



# Place2Be Initial Teacher Education in Scotland Report

June 2023

Demonstrating the impact of specialist mental health education and 'Place2Think' reflective supervision on student teachers and their work with children

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## Foreword from Dr Zoë Robertson

**Moray House School of Sport and Education**  
**Director of Teacher Education**  
**Programme Director for MEd Leadership and Learning**



The partnership between Place2Be and the University of Edinburgh, Moray House School of Education and Sport (MHSES) provides a critical and unique support and development opportunity for our Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students. The work of the partnership has evolved over the last four years to respond to the shifting educational landscape as well as the global challenges we have faced as a result of the pandemic and the impact this has had on students, initial teacher education, school staff and children, young people, and their families.

The overarching aim is, of course, to help best prepare students to become teachers who are well equipped to support and contribute to the development of mentally healthy school communities. To achieve this, the partnership approach focuses on providing expert advice and input on child and adolescent mental health and wellbeing, developing skills and strategies that can be applied in the classroom, as well as supporting individuals to understand the need for their own self-care and develop emotional resilience as a teacher.

Having an embedded clinician is a fundamental strength of the partnership. This model has enabled the clinician to develop an in-depth understanding of the range of challenges, issues, and themes experienced by student teachers and the patterns and trends emerging. This has allowed for a tailored asset-based approach to be developed that ensures teaching, information, resources, workshops and the bespoke Place2Think sessions are planned for and offered at the times most valuable to meet student needs, develop understanding and build capacity. This is aligned to the specific progression of their ITE

programme and is both a proactive and a responsive service. It contributes to the core planned teaching, learning and development of students as they build their capacity in understanding children's mental health and wellbeing and their role as teachers. It also provides a distinctive responsive space through Place2Think where students can reflect on their own experiences, need for self-care and emotional responses to situations and how this influences their school-based practices and support of pupil mental health. This reflective space is truly unique because it is supported by a consultant clinician who is able to provide informed support to the participants in the session and help individuals to consider how they can apply what they have learned to their future practice and actions.

As can be seen from the data shared in this report, students who have engaged with the Place2Be partnership have reflected positively on the benefit and impact it has had on them. Both as individuals making sense of their experiences, as well as thinking about their professional practice and evolving identity as beginning teachers. The focus for many over the last few years has, perhaps unsurprisingly, been influenced by the ongoing impact of the pandemic and the significant emotional and mental toll this has taken on them as individuals and as well as the experience they have had in schools. Self-care, resilience, anxiety and managing stress continue to be key themes. We can also see the emerging impact of this work on individual's ability to better understand children's mental health and wellbeing, develop skills and strategies that inform their practice as a teacher.

The partnership has contributed to a strategic narrative and focus within MHSES which values, foregrounds and is proactive in recognising the importance of addressing mental health and wellbeing and developing a culture of care for students, teachers, ITE staff and the whole school community. It is clear that work in this area must continue to develop and grow and that we should consider how this partnership may be further enhanced to help make a sustained and systemic change in education. At MHSES we are committed to further developing the partnership and researching the value and impact of this unique approach.



## Introduction from Kathleen Forbes

**B.Sc., PhD. MCOSCA, MAFT.  
Place2Be Clinician/Consultant**



In the four years that I have been employed within this role, the most common phrase I have heard from student teachers, at some point during their ITE course, is “maybe teaching is not for me.” This has rarely been the reality.

What has been much more common when these student teachers access Place2Think is that they are experiencing overwhelm, anxiety, stress, and disorientation. They are trying to make sense of the emotional aspect of becoming a teacher. This is of most relevance when the students are on site-based learning where they experience differing expectations and demands on their time. They find themselves navigating multiple new relationships with mentor teachers, colleagues, the children they are teaching and with themselves.

Place2Be are part of a national conversation that teaching is a relationally demanding job that involves emotional labour and that teachers need access to reflective space to discharge, to gather their thoughts, to understand the impact that children’s realities have on them, and to make sense of their own experiences and how they might be impacting them within the classroom.

Sir Harry Burns <sup>1</sup> states that “people need to possess, generate and evolve new narratives to make sense of their

experiences.” Place2Think gives the students a sense of agency, of making sense, of having a purpose, of owning their strengths and working on their weaknesses, of being able to identify those thoughts and beliefs that contribute well or not so well to their efficacy and ultimately promote or destroy their sense of wellbeing. This is not a quick process for young adult students as they are often at a stage of life where they are figuring out their own identity. Place2Think may help accelerate these thoughts as student teachers strive to understand their own identity and meaning and purpose in life and take on the professional identity of a teacher.

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) places a requirement on student teachers to be reflective practitioners. We know from research that becoming reflective entails painful self-exploration and can be a disorientating process for many. Having a space like Place2Think complements this process and many students have testified to “Place2Think has been such a significant resource in my staying on this course and helping me to be a better teacher, kinder to my students and to myself.” Our work in Place2Think sessions is to help the students move from being reflective to being reflexive within the classroom.

Could there be a parallel here with the attrition rates we currently see in the teaching profession? Low self-efficacy for classroom management seems to be the most important trigger to abandoning this profession. It makes me curious if these teachers who decide that “teaching is not for me” would reach a different decision if they had access to a space like Place2Think?

