



## Wellbeing Policy

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**Promoting Positive Mental Health to empower and enable people to:  
'Feel Good, Function Well'  
A Policy for Pupils and Staff**

**Outstanding Achievement for All**

## Policy Statement

Mental Health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community'

*(World Health Organisation)*

Within our Trust and Academies, we promote positive mental health for every staff member, student and their families. We pursue this aim and work within a THRIVE model of care (see Appendix 1), using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches to support all stakeholders. In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health sensitively and at the earliest opportunity.

Every year, 1 in 4 people in the UK experience a mental health problem. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures, we can promote a safe and stable environment for staff and students affected both directly, and indirectly by mental ill health.

Our Trust consists of both mainstream and specialist provisions which cater for children and young people from Early Years through to the end of KS4 and sixth form. Our special schools work with children and young people whose main need relates to social, emotional and mental health support. Our Trust works with a significant number of families and children who are both disadvantaged and vulnerable: many have experienced a range of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES). ACES are traumatic events that **can** have a negative, lasting effect on physical health and risk-taking behaviour and can vastly increase the risk of developing mental health issues.

We appreciate the risks to mental health are wide and recognise that:

- Mental health and well-being is influenced not only by individual attributes, but also by the social circumstances in which people find themselves, and the environment in which they live and work; these determinants interact with each other dynamically, and may threaten or protect an individual's mental health state.
- Risks to mental health manifest themselves at all stages in life. Risk exposures in the formative stages of life (including substance use in pregnancy, insecure attachment in infancy and/or family violence in childhood) can affect mental well-being or predispose individuals towards mental ill-health many years or even decades later.
- Depending on the local context, certain groups in society may be particularly susceptible to experiencing mental health problems, including households living in poverty, bereavement, people with chronic health conditions and/or caring responsibilities, minority groups, and persons exposed to and/or displaced by war or conflict.
- Persons with a mental illness have their own set of vulnerabilities and risks, including premature mortality, stigma and discrimination, social exclusion and impoverishment. Mental illness is also more prevalent for persons with a disability.

Within Ambitions Academies Trust, we recognise the importance of '**Feeling Good**' to be able to '**Function Well**' within our organisation, to enable and empower all to be the best they can be.

We appreciate that staff wellbeing is a complex concept, involving emotional, physical and spiritual resilience. Alongside clarity around each individual's role, responsibility and recognition, positive wellbeing and mental health is important in maintaining staff motivation and excellence, and supports ongoing resilience when working with children and young people within and beyond the classroom. Within the AAT we recognise that staff wellbeing is essential to student wellbeing.

It is recognised that school staff are frequently required to deal with difficult and complex safeguarding issues, which may impact negatively on wellbeing and mental health – either immediately or over time. This policy is designed to guard against compassion fatigue and supports staff to meet the needs of our pupils each and every day in a positive and professional manner.

### **Scope of the Policy**

This document describes the Trust/Academies' approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for **all staff**, Trustees, Members and Academy Advisory Committee (AAC) members. This policy should be read in conjunction with our Supervision, First Aid, SEND, Stress Management and Attendance at Work policies alongside EHC (Education, Health and Care) plans for individuals that outline or detail the needs and support required to support a pupil's mental wellbeing as appropriate.

### **The AAT Wellbeing Policy Aims to:**

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and pupils, and in their families
- To offer a universal provision of support to all staff, pupils and families, that promotes positive wellbeing and mental health (Five Ways to Wellbeing)
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to pupils suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- To signpost how staff can seek support for issues around their own mental health and well-being

### **Lead Members of Staff**

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of pupils and colleagues, staff with specific roles and responsibilities within our academies include:

- Principals
- Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)
- Teachers
- Mental Health Leads (as appropriate)
- Early Help Leads
- SENDCO / Inclusion Leads
- ELSAs
- Lead First Aiders
- Pastoral Leads

- CPD Leads
- PSHE Leads
- CIAG Leads
- Admin Leads

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to their Mental Health Lead or SENDCO in the first instance.

### **However -**

If there is a fear that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or the Principal.

