companion groups with Project Workers from Barnardo's Nurture Service. Children, parents/carers and school staff informed of the SFG programme.
- All participating children (N=37), parents/carers (N=24), teachers (N=39) gave written consent to take part in the evaluation and completed the pre-intervention questionnaires.
- Educational Psychologists continued to support Companions throughout the duration of the SFG programme.
- Challenge: post-intervention questionnaires were completed by all the children (N=37) and teachers (N=39) but only some of the parents/carers (N=15).

Do

- Focus group discussions produced a significant amount of rich data reflecting the views of children (N=18), parents/carers (N=7) and Companions (N=6).
- Challenge: limitations of the study include the relatively small sample size comprising of children, parents/carers, teachers and Companions from six primary schools. Although the sampling method was chosen to gather data relating to the aims of the study, it is context-specific and caution must be taken when interpreting the results and making generalisations about the impact of the SFG programme on children and young people's health and wellbeing and learning.

Review

What does the evidence tell us about the impact of this change?

Quantitative data

- Data from the questionnaires gathered from the six primary schools were aggregated and analysed within the groupings of children, parents/carers and teachers. Pre- and post-intervention rating scores were subjected to paired t-tests to determine whether the differences in the scores were statistically significant.
- Findings from the study provide evidence that the SFG programme was viewed positively by children, parents/carers and professionals. Statistically significant gains were recorded in a number of areas relating to health and wellbeing and learning which correspond with the Health and Wellbeing curriculum outcomes. Specifically, significant improvements were made in children's ability to: "name some feelings when change happens"; "talk about their feelings and how feelings make them behave"; "manage their feelings"; "choose how to behave when they feel sad or angry"; "make good choices and talk to people when things are difficult"; and "understand about change and loss".
- The findings suggest that the educational approach of the SFG programme can contribute to the promotion of children's mental and emotional wellbeing and can provide a structure which supports learning across a number of areas of the Health and Wellbeing curriculum.

Qualitative data

- Analysis of the data collated from the focus group discussions indicates a number of emerging themes which provides consistent evidence supporting the quantitative findings.

Theme: Health and wellbeing and learning

- The children's views reflected outcomes such as an increased awareness and understanding in relation to their own emotions and ability to express their feelings and thoughts more confidently using a wider vocabulary. Companions and parents/carers also highlighted children's increased confidence and willingness to share their feelings within school and at home. Enabling children to express their thoughts and feelings can be viewed as an effective coping strategy which can help to reduce levels of stress and worry (Riley, 2012).

Review

- Children reported that they had learned alternative ways of thinking and behaving through the peer-led group discussions and had developed skills and strategies aimed at managing emotions and making positive choices in difficult situations.
- Parents/carers recognised that their children were spending more time learning at home and some children highlighted improvements in their sleep pattern and ability to concentration more in class by the end of the eight-week programme.
- This study highlights the key role which interventions aimed at supporting grief, loss and change can have on supporting children to develop coping strategies which can mediate against the negative impact of these experiences on children's mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing (Jones et al., 2013).

Theme: Curriculum structure of the programme

- Engaging in activities such as group discussion, art, music and journal-writing was viewed by the children and Companions as providing alternative ways for recognising, expressing and communicating feelings which contributed to increased levels of confidence and self-esteem.
- The confidential and respectful nature of the small group discussions enabled children to share personal experiences of change and loss which increased their sense of belonging within the group.

Theme: Relationships and Connectedness

- The impact on children's social wellbeing was strongly evidence through comments from different focus groups. The children acknowledged the importance of being listened to and having their views recognised. They reported feeling less isolated and more confident in being able to identify people they could talk to within school and at home. The sustainability of this connectedness was evident beyond the group setting as observed by school staff in classrooms and playgrounds.
- Companions also reflected on the benefits of strengthening support networks for children which includes both peers and adults.
- Parents/carers highlighted the impact of the supportive relationships on aspects of their children's health and wellbeing including feeling happier and more settled.
- Children developed problem-solving and decision-making skills which enabled them to identify the factors in their life which they could change, such as being able to choose how they respond in challenging situations, and acknowledge the factors which they could not change.
- Central to the learning process was the role of the Companions who promoted children's competency and agency, and recognised them as being active in developing their own wellbeing.

Theme: Understanding about change and loss

- Children highlighted the importance of learning that they are not the only ones experiencing significant change and loss and that other people share similar grief reactions.