Place2Be’s focus is always on children’s mental health however we cannot separate out children’s mental health and teachers’ mental health. The two

<sup>1</sup> Sir Harry Burns professor of global public health at the University of Strathclyde, having been the Chief Medical Officer for Scotland from September 2005 to April 2014.

are inextricably linked. In the partnership work we spend a lot of time building capacity into the ITE program by talking about emotional intelligence and how important it is in the classroom particularly around developing the ability for the student to understand, use, and manage their own emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges, and defuse conflict.

The partnership also aims to build capacity within the ITE system allowing lecturers and teaching staff to also make use of Place2Think sessions. I have witnessed strong parallel processes within the ITE institute where staff can at times also experience a sense of overwhelm, anxiety and stress while managing workload and attending to the many varied needs of the students undertaking the course.

The students' course in education encompasses a broad range of cognitive and technical skills aligned to professional teacher standards. My hope is that our partnership complements the teaching on the courses while also helping to focus the student teachers a little more closely on the emotions that go along with being a teacher. This is a highly relational job. Research shows teachers' professional lives can be highly demanding, pressured, stressful and at times, emotionally exhausting especially when they are interacting and supporting children with mental health and emotional distress.

Teaching is an incredible profession to be part of and when it comes to teacher wellbeing, I encourage the student teachers that they need to be in it for the long-haul. Developing good habits and healthy boundaries will give these professionals an enduring sense of wellbeing.

There is a negative association between poor teacher self-efficacy and burnout factors. Teachers with low level of self-efficacy seem to experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion, lower levels of satisfaction and commitment. When teachers experience a sense of wellbeing, they feel good, and they function well. Levels of burnout in teachers can be buffered or exacerbated by factors such as self-efficacy. Teachers with a high level of self-efficacy may experience less job-related stress and have more satisfaction with their job and relationships than their less efficacious counterparts.

My desire in this work is to see future generations of student teachers go on to become qualified teachers who feel better equipped with the skills and understanding to support children's mental health - thus building the capacity of the future teacher workforce. We now see some students making their choice of ITE provider based on the existence of this partnership work.

**“One of the reasons I was interested in studying with Edinburgh is because of the partnership with Place2Be.”**

## What is this report setting out to do?

This report illustrates the impact of providing embedded specialist mental health education, including reflective supervision, to student teachers, highlighting survey findings between 2020 and 2022.

Place2Be supports student teachers to understand and work with their own mental health and wellbeing and that of the children and young people in their classrooms. We consider the potential this work has in cultivating a systemic change to mental health and wellbeing, where all teachers are trained to support their own wellbeing and to improve children's mental health in initial teacher education.

**“It is about moving from intervening when a crisis happens towards prevention, building resilience and providing the right level of support before problems materialise.”**

(Early years and early intervention: joint Scottish Government and COSLA policy statement, 2008).<sup>2</sup>

## The mental health and wellbeing of teaching staff over the last decade

The landscape of education has changed significantly in the last few years. The pandemic delivered a significant challenge to teaching staff and, along with the cost-of-living crisis, has impacted negatively on the mental health and wellbeing of everyone in schools. With frequent absences and changes in workload, the resulting stress experienced by school staff has been understandably high. The Educational Institute for Scotland (EIS) member survey of 16,000 education professionals in 2021<sup>1</sup>, indicated that:



**Over 67%**

of teaching staff report being stressed frequently or all the time in their roles



**73%**

of teachers say they deal with stress alone



**46%**

state they are dissatisfied with their job overall over the last five years

Prior to the pandemic, teacher attrition rates were already increasing, and levels of stress and burnout were on the rise. In the EIS survey, 2019, 75% of teachers reported being stressed in their roles, while 60% stated they would not recommend teaching to others outside of the profession<sup>2</sup>. High stress levels in schools are associated with more sick days and members of staff leaving the profession. A study conducted by the Scottish Liberal Democrats indicates that between 2017 and 2021, 550,000 staff days were lost due to mental health reasons<sup>3</sup>. These levels of stress may contribute to 1 in 3 teachers leaving the profession after five years in post (TES, 2019)<sup>4</sup>. EIS's working conditions report (2017), shows us that extremely high workloads, a lack of support and classroom behaviour are major stress factors for teachers in Scotland:

"On average teachers work at a minimum 11 hours more than they are contracted to each week... both primary and secondary teachers are exposed to high levels of poor student behaviour, and approximately 40% of primary teachers are exposed to negative parental behaviour either online or on school premises at least once a month."<sup>5</sup>

The Scottish Government has recognised that all school staff need to be skilled in working with the mental health and wellbeing of children<sup>6</sup>, to help close the attainment gap<sup>7</sup>, improve mental health outcomes and make Scotland the best place for a child to grow up<sup>8</sup>. Providing high quality education, training and ongoing support in this area is necessary for these aims to be achieved.

The EIS Thematic Review of Health and Wellbeing recognises, "Staff wellbeing is essential for children's wellbeing."<sup>9</sup> The capacity and wellbeing of teaching staff has an influence on the whole school's health and wellbeing.

