



Chiltern Teaching School Resilient Minds 2025-2026



In partnership with:



**CHALLNEY HIGH
SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**



CHALLNEY
High School for Boys



B | C Better Community
B | N Business Network





ACKNOWLEDGMENT



SUFIAN SADIQ, CHIEF TALENT AND TRANSFORMATION OFFICER

We are proud to have supported the Resilient Minds project and to have worked alongside partners who share our commitment to the wellbeing and success of young people. At Chiltern Learning Trust, we recognise that academic achievement cannot be separated from emotional health, belonging and cultural understanding.

This programme reflects our belief that mental health education must be relevant, inclusive and grounded in the lived realities of the communities we serve.

We extend our sincere thanks to the staff, students and senior leadership teams at Challney High School for Boys and Challney High School for Girls for their openness, professionalism and genuine engagement throughout the project. The honesty and insight shown by students, particularly through the advisory groups and curriculum feedback, have been central to shaping a programme that truly speaks to young people's needs.



Our gratitude also goes to the wider Resilient Minds project team and partners whose expertise, care and collaboration made this work possible. Their commitment to co-production and culturally responsive practice has helped create a model with real potential for sustainable impact across our schools and beyond.

Resilient Minds represents what can be achieved when schools, communities and specialist partners work together with a shared purpose. We look forward to building on this foundation to ensure that every young person feels seen, supported and equipped to thrive.



SABAH GILANI OBE, CHIEF EXEC OF THE BETTER COMMUNITY BUSINESS NETWORK & DIRECTOR OF MUSLIM MIND COLLABORATIVE

The Resilient Minds programme was commissioned and co-informed by the Muslim Mind Collaborative (MMC) in partnership with Chiltern Learning Trust (CLT), with a shared goal: to embed culturally and faith-responsive mental health education into schools in a way that is relevant, inclusive, and led by the lived experiences of young people.

From the outset, CLT demonstrated a level of educational leadership that set this programme apart. Their commitment to student wellbeing, identity, and belonging, particularly for pupils from South Asian and Muslim backgrounds made them the ideal partner to pilot this work. CLT had championed wider initiatives focusing on aspiration, inclusion and community engagement, and their openness to co-production was critical to Resilient Minds.



Drawing on MMC's experience of working with youth services, educators, and third-sector mental health partners, we brought together subject specialists to inform the design, delivery and evaluation of this new school-based model. What made Resilient Minds unique was its structure: co-designed advisory groups, curriculum-aligned PSHE sessions, enrichment panels, and storytelling workshops that placed student voice at the center.

Across both schools, over 2,200 students were reached. Students explored the realities of exam pressure, cultural identity, stigma and digital wellbeing. They shaped the content, challenged assumptions, and created a model that now has potential to scale across CLT and beyond. What emerged was a comprehensive, inclusive mental health curriculum that speaks to students' real needs, academically, emotionally and culturally.

Across the academic year 2025–2026, Resilient Minds has shifted the conversation around mental health inside and beyond the classroom. From class room workshops to student-led enrichment, and now a youth-led social media campaign, it has challenged stigma and reimaged what meaningful mental health education can look like. We believe Resilient Minds offers a scalable, strategic model, showing how schools, communities and mental health partners can collaborate to embed lasting, culturally relevant support for every young person.



RESILIENT MINDS PUBLIC FACING REPORT

In classrooms across Luton, Year 10 students were quietly carrying heavy loads. Before the Resilient Minds project began, many young people at Challney High School for Girls and Challney High School for Boys described feeling overwhelmed by exams, unsure how to manage stress and uncertain about how, or whether, to talk about their mental health.

Baseline surveys undertaken by researcher Faiza Naznin revealed a cohort under strain. Challney High School for Girls

- 👤 70% of students said fear of failure is the biggest stressor
- 📚 Pressure from workload & homework
- 👥 68% of students had never accessed school mental health support
- 💬 49% felt mental health was not spoken about enough
- 📱 60% wanted guidance on managing social media's impact
- 💡 Asked for earlier interventions (Year 9) + tailored coping strategies

Challney High School for Boys

- 👤 Exam stress & fear of failure was compounded by parental/teacher pressure
- 👤 Many felt isolated or misunderstood despite peers/family
- 📖 Called for stress education to begin in Year 7
- ⚠️ Felt that school support was symbolic, not substantive
- 👥 Wanted structured peer frameworks & emotional literacy
- 💡 Emphasis on embedding mental health into school culture





THE POWER OF STUDENT VOICE

The Resilient Minds Programme was designed to respond to the findings from the baseline survey results which evidenced the need for a mental health programme that directly addressed this specific issues. Working alongside senior leaders at both schools, Mental Health expert, Shamila Sadiq, created a student advisory group at both schools.

