

# Emotion Coaching as a gateway intervention?

**Laura Stagg, John Drew and Marius Frank report on a groundbreaking and innovative project to take Emotion Coaching techniques and practice into Youth Justice Teams in London.**

**This project would not have been possible without the generous sponsorship of the Fishmongers' Company's Charitable Trust**

*"I use many of these techniques and approaches in isolation but Emotion Coaching completes the circle..."*

*"Every professional in our Local Authority needs to do Emotion Coaching..."*

*"(This training) has developed my self-reflection and delivery as well as putting more thought and analysis into the behaviour of young people."*

*"I really liked the hand model of the brain it was an easy way to explain how the brain works."*

*"Very struck by fact that the teenage brain is recording more cues. Thank you...good and interactive. Looking forward to next session."*

*"Learned a visual technique to help explain flipping your lid and the importance of knowing that when your kids flipped no real understanding or thinking will be going on."*

*"I'm thinking about how to use this in my support of staff as well as a clinician."*

These are just some of the comments made by delegates from five Local Authorities in London who have begun a three-year Programme with Achievement for All to develop advanced approaches and techniques to help young people divert away from criminal



pathways, building their social and emotional resilience and be better equipped for productive and successful adult life.

Marius Frank, in charge of materials development at Achievement for All, begins the story:



"The service day went very well facilitated by the coach for the EC project.

The messages about turning Emotion Coaching lessons and trauma informed learning into actual practice was clear throughout.

Today went excellently, thank you once again for your leadership of the event. "

**YOT Service Lead London**

"We were quick to identify the potential of Emotion Coaching within youth justice pathways after pilot work with Virtual Headteachers around the country, and in full appreciation of the challenges that face youth justice professionals when attempting to engage with some of the most marginalised and traumatised children and young people in society.

"But all that followed would not have been utterly possible without the commitment, belief and support of the Fishmongers' Company's Charitable Trust, whose generous grant enabled not only a programme of coach-led training to commence across Youth Offending Teams in London, but critically also enabled the development of specific and targeted tools and resources that had not been required in mainstream training programmes."

After a period of engagement and careful planning, two of our experienced Achievement Coaches, John Drew and Laura Stagg, began face-to-face training in January... only for the Covid-19 crisis to descend almost immediately.

"AFA pivoted to on-line training rapidly in the delivery of training and coaching conversations in order to meet the challenges arising from the lockdown", says John Drew. "This was warmly welcomed across the different teams and attendance to on-line training was excellent.

"With so many YOT workers working from home and young people not able to have face to face meetings there have been increased levels of anxiety, stress etc. as a result, experienced on both sides. Emotion Coaching and the need for self-regulation have been clearly identified by YOT Leaders and workers alike as they have faced up to the challenges the pandemic has laid bare.

The Youth Justice has some of the most vulnerable young people in society in its care. The service has had to restructure how it operates and delivers interventions and in general how they engage with young people in order to keep both them and the public safe.

The speed of change has often led to feelings of self-doubt, confusion and anxiety and this is where the Emotion Coaching strategies and the subsequent coaching conversations we have had with the various teams across the London Boroughs have had the most impact.”

### What is Emotion Coaching?

**All too often a lack of self-control leads to young people, already in difficulties, to make things worse for themselves.**

Be it in the community, within families, in the court system or within secure estate settings, emotional flare-ups and disproportionately aggressive and volatile behaviours result in situations escalating rapidly out of control.

We now know from some of the latest brain research how early childhood experiences shape the developing brain, and how disproportionately aggressive and volatile behaviour has its roots in early childhood trauma: **an anxious, frightened or angry mind will not learn!**



Emotion coaching



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Achievement for All's Emotion Coaching programme is designed to embed and measure the impact of Emotion Coaching on the effectiveness of teaching and learning in schools and other education settings. Emotion Coaching is an attachment based tool that helps children to self-regulate and manage their own emotions by developing self-awareness and nurturing relationships. Research has shown that Emotion Coaching enables adults to understand their own emotional responses and communicate more effectively and consistently with children about their emotions, particularly in emotionally charged situations, leading to a reduction in stress and an increase in wellbeing and readiness to learn.

<https://afaeducation.org/coaching-programmes/emotion-coaching/emotion-coaching/>

Emotion Coaching can have a profound impact on the life chances of these young people. By attuning to a young person’s emotions rather than the behaviour, by validating these emotions and helping a young person to understand them and regulate them (but also, critically, setting limits on the behaviours at the same time), young people learn the mental skills to emotionally self-regulate.

