Supporting Educational Resilience and Inclusion in Post-16: Introducing an Evidence Based Intervention

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A Definition:

▶ **"Educational resilience is defined as the heightened likelihood of success in school and in other life accomplishments, despite environmental adversities"** (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg,1997)

▶ Research indicates that resilience helps students cope with academic pressures, adapt to stressful situations, and maintain personal well-being, which in turn supports their academic goals (Imhof, Worthington, Burger, & Bellhäuser, 2024)

▶ Students supported with resilience are better equipped to manage stress and emotional challenges, contributing to overall mental health and well-being (Beltman & Mansfield, 2018)

▶ Building resilience in educational settings can lead to long-term benefits, including improved career prospects and personal development (Wosnitza, M., Peixoto, Beltman, & Mansfield, 2018).

Why?

- 13 years in post-16 watching returners to education go on and have great success – what helps?

- Doctoral research (Borrett, 2019; Borrett & Rowley, 2020). This identified a set of protective mechanisms for educational resilience – it also demonstrated the transformative process involved when students are supported to activate strengths following adversity

- The research highlighted a need to help students to reflect on adversity through resilient reintegration and cognitive appraisal

- Requests from colleges and schools

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The Gap

- **School-Based Interventions to Enhance the Resilience of Students (Ungar et al, 2014)** = More local interventions performed better due to understanding the needs of students in the area. The best school-based interventions appear to be collaborative, multisystemic and culturally and contextually relevant, responding to what children themselves

- **Effectiveness of an Intervention Program in Fostering Academic Resilience of Students at Risk of Failure at Secondary School Level (Arif & Mirza, 2017)** = intervention was significantly effective in enhancing students academic resilience study recommended that schools should adopt strategies and train teachers to teach youth about resilience. However, experts were faculty members in the subject of education holding PhD degree in Education. Potentially missing the psychological/therapeutic practice

The Gap

- **School-based Interventions to Improve Adolescent Resilience: A Scoping Review (Tasijawa & Siagian, 2022)** = Intervention programs have a significant effect on adolescent resilience levels

- Interventions focus on individual approaches OR whole school approaches – no current intervention that combines both these elements

- Intervention approaches do not recognise

- a) the importance of the system in developing resilience

- b) the importance of the therapeutic relationship in developing resilience

- c) the role of adversity/trauma

A Programme of Support for Educational Resilience

Our definition…

"Educational Resilience is a process derived from the interactions between the individual and its systems across the life-course that lead to positive adaptations in education despite earlier risk or adversity" (Borrett, 2019)

The definition recognises the conceptual framework that examines the dynamic relationship between the individual and its environment and therefore the theoretical lens of ecological systems theory

Aims in developing an intervention:

▶ To use psychoeducation to support resilient reintegration through cognitive reappraisal

▶ To reject the notion a student is either 'resilient' or not

▶ To activate strengths and resources

▶ To take a positive, proactive and preventative approach

▶ To recognise the whole system's role in developing educational resilience – to acknowledge ecological systems theory

▶ To recognise the importance of relational approaches

What is the evidence base?

▶ Protective mechanisms (ecological systems theory perspective) of educational resilience (Borrett, 2019; Borrett & Rowley, 2020)

▶ Protective factors identified in broader educational resilience research and school based interventions (see Borrett, 2019 for full review and also Effectiveness of an Intervention Program in Fostering Academic Resilience of Students at Risk of Failure at Secondary School Level Arif & Mirza, 2017)

▶ More broadly – ecological systems theory, relational practice, trauma informed, acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), self-determination theory and positive psychology (e.g. PERMA and flow)

Evaluation of Trauma Informed Approaches in YJS (Carter & Borrett, 2023; Borrett & Carter, in press)
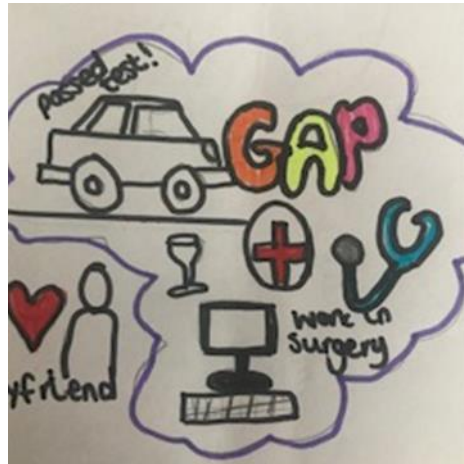

