



**Scottish  
Attachment  
In Action**



**#Keep  
The  
Promise**

## **Wee BREATHERS**

*Supporting the education workforce through relationships*

### **What are Wee BREATHERS?**

Wee BREATHERS are attachment-informed, trauma sensitive supervision sessions that offer education colleagues protected time to connect, reflect and learn within a safe and confidential space.

Wee BREATHERS are open to education practitioners at all levels and can take place either online or in person. Sessions are available to individuals or groups of no more than 12 participants and usually run for blocks of 6 weeks. Timings of sessions can be flexible and based on the needs of your school or organisation.

Wee BREATHERS are led by trained supervisors with knowledge and experience of applying attachment-informed, trauma sensitive approaches within education.

### **Why do we need Wee BREATHERS?**

Over recent years there has been a commitment within Scottish Education to promote attachment-informed, trauma sensitive approaches in schools and early years settings, However, there is currently no consistent structure in place to provide staff with safe and confidential spaces to gain insight into the needs of pupils in their classrooms who have experienced disrupted attachment and/or trauma.

Without access to this type of support, teachers are at risk of feeling isolated in trying to help pupils with extreme levels of distress without access to appropriate opportunities for emotional regulation themselves. which may lead to increased stress levels and burnout. The SAIA Wee BREATHERS project aims to address this gap by providing teacher supervision that supports a deepening of knowledge and understanding around attachment-informed, trauma sensitive practice while supporting teacher wellbeing. By providing attachment-informed, trauma sensitive supervision, our aim is to support teachers to address their own distress/wellbeing and provide them with strategies that allow them to support pupils who become dysregulated in class as a result of unmet emotional needs.

## What will Wee BREATHERS sessions look like?

Wee BREATHERS are based on key principles of an attachment-informed, trauma sensitive approach. These principles should form the core components of the relationship between the supervisor and practitioner/s as well as mirroring what we would hope to promote within attachment-informed, trauma sensitive learning environments. This is represented in the Wee BREATHERS Practice Model.



The key principles of Wee BREATHERS are outlined in the table below.

B	Belonging	According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, belonging is part of one of the fundamental needs that motivate human behaviour. We define a sense of belonging as that feeling of connectedness to a group or community. Within our 'Wee BREATHERS' our aim is for supervisees to sense that they are part of something and feel attached and accepted within sessions.
R	Reflecting	Reflecting means stepping back from the immediate, intense experience of hands-on work and taking the time to wonder what the experience really means. Our 'Wee BREATHERS' offer an opportunity to reflect, and for participants to examine their thoughts and feelings about an experience and identify areas for growth and development.
E	Empathising	Empathising means having an open heart for the experience and feelings of others. There will be various times during 'Wee BREATHERS' when empathy is important both between supervisor and supervisee and between supervisee and relationships within the classroom. It is important that empathy and positive regard are experienced by all during our sessions.
A	Acceptance	Acceptance is important for wellbeing and can enable us to show compassion to ourselves and others. As humans we all inevitably face painful emotions and accepting these is important for healing and moving forward. Individuals have different views based on life experiences. Our 'Wee BREATHERS' offer a non-judgmental stance where thoughts, feelings and wishes are accepted, not evaluated.
T	Thinking	Thinking critically is important for bridging the gap between theory and practice. Within 'Wee BREATHERS' we aim to support practitioners to think critically and reflect on their practice through an attachment-informed, trauma sensitive lens.
H	Hearing	The feeling of being properly heard and understood can be transforming. Within our 'wee BREATHERS' we aim to offer a safe environment where participants can share stories and be heard and accepted without being judged. We believe that really listening to what someone has said can have a powerful effect on feeling affirmed and respected.
E	Exploring	Within our 'Wee BREATHERS' we aim to take a 'not knowing' stance that seeks to understand without making assumptions. We aim to support participants to explore thoughts, feelings and behaviour within a safe and supportive space.
R	Restoring	Within our 'Wee BREATHERS' we aim to focus on re-energising and restoring feelings of wellbeing by acknowledging and celebrating successes and supporting participants to take a strengths-based approach to managing difficult situations
S	Soothing	In stressful situations we can be a source of calm for each other. Within our 'Wee BREATHERS' we provide comfort and understanding to enable participants to regulate and sit with 'big feelings' within a supportive space

## **What's the purpose of Wee BREATHERS?**

The Wee BREATHERS project aims to better understand how developing an increased knowledge about the impact of disrupted attachment and trauma as part of reflective supervision can impact on teacher wellbeing and what changes staff notice in their thoughts, feelings and behaviour when using attachment-informed, trauma sensitive approaches to reflect on practice.

This study provides new opportunities to support and educate teachers to successfully mitigate the negative impacts of exposure to childhood adversity while simultaneously assisting teachers to nurture their own workplace wellbeing.

The purpose will be to:

- provide opportunities for reflective supervision that is valued by the education workforce
- deepen learning and understanding about the impact of disrupted attachment and developmental trauma
- build capacity in staff to better understand and respond to distressed behaviour and pupil needs, (particularly those who have experienced disrupted attachment and trauma)
- Support staff to reach a greater understanding about their practice and how their own emotions and behaviour can become engaged
- Promote staff wellbeing
- Encourage positive and supportive adult-pupil relationships

## **How are Wee BREATHERS supporting The Promise?**

Through our collaboration with The Promise Partnership, we aim to extend learning on how we can best support the education workforce to keep the promise for care experienced children and young people. Through exploring possibilities for change by testing and evaluating the impact of our 'Wee BREATHERS' within different education contexts, we aim to better understand how providing attachment-informed, trauma sensitive supervision impacts teacher wellbeing.

Our research questions will be:

*What are the impacts and outcomes of Wee BREATHERS on:*

- *Adult-pupil relationships within the education setting*
- *Staff attitudes towards school inclusion (particularly around children experiencing distressed behaviour)*
- *Knowledge and understanding about the effects of disrupted attachment and developmental trauma*
- *Staff ability to reflect on 'self' and understand their own thoughts, feelings and behaviour*
- *Confidence in using an attachment-informed, trauma sensitive approaches*
- *Staff wellbeing*