Review

- The analogy and imagery of the ‘changing seasons’ was also viewed as a helpful way of developing an understanding about the natural cycle of change and loss which is an important part of life.
- Companions reported that the children became more empathic towards each other as the sessions progressed, and the wider impact of the programme was also evident across whole schools as staff became more aware of the significant impact that loss can have on children’s health and wellbeing and learning.
- Companions attributed their increased confidence in facilitating the programme to the quality of the training delivered by the Educational Psychologists in their role as SFG Trainers, which helped to develop their knowledge and understanding of how grief experiences can impact on children and young people’s health and wellbeing and learning. They also highlighted the importance of continued support from their own senior management team.
- Companions who participated in the evaluation process successfully achieved Full Accreditation.

What do we need to do next (ongoing APDR cycle)?

- Within Inverclyde Council, the SFG programme has been shown to be sustainable in a number of schools as the principles of the programme have become embedded within their cultures. With an increase in the number of Accredited Companions from education and partner agencies, it is envisaged that there will be capacity to facilitate the programme across the local community.

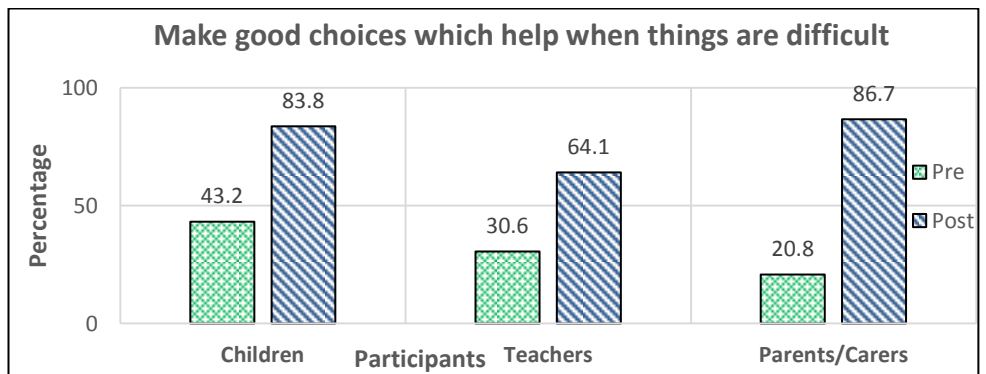
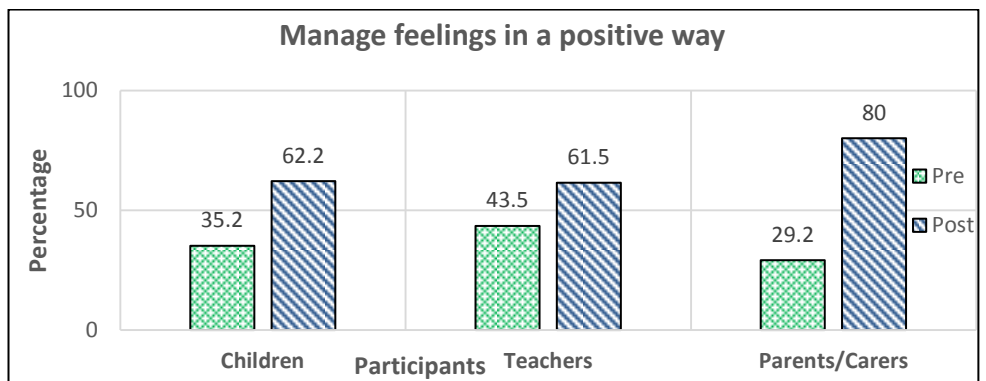
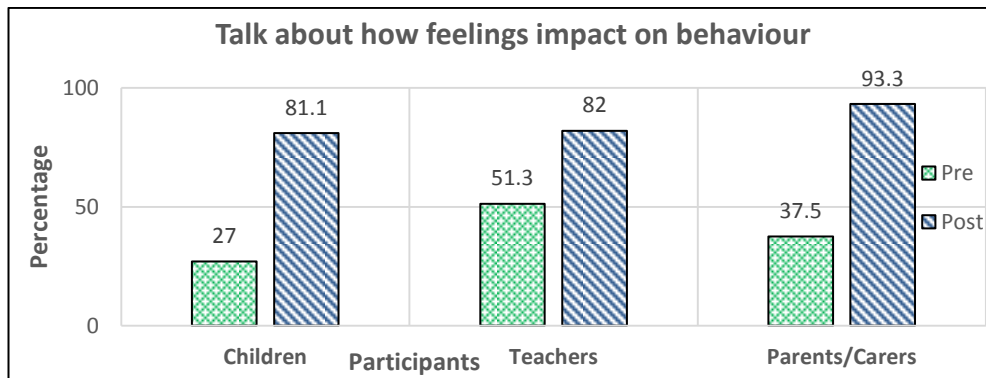
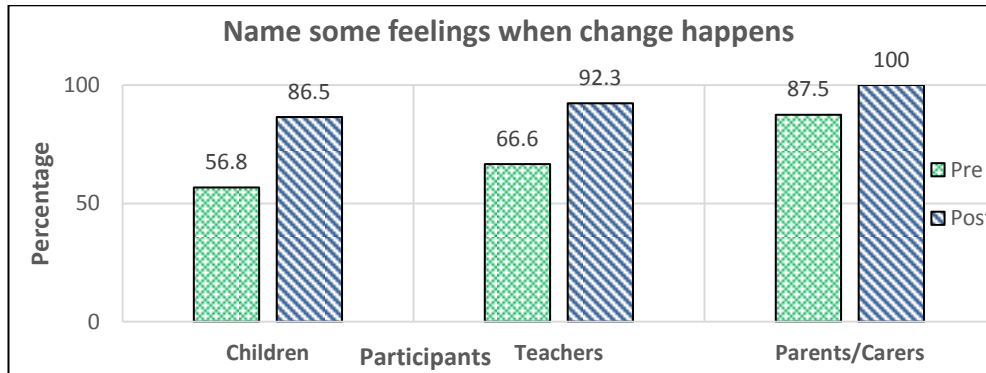
What	When	Where	Who	How	Impact Data Gathered
Educational Psychologists (EPs) to deliver 2-day SFG Companion training workshop	Workshop 3 14 th and 15 th September 2017 (20 adult participants)	Local training venue	Education staff, Barnardo’s Workers (Secondary Attainment), Community, Learning and Development Team	Planning to Companion groups within primary and secondary schools, and local community groups	SFG evaluation forms completed by young people and Companions
Adult SFG programme facilitated by EPs and Barnardo’s Workers	May 2017	Barnardo’s Nurture Service	Parents/carers of children attending primary schools	Additional Companion training to facilitate the Adult SFG programme	Pre-post intervention questionnaires completed by parents/carers
Parent SFG programme facilitated by EPs	March 2018	Barnardo’s Nurture Service	Parents/carers	Additional training for SFG Trainers	Focus group interview

