

# MEET OUR SPEAKERS AND PANELLISTS



**David Weaver**  
Conference Chair

David was President of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) from 2017-2022. He is a former social worker, university lecturer, local authority senior manager and political advisor. He has worked with NHS, local government and professional bodies on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategies. David is a fellow of the British American Project and co-founder of human rights body 'Operation Black Vote'.

## SESSION 1: System-wide Strategies for Mental Health Prevention and Early Intervention



**Catherine Roche**  
Chief Executive, Place2Be

Catherine began her career in teaching before completing an MBA and joining KPMG. Her pro bono support for Place2Be from 1996 inspired her to join the charity as Chief Operating Officer in 2003 and then Deputy CEO. In 2014 Catherine became Chief Executive and has led the organisation's development since then. In 2019, Catherine was elected to the NHS Confederation Mental Health Network Board. She is also a school governor of her local secondary school and a non-Executive Director of GoodCorporation.



**Joe Lane**  
Deputy Director of Research, Office of  
the Children's Commissioner for England

Joe is responsible for developing and leading all aspects of expert research and analysis at the Children's Commissioner's office, producing high quality and comprehensive evidence - and recommendations - about the experiences and outcomes for children in England.

Joe is a policy and regulatory specialist with experience of expert analysis, stakeholder engagement, and strategic communication in a range of sectors. Prior to joining the CCO, Joe was Head of Policy and Research at Action for Children. He's worked with various organisations, including Citizens Advice, Teach First, and Education and Employers Taskforce, to influence policy and practice in education, employment, and social welfare.



### **Lyndsay Harris**

#### **Director of Pastoral & Inclusion at Ark Schools**

Lyndsay is deeply committed to truly inclusive practice and supporting leaders to create joyful, safe and ambitious schools where all members of the community are able to thrive.

Under Lyndsay's steer, Ark schools have taken a comprehensive, 'whole-school' approach to mental health and wellbeing, thinking about their ethos and pastoral provision through a mental health lens.

Prior to her role at ARK, Lyndsay spent ten years at Harris Academy Bermondsey in numerous teaching and leadership roles – most recently as Vice Principal (Pastoral and Inclusion). Lyndsay was also responsible for launching Harris Bermondsey's Sixth Form, before taking up her current role at Ark in 2022.



### **Fiona Fearon**

#### **Head of Policy and Research, National Governance Association (NGA)**

Fiona Fearon leads NGA's policy and research work, ensuring that the value and voice of governance are central to policy-making and represented in national education policy discussions.

Before joining NGA, Fiona spent 16 years in teaching and senior leadership roles, primarily working in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and Alternative Provision (AP) schools. She is particularly passionate about seeing educational equity for all children and committed to addressing the structural and systemic barriers that limit opportunities this for certain pupil groups.

## SESSION 2:

### The Socio-Economic Benefits of a Preventative Approach in Education



#### **Rachel Gomez**

Senior Economist - PBE (Pro Bono Economics)

Rachel is focused on the economic impact of social sector organisations, as well as issues of interest to them. Prior to joining PBE in 2021, she worked as an economist in the UK Civil Service. She has carried out several economic evaluations while at PBE, including Place2Be's one-to-one counselling service in UK primary schools: An updated cost-benefit analysis. Rachel is particularly interested in building and using data to evidence the lived experiences of people living in deprivation; the impact of the issues they face; and the efficacy of solutions to improve their wellbeing.



#### **Dr Mark Ungless**

Director of Data Science, AI and Research - Mental Health Innovations

With over 20 years of experience in psychology and neuroscience research, Mark has worked extensively in public engagement and science communication.

Before joining MHI, Mark was Senior Lecturer in Neuroscience and Director of Postgraduate Studies at the MRC London Institute of Medical Sciences at Imperial College London, and Education & Engagement Secretary for the British Neuroscience Association. He previously held a lectureship and a Royal Society University Research Fellowship at the University of Oxford, after postdoctoral research in Houston, San Francisco, and Oxford. Mark has a BSc and DPhil in Experimental Psychology and is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Mark also sits on Place2Be's Research Advisory Group.



