

Schools Outreach offers recruitment, training and employment of pupil pastoral care specialists for placement into primary or secondary schools across the UK as well as training to schools, youth organisations and churches.

Our aim is to incarnate unconditional care in the lives of children and their families. In the first instance children are referred to the pastoral care specialist by members of the teaching staff. By offering the precious gift of time (time the caring teacher longs for but cannot find) the specialist offers friendship, a confidential listening ear and whatever help is practicable.

This has meant deep involvement with children and families where serious physical, emotional, and spiritual deprivation exists.



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A note from the Chief Executive

Most parents suffer the pain of seeing their children suffer harm, just as their children suffer the pain resulting from the accidental fall, an experience of bullying, or a sporting injury.

But – for a child to decide to cause himself pain, for a girl to damage herself on purpose, is an event which suggests that this deliberate act is a symptom of something deeper than the wound on the arm, or the slash to the leg. Many a simplistic and cost-free explanation is offered by individuals unwilling to give the young person the precious gifts of time and unconditional love and friendship.

Was it peer pressure alone that caused the self-harming? Is it an attention-seeking act, resulting, perhaps, from the young person confusing attention with affection? Is it a cry for help, and, if so, for what reason? Could the cause be neglect, desperation, abuse, a serious loss of hope? Correct answers come from asking the right questions; being willing to listen, to listen at length, to listen when nothing is being spoken; and to offer the sufferer full confidentiality and a never-failing commitment.

It has to be said that such a caring response cannot be maintained for the necessary time when local and national governments refuse to provide funding to relevant and effective projects for long-term sustainability.

Thinking of finance I wish to say a sincere 'Thank you', yet again, to those who provide the funding necessary to maintain the work of Schools Outreach.

Our present situation is a very serious one, so serious we have to face the possibility of seeing our work come to an end.

We carry a deep sense of responsibility to those workers we have in post and for whom funding has been promised. We are responsible for their continued care, their in-service training and professional development; and, of necessity, the management of their funding. It is the core funding we need to sustain the fulfilment of our responsibilities that we are finding very difficult to acquire.

Dr Gordon Bailey

Schools Outreach Ltd

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News:

The Torfaen project:

As you may know we have had pastoral care specialists based in two Torfaen schools since 2003. Despite our best efforts we have been unable to raise further continuation funding for these projects and so sadly we have had to call an end to the project.

Caroline Reynolds (with us from 2002) and Becky Hayward (from 2005) left Schools Outreach in March. They have both been offered positions working with children in the local area. We will miss them both but wish them all the very best for the future.

Please note:

- All children's names used in the case studies and extracts have been changed and locations omitted to protect their right to privacy.
- The photographs used in this publication are royalty free stock photographs from the Microsoft clipart site and are not of children / young people we work with.



Focus on ... self-harm

On occasions our specialists work with pupils who are self-harming. Unfortunately there is no 'quick fix' for this problem but our workers can offer a listening ear and shoulder to lean on in times of severe stress.

The following are extracts from our specialists' reports:

"John is a bright pupil who moved from another school in the area due to bullying. It wasn't long before the sort of problems he was facing at his previous school started to happen again. I started seeing John and we had sessions looking at coping with bullying. Through these discussions it became clear that he was self-harming, using a knife on his wrist and arms. Over the following terms I worked with him looking at various topics. The key issue was managing his self-harming with a view to being able to stop altogether. We also discussed relationships, family, health, personal interests and strategies to cope with the bullying. Work focused on finding positive areas in his life and getting him to focus on and develop those aspects of his life."

"Whether it is due to a decrease in communication skills and an increase in stress levels, higher profile or 'fashion', self-harm is something that is on the increase. It is worrying that young people increasingly feel that causing themselves physical pain is the only way to cope with the struggles in their lives. It's a crude and ultimately self-destructive tool, but it works, providing relief from the overwhelming pain, fear and anxiety in these people's lives. Those who self-harm haven't learnt positive ways of coping with overwhelming feelings. They are not disgusting or sick—they just never learnt positive ways to deal with their feelings."

"One to one work has been ongoing with self-harmers, trying to change the way they cope with difficult situations, trying to get them to find other coping mechanisms alongside dealing with the causes of their self-harming."

"The young people I have dealt with who have been self-harming said they were doing so as a result of either bullying or difficult home lives. All pupils suggested that this was the only way they felt that they could 'release the pressure'. The reality is that these pupils were self-harming because they didn't have effective strategies to cope with the feelings being bullied or having a distressing home situation gave them. My role has been to try to help these young people to see that change is possible, that they can escape, that things can be different. The aim has been to show them and help them believe that other tools do exist and help them to begin figuring out which of these non-self-destructive ways of coping will work for them. It is a long process and some pupils who support staff deal with may continue to self-harm throughout their school lives and beyond. The hope is that one day they will be able to use the knowledge we have helped provide."



A look at ... Recover Your Life

Recover Your Life is one of the biggest online communities for self harmers.

