

Summary Notes

New to the Role: Mental Health Lead

WHY DOES THIS ROLE MATTER TO YOU?

Whilst many schools and colleges now have a mental health lead or the equivalent, this is still a new and evolving role for many and the parameters aren't always clearly defined. This is great news as it can mean you're in the position of defining the role and deciding what the focus will be, but it can also bring the challenge of uncertainty about what you should be doing, when, with recourse to whom and so on. Taking time to consider and share why you're doing the role, what 'success' would look like and what you think is realistic in terms of expectations will help to focus your thoughts and actions right from the start.

- Consider who you are here to help: students, staff, families...
- What inspired you to take on the role; what strengths and experience do you bring?
- What's currently working well that you could build on?
- Conversely, is there anything you consider to be thoroughly wrong / broken / in need of change?

In 12 months' time, what would you hope to have achieved?

IDENTIFY ALLIES, EARS AND NAYSAYERS

This is a big job and as one of the key things you'll often be looking to do is to impact on the culture and ethos of your setting, it's not a job that can be done alone. Be accepting of help and ask for people to support you in your role. Within every staff team and wider community there will be people who are passionate about mental health who may be willing to support you with their time, suggestions or expertise. If you don't ask, you won't get! There will also be those who don't value this role – identify them early to make sure that they don't trip you up and instead of working against them, it can help to consider what their aims are and whether there is anything your work will do to support them in their aims / role. There is often more synergy that people realise that this can begin to bring more reluctant colleagues on board.

- Who's got your back and who would be happy to pitch in?
- Are there practical jobs you can give to people who are passionate and keen to help?
- Who can help you to ensure that even the quietest voices are heard during consultation?
- How can you help naysayers achieve their aims?
- Identify a lead governor for mental health and get them involved
- Build relationships inc: SENDCo, DSL, school nurse, frontline staff, FSWs, LSAs

Who could you approach tomorrow to support you in your role?

DO A FEW THINGS WELL

One of the biggest mistakes that new mental health leads make is trying to do ALL THE THINGS. This is a laudable aim, but is likely to end in things half done and you run ragged. Instead, a useful first step is to really take stock of the situation and decide where you should focus your energies. You could use the [simple audit](#) I put together to help you with this. Some schools and colleges find using a framework like the [Schools Mental Health Award](#) can be a very helpful vehicle for prioritising their thinking and action too (contact schoolMH@leedsbeckett.ac.uk for more info)

- Identify a visible quick win – this will bolster your confidence and get things going
- Decide a long term focus too – something gnarly that may take time; make a plan & make a start
- Work out what you definitely will NOT do – write a to don't list
- Budget your time and set regular review points to celebrate success and decide your next focus

What could you do simply and quickly that will make a difference and be seen?

TAKE THE APPROACH OF A RESEARCHER

Time and money are likely to be two things you simply don't have enough of, so it's hugely important to ensure that what resources we do have are not wasted. This means having a clear idea about why you're doing things, what you hope to achieve and how you'll know if you succeeded. Don't assume that just because things have been done a certain way, that they should continue to be done that way and beware the snakeoil sellers! Everyone will want to sell you an intervention or measure or resource. Question everything. Measure impact. Do more of what's working if you can, and if something isn't working be brave enough to stop.

- What would success look like? Can you quantify / measure it?
- Validated measures are great, so long as they measure what you want them to
- How will you know if something's not working? When will you call time?
- How can you enable others to learn from what's working and what's not?

Is there a resource or intervention currently in place that you should re-examine?

FIRST LOOK AFTER YOUR OWN MENTAL HEALTH

You have an important role in terms of promoting the mental health and wellbeing of the children and adults within your community but take care to ensure that this doesn't not come at the cost of your own mental health.

- Who's got your back?
- Do you have time to dedicate to this role, if not why not? How could this be addressed?
- Can you plan ahead for crunch points?
- What's worrying you – who might be able to help and how?

What can you do for YOU?

LINKS & THINGS...

Connect with Pooky

You can connect with Pooky on [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) or [LinkedIn](#). You may also be interested in the [books she has authored, edited or contributed to](#) and [her podcast](#).

Develop in your role with our in depth course

[Mental Health Lead Development Programme with Dr Pooky Knightsmith](#)

A development programme aimed at existing or aspiring school and college mental health leads wishing to build on their knowledge, skills and confidence in the role. You'll learn through a combination of live, on demand and project based learning with regular input from course leader Dr Pooky Knightsmith as well as peer support from your cohort.

[More information / book here.](#)

YouTube Videos

Here's a playlist of my videos which mental health leads may find helpful:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1HN98dJOCA9z3K6c7zZulsJ1WeqrA1-P>

On Demand Video Courses

We have over 100 on demand courses including many re mental health and EWB by Pooky, here are a couple that you might find especially helpful:

[Provide A Whole School Mental Health Offer in Primary School](#)

[Spot and Support Return-to-School Wellbeing Challenges](#)

[How Mentally Healthy is Your School? – A Simple Audit](#)

You can see all our [on demand courses here](#) and all our [learn live courses here](#) and our [free courses and resources here](#). If you have a team and would like me to organise a free trial so they can access all the learning for four weeks, email pooky@creativeeducation.co.uk.

Books

- [The Mentally Healthy Schools Workbook: Practical Tips, Ideas, Action Plans and Worksheets for Making Meaningful Change](#) by Pooky
- [Self-harm and eating disorders in schools](#) by Pooky
- [Cards against anxiety](#) by Pooky
- [The Mental Health and Wellbeing Handbook for Schools: Transforming Mental Health Support on a Budget](#) By Clare Erasmus
- [Supporting Staff Mental Health in Your School](#) by Amy Sayer