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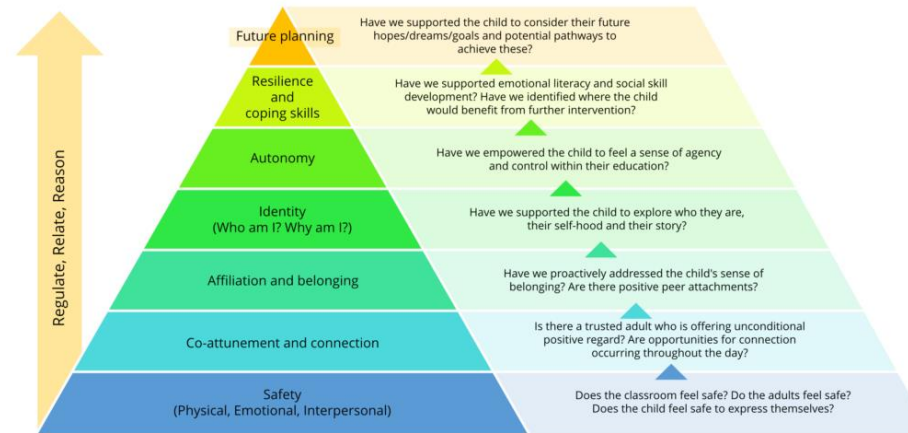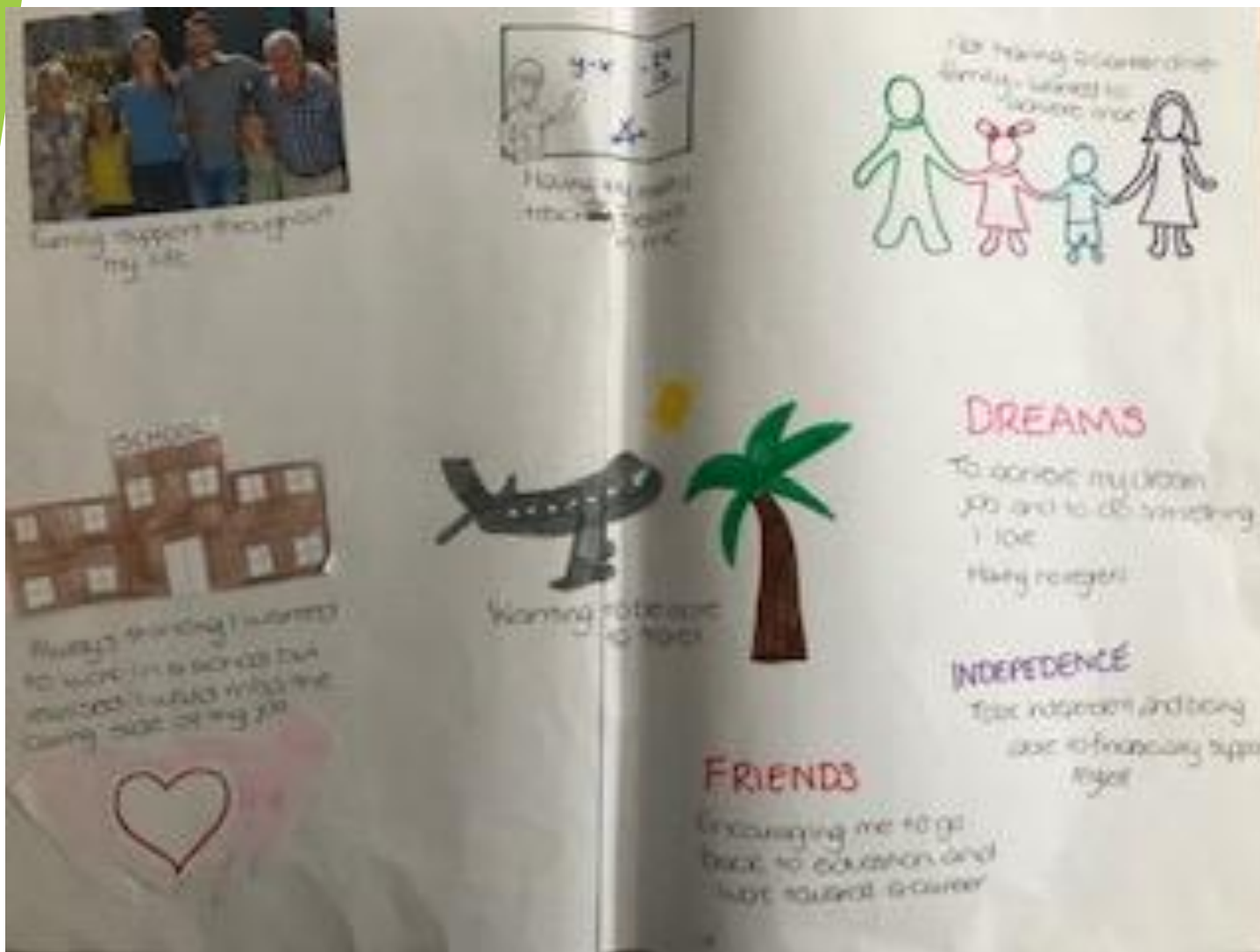

Dr Jemma Carter, Suffolk County Council

Two Underpinning Models

- Protective Mechanisms in Educational Resilience (Borrett, 2019, Borrett & Rowley, 2020; Carter & Borrett, 2023)