If a pupil presents with a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting first aid staff and contacting the emergency service if necessary.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be managed by the SENDCO/Inclusion Lead/ Mental Health Lead/ Safeguarding Lead as appropriate. However, any staff member can refer to CAMHS, with agreement that this is the best next step for a pupil. Please ensure you know how to refer to CAMHS within your context.

Lead Professionals may be the coordinators and signposting professional for mental health and wellbeing support / promotion for families who attend their academy. It is key that Lead Professionals work within local Early Help procedures, and take into account the range of services available.

### **Our Approach**

It is anticipated that with increased awareness, signposting and provision of support available to staff and pupils, Academies will work proactively to reduce the likelihood or seriousness of mental health and wellbeing concerns.

### **Warning Signs of Mental Health Risk**

- A change in personality.
- Uncharacteristic anxiety, anger, or moodiness
- Social withdrawal and isolation
- Lack of self-care or engaging in risky behaviours
- A sense of hopelessness or feeling overwhelmed
- Sleep patterns changing or being affected – changes in routines
- A significant 'life event' occurs (e.g. moving house / divorce)

For other warning signs, please see Appendix 2

When an issue has been identified, it is important to establish a coordinated support plan to enable the individual to regain their ability to Feel Good and Function Well. This may be delivered by

staff/services available within the academy/Trust and/or in partnership with other agencies as required. Support Plans are guided using a 'Signs of Safety' approach. (Appendix 3)

The importance of reviewing the impact of these strategies is of para-mount importance, and working within a person-centred approach is crucial. We are striving to help build and maintain levels of resilience and the promotion of self-help strategies will be central to our approach. It is not a 'do unto' but a 'do with' approach that is our preferred course of action.

## **Prevention and Promotion – Universal and Targeted Support**

### **Staff Induction**

During staff induction, new colleagues will be signposted to this policy and to the practices and personnel available to help develop and maintain staff to feel good and function well. This will also include information about what they should do if they experience any concerns in respect to their mental health and wellbeing, or the wellbeing / health of others.

All staff will be encouraged to seek support at the earliest stage to prevent escalation of concern. In the first instance, staff are encouraged to speak directly with their Line Manager if they have any concerns: where this is not possible, concerns should be raised with the Principal. If there are safeguarding issues with regards to the Principal, matters should be raised with the relevant Director.

As a Trust we appreciate that working in schools can be difficult at times, and understand the importance of ensuring professional conduct and conversations. Staff should not promote negativity or make policy-change suggestions to any person other than to Line Managers in order to preserve the wellbeing of all staff: public negativity will affect the wellbeing of an academy, and will prevent it from functioning well. Opportunities, such as supervision and other meeting times will provide forums for issues to be raised in order that solutions can be discussed and implemented to remediate and remedy any concerns.

Staff are surveyed at least once a year as to whether they feel the Trust is supporting their wellbeing. This provides an anonymised opportunity for feedback.

The Trust understands its duty of care to its employees.

All staff are expected to take responsibility for maintaining good mental health of themselves and others, this includes those with management responsibilities. We understand the importance that leadership on all levels plays in enabling each academy to feel good and function well. This begins with the concept that all members of staff are leaders, and that we all have a role to play in leading on actions that promote the wellbeing of ourselves and others.

Our aim is to ensure that all staff who have Line Management responsibility are trained in coaching techniques. The preferred coaching approach is the GROW model – Appendix 4. Coaching enables people to find solutions to issues for themselves and, alongside other techniques, develops knowledge, skills, understanding and promotes resilience. Within AAT we understand that there are also certain models for interaction and leadership that promote wellbeing and can support an academy to feel good and function well, which include taking a PACE and Unconditional Positive Regard approach in all matters (Appendix 5). Line Managers can also access a wealth of resources to help them support the staff they are responsible for, for example [www.leadershipmatters.org.uk](http://www.leadershipmatters.org.uk)

### **Teaching about Mental Health**

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included in part of our developmental PSHE Curriculum,

alongside other cross-curricular opportunities (e.g. PE / Literacy). The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we are teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling the students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help as needed for themselves and others, as they journey towards becoming resilient, safe and respectful adults.

