
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

High Five: creating compassion and mental wellbeing in young people in Scotland and Brazil

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High Five: creating compassion and mental wellbeing in young people in Scotland and Brazil

Compassionate Inverclyde (CI) is part of a global movement of compassionate communities that seek to tap into our desire to be kind, helpful, neighbourly and compassionate.

High Five is an innovative programme developed by CI health and education partners, based on “Five ways to wellbeing” published by the New Economics Foundation.

It presents simple messages about self esteem, self compassion, kindness and wellbeing and prepares children and young people to talk about challenging topics such as death and dying, bereavement or loss. For high school and college students it also explores issues of sexuality, bullying, self harm and suicide prevention. Aims are to nurture empathy, create compassionate communities in schools and develop a cohort of young compassionate citizens as future community leaders.

Inverclyde population is 80,000 with high levels of poverty, unemployment, alcohol misuse, drug addiction and poor mental health. Programme partners are health, education, social care and Third sector.

Developed during 2016, it has been adapted for different educational stages. It is now in all Inverclyde primary schools and has been delivered to around 200 high school or college students.

In the pilot, college students demonstrated significant improvement in Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale scores (WEMWBS). They found photo sharing an excellent reflective tool and set up a wellbeing Facebook page. During 2017, High Five was adapted for children age 6 using creativity and fun to learn about wellbeing. Now adapted for age 14 – 17, the programme has seen an increase in young people volunteering and participating in intergenerational befriending. Other successes include some young people with emotional support needs who re-engaged in school.

The lesson plan and packs developed frame High Five in the mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing experience and outcomes of the school curriculum. This has enabled the programme to be embedded in all Inverclyde primary schools.

The High Five programme was introduced to 3 high schools in Sao Sebastiao, Litoral Norte, Sao Paulo state, Brazil through the Transforming Together project. For 'Yellow September' all 10 high schools are taking part in a joint health and education campaign to raise awareness about suicide prevention. From 2020, pupils from schools in Scotland and Litoral Norte will link by zoom to exchange insights about mental health and wellbeing, make new friendships, and discover new possibilities for their future.

High Five is evidence based, effective and can be readily adapted across age ranges and life stages. This integrated approach across health, social care and education is improving wellbeing and building social capital and kindness. The programme is being embedded in schools in Inverclyde and embraced by schools in Sao Paulo. Short term impacts on wellbeing and increasing volunteering are matched by longer term gains from inspiring a new generation of compassionate citizens.

High Five is an effective integrated approach to create wellbeing and resilience in communities with challenging socio-economic profiles across the globe. Embraced equally by young people in Scotland and in Brazil, it is a powerful and transferable tool to enhance mental wellbeing and improve population health.