

RENFREWSHIRE'S NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS APPROACH: UTILISING NURTURING APPROACHES TO SUPPORT SCHOOL STAFF AND PUPILS DURING COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Aims: In response to the Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) and the changing needs of educational establishments, pupils and families, Renfrewshire Educational Psychology Service (REPS) enhanced the existing Renfrewshire's Nurturing Relationships Approach (RNRA) with digital adaptations. This paper outlines the process.

Rationale: In 2016 REPS developed RNRA, which uses an implementation science framework and coach consult model to embed whole-school nurturing approaches in a sustainable way. RNRA was considered ideally placed to support educational communities to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic. Adaptations were made to the content to make direct links to how nurture principles can support the wellbeing of staff, children and young people and their families, including those who are experiencing trauma. Digital adaptations to RNRA were required to ensure accessibility, flexibility, and sustainability of the approach.

Findings: This narrative article drawing on the concept of action research will provide an outline of RNRA and adaptations to content and digitisation of the intervention in response to Covid-19. Adaptations include a range of digitally accessible whole-school nurturing resources and a multi-media curriculum-based recovery programme. Preliminary findings and implications for future practice and research in Renfrewshire and for wider educational psychology, local authority, and nurture practitioner practice₁ are discussed.

This article identifies literature and research relevant to nurturing approaches and trauma (in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic) and discusses the existing whole establishment approach to nurturing relationships within Renfrewshire. Following this, the article describes the digitally enhanced adaptations made to Renfrewshire's nurturing relationships approach (RNRA) to support establishments to cope with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. It concludes by drawing out implications for wider educational psychology (EP), local authority (LA) and nurture practitioner practice. These digital adaptations continue to be refined by Renfrewshire Educational Psychology Service (REPS), using an action research approach following quality improvement (QI) methodology. Preliminary findings from the initial cycles of this developing action research are identified with a view to add to further research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Trauma-informed approaches in schools

A body of research indicates there are links between children and young people's social and emotional wellbeing, their academic outcomes and future functioning (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2014;

Cheney et al., 2014; Dawson & Singh-Dhesi, 2010; National Institute for Health Care Excellence, 2013; Weare, 2015). If children and young people are in a good place emotionally then they are more settled and ready to learn. It is suggested that the school environment is well placed to provide children and young people with opportunities to promote social

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and emotional wellbeing (Cheney et al., 2014; Weare, 2015).

It has been widely reported that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children and the adults who support them (Action for Children, 2020; Barnardo's, 2020; Jeffery et al., 2020; Mind, 2020). The Co-Space study explores a range of impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic including changes in mental health symptoms in children and young people in the UK between March-May 2020 (Waite et al., 2020). The study has shown a deterioration in mental health symptoms in children, especially those from a low-income household or children with additional support needs. Interestingly, it was found to show less of an impact for adolescents. This paper recognises the impact on individual people varies. Early research shows that many staff, children and young people and their families have experienced anxiety, stress or loss which may result in a range of normal, short term stress responses, but many of whom will return to typical functioning (Barlett et al., 2020). For others, the effects of Covid-19 will put them at higher risk of developing mental health conditions including anxiety, depression, and trauma related conditions (Barlett et al., 2020). Trauma describes both the experience and its short and long-term effects on behaviour, emotions, learning, memory, and relationships (Webster, 2020). Maynard et al. (2019) suggest that schools are increasingly developing trauma-informed approaches as a result of the increased knowledge base on trauma and the negative impact it can have on children and young people. Nolan et al., (2021) highlight that children who have experienced trauma are likely to engage less with school support available during the current pandemic climate, which may have negative effects on their mental health and wellbeing as well as their attachments. It is important to recognise that people are responding differently to the effects of Covid-19 and not all experience trauma.

NURTURING APPROACHES

Nurturing approaches are one recommended intervention to support children and young people's mental health, wellbeing, and attainment (Cheney et al., 2014; REPS, 2020). Nurturing approaches are also recommended as an intervention that can be used to support children and young people who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma (Education Scotland, 2018). Education Scotland (2018) suggests that trauma informed practices and nurturing approaches, which include nurture groups (NGs), share several elements. These include: the emphasis on relationships to alleviate the impact of ACEs, the importance of early intervention, an awareness

that there is a meaning behind behaviour, and a belief that poor outcomes can be mitigated with the correct support (Nolan et al., 2021).

