

# Social Emotion and Mental Health Difficulties (SEMH)

The following advice is not intended to be a tick list of support that schools must provide young people but rather a menu of options that could be applicable for young people with SEMH needs.

The following document should be referred to in conjunction with other appropriate sections from the Outreach Toolkit.

## What is SEMH?

Social, emotional and mental health needs are a type of special educational needs in which children/young people have severe difficulties in managing their emotions and behaviour. They often show inappropriate responses and feelings to situations.

This means that they have trouble in building and maintaining relationships with peers and adults; they can also struggle to engage with learning and to cope in classroom without additional strategies and interventions. Children with SEMH will often feel anxious, scared and misunderstood.

It is vitally important that schools view SEMH difficulties as SEND. 22% of pupils in BANES who are permanently excluded go on to receive an EHCP post permanent exclusion (for the majority the primary area of need is SEMH). Schools should initiate the graduated approach as soon as possible and record all interventions using the assess, plan, do, review model. This will mean a close working relationship is needed between pastoral and SEND practitioners.

Typical characteristics of children with SEMH can include:-

- Disruptive, antisocial and uncooperative behaviour
- Temper tantrums
- Frustration, anger and verbal and physical threats / aggression
- Withdrawn and depressed attitudes
- Anxiety and self-harm
- Stealing
- Truancy
- Vandalism
- Drug abuse
- Setting fires

Recent figures estimate that around 150,000 children in mainstream and special schools are suffering from SEMH.

SEMH does not have to be a lifelong condition. With appropriate support children and young people can move forward and live successful lives.

### Suggested programs and interventions for SEMH.

The early intervention foundation is brilliant for finding peer reviewed and cost considered interventions for many social and emotional programs.

1. Schools should consider visiting <https://semh.co.uk/> for a wide range of information and strategies.
2. Internal alternative provision – see BANES advice for setting up internal AP. This is a strategy which is becoming more and more popular as it provides schools with the option of delivering learning focused on developing positive learning behaviours away from the mainstream classroom.
3. Boxall profiling - Nationally this is the most recognised assessment and intervention tool for SEMH. It has been used in various forms for years, the updated version offers assessment, target setting and resources. The assessment is standardised, and many authorities will take this into consideration through the needs assessment application process. The assessment is broken down into developmental and diagnostic strands making target setting and tracking progress simple. The assessments are cheap at 50p an assessment.
4. Nurture UK – Nurture UK offer a range of advice and best practice regarding SEMH and trauma informed approaches in school. A variety of training options are available, and schools can become associated with the organisation. Nurture UK also hosts the online version of Boxall profiling.
5. Beyond the Boxall – A useful supplement to Nurture UK theory and Boxall profiling. This book contains lots of resources and activities for young people with SEMH needs.
6. Zones of Regulation – This is one of the most widely used strategies to support young people with SEMH needs. It is very simple and involves 4 or 5 zones which represent how a young person feels between calm or upset and dysregulated. In each zone, with an adult's support, the young person investigates how they feel, how they look, how they want to be treated and what their regulation strategies would be. The zones of regulation support book is relatively cheap and is a very useful source of information and resource.
7. SDQ – The strengths and difficulties questionnaire is a simple assessment that requires little time. This can be used to track progress over time but the results would be qualitative rather than quantitative. Some schools choose to use the SDQ as part of their safeguarding and pastoral care systems.