1 <https://www.eis.org.uk/Research/Survey2021>

2 <https://www.tes.com/magazine/archive/75-teachers-often-stressed-workload>

3 <https://employeebenefits.co.uk/working-days-lost-mental-health/>

4 <https://www.tes.com/magazine/archive/one-three-teachers-leaves-within-five-years>

5 <https://www.eis.org.uk/Content/images/Health%20and%20Safety/EIS%20Report%20August%202017.pdf>

6 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/whole-school-approach-mental-health-wellbeing/>

7 <https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/pupil-attainment/>

8 <https://www.carereview.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/The-Promise.pdf>

9 <https://education.gov.scot/media/rwrq13jz/health-and-wellbeing-a-thematic-review.pdf>

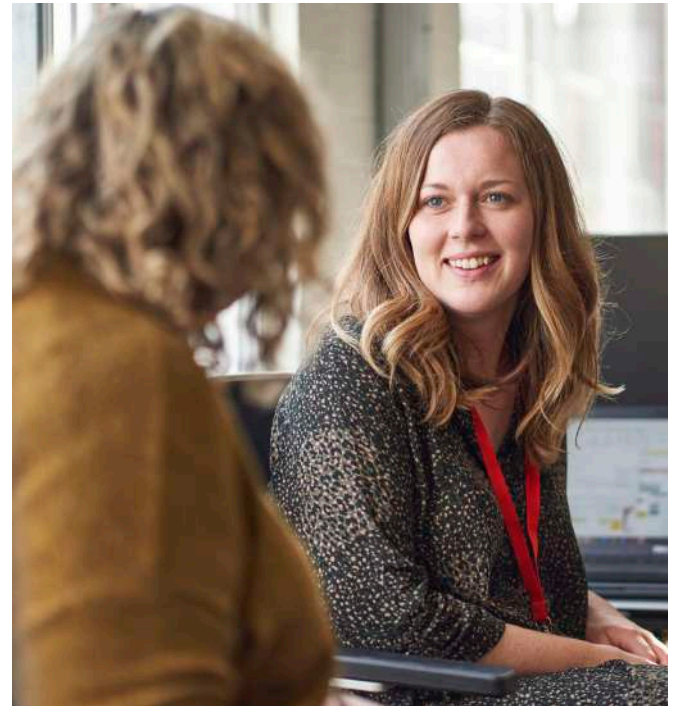
## Building mental health capacity and teacher resilience in Initial Teacher Education

Education professionals learn about the expectations, models, and frameworks of their work during their initial teacher education and their probationer years. Mental health education at this stage would lay a foundation that teachers can lean on throughout their careers. In reflective supervision, student teachers could be supported to consider their reactions and responses in the school environment, which can help them to become reflexive in responding to their own needs and the emotional needs of children and young people. Providing student teachers with emotional and psychological education can help create whole school systems underpinned by nurturing, relational approaches. This would ultimately embolden the mental health and wellbeing of staff, children, and young people. The General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS), in their statement about a continuum of learning for teachers from their Initial Teacher Education (ITE) years, highlight the benefit of providing this education in ITE:

**GTCS believes there is a need for a continuum of learning for beginning teachers, from initial teacher education through probation, post-probation and beyond. By this we don't mean increased centralisation of learning opportunities for teachers, quite the opposite, this is about embracing diversity while providing a structure to navigate through an early career and build on the learning in initial teacher education**

**(Stephen, 2022).**

This report shines a light on the impact that providing this specialist mental health provision can have in initial teacher education.



## Place2Be in Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

Place2Be provided a service to students in Initial Teacher Education at Moray House, University of Edinburgh in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 academic years, building on a long-term partnership with an embedded full time mental health practitioner seconded to the University. Students can access:

- The Mental Health Champions - Foundation training programme, facilitated by our embedded practitioner
- Place2Think sessions either individually or in a group
- A range of specialist lectures and seminars, including on anxiety, transitions and new beginnings, placement support, building good relationships and inclusion, emotional preparedness for school-based learning, Place2Think; reflect and recharge and attachment theory in the context of behaviour.

What follows is our impact report of the key findings from this work in ITE at Moray House in 2020-21 and 2021-22, a conclusion, and recommendations for next steps.



# Place2Think in Initial Teacher Education

## Accessing the sessions

The Covid-19 pandemic, and associated restrictions, were ongoing through the 2020-21 academic year, therefore, all students accessed the sessions remotely. 92% were online and 8% of sessions were conducted over the phone. Students also accessed sessions remotely in 2021-22.

**“I found the experience was very comfortable and did not affect how easily I was able to discuss things. [Place2Think Practitioner] seems very comfortable working by video call which made me feel at ease and made the process feel like it was meant to be that way – very seamless.”**

In 2021-22, 86 respondents represented six different courses with most on the PGDE Primary and Secondary courses. This is slightly different to 2021 when most were on the PCDE Secondary and MA in Physical Education courses.

The respondents were working towards being qualified to teach across the age ranges with about two-thirds aiming for the primary phase and around half being educated in the secondary phase. Compared to 2020-21, a slightly smaller proportion of the 2021-22 cohort were preparing to teach S4-5 and S6 (59% or 52 respondents)

## How is Place2Think different from other supervisee sessions? For example, with a personal tutor or in student services?

Most of the respondents (92%) felt that the Place2Think sessions with the Place2Be Practitioner were different from their sessions with their personal tutor.

Themes among the responses included that the Place2Think sessions were more personal, confidential, more focused on mental health, and less focused on the learning and course content. Findings from King’s College London research on newly qualified teachers (NQTs) during the pandemic also supports differentiating supervision with performance related assessment. King’s College found that opportunities for reflection, which are not linked to assessment have a positive impact on NQT’s identity formation, professional experiences, and growth.<sup>1</sup>

As was the case in 2020-21, most of the respondents (92%) felt that the Place2Think sessions with the Place2Be consultant were different from their sessions with their personal tutor.