Traditionally, nurture groups have been used to support children with social, emotional, and behavioural needs resulting from early attachment experiences (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000; Reynolds et al., 2009). More recently research has suggested the benefits of incorporating nurturing approaches throughout the whole school (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007; Doyle, 2003; O'Connor & Colwell, 2002; Weare, 2015). As a result, whole-school nurturing approaches have been developed more widely (Warin, 2016; Coleman, 2020). The Scottish Government promotes a whole establishment nurturing approach as key in supporting behaviour, wellbeing, attainment, and achievement in Scottish schools, including recommending the approach through several policy documents (Scottish Government, 2013; Scottish Government, 2017).

Nolan et al. (2021) suggest that definitions of whole-school nurturing approaches incorporate the following:

- An understanding of attachment theory
- School staff as positive role models
- Positive relationships in school that are predictable, consistent, and reliable
- Positive relationships across the school community that include parents/carers, pupils, and staff
- High expectations with a balance between care and challenge
- A focus on connection, attunement and warmth
- Support for pupils who have missed early nurturing experiences
- Development of pupils' resilience

(eg Education Scotland, 2018, p13; nurtureUK, 2020a).

WHOLE-ESTABLISHMENT APPROACH TO NURTURE: RENFREWSHIRE'S NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS APPROACH (RNRA)

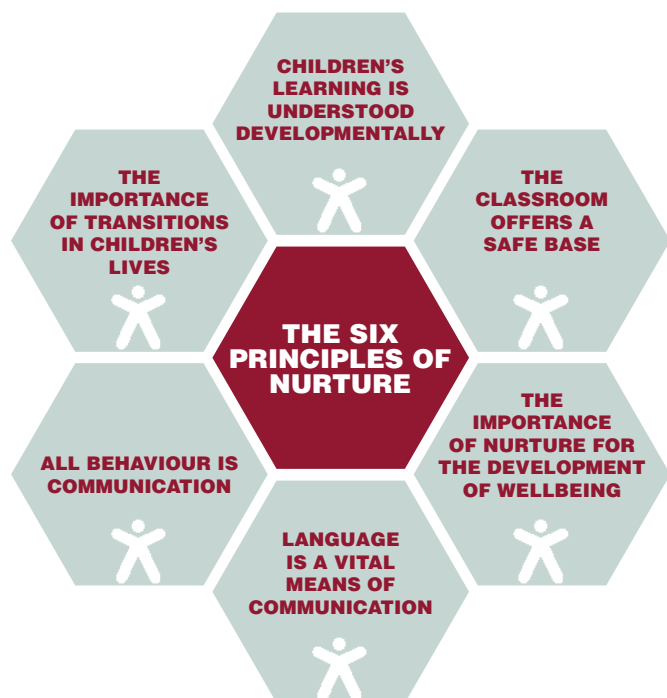
The Scottish Government suggests that key to nurturing approaches is an understanding of attachment theory and how early experiences can have a significant impact on development (Scottish Government, 2017). The Scottish Government also stresses that wellbeing and relationships are central to nurturing approaches (Scottish Government, 2017). Education Scotland's 'Applying Nurture as a Whole School Approach' framework identifies that all school/ Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) staff have a role to play in establishing the positive

relationships required to promote healthy social and emotional development.

In 2016, informed by research on whole-school nurture approaches and Education Scotland guidance, REPS developed RNRA. RNRA is an authority-wide whole establishment approach to developing nurturing relationships. It is a universal approach for supporting the wellbeing of all pupils, but also recognises that some children and young people have experienced ACEs and trauma and may require more targeted support (REPS, 2020).

RNRA is based on enhancing establishment staff's understanding of attachment theory and nurturing approaches, and embedding the six principles of nurture (Lucas et al., 2006) (see figure 1) across the whole school community (REPS, 2020).

Figure 1: *The six principles of nurture (nurtureUK, 2020b, p2)*



The aims of RNRA are:

- To promote an understanding of attachment theory and of the importance of nurturing relationships in helping all children and young people to learn and develop socially and emotionally.
- To promote an understanding of the six nurture principles and support establishments to embed these at a whole establishment level.
- To support practices that will improve wellbeing and promote resilience for children and young people.
- To introduce an approach to implementation that is evidence-based and therefore has the best chance of delivering a sustainable approach for establishments and children and young people.

(REPS, 2020)

A doctorate evaluation was carried out on behalf of the LA, evaluating the impact of RNRA in three primaries and one secondary school (Nolan, 2020). The empirical study suggested that RNRA leads to:

- A positive impact on staff's skills, practice, knowledge and understanding
- Positive changes in staff mindset
- The implementation of new interventions
- The promotion of nurturing relationships
- Positive changes to the environment.
- Positive social, emotional, and behavioural effects on pupils in the primary and secondary sectors (Nolan, 2020).

RNRA has been identified as a national exemplar of good practice within the Education Scotland improvement hub (Education Scotland, 2021).