The student advisory groups at Challney High School for Girls and Challney High School for Boys consisted of twelve Year 10 school prefects selected by senior leadership. The students were consulted over a period of five months to ensure that their voices and ideas were incorporated at every stage of the Resilient Minds Project, from the introductory mental health exploration session to the very latter stages of the final curriculum.

What we found most powerful was the students' transparency and vulnerability in communicating their needs, leading to a programme that showcases the power of young people's voice in curriculum design.



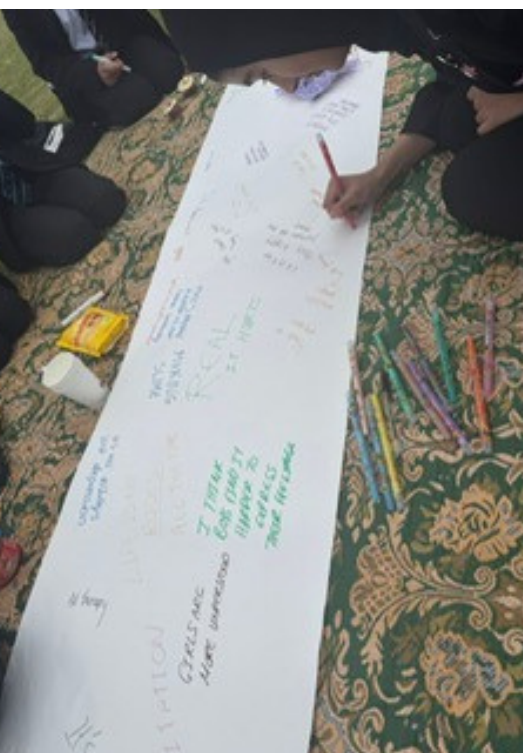


THE POWER OF STUDENT VOICE

In addition to collaborating with our Mental Health expert in designing the resilient minds programme, the student advisory group also had the opportunity to develop their own mental health literacy.

Weekly sessions facilitated by Shamila were personalised to the needs of students by listening to their feedback and taking this into account when planning the following sessions. Each session was practical, hands on and focused around diverse mental health concerns raised by the students themselves. Based on student feedback, examples of sessions included equipping students with strategies to deal with anxiety, with a focus on exam stress and scenario based discussions around managing family relationships.

Consequently, students in the advisory group became more relaxed and were willing to delve deeper, showcase vulnerability and openly discuss their own mental health challenges.





PROJECT OUTLINE



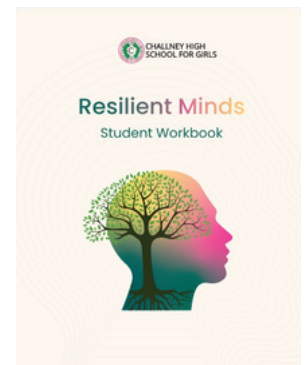
RESILIENT MINDS WAS CREATED TO CHANGE THE STORY

A CURRICULUM DESIGNED WITH STUDENTS, NOT JUST FOR THEM.

Funded by the charity Muslim Aid, in partnership with Better Community Business Network and Muslim Mind Collaborative, Chiltern Teaching School collaborated with students from both schools to design and deliver the Resilient Minds Curriculum. Built through student voice from both baseline surveys and the student advisory groups, the programme created by Curriculum and Pedagogy expert Yamina Bibi, became a bespoke six-session mental health curriculum with students shaping content, testing activities and sharing lived experiences. To empower teachers, there were accompanying lesson slides, a personalised teacher handbook with step-by-step lesson plans and instructions as well as a student handbook for all students to note down their thoughts through the sessions.