They say: "RYL ideals are that no one should be alone in what they go through - while there are no firm answers as to the cause or the cure to Self-Harm - RYL has proved that communication is key to a better sense of wellbeing, and in many, many cases...recovery. RecoverYourLife.com - the new face of RYL, brings with it far more community interaction - giving anyone who needs it the support, companionship, understanding and advice they need, whenever they need it."

Some statistics on self-harming from their website:

- Every 20 minutes a young person self-injures as a way of coping
- Every year, Childline receives approximately 4,500 calls related to self-injury
- Self-harm is thought to be the second highest reason for hospital accident and emergency admissions (with the top being 'accidents').
- 43% know someone who has self-harmed
- 56% of adults would not know how to help someone who was self-harming
- 1 in 10 15-16 year olds in the UK have deliberately harmed themselves, and that girls of this age were nearly four times more likely to have self-harmed than boys
- Young people have the highest rate of self-harm
- There has been a rise in the incidence of self-harm in the UK over the last 10 years, particularly in young women and men aged over 55.

We are very grateful to the Recover Your Life organisation for allowing us to reproduce some of their website content. To find out more about this volunteer organisation please visit their website at www.recoveryourlife.com

Please visit our website
www.schoolsoutreach.org



Our website is packed full of information, including:

- **About us**—looking at the history of Schools Outreach and a breakdown of the Council of Management and staff
- **Our services**—pastoral care specialists and training
- **What people say**—comments from pupils, teachers and parents about our workers
- **Our footprint**—where Schools Outreach has had an impact
- **How you can help**—including a facility for making online donations
- **Case studies**—a new case study is added each term
- **Statistical analysis**—updated annually
- **Newsletter**—an online version of this newsletter

News:

The Office:

Christine Wickham, who works part-time in the office fully retires in May 2008. She has been with us since 2002. We wish her well and hopes she will find more time to enjoy her garden!

Over the last few months many of you will have had difficulty getting through to anyone in the office. This was due to staff illness and holidays. Please accept our apologies. We will not be replacing Christine in the office as we seek to reduce administration costs—so there may well be other occasions when the office has to be closed. Please be patient with us and do leave a message on the answer machine and we will get back to you as soon as possible.
Thank you.



Our specialists work one to one and in groups with children and young people who are exhibiting signs of disadvantage, neglect or abuse, or are suffering from the loss of a loved-one. They also provide support to struggling parents and help build a good relationship between the parent and the school.

Further information is available on our website or from the Schools Outreach office.

I have seen Anna many times over the past 3 years with family and school issues. She portrays a very unhappy life and has spent periods of time missing lessons, involved in drink and drugs as well as self harm involving starvation and mutilation. She had been part of group sessions focusing on social skills, communication and relationships as well as extensive one-to-one support meetings with myself and various other staff members.

Anna would turn up as and when she felt the need, often after she had been to see other staff members and she didn't feel able to cope with lessons. She would talk about how she would sit in the school toilets to avoid lessons and would use scissors to cut herself generally on her arms but also on her hip. She would also limit her food intake some days not eating at all. Anna said that much of this was because she felt so unhappy, she didn't feel like eating, but also that things at home were bad and so she didn't like mealtimes.

Nothing seemed to change Anna's situation or behaviour; meetings with her mother and other support professionals were unproductive and she would choose not to act on the advice she was given. She would also fail to use her own skills and qualities to change her negative behaviours. Anna would just drift from one difficult situation to another. Every now and then she would make a real effort; at times she would come in and say how pleased she was that she hadn't self-harmed for over a week or she was eating properly, though these times were short-lived as Anna would return in a few days saying that something had gone wrong and she had self-harmed again. This is not to say that one-to-one and group sessions were not of benefit to her. She wrote: "Speaking to (worker's name) has helped me through a lot in the past year. Speaking to him has helped me take my mind off of things and put things into perspective."

At the start of the year Anna developed a new relationship with another female pupil in her year. Her new friend was a pupil who also had many problems and had been struggling in school. On the face of it the developing relationship seemed like it would be negative for both pupils involved. With both pupils having such difficult lives and very negative outlooks one would assume that both parties would be dragged down. Anna wrote: "We have a lot of things in common, but that's not always a good thing, but for me it was, she could understand how I felt." Through their relationship, Anna stopped self-harming, cutting herself. "She liked me for who I was, and didn't care about what my family was like. She was always there for me, and would stop me doing stupid things like I used to."

That doesn't mean that Anna and her friend never do anything wrong. When you have two such needy young people who rely on each other there are bound to be times where one will rely too heavily on the other, or one will cause the other to make a bad choice. Views from staff suggest that Anna's behaviour has not improved significantly, but that Anna is happier in herself and less likely to make rash and bad decisions.

Over time, as Anna becomes more settled, it is hoped that this will reflect on her happiness at home and her performance in school. Anna's new friendship is proof that meaningful, honest and close peer relationships can provide the footings young people need to change their lives.

Case study ... 'Anna'

Schools Outreach Ltd

Specialists in training those involved in the pastoral care of children & young people

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