



Using Emotion Works as a tool to support effective staff debrief and promote wellbeing at East Park



East Park

East Park, a registered charity based in the Maryhill area of Glasgow, has provided Education and Supported Accommodation services to children and young people with additional support needs, including autism, since 1874.

East Park School provides education for children and young people between the ages of 5 and 18, with complex additional support needs. All our learners have a significant learning difficulty coupled with other potential barriers to learning including physical disability, sensory impairment, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), Attachment Disorder, Autism and challenging behaviour.

A high proportion of our pupils have an Autism Spectrum Disorder and require specialist environments and strategies in order to access a rich and purposeful curriculum. Many are non-verbal communicators, a significant number require personal care, the majority have no sense of danger, and all require a high staff ratio to enable them to successfully access the full curriculum and the community.

Allie Davie is a Principal Teacher at East Park, and has key responsibilities for emotional development and positive behaviour support. Allie is an accredited Emotion Works Practitioner and a CALM Theory Trainer. The website is www.eastpark.org.uk and you can contact Allie via email at Allie.Davie@eastpark.org.uk.

Emotion Works

Emotion Works is an educational programme and an organisation that puts learning at the heart of emotional health and well-being. The programme has been developed and piloted over an 11-year period by teacher, curriculum designer and educational consultant Claire Murray, with important contributions and feedback from teachers, early years practitioners, and additional support staff every step of the way.

The result is Emotion Works – a highly regarded and extremely practical set of resources and training for anyone involved in promoting and delivering emotional education in schools, nurseries and additional support services.

Emotion Works is 'home grown' in Scotland so is very well aligned to the Scottish Curriculum and related policies such as 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) and the Scottish Attainment Challenge. There is a strong overlap with other agendas and initiatives concerned with learning and wellbeing such as the inclusion agenda and the ACEs awareness movement.

As an organisation, Emotion Works operates as a social enterprise with a growing reputation for providing high quality goods and services in cost-effective and creative ways. The community-building side of our work is something that is growing and evolving naturally as we meet and connect with others with an interest in working towards emotional education and wellbeing for all.

You can find out more at: <https://www.emotionworks.org.uk/>



A partnership for complex additional support needs (CASN)