AS A RESULT, THE PROGRAMME IS ONE THAT SPEAKS TO THE AUTHENTIC REAL LIVED EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH INTERSECTING IDENTITIES:

1. What mental health really means
2. Healthy habits for body and mind
3. Understanding thinking patterns
4. Relationships, culture and identity
5. Social media and wellbeing
6. Supporting ourselves and others



The curriculum was launched through **whole year assemblies** and supported by **staff training** at the beginning of the academic year delivered by our Curriculum and Pedagogy and Mental Health expert. Every Year 10 student in both schools took part and feedback from staff and students highlighted the powerful impact of both the training and the assembly.

A link to the resources can be found by clicking the link [here](#).





PROJECT OUTLINE



ENRICHMENT THAT EMPOWERS

Alongside the lessons, students experienced enrichment events designed to inspire and empower.

At Challney High School for Girls, over 80 students attended a “**Dream Big**” panel with NHS paediatrician Dr Kiran Rahim, publishing leader Natasha Syed and mental health advocate Sabah Gilani - women whose journeys reflected the students’ own communities. One student said simply, “It made me feel like people like me can do big things.”

At Challney High School for Boys, students took part in a Neurolinguistic Programme (NLP) and Art Therapy session, learning practical techniques for grounding, confidence and self-regulation.

Together, these experiences created a shared language and a safe space for conversations that many students had never had before.



“It made me feel like people like me can do big things.”



PROJECT OUTLINE



WHAT CHANGED?

The difference between what students said at the start of the project and what they say now is striking.

BEFORE RESILIENT MINDS:

Mental health was often defined only as illness or crisis before the launch of the Resilient Minds programme. Students recognised stress but lacked tools. Conversations felt taboo or embarrassing. Many wanted to help friends but felt 'lost' about what to say.

AFTER RESILIENT MINDS:

Students now describe mental health as everyday wellbeing. At Challney Girls, 61% define it as emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. At Challney Boys, over three-quarters use accurate, holistic definitions. As one student now writes:

'Mental health is how you think, feel and act.'

Two thirds of female students and 70% of male students say their understanding of mental health has changed since the sessions. Even those who felt knowledgeable prior to the project say the programme deepened and clarified their thinking.

The emotional climate in school has shifted. Over half of students in both schools now believe mental health is spoken about enough an important change from baseline feedback, where students felt concerns were dismissed or sidelined. Perhaps most powerful is the growth in peer support.

At **Challney High School for Girls**, over **90%** feel more confident, or somewhat more confident, supporting friends. At **Challney High School for Boys**, nearly **9 in 10** report the same.

Students now talk about listening, checking in, and signposting help. One wrote: "Help others the way you want to be helped." Another reflected: "Never judge anyone because you don't know what they're going through."

'Two thirds of female students and 70% of male students say their understanding of mental health has changed since the sessions.'



PROJECT OUTLINE



FROM PANIC TO PREPARATION

Exam stress was one of the clearest needs identified at baseline. Students described panic-driven revision and constant fear of failure.

AFTER RESILIENT MINDS:

