

## Evaluating the Impact of the Whole School and College Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing: The Development and Pilot of the WSCA Outcome Self-Assessment Tool

### Summary

Schools are increasingly considered important for promoting the mental and emotional wellbeing of children and young people (CYP). This was recognised by a government policy document in 2017, and Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs), a service created jointly by NHS England and the Department for Education, were introduced. One of the main functions of MHSTs is to work with schools and colleges to help them develop a Whole School and College Approach (WSCA) to emotional wellbeing and mental health for all children and young people.

Our team's previous work to review progress in this area found that whilst there is a great deal of encouraging work being put in place, there were concerns about the lack of measures that were in place to evaluate the impact this work was having. Therefore, in this project, we worked with staff and pupils, and in consultation with MHST leads and colleagues from Department for Education and NHS England, to develop a new self-assessment tool for schools and colleges to assess and track the outcomes that could be linked to their WSCA work on mental health and wellbeing.

We first gathered input from a total of 228 pupils and 46 staff members from various primary and secondary schools in the South East and East of England, and used their insights to help us develop a new self-assessment tool designed for schools to assess and track different areas of school outcomes (ranging from early identification of mental health difficulties to overall school ethos to the engagement of parents and carers in this area of work). We then piloted this tool in over 20 schools in the South East, East, and North East of England. Feedback from schools suggested that staff responded positively to the tool and found it easy to complete in a school setting. They also made some suggestions for how the tool could be improved. In addition, there were encouraging patterns of links between the ratings of the various outcomes and the ways in which schools were implementing the WSCA work on mental health and wellbeing.

Further work is now needed to test this tool in different regions and across a range of educational settings. Following on from the feedback we gained, the project team is now developing a digital platform that will be made publicly available, at no cost, for all schools and MHSTs. We will also expand on our information and guidance around the tool to support schools in adopting the toolkit.

**For further information:**

Report and Summary of the Best Practice Review and Evaluation of Whole school and college approaches to Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health within Mental Health Support Teams –Web link - [Starting Well: Children's Mental Health | ARC KSS \(nihr.ac.uk\)](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about/starting-well-childrens-mental-health/)