The responses of the students showed that they considered that the Place2Think sessions had a different type of focus, from sessions with their personal tutors which were often more focused on the academic and practical aspects and sometimes experienced as less supportive, and that the Place2Think consultant brought a different set of skills and expertise to the sessions. The impartiality

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/open-consultation-understanding-and-mitigating-the-impact-of-covid-19-disruption-on-trainee-and-early-career-teachers-in-secondary-schools>



of the Place2Think consultant, who was seen as 'not affiliated' to the university was another distinctive factor.

**"It is apparent that [Place2Think consultant] has training/lots of experience in mental health/adults etc. Tutors tend to suggest speaking to [Place2Think consultant] if anything stressful does come up. With tutors, I tend to speak about the more practical aspects of things - assessment, situations in class etc. Whereas with [Place2Think consultant], you're more likely to talk about how that can make you feel/ the impact it has/ how you deal with that yourself."**

The following examples illustrate students' thoughts about the difference between these sessions:

**"(Place2Think is) Longer, more relaxed, less focused on coursework. I felt the content was broader and more helpful to my future career in the context of my life. I didn't use my personal tutor to have discussions like I did in Place2Think."**

**"The focus was more on my own emotional experience and less about solving practicalities related to the course. I feel these sessions made me grow as a person in a greater way."**

**"I don't know it just seems different having a professional who is specifically there to help with the mental health side of things and who is not directly affiliated with the university."**





## What did ITE students discuss in Place2Think sessions?

48 respondents picked from 17 items detailing a range of themes that were commonly discussed in Place2Think sessions.

Most students stated that they had used the Place2Think sessions to discuss managing self-care (92%). The next most common issues discussed in the sessions also related to personal self-reflection and emotions with discussions relating to placement or practice issues (65%), managing the impact of a personal issue on professional practice (58%), reflecting on their emotional response in the classroom (56%) and reflecting on their university learning (56%). Around a quarter of the students had discussed issues related to children and young people's mental health such as exploring school mental health strategies (27%), understanding the communication behind children's behaviour (23%) and understanding mental health issues of children and families (19%).

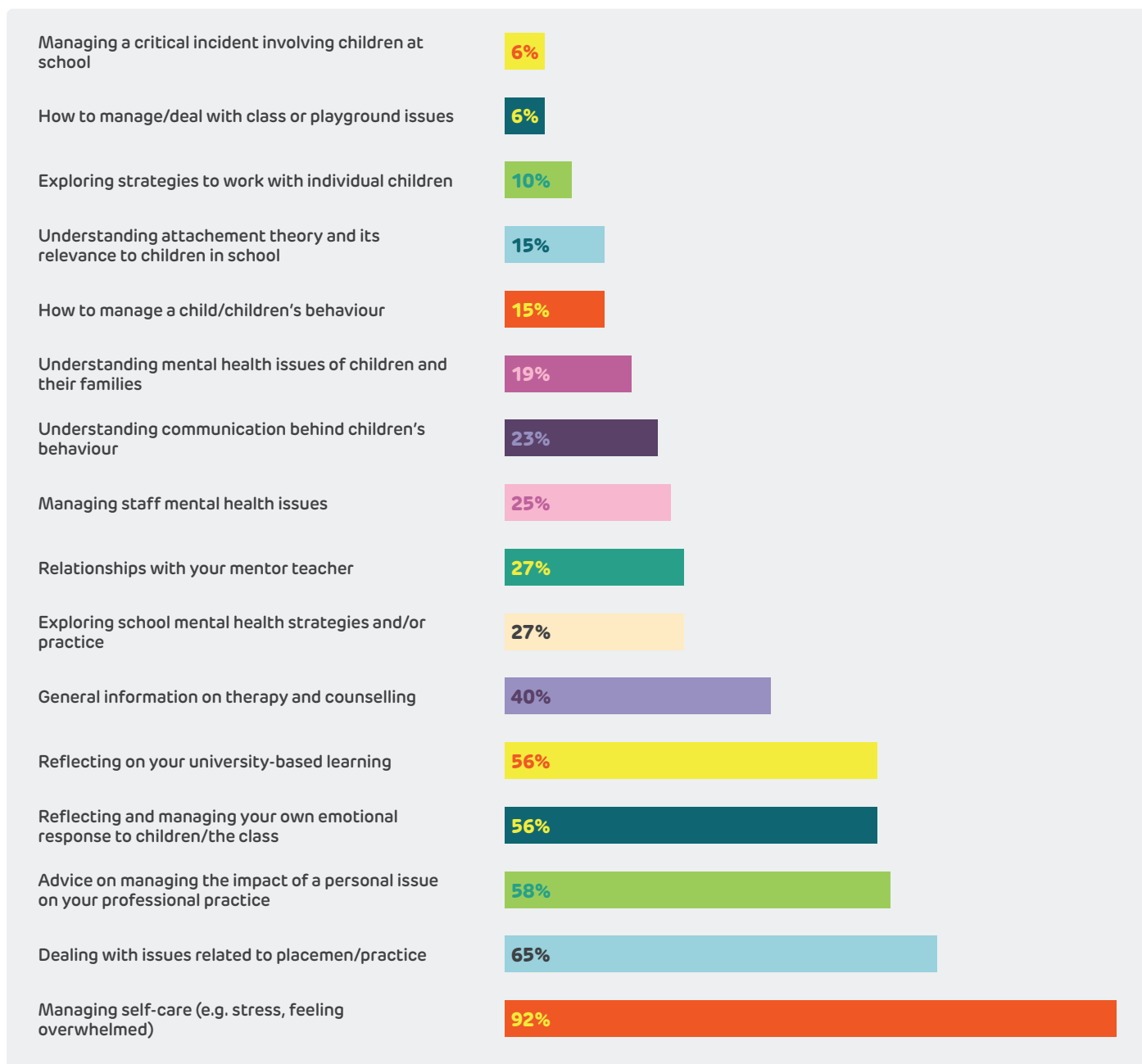
In 2021-22, 43 respondents picked from the same 17 items. The majority of the respondents had used the Place2Think sessions to discuss managing self-care (95%) which was also the case in 2020-21 (92%). Among the next most common issues discussed in the session also related to personal self-reflection and emotions with discussions relating to placement or practice issues (63%; 65% in 2020-21), managing the impact of a personal issue on professional practice (56%; 58% in 2020-21), reflecting on their emotional response in the classroom (53%; 56% in 2020-21). Reflecting on their university learning was discussed by 60% of respondents compared with 56% in 2020-21. Across the two cohorts, the five most commonly discussed issues remained the same.