8. Thrive – Thrive is a very popular intervention. It is used best as a whole school approach to emotional well-being for young people. In a similar way to Boxall profiling Thrive exists online and can support schools in identifying social and emotional needs, conduct profiling, creating targeted action plans, offering over 1000 tailored resources and measuring progress. Thrive also offer a range of training programs to support schools.
9. ELSA – The emotional literacy support assistant is a program aiming to support young people with emotional regulation and resilience. It is an educational psychology led intervention – training is offered by the banes EP team. ELSA is an approach to supporting young people with SEMH needs rather than a resource or assessment. Schools who have staff trained as ELSA's often use resources from other SEMH interventions.
10. Tina Rae – Is a worldwide specialist in supporting young people with SEMH. She offers a range of publications which include assessments and intervention resources for schools ranging from EBSA to Emotional well being for girls with ASD and everything in between. Schools should seriously consider investigating these resources. Tina Rae offers a resource pack to support school based professionals in delivering Cognitive behavioural therapy to young people.
11. Talking and drawing therapy – Organisations such as drawing and talking <https://drawingandtalking.com/> offer relatively cheap training to schools so school staff feel confident in this counselling-based intervention. This has proven success as a counselling therapy but also supporting young people with regulation techniques and speech and language difficulties. This is used in many schools and is recommended by educational psychologists.
12. Connors Profile - This is a behaviour assessment that is usually completed by the school on behalf of a health practitioner. Used less today than in the past but it can still provide useful information to help support young people with SEMH needs.
13. Skills builder – This is an online application that focuses on building the young persons core competencies in 8 keys areas. Staying positive, teamwork, aiming high, leadership, problem solving, listening, speaking and creativity. It has an online trackable assessment tool and resources and activities to work through with young people. It is not a tool designed specifically for young people with SEMH but is used widely with behaviour units and specialist settings for developing emotional wellbeing.
14. Talk about – This is a structured programme for teaching and measuring social skills. It is a whole scheme of work which helps you assess, teach and measure your work easily. It uses a hierarchical method of teaching social skills which means that having assessed the child using the Talkabout assessment, teachers will choose the appropriate level or book to start work at. This means that you may start by developing a child's self-awareness and self-esteem before progressing onto body language. You will then move onto

conversation skills and then onto friendship skills and assertiveness. The program comes with resource packs to suit various ages.

15. Overcoming – This is a guided self-help Cognitive behavioural therapy for parents of anxious young people. This has proven to be a useful tool for schools who are supporting young people who also need continued CBT support outside of schools.
16. Social stories or consequence trackers - Social stories were created by Carol Gray in 1991. They are short descriptions of a particular situation, event or activity, which include specific information about what to expect in that situation and why. Social stories were primarily developed to support young people with ASD, however they have proven to be very successful for young people struggling with emotional empathy and SEMH needs. Secondary schools report that use of consequence trackers or consequence mapping works better for older young people. Consequence mapping is usually completed by mapping the available option of actions and considering the consequences of each. Consequence mapping is not usually completed with the support of visual aids whereas visual aids are a key constituent of social stories.
17. Anger management – Anger gremlin/anxiety gremlin. Both resources are cheap and provide excellent activities for young people to work through with the support of a trusted adult. Both books are used extensively across schools and specialist settings.
18. Mindfulness - Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us. Mindfulness in schools offer a range of resources and training opportunities to develop school staff's skills in leading mindfulness sessions and developing a mindfulness curriculum. A range of excellent books are available that young people can pick up and go without adult support. These are particularly helpful in designated school emotional regulation rooms. <https://mindfulnessinschools.org/mindfulness-in-education/what-is-it/>
19. Lego therapy - LEGO-Based Therapy is a social development program that uses LEGO activities to support the development of a wide range of social skills within a group setting. A wide variety of training and guidebooks are available from multiple organisations. Lego therapy although developed primarily for young people with ASD has been proven to be very effective for young people with SEMH, both as a social skill interventions but also as a regulation strategy.
20. Art therapy – Art therapy originated in psychotherapy. It allows young people to express their feelings, thoughts and emotions in art rather than in words. Art therapists undertake specialist training for many years and there are local examples highlighted in the AP directory. Schools however sometimes use a simplified version based on the same principles where young people find it

easier to convey their message using pictures rather than words. Some schools report using art therapy strategies as part of a young persons de-escalation technique.