- The Applied Trauma Responsive Classroom Model (Carter, 2023, Carter & Borrett, 2023)
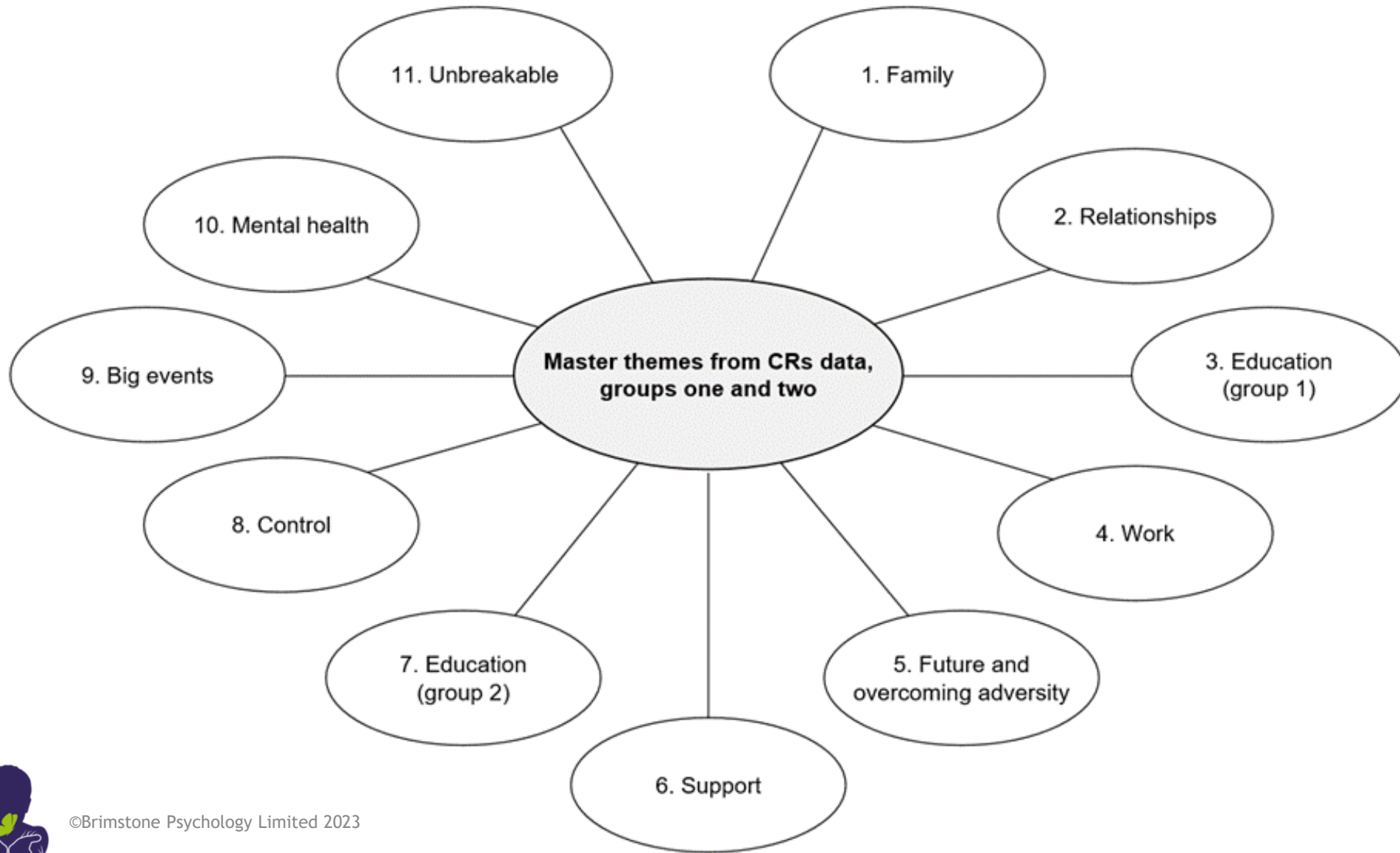
Using visual and participatory research methods to describe processes of educational resilience in returners to education (Borrett, 2019; Borrett & Rowley, 2020)

11 Master Themes

Synthesised into three main findings

Group 1 Factors	Group 2 Factors
Family • Responsibilities • Role models • Encouragement • Support	**Support** • Family • Community
Relationships • Friends • Romantic	**Education** • Support from key person • Being good at something
Education • Support • Enjoyment	**Control** • Taking control • Relationship Break-ups **Big events** • Bereavement • Events changing future **Mental health** • Providing experience • Success despite **Unbreakable** • Adversity creating success • Proving others wrong
Work • Realising potential • Experience in the field of study	
Future and Overcoming Adversity • Growth • Independence • Travel	

▶ Support

▶ Connectedness

▶ Growth from adversity and the role of reflection

Sources of Support

Family	Community	Friends	Educators	Partners

Emphasis of where support can be gained from changes over time

- Nature of support changes with time

- Having one teacher who believes in you can function as protection

- Lack of support (possibly due to constant peer group changes) perceived in high school

