



# The Hummingbird Project

A Positive Psychology Intervention for  
North West Schools



Friday, 11 July 2025.



10am - 1pm.



The Deane Lecture Theatre, University of Greater  
Manchester, Deane Road, Bolton, BL3 5AB.

# About the charity

**MedEquip4Kids** is a Manchester-based children's charity with a 40-year track record of improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people. Best known for providing vital medical equipment and facilities to hospitals and health centres, the charity is also a growing force in mental health education through its schools programme, the Hummingbird Project.

Launched in 2017, the Hummingbird Project is a free, evidence-based, six-week course delivered in schools to help pupils aged 7-18 improve their wellbeing, resilience and emotional awareness. Developed in partnership with psychologists at the University of Greater Manchester, the University of Chester and the Open University, the programme is based on Positive Psychology and introduces young people to topics such as gratitude, kindness, mindfulness, character strengths, resilience and growth mindsets.

Since it began, the Hummingbird Project has reached more than 8,000 pupils across 66 schools in Greater Manchester, Cheshire and Merseyside. Each year, evaluations show statistically significant improvements in pupils' wellbeing and hope, alongside reductions in anxiety and depression. In 2024, the project's outcomes were published in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology*.

Feedback from both students and teachers is overwhelmingly positive. Pupils describe feeling calmer, more confident and better equipped to handle challenges, while teachers report noticeable improvements in classroom behaviour and emotional regulation.

The Hummingbird Project is delivered free of charge in the classroom by a small team from MedEquip4Kids, supported by trained volunteers. The course is inclusive and adaptable for different educational settings. As part of its commitment to accessibility, the charity is developing a special strand of the project tailored for Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools. These adaptations will ensure that young people with a range of learning needs also benefit from the tools and techniques the project offers.

As children's mental health continues to face unprecedented challenges, early, practical and compassionate support in schools has never been more important. MedEquip4Kids is committed to further strengthening the project's impact in the North West and beyond, with a vision for national reach.

**Thank you to all the donors who have supported the Hummingbird Project and in particular the following:**

Bain Charitable Trust, Camelia Trust, Casey Trust, David Riddell Memorial CIO, Dalglish Charitable Trust, Edward Gostling Foundation, Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust, Eric Wright Charitable Trust, Innholders' Charitable Foundation, Kristina Martin Charitable Trust, Leri Charitable Trust, Jigsaw Foundation, John Rayner Trust, Patricia Routledge Foundation, Pilkington Charities Fund, Rainford Trust, Schreier Foundation, Mr Branislav Trajkovski, UKH Foundation, Westminster Foundation.

# Programme

## Session One (10:00 am)

- **Welcome** - Professor Jerome Carson, University of Greater Manchester.
- Catherine North, Hummingbird Project Development Manager.
- Ian Platt, Hummingbird Project Manager.
- Ifthakar Khaliq, Essa Academy, Bolton.
- Claudine McFaul, Open University.
- Ana-Cristina Tuluceanu, University of Greater Manchester.

Tea/Coffee Break (11:15 am)

## Session Two (11:45 am)

- Sonia Ebenezer-Bamigbayan, Hummingbird Project Co-ordinator, and Ayo Ebenezer-Bamigbayan, Hummingbird Project Volunteer.
- Kati-Anne Roughley, Haslam Park Primary School, Bolton.
- Dr Kevin Hochard, University of Chester.
- Sarah Hobson, St Bede CE Primary Academy, Bolton.
- Dr Michelle Tytherleigh, University of Chester.

## **Concluding comments (12:50 pm)**

- Councillor David Chadwick, The Mayor of Bolton.
- Dr Ghazala Baig, Chief Executive Officer of MedEquip4Kids.

Lunch (1:00 pm)



# Professor Jerome Carson

It has been a great pleasure to have been involved with the Hummingbird Project since its inception. I was also delighted some years ago to accept the offer to become a Trustee of the MedEquip4Kids Charity. The July conference coincides with the 40th anniversary of the Charity. Hummingbird provides a free six-week mental health intervention for primary and secondary schools. Thus far we have mainly delivered the intervention in Greater Manchester and Cheshire. We would dearly love to bring Hummingbird to London and other locations in the UK, as well as internationally. The success of this project is due to three main factors. Firstly, an incredible MedEquip staff team, principally Ghazala, Catherine, and of course Ian and Sonia who facilitate the groups in schools. Secondly, the academics who provide their services pro bono. Three universities have been working together on the project. These are the University of Greater Manchester, the University of Chester, and the Open University. The academics involved are Dr Michelle Tytherleigh, Dr Kevin Hochard, from Chester, Claudine McFaul from the OU, and Dr Chathurika Kannangara from Bolton. Thirdly, the project would not be possible without the financial support of other charities and a number of philanthropists. We are indebted to all of you for your continued involvement that enables Hummingbird to improve the mental health of our children and young people.