We will follow the PSHE Association Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps and supports pupils. The Five Steps to Wellbeing Toolkit available online provides a useful additional resource.

In addition to taught lessons, students can access individual support via KOOH which is an online tool which has been commissioned to be used across Dorset to help address individual concerns. We also ensure that all pupils are aware of Childline and other organisations that can support and promote support in feeling good and functioning well.

## The Steps to Wellbeing

The five Steps to Wellbeing programme is a **universal** support strategy designed to help staff and pupils maintain good mental health and wellbeing. This programme advocates five simple ways in which staff and pupils can support their own mental health and wellbeing.

The Five Ways to Wellbeing Framework was developed by the New Economics Foundation as a set of five evidence-based actions that can promote wellbeing. Based on the latest scientific evidence the simple actions, if taken regularly, can improve wellbeing and enhance quality of life.

### The 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' are to:

- Connect – connecting with others
- Give – giving – looking outward as well as inward
- Be active – doing something active
- Take Notice – taking notice of the world around you
- Keep Learning – learning new things

Each action can be undertaken individually or collectively as part of everyday activity.

These may help pupils, their families and staff to:

- Make the most of opportunities and deal with stressful situations by taking time out and learning how to cope and communicate when things get tough.
- Increase their interpersonal skills, empathy and communication skills through giving and seeing themselves as part of the wider community.
- Increase their chances of employability and maintain high standards and self-worth by taking notice of what they are good at and what they have to offer others.
- Understand that there is an inseparable link between positive mental health and positive choices about physical health

Specific details about how the five Steps are supported for staff in the academy in which you are working can be found on the staff wellbeing notice board in the staffroom.

## Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of sources of support within the academy and in the local community.

Support for wellbeing within each academy can be accessed in a variety of ways:

At a Universal Level – the Five Steps to Well Being helps to promote wellness, and participation in curriculum and non-curriculum activities within the academy and beyond are encouraged and promoted.

At a Targeted Level there are a number of different ways staff and pupils can be supported to thrive within the school context and this will depend on the nature of need and support required. These targeted approaches include regular coaching, access to external sources of support, stress risk assessments (where reasonable adjustments can be discussed), signposting and hosting of community and/or physically active events, and ensuring that there are clear systems for support, understood by all, amongst other strategies.

## Pupils

For some pupils the Universal strategies used at the academy will be insufficient in providing the level of support they need. Academies will employ ways of identifying mental health concerns appropriate to their context and will seek to offer individualised support for pupils at the earliest opportunity, within resources available (within and beyond the academy) to prevent escalation of need. This support will always be provided in partnership alongside parental communication and/or support.

At the Targeted Level, it is considered best practice to draw up an Individual Care Plan for pupils causing concern or for those pupils who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. These inclusion and support activities will be coordinated by the SENDCO, Inclusion Lead or Early Help lead.

## Individual Care Plans

These should be drawn up involving the pupils, the parents/carers and relevant health professionals. They can include:

- Details of the pupil's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do and who to contact in an emergency
- Any support the academy provides

## Staff

In the first instance, all staff can expect to work within a positive, supportive team. Issues to do with work affecting wellbeing can often be resolved through sharing and talking through an issue with an experienced colleague. We pride ourselves on being solution-focused and in holding a sense of positive regard towards ourselves and colleagues.

As colleagues, it is important to maintain confidentiality, within Safeguarding parameters, to develop trust and a sense of safety.

If you have a concern regarding the welfare of a colleague it is your duty to act. In the first instance this could be to raise concern with the member of staff directly or to inform their Line Manager or the next level of line management.

If you have a work issue that is causing you concern and it cannot be resolved by talking it through sensitively and privately with a peer, then you should inform your Line Manager.

If the issue is with the Line Manager, it should be flagged in the first instance to the Principal or Vice Principal, and crucially not done so in a 'generally shared' approach with colleagues. It is important that we safeguard the wellbeing of all staff, including management. It is considered unprofessional to air grievances to staff about colleagues within or outside the staffroom. This includes social media on which discussions relating to the Trust, Academies and personnel is prohibited.