In 2021-22, around one in three students (35%) used Place2Think as a space to reflect on feedback received on placement and the same similar proportion (35%) discussed their relationship with their mentor / teacher.

Some had used Place2Think as an opportunity to discuss issues related to children and young people's mental health such as understanding attachment theory (23%), understanding the communication behind children's behaviour (23%), understanding mental health issues of children and families (9%).

As was the case in 2021-22, students discussed managing children's behaviour and strategies to a lesser extent, perhaps reflecting the stage they were in their Initial Teacher Education. For example, 9% discussed managing children's behaviour, 5% talked about strategies for individual children and 7% discussed managing classroom or playground issues and the same percentage talked about managing a critical incident. In 2021-22, 9% of respondents had used Place2Think to explore school mental health strategies, which was noticeably less common than reported by the 2020-21 cohort (27%).

## Table detailing what students discussed in Place2Think sessions



**N=48** – all those who attended a Place2Think session

More than one answer could be given

Students discussed managing children's behaviour and strategies to a lesser extent, perhaps reflecting the stage they were at in their Initial Teacher Education. For example, 15% discussed managing

children's behaviour, 10% talked about strategies for individual children and 6% discussed managing classroom or playground issues and the same percentage talked about managing a critical incident.





## How did Place2Think meet student expectations?

In 2020-21, 90% of the students who took part in the Place2Think sessions reported that they had met their expectations, 4% of students did not know, and 6% said that it did not.

Where they had felt that the sessions met their expectations, this typically related to the students feeling supported, listened to, and having an opportunity to share. They valued gaining advice and strategies and reported being less anxious or better able to deal with stress because of attending the sessions.

In 2021-22, 96% of the students who took part in the Place2Think sessions reported that they had met their expectations while 2% (one individual) said they did not and 2% (one individual) did not know.

As might be expected given that the majority said the sessions had met their expectations the students' comments on this showed that they had felt listened to, supported and challenged, provided with techniques and strategies they could adopt and had been able to reflect on themselves and their experience and the impact of this on their practice as trainee teachers.

**“It helped me more than I realised, I just wish I had done it more. I felt less alone hearing about other students’ experiences and discussing about detaching myself from a situation and not making it personal has been really beneficial to my mental health.”**

**“I would say they exceeded my expectations! I’ve engaged with a number of counsellors over the years but the support I received from [Place2Think consultant] blew me away. Her ability to offer compassion, challenge, humour, and encouragement is powerful. Everyone should have access to a [Place2Think consultant] when doing a course that demands so much.”**



“All students attending the session are not left out as their contribution/thoughts are always encouraged. Worries and anxieties are validated. Simply talking and listening to each other about similar experiences makes me feel so much better.”

“I needed to talk, and I was listened to. But I also needed some advice, and I got some supportive, professional, considerate, and realistic help, which was greatly appreciated.”

“I felt I was able to express concerns or ask questions that I needed to. I felt there was always something constructive that I could think and take into practice moving forward. There were times I was able to set clear goals to help me focus.”

“I was able to discuss the situation and offload which enabled me to view the situation from a different perspective and understand my own reactions better.”

## What was the impact on the students?

In 2020-21 the sessions had helped most of the students cope with the pandemic (76%) and helped with their resilience during this time (79%).



Place2Think sessions helped the students with their own wellbeing (88% found it extremely or very helpful) and 88% said sessions supported their self-awareness

The sessions had been helpful for students' engagement with their university course (64%) and being more reflective in their practice (74%).

The sessions had also been helpful for some students in relation to gaining an insight into children's behaviour (47% in 2021-22; 43% in 2020-21), understanding the emotional needs of children (49% in 2021-22; 43% in 2020-21). 28% of students in 2021-22 and 29% in 2020-21 said the sessions had been helpful for helping to manage children in the classroom.

Over three quarters (77% in 2020-21, and 88% in 2021-22) of students in ITE reported that the opportunity to reflect on their own needs had been valuable to supporting their work in school.

Just over half (55% in 2020-21, and 51% in 2021-22) felt more able to work with the mental health of children and young people in an education setting following the Place2Think sessions.

40% of students said that they had applied their learning to working relationships with children and young people in 2020-21, while this number rose to 56% in 2021-22. This rise may be attributed to more students starting placements after the pandemic.