Thank you all.



Jerome walks to Walsingham for Hummingbird.



# Dr Ghazala Baig

Dr Ghazala Baig first joined MedEquip4Kids 25 years ago and held a variety of fundraising roles before being appointed Chief Executive Officer in 2011. She is the daughter of Karim Din, founder of the Victoria Park Mosque, who was honoured with an award from the Queen for his work in the 1970s to help integrate the Muslim community into Manchester. His legacy inspired Ghazala to pursue a career in the charity sector. In 2023, she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Greater Manchester in recognition of her lifelong commitment to improving healthcare.

## **Thank you and future involvement.**

Ghazala would like to thank the speakers for their time and insights, everyone attending the conference, the incredible team behind the Hummingbird Project, and the many schools and thousands of young people who have taken part over the years and shared their feedback so generously. She will go on to outline how we can all continue to support MedEquip4Kids and the Hummingbird Project in the future.





# Dr Chathurika Kannangara

The one notable absentee from today's event is Dr Chathurika Kannangara. The conference conflicted with a holiday break. It was Chathurika and Ian who did the initial scoping study for MedEquip4Kids that led to the setting up of the Hummingbird Project. In addition, Chathurika also established the first ever MSc in Counselling and Positive Psychology. Claudine and Sonia were both graduates of this programme. Chathurika's role has been pivotal. Since then, she has continued to innovate, most recently with a new programme called 'Oscar'. She is currently the University Director of Research Quality. She already has numerous major publications to her name and her paper '*All that glitters is not grit...*' has already been cited 149 times by other researchers and has had over 84,000 reads. We have all benefitted from her very positive can-do approach.

Thank you Chathurika.

Professor Jerome Carson.







# Catherine North

Catherine North is the Development Manager for the Hummingbird Project and is responsible for securing funding for the programme. She has over 25 years' experience in the charity sector, working in fundraising, marketing and communications, and as a freelance copywriter. Catherine is also an author, having written a novel, and a non-fiction book exploring the relationship between photography and mental health. An amateur photographer herself, she is passionate about how creativity can support emotional wellbeing.



## **From the beating of tiny wings: how the Hummingbird took flight.**

Catherine shares the personal and professional journey that led to the creation of the Hummingbird Project by children's charity MedEquip4Kids, in partnership with the University of Greater Manchester, the University of Chester and the Open University. The project began as a small idea, inspired by lived experience of mental health challenges and a belief in the power of early intervention. With a focus on building emotional resilience and helping young people feel more supported and hopeful, the Hummingbird Project has grown into a highly regarded programme with the potential to be rolled out nationally.



# Ian Platt

Ian Platt works with school children of all ages as Project Manager for the Hummingbird Project at Medequip4Kids. He has also worked with parents, delivering the Bounce Back intervention at MhIST. Ian has previously worked with adults recovering from depression and his particular area of interest is improving mental health provision and access to higher education for children from underprivileged backgrounds.

The Hummingbird Project, a brief, multi-component PPI, delivered by current university students in Psychology, which has educated around 8,000 school-aged people in a variety of Positive Psychology concepts, has been shown to improve in mental health in this population.



## **The Past, Present, and Potential of the Hummingbird Project.**

Developments following on from the Hummingbird Project have led to advances in school-based mental health intervention such as HAPI Schools and the P3p model. The HAPI Schools tool can be used by educators to evaluate the usefulness of mental health interventions offered by outside agencies. The P3p model demonstrates factors that should be considered when intervening in young people's mental health. The Hummingbird Project has led to improvements in young people's; well-being (World Health Organization Well-Being Index (WHO-5)), hope (Children's Hope Scale (CHS)), and symptoms of mental distress (Young Person's Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (YP-CORE)). HAPI Schools and the P3p model elucidate the processes via which these improvements might be explained. These results show that a brief, multi-component PPI, delivered by non-specialist staff, can improve mental health outcomes in school settings. Attendees of this presentation should leave with a clearer understanding of the steps they might take in improving in young people's outcomes.





