



Case Studies	
Title	<p>Emotionally and Brain Resilient to Adverse Childhood Experiences – EmBRACE - A vehicle to change culture through an ACE-informed approach</p>
Brief summary	<p>A paradigm shift is needed in our education system to overcome the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which requires local and national priority. EmBRACE (Emotionally and Brain Resilient to Adverse Childhood Experiences) is an innovative cultural change programme, taking the emerging evidence of childhood adversity together with the neuroscience and implemented within educational settings.</p> <p>Through EmBRACE, schools, academies and colleges are provided with a programme to become ACE Informed and bring about a culture change through an ‘ACE lens’. This involves changing culture within. Barriers need to be broken down, growth mind-sets need to be developed, expectations need to be high and people’s thinking challenged. Most importantly, support needs to be given, to pupils, staff and, parents. This ACE-Informed approach improves outcomes for students and institutions, by having more engaged pupils, pupils who understand their behaviour and can change their actions, but also supports staff and parents/caregivers; providing a common language and approach for multi-agency working.</p> <p>EmBRACE supports pupils, staff and parents to become ACE-Informed, ensures that policies and procedures ACE Informed, and creating a wider ACE Informed learning environment.</p>
Background and context of initiatives	<p>On the basis of the first population prevalence study in Blackburn with Darwen, a pilot study (funded by Lancashire Constabulary) was undertaken to understand the impact of repeated exposure to ACEs on a young person’s emotional well-being and learning within an educational setting. This has since been rolled out to other educational settings.</p> <p>EmBRACE is a consultant-led change management programme; planned and developed by Sue Irwin Ltd. The principles and vision for implementation was modelled on the Lincoln High School in America, where graduation increased and exclusions reduced due to culture changing within the school by integrating trauma-informed strategies and resilience building practices.</p> <p>EmBRACE was piloted at Witton Park Academy (WPA), where Steve Archer, the ACE Champion, was supported by Sue Irwin to fully embed EmBRACE.</p>



	<p>When exposed to stressful situations, the fight, flight or freeze response floods our brain with corticotrophin-releasing hormones (CRH), a normal and protective response. However, when repeatedly exposed to ACEs, more CRH is produced by the brain, which results in the child being constantly in heightened state of alert, constantly in fight, flight or freeze mode and do not reaching the natural recovery mode. In this heightened neurological state a young person is unable to think rationally and it is physiologically impossible for them to learn. The EmBRACE model utilises this knowledge to create an environment that is conducive to learning, even when ACEs are present.</p> <p>EmBRACE's Values and Vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognises the significance of a collaborative approach between multi-agencies to drive the ACE agenda• Encourages, develops and supports a common language for partnership working• Focuses on changing culture and capacity building <p>EmBRACE's Strategic Framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senior leadership teams implement and embed the thinking, understanding, responses and considers how the 'organisation' becomes both ACE Aware and Informed• Provides the organisation with the infra-structure to drive forward change management• Creates the conditions in which an ACE informed culture is developed and enhanced• Challenges resistance to change and recognises that each organisation is unique <p>Various change management tools are implemented to ensure that EmBRACE's values, vision and framework are implemented.</p>
Rationale	<p>Baseline position at WPA: <i>Ofsted - outstanding pastoral position.</i> However, there were episodes of staff and student well-being concerns in stressful situations (e.g. end of term, impending Ofsted, report deadlines, exams).</p> <p>Once ACE Champion identified, the audit process provides next steps for informing development plan. Various strategies and change management tools are explored to aid staff and students who were dealing with toxic stress, i.e. staff training; resilient workshops; 1-1 support for learners; how to be a successful learner; de-escalation strategies; challenging those resistive to change.</p>




