

Verbal Wellbeing: A whole school, preventative mental health & emotional wellbeing programme for primary-age children in Northern Ireland

Summary Report



What We Do

We combine the power of storytelling and psychology to encourage insight and learning around mental health and emotional wellbeing in group and 1-2-1 sessions.

Our work is a form of **bibliotherapy** and is informed by mental health frameworks such as **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)** and **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)**.



Bibliotherapy
Encourages reflection and discussion through stories



CBT
Changes unhealthy thoughts and behaviours



ACT
Accept and change emotions and behaviours

CAWT Phase 1 & 2 Programme Delivery

Delivered interventions designed to improve resilience and mental wellbeing across:

42

primary schools
across Northern
Ireland; children
aged 9-11

488

storytelling
sessions
delivered between
Jan-Dec 2022

732

hours of storytelling
and discussions with
children

Collected surveys before and after programme from **436** children.

These surveys contained:

- World Health Organisation Wellbeing-5 Index
- Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire
- Child & Youth Resilience Measure
- Attachment Style Classification Questionnaire

Surveys allow us to test for changes & **statistically significant differences**.

If something changes **significantly**, it means that we can be confident that the change happened due to the impact of our programme.



Psychological Impact



Resilience

56%

of children showed an increase in resilience

Children were **significantly** more equipped to deal with problems and difficulties



Difficulties

47%

of children reported fewer difficulties in life

Children had **significantly** fewer behavioural problems & were **significantly** kinder to others



Mental Health

42%

of children showed improvements in their mental wellbeing

Children had **significantly** fewer emotional problems and felt happier about their lives



66%

higher improvements to mental wellbeing for children in the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland

Programme Feedback

83%

of children
felt listened to
during discussions

77%

of children
enjoyed
taking part

85%

of children
would recommend
to other children



Group discussions helped children **gain confidence to speak** about emotions and their wellbeing



Children learned **coping strategies** from stories such as breathing techniques



Encouraged children with **Special Education Needs** and **non-verbal children to share their voice and opinions**