

A Social Work in School approach to Tackling Homelessness

How social work in schools can **reduce** the impact on educational attainment

Introduction



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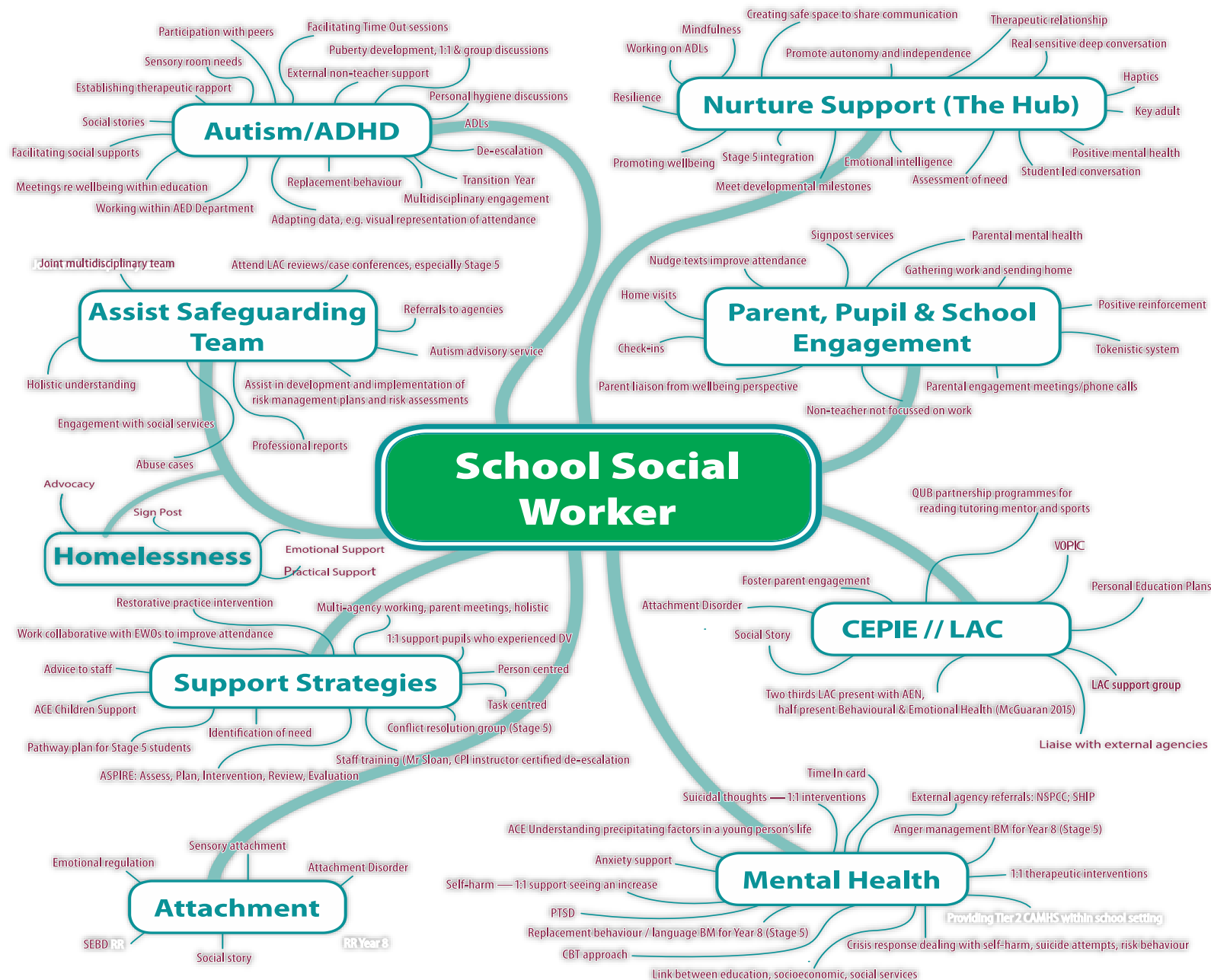


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Social Work in Schools

- Widespread across over 50 countries
- Mandated in Swedish Education Act and USA
- On site visit to School Social Worker in New York State High School
- Running a pilot programme in Hazelwood Integrated College





SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER

- ♦ A School Social Worker assists in the assessment, planning, intervention, review and evaluation of a student's needs to provide person centred support
- ♦ Assist in behavioural situations
- ♦ Providing an intervention tailored for the specific needs of a student - that may be long/ short term strategies
- ♦ Crisis Intervention for vulnerable students
- ♦ Multi-Disciplinary working with other key professionals to engage in a holistic assessment and intervention of pupil
- ♦ Work on well-being, mental health and other precipitating factors with the aim of improving educational attainment
- ♦ 50 Countries currently employ School Social Workers
- ♦ Sweden has the provision of School Social Workers mandated in their Education Act/
- ♦ Sweden has 1 Social Worker to every 800 pupils
- ♦ The United States of America recommends 1 Social Worker to every 250 pupils

