



## Headspace

### How Headspace Works

Headteachers and other school leaders have the toughest jobs in education. Headspace is our innovative approach to supporting Heads in the challenges you face each day.

#### *Headspace Framework*

Headspace programmes follow a six session model - an introductory day and five half-day sessions through the school year. Each programme is unique but follows a framework which enables discussion and debate based on number of different themes.

The principles of the programme are based on “person-centred” beliefs: that if the conditions are right, then a human being will thrive and grow.

We approach the themes holistically, believing that whilst we are working on work-related issues, it is impossible in reality to separate out the different elements of our lives whether personal or professional.

It provides an opportunity to leave behind, albeit for a short period of time, the day to day issues that many heads tell us are so debilitating - an opportunity “to lift your head above the parapet so that you can re-discover the vision”.

#### *Principles*

There is a strong underpinning of respect during the sessions: we stress the confidential nature of the group and expect that individuals participating will respect the views of others within the training situation. We discuss and agree ground rules or terms of engagement within the group.

It is important for participants to understand that this does not represent an opportunity for therapy or counselling, rather a sustained opportunity over a given period to work in a different way with a group of colleagues with whom they may not have worked before.

#### *Journaling*

Journaling is a thread which we encourage, both within the sessions and in between. We ask colleagues to record in some way - visually with diagrams or drawings, or using words or lists, significant events which may prompt thoughts that can be drawn upon within the next session.

#### *Session Format*

The sessions are conducted in an “action-learning” - type environment, with lots of interactive group work, paired work and an opportunity for individual reflection, as well as the more usual presentation-focused activity. Think-pieces and trigger activities will form the basis of much of the discussion.

Each session begins with an activity around “what’s been going on for you since we last met” in order for Heads to “park” issues which otherwise may remain with them during the session.

We will then usually move into a theme, either one suggested by the group in advance, or one of the themes identified through the on-line audit. There is an expectation that colleagues will participate actively in each session.

For example, previous Headspace groups have worked on the following:

- Leadership - what does it actually mean for you?
- Power, status and influence - what makes someone influential in groups and teams (this will often lead to a discussion about how influential they feel Heads can be)
- Relationships - dealing with tricky scenarios, difficult individuals
- Communication - how, what with whom and why?
- Control and demands - a key area, where we attempt to agree some possible solutions
- Emotionally effective leadership
- Understanding and managing change

The context of each session very much comes from the Heads themselves, so each session is very fluid, within a framework that provides some structure. Worklife Support trainers are expert facilitators who will allow the group to articulate their own issues yet move the group onwards rather than getting “stuck” in seemingly intractable issues

Programmes are strictly limited to a maximum of 20 participants - we ask for training rooms to be set up in a “cabaret-style” format to enable Heads to work together more effectively. If the group becomes too large this makes it to build up a true rapport with the trainer and between delegates

### *Comments from Participating Headteachers*

“The introductory session of each meeting where we talked about our current issues was very important because you were able to share without judgement, or anybody trying to fix things for you. You were also able to park those issues so that your head was clear in order for you to really listen and participate in the rest of the morning/day. I often felt the tension drain out of me as I spoke. The higher level “challenges” were opportunities to talk around headship issues with no fear of a hidden agenda!”

“Operational issues is useful because this is a lonely role, and by listening to colleagues and sharing expertise you feel as though other people know exactly how you are feeling and you get very good advice. Higher level discussion is something that doesn’t really happen in school despite the best intentions, because of time constraints and the daily issues that arise. This has been enlightening.”

“I made a point of putting all the dates in my diary. It’s called “Headspace” so that’s what it should be”

“An opportunity to step outside/off the treadmill and reflect and challenge with like-minded colleagues. It gives you back the energy and the renewed vigour to step back on.”

“An opportunity to step outside and reflect. An opportunity to leave some of the “aleness” of Headship aside. It’s like good compost allowing you to grow.”

“Conviviality, professional discussion, the leadership of the group - very professional but insightful, and the chance to reflect on leadership and practice plus future plans.”