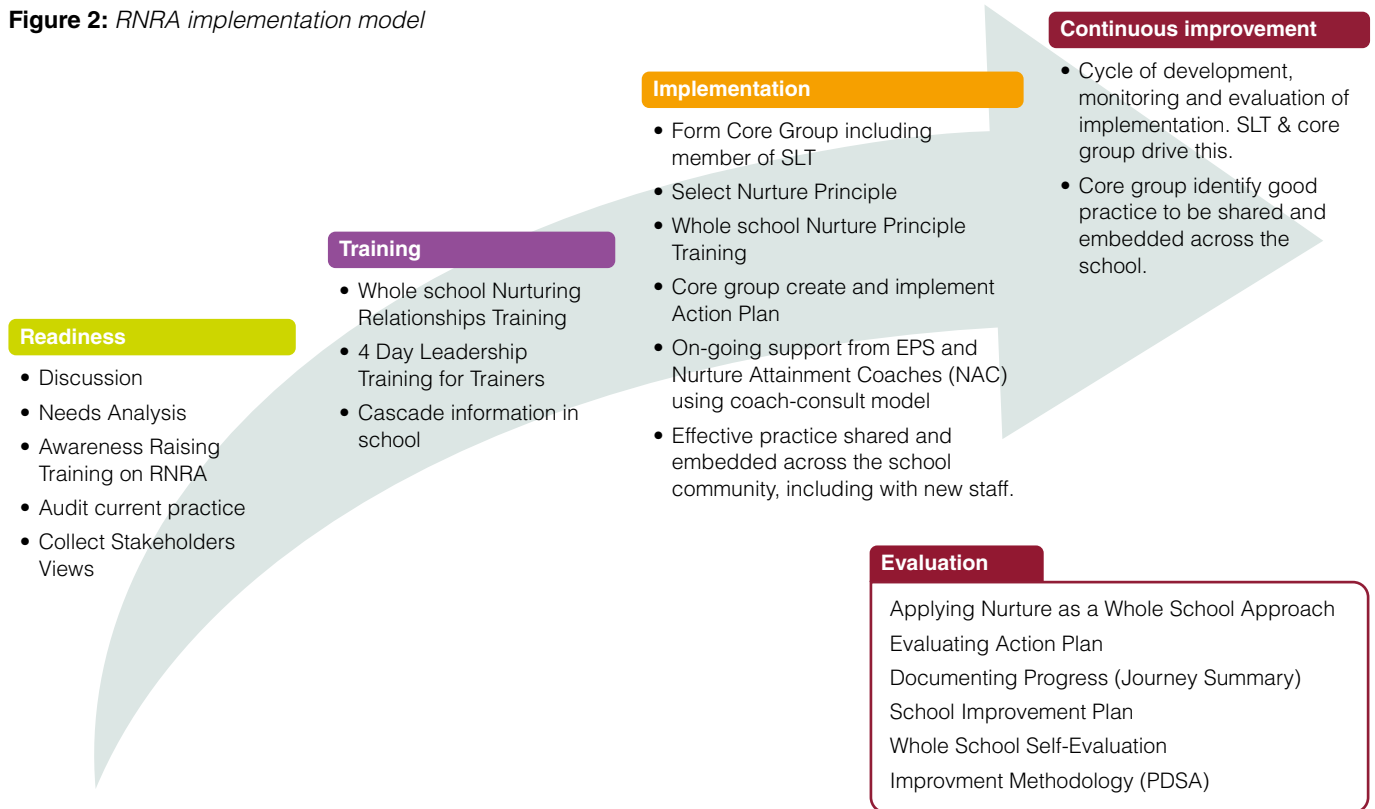
RNRA IMPLEMENTATION MODEL

The RNRA approach to implementation has been a key part of the success of this initiative. The RNRA implementation model (see figure 2) integrates an implementation science framework (Meyers et al., 2012), a coach consult model (Balchin et al., 2006) and quality improvement (QI) approaches, including action research cycles based on the model for improvement (Langley et al., 2009) to embed nurturing practice across the whole establishment in an evidence based and sustainable way (REPS, 2020).

Implementation science is the study of methods that influence the integration of evidence-based interventions into practice settings. It is now recognised for its critical importance and there is a growing body of evidence that clearly states implementation influences desired outcomes (Meyers et al., 2012). The RNRA implementation model follows the implementation science framework as described by Meyers et al. (2012). Each RNRA establishment follows the RNRA implementation model that includes: readiness assessment; leadership training for those leading the initiative within an establishment; whole establishment training (to increase knowledge about attachment theory and nurturing approaches, including the six nurture principles); the setting up of an RNRA core group of staff to lead the implementation, including developing and evaluating the establishment's RNRA action plan; and ongoing coach consult support provided by REPS.