# Ifthakar Khaliq

Ifthakar Khaliq is a qualified MBACP counsellor with 19 years of experience supporting children, adolescents, and adults across school and community settings. He currently delivers mental health support at Essa Academy in Bolton, Greater Manchester (Northern Education Trust), and Chalk Hills Academy in Luton, Bedfordshire (The Shared Learning Trust). His roles have included school-based mental health practitioner and safeguarding support, focusing on anxiety, trauma, and online harm. Drawing on his experience, he helped develop Aiding Minds, a school-wide mental health screening tool used by a growing number of schools to identify students at risk before they reach crisis.



This talk will reflect on the success of the Hummingbird intervention in improving student emotional well-being, attendance, and behaviour through targeted mental health support. Building on this foundation, Ifthakar Khaliq will introduce Aiding Minds—a proactive, whole-school screening tool designed to identify children experiencing emotional difficulties before they reach crisis point. The presentation will explore how early identification, combined with targeted support, creates a sustainable and preventative mental health framework in schools.



# Claudine McFaul

Claudine is a Lecturer in Psychology and Counselling at The Open University and an integrative counsellor registered with the BACP. She developed Hummingbird Primary, a school-based mental health programme in partnership with MedEquip4Kids, which has reached over 3,000 children across North-West England. She is also the lead writer and creator of Bounce Back, an online course on OpenLearn Create supporting family wellbeing, with nearly 9,000 views and adoption by mental health services. Her research explores how people navigate loss and change with a particular focus on the role of hope in psychological resilience. Claudine is currently co-developing a digital game to support emotional wellbeing in children, shaped by input from pupils, parents and educators. Her work bridges counselling, community practice and research to promote wellbeing across the lifespan.



## **Creating New Pathways for Positive Psychology with Children and Families.**

*What if the wellbeing resources we use in schools were designed with children, not just for them?*

This talk shares the creative journey behind Hummingbird Primary, Bounce Back and a series of innovative projects that bring positive psychology to life in both classrooms and homes. Developed through hands-on collaboration with pupils, families and educators, these resources have become living platforms for shared learning and emotional growth. Children have taken on the role of co-creators, shaping content and offering fresh insights that challenge adult assumptions. In the process, Claudine has rediscovered her own character strengths- creativity, humour and a love of learning-which have guided every stage of this work. This session invites school leaders and educators to explore how co-production, playfulness and strengths-based approaches can reshape how we nurture wellbeing across the whole school community.



# Ana-Cristina Tuluceanu

Ana is a Psychological Therapist (CBT, EMDR & Schema) and a Neurodevelopmental (ADOS & ADI-R) Assessor with experience of working with vulnerable young people and adults with mental health difficulties in various settings and in various capacities: community, clinical and forensic. Ana has extensive experience within mental health support, group and individual therapeutic and educational interventions and is passionate about being an active advocate of mental health recovery and youth crime prevention. Ana has supplemented an education in Criminological & Forensic Psychology and Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapies and is currently completing a PhD under the supervision of Dr. Chathurika Kannangara.



**The EAGLES (Educate, Aspire, Grow, Learn, Empower and develop Skills) Programme: Inspiring and Motivating Young People to make Safe Choices.**

Current national reports highlighted that the existing school-based interventions aimed at addressing disruptive and in more severe instances, anti-social behaviours in UK, are reactive and described as punitive. Their focus intends to correct behaviours but do not address the function of these, which perpetuates the cycle of 'disruption' for young people in schools. Contrary to this, psychological and criminological theories recommend that early intervention is necessary to help strengthen social bonds and positive identities reducing the negative labels which are associated with disruptive behaviour. Research suggests negative labels can push pupils toward deviant peer groups, increasing their risk of engaging in anti-social behaviours that can be antecedents to criminal behaviour. In order to support young people to make safer choices, reduce anti-social and disruptive behaviours in schools, a preventative intervention targeting higher risk young people would promote a more positive trajectory in their adult life. The current research aims to co-develop an intervention, targeting at-risk youth, aimed as an effective strategy to reduce risk factors for referrals to Youth Justice System in UK secondary schools.



# Sonia Ebenezer-Bamigbayan

Sonia Ebenezer-Bamigbayan is dedicated to life transformation through counselling, life coaching, mentoring, public speaking, writing, and the application of positive psychology principles. She is a passionate advocate for emotional well-being, mental health, and practitioner of positive psychology. With education career spanning over a decade, Sonia brings warmth, wisdom, and professional insight to her work. Currently, Sonia serves as the Project Co-ordinator for the Hummingbird Project at MedEquip4Kids, delivering the project across primary and secondary schools in the Northwest of England. She is also a practising counsellor at Fortalice, supporting individuals impacted by domestic abuse, and the host of the Authentic Thriving Podcast, where she shares real stories that inspire emotional healing and mental resilience.