## Would students recommend Place2Think to other students and why?

95% and 97% (2020-21 and 2021-22) of students who responded to the survey (41 individuals in 2020-21 and 43 individuals in the subsequent year) would recommend Place2Think sessions to other ITE students.

Overall, students' reflections related to the opportunity to meet with an independent person, who is not involved in the marking, in a safe space where they could share with others and realise they are not alone and that others have the same feelings and thoughts. It provided an opportunity for self-reflection, to think rationally, put things in perspective and identify strategies they could employ in their work.

Students also reflected on the value of having the space and time to reflect with the support of a skilled professional. The nature of these Place2Think sessions was sometimes noted as being something that was not available through other means on the course. In addition to helping some navigate through difficulties they had experienced through the year – personal and professional – including helping some remain on the course, it was notable that some students said the sessions had helped them to be better teachers and that there would be benefits to their pupils of having had this opportunity to reflect and understand themselves. The following quotes exemplify these reasons for recommending Place2Think:

**“Especially through 2 Lockdown’s, Place2Be has helped my wellbeing, kept me motivated, and allowed me a space to share my thoughts openly, which I feel has led to me making a greater impact in the classroom than I previously could have.”**

**“It has been valuable to me. We knew there was somewhere we knew we could turn to or encourage others to reach out to for support.”**

**“On the course, we are expected to self-reflect regularly, but are not given any guidance on how to do this. Place2Think can help guide us in this, as a neutral space where we can gain a better understanding of our experiences of the course, placement, and anything else which might be affecting these experiences.”**

“Attending Place2Think sessions has been probably one of the most valuable things I’ve done on this course. While we’re encouraged to reflect on the course, this isn’t something we receive guidance on or designated time to discuss, and [Place2Think consultant] has provided a space for that. She’s helped me reframe my concerns into pedagogical dilemmas, which has improved my teaching, my understanding of the course, and my mental wellbeing, and I’m sure this is the case for many of my fellow students. We will be better teachers as a result.”

“It was a great support and a part of why I didn’t give up on the course (although they never advised I do or don’t; it was just good to know there is support).”

“The individual and group sessions are a great opportunity to grow awareness about the emotional experience we have, to feel supported, to feel understood and listened to and to receive great advice. It is also a safe and nurturing space where students can practice becoming reflective teachers who are able to take care of their well-being as well as that of their peers and students.”

“The sessions were a safe, non-judgmental space to make sense of my experiences at university and on placement. This year is tough (physically, mentally emotionally) and I feel that the Place2Think sessions supported me throughout and in turn have made me a better teacher in the classroom and more prepared to enter my probation year.”

## What did students suggest for future development?

There was clear support for a similar Place2Think service being available once students became practising teachers among the survey respondents. 79% said it would be extremely helpful and a further 17% said it would be very helpful.

## Lectures, Seminars and Training

**What were they about? How many people attended?**

Training included our Mental Health Champions Foundation programme. This course has been developed from our work in schools and enhances professionals' understanding of children's mental health, introducing approaches that foster positive wellbeing in schools and communities. In 2020-21, 57% of Moray House ITE students attended the five-week programme.

The responses from 27,554 teachers who took part in the programme across England, Scotland and Wales indicated that 91% of participants who attended feel that the course increased their capacity to lead a positive approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Specialist lectures and seminars, included topics on anxiety, transitions and new beginnings, placement support, building good relationships and inclusion, emotional preparedness for school-based learning, Place2Think; reflect and recharge and attachment theory in the context of behaviour.

### What was the impact of lectures, seminars and training?

**Students reported that the lectures and seminars had enhanced their knowledge and understanding of children and young people's mental health (81% found it helped a little or a lot)**

78% in 2020-21 reported having a better understanding of the emotional needs of children, this rose to 80% in 2021-22.

In addition, 83% (2020-21) reported that it had helped them personally, and 80% in 2021-22.



**Most students (71% - 2020-21 and 74% - 2021-22) said that the lectures and seminars had added to their teaching methods**



**61% (2020-21) and 69% (2021-22) reported lectures and seminars had helped a little or a lot with changing their practice in class**



**53% (2020-21) and 56% (2021-22) reported it had helped them to find it easier to manage pupils in the classroom**



**51% (2020-21) and 54% (2021-22) reported that the lectures or seminars had helped them work with a particular child.**



## What did students say they learned from lectures or training?

“Overall, an awareness of what sits behind behaviour so being able to respond more calmly when dealing with young people who are dysregulated.”

“Remembering that behaviour by pupils is often about what they are bringing into the room and not personal to you.”

“I’ve made sure that when talking to students I listen and don’t invalidate their feelings or make them feel patronized.”

“Understanding attachment theory has helped me to understand that there can be more to ‘attention seeking’ behaviours. I took the time to learn a bit more about a pupil in my class and made a point of letting him know I remembered his dog’s name. He responded really well, and it was a way I could communicate to him that I cared about him as a pupil.”



## Case Study of Student J

### J attended 15 Place2Think sessions.

Student J had previously taught abroad after changing careers. However, J was having a difficult time on their first placement and was considering dropping out of the course. J was finding their mentor teacher “difficult to read and not very forthcoming”. Their relationship was contributing to J feeling inadequate, nervous, and hopeless. Student J was a high achiever and was struggling with the feelings evoked by potentially failing as a teacher. J cared deeply about what people thought of them and felt that what they did was never enough.

J said teaching abroad helped them feel quite confident in the past, so to find themselves struggling this time around was a shock. They were asking “why am I in this position?”. When I asked what kind of emotional age they felt like in the classroom and around their mentor, J replied “a primary school age”. J felt very inadequate at this time.