21. SEAL – Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) is a comprehensive, whole-school approach to promoting the social and emotional skills that underpin effective learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, staff effectiveness and the emotional health and well-being of all who learn and work in schools. The government advice on SEAL is slightly dated now but is however still relevant for schools looking to implement this whole school approach. The SEAL community website offers a wide range of advice and strategies to build into the schools offer. <https://sealcommunity.org/node/356>
22. PACE – playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, Empathy. This whole school approach aims to support young people who have experienced trauma. Where employed schools would benefit from trauma informed training and gaining insight into Stephen Porges Polyvagal Theory.
23. Circle of adults – This is a strategy based planning protocol for young people in the most challenging situations. Some schools report positive outcomes from using this solution focused approach. <https://inclusive-solutions.com/circles/circle-of-adults/circle-of-adults-for-problems/>
24. Socially speaking - Socially Speaking helps schools to introduce and practise skills your pupils need to develop and maintain relationships and to lead independent lives outside the school context. It is a unique social skills programme that lasts a whole school year and is divided into three units: let's communicate, let's be friends, and let's practise.
25. Time to talk – In some local authorities young people can access the time to talk intervention/therapy through local NHS pathways. Guided self-help, CBT and counselling can be offered.
26. Circle of friends - Circle of friends is an approach to enhancing the inclusion, in a mainstream setting, of any young person (known as 'the focus child'), who is experiencing difficulties in school because of a disability, personal crisis or because of their challenging behaviour towards others. The adult's role is to meet with the circle and the focus child for around 20-30 minutes weekly to facilitate their problem solving in the early stages. Successful circles will often become largely self- sustaining and provide support for the focus child without the need for regular adult input. When there is careful planning and real commitment from the facilitator, results from the process are seen very quickly. Inclusive solutions provide a support book to help schools develop "circles". <https://inclusive-solutions.com/circles/circle-of-friends/what-is-a-circle-of-friends/>
27. The Homunculi approach - The Homunculi Approach is a Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) programme for children and young people on the Autism spectrum or with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The approach aims to build social and emotional resilience in children and young people,

especially for those with high functioning autism or Asperger's Syndrome who often have difficulty identifying troubling feelings such as anger, fear and anxiety. As part of the Homunculi approach a child/young person is asked to invent their own Homunculi characters (agents) and stories. These Homunculi agents are used to help the child/young person tell a problem solving story in which the agents help out with real-life distressing thoughts, feelings and behaviour. The activity of storytelling helps the child/young person to learn to cope with social problems.

28. TEACCH strategies -

<https://www.appliedbehavioranalysisprograms.com/lists/key-principles-of-the-teacch-method/> TEACCH strategies can support young people with SEMH as well as ASD. Schools should view the research with an element of scepticism as some of the research is dated. Schools report the most successful strategies from the intervention are the structured learning routines and designed work stations.

29. Sensory screening and sensory diet/circuits – Sensory screening and sensory diets have primarily been used for young people with ASD however schools are reporting excellent progress for pupils with SEMH using these strategies. Usually, a diet is defined by an occupational therapist however it is possible for schools to develop simple diets based on the young persons needs and wants. These can be exceptionally useful as a regulation strategy. Autism awareness have a good resource on the types of activities that make up a sensory diet or sensory circuit. The following assessment tool can only be used by trained practitioners but schools may wish to use it to informally support the development of a sensory diet for a young person.

<https://affectautism.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Sensory-Problems-Assessment-Questionnaire-2010.pdf>

30. Time out or use of regulatory space within school – Most schools employ this strategy. It can help if the young person has their own regulation strategies based there. Most often schools use an adult to support the young person with co-regulation until regulation strategies are well developed and successful.

31. Incredible 5 point scale – A very similar system to Zones of Regulation. Schools often choose to use the associated visuals and resource book to support the implementation of the intervention.

32. Opal outdoor play and learning program – primarily designed for all pupils but school report excellent progress particularly for young people with SEMH. School report far lower levels of dysregulated behaviour at break and lunchtimes when using this strategy compared to free play. This intervention is designed for primary age children.