The coach consult model aims to increase establishments' ownership of the whole establishment nurturing approach and sustainability. REPS offers coaching for each establishment to support the development of its nurturing relationships action plan and the resultant

Figure 2: RNRA implementation model



changes in practice. Establishment core groups are supported to use QI methodology to help them understand their context before developing their theory of change. The core groups then use action research cycles to test out new practice or to make improvements to existing practice and to evaluate these changes in a quick iterative cycle of plan, do, study, act (PDSA). This supports the design and evaluation of the impact of new practice introduced. It is widely accepted that action research approaches are effective in developing and embedding sustainable improvements in education settings (Elliot, 1991).

RNRA is a whole establishment approach and encourages all establishment staff to attend training and they can opt-in to be part of the RNRA core group. This includes all teaching and support staff and business support, janitorial and kitchen staff. The importance of all establishment staff being trained in establishing a nurturing culture is one of the key themes reported by Warin and Hibbin (2016). Typically, RNRA core groups have between six and 10 members. Coleman (2020) reports on the key role that leadership plays in leading the change to establish a whole-school nurturing culture, and it is a stipulation of the RNRA implementation that the core group must include a member of the senior leadership team.

This RNRA model of implementation is consistent across establishments, but the way in which the initiative develops is bespoke, as each

establishment develops practice in a way that suits its context and identified needs.

DIGITAL ADAPTATIONS TO RNRA IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The following section describes the rationale, adaptations made and the approach to implementation of a new suite of digitally accessible resources which were developed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. These adaptations will continue to be reviewed in ongoing cycles of action research, in line with the existing emphasis on QI methodology in RNRA as an evidence-based approach to identifying and embedding sustainable improvements.

RATIONALE

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on establishments and individuals prompted an opportunity to refine and enhance current RNRA frameworks. Recommendations from a recent report (Barnardo's, 2020) on the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of children and the adults who support them include: the need to develop relationship-based programmes that support rebuilding of connections disrupted by Covid-19 isolation, and the introduction of a flexible curriculum that can adjust to meet the psychological needs of children and young people on return to school. RNRA is a relational and trauma informed approach currently in place across the majority of Renfrewshire establishments. As such, it is ideally placed to support the wellbeing of

staff, children and young people and their families as they cope with the effects of Covid-19 (REPS, 2020). To make the materials directly related to Covid-19, REPS refined and enhanced RNRA so that it serves as a framework for understanding the community trauma caused by Covid-19 and makes direct links to how the nurture principles can support the wellbeing of staff, children and young people and their families, including those who are experiencing trauma (REPS 2020).

REPS identified that digital adaptation of RNRA resources and support was needed due to the abrupt shift to remote learning and virtual educational psychology (EP) service delivery due to the Covid-19 pandemic. REPS was able to adapt the content to consider the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The response to this crisis also provided new solutions to an existing issue of growth in demand for RNRA from establishments. The percentage of Renfrewshire education establishments engaged in RNRA has rapidly increased from 1% of schools and no ELCC settings in 2016 to 87% of schools and 92% of ELCC settings in 2020. Following QI methodology to plan for increasing scale and spread of the approach, REPS had already begun to consider how it could

adapt the existing RNRA implementation model to sustain the fidelity of the approach with significantly increased demand. Plans to create RNRA e-learning courses and networks of support were at the early stages of development in March 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic led to school closures and home learning across Scotland. The process of digital adaptation gave REPS opportunities to improve the accessibility of the RNRA materials and to consider how to increase the direct engagement of staff, children and young people and parents/ carers with RNRA.

DIGITAL ADAPTATIONS TO RNRA

REPS recognised the need for support and guidance in educational establishments to adapt existing nurturing relationships approaches to the quickly developing virtual ways of working and learning in March 2020. The first digitally available resource from REPS was 'Nurturing relationships during establishment closures', which contained guidance and ideas to create nurturing connections virtually (REPS, 2020). Table 1 summarises the digitally accessible resources produced by REPS between March and November 2020.

Following on below, there is an account of the core resources developed for the main stakeholders; all

Table 1: RNRA resources developed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic

