

Report

Report to:	Education Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	19 January 2010
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	'Give us a Break!' - A Programme for Young People who have Experienced Loss, Change or Bereavement
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ inform the Committee of the development of 'Give us a Break' an innovative therapeutic programme that helps young people cope with bereavement, loss and major negative changes in their lives and who are showing signs of difficulties in managing the emotional consequences.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the new resource entitled, 'Give us a Break!' to support young people aged 10-14 years old who have to cope with loss, bereavement, significant change or trauma is made available to schools; and
- (2) that the proposal to levy a charge of £200 per copy to cover the costs with the production of the pack and associated training for interested parties outwith South Lanarkshire Council be approved.

3. Background

- 3.1. 'Give us a break!', the first programme of its kind in the UK, was developed as a result of joint work by South Lanarkshire Council Education Resources Psychological Services, Macmillan Cancer Support, and NHS Lanarkshire, with funding being provided through a grant of £50,000 from Macmillan.
- 3.2. 'Give us a Break' is an innovative therapeutic programme designed to help children and young people cope with bereavement, loss and major negative changes in their lives and who are showing signs of difficulties in managing the emotional consequences.
- 3.3. It is also the first bereavement and loss programme in the UK which is based on a "solution focused approach". This is a type of therapy that was developed in the USA and places emphasis on the present and future. It helps young people to recognise and develop their personal strengths and effective coping strategies. It uses goal setting to help young people to move towards the future. The eight week programme engages small groups of young people aged between 10 and 14 years of age attending weekly sessions that are run by trained facilitators.

- 3.4. Through telling their story, speaking about their feelings and listening to the experiences of others, those attending learn to understand the changes in their lives. It also enables young people to identify their strengths and draw upon these to help manage the changes they are experiencing.
- 3.5. A major strength of 'Give us a Break!' is the opportunity to engage with young people in order to take part in open discussions with trained facilitators in solution focused activities. The strengths and benefits of existing bereavement and loss programmes were fully acknowledged by the authors but it was felt that these programmes did not meet the needs of all children experiencing such life changes. There was a continuum of need and so a continuum of resources was required. 'Give us a Break!' offers a very valuable contribution towards filling that gap. The resource has been built around real life experiences faced by young people and on a wealth of research on how best to support young people at this significant time in their lives.
- 3.6. More than 30 children have attended the pilot sessions which have taken place at schools throughout South Lanarkshire. A group has also taken place at the Haven in Blantyre, a charity which supports families affected by life-limiting illnesses. The programme gives young people an opportunity to speak in confidence about loss and changes in their lives.
- 3.7. A very successful launch event took place at Hamilton Racecourse on 25 November 2009 attended by over 100 representatives from Education and Social Work Resources, Health, Macmillan Cancer Support and the voluntary sector. There were presentations from Larry Forde, Executive Director (Education Resources); Councillors Mary Smith and Jackie Burns; Geoff Sage, NHS Manager; Elizabeth King, Principal Psychologist; Barbara-Anne Walker, Daily Living Programme Manager for Macmillan Can Support; and Anne Murphy and Lisa Cunningham, Psychologists involved in the team who developed 'Give us a break!'. The keynote address was from Julie Stokes OBE, Founder of Winston's Wish, the charity for bereaved children. Julie Stokes is also known for her work in the television series 'The Mummy Diaries' which follows young people through the experience of losing a mother to a terminal illness.

4. Impact and Benefits of 'Give us a Break!'

- 4.1. The impact and benefits that are expected to accrue from the use of this resource are as follows:
 - Young people have an opportunity to receive support from peers, and sympathetic, knowledgeable and understanding adults.
 - Young people will feel heard, understood and encouraged.
 - Young people will receive affirmation and recognition of their skills, abilities, achievements and efforts.
 - Young people will be able to learn new skills such as relaxation and goal setting which will increase their emotional literacy and in particular help them think positively about the future.
- 4.2. Over the next year, healthcare staff, teachers, social workers, educational psychologists and other professionals in South Lanarkshire will be trained to facilitate group sessions with young people. Initial training dates will be included in the multi-agency training calendar. It is planned to deliver and monitor the training in localities, within the context of the 'Getting it right for every child' agenda. This will facilitate partnership working and strengthen the support for children and young people within their own communities.

- 4.3. It is proposed that 'Give us a Break' be made available to interested parties outwith South Lanarkshire Council at a cost of £200 to cover the cost of producing the resource and providing appropriate training to users.

5. Employee Implications

- 5.1. A group has been set up within Psychological Services, with support from Integrated Children's Service, to monitor the development of the training programme and consider the development of an accredited training course.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. A charge of £200 per copy is proposed to cover the costs associated with the production of the pack and for any subsequent training that may take place with interested parties and agencies from outwith South Lanarkshire Council. Macmillan Cancer Support has provided £50,000 to support the development of the therapeutic programme.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1. None

8. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 8.1. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and appropriate stakeholders consulted and there is no noted adverse impact on any of the equality groups.
- 8.2. Consultation has taken place with Macmillan Cancer Support, NHS Lanarkshire and Education Psychological Services on the development of the resource and with some young people who have experienced loss and bereavement.

Larry Forde
Executive Director (Education Resources)

15 December 2009

Link(s) to Council Objectives

- Raise educational attainment for all
- Improve lives of vulnerable children, young people and adults

Previous References

None

List of Background Papers

- 'Give us a Break!' – Pack

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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