33. McGill self regulation lesson plans – This intervention is not widely used in the UK and is US based and researched. There are however very helpful lesson plans to support young people in developing their own regulation strategies.

[https://www.mcgill.ca/connectionslab/files/connectionslab/emotional\\_regulation\\_lesson\\_plans.pdf](https://www.mcgill.ca/connectionslab/files/connectionslab/emotional_regulation_lesson_plans.pdf) it may also be helpful to use these resources in line with guidance at <https://positivepsychology.com/self-regulation/> where a range of further activities to support regulation are available.

34. .B – The dot-be curriculum aims to support young people between the ages of 11-18 with mindfulness techniques. <https://mindfulnessinschools.org/teach-dot-b/dot-b-curriculum/> The curriculum is made up of ten lessons, each lasting between 40 minutes and an hour.
35. Pivotal behaviour approach – The pivotal approach to behaviour management is used in several BANES schools. Rather than being a particular intervention it is used throughout everyday school life and is based on the following “pillars”. 1. Consistent, calm adult behaviour 2. First attention to best conduct 3. Relentless routines 4. Scripted interventions 5. Restorative follow up.
36. Assist – stop smoking intervention – A programme where young people are trained to support peers in stopping smoking. Has proven to be very successful. Training is delivered by DECIPHER IMPACT.
37. Advanced lifeskill training – targeting substance use. Advanced LifeSkills Training (LST) is a school-based substance misuse prevention programme designed to help young people avoid tobacco, alcohol and drug abuse. Advanced LifeSkills is a universal programme for all children and young people between the ages of 11 and 14. Advanced LifeSkills Training is delivered to classrooms of children or young people by teachers, social workers or youth workers. The curriculum teaches children and young people personal self-management skills, social skills, and strategies for resisting tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.
38. All stars (core and plus) – intervention to target preventing risk behaviours. US based intervention that is school based and led and aims to target young people who are at risk of being involved in dangerous behaviours such as drug and alcohol use or physical aggression.
39. BAM (Becoming a Man) –Becoming A Man (BAM) is a school based social and emotional learning programme. It is a targeted selective group intervention programme for pupils between the age of 12 and 18. It typically works with pupils that reside in deprived areas and come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. It is delivered in secondary schools and aims to improve school engagement and completion and reduce interactions with the criminal justice system. <https://www.youth-guidance.org/bam-becoming-a-man/> This is a US developed program that has had positive results and is being trialled in the UK.
40. Blues program – <https://bluesprogram.org/> This is a well being program for young people aged between 13 and 19. It contains 6 hours of classes and teaches emotional resilience and reduces low mood and anxious thought.

41. Children's university – aims to improve aspirational thinking for pupils.
42. Friends for life/Youth/Fun friends (health led) – This is a social skills and resilience curriculum that has been recognised by the World Health Organisation as an effective tool to prevent anxiety in children. Practitioners require training before delivering the intervention. The delivery mode can be designed by the school and ranges from daily 15 minute sessions for the school year to intensive 2-3 day courses.  
<https://friendsresilience.org/friendsforlife>
43. Learning together – school wide intervention targeting developing positive learning behaviours. Learning Together is a school-based social and emotional learning programme using restorative practices. It is a universal programme for children between the ages of 11 and 16. It is delivered in schools and aims to improve student's commitment to school, promote student's mental wellbeing and health, and reduce involvement in risk behaviours such as violence, antisocial behaviour and bullying.  
<https://guidebook.eif.org.uk/public/files/pdfs/programmes-learning-together.pdf>
44. Lions Quest Skills for Adolescence – Lions Quest Skills for Adolescence (SFA) is a comprehensive youth development program that unites educators, parents, and community members to help adolescents develop social skills and competencies for resisting drug use. <https://www.lions-quest.org/explore-our-sel-curriculum/middle-school-social-and-emotional-learning-program/>
45. MindUp – aims to improve self-regulation and positive mental health. MindUP teaches the skills and knowledge children need to regulate their stress and emotion, form positive relationships, and act with kindness and compassion. <https://mindup.org/> MindUp offer training to school based practitioners and various online systems and programmes to support young people.
46. PATHS elementary curriculum – This primary aged intervention aims to reduce aggression and behavioural problems. The PATHS® Programme for Schools (UK Version) empowers all children to develop the fundamental social and emotional learning skills which will enable them to make positive choices throughout life. <http://www.pathseducation.co.uk/> This program has been adapted by Barnardo's for UK school use. Training can be delivered by Paths education; the resources and lesson plans are fully scripted and contains lesson plans for all primary year groups/
47. Positive actions – aims to prevent crime and anti-social behaviours and substance abuse. <https://www.positiveaction.net/#Home> offer a range of resources and curriculum plans to support young people's social and emotional aspects of learning. This is a US based intervention and resource that has not been widely trialled in the UK.
48. Pyramid Club Primary/Secondary/Transition – aims to support pupils who are quiet and may internalise issues leading to poor mental health. The Pyramid Club Intervention is a targeted small-group intervention for children who demonstrate internalising behaviours or are experiencing difficulties with peer

