

## **TARGETED MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS**

Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS), is a joint venture between the Department of Health and the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Sunderland is one of 25 Pathfinder authorities for this programme and will work with the Primary Care Trust and 23 schools across the city.

Good mental health and well being are essential for children and young people to learn, achieve and fulfil their potential so TaMHS will focus on the promotion of good mental health and early identification and intervention for those children who are at risk of, or experiencing problems.

There are five secondary schools taking part: Southmoor Community School, Monkwearmouth School, Washington School, St Aidan's Catholic School and Language College and St Anthony's Catholic Girl's School, together with 18 feeder primary schools. The secondary schools were selected because they had already signed up to promote the first phase of SEAL - social and emotional aspects of learning.

TaMHS is a natural progression and staff at the schools will take part in training in mental health. There will be group work for anxious children, and for promoting social skills and emotional literacy and there will be an extension of counselling and peer monitoring. The lead teachers from each school are meeting this February to get to know each other and staff from Community CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) and partner agencies and to begin their training with an introduction to cognitive behaviour therapy.

Eventually the staff in their schools will be offered basic mental health training to help identify children with emotional difficulties and will be given support from the lead teacher to recognise and support those children at an early stage. At the same time as the project is running the Government will be carrying out a detailed tracking study of current Year 4 and Year 7 pupils to monitor the effectiveness of the work.

Acting project manager Anne Loadman is emphatic that the work must be sustainable and schools must retain the skills after the project is completed.

Anne believes TaMHS will be successful when every school has a therapeutic space, when the stigma of mental health is reduced, when staff have the awareness and confidence to help children and young people at an early stage and when the children and young people themselves all have access to counselling in schools. The real success will be when mental health is recognised as everybody's business.