- Significance of supportive partners in sustaining a return to education

Educational resilience outcomes resulting from support

Sources of Support

| Family | Community | Friends | Educators | Partners |

Emphasis of where support can be gained from changes over time

Educational Resilience Outcomes

| Love and Belonging | Autonomy | Self-belief | Confidence | Motivation |
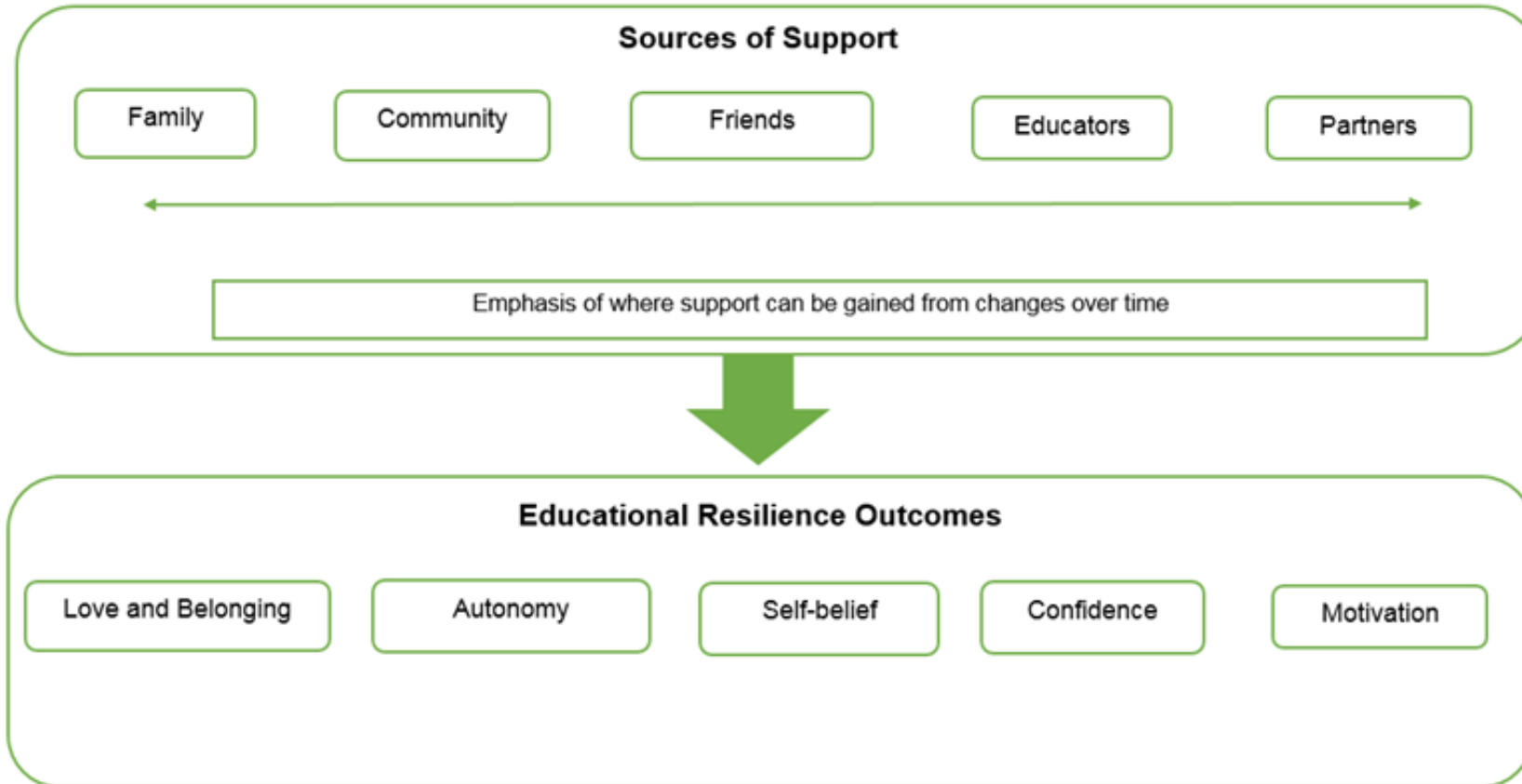
Connectedness

