



## **10<sup>th</sup> HALF DAY CONFERENCE**

### **BUILDING CHILDREN'S RESILIENCE AND IMPROVING THEIR EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES THROUGH ATTACHMENT AND TRAUMA-INFORMED FRIENDLY PRACTICES**

**Saturday the 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2023 from 09:30 to 12:15 at:  
Partnership for Learning, South Road, Speke, Liverpool, L24 9PZ**

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#### **WELCOME & INTRODUCTION:**

The LGF committee would like to extend a warm welcome to all the delegates attending today's conference. This is our 10<sup>th</sup> LGF half-day Conference which is specifically for school governors/trustees and we trust you will find it to be a most informative and interesting event.

The conference aims to provide attendees with an overview of the attachment and trauma framework and importantly highlight the real difference it can make in building children's resilience and improving their self-esteem, supporting them to reach their potential coupled with an improvement in their educational outcomes.

The inspirational speakers, who have extensive experience and knowledge, will highlight how unmet needs and trauma affects pupils' ability to learn and how introducing an attachment and trauma-informed strategy will provide support and ensure every pupil has a positive experience of school life.

There is considerable interest, both nationally and locally, to implement and develop an attachment and trauma-informed strategy and framework within schools. Over the last 12 months, Virtual School Liverpool has been leading the Hearts programme, which supports and facilitates 32 Liverpool Schools to build capacity and progress toward being recognised as a committed and effective attachment and trauma-informed school. The key speaker will give an overview of this important Liverpool schools project.

#### **CONFERENCE SPEAKERS:**

##### **ROHIT NAIK:**

Rohit is the lead speaker and has been the Headteacher of Hope Special School (SEMH) for over 22 years. Through his leadership, the school embarked on a journey to bring itself into the vanguard of attachment-friendly, inclusive practice. The school has gained the 'Attachment and Trauma Sensitive' school award.

Having worked in a range of educational settings, Rohit is recognised locally and nationally as being at the forefront of Trauma-informed practice.

Rohit is a National Leader of Education (NLE) and was awarded the Pearson’s Primary Headteacher of the year in 2017 and an OBE in the 2022 Queen’s Birthday Honours, for services to Education.

**SARAH GOLDMAN & KATIE ATKINSON:**

Katie will make reference to the positive impact Hope School has made on her son and summarises this as follows:

*“At the tender age of 12, my son has learnt who he is. He knows how to handle his emotions, he knows how to regulate himself and he also knows what situations to avoid. He knows his limits, his triggers and he understands himself”.*

Sarah is a birth mother and an adoptive parent and is also a parent champion with the Anna Freud Centre in London.

Sarah and Katie will share their experiences as both parents and governors. They will be drawing on their experiences of how things can go wrong if the understanding of attachment and trauma is not taken on board when offered and how difficulties can be exacerbated for both the individuals and families that may find themselves in such a situation.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME	
09:30 / 09:35	<b>Opening, welcome, and introduction to the key speaker</b> Michael Morris, Chair of LGF
09:35 / 11:00	<b>Part 1: Attachment &amp; Trauma Overview &amp; Benefits</b> Guest Key Speaker: Rohit Naik, supported by Sarah Goldman and Katie Atkinson (This session will include table exercises and the opportunity to ask questions)
11:00 / 11:15	<b>Comfort &amp; Refreshment Break</b>
11:15 / 12:00	<b>Continued - Part 2: Hearts Project</b> Guest Key Speaker: Rohit Naik (This session will include the opportunity to ask questions)
12:00 / 12:15	<b>Summary &amp; Close</b> Michael Morris, Chair of LGF

**NB: Conference speakers notes follows.**



## Hope School

LGF Conference – 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2023

### **Attachment Trauma: How it affects us, our relationships, our children and our learning**

Children with complex trauma histories often find school a constant uphill struggle as they are ill-equipped for the social, emotional and cognitive challenges that they encounter during any given day. Currently, many pupils in mainstream, special and alternative education are suffering from undiagnosed or misdiagnosed attachment difficulties, and despite the best efforts and intentions of educators, their problems are exacerbated because these children and young people do not respond well to conventional behaviour management strategies.

This raises questions about the effectiveness of the fear-based, often shaming, behaviourist, reward and punishment systems that are all too frequently found in our schools, and simply exacerbate the problems experienced by children who have experienced trauma.

### **What can we do to support these children?**

Several years ago, the staff at Hope School embarked on a transformational journey to become an Attachment Trauma-informed learning community – moving away from the traditional behaviourist approach. Although we were rated as outstanding by Ofsted I did not believe the framework met the real needs of our children. We were actually failing many children who had attachment and trauma histories – this was highlighted when we tracked children who had left us and were further excluded from their next schools and/or were known in the criminal justice services. They were not able to self-regulate and manage their behaviour on leaving our school.

I am confident that all my staff would not want to go back to a behaviourist approach even though at times it can seem 'easier' to have been a straightforward cause-and-effect approach that is offered by a behaviour management system. But this approach can be more exhausting because the behaviour just repeats itself more often and no real learning takes place for the child. It can take time and effort to support a distressed child/young person to be able to self-regulate and understand their emotions and feelings – but well worth the long-term outcome I'm sure.

A relational approach emphasises connection and belonging. A 'Trauma Informed' attitude assumes that behaviour is a means of communication and that behaviour that challenges can be a sign of unmet emotional needs. Relational approaches behaviour with curiosity rather than judgement. They are grounded in psychological theory and support children to build their self-regulation skills. They take account of context and the child or young person's lived experiences.

Sometimes 'our past' / 'inner child' will hijack a situation and we may react. This can make the situation worse – this happens and we make a mistake/wrong reaction to a situation. We have to accept this and be compassionate to ourselves. There will be always an opportunity to repair the relationship if it has been ruptured (known as rupture and repair).

As to be expected when working with children who have undergone traumatic experiences in life, the depth and intensity of these experiences will show itself not only in challenging behaviour but themes that resonate and come up strongly for staff too. This is known as a parallel process.' And this is where supervision can help. As well as having an empathetic and compassionate staff team.

Learning is an attachment dynamic:

- You learn when you are curious
- You learn when you are willing to try something and if it doesn't work you try again.
- You learn when you feel safe and you have relationships

So, this is the optimal emotional environment for Teaching and Learning.

A whole-school approach defines the entire school community as a single unit and involves coordinated action between 3 interrelated components:

- Curriculum, teaching and learning
- School ethos and environment
- Family and community partnership

We know that the relationships and the sense of safety children build in schools can make a huge difference to their lives and their learning. Today is an opportunity to understand more about attachment and trauma and hopefully have 'city-wide Attachment Trauma' awareness in all our school settings.

LGF/13<sup>th</sup> May, 2023 / Rohit Naik