Resource title	Intended audience	Digital delivery methods
Nurturing relationships during establishment closures	All education staff	Posted to REPS blog ¹ Shared on social media (Twitter)
Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better: a trauma informed resource (extended version)	Senior leadership teams of educational establishments and RNRA core groups.	Posted to REPS blog Shared on social media (Twitter)
Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better: a summary of trauma informed priorities for educational establishments	All education staff	Posted to REPS blog Shared on social media (Twitter)
Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better: a closer look at trauma informed practice	Education staff supporting children and young people impacted by trauma.	Posted to REPS blog Shared on social media (Twitter)
Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better: skills for recovery (pupil programme)	Children and young people from Primary 6 (age 9-10 years) to Secondary 6 (age 16-17 years).	All resources posted to the LA health and wellbeing development blog ² for ease of access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 x lesson plans & PowerPoints • 6 x videos hosted on YouTube • 6 x pupil Infographics • Sway leaflet 'Wellbeing when isolating' (pupil version)
Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better: skills for recovery (staff programme)	All education staff	Social media strategy (Twitter) All resources posted to the LA health and wellbeing development blog for ease of access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 x weekly plans including video links and resources • 6 x staff Infographics
Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better: skills for recovery (parent/carer programme)	Parents/carers of children and young people engaged in the pupil programme.	All resources posted to the LA health and wellbeing development blog for ease of access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 x weekly plans including video links and resources • Sway leaflet 'Wellbeing when isolating' (parent/carer version)

1 <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/re/renfrewshireedpsych/>

2 <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/re/renfrewshirehwb/skills-for-recovery/>

education staff, senior leadership teams, RNRA core group members, children and young people from Primary 6 to Secondary 6 (aged 9 to 18 years) and their parents/carers.

Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better: A trauma informed resource (extended version)

The purpose of this resource is to provide senior leadership teams and existing RNRA core groups with a refined and enhanced nurturing relationships framework for recovery in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. RNRA core groups are already established to develop RNRA practice in educational establishments. As previously detailed, they are comprised of members of establishment staff and senior leadership and lead the implementation of nurturing approaches in the establishment. This extended resource is structured around the six nurture principles (Lucas et al., 2006). Within each nurture principle section there is information about key features of the nurture principle, why these are important for Covid-19 recovery planning, suggestions for putting the nurture principle into practice and links to further resources or information. The extended resource also gives a brief introduction to trauma informed approaches and practical actions.

Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better: A summary of trauma informed priorities for educational establishments

The purpose of the summary resource is to highlight guidance from the extended resource that would be most relevant to the immediate priorities of educational establishments as they returned to school buildings post lockdown. Key information is structured in three broad areas: preparation for transition; supporting children and young people through interactions and supporting adults.

Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better: A closer look at trauma-informed practice

The purpose of the 'Closer look at trauma-informed practice' resource is to provide more detailed learning and guidance regarding trauma specific approaches. This resource includes guidance to support the planning of a whole establishment approach to trauma-informed practice.

Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better: Skills for recovery

Skills for Recovery (SFR) is a collaborative project between REPS and Renfrewshire's health and wellbeing development officer. SFR was developed in response to a request from LA education managers for a programme to support the transition back to secondary schools following the summer

holidays and the school closures prior to this in March 2020. The request included:

- A specific focus on supporting both staff and pupil wellbeing;
- Curricular resources that could be delivered through personal and social education lessons without significantly adding to the workload of teaching staff;
- Resources that could be used flexibly and accessed from home to:
 - support the proposed blended learning approach at that time;
 - allow quick adaptation of teaching methods if there was another lockdown; and
 - enable pupils who were self-isolating due to Covid-19 to complete the programme.

At the time of developing the SFR programmes there were vast numbers of resources being made available online from a variety of sources to support wellbeing during Covid-19. There was acknowledgement that the choice for schools could become overwhelming and lead to inconsistent approaches across educational establishments. The purpose of this resource was therefore to promote clear and consistent messages across LA establishments about how RNRA practice can nurture the mental health and wellbeing of staff, children and young people and their families as they adapt to the changes brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. The content is based on the extended 'Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better: A Trauma Informed Resource' in addition to a range of freely available resources designed to support mental health and wellbeing in the context of Covid-19. There are consistencies between the content of SFR and an existing cognitive behaviour therapy based curricular approach to support mental health and wellbeing that was already established in Renfrewshire secondary schools.

SFR is a multi-faceted resource with specific pupil, staff, and parent/carer programmes. SFR was developed with digital accessibility as a key consideration. The resources are posted on the LA's health and wellbeing blog, which is publicly available, therefore allowing pupils and parents/carers to use the resources at home as well as in school. As recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2020), the resources include approaches to changing behaviour that are evidence-based, for example support to set goals and develop plans to improve personal wellbeing.

The pupil programme provided practical help in the first six weeks of the new school session including materials related to: dealing with

change, understanding, and naming our feelings, relationships and bouncing back. The programme also includes signposting to supports within the LA through a ready-made curricular resource, videos, and infographics. SFR was initially developed only for secondary pupils (aged 11-18 years), however, in response to demand from primary schools, it was offered to primary six (aged 9-10 years) and seven pupils (aged 10-11 years) to support preparation for secondary school transition.