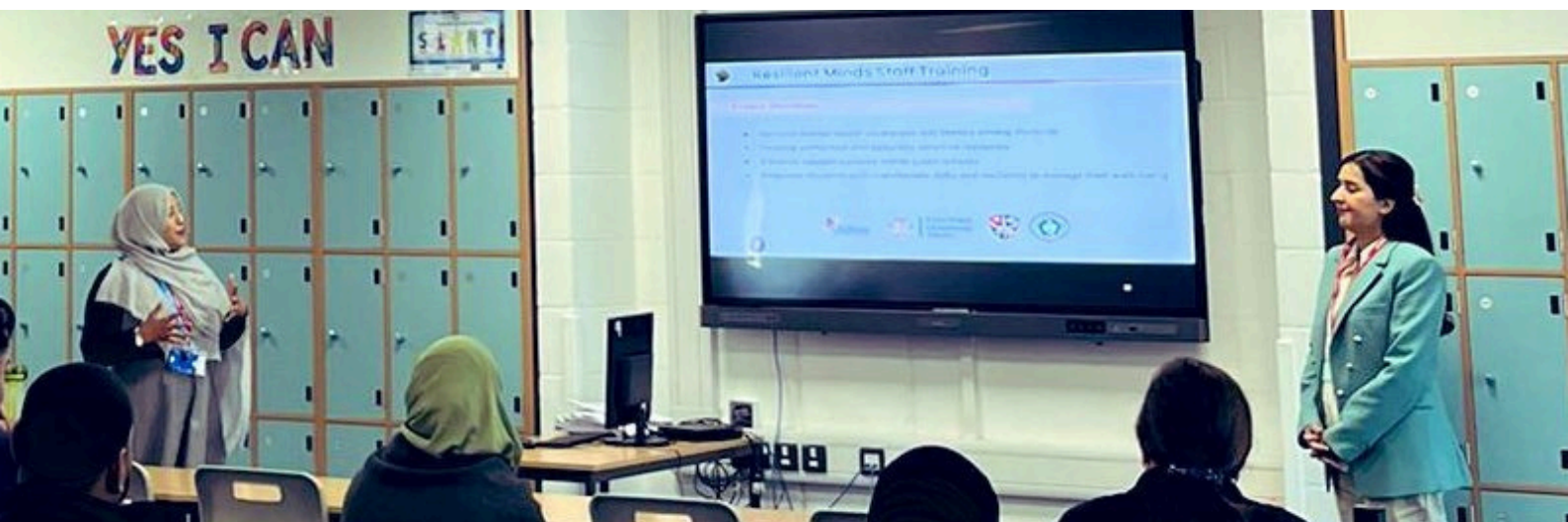
59% of female students and **80%** of male students feel at least somewhat more prepared to cope with exam stress.

Planning and revision strategies were the most valued tools.

Students also cited breathing techniques, interrupting negative thoughts and seeking support.

One female student wrote “It gives me solutions to tricky thoughts.” Another student shared: “I’ve learned how to stop thinking traps before they spiral.” These are not abstract ideas, they are practical skills students are using during real moments of pressure.

Crucially, students told us they want this support earlier. Over a third believe exam stress education should begin in Years 7–8, and most by Year 9. They are asking for prevention, not crisis response.





PROJECT OUTLINE



SOCIAL MEDIA & MENTAL HEALTH

Social media emerged as one of the most powerful and relevant themes. In baseline feedback, students described platforms like TikTok and Instagram as both supportive and harmful, sources of connection and sources of comparison, pressure and distraction.

AFTER RESILIENT MINDS:

The Social Media & Mental Health session was reported by students as the most impactful session in both schools.

Students said it felt **'real'** and **'relatable.'**

Many reported becoming more aware of how online content affects mood, confidence and self-esteem.

For young people growing up online, this session gave language and agency by **helping them** step back, **reflect** and make **healthier choices in a digital world.**

"IT HELPED ME LIMIT MY TIME ON SOCIAL MEDIA."

"BECAUSE SOCIAL MEDIA CAN REALLY AFFECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH..."

"IT SHOWED ME BOTH SIDES."





PROJECT OUTLINE



CULTURE, IDENTITY AND FEELING SEEN

Both schools serve diverse communities, with the majority of students from Asian and/or Muslim faith backgrounds and many from families without higher education experience. For these young people, mental health cannot be separated from culture, faith, family expectations and identity.

Resilient Minds created space for those conversations. Session 4, on relationships and cultural identity, was highly rated by students at Challney High School for Girls. Students said **'it told me more about how culture and mental health interlink'** and **'it gave me a good introduction to how my culture encourages good mental health.'**

A LASTING LEGACY

Resilient Minds has not been a one-off intervention. Both schools have committed to embedding the curriculum permanently within their Personal Development programmes, ensuring thousands of students benefit in years to come.

The programme has delivered:

Improved mental health literacy
Greater emotional awareness

Stronger peer support networks
Practical tools for stress and exams

A more open school culture A
sustainable, teacher and student-led
model



Most importantly, it has shifted how young people see themselves. Where students once said, 'I don't know what to do,' they now say: 'it's okay to struggle at this age'; 'Talk to people' and "mental health is important.'

The Resilient Minds programme shows what is possible when we invest not only in academic outcomes but in the inner lives of young people. This work can grow: reaching students earlier, refining sessions through an intersectional relevance and building a generation who are resilient, compassionate and hopeful. Because when young people learn that their feelings matter, their futures change.



   @ChilternTSH www.teaching-school.co.uk

HONESTY • CARE • COLLABORATION • INSPIRATION • AMBITION • BELONGING