At the start of this process, J said they could not “read” their mentor, so we worked on emotional literacy- the ability to read other people’s emotions and what they are communicating. J felt like they were letting their mentor down. We drew upon methods from therapy and coaching, such as psychoeducation and the drama triangle, to think objectively around J’s responses. This gave J space to talk about the doubts that they were having and to see them within the wider narrative of their life story.

J worked hard in sessions to find an adult voice that they were comfortable with and become more regulated emotionally, both in the classroom and with their mentor teacher. J and I had several sessions talking about their professional identity versus their personal identity, and how to develop the former without losing sense of the latter. Through this process, J got better at not being so harsh towards themselves and in turn was more available to the relationships with the children in the classroom. J was able to stop taking the interaction with their mentor personally. We talked about empathy as an aspect of emotional literacy and thought about the reality of what J’s mentor had been experiencing over the lockdown. This work really helped J, as previously they had “written off” their mentor. J was able to become more reflexive in their relationship.

J’s last placement was a good experience and the relationship with their mentor was complementary. J liked the way they were with the children and was maintaining some self-care strategies. This year of work helped J to feel less vulnerable, more relaxed and to become a more playful, responsive, and empathetic teacher in the classroom.



## Case Study of Student L

### L attended 8 Place2Think sessions

Student L was a mature student with two children and many competing demands on their time. She had previously worked in management and teaching English as a foreign language. L felt like she was not coping with everything she needed to do and was feeling pressure. She felt like she was “letting her own kids down.” This is a common theme for students with their own families. In our first session I let L talk about all these competing demands and then asked them about their resilient capabilities. L said, “I don’t like to quit. I know I can do this”.

The work became about how to manage the competing demands and needs from university, school, family and self. This is a very common theme in Place2Think sessions. I worked with L to develop a strategy, supporting her to park some of the stuff she couldn’t manage for the moment and prioritise her time, focusing on what she could control. We talked about L’s own family system and how she could negotiate what she needed but also have conversations with the family to find out what everyone’s non-negotiables were in terms of emotional needs. L continued to feel overwhelmed at times but would check into Place2Think and together we were able to help clear her thinking. We talked about work/life balance and how L could make that a reality. At one demanding point L was asking “do I want to be a teacher?”

At times on the course, L’s sleep was affected. L was able to talk about the conflict she was feeling that was contributing to this. She was struggling

with behaviour management of children out on placement. We talked about accessing more support from the university and her tutor and asking for help more generally.

On her last placement L had “such nice mentors.” L found them “hugely supportive”.

L was starting to recognise what “a buzz” they got from the children they were teaching. L was becoming more skilled at building relationships with the children and wanted to talk about their behaviour and how they were acting out in class. L felt overwhelmed by these children’s realities and wanted to help them. We worked together to help L understand how she could best support these pupils. I directed L towards Place2Be’s Mental Health Champions Foundation programme, which helped L to support the children she was working with in the appropriate way. L said “everyone should do this programme”.

Place2Think helped L to “turn my busy brain off” and get to the end of the course. L said, “I am so proud of myself.”

L started to talk about preventing her feelings of overwhelm. L was looking forward to end of course and had a plan of action for self-care. Place2Think helped L steady herself. L learned about self-care, holding personal and professional boundaries, negotiating work life balance and how to look after young people whilst managing her own expectations, through the help of Place2Think sessions.

# Evaluating the Impact of Place2Be in ITE

## Accessing the sessions

An important distinction was made by students between Place2Be sessions, and any other type of student support or service received whilst at university or on placement. Students articulated that Place2Think sessions were unique in allowing them to feel at ease. It was helpful that the Place2Be practitioner was external to the university, allowing neutrality. The students did not feel like they were being assessed during the sessions.

**“Place2Be is independent of the University as an institution, which makes a huge difference.”**

Furthermore, because Place2Think sessions are facilitated by a qualified mental health practitioner, the sessions have the capacity to explore personal, confidential issues around mental health, enabling students to learn about themselves in relation to their reactions in the classroom. This level of reflection is only possible with a qualified practitioner, and facilitates deep growth, learning, and long-term resilience. Indeed, supervision has long been used in the therapy, counselling, social work, and health care professions to this affect.<sup>1</sup> Students reflected this benefit in their feedback:

**“I was able to discuss the situation and offload which enabled me to view the situation from a different perspective and understand my own reactions better.”**

The need and benefit of reflective supervision in education is a topic more frequently explored and offered in the past five years. For example, research by Barnardo’s Scotland has illustrated the need for supervision structures for teachers and education professionals.<sup>2</sup>

## Building resilience

Place2Be supported teachers to understand and work with their own mental health and wellbeing. The majority of students used Place2Think sessions to discuss managing the impact of a personal issue on professional practice (58%) and reflecting on their emotional response in the classroom (56%). Place2Think sessions enabled student teachers to begin to respond with flexibility to stressful situations in their working contexts. This gave students more options in these situations, empowering them with new actions and behaviours. The students themselves noticed this correlation:

**“Especially through 2 Lockdown’s, Place2Be has helped my wellbeing, kept me motivated, and allowed me a space to share my thoughts openly, which I feel has led to me making a greater impact in the classroom than I previously could have.”**

The sessions had helped the majority with their resilience as a teacher (77% ;79% in 2020-21) and encouraged a more reflective approach to their practice (70%; 74% in 2020-21). 88% of students said sessions supported their self-awareness in 2020-21; 81% in 2021-22.

