

INTRODUCTION

This case study is from one of 15 collaborative projects, across a range of cross-sector partnerships, that were commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation to support Phase 4 of the Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment (OTLA) programme.

This phase was delivered by touchconsulting and CETTAcademy to evaluate the role of Advanced Practitioners (AP), as defined by [Tyler et al \(2017\)](#)¹. The projects were intended to explore the [functions](#) and [values](#) of the AP role within the partnership's quality improvement priorities.

WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT?

The project focus was to support staff in developing and applying resilience strategies for themselves and their students through engagement with the AP Team. The focus was born out of recent research (The Education Support Partnership, Leeds Beckett University, National Education Union²) that found that an increasing number of teachers have had mental-health problems, the vast majority attributing their problems to excessive workload. It is claimed that poor mental health had a negative impact on the quality of teacher relationships with their learners, affecting their behaviour management skills, with teachers citing "lower levels of tolerance" and being "quick to anger".

Hence the starting point for this project was to consider how the role of the AP at each partner college could support teachers' personal wellbeing. In the past, especially in schools, this has sometimes been referred to as developing resilience. Resilience in this context is not just an ability to 'bounce back' but focuses on a person's capacity to adapt in the face of challenging circumstances, whilst maintaining mental wellbeing.

This project sought to establish a more holistic approach to the supporting of teaching staff in overcoming the day-to-day challenges faced in the sector. Interestingly, changes to college leadership and structures during the lifetime of the project meant that the focus on mental health and well-being became even more pertinent.

WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

The overall aim of the project was for APs at each of the partner colleges in Surrey to support selected teaching teams with resilience strategies to maintain positive levels of mental health and well-being as these teachers undertake their daily work roles and responsibilities. The intended outcome

'Research has claimed that poor mental health has a negative impact on the quality of teacher-learner relationships, which in turn affects their classroom management capabilities, with teachers citing "lower levels of tolerance" and "being quick to anger" as barriers to learning progress.'

Project Lead, East Surrey College

'Although these are not new insights, the APs - and this was also supported by feedback from their supported teachers - indicated, strongly, that 'time' and 'space' were two vital ingredients for the full benefits of coaching and mentoring to happen.'

Project Lead, NESCOL College, East Surrey College

¹ Tyler, E., Marvell, R., Green, M., Martin, A., Williams, J. and Huxley, C. (2017) Institute for Employment Studies (2017). Understanding the role of Advanced Practitioners, (Education and Training Foundation)

² Greenfield, B., What is Teacher Resilience and how might it be protected and promoted? In CollectivED Working Paper Series: Issue 1, Dec 17 (p38-42). Leeds Beckett University

was therefore to provide a supportive coaching network so teachers can perform their roles as effectively as possible, feeling more positive about their job scope and responsibilities, leading to more positive and productive relationships with their learners.

For the APs, we hoped that the use of resilience strategies would enable them to connect with the teachers they support in a more holistic way and, as such, develop further their own coaching and mentoring capabilities.

WHAT HELPED THE PROJECT SUCCEED?

The support of senior leadership has been a major factor. It was the Lead Manager at Nescot who initially brought the issue of Mental Health to the top of agendas, and the Lead Manager at East Surrey College attended the first briefing and training session with the Project Lead in June 2018.

A second key factor was the appointment of the four APs, each of whom had a discernible personal or professional interest in mental health issues and, importantly, had the support the Lead Managers. As the project progressed it also became apparent that each AP brought something different to the table. One had vast experience in safeguarding and staff counselling; another had already worked with challenging groups of teachers; and adversely, one AP had little mentoring experience and was able to bring fresh ideas to the team. This working synergy became a real strength of the project delivery, with the benefits of the AP role beginning to be appreciated in the wider college communities as time went on.

In terms of the key resource of time, this was allocated differently at each partnership college, but essential additional hours were given to all APs to carry out the face-to-face team and individual coaching. Time was also given for three of the APs to attend the national AP training event on two occasions. The average remission time granted for the project across the partnership was two hours weekly for each AP. Two of the delivery team were already practicing mentors/counsellors and the project remit was embedded into their overall teacher support.

For Lead Managers and wider high-level stakeholders at each college, there was a tangible kudos in being involved in a funded national project, and the incentive of cross-college collaborative working was seen as a positive step.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID THE PROJECT FACE?

One challenge of cross-college collaboration is to maintain consistency of project methodology. The most obvious variable was the amount of time each AP had in their own organisation, and the direct or indirect support they received from their Lead Managers and wider leadership teams. Thankfully, despite some early setbacks, the APs were given the essential resources required to fulfil the project remit.

'In terms of capability, a supportive framework was agreed with the Lead Managers that allowed the APs to work outside their regular roles and remits to focus on the delivery of this project.'

Project Lead, East Surrey College, East Surrey

'Being listened to...looking out for their well-being was valued. The 1:1 coaching encouraged [teachers] to think differently and find solutions.'

AP, NESCOL College

"Being less stressed means I can cope with all aspects of my role.'

'I was emotionally available for my students - I had more energy when working with them.'

Teachers, NESCOL and East Surrey College

Whilst APs tried to adhere to a Coaching Schedule, this was often difficult to hold to with last-minute changes to the supported teacher cohorts and lack of opportunities to hold supported teacher team meetings.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DID THE PROJECT MAKE?