The purpose of the parent/carer programme is to provide support for parents/carers' mental health and wellbeing, to help parents/carers to understand what their child is learning through the SFR programme in school, and to give parents/carers ideas about how they can support their child's wellbeing. In a recent review of research pertaining to the mental health of children and adolescents impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting lockdowns, Singh et al. (2020) surmise that role modelling of important life skills, such as coping with stress, emotions and problem-solving by parents is particularly important for adolescents. Parent mental health and coping skills are also highlighted as factors which affect the mental health of children following disasters (Singh et al. 2020).

The staff development programme has a focus on nurturing approaches and staff wellbeing, to mirror the curricular resource. Relationships are key to learning and mental health and wellbeing: children and young people learn more when their teacher is happy and performing well (White, 2020; Glazzard & Rose, 2019). Research has found that teachers have higher job-related stress on average than other professionals (Worth & Van den Brande, 2019). The teacher wellbeing index (Education Support, 2020) shared findings collated during the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrating that education professionals reported high stress levels, an increase in poor wellbeing and a higher workload. REPS was mindful of the potential to add to existing stress by overloading staff with too much information at the point of transition back to schools. Infographics were produced to highlight key information for each of the six weeks of the SFR programme and the six curricular lessons were produced for teachers to use with little preparation required.

IMPLEMENTATION

The LA health and wellbeing development officer worked with Secondary schools to raise awareness of the SFR resources and offered support to plan implementation. The SFR resources were also promoted in the LA health and wellbeing digital newsletter and multiple social media channels.

LA education managers and the head of service (education) supported the dissemination and implementation of the Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better digital resources, highlighting the value of these to establishments across the LA's 49 primary schools, 12 secondary schools, 21 ELCCs, two alternative provision establishments and six flexible learning bases. REPS held a virtual launch to inform establishments about the suite of resources and supported schools to implement these through providing coach consult support. Core groups, already established to develop RNRA practice within educational establishments have produced action plans which detail creative and thoughtful implementation of practice directly informed by the range of digital resources produced by REPS. Establishments were urged to consider how best to engage parents/carers in the SFR programme, and to use the materials in ways that best meet the needs of their community. Some establishments sought to engage parents/carers and have used social media outlets, such as Twitter and Facebook, to communicate the information in manageable and engaging ways. Other establishments reported good engagement through existing parent/carer communication systems, such as SeeSaw and Show my Homework.

SMALL-SCALE EVALUATION: METHODOLOGY

A small number of establishments (n=3) were asked to give feedback on the SFR programme through an online survey, sent to them by the LA health and wellbeing development officer based on the school's uptake of the resources. Participants gave their consent by way of completing this survey. There are no identifying factors for establishments that shared their view within this paper to ensure their anonymity. Participant responses were submitted by primary six pupils (n=16) and primary and secondary teachers (n= 6). In addition to this small-scale survey, anecdotal feedback from establishments and tracking data from digital platforms regarding engagement with the resources is reported.

The purpose of seeking this feedback was to review the effectiveness of the adaptations made to the RNRA resources in this cycle of action research. The findings will be considered in the next cycle of PDSA, with the aim that this iterative process results in a resource which meets local needs and is a sustainable intervention.

FINDINGS

Survey

Brief preliminary feedback from small samples of primary six pupils (n=16) and primary and secondary teachers (n=6) indicates that all the teachers found the SFR pupil programme extremely

easy or somewhat easy to use. Eleven of the primary pupils in the sample found the SFR programme useful and had used some of the things they had learned, while half of the pupils wanted to learn more about some of the things covered in the SFR pupil programme. Although it is acknowledged that this is a very small sample, these figures are encouraging, given that the SFR pupil programme was primarily developed for secondary aged pupils. This is reflected in teacher feedback, where the majority of the teachers reported that pupils mostly engaged well with the SFR resources and two thirds had noticed some of their pupils using strategies they had learned from this programme. Nearly all of the pupils in the sample considered that they might look at the online resources for the SFR programme again in the future, while two thirds of the teachers reported that they were somewhat likely to use the SFR pupil programme again in the future. Around half of the pupils had shared what they had learned with their parents/carers, however only a small number of the teachers reported that they or the establishment's senior management team had shared information about the SFR programme with parents/carers.

Qualitative teacher feedback about the SFR pupil programme collected through the online survey highlighted some areas for improvement, including: ensuring videos are appropriate for primary aged children in terms of understanding the language and terms used; reviewing some of the curricular tasks to reduce repetition for secondary pupils, and improving the engagement with PowerPoint slides, eg use of videos. Other positive feedback included: the SFR programme encouraged more open discussion about mental health issues; pupils were engaged and seemed to enjoy the course and that the programme encouraged good interaction from pupils.