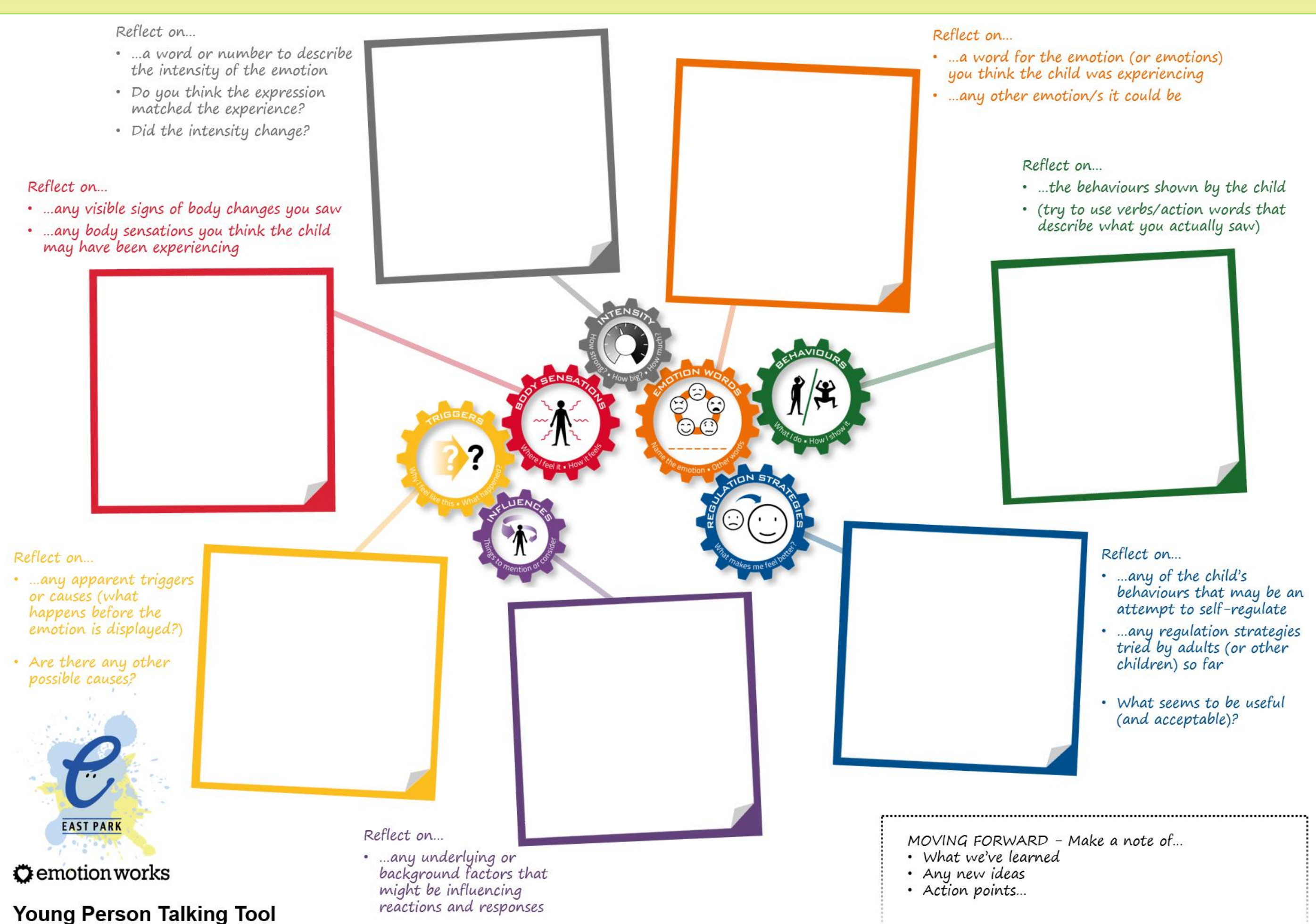
Having seen the benefits of the Emotion Works programme for the children and young people at East Park first hand, Allie and Claire were keen to develop more specific tools and resources to enhance the emotional wellbeing of other children with CASN across Scotland. Having trained in Emotion Works some time ago, Allie has worked closely with Claire to tailor the programme to the specific needs of this group of learners, and now leads Emotion Works for CASN CPD courses at East Park. As the partnership has evolved and staff across the sector have embraced the programme, a need to provide further emotional support specifically for staff emerged and at East Park, the Cog Model has been developed to provide an effective structure for staff debrief. This approach is being further embedded through positive behaviour support meetings, scheduled for all learners to promote understanding through a critical understanding of the dynamic emotions experienced by adults and children at school and in their daily lives.

Using the Cog Model

The 'Cog Model' framework identifies seven categories of emotional knowledge and competence that link together to help show how 'emotion works'. The links between the different cog categories demonstrate the causal connections between concepts such as emotion triggers, body sensations, emotion behaviours, intensity and regulation strategies. A wide range of digital and hard copy resources have been developed to teach the complex and abstract topic of emotion to children and young people, with the added bonus of resources that work well for pupils who have additional support needs relating to learning, communication, behaviour and wellbeing.

The Emotion Works programme provides a custom-made solution to the Scottish Curriculum's 'Mental and Emotional Health & Wellbeing' learning experiences and outcomes, and works extremely well alongside other social-emotional learning approaches.

The Cog Model framework and tools can also be used for staff consultation and pupil voice activities when there is an interest or need to discuss real-life emotional events and experiences, and supporting children to communicate their feelings.



Staff debrief

Alongside classroom work on The Cog Model (above), discussions were taking place across East Park and at a national level about the importance of providing staff with an effective debrief tool. We needed a tool to support adults managing the challenging that can arise from the emotional crises experienced by our learners. The Young Person Talking Tool (left) had proven to be successful in analyzing the emotions of learners, but as we became familiar with this process, we realized that adults – staff – went through the same process. By asking ourselves the same questions, we could better understand our own reactions and interpretations of our children and young people, and with that greater understanding and awareness, we are better equipped to deal with those triggers and sensations, and make conscious choices about our responses to children, young people and each other.

Managing crises effectively and understanding each other better has led to stronger relationships and more positive reactions. We are able to support the emotional wellbeing of the school community using a common language.