▶ Connections appeared to operate by providing individuals with support, but they also increased feelings of belonging which in turn had positive effects on school attendance and enjoyment of learning
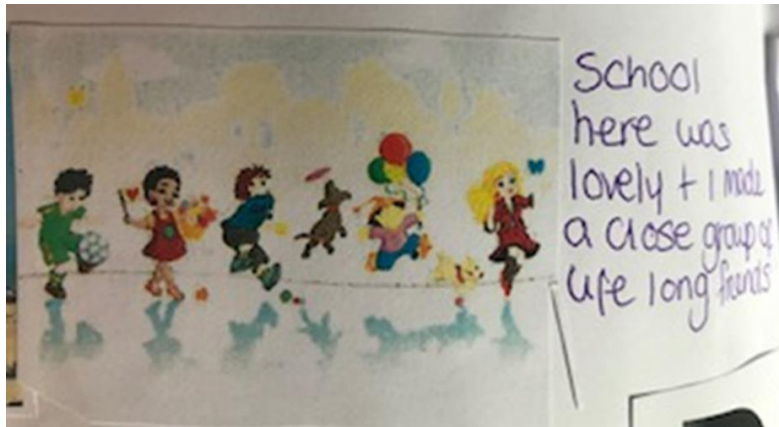
"Council estate that's where you wanna be, everyone loved each other"
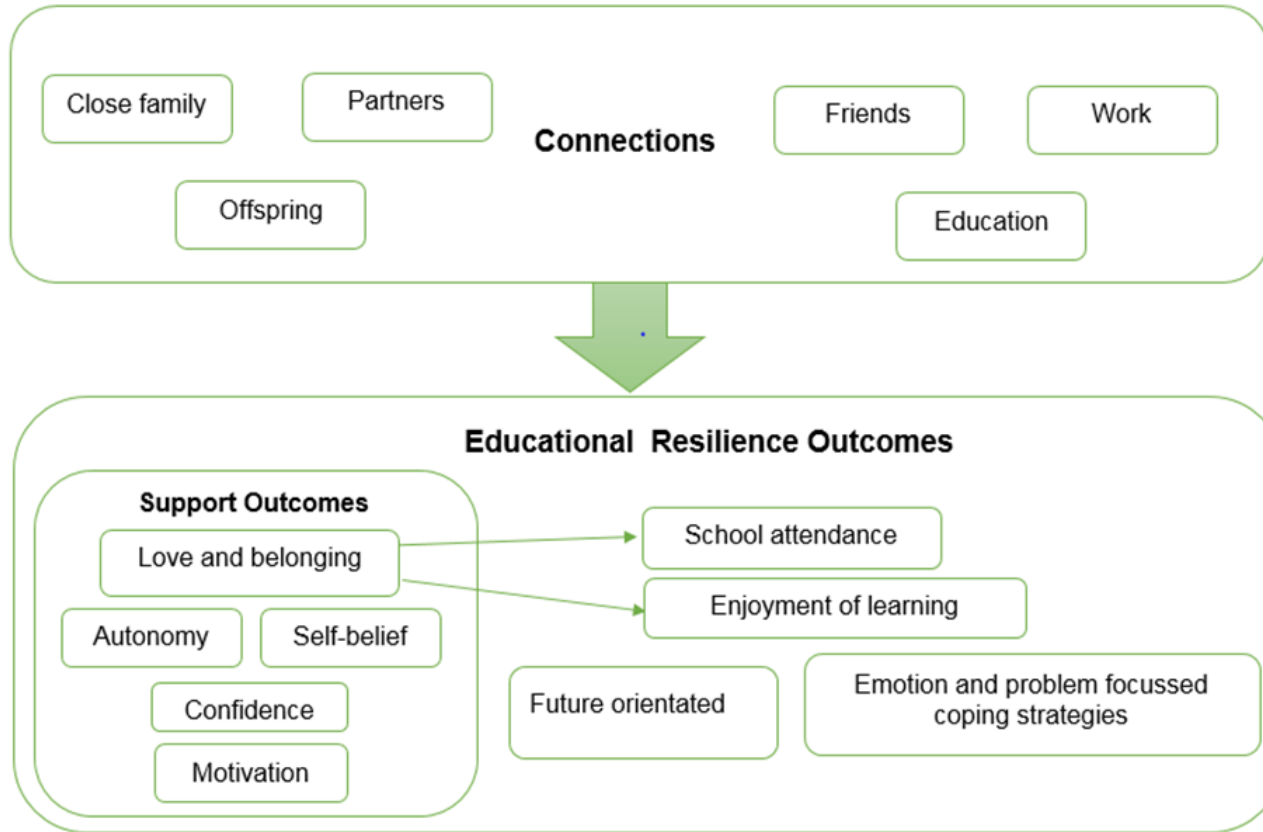
EDUCATIONAL RESILIENCE OUTCOMES RESULTING FROM CONNECTIONS

Adversarial Growth and Reflection

"I thought f**k it, I'm not gonna let you dictate my path now, signed up to college completed my English last year, said I'm not gonna stop here. Here I am!"
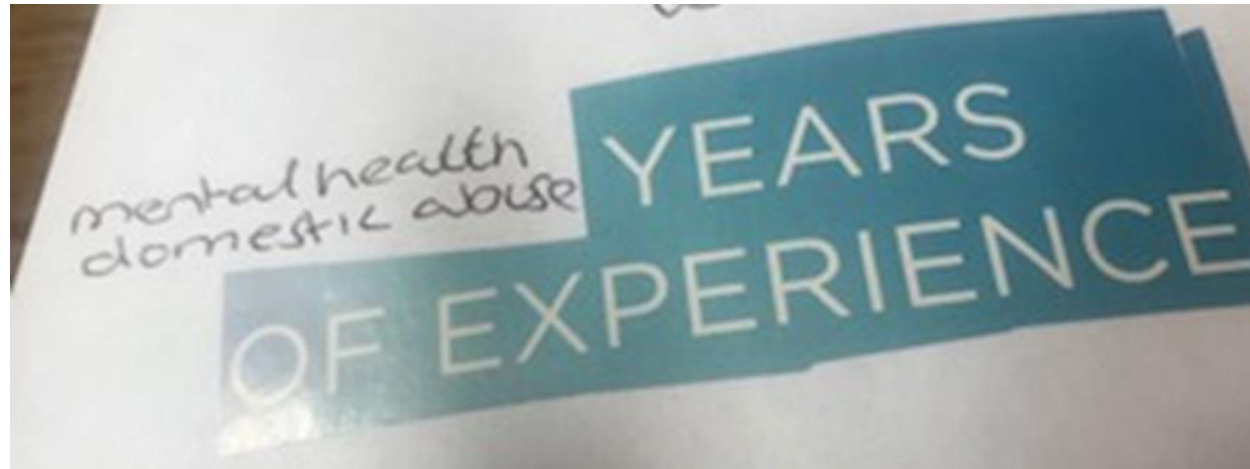
▶ Adversity experienced included economic instability, physical, emotional and mental abuse, relationship break-down, death and loss of a children, substance abuse, household mental illness, parental divorce and discord

▶ The most common view held by CRs was that adversity can highlight individual capabilities. Both groups felt that through adversity they had been transformed

Adversarial Growth

- **Reflection was key:**

- When CRs reflected on challenges they were able to activate personal characteristics of ER such as; motivation, self-belief, resource activation, confidence and self-efficacy

- By taking a gap in education, and allowing psychological distance from the event, RTE were able to reach a more resilient level of functioning – how can we safely facilitate this process?

