

Wellbeing for Education Return - Top Tips for Engaging with Schools and Further Education (FE) Providers

Please note that this guide is based upon our experiences of delivering training and school-based programmes across England to a range of educational settings. This document offers practical suggestions only for you to consider when engaging schools and FE providers in mental health programmes.

We use the term 'programme' to cover all aspects of cascading information to schools and FE providers (such as staff training and providing materials) and the practical implementation of that information within the school or FE setting (e.g. using new or adapted key models with individual pupils/students)

1. How to engage with schools and FE providers

- Demonstrate an understanding of the nature of school/FE life in all communications; we all know school/FE staff have busy workloads and work in a time-pressured environment where the demands on their time can change at very short notice.
- From the start, provide a clear, brief explanation of the programme, its aims and how this may benefit the whole school/FE community.
- Build relationships with your school/FE contacts and consider if those contacts are best placed to benefit from and implement the programme in their setting. For example, RSHE leads or members of the pastoral or SEND teams.
- Whole school/FE engagement is important for all programmes - encourage the setting contacts to make all school/FE staff, including Governors, aware of the programme (e.g. add to the agenda for all staff briefings and department meetings as a rolling item).
- Seek support and 'buy-in' from the Senior Leadership Team and Governors to promote awareness and help ensure smooth implementation of the programme across the school or college.
- Some local experts have asked how they can best contact and engage FE providers specifically. FE safeguarding leads may be a viable contact route and it may also be possible to reach them through Local Safeguarding Boards. If you are experiencing difficulty in reaching FE staff, another option is to contact the Association of Colleges (<https://www.aoc.co.uk/contact-us>).

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- Alternatively, you may be able to engage with FE staff via established Special Educational Needs (SEN) coordinator networks or Educational Psychologists who work in both schools and FE.
- Please note that FE providers may employ hundreds of staff, so you will need to consider how you can support training dissemination in these settings.

2. Communications

- Keep emails short and simple– school/FE staff receive high volumes of emails every day and will not have time to read long emails.
- Consider adding links to webpages or online documents (e.g. online pdfs) within emails when you need to provide more detail for staff.

3. Working to deadlines

- Send regular reminder emails and offer clear deadlines, where appropriate.
- Be aware that school/FE staff may respond and engage at the last minute, usually due to the changing nature of timetables and staff availability (e.g. staff cover).
- Remember that school/FE contacts may change with staff being on sick leave or leaving to take up new roles, especially at the end of the Spring or Summer terms.
- Do not under-estimate the power of the school/FE administrative office! It is often helpful to follow up by a phone call directly to this office, who can then prompt relevant staff.

4. Training sessions and resources

- Send a reminder email the day before the training session or meeting with the option to get in touch if they have any IT issues (see our Top Tips for Online Training Delivery guide) or if they need to re-arrange at the last minute.
- If an attendee can no longer join the session, consider offering the option for other staff to attend the training at the last minute, who can then cascade this back at their setting.
- Provide an opportunity to discuss barriers to the programme and to trouble-shoot – consider together solution-focused ways to help the whole school/FE community get the most out of the programme.
- School/FE staff are often grateful to receive advice and suggestions for time saving strategies that allow effective use of the training materials without requiring a lot of time to develop or re-design resources.
- Provide ready-made resources, where possible, with opportunities to extend the learning. Resources that are adapted to offer a range of timings are well received, such as a shorter session to be done for ten minutes in Form time through to a full lesson plan.

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- Offer ways for resources to be easily cascaded to other staff to deliver to pupils/students.

5. Following up

- Consider and confirm where school/FE staff should direct their queries and feedback to around the implementation of the programme within their setting, and who will be best placed to respond to these queries.
- Consider whether there will be any follow up or progress tracking for the school/FE provider and maintain regular communications with contacts.