

Thought-Full: Mental Health Support Teams in Schools

A guide for parents and carers

Please see our website for some helpful websites and contact numbers that you can access for your own support, alongside that of your child's.

You can find us at: www.westsussex.gov.uk/Thought-Full

Or contact us at: Thought-Full@westsussex.gov.uk



Who are Thought-Full?

Thought-Full are The Mental Health Support Team in Schools in West Sussex. We are a team of practitioners working in primary and secondary schools supporting school aged children up to 18 years old with mild to moderate mental health difficulties.

What do Thought-Full offer?

We work across selected primary and secondary schools in Bognor and Felpham, Worthing, Mid-Sussex and Crawley. We have funding confirmed to expand to other areas over the next three years. We can support children and young people who are experiencing the following: mild to moderate low mood and/or anxiety, fears, worry, low self-esteem, sleep difficulties, eating problems (linked to mood and emotional issues) and young children with behavioural issues.

Who is in the team?

There are a variety of roles in Thought-Full. These include: A Clinical Psychologist, Assistant Psychologists, Educational Psychologists, Children's Wellbeing Practitioners, An Advisory Teacher, Educational Mental Health Practitioners (Trainee's), Senior Mental Health Practitioners, Mental Health Practitioners, a Team leader and a Programme Support Assistant.

What is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy? (CBT)

CBT is an evidenced based intervention proven effective in helping children and young people to cope with, and manage the difficulties they are experiencing. It is a psychological therapy that is based on the concept that emotional issues are caused and kept going by unhelpful patterns of thoughts and behaviours. CBT focuses on a thoughts, feelings and behaviours cycle. It helps identify these unhelpful cycles of thinking and behaving, so that with help, a child or young person can build a more helpful belief and improve their problem-solving skills which will then reduce emotional difficulties.

How are sessions delivered?

Our interventions are brief, evidence-based and CBT informed. We offer up to 10 sessions, which we can either offer as face-to-face or virtual sessions. Sessions take place in school hours, and are usually the duration of a school lesson, up to an hour in length. We will support your child and work collaboratively with them to develop tools of self-awareness which can be used in all areas of their life, now and in the future. Research shows these tools can be very effective for young people.

For information about Data protection please visit our website.

For further details and information about our Data Controller, please see: www.westsussex.gov.uk/privacy-policy

What happens between sessions?

Your child may be required to work on strategies outside of their sessions. This is a key part of CBT being effective as this will help your child use what they have learnt within sessions and put this into practise in their everyday life. This could include reading, or having specific tasks set like symptom logs, reflective journals or be asked to complete structured activities. Non-compliance with home learning tasks is one of the top cited reasons for CBT not being effective, therefore it is important that your child is motivated to talk about, and work on the difficulties being experienced both in and outside of the sessions, and that you can support them with this.

Parent/ Carer involvement

Where possible, we will work with both your child and you, the parent or carer, as you are in the best position to support the implementation and reinforcement of the strategies we teach in sessions at home with your child. You are also best placed to encourage and support the completion of any home practice tasks set from these sessions. If it is assessed as more appropriate, for which it is more commonly with adolescents, we may work directly with your child, involving you with their permission. With younger children in particular, we may work solely with you in order to achieve the best and most effective outcomes for your child.

Psychoeducational workshops

As part of our whole school approach we offer a range of psychoeducational workshops and recorded webinars for parents and carers to support you in supporting the emotional wellbeing of your child.

Frequently asked questions

Are the sessions confidential? Confidentiality is an important part of building trust between your child and their allocated practitioner from the MHST. We will seek parental/carer permission to work with children under 16, involving you in the sessions where appropriate. We will always encourage your child to talk to you to let you know they are working with an MHST practitioner. What we discuss within the sessions remains confidential between the MHST service and your child (and you, if you are involved in the sessions), UNLESS we feel that a child or young person is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing harm. In which case, we have a duty of care to share this with the local safeguarding team and your child's School Safeguarding lead.

What happens to sessions over school holidays? We are an all year-round service, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. We will be able to continue sessions regardless of school holiday's, however these may be held virtually over these periods on a secure online platform. This will be agreed directly with you and your child.

How long will my child need to attend sessions with you for? Our interventions are designed to be short term, so we expect that we will work with your child for up to 10 sessions. Each session is up to an hour long (this is flexible) and we will aim for these to be held over school hours.

Do I have to complete questionnaires and forms? All practitioners will use a range of tools, including questionnaires to help us plan together what interventions we will use and then evaluate if the strategy being used is working or not. We use forms for: Supporting discussions within sessions; Planning goals; Reviewing if strategies being used are effective; Feedback used to improve the service.

Some members of the MHST will be completing training so at times may request feedback from your child/ you for their University so they can complete their course and qualify.

How does my child get referred into your service? Referrals into this service require the school's Senior Mental Health Lead having a conversation with your child and explaining the role of the MHST and what it can offer. If your child (and you as their parent/carer, dependent on age) agrees, the Senior Mental Health Lead will then complete the 'Request for Support Form' and send this to the MHST. If there is something in particular you would like us to know, please ask the Senior Mental Health Lead to add this to the referral. Our interventions rely on a collaborative working approach for them to be effective. It is therefore important that your child acknowledges they have a difficulty, and that they are motivated to talk about, and work on this.

Accessing urgent support: If your child needs support, please contact your GP, or if out of hours, call 111. If your child is experiencing a mental health crisis and needs immediate support you can contact the YoungMinds Crisis messenger text service, by texting YM to 85258. They provide free 24/7 crisis support across the UK. You can also access The Sussex Mental Health Line, which is available 24/7 on 0800 0309 500.