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"I feel sorry for those that have it easy because when they have bad experiences, how are they gonna cope? I know, well, I know I can."

How does reflecting on adversity operate in educational resilience?

Adverse Experiences

| Financial instability | Major life-events | Trauma | Mental health difficulties | Awareness of social circumstances |

1. Awareness of adversity (as a difference)

2. Cognitive appraisal of adverse experiences activates strengths, resources, capabilities and demonstrates available coping mechanisms*.

Gap between educational phases allows space and time to reflect and activate cognitive appraisal of the events

Educational Resilience Outcomes

| Motivation | Confidence | Self-belief | Practical experience | Realising potential |

| Sense of control | Coping mechanisms | Strength Activation |

"It's almost like you learn from experience in that gap, you need it to happen so that you can learn from the bad experiences. It's about finding yourself in the gap"

RESTA
RESILIENCE SUPPORT TEACHING ASSISTANT

How does reflecting on adversity operate in educational resilience?

- The findings suggest that during the time between educational phases CRs went through a period of cognitive appraisal

- The levels of stress experienced from these events were moderate enough so that their normality had been challenged and so they experience intrusive thoughts. However, the stress is not enough to challenge their cognitive abilities and the individual could engage in enough processing to think clearly and activate coping

"...considering my homeless status and crippling depression, sofa hopping, I learnt to be independent"

RESTA Focused Intervention

Safety first! At least 2 weeks building safety and connection

Connection, affiliation and belonging	Connection and sense of belonging
	Social competence skills and empathy Understanding relationships and seeking support
Identity, sense of self and positive experiences	Regulating emotions
	Reflection Values, sense of purpose and strength identification
Autonomy and adaptive coping skills	Confidence and self-efficacy and self-esteem
	Coping mechanisms (calming, positive and negative thinking) relationships
Future planning	Motivation
	Future orientation and realizing potential (Optimism)

Space for ending and the RESTA toolkit

Resulting Intervention: Resilience Support Teaching Assistants (RESTA)

RESTA is an evidenced based model of intervention and support designed to increase Educational Resilience in young people

Utilises educational setting staff to be able to support students

Follows other models of school support (trained member of staff receiving psychological supervision from Educational Psychologists)

Differs from other models of support (concise, sequential approach utilising evidence from both educational resilience and trauma responsive practice)

An Introduction to the Intervention

▶ Resilience Support Teaching Assistants (RESTA)

▶ 6 days training in the protective factors that develop resilience in education

▶ Supervised by EPs

▶ Full package of materials (developed with students)

▶ Online access to resources and supportive community (podcasts and webinars – we are always interested to hear from others working with resilience for either of these!)

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Action Research: Developing RESTA

▶ Stage 1: (2018-2019):

- To establish whether the programme facilitated the protective mechanisms identified within the research

- Pragmatics of delivery (resources, structure, content, engagement)

▶ Seven cohorts from three different colleges in the East of England (n=70) seven groups of 10 groups run by EPs

▶ Results:

- Increase in scores on the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) - although too few to calculate significance (to be continued…)

- Qualitative data demonstrated positive feedback

- However, having visiting EPs running the programme meant it took longer to build relationships, there were some dropouts, difficulties chasing attendance

Action Research: Developing RESTA

- Stage 2 (2022-2023)

- COVID-19

- Previous findings suggested an EP running the intervention may not be the most effective way to run the intervention (issues with cost, sustainability, accountability, development of relationships)

- Began working with one college to look at the programme to find out what teachers/support assistants would need in terms of knowledge and resources to run the programme for themselves

- Each teacher was taken through a different part of the intervention training – reviewed it for ease of understanding, fed back on what further knowledge they may need, teachers from different levels within the college worked to adapt resources for different levels

- The teacher would then run the session and report back in order to gather feedback (at this stage students were instrumental in designing some of their own resources and activities)

Action Research: Developing RESTA

- ▶ Stage 3 (2023-2024)

- ▶ Pilot to train the first RESTAs

- ▶ Included practitioners from post-16 and secondary schools

- ▶ Results

- Confirmed findings of original intervention increases in BRS, some anecdotal evidence of students reengaging/increased attendance following intervention

- However, RESTAs noted difficulties with settings understanding the programme.

