

The Emotional Health Academy (EHA) is unique to West Berkshire. Our mission is to provide emotional health support earlier to children and their families, before problems become severe and enduring.

The EHA was established in April 2016 after our local children and young people told us how the mental health system had been letting them down; we were particularly focussed on trying to prevent adolescent suicide. The children helped us design the EHA, with partnership support from CCGs, schools, GPs, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), and the voluntary sector. Schools, CCGs, and West Berkshire Council are funding the service together.

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## | Reaching vulnerable children |

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The EHA has had an immediate impact on the emotional wellbeing of children and young people in West Berkshire. We have directly supported over 600 children, young people and parents across our schools and communities in our first 10 months of operation. Every child's outcomes are closely monitored, we've seen:

- Consistent outcome improvement including symptom reduction, improved wellbeing.
- A slowdown in the rate of increase of referrals to CAMHS specialist mental health services.

This means fewer children and young people need to wait for their difficulties to become acute, severe and/or enduring before receiving help.

Children, young people and their families consistently tell us the support they received was tailored to their needs and helped them to achieve their goals. Our routine outcome measures also tell us that reductions in symptoms and improvements in functioning coincide with general improvements in wellbeing. You will find anonymised stories of the children and young people we have worked with attached to this report.

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## | Emotional Health Triage |

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"Triage" is our first point of contact with all members of the community concerned about a child or young person with emerging, mild or moderate emotional health difficulties. EHA staff meet together with specialist voluntary sector and CAMHS staff to assess need and risk and determine who will support the child or family and how. Triage received 374 referrals in the first nine months of operation, far exceeding initial modelling.

There are a broad range of services across West Berkshire offering support to children, young people and families. This includes low intensity talking therapies, youth and family counselling, bereavement, pastoral support, groups for young carers, support for bullying and those affected by crime, mentoring, and emotional wellbeing groups amongst others.

We check on every child six weeks after Triage have met to check that the help they are receiving is improving their outcomes. Referrers reported recommendations were helpful, or had resulted in the child or young person being actively engaged in support in 82% of cases by six week review. The review process also allowed for cases where effective support was not yet in place to be signposted to alternative or more appropriate forms of support. Triage has been successful in ensuring children and young people get the right help at the right time, and the demand is shared across public and voluntary Tier 2 services.

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### | Schools |

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The EHA has provided support across 28 schools on a weekly basis including direct work with individuals, or groups of students and parents for a wide range of difficulties. These difficulties include but are not limited to: anxiety, low mood, deliberate self-injury, poor behaviour and attendance, friendships, eating, sleeping, attention and concentration issues, and problems associated with Autism or other learning difficulties.

The EHA has delivered emotional health training to 237 members of school staff. This has focused on building school capacity to strengthen the resilience of their students through relationship and strength focused approaches.

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### | Community |

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The EHA provides outreach in local communities where children and families can access help and support, which has led to new and innovative solutions emerging including:

- Co-development and delivery of a peer volunteer training program to 9 vulnerable parents, which will be rolled out as an accredited program.
- Co-development and delivery of standalone wellbeing workshops for our most vulnerable young people.
- Weekly developmental play workshops for parents of children with Autism or other learning difficulties.
- Helping to link disengaged young people attending pupil referral units into meaningful activity at local community charities.



## The journey of children and young people supported by the EHA:

### David\*

David has a diagnosis of ADHD. He had been finding primary school extremely difficult, resulting in numerous exclusions due to disruptive behaviour. David was offered a new start at a nearby school. The EHA supported his transition alongside the exclusion officer and educational psychologist by providing holistic consultation and direct support around his emotional health needs. David has settled well into his new setting with no behavioural incidents, which is a significant improvement from his previous school. His mother provided the following feedback:

*'Hi, I just want to thank you all for all your help and support you have given David and myself over the last few weeks, it has been a really hard time but I can finally see a light at the end of the tunnel, I have just picked David up from his visit and he was smiling. I've not seen him smiling at school in a long time; he was also telling me how much work he has done and has made some friends, he can't wait to go back Friday. I really appreciate all your help'*

**David's mother**

### Timothy\*

Timothy was referred to the service by his school. He was initially referred for low mood and anger management, with additional difficulties due to his ADHD and ASD. Timothy Completed 12 individual sessions with the EHA and then took part in group anger management. He is now happy at school, learning and making friends.

*'The EHA has been brilliant for Timothy. We have seen a vast improvement in his emotional state. He no longer states he wants to kill himself or this is the worst day of my life, which were both a daily occurrence. He has become less volatile and angry and his outbursts have decreased. He is also more open to discussing what went wrong and what he could do next time.'*

**Timothy's Head Teacher**

### Sarah\*

Sarah attends an independent school that provides an alternative curriculum for West Berkshire's most vulnerable young people. Sarah has ongoing struggles with social anxiety and anger, and has experienced extensive bullying in mainstream education. Her parents also struggle with mental health difficulties, maintaining employment and ongoing financial burdens. The EHA provided a highly individualised, relational and restorative approach in partnership with her school. This involved drawing on her love of animals to improve her

social and communication skills, and address her worries about her family's wider struggles. Overtime Sarah has grown in confidence, been able to speak more openly with her parents, and engage in education and targeted vocational training. She has provided the following feedback:

'By using the 'I' statements I can communicate better with my mum and dad at home.'

