

DESIGNATED TEACHERS and the SDQ

Statutory guidance for Designated Teachers and local authorities describes how the Virtual School Headteacher should work with Designated Teachers to ensure that schools are able to identify signs of potential mental health issues and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary. Paragraphs 56 and 57 of the guidance for Designated Teachers tell us that:

'Designated teachers should put in place robust arrangements to complete their element of the SDQ and engage with the relevant VSH and, where the school has one, the officer responsible for links with mental health services regarding this. Designated teachers should use the results of the SDQ to help inform the child's PEP'.

Completing the teacher SDQ

From September 2021, in line with statutory requirements, all Designated Teachers will be asked to complete an SDQ annually for all Northumberland looked after children on their school roll. The score will be recorded on each pupil's ePEP. The teacher SDQ score will therefore be available to use at the six monthly PEP review.

The SDQ needs to be completed by someone who knows the child or young person well and has regular contact with them. The Designated Teacher does not have to fill out the SDQ themselves, but is responsible for identifying the most appropriate adult to complete it, and ensuring that it is done. It is crucial that the person completing the SDQ is not basing their answers on a specific day but rather over a period of time.

Using SDQ scores at PEP review meetings

The information gathered through the SDQ should be reviewed, discussed and recorded during the PEP meeting. This includes the identification of appropriate targets, derived from review of the SDQ information (and other relevant sources), to meet any identified social, emotional or mental health needs. Professionals are required to identify strategies to support the child to meet the identified needs, including planned impact and termly review.

What do the scores mean?

Normal Score 0-13 (close to average)

- no direct additional intervention is likely to be required
- how to maintain and further enhance wellbeing is discussed at the PEP meeting.

Helpful questions to explore at the PEP meeting:

- Are there any trigger points that can be foreseen that may impact the pupil's mental health and wellbeing? For example an anniversary of significant events such as coming into care; parent or sibling birthday; transitions; exams; change in contact arrangement; sensitive curriculum topics.
- What additional support can be put in place in relation to these trigger points?

Borderline Score 14-16 (just above average)

- add a target to enhance the pupil's emotional wellbeing.

Helpful questions to explore at the PEP meeting:

- Does the pupil have a trusted adult in school who they know that they can talk to about their emotional wellbeing and seek support if needed?
- What additional support is available that might be appropriate for this pupil? For example school nurse, mentoring, extra curricular activities, group work to improve self-esteem or understanding and managing emotions

- Does current support need to be adapted?

Cause for Concern Score 17-40 (above or well above average)

- indicates the pupil is likely to need additional support to enhance their wellbeing
- the score triggers a consultation with the Virtual School, social worker, and an Educational Psychologist or CYPS worker
- add a target with actions to improve the pupil's emotional wellbeing

Helpful questions to explore at the PEP meeting:

- Consult with appropriate professionals e.g. Virtual School staff, social worker, educational psychologist, senior mental health lead
- Risk assessment: is this pupil at immediate risk or experiencing a mental health crisis? Please follow your school guidance and liaise with the Virtual School and CYPS
- ***If a pupil experiences a mental health crisis, and poses an immediate risk to themselves or others, they should attend A&E immediately and contact CYPS the CYPS LAC Matron Heather Thompson, Heather.Thompson@cntw.nhs.uk***

Preparing for a discussion about emotional wellbeing at the PEP review

The SDQ is a tool that supports us to think about a pupil's mental health and wellbeing. It is important to ensure SDQ information is considered as one part of the picture alongside other sources of available information. It may be helpful to consider the following questions when preparing for PEP meetings.

1. **Are there any concerns in any areas?**
 - What may be contributing to this?
 - What is already in place that is supporting the pupil's mental health and wellbeing?
 - How do we know if this is making a difference?
 - What else can be put in place to support these needs?
2. **What other information do professionals have about the pupil's emotional wellbeing? For example:**
 - Round Robin teacher views regarding emotional wellbeing and presentation
 - In house systems for assessing the pupil's wellbeing eg Thrive
 - Information from other professionals involved with the pupil
3. **Does the information gathered from a range of sources 'fit' with what the SDQ results are indicating?** Do you need to find out any more information in a particular area to explore this further?
4. **Are there any differences between what different sources of information are telling you?** If so:
 - What may have led to these differences?
 - Consider whether the pupil presents differently in different contexts
 - What do you know about when they are managing well? How can you apply what is working well in one context to another context?
 - Does the person who completed the SDQ only see the pupil in particular types of situations? Is this representative of their presentation and behaviour more generally?
5. **What are the pupil's views about their own social, emotional and mental health needs?**
 - What are their main concerns? What do they think might support them?
 - How can you take their views into consideration when identifying strategies?