Fusion SEND Hub

The spectrum of SEMH

Olly Dean, Strategic Lead, Fusion SEND Hub, Talbot Specialist School, Sheffield

"Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained."

A combination of characteristics relating to a neurotype called autism

Characteristics occur in different ways and to different degrees across the diverse autistic population

Not a linear scale from mild to severe

What might an SEMH spectrum look like?

Differences and challenges around…

Department for Education

Department of Health

Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years

Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities

January 2015

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"…social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways."

"…behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties"

How much of our <u>attention</u> and strategy for children with SEMH needs is focused on social development and mental wellbeing?

What would happen if we shifted our attention from behaviour? What developmental difficulties would we see beneath?

The world is not safe for me.
I feel rejected and unloved.
I can’t do anything right.

I feel rejected and unloved.

I'll make sure…

- to always demonstrate my care for you.
- to be in your corner.
- to be the stable adult you need me to be.
- to challenge others when you need me to.

The world is not safe for me.

I'll make sure…

- to make your day predictable.
- to be calm and clear in my responses.
- to create an environment you can cope within.
- to advocate for you beyond the classroom.

I can’t do anything right.

I’ll make sure…

- to enable you to experience success every day.
- to play to your strengths.
- to not judge you when you make mistakes.
- to recognise the extra effort you have to make.

Looking beyond behaviour as the primary descriptor of need

She’s on a part time timetable because she’s hurting adults

She gets exhausted.
She worries about mum when she’s away from her.
She copes better with shorter school days.

Looking beyond behaviour as the primary descriptor of need

His impulses make him feel like he's going to burst.
He worries he'll forget what he has to say.
He doesn't understand the social expectations.

He constantly interrupts in class.

Looking beyond behaviour as the primary descriptor of need

She refuses to do any work.

She's ashamed of her handwriting and spelling.
She can't process information quickly enough.
She hasn't got the language to ask for help.

The power of educators

Mrs Williams

Mr Mason

Education Endowment Foundation

- Every pupil should have a supportive relationship with a member of school staff

The importance of adult support and advocacy

Does continuous trusted adult support in childhood impart life-course resilience against adverse childhood experiences - a retrospective study on adult health-harming behaviours and mental well-being

Mark A. Bellis, Katie Hardcastle, Kat Ford, Karen Hughes, Kathryn Ashton, Zara Quigg & Nadia Butler

BMC Psychiatry **17**, Article number: 110 (2017) | Cite this article

"Adverse childhood experiences negatively impact mental and physical health across the life-course. Such impacts may be substantively mitigated by always having support from an adult you trust in childhood."

The value of even one, consistent, trusted adult has a huge impact!

Recommended reading

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Fusion
SEND Hub

An invitation to Sheffield!

Annual, Regional SEND Conference

Thursday 13th June

Booking and details: www.fusionsendhub.co.uk