1 <https://socialcareinspection.blog.gov.uk/2018/10/23/supervision-and-effective-social-work-practice/>

<http://www.safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/trauma-informed-supervision.pdf>

<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/supporting-mental-health-wellbeing-education-staff-through-professional-supervision-structures.pdf>

2 <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/supporting-mental-health-wellbeing-education-staff-through-professional-supervision-structures.pdf>





## Understanding the mental health of children and young people

The majority of students (81%) stated that Place2Be lectures and seminars helped their understanding of children and young people's mental health a little or a lot. 53% reported it had helped them to find it easier to manage pupils in the classroom. In addition, 83% said that lectures and seminars had helped them personally.

The direct quotes from student teachers indicate that the provision provided at this stage can reframe thinking in terms of behaviour in the classroom and the capacity to support young people who are struggling:

**“Remembering that behaviour by pupils is often about what they are bringing into the room and not personal to you.”**

**“I've made sure that when talking to students I listen and don't invalidate their feelings or make them feel patronized.”**

**“I managed to support a child with identifying their emotions and what they were feeling, which allowed me to work out how best to support them better.”**

ITE students learned where challenging behaviours might come from, how to help young people with behavioural or mental health difficulties and how to look after themselves. This approach helped ITE students in supporting themselves and young people on their placements. The approaches and attitudes they have learned through the Place2Be, and Moray House partnership may provide a foundation level of skill that they can build upon, to help support their own wellbeing and that of young people throughout their careers. Longitudinal research into this relationship is underway.

If teachers are to support the mental health and wellbeing of young people at the appropriate level, as outlined by NHS Education for Scotland<sup>1</sup>, it is important that teachers are trained in these approaches at an early stage. Doing so would develop our education system's skills towards a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, where all school staff are trained to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

## Conclusion

Providing specialist mental health provision for students in ITE at Moray House had a positive impact on the wellbeing and reflective capacity of student teachers. Having a practitioner available each week for Place2Think sessions helped student teachers develop responsiveness to their needs and the needs of children and young people. Place2Think sessions, the Mental Health Champions Foundation programme, lectures, and seminars provided a holistic approach to wellness and mental health education that increased the capacity of student teachers throughout both 2020-21 and 2021-22. The overall resilience of teachers increased as did their ability to work with the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

The Moray House model in other ITE providers could help change the landscape of mental health provision and teacher resilience systemically in our schools, through contributing to building a resilient, mentally healthy workforce. In 2023/24 Place2Be will extend the programme's reach, developing a new partnership with the University of Glasgow. The positive impact seen in Moray House has also led Teach First in England to develop a growing partnership with Place2Be.

**For ongoing information on the Moray House/ Place2Be partnership, go to:**

- [Moray House School of Education and Sport](#)
- [Place2Be Scotland](#)

<sup>1</sup> Children and young people's mental health & wellbeing: a knowledge and skills framework for the Scottish workforce. NHS Education for Scotland (NES), 2021 <https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/49346>

## About Place2Be



Our mission is to improve the mental wellbeing and prospects of children, their families and school communities across the UK. Our vision is for all children to have the vital support they need to help them build life-long coping skills and to thrive.

### The need we are meeting

- Among five- to sixteen-year-olds, 1 in 10 young people has a clinical diagnosable mental health illness.
- At the end of September 2021, 11,816 children and young people were waiting for an appointment with CAMHS. The Scottish Government target is that 90% of patients should wait no more than 18 weeks for such help. However, almost 2000 young people have been waiting a year or more to be seen.

Teachers have also been significantly affected by crises in mental health, with “more families in crisis than before and looking to schools for immediate support. This in turn is having a major impact on the wellbeing of staff in schools.”<sup>1</sup>

### Our work

Place2Be has offered child mental health support in Scotland since 2001 and currently reaches over 48,105 pupils and their families in 58 schools across 10 local authorities. We offer a range of different services to meet schools’ needs, including in-school mental health support, expert training, and resources.

With regards to training and development, Place2Be is recognised as a GTCS Learning Award organisation. We have trained and supported senior leaders, headteachers, probationers and student teachers. Since 2020, we delivered our Mental Health Champions Foundation programme to over 7000 school staff, student teachers and youth workers across Scotland.

We also offer Place2Think, a space facilitated by qualified Place2Be mental health practitioners. The space is for education professionals to reflect on their reactions to children’s behaviour, discuss what children may need from them, and review implementation of any changes in their approach. It is a space that supports the mental health and wellbeing of education professionals. In the 2020-21 academic year, we delivered Place2Think to nearly 500 education professionals through the Scottish Government Covid Education Response. This focused on supporting adult mental health during the pandemic. You can find the impact of our work in this space here.



<sup>1</sup> [Attainment Scotland Fund Evaluation: Headteacher Survey Report 2020](#)





**For further information on  
Place2Be's work in Scotland  
contact [scotland@place2be.org.uk](mailto:scotland@place2be.org.uk)**

**Readers can find out more about our impact  
and our data by looking at the following  
publications:**

- Impact Report 2022 - <http://bit.ly/3oeV1k1> 
- 25 years learning from practice and evaluation - [bit.ly/36hmuoQ](http://bit.ly/36hmuoQ) 

**Royal Patron  
HRH The Princess  
of Wales**

**[place2be.org.uk](http://place2be.org.uk)**

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