Establishment feedback and tracking data

Individual establishments have measured the impact of new practice from the Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better resources put in place, detailing this in their RNRA action plans. Establishments have used QI methodologies, such as PDSA, and a range of qualitative and quantitative measures to evaluate impact, including staff, pupil and parent surveys and rating scales. Some establishments have already reported positive impact. Some not previously engaged in RNRA have used the digital resources and have anecdotally reported that the resources have had a positive impact on staff understanding and practice in using nurturing relationships to support transitions back to establishments. It is hoped that as a result of using the Nurturing Wellbeing materials and seeing the impact they

have, that these establishments will decide to develop RNRA further.

Engagement with the SFR programmes has been high, with most of the 12 secondary schools in the LA reporting that the SFR lessons have been delivered to some or all their pupils. Many primary schools have also been using the SFR programme with Primary 6 and 7 pupils. YouTube views of the SFR videos indicates higher engagement at the start of the six-week programme (618 views as of 3 December 2020), which declined as the weeks progressed. This decline could be due to promotion of the week one video on the LA social media sites and the involvement of some local high-profile personalities in this video. Videos for the following weeks were not so heavily publicised and were more likely to only have been viewed by those engaged in the SFR programmes. The decline may also be as a result of pupils successfully transitioning back to school. Engagement with the Microsoft Sway leaflets, designed for pupils who are self-isolating and their parents/carers, was encouraging with 1,830 views in the first three weeks following the launch, with over half of these coming from the parent/carer resource. Engagement with the SFR staff programme has been mixed. In some establishments where staff wellbeing was identified as a key priority on their school improvement plan, collegiate time or departmental meetings were used by senior leadership teams to highlight and work through parts of the SFR staff programme. In others the existing RNRA core groups used the resources to inform action plans to improve staff wellbeing. Some senior managers gave anecdotal feedback that the volume of information in the staff programme may be overwhelming for teachers who are already stressed by their workload and that this could affect levels of engagement.

DISCUSSION

The incorporation of practice recommended in the Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better resources into establishment RNRA action plans, and the high levels of engagement with the SFR programmes, suggests that establishments have seen the need to support staff, pupil and family wellbeing and have considered these resources appropriate and helpful in doing so. Initial feedback indicates that practice suggested in the Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better resources put in place by establishments has had a positive impact. Initial feedback from a sample of staff and pupils reporting on the SFR resource through an online survey, suggests high levels of pupil engagement, with a high proportion of pupils using strategies suggested and wanting to find out more. A high proportion of pupils and school staff also said that they would consider revisiting

the online SFR resources again in the future. Digital availability of SFR and other Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better resources will allow for this and highlights the benefits of digital adaptation of interventions to allow wider and more flexible access for users. Teachers were very positive about the digital access, with all staff who responded reporting that the SFR resources were extremely easy or somewhat easy to use. Teachers also reported on the benefits of a resource which was ready to deliver to pupils, especially at a time when establishment staff were exceptionally busy coping with changes to working practices, while also trying to cope with the stress associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

In several establishments senior leaders and RNRA core group members have used the digital resources to lead staff training. Previously, many would have asked their link EP to deliver such training. This suggests that the digital platform has provided ready access to the information and resources and this has helped build staff confidence about delivering training independently. This has positive implications for the sustainability of RNRA within establishments. REPS has been developing the existing RNRA leadership training to provide participants with the knowledge, resources, skills, and confidence to lead RNRA more independently within their establishment. The independent use of these Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better materials suggests that digital resources have a positive role to play in this.

Digital availability of RNRA resources also has implications for REPS capacity. Prior to this development, all EPs would have been directly involved in disseminating these resources and delivering training about them to individual establishments. This has general implications for future REPS service delivery as it allows for that time to be used more effectively. The digital availability of RNRA resources was particularly important during the Covid-19 restrictions, where EPs operated service delivery predominantly via virtual means.

While some establishments have made efforts to engage parents/carers with the resources, for example through social media, only a small percentage of establishments from the sample providing feedback reported that they had shared information with parents/carers about SFR. However, encouragingly a much higher percentage of pupils reported sharing what they had learned through SFR with a parent/carers. RNRA implementation typically begins with development of staff knowledge and skills followed by changes in practice. Once staff feel confident about the

initiative and its impact, RNRA practice is developed further to include more engagement with parents/carers and the wider community. This is reflected in the RNRA accreditation criteria that charts an establishment's progress in implementing RNRA. Further data gathering and reflection are planned to help identify the reasons behind establishments' limited promotion of the parental resources and to identify the barriers to access and engagement with the SFR staff programme. Adaptations will continue to be made to the resources reflecting the data and feedback gathered.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations of this approach to digitally adapting an existing whole establishment nurturing relationships approach have been identified. RNRA uses implementation science and QI methodology to develop interventions that are refined to meet the needs of each context. The Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better resources (digital adaptations of existing RNRA materials) did not follow the same process, due to the speed of development and implementation necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic. REPS did not pilot the resources nor consult with stakeholders prior to dissemination to establishments, families, and communities. This process would have undoubtedly led to a refinement of the materials and would have highlighted any issues with accessibility.

