

## The Alex Timpson Attachment and Trauma Programme In Schools Newsletter July 2018

The Alex Timpson Trust is funding the Rees Centre to develop a national evidence base on the effects of attachment and trauma training in schools. Around 22 local authorities have signed up so far with over 100 schools: [The Alex Timpson Attachment and Trauma Programme In Schools](#).

This termly newsletter will provide updates and support to schools and local authorities nationally, both those participating in the Programme and those who are interested in it. As the Programme develops, please contact us with news from your school and suggestions for content.

### **Webinar: Sir John Timpson speaks about why understanding attachment and trauma is so important**



Sir John Timpson led an online webinar on 27 June 2018. He explained his personal experiences of fostering 90 children and adopting two with his late wife Alex and their lightbulb moment when attachment was explained to them and they came across the work of Dan Hughes<sup>1</sup>. This helped them understand some of the more challenging behaviours they encountered. Since then, John has helped a primary school where he chaired the governors develop from an Ofsted 'special measures' rating to 'outstanding', he has written books for foster carers, teachers, social workers and young people about attachment and, most recently, has been working with Virtual School Heads to encourage more schools to commit to becoming attachment aware.

#### **John's 5 principles for schools working on attachment and trauma:**

1. The head must be TOTALLY committed
2. Involve the whole team (including staff other than teachers)
3. Have a team full of positive personalities
4. Provide a place for pupils to escape and have 'down time'
5. Adopting an Attachment Aware approach enables teachers to do the job they came into the profession to do.

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. Hughes, D. A. (2000). *Facilitating developmental attachment: The road to emotional recovery and behavioral change in foster and adopted children*. Jason Aronson, Incorporated.

Judy Sebba and Helen Trivedi from the Rees Centre joined John for the interactive part of the session with more than 60 webinar participants, including school staff, practitioners, foster carers and adoptive parents. There was some discussion in the following areas:

**Transitions between year groups** lead to pupils experiencing new teachers. This is an additional challenge for pupils. If the attachment and trauma training for staff includes whole staff training then pupils are more likely to experience a consistent approach by staff across the school which can support pupils with the rest of the changes they experience through transition e.g. new classrooms to find, new subjects to learn.

**Barriers to teachers teaching in an attachment aware way** – There is very little about any relational work in teacher training. This lack of skillset and awareness around these issues mean that teachers are poorly equipped and only have behaviour management systems to fall back on.

Some initial teacher education programmes (ITE) such as Bath Spa University, UCL and University of Oxford do include modules addressing attachment and trauma. Attachment awareness is now part of the core framework for initial teacher training, we need to make sure that all ITE programmes do this. Some Virtual Schools include this training with their trainee teachers e.g. Doncaster's Virtual School offers a day to all ITE trainees in Doncaster schools.

While increasing the awareness of attachment and trauma issues among individual teachers is important; the commitment of senior leaders, particularly the head, is, as John suggested, crucial. If there is not full buy in from the head teacher, individual class teachers in schools can address attachment and trauma issues sensitively with individual pupils, but as soon as those children are in contact with other staff in the school, this effective work may be challenged.

**Attachment and trauma awareness impacts on all pupils**, not just those in care. Schools engage better when they realise this has application to a wide range of pupils. Incorporating an understanding of attachment and trauma into lessons is possible e.g. discussion around how footballers feel when taking a penalty can lead to a discussion around bodily responses to stress, and then effective strategies for coping with stress. Discussions can also sensitively highlight how everybody's perception of stress is different, and our thresholds differ. Eventually, this moves to supporting pupils to understand why different pupils react differently to events in school, and why teacher responses may vary accordingly. John also suggested supporting parents and carers to understand the school's way of working in this approach to help them understand why there might be perceived differences in how staff respond to children's' behaviour.

**Zero tolerance behaviour policies** were noted not to work for pupils with attachment and trauma needs. It was suggested that zero tolerance drives exclusions up and, to some extent, is designed to 'get rid of' the problematic students.

Finally, it was concluded that **there is an opportunity right now** to promote this work since there is strong national concern for the mental health of young people – The Prince's Trust is very committed to promoting good mental health.

The above text also appears as a [blog post on the Rees Centre website](#).

**Listen and watch John's** [slide presentation via YouTube](#).

Our webinar series presents one online session each term, open to all with an interest in the topic. These sessions are recorded so you can watch and listen to the presentation a later date. The [March 2018 webinar](#) was led by a primary school head teacher in Hertfordshire. We hope a future webinar will be presented by a secondary school head teacher. If there is a particular issue that you would like to have addressed in a future session, [please let us know](#).

## We are currently working with schools in 22 local authorities across England



### **Feedback from the Hampshire Virtual School:**

*"Having worked closely with schools in Hampshire over a period of time to meet the needs of our looked after learners, schools began requesting further support with whole school approaches. We needed a way to support our designated teachers and school leaders to work with whole staff groups to develop their understanding of the behavioural and emotional responses of looked after learners and then with approaches and strategies with which to respond. Our work in this area has been so successful we are now on our third cohort of schools and our fourth is pending! The Timpson Programme is helping us to keep momentum with this crucial work".*

### **Feedback from staff at a Hampshire school:**

*"I attended the course put on by Hampshire Virtual School to further develop our school's capacity to support a particular child, however we have a growing number of children experiencing heightened emotions. As a school we need to increase our capacity and capability to support children with understanding, recognising and regulating their emotions along with resilience. It has become increasingly clear over the course of this year that we need to shift the mindsets of school staff about behaviour and the need to provide 'additional to and different from' for some children with social, emotional and mental health needs".*

## **How to Join the Programme**

We are recruiting local authorities to take part in the programme, starting term 1 or term 2 of the academic year 2019-2020 (groups of around 10-15 schools are ideal).

Virtual School Heads should get in touch with Judy Sebba and Helen Trivedi at the Rees Centre.

## **Further Information**

**Website:** [The Alex Timpson Attachment and Trauma Programme in Schools](#)

### **Research team at the University of Oxford**

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