*Sarah*

### **Todd\***

Todd is a young boy that has struggled for some time with a food phobia. He had a very limited diet, which consequently restricted the overall quality of his life and that of his family. The EHA provided a short term evidenced based anxiety intervention which was led by Todd and his mother over 12 sessions. By the end of the intervention Todd was eating a much wider variety of foods and his family had eaten at a restaurant for the first time in years. Both Todd and his mother provided the following feedback:

'I have sought help for my son for 10 years now and to no avail, however since seeing the Emotional Health Academy we have come on in leaps and bounds. We are now at a stage that I had lost hope that we were ever likely to achieve. A massive thank you to all involved.'

*Todd's mother*

'I think [Mental Health Worker] has been really helpful with all the help and time she's given me. I wouldn't be eating without her!'

*Todd*

### **Adam\***

Adam is a looked after child who was at risk of permanent exclusion due to poor behaviour at school. At the time the EHA became involved there was no clear plan around how various therapeutic inputs were working together to support Adam's needs, as well as his transition to a new school. The EHA took responsibility as the lead professional and provided holistic support including managing the school transition, building a relationship with Adam to facilitate his engagement with specialist mental health services, and to carry out any joint working alongside his specialist plan.

The EHA impact resulted in a cohesive team approach that was lead by Adam. He successfully transitioned to his new school without incident and engaged with specialist mental health services. Unexpectedly as a result of this work a connection was made with a Marine Biologist, who is now personally supporting Adam in working towards his dream of a career in Marine Biology.

### Jane\*

Jane is currently under a special guardianship arrangement with her grandparents. She was referred to the EHA by her school to help engage the family in working together to support her behaviour in the classroom. Jane was having tantrums, being defiant, stealing and damaging property. This was having a significant impact on her friendships and learning. The EHA identified that these problems were directly linked to difficulties in the home.

Direct support was provided to Jane using a family centred approach to establish better relationship dynamics within the family. The EHA helped the grandparents address negative lifestyle factors and to develop greater sensitivity to Jane's needs which resulted in improved emotional regulation. Jane's family relationships have now improved significantly. Difficulties at school have also decreased to the point where Jane is now supported fully by her pastoral care team and is enjoying closer friendships. The feedback from grandparents was:

*'Jane's behaviour has really improved and we really enjoyed the flexibility of the Emotional Health Worker's approach. This is the first time we have felt able to trust a mental health professional'*  
**Jane's grandmother**

### Stacey\*

Stacey was struggling with anxiety, particularly in relation to obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviours. Stacey was supported at her school over a period of 12 weeks. The EHA provided an evidenced based anxiety intervention that focused on helping Stacey to gradually overcome situations she was worried about and manage her thoughts and behaviours. Stacey experienced a significant reduction in her symptoms and improvements in wellbeing. Follow-up feedback from her family was that Stacey continues to make gains in her emotional health and they now feel confident taking what they learnt during intervention and building on her gains.

*'I found the techniques for managing my anxiety really useful'*  
**Stacey**

*'We have definitely seen a change in Stacey's emotional health and are really grateful for your help. We wish we had of known about the Emotional Health Academy sooner. We were unsure about what would happen after the support ended but by the end we were very confident in being able to move forward on our own.'*  
**Stacey's mother**

### Alex\*

Alex is diagnosed with ASD and ADHD and was referred by his mother due to problems with low mood and aggression that was putting the family under significant pressure. The EHA used a combination of restorative techniques and innovative coping strategies to help Alex improve his mood, behaviour and family relationships. His family described the positive impact to be huge, especially when many other interventions had been unsuccessful in the past.

*'I would like to say a huge thank you to the Emotional Health Worker for the work that he has done with Alex - it really has had a positive impact. The focus of the work was on Alex's responses to demands and on helping him to manage feelings of anger or frustration. As a result of the input from the Emotional Health Worker, I can see that Alex is taking time to think about his responses and trying really hard to practice the strategies that the Emotional Health Worker taught him.'*

*Thanks again for all of your help and support, Alex really valued it and myself and his step-father did too. I am so pleased that we have this provision available for children and young people and their families in West Berkshire.'*

**Alex's mother**

- **All names have been changed to protect children's anonymity.**

## **Feedback provided by Head Teachers:**

### **Head Teacher 1**

Staff had an initial session with the Emotional Health Worker (EHW) beginning to look at Restorative Practice. This has been immediately put into practice by the staff. We are all looking forward to further training. The EHW has also been working with individual children and with a group of Year 6 children.

As Head Teacher, I was privileged to observe the EHW dealing with the group. The group totally engaged with the EHW and through restorative justice began to realise the impact of their behaviour. Obviously, there is still further work to be done for this group of pupils as they transition to Secondary School.

It is early days, and the EHW has only visited our school four times during this term. However, there has been an immediate impact. My entire staff feel supported as well as the children which is an added bonus. As a result I have just increased our buy back from one hour to two hours per week.

### **Head Teacher 2**

The Emotional Health Worker has had a positive impact on the school in that she has been able to support parents who have been desperate for CAMHS support. This in turn helped lessen the load on existing ELSA support assistants. We have had patients independently access the service. Do not stop or cut back the available service!

### **Head Teacher 3**

The Emotional Health Worker has been fantastic in supporting a group of staff at my school. She comes with a wealth of experience and knowledge, and her sessions have been well received.

### **Head Teacher 4**

We have been very impressed by the EHA offer. The staff we have worked with have been highly skilled, effective and professional. For us, the main benefits have been:

- an additional and higher level element to our established ELSA systems
- professional development opportunities for teachers and support staff
- excellent resources
- positive engagement with parents
- a clearly identifiable and positive impact on the children being supported

It is our intention to work very hard to build additional funding into our budget next year in order to buy more EHA time. That statement, in such challenging financial times, probably says more than anything about how highly we rate both the concept and delivery.