100% of the teachers who worked with an AP reported a reduction in stress and the benefit of being able to talk about teaching issues. Teachers also pointed out that the process of being actively-listened to was supportive and valuable, helping them to gain perspective or accept the limits of their locus of control.

The project made the AP role even more credible – even in a supportive working environment, teachers are still fearful of open learning walks etc, and this was seen by our teachers as a non-judgemental alternative. The use of active-listening, as a key aspect of coaching technique, helped to establish trust, mutual respect and empathy which was helpful in changing perceptions of observations.

The Project Lead reported that ‘the strength of feedback from the supported teachers about the transformations that this project has made to both their personal and professional lives in such a short timeframe, has been quite extraordinary. Even more so in light of the challenges faced by three of the teaching teams over the duration of the project, which included the threat of redundancy, serious personal health issues, extremely challenging learner groups, changes to line management and uncertainty of future roles and responsibilities.’

The new element in this research, the use of APs to promote teacher mental health and well-being, confirmed a number of powerful messages.

The three key messages were that:

1. APs can provide effective support for teachers in meeting mental health and well-being needs.
2. Promoting mental health and well-being, as part of teacher workforce development, can impact positively on teachers’ practice and teacher-learner relationships.
3. Appropriately supported, APs can promote a developmental culture of professional development, through coaching and mentoring, with diverse teaching teams.

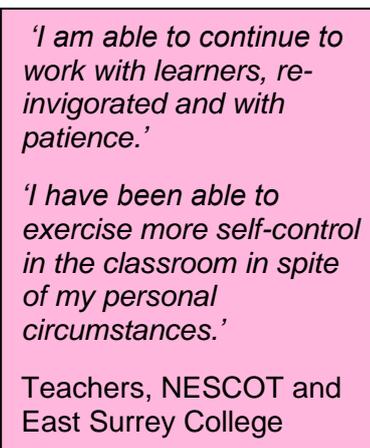
An unexpected outcome was the sheer range of ideas, suggestions, initiatives and solutions that came out of the individual and team coaching sessions. These have subsequently been curated into a [guide](#) listing nearly 50 strategies that could support personal and professional resilience.



Resilience Strategies for supporting Teacher Mental Health and Well-being

Working in the Post 16 Education and Training sector has always been challenging. Today, the demands on the teacher from both students and curriculum requirements seem to be greater than ever. Whether this is true or not, the fact of the matter is that with less time, teachers are asked to cover more bases. We know that the well-being of the teaching workforce is a growing concern for all stakeholders in the Post 16 sector. For a start, it just makes good business sense to keep good teachers teaching, and to support those who are struggling with their workloads, rather than to find money to replace from the staff with shrinking recruitment budgets.

[Click here to access the guide to Resilience Strategies for supporting Teacher Mental Health and Wellbeing created as a result of this project.](#)



‘I am able to continue to work with learners, re-invigorated and with patience.’

‘I have been able to exercise more self-control in the classroom in spite of my personal circumstances.’

Teachers, NESCOL and East Surrey College

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

For further information please visit the Advanced Practitioner OTLA Projects

Padlet page here: <https://en-gb.padlet.com/joss1/collabprojects>

Or contact:

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RESOURCES SUPPORTING THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR ADVANCED PRACTITIONERS (OTLA 4) – 2018/2019

CLICK ON THE IMAGE TO ACCESS THE RESOURCE

- Advanced Practitioner Toolkit – Professional Development Cards

DEVELOPING ADVANCED PRACTITIONERS
THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CARDS

This resource has been produced to support the work of Advanced Practitioners. It builds on an original set of cards used to develop the skills of teaching and learning coaches who, using a peer-to-peer coaching model, work with staff to improve specific aspects of their delivery.

Advanced Practitioners can use these cards in a variety of ways, for example, to stimulate their own understanding and development, support their practice when working with others and to drive quality improvements in teaching, learning and assessment across the organisation.

The cards are colour coded to provide an initial focus for their use and application.

It should be noted that a number of the cards can be used in different contexts. For example, a card that helps support self-development could also be used to help support the coaching and development of others.

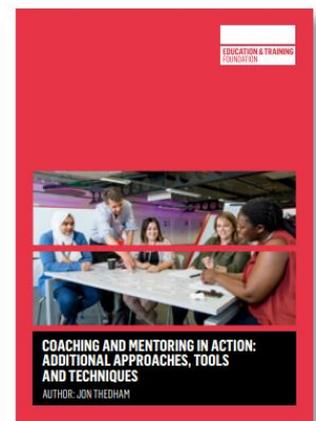
BLUE CARDS
PRIMARY FOCUS: DEVELOPING SELF

GREEN CARDS
PRIMARY FOCUS: DEVELOPING OTHERS

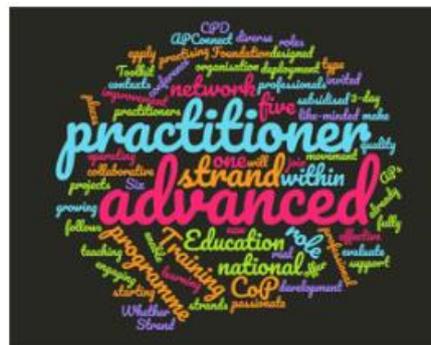
MAGENTA CARDS
PRIMARY FOCUS: DEVELOPING ORGANISATIONS

EDUCATION & TRAINING FOUNDATION

- Advanced Practitioner Toolkit – Practical AP Guides



- Advanced Practitioner Monthly Communications



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