Staff have highlighted that a significant cause of stress can be listening to the grievances aired by others in the staffroom. This does not help individuals to feel good or function well and can impact the whole academy. The staffroom needs to be preserved as a place of relaxation and safety for all.

If a member of staff is suffering due to home issues, the academy can help. All academies will highlight sources of support to staff and students, either in staffrooms or other communal areas. It is encouraged that the member of staff would speak to their Line Manager in their first instance, though of course should matters be of significance, embarrassing or personal in nature, then each member of staff will make a judgement about who to best share this information with. On such occasions, please understand that the person you share with cannot and should not guarantee confidentiality: to enable the strongest possible support for every staff member, information will typically be shared with the Admin Lead and Principal within each academy. If you would prefer to communicate directly with the AAT HR Team about particular matters, then this is available to you.

In this case, if the AAT HR agree that this was an appropriate course of action, the Principal will be informed of any 'reasonable adjustment' that needs to be taken into account, but not necessarily the reason why.

Staff should feel able to contact the Admin/HR Lead for support and advice or to talk about the process behind any particular situation. We are all here to help and support.

Whenever we highlight sources of support or levels of reasonable adjustment in the workplace, we increase the chances of staff and pupils seeking help for themselves by ensuring everyone understands:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why to access it
- What is likely to happen next



## Managing Disclosures

Disclosures about mental health should always be met by a response that is calm, supportive and non-judgmental. Staff should listen rather than advise, and the first response should be to focus on the emotional and physical safety of the staff member or student rather than exploring 'Why?'

Disclosures from pupils **cannot** be held in confidence and the usual safeguarding procedures apply with regards to reporting.

If concerns are raised about a staff member these should be raised with either the Safeguarding Lead, Admin/HR Lead or the Line Manager if known. Staff are always encouraged to seek support from a colleague or Line Manager in the first instance if they feel their mental health is at risk.

In an emergency situation, all staff are able to refer pupils to CAMHS, whilst informing the SENDCO / Inclusion Lead or Principal within their academy. A pupil does not need to be known to CAMHS for a referral to be made. The duty worker will advise the next steps.

## Confidentiality

We should be honest with regard to the issue of confidentiality. If we think it is necessary to pass on our concerns about a pupil then we should sensitively discuss with the student:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

**Unless it could cause further harm by doing so**, we should never share information about a pupil without telling them first. Ideally, we would receive their consent, though there are Safeguarding situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and / or a parent. Equally there are safeguarding situations whereby the first point of contact is Social Care NOT the parents or pupils.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually a Line Manager, Safeguarding Lead or Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead. This helps to safeguard our emotional wellbeing, ensures continuity of care in our absence, follows school process, ensures information is shared and provides an extra source of support and ideas. Should the sharing of information about a pupil be in their positive interest, is within school policy and NOT sharing has the possibility of causing more harm or increasing the risk, then there are no restrictions (GDPR or other) in the sharing of data. There is a duty (professionally, and in some cases statutory) to share information.

Where there are concerns for a pupil's mental health and wellbeing, parents/carers must be informed. There are instances when this is not appropriate, for example, if concerns relate to safeguarding issues in the home. The Safeguarding Lead should be consulted if unsure. A pupil may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, and unless there is an immediate risk of harm, the pupil should be given 24 hours to share this information before the school contacts the parents. We should explain this to the pupil and discuss with them with whom it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

To reiterate: If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should **NOT** be informed, and the safeguarding procedures within the academy should be followed immediately.

### **Working with Parents / Carers**

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before information sharing with parents we should consider the following questions (on a case by case basis):

- Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.
- Where should the meeting take place and how can we ensure that it is safe to meet? At school, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the student, and other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and they may respond with anger, fear or sadness during meetings. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect and to process the information which has been shared. We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away where possible as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news you are sharing.

Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful, for example, parent helplines and forums. We should always provide a clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking a follow up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next step and always log a record of the meeting on the child's confidential record on SIMS or My Concern where available.