	<p>Outcomes:</p> <p>Increased awareness of ACEs and implications for various roles, i.e. including pastoral leader</p> <p>Reflective practitioners and improved practise, i.e. case studies that demonstrate teachers are modelling and using empathy more; de-escalating techniques implemented; providing safe environments for self-regulation and sharing emotional experiences. One student was supported to remain in school: Over 20% increase in attendance when teacher started to change approach with student</p> <p>Positive student-teacher relationships which buffers toxic stress as a result of ACEs, by modelling ‘Me with you’ rather than ‘Me against you’ approach and focusing on ‘What’s happened to you?’ rather than ‘What’s wrong with you?’</p> <p>The language of ACEs is becoming normalised, e.g. students know what ACEs are and understand about the reptilian brain and that you can do something about it – positively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of a coaching system - Increase in the number of self-referrals - 1-1 sessions with students recognised as an important strategy to support children experiencing trauma. <p>The brain-based and emotionally resilient workshops were having an impact by capacity building and embedding of knowledge into practice.</p> <p>Discovery of the cohort of more able students subject to ACEs that don’t demonstrate behaviour issues. There is always the theory that higher academic ability results in higher expectations and subsequently the student should be able to cope with this. However very often these students do bottle things up which subsequently have an impact on their emotional and mental well-being.</p>
<p>Implementation</p>	<p>Supporting Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EmBRACE rolled out in primary and secondary schools in various geographical areas - EmBRACE recognised as an effective change management tool beyond the education sector (BwD Transforming Lives has implemented EmBRACE; Health Watch, BwD; BwD Youth Zone) - The core principles of EmBRACE feeds into the Pennine



		Lancashire ACE Framework - Outcomes and impact shared by WPA ACE Champion at the Blackpool ACE Conference – Summer 2017
	Challenging Factors	No central or additional finances No national direction across government
Process	Key actions taken	Continuing to be embedded by WPA and driven by ACE Champion (Steve Archer) Multi-agency approach being established –part of the conversation for transition from Primary to Secondary School Other education setting visit WPA to look at what’s being done differently and positive feedback being received
	Timescales	EmBRACE is implemented over time to enable a true cultural change to embed
Resources		There is a need to fund the EmBRACE programme for the settings to engage, embedded and drive forward all of the milestones and bring about a whole settings approach to being ACE-Informed.
Outcomes (and Efficacy)		This consultant-led change management programme has been successfully implemented and continues to be driven forward in other educational settings/organisations. The change management process provides an organisation with a framework to become ACE aware and then plan for being ACE informed. As capacity building, self-reflection and encouraging embedding of strategies are part of the process, each organisation is provided with the platform to continue their journey of becoming fully a trauma informed organisation. Change in culture takes time. The process is manageable and takes into account the thinking needed in order to have a paradigm shift.
Transferability		EmBRACE is not an initiative. EmBRACE threads through all aspects of school improvement. The change management tools are transferable across different organisations. Thinking is challenged and supported to look at current practice from a different perspective and through an ACE lens. Case studies produced demonstrate impact through reflective



	practice.
Further information	<p>Quotes which demonstrate impact:</p> <p>This is what one Year 10 Male Student, who is identified as both an Able Learner and Pupil Premium, had to say about his experience:</p> <p>‘The workshops are helping. They are making me think more and I need to develop more of a growth mind-set. After the brain workshop I knew what was happening when you get stressed out, so when it happened it was less scary. I now want to push myself. I still stress and worry about the expectations from my teachers and parents. Since the workshops started my teachers have made comments about how happy I have been and could see that I was in a better mood. I am now learning things better. In English I have been in more of a productive mood and listened more carefully. In the past I have never got a mark which was <i>‘a good piece of work’</i> before. I know I get stressed and do need help. I now feel more confident to talk to one of my teachers’.</p> <p>Staff feedback:</p> <p>‘I understand it is not just about a student getting away with something. I realised how important it is to be consistent, fair and set clear boundaries. It is important that you do follow through with everything. This provides a safe environment as the student knows what s/he can and cannot do. Once a student knows how much empathy you have for them they respond better’.</p> <p>‘I’m picking up on signs and reading body language’</p> <p>‘It’s about knowing a child and knowing something’s up without them having to say anything.’</p> <p>‘I’m listening more’</p> <p>‘More children have opened up because I am now more aware of the impact of positive relationships.’</p> <p>‘When dealing with pupils who are traumatised it is important to have the balance of compassion right with healthy boundaries. Too often as human beings we can be over compassionate with pupils who have experienced trauma. It is a real skill to be able to be compassionate with a pupil but to also ensure that healthy boundaries are still in place’.</p>
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