- RESTAs felt that they wanted their setting to know and understand resilience principles, there was discussion amongst the team that individual/small group intervention does not adequately address the role the system plays in developing protective mechanisms

Jenny Shillito: Herts Regional College

- "It was great for the student to actually see their coping strategies, even allowing us to see how many of those were healthy/unhealthy coping strategies. It gave us an opportunity to really see things we can work on together to better equip her when feeling challenged/unsafe." – **Jenny**

- "This has been so much better than the counselling I've had in the past, it feels more helpful. Just talking about my problems has never helped because I came away not knowing how to change the behaviours that were causing me distress. I feel excited I have the tools to do this myself. I'm not broken or a bad person that bad things happen to." – **Jenny's student**

'The RESTA pilot has been a practical, insightful, and impactful course equipping members of staff at City College Norwich (CCN) with key knowledge and strategies around resilience and wellbeing. The pilot has allowed us, as teaching and teaching support practitioners, to reflect on the challenges that young people in Post-16 face, how we might develop resources around resilience and wellbeing to support them, and how we might begin to implement the ethos of programme of work at CCN. We know that there is a need for these provisions, and we are looking forward to using the support and guidance from the RESTA team to consider future ways of working with young people using the RESTA approach'.

Callum Perry
Course Leader and Lecturer, Inclusive Learning
Team Leader, Curriculum Services
City College Norwich.

Suze Mildinhall – Stowupland High School

- Training – sat along side other training nicely (ELSA). Resources for each topic and breakout rooms very useful.

- Pilot at SHS – 2 students.
    - 1 Attending school, but lacks resilience, requires a lot of support to maintain attendance.
    - 1 hasn't attended for a year. Been under MHST and was referred to RESTA via school Psychologist

- Implementing in school. Through SENCO or direct to APLs to assess suitability (or MHST)

- Challenges – staff not quite grasping what the intervention is and how its different to other psychoeducation provisions; attendance of the students (then discussions how to catch them up), rotating around the timetable for students

- Development ideas for September:
    - Delivering off site if needed/or online
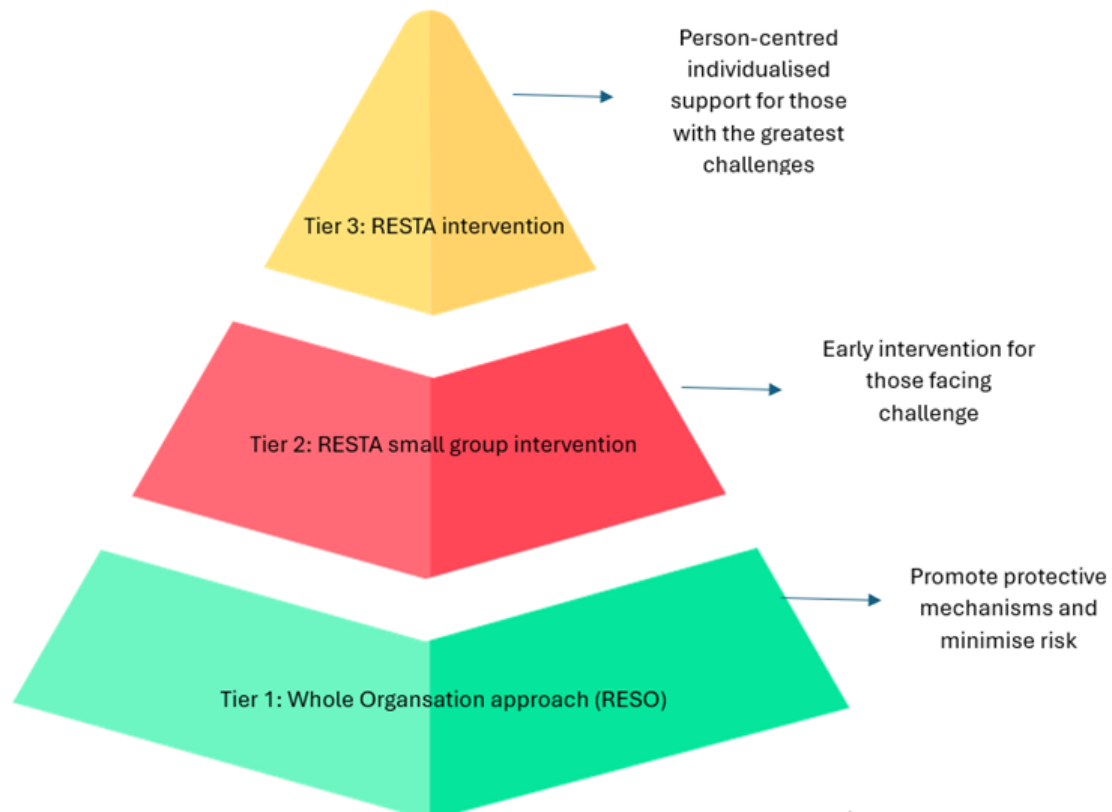   - Front loading into an intensive intervention
    - Whole school approach

Action Research: Developing RESTA

- Stage 4 (2024)

- Create a systemic approach to developing educational resilience

- Collaboration between a team of EPs, Assistant Psychologists, Head Teacher, Senior Leader from FE, existing RESTAs to develop a framework for building educational resilience across educational settings

- Developed a set of principles based on RESTA

- Development of Quality Mark for settings to demonstrate their commitment to embedding resilience principles within their settings – we are interested in hearing from EPs who would like to sit on the quality mark panels