This proforma has been adapted from Dundee Attainment Challenge: Action Research and Improvement Methodology (17.04.16) and Scottish Government website:

www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum/Raisingeducationalattainment/RAFA/QIMaterial/programmtemplates

Impact on health and wellbeing and learning

Graphs showing significant differences in pre- and post-intervention percentage scores



Impact on health and wellbeing and learning

Selection of comments recorded during the focus group interviews

Children's views

"I learned to be confident and tell people how I'm feeling"

"I'm able to cope with change because of Seasons"

"I'm more confident in class"

"I'm able to get on with my work faster because worries are no longer inside me and I'm happier"

"I feel like people listened to me in the group"

"I can do homework a lot faster because my worries are not there and I am listening more in class"

"I can see that I'm not the only person who has lost someone and that other people have had changes in their family"

"I would definitely tell someone else to join a Seasons for Growth group"

Companion's views

"Small group enabled them to share their feelings and ideas without feeling they were being judged: that fits with nurture and Health and Wellbeing"

"The impact of seasons for Growth on the children's learning, health and wellbeing and confidence has been significant – they can speak out more and offer their ideas – and the trust they have built up with each other and the Companions has been very noticeable"

"One child is responding to discussion using the language for feelings which he learned in the group"

"All children could identify someone they would talk to including the Companions"

"Teachers became more empathic towards children as they understood that they had experienced some significant loss"

Parent's/carer's views

"My child is talking about their feelings more and saying it's ok to be sad and happy"

"Thinks more about choices to make and behaving in a different way in different situations"

"Not worrying as much now"

"Will try to do homework now"

"She says she can concentrate better now"

"My child is much happier and more settled since attending the group"

"More time with family and less time in their room"

"He is talking about his feelings and how change has affected him – more aware that change happens and is part of life"

"I would like to attend an adult version of Seasons to be able to help my older child"

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