Sonia holds a Master of Science in Counselling and Positive Psychology from the University of Greater Manchester, along with a postgraduate degree in Teaching and Learning from Manchester Metropolitan University. She is a registered member of both the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and the National Council of Integrative Psychotherapists (NCIP).

At the heart of all her work is a deep belief: that healing is possible and every person deserves to live a life filled with love, confidence, peace, and purpose.

## **Adapting the Hummingbird Project for Special Needs Students in Primary and Secondary Schools**

The Hummingbird Project, focused on positive psychology, has successfully enhanced mental well-being and resilience among over 8,000 mainstream students through six-week workshops on happiness, gratitude, character strength, resilience, mindfulness, hope and growth.

However, there is a significant gap in similar interventions for students with special educational needs (SEN). Early interventions are vital for young people at psychological risk, particularly those with Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, and emotional challenges, who face unique barriers in traditional school interventions.

Adapting the Hummingbird Project for SEN students is crucial, incorporating sensory-friendly practices and trauma-informed approaches tailored to their specific needs. This modification aims to bridge the inclusion gap, providing essential tools for emotional regulation, resilience, and academic success, thus promoting equitable mental health support in education.



# Kati-Anne Roughley

Kati-Anne Roughley is the headteacher of Haslam Park Primary School in Bolton, which we visited recently to deliver the six-week Hummingbird Project. The school serves a community that faces numerous challenges, such as poverty, homelessness and high levels of criminality. Despite these challenges, the school's aim is for children to be confident, caring, resilient, inquisitive young adults with a desire to learn and achieve the best they can, in all they do.



Kati-Anne is very interested in the Hummingbird Project, as she feels that it addresses a significant gap in our children's lives - finding happiness when circumstances are less than ideal. She is looking forward to talking about the positive impact of the project and sharing the thoughts of the children themselves!



# Dr Kevin Hochard

Dr Kevin Hochard is Head of Psychology at the University of Chester. He completed his PhD at the University of Nottingham in 2014. Kevin's research has two main strands. The first examines the effects of poor sleep and sleep disorders on suicidality. He is interested in the processes through which sleep can regulate mood and the impact of this regulation or lack thereof on waking life. His work at present fits within the Contextual Behavioural Science tradition and focuses on the development and testing of brief intervention techniques. The second strand is Operational Research, which is focused on promoting health and well-being using data-driven insights, working with partner organisations such as Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. Kevin supports the Hummingbird team by implementing data analysis techniques to evaluate the intervention.



## **How do we know our interventions in schools actually work?**

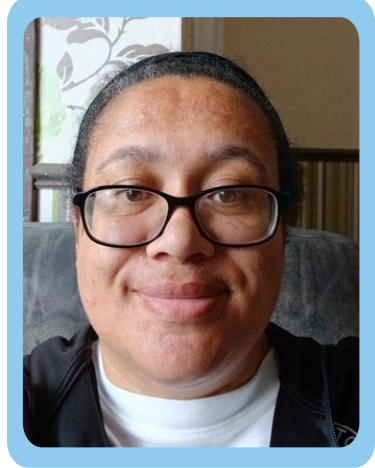
This presentation will provide a practical overview of how we can determine whether educational interventions are truly effective. Core principles for evaluating interventions, including considerations around study design, the hierarchy of evidence, and the selection of valid, reliable outcome measures will be discussed using examples from Hummingbird and the wider literature. Recognising the real-world constraints educators often face, a practitioner-focused checklist to support critical decision-making when selecting or implementing interventions will be introduced. This session is designed to empower educators with the tools to engage confidently with the evidence base and make informed choices for their own practice.





# Sarah Hobson

Sarah Hobson is the Pastoral Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead at St Bede Academy, a three-form entry primary school in Bolton. She has worked at the school for nine years, beginning as a teaching assistant before taking on her current role five years ago. Sarah is responsible for safeguarding, mental health and wellbeing across the school, supporting children from Reception to Year 6, as well as working closely with parents. She is passionate about creating a nurturing, inclusive environment where every child can thrive. Outside of school, Sarah enjoys reading, music, non-league football and attending Comic Cons.



In this talk, Sarah Hobson shares how the Hummingbird Project was successfully embedded at St Bede Academy to support the mental health and wellbeing of Year 3 pupils. As Pastoral Lead, Sarah believes that every child deserves the opportunity to shine, even if they find the school environment challenging. The Hummingbird sessions helped children develop emotional awareness, resilience and kindness. One memorable moment involved a child comforting a peer by referring to the Hummingbird booklet, a powerful sign that the learning had stuck. Sarah reflects on how the project has equipped pupils with lasting strategies to manage their mental health positively.