relationships. It aims to give children the opportunity to build confidence, develop social skills and learn strategies to use to manage their thoughts and emotions. The following documentation provides some useful information for the Pyramid club intervention.

49. Rock and Water – Rock and Water is a social and emotional learning programme for children and young people. It aims to improve skills such as self-regulation, communication and empathy. It can be delivered in a variety of settings, such as schools or youth clubs.  
<https://www.rockandwater.org.uk/research#:~:text=Rock%20and%20Water%20is%20a,as%20schools%20or%20youth%20clubs>.
50. Talk about Alcohol – Aims to reduce alcohol related problems.  
<https://www.talkaboutalcohol.com/>
51. Good behaviour game – primary school based whole class positive behaviour modelling game. The Good Behaviour Game (GBG) is a classroom management approach designed to improve student behaviour and build confidence and resilience. The game is played in groups and rewards students for good behaviour
52. Triple P – program aiming to support parents with managing the behaviour of their child. <https://www.triplep.uk.net/uk/en/what-we-do/> Triple P offer a very wide range of programs to support parents with the emotional well being of their children.
53. The incredible years – The Incredible Years® is a series of interlocking, evidence-based programs for parents, children, and teachers, supported by over 30 years of research. The goal is to prevent and treat young children's behavior problems and promote their social, emotional, and academic competence. The programs are used worldwide in schools and mental health centers, and have been shown to work across cultures and socioeconomic groups. <https://incredibleyears.com/>
54. Penn resilience program – 18 lesson curriculum to support pupils with mental well being and emotional intelligence.
55. Healthy minds curriculum – scheme of lessons endorsed by EEF and led by bounce forward to support pupils well-being.  
<https://www.bouncetogether.co.uk/education/healthy-minds> The curriculum features similar content to the Penn curriculum however is UK based and widely used and therefore would be a better option. Fully resourced PSHE schemes of works that are to be delivered throughout secondary school.

## **56. Specific school bullying strategies**

1. Olweus Bullying Prevention programme (OBPP) from Norway. This has been the most widely used bullying program in the UK. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is designed to improve peer relations and make schools safer, more positive places for students to learn and develop. Schools looking

to implement the program would benefit from purchasing the associated Olweus book.

2. KiVa from Finland, another fully resources bullying program. <https://www.kivaprogram.net/materials-for-schools/> . This program requires parental engagement as well as young person engagement.
3. ViSC from Austria – included for fullness – schools may wish to investigate. Some positive findings internationally but not used widely in the UK.
4. NoTrap! from Italy - included for fullness – schools may wish to investigate. Some positive findings internationally but not used widely in the UK.
5. United against bullying – anti bullying whole school policy. <https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/aba-our-work/united-against-bullying-uab-programme> . This is the best source of UK based information to support schools, young people and parents with bullying. Resources range from whole school approaches to individualised activities for young people. Schools should seriously consider investigating this excellent organisation.