### **Working with ALL Parents / Carers**

Parents / carers are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children to feel good and function well. In order to support parents we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on the academy website
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to get support if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- Make our Wellbeing Policy easily accessible to parents
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through regular information evenings
- Keep parents informed about wellbeing topics their children are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home as appropriate

## Supporting Peers

When a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends will often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Support can be provided in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations between students who are suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing/saying which inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend needs help (e.g. signs of a relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

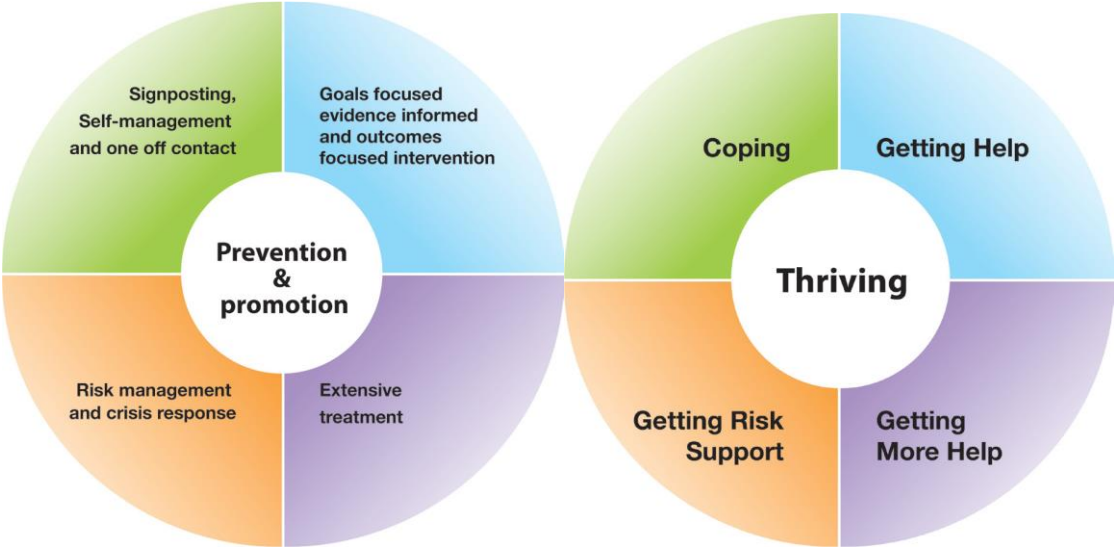
## Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular Safeguarding training. We will host information on our staff noticeboards and within our network drives for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. The MindEd learning portal (accessible via Google) provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be discussed as part of our supervision and/or performance management processes. Additional CPD will be supported throughout the year if it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with one or more students.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight training sessions for all staff to promote or understanding about specific issues related to metal health. Suggestions for whole school training should be discussed with the Principal, Vice Principal, DSL or CPD Lead. This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum.

**Appendix 1: The THRIVE Model**



## Appendix 2: Other Warning Signs

There are additional warning signs which can indicate a pupil or member of staff is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously.

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating/sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly
- Lateness to or absence from school or work
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increased lateness or absenteeism