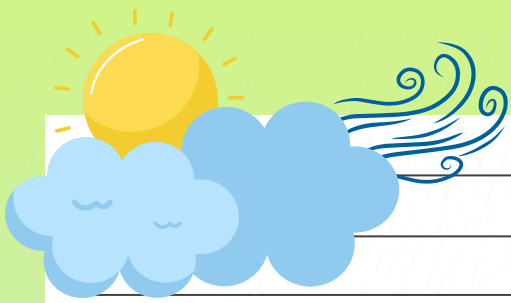
# Michelle Tytherleigh

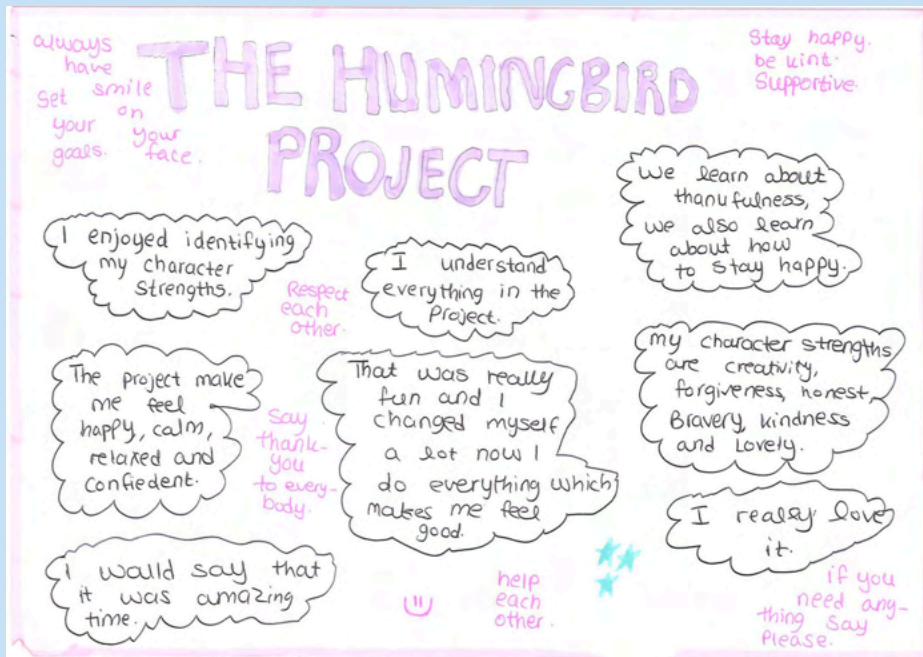
Michelle Tytherleigh is a Senior Lecturer and Deputy Programme Leader for the MSc (Conversion) Psychology at the University of Chester. A Chartered Psychologist (C.Psychol) and author/editor of Positive Psychology at all Levels: Learning to Flourish, she also co-edits the Positive Psychology in Practice book series (Emerald Books) with Professor Jerome Carson. Her research focuses on positive psychology for wellbeing and education, and particularly for students with SENs. Michelle is also an Associate Fellow of the British Psychology Society, an International Affiliate of the American Psychological Association, a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA), and owner of MYT Consulting.



Positive Education applies the science of Positive Psychology within educational settings. Complementing traditional approaches, it integrates positive psychology concepts and research with educational best practices (Slomp et al., 2017) to explicitly teach wellbeing skills. This session will explore how the PERMA model of flourishing, the upward spiral of positive emotions, and the use of individual strengths can enhance both academic success and overall wellbeing. We'll present research highlighting why Positive Education is crucial for students, school communities, and parents today. The session will conclude by discussing the future of Positive Education and provide attendees with at least one practical, evidence-based strategy for integrating wellbeing into their practice.







# THANK YOU!



Phone

0161 798 1600



Platform X

@HummingbirdMH



Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/HummingbirdMH>



Website

[medequip4kids.org.uk/hummingbird-project](https://medequip4kids.org.uk/hummingbird-project)

This booklet has been produced by Aishath Shahama, PhD scholar from the University of Greater Manchester.  
It has been funded from the Elizabeth Carson Memorial Fund.

*"Amor matris numquam moritur, tecum est tua semper."*  
*"A mother's love never dies, yours is always with you."*



# The Hummingbird Project

A Positive Psychology Intervention for  
North West Schools



Booklet prepared by

*Aishath Shahana (Shahaa)*