Although data are currently being gathered to evaluate the impact of the digital interventions, this process is in its early stages. The preliminary data currently available to authors have a small sample size due to the early stages of data gathering. The small scale feedback to date has identified some improvements that could be made to the materials; however, it is acknowledged that it is limited in scale and scope. Since writing, improvements have been made to the delivery of information utilising Microsoft Sway to allow easy access and inclusion of hyperlinks. It is hoped that a follow-on paper will be written focusing on the impact of the digital interventions once all data gathering has taken place and data has been analysed.

Significantly, the views of parents/carers were not received despite the resources being accessed. The choice to partake in feedback was optional. Access to technology to engage with the digital materials and therefore with the online surveys may pose a barrier to parental engagement. A recent report on digital exclusion in Scotland (Halliday, 2020) highlights that a third of households with low incomes do not have any internet access and 19 per cent of Scottish people do not know how to use digital technology. Although many LAs have

identified the risks posed by digital inequalities and supply technology to children who need it, there remain issues around confidence and skills of parents/carers to support their child to use the technology appropriately (Halliday, 2020). Further work should be carried out to investigate this issue and to improve accessibility of the resources for parents/carers. Further implications for LAs and EPs in addressing these inequalities will be discussed in the implications section.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICE

- Relational and trauma informed approaches that promote the practical application of the six nurture principles, as RNRA does, can support the wellbeing of staff, children and young people and their families as they cope with the effects of Covid-19 (REPS, 2020).
- RNRA should continue to be implemented and further developed as a key part of the LA approach to supporting mental health.
- Establishments with an existing nurture framework and established nurturing relationships practice that supports pupil and staff wellbeing are well prepared to support their establishment community when something traumatic happens.
- EPs should ensure that interventions take account of the needs of both staff and pupil wellbeing and consider the prevalence of work-related stress in teachers.
- Ready-to-use curricular materials that require little teacher preparation time offer a manageable method of delivering a nurture-based intervention directly to children and young people without adding to teacher stress.
- Ensuring that resources are digitally accessible can offer a flexible approach to EP training and interventions in educational establishments, and in this way can increase the scale and scope of EP support. This has implications for capacity issues in relation to EP services.
- Providing EPS resources digitally has positive implications for the sustainability of EPS initiatives, such as RNRA within establishments. Having digital resources can support establishment staff to lead initiatives and training more independently.
- One benefit of offering interventions digitally is to widen access and increase direct engagement of EP services with children, young people, parents and carers, however EP services should also take account of the issue of digital inequality and seek to address this.

- Working in partnership with education services colleagues at LA level can allow EPs to develop training and interventions that more effectively meet the needs of stakeholders and to promote these developments across the local authority.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- It is recommended that data continue to be gathered to evaluate the impact of the digital interventions on staff and pupil wellbeing.
- It is also recommended that data is collected from parents/carers.

CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic has been disruptive to all children and young people and traumatic for some (Action for Children, 2020; Barnardo's, 2020; Jeffery et al., 2020; Mind, 2020). Research suggests that RNRA has a positive impact on staff practice and pupil wellbeing (REPS, 2020). Research also indicates that nurturing approaches can be used to support children and young people who have experienced ACEs and trauma (Education Scotland, 2018). Hence, RNRA was considered an appropriate and useful resource to support educational communities to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic, especially as many establishments in the LA were already familiar with the materials and had a framework in place to implement RNRA (REPS, 2020). REPS identified that digital adaptation of RNRA resources and support was needed due to the abrupt shift to remote learning and virtual EP service delivery due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The process of digital adaptation gave REPS opportunities to improve the flexibility and accessibility of RNRA materials, to increase the direct engagement of children, young people, and parents/carers with RNRA and to address existing issues with sustainability of the model of EP support. Staff wellbeing was a significant consideration in the development of these resources. Some limitations of the approach have been identified, including a lack of stakeholder consultation and refinement of the digital resources and possible impact of digital inequalities on accessibility for pupils and parents/carers. REPS plans to continue to gather data on the use of the digital RNRA resources and to use this information to improve the approach. Given the benefits of digital approaches to EP service delivery to both stakeholders and EPs outlined in this paper, this is an area of EP practice which will undoubtedly continue to evolve beyond the Covid-19 pandemic and inform nurture and other EP practice more widely.

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