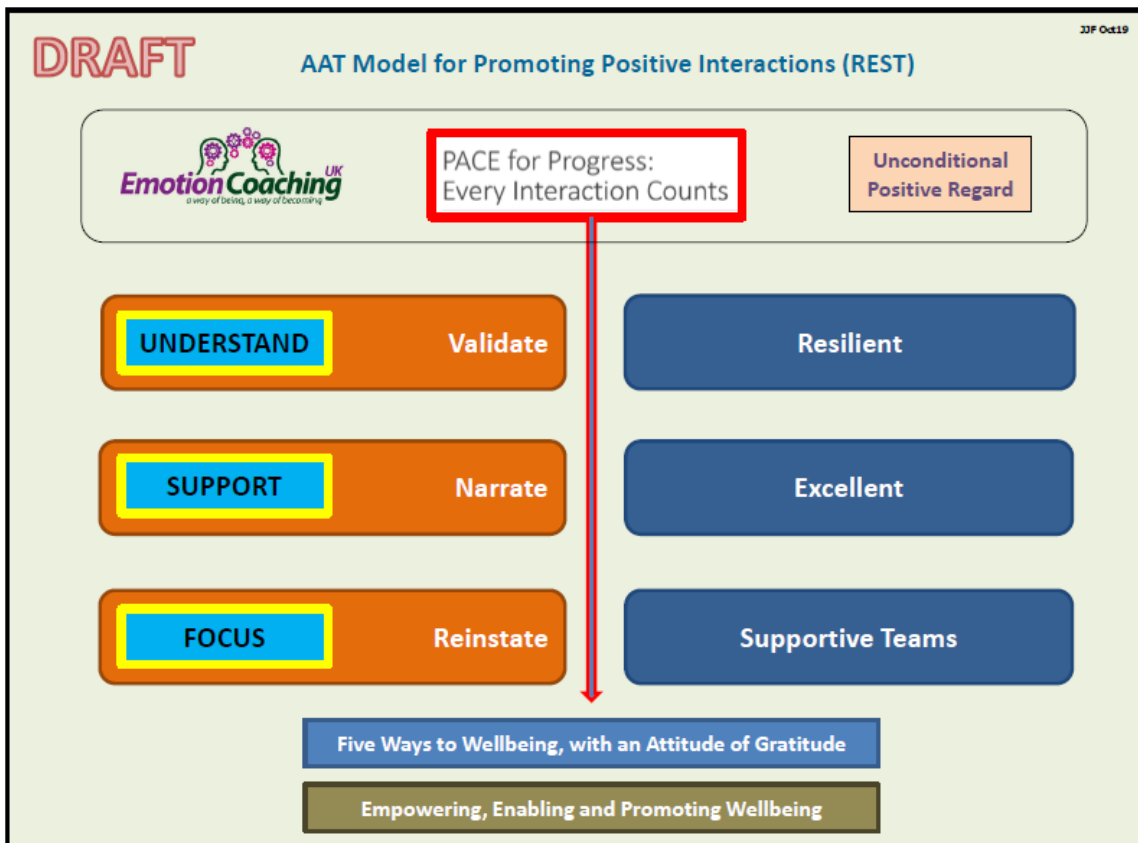
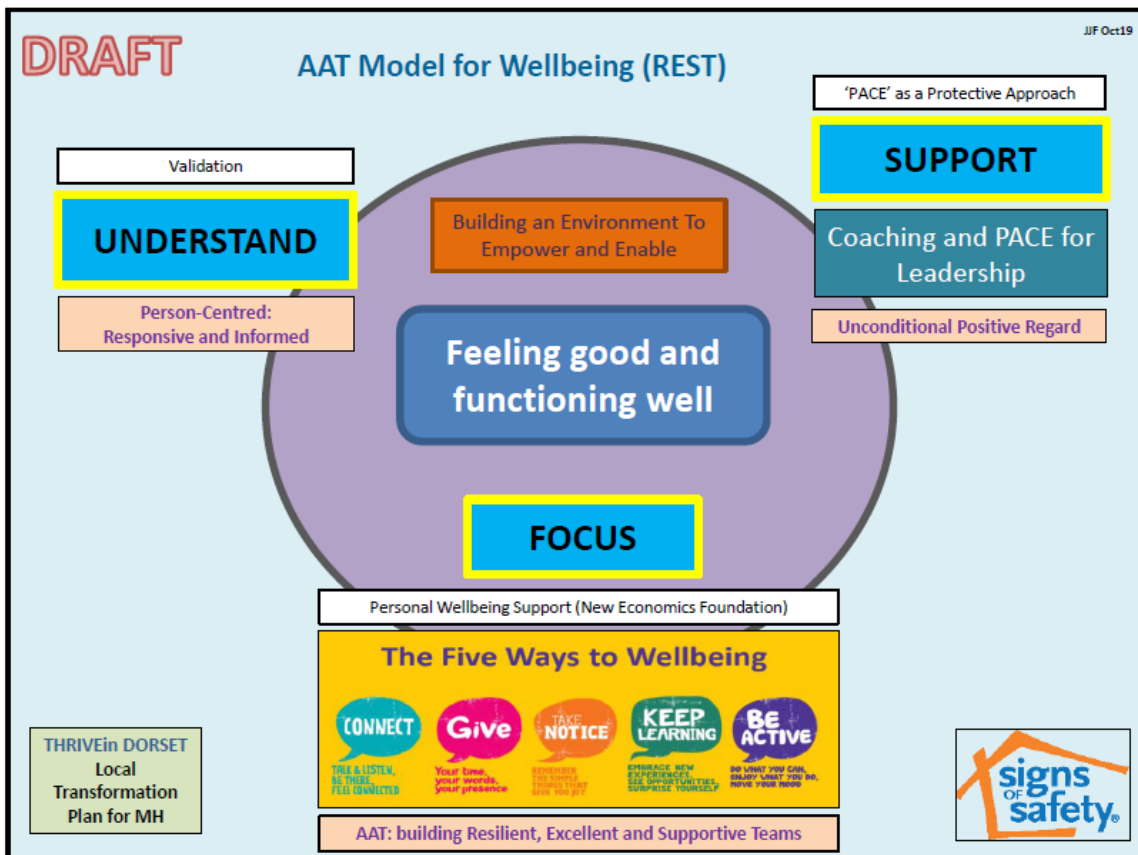
## APPENDIX 3: Signs of Safety

