

### **Background and Current Position**

In April 2009 a consultation took place with head teachers across 27 schools in the CABMAG (Comberton and Bassingbourn, Melbourn and Gamlingay) which identified a lack of provision to support children experiencing through difficult life events e.g. bereavement, loss and change. These schools decided to use Government Funding, made available to schools at that time, to establish an in-school counselling service. However, this funding came to an end in December 2011.

Having helped over 160 children and their families, 13 schools pledged their support to raise funds in order to continue this invaluable service. From this point, working in partnership, each school will be playing their part towards raising the £55,000 per annum needed to ensure this service is available for any child within these schools.

These 13 schools joined together as a cluster partnership, under the acronym of BeMAG.

The schools providing the allyance service are:

Barrington, Bassingbourn, Fowlmere, Foxton, Gamlingay First, Guilden Morden, Harston&Newton, Hauxton, Melbourn, Meldreth, Petersfield, Steeple Morden and Thriplow Primary Schools.

### **Why allyance?**

Ally Brennan, a specialist teacher, working at Comberton Village College has always been a key figure within the extended schools partnership out of which the counselling project grew. Despite serious illness, Ally has remained enthusiastic and passionate about this work. It is in her honour that the project has been named allyance.

This is a groundbreaking project that we believe could be a model for clusters of schools across Cambridgeshire and ultimately across the country.

### **Our Aims**

Experience shows us that intervention work at an early stage helps prevent the escalation of some of these young people's difficulties and improves their learning outcomes. The service is provided free of charge and all money raised is used to pay for fully qualified and BACP recognised therapists.

The aim of the allyance in-school counselling service is to provide counselling support when directed by the headteachers to

- Improve the emotional well being of children aged 4 to 11 years, in order to improve their learning potential.
- To work with school staff, parents and carers to help everyone understand the child's feelings and behaviour.
- To respond to long and short term needs of children and their families in the BeMAG schools.

We provide counselling to children with a range of mental health issues including:

- Family breakdown.
- Friendship issues.
- Bereavement.
- Victims of domestic violence.
- Physical and mental abuse.
- Low self esteem.
- Self harming.
- Social difficulties.

We believe that strong mental health enables young people to:

- Contribute to their community.
- Feel inspired.
- Form good relationships.
- Have a desire for learning.
- Become resilient employees/employers of the future.