Trauma Informed Practice at North Herts Education Support Centre

Major studies have found that when children and young people have suffered multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), there is a significant risk of them developing mental health problems, behaviour problems, social and relationship difficulties and learning difficulties and engaging in criminal activity.

Trauma informed approaches in schools and the social buffering of emotionally available adults have been shown to interrupt this trajectory. This approach supports by providing relationships for these children that heals minds, brains and bodies.

- The work we deliver at NHESC ensures a trauma informed practice. From a Meet and Greet at every lesson change or following lunch, all students have a fresh start to a lesson. Soft starts for young people where anxiety is high or mornings before school that may cause emotional dysregulation or upset. Students may arrive at school with the need to meet with an emotionally available adult, to regulate and de-escalate to be able to participate in school life and learning. This happens daily.
- Practical and vocational lessons aimed at building self-esteem and self-worth with celebrated success.
- Lessons at KS3 that include horticulture and horse riding involve using plants, gardening, and nature connection to support individuals in improving their physical, psychological, and social well-being, communication, and skills.
- Biophilia has a positive impact on mental health and overall well-being. Exposure to natural elements, such as sunlight, greenery and water features, has been linked to reduced stress, improved mood and enhanced cognitive function
- Providing vulnerable students with daily access to at least one emotionally available adult, who believes in them, relates to them with compassion, empathy and unconditional positive regard (Carl Rogers), provides appropriate limit setting, understands their attachment and mental health needs, knows their life story, and offers repeated enriched relational, regulatory and reflective opportunities.
- Staff interacting with all students in such a way that they feel valued as individuals throughout their day
- Staff adjusting their expectations of vulnerable children to correspond with their developmental capabilities and experience of traumatic stress.
- Catching children as they are ‘falling’ not after they have fallen. When the child is experiencing a painful life event, the emotionally available adult will help them process, work through and make sense of what has happened, rather than waiting until the pain of the trauma has transformed into challenging behaviour and/or physical and mental health problems.

- Staff practitioner available to work with students experiencing or have experienced trauma through Sand Play, Big Emotion Drawing and Emotion Cards.