If, because of emotion coaching, young people become more responsive to help, support and guidance through better emotional self-regulation, the impact will be measurable beyond the programme: **in this regard, emotion coaching can be perceived by service leaders as a gateway intervention.**

The video clips below demonstrate the immediate impact Emotion Coaching training has had on the team at Southwark.

The first one talks about using the skills, structure and tools within emotion coaching on a young person in a challenging situation. The practitioner was able to successfully support this young person through a very difficult time using the skills we had developed. The

second video explains how a practitioner has used the bubble as a handbook to support and compliment the training, including developing their emotional intelligence and self-awareness.

The third video demonstrates how validating emotions and “naming them to tame them” worked with a child as young as two and how emotion coaching changed the adults approach to dealing with tantrums.

The last video demonstrates how emotion coaching isn’t just a tool or strategy to support children and young people, but actually a way of “being” and overtime this becomes part of the workplace culture.

Feedback from Southwark remote training

**Using the emotion coaching approaches with a young person 3:51**

<https://youtu.be/dA7QB40qwKs>

**Using The Bubble and the self-test tools 2:37**

<https://youtu.be/xa8XU4BIOkk>

**Using the emotion coaching tools within your family, with toddlers! 1:25**

[https://youtu.be/bW8fn\\_B7tIs](https://youtu.be/bW8fn_B7tIs)

**Using the emotion coaching tools with colleagues 1:12**

[https://youtu.be/grPCIGuP2\\_U](https://youtu.be/grPCIGuP2_U)

YOT teams are eager to continue with online forums to discuss their experiences of using Emotion Coaching as a strategy in their work with young people.

They are requesting follow-up sessions to:

- **consolidate learning**
- **to expand the training out to wider members of their teams such as Early Help Services, Gang Units, youth teams, PRUs, schools, parents/ carers and volunteers.**
- **in developing Case Studies that could be shared in discussions around good practice,**
- **Develop emotion coaching practice in meetings, supervision, environment, etc.**
- **Creating an emotion culture that leads on excellent practice and supports others to achieve this.**

As an education charity working in times of significant financial challenges to public service management teams, we cannot stress enough the importance of support and assistance from funders such as Fishmongers’ Company’s Charitable Trust.

Not only has this grant funded the sustained and targeted delivery of coaching and training, ensuring that effective practice becomes firmly embedded in the culture and climate of interactions with troubled and vulnerable young people, leading to reductions in reoffending and first time offending: we have been able to significantly improve our offer to other youth offending teams and schools around the country. We are also looking for ways to develop the practice footprint further to take the learning into other teams working with young people and adults beyond schools and youth justice professionals.



Parent support worker, Northamptonshire:

**"We need every member of staff in every school using **Emotion Coaching** to support wellbeing and learning."**

#wellbeing #learning #Resilience #SEL @AFA\_Education



Wellbeing at the heart of learning and leadership

There are major Probation Service reforms on the way over the next eighteen months.

There is a growing evidence on trauma-informed practice development within Probation, and we see real opportunities for Emotion Coaching in Probation to add value to established Restorative Practice. The same can be said of Panel Members, a national network of over 6000 volunteers trained to support young people caught in youth justice systems and procedures.

*"We need multidisciplinary and multi-agency approaches to preventing as well as responding to crime through streamlined services that enable holistic responses. This approach emphasises the importance of being person centred and trauma-informed... being trauma-informed supports reintegration by helping a person to have a better understanding of why they committed their offences, enabling them to change their behaviour."<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/07/Academic-Insights-McCartan.pdf>

Over the next twelve months, we will be seeking to share the impact of emotion coaching to support this ambition.

We hope you will join us in late 2020/early 2021 for a conference which will celebrate and showcase the developments that have been made and impact that Emotion Coaching training has had on professional practice, and the life course of children and young people.

Marius Frank Director of E-Learning and Youth Justice Lead  
Laura Stagg and John Drew Achievement Coaches



The screenshot shows the Achievement For All website homepage. At the top left is the logo. To the right are two buttons: 'Get in touch' (pink) and 'Donate' (dark blue). Below these is a navigation menu with links: 'About us', 'Coaching Programmes', 'Covid-19 Leadership Support', 'Step-Up Reviews', 'Our Impact', 'News', 'Join us', 'Blog', and 'Awards'. The main content area features a large image of two smiling children in school uniforms. Overlaid on the image is the text: 'We want to put Wellbeing at the heart of learning and help school communities across England and Wales to thrive emotionally, socially and academically, ensuring that social mobility is real.' At the bottom of the image is a pink button that says 'Read our Every Child Included in Education manifesto here'.

Visit [afaeducation.org](http://afaeducation.org) to learn more about our leadership development and professional training approaches that have reached nearly six thousand education settings over nearly a decade.

With thanks to the Fishmongers' Company's  
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