Anxiety Resources Showcase

Important to distinguish between "normal anxiety" and anxiety that gets in the way of life, stops you doing things for an extended period. It's natural that when something goes wrong or is difficult we remember this next time we're faced with it and become anxious, but this usually resolves naturally over time. When we get stuck in a highly anxious state for too long and can't do the things we need to do or want to do that's when it becomes problem anxiety. It's natural for me to feel anxious about talking to so many people, more of a problem if I run for my car and head for the ringroad.

Important to avoid over-medicalising normal feelings

Having said that, Anxiety in pupils was probably the most commonly raised concern from our partner schools

We heard earlier from Matt about how developing the culture of a school can improve the wellbeing of its pupils and reduce anxiety.

These resources I'm sharing are more aimed at working with pupils whose level of anxiety has become a problem

1 Anxiety Toolkit

Process and Quality assurance. Aim was to create a framework that could be used by OHS, our project partners and other schools by sharing on the website

Drafted and amended a number of times – quality assurance from H&D, HAU, OHS staff, Karen Spasik CAMHS. Also shared with a couple of partner schools who thought it would be useful.

I imagined it to be a toolkit of information and strategies for all teachers – some of whom will know a little and some of whom, probably like yourselves, will know a lot.

Walk through

First section speaks for itself, some **sound basic information** and good sources for more if required

Section 2 Key points: General approaches – there are two important messages here I'd like to highlight

Avoidance changes nothing – picking this up later

Second message is to be mindful about the impact of **reassurance** – we're human, we want to be nice, but too much reassurance can locate the solution to the anxiety outside the pupil rather than from within the individual. Some psychological treatments require the individual to sit with the anxiety and not be reassured, so if a child is in psychological treatment its best to work within the approach of that treatment.

3. Gathering information – self-explanatory, all the places you should look and how important joined up working across disciplines is.

4. Impact of condition on Learning. Some obvious things – reluctance to try new things, some more general, feeling isolated, being sensitive to criticism, unable to make decisions

5 Interventions. This is probably the heart of the toolkit.

Left hand column has a range of interventions which could be made to support a pupil with Anxiety. They are all reasonable adjustments for a school to make. Reasonably comprehensive list, tho it could be added to. The possible interventions are written in a progressive way but this doesn't imply that you have to work through all stages. The idea is to think about what interventions are relevant to a particular pupil at a particular point in time and to put them in place. Pick and mix. Perhaps half a dozen.

I think schools are good at putting the interventions in place, but sometimes the recording of what you're doing is hard and doesn't always get done well – sometimes feels hard to find the language.

The right hand column gives the words to describe each of the interventions, forming exemplars of how you might describe what you're doing in an Individual Health Plan.

6 Scripts

There's no one right way of talking to a pupil about their anxiety because you have to bring your own knowledge of that pupil but here are some conversation starters that seem to work well, often combining a validation of the pupils anxious feelings with a gentle but relentless challenge/expectation that things will change eventually. I think that lots of us in the room will have found ourselves saying things like this at some point!

7. Indicators of success – important to be realistic. We may not achieve everything we want for a pupil (Not magicians!) but we can move them forward. Important to notice and give credit to the small steps.

One way you can do this is to use the **grid on last page, section 8.** The way this works is very simple and not time-consuming, maybe takes a minute.

Take a coloured highlighter, swipe the colour into the space and write the date next to it. Use that colour to highlight any descriptors that apply to the pupil you're assessing. You can take bits from all of the boxes, doesn't have to be everything in the box. Repeat the process with a different colour after 4-6 weeks. Used in combination with the IHP it allows you to track progress and adjust the interventions you're making. If there's no or little progess it's evidence-building for the future of what you've tried and the outcomes you've had, this might lead on to an escalation of some kind eventually, such as an EHCP. **Available electronically on USB sticks and on website can be cut and pasted/personalised further. Might be useful for a spot of staff training.**