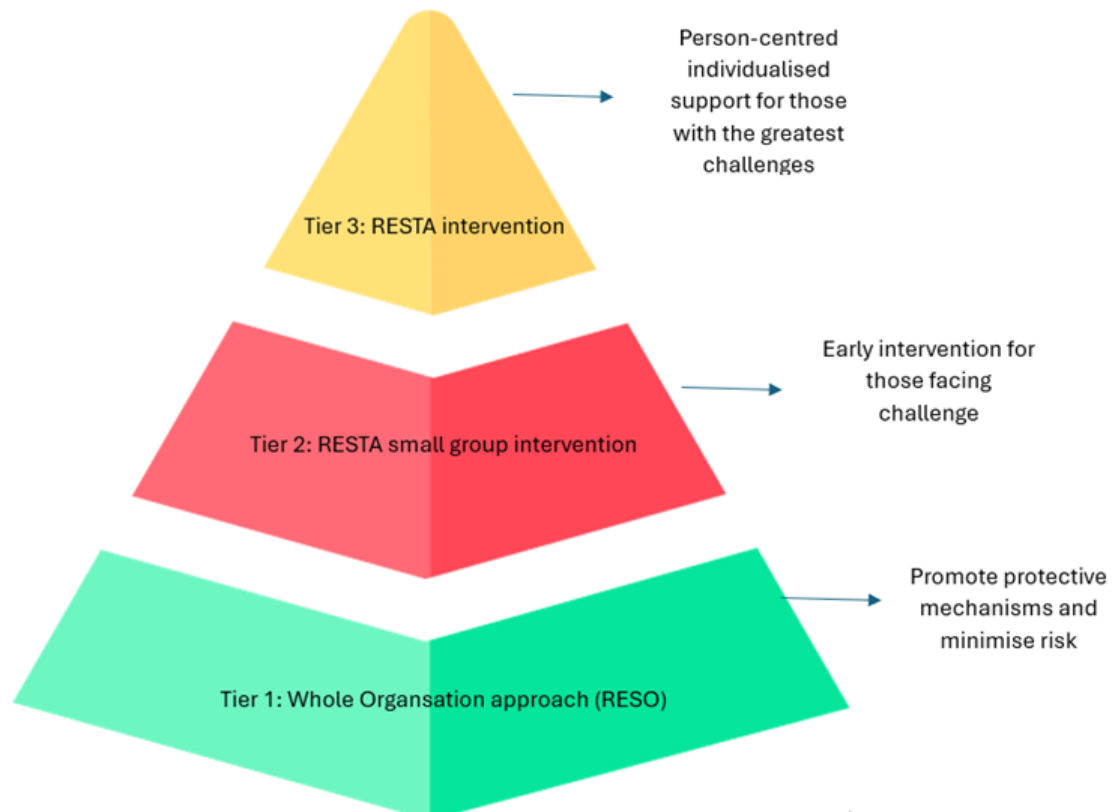- Parents workshop (webinar)

- Beautiful moments from RESOs

What's Different about the RESTA Approach?

Person-centred individualised support for those with the greatest challenges

Tier 3: RESTA intervention

Early intervention for those facing challenge

Tier 2: RESTA small group intervention

Promote protective mechanisms and minimise risk

Tier 1: Whole Organsation approach (RESO)

- ▶ The importance of the system – shifts away from an individual approach to intervention, resulting in a tiered system of support and 'buy in' from all staff

- ▶ Sequential nature of the programme results in person centred and developmentally appropriate intervention

- ▶ One of our LA specialist teams described it as: "RESTA is not just psychoeducation is a programme of human meaning making that develops skills that will stay with young people for life"

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What's Different about the RESTA Approach?

Tier 3: RESTA intervention — Person-centred individualised support for those with the greatest challenges

Tier 2: RESTA small group intervention — Early intervention for those facing challenge

Tier 1: Whole Organsation approach (RESO) — Promote protective mechanisms and minimise risk

- ▶ Relational approach that emphasises that a young person needs to feel psychologically safe in order to reach resilient reintegration

- ▶ Different from CBT based programmes – the influence of positive psychology and ACT means that young people learn to accept all emotions as normal and serving a function. They are clearer on the internal resources they have to overcome stress and focus on the future

Working with Further Education – lessons learnt

Less time to supervise staff – impact of shorter academic year

The role of support within further education – LSA supporting individual student – development of a 'RESTA' role

Less hands-on experience of delivering/understanding intervention

Support is often departmentally based – less opportunity for shared resources/collaboration

Understanding of what is developmentally appropriate – initial reservations that students would not engage, would not be suited to age (quickly dispelled once the programme began)

Takes a lot longer to set up the programme – funding sources, agreement at different levels and across different departments

Working with Further Education – benefits

Diversity of student groups - returners to education, former EOTAS/EBSA students, unaccompanied asylum seekers

Greater acceptance of creating a role for RESTAs and recognising the value of the role – time allocation has been greater in FE

Development of a specific 'RESTA' role within the colleges

Colleges keen to develop a systemic approach – feeding into one teacher training programme for FE teachers

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RESTA
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What next?

Gathering data

Literature review identifying gap and initial qualitative findings

Increasing knowledge of the intervention

Increasing the offer to EP services – train the trainer model

Questions

▶ Please feel free to look at the RESTA resources and ask any questions

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