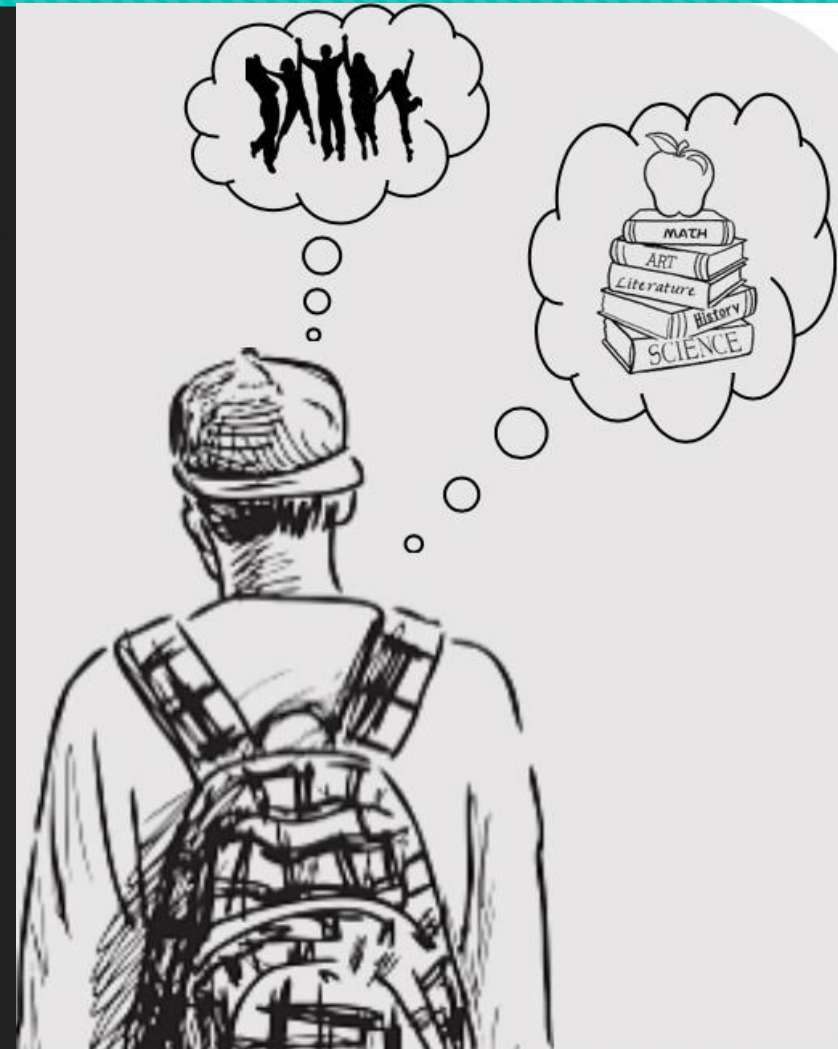
OUTCOMES

- ♦ Less burden on Teachers, Social Workers are trained with skills to assist in Child Protection situations to intervene or advise
- ♦ School Social Workers can make referrals to external agencies that may be out of the Teachers remit of work
- ♦ To provide a holistic understanding of the student
- ♦ Improved self-esteem, confidence and self-help techniques for the students
- ♦ Students can avail of 1:1/group therapy sessions which promotes positive mental health and peer integration
- ♦ Improving attendance by addressing precipitating factors, mental health, home life, emotional and behavioural barriers. Improved attendance = improved educational outcomes.
- ♦ Increase engagement from parent, community and school via home visits and parental/guardian liaison. "for every 2% of disengagement pass rates drop by 1%" (Valentine and Collins 2011)
- ♦ Nude Theory via telephone contact in the morning to motivate student to attend school. Evidence based practice and trial period illustrates impact.
- ♦ Telephone contact also reduces anxiety in pupils; they can contact School Social Worker via text at any time, particularly during break and lunch. The School Social Worker can then meet them at the location they specify and provide reassurance and support. This creates a layer of comfort for the student, especially Stage 5/Statemented students.
- ♦ Crisis response interventions utilised as and when needed as School Social Worker is equipped with the knowledge and skills to deescalate and are readily available at a moment's notice
- ♦ Care experienced students feel supported via accessing the Social Work room creating a family environment where students feel safe therefore want to attend school increasing attendance and academic achievement



How Homelessness Appears in Schools

- Incorrect uniform
- Punctuality – hostels/temporary accommodation is often a distance away from school
- Reduced attendance – trauma/supporting family/loss of motivation/increased illness
- Incomplete homework
- Decline in behaviour
- Withdrawal – from friends/extra curricular/staff
- Not receiving/returning school notes
- Impact of parents attending meetings – distance/money
- LAC – change in placements (Case Study – Danielle and Carson)



Current Support

- Homelessness is not immediately identified (Case Study – Smith Family)
- Requires parents/social services (if involved) to update school
- This is not always done immediately
- Head of Year is informed and may pass message on to necessary staff
- Social workers may advocate for: flexibility surrounding uniform/help with FSM/transport to school/emotional support/contact with parent or carer/referral to external agencies/flexibility surrounding timetable if struggling with trauma (Case Study – Aaron)
- Support to friends/other family members offering support
- “Safe space” to complete work/access to resources



Social Work

- Understanding of trauma/ACEs – this is something not taught to teachers in their teacher training
- Trauma of being displaced/trauma leading up to the displacement (domestic violence, care orders, racist attacks, community issues, financial issues)
- Referral to external agencies
- A responsible adult without “grade power” to offer support
- Advocacy inside and outside school
- LAC support
- Not all who are made homeless have access to a social worker or any additional support



Case Study



- Jack – impact from childhood into adulthood

Thank you!

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