

# Scottish Borders Council – Student Perspective

**Inspirational students in their own words:  
Young people taking charge and fighting  
mental health stigma and discrimination in their schools.**

## What is it?

We wanted to create a safe and supportive environment in our school to encourage open conversations about mental health, helping eliminate stigma in society by nipping it in the bud within the minds of our fellow students. To have a toolkit for fortifying our voices, giving us the ability to speak up about mental health and help others embrace the idea that 'It's Okay not to be Okay'.

## Who is it for?

Mainly, this is for young people within schools and our wider community. To ensure real improvement in the wellbeing of young people, they themselves must be the ones standing up to act. The See Me Youth Champions who delivered the project effortlessly bridged the gap in both age and knowledge that exists as a barrier to educating young people about mental health; like them we aimed to ensure every student was encouraged to develop their understanding of wellbeing and supported where appropriate. The See Me Youth Worker facilitation allowed relatable and inclusive conversations to blossom within our groups, helping students digest the content of the training and benefit from its message – we aimed to replicate this, with equal levels of energy, effectiveness and to develop our own events with the same level of passion.

## What was done?

- Raised awareness and understanding in school pupils in SB.
- Delivered SMHFA training and qualification.
- Delivered collaboratively with Quarriers to provide support, resources and encouragement to young people.
- Created opportunity for young people to take the lead on change.
- Designed a system in which the young people are supported by trained members of staff as well as via See Me resources and Quarriers. Allowing them to build individual confidence and knowledge base whilst delivering vital mental health education to peers.
- Empowered young people through knowledge, support and validation to allow them to create and pioneer change in their school.

Following their training in the Scottish Borders young people used their initiative to develop follow-up activities. Here is an account from several Wellbeing Ambassadors at one school who received the training:

*'We introduced ourselves to the school community through short presentations and videos we delivered to all year groups at assemblies, so staff and pupils understood our role and purpose. We have also attended national conferences as ambassadors, participated in national mental health associated days, strengthened our presence in the senior school by delivering an adapted version of SMHFA to our fellow sixth years, arranged and organised a whole school drop in after a traumatic school-wide event and so much more. We feel very passionately that the addition of the Wellbeing Ambassadors to our school community has provided a strong foundation onto which a positive culture of mental health can be built.'*

## What was the impact?

One individual fed back by saying, *"at the SMHFA training, I was apprehensive about speaking about something as personal as mental health, but the confidence, compassion, and charisma of my group Champion quickly opened me up. I was so empowered by the Youth Champions and their ability to have such a positive impact on young people in such a short amount of time. To have had the opportunity to take part in this experience and watch it reoccur within others in a group I have facilitated, is incredible – and an influence on my personal development that I am thankful for."*

Another student quoted; *"We have risen the awareness of the importance of mental health and developed the understanding of it across our school and community. Many have approached us in seeking guidance, predominantly in learning how to do more and support others. Even amongst teachers, with one who once overlooked the impact had by poor mental health as a result of being "stuck in their ways", has been in touch with appreciation and certifying the work we've achieved."*

The Wellbeing Ambassadors have continued to work alongside See Me and have since become See Me Youth Champions after they attended the Education and Young People Residential in August 2019. They have attended many events representing See Me, including national events like What's On Your Mind 2019 and the Youthlink Scotland Youth Work Awards. They have also attended the UNCRC 30th Anniversary weekend with the Children's Commissioner Scotland to represent youth voice across Scotland.