Signs Of Progress: Solution Focused Planning Tool		
<p><b>Progress Begins from here</b>      <b>Date:</b></p> <p>On a scale of 0 and 10 (where 10 is far better than 0) how do you rate the situation?</p> <p>0 ..... 10</p> <p><b>Comment:</b></p>	<p><b>Check-In 1</b>      <b>Date:</b></p> <p>On a scale of 0 and 10 (where 10 is far better than 0) how do you rate the situation?</p> <p>0 ..... 10</p> <p><b>Comment:</b></p>	<p><b>Check-In 2</b>      <b>Date:</b></p> <p>On a scale of 0 and 10 (where 10 is far better than 0) how do you rate the situation?</p> <p>0 ..... 10</p> <p><b>Comment:</b></p>
<p><b>What are you worried about?</b></p> <p>2. What has led us to a place of worry?</p> <p>3. What words would you use to describe the situation?</p> <p>4. What do you think is the worst that can happen as a result of the situation?</p> <p>5. Are there any contributing factors?</p>	<p><b>What is working well?</b></p> <p>1. What are the key strengths?</p> <p>6. Has there been a time when the issue/situation was more successful? Why was that?</p>	<p><b>What needs to happen?</b></p> <p>7. What do we need to happen to get nearer a 10?</p> <p>8. What are the next steps?</p> <p>The following are my QUICK WINS:</p> <p>▲</p> <p>▲</p> <p>▲</p>

## APPENDIX 4: The GROW Coaching Model



## Appendix 5: AAT Models for Wellbeing and Interaction





## **APPENDIX 6: Links and Further Information**

### **THRIVEin Dorset:**

<https://www.dorsetccg.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/draft-dorset-cyp-ltp.pdf>

### **Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools:**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/755135/Mental\\_health\\_and\\_behaviour\\_in\\_schools\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/755135/Mental_health_and_behaviour_in_schools_.pdf)

### **NCB – Whole School Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

[https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/NCB%20School%20Well%20Being%20Framework%20Leaders%20Tool%20FINAL1\\_0.pdf](https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/NCB%20School%20Well%20Being%20Framework%20Leaders%20Tool%20FINAL1_0.pdf)

### **Trauma Informed:**

<https://www.traumainformedschools.co.uk/>

<https://motional.io/>

### **5 Ways to Wellbeing (NEF (2008)):**

[https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/8984c5089d5c2285ee\\_t4m6bhqq5.pdf](https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/8984c5089d5c2285ee_t4m6bhqq5.pdf)

### **Hertfordshire Approach:**

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/about-the-council/partnerships/five-ways-to-wellbeing-toolkit.pdf>

### **ACE Screening Tool (EXAMPLE ONLY):**

<https://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/Finding%20Your%20ACE%20Score.pdf>

### **ACE Study in Wales:**

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/news/40000>