Outcomes and Processes in Secondary School Nurture Groups – A Research Study

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Secondary School Nurture Groups: Context

- Originally developed in the 1970s
- Recent adaptations include part-time and older age groups
- Part-time model in response to school needs e.g. curriculum pressures, emphasis on inclusion, staffing etc.
- Secondary school pilot in 2009 in response to schools’ request for a school-based group intervention for vulnerable young people.
- Groups were diverse in terms of needs
- Evaluation process introduced as an integral part of the model
Nurture Group Model in Buckinghamshire

- Provide specially designed and furnished learning environment.
- One or two, two-hour sessions a week (ideally as a minimum), with lunch or break time drop-in if possible.
- Two core members of staff; modelling a positive and ‘real-life’ relationship, plus trained ‘aunties’.
- Small groups (Typically 6-8) of vulnerable young people with a range of needs, offering a more individualised approach,
- Predictable, structured routine – including opportunities for social role modelling and time to reflect on events from the previous week with a trusted adult and peers,
- Carefully planned transition out of NG after two terms,
- Structured evaluation to monitor outcomes for young people.
Secondary school nurture groups: an antidote to labelling?

- Early intervention approach
- School-based delivery, which helps participation and reduces concerns about any stigma, as it the group is part of the school day not in a clinic
- Schools select participants (no thresholds or criteria used)
- Screening tool, observation and background information collected
- Risk and resilience approach encouraged
- Diverse range of needs within groups results
- Young people in the group learn from each other and develop relationships
- Intervention can help schools develop understanding of child’s needs over time
- Supports development of skills and relationships over time, so also able to support children with long term needs by developing their support network and reducing anxiety
- Flexible approach – programme is not set but planned by practitioners who know the group
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Having fun together!
Research Study: Nurture Group Outcomes

- Data from six schools who ran Nurture Groups between September 2009 and March 2013.
- No control group.
- 49 young people between 11 and 14 years old
- Pre-post questionnaires
- Semi-structured interviews of nine nurture group practitioners
- SDQs from young people, teachers and parents/carers showed decreases in overall stress and emotional symptoms scales
- No significant changes were observed using the Boxall Profile for Young People measure or the Social Skills Questionnaire.
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Reduction in Emotional Symptoms Score

![Bar chart showing reduction in emotional symptoms SDQ scores pre- and post NG intervention.](chart.png)

**Pre- and Post- Parent, Teacher and Young Person Subscale Scores**
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Reduction in Total Difficulties Score

SDQ Total Difficulties Score
Pre- and Post- NG intervention

Total Difficulties SDQ Score

Parent Pre SDQT  Parent Post SDQT  Teacher Pre SDQT  Teacher Post SDQT  YP Pre SDQT  YP Post SDQT

Pre- and Post- Parent, Teacher and Young Person SDQ
What the practitioners said……

“It was like I had given them gold…..it was like a comfort blanket, I suppose.”

Process

“On the whole, they have grown, they are little flowers that are opening up. It is brilliant.”

Change
Buckinghamshire County Council

Thematic Map: Change Promoters and Processes

Processes

- Trusting Relationships
- Scaffolding-thinking
- Teaching/Practicing Skills/Strategies
- Being listened to/Empower-ment
- Communication with others
- Modelling and feedback
- Secure setting/routine
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What next?

- Continuing to support new schools to set-up nurture groups
- Evaluation – rating scales and questionnaires
- Implementation support for schools
  - Training new staff
  - Support with model fidelity
  - Networking meetings
  - Additional training
  - Embedding nurturing ethos throughout the school

To read more:
“Part-time secondary school nurture groups: an analysis of participant outcomes and possible mechanisms of change.”
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The International Journal of Nurture in Education. April 2015.
http://issuu.com/nurturegroups/docs/the_international_journal-online