#### **Akal Bains**

Research Director - Global Future Foundation

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**Elizabeth Hampson**

Health and Life Sciences Partner at Deloitte and  
Leader of the Deloitte Health Equity Institute, Europe

Elizabeth (Liz) is a Partner in Monitor Deloitte. She leads health policy advisory and health innovation strategy projects with central government, industry, charities and payers in a range of countries. Liz is an advocate for improving mental health in the workplace and supported Mind in the development of the Workplace Wellbeing Index. Liz was one of the authors of "At a tipping point? Workplace mental health and wellbeing?" early in 2017. She also takes an internal leadership role on Wellbeing within Deloitte UK.

**David Huntingford**

Head Teacher, William Ford C of E Junior  
School, East London

A dynamic and visionary educational leader, David is driving innovation, inclusion and school improvement in east London. His empathetic and strategic approach empowers both staff and pupils, embedding emotional wellbeing at the heart of school life.

Under his leadership William Ford has transformed its provision to better support disadvantaged and neurodiverse learners. From pioneering creative, real-world curricular approaches to embedding careers and life-skills education, David ensures that wellbeing, aspiration and academic success go hand in hand.

Earlier this month, William Ford was featured in Jamie Oliver's Channel 4 documentary 'Jamie's Dyslexia Revolution', as a national example of inclusive practice and meaningful support for neurodivergent pupils. David continues to use this platform to advocate for change in how schools approach learning, difference and mental health.

A respected voice in the national conversation on education reform and funding, David highlights the severe limitations facing many schools today. He is a passionate advocate for increased investment in mental health support within schools, recognising that every child's ability to thrive depends on feeling safe, valued and inspired for the future.

## SESSION 3:

### How the right support can reshape a life



**PANEL CHAIR: James Emmett**

Place2Be Regional Clinical Lead for The North

James is a qualified counsellor and clinical supervisor with over 15 years' experience working with children and young people. James joined Place2Be in 2013 and holds national responsibility for Group Work, including our Journey of Hope and Racial Identity programmes.



**Pia Sinha**

Chief Executive, Prison Reform Trust

Pia joined the Prison Service in 1999 as a Higher Psychologist at HMP & YOI Holloway. Pia next took up the post of Head of Safer Prisons, followed by Head of Reducing Re-offending at HMP Wormwood Scrubs. She then took up her first Deputy Governor role at HMP Send, and subsequently Downview and Liverpool.

In 2013 Pia was appointed to her first Governing role at HMP & YOI Thorn Cross, going on to govern at both Risley and Liverpool. In 2020 she became Acting Deputy Director Probation Reform Programme, then the Workforce Programme, before becoming Director of Women in November 2021. Pia's vision for the Women's Directorate was to enable safe, compassionate and individualised care for women. In April 2023 Pia became the CEO of the Prison Reform Trust.



**Ben Hurst**

Director of Facilitation, Beyond Equality

Ben Hurst is an activist, educator, podcaster, model and public speaker. He makes important conversations accessible; engaging men and boys in the gender equality conversation across schools, universities and corporate spaces; rethinking masculinities to promote positive personhood and healthy relationships.

Ben has a wealth of experience in working with young people, having previously worked at sex education charity ACET UK (Esteem) and gaining a degree in Youth Work and Theology from Regents Theological College. His media work - which includes TEDx Talks such as 'Boys won't be boys. Boys will be what we teach them to be' and 'We need to talk to boys about online misogyny' - focuses on dismantling the gendered stereotypes that men inhabit and encouraging them to explore their relationships to masculinity.



**Gemma Wood****Deputy Head Teacher, Portway Primary School**

Gemma Wood is an experienced and dedicated Deputy Head Teacher who has worked at this vibrant East London primary school for the past eight years. With a strong background in teaching across the primary curriculum, Gemma has developed a deep understanding of children's learning and development. In recent years, her focus has shifted toward leading whole-school wellbeing, where she has played a pivotal role in shaping a proactive strategy to support mental health and wellbeing for pupils, staff, and families.

**Nadirah Khan****Assistant Head Teacher and DDSL,  
Stratford School Academy**

Nadirah is an alumnus of Stratford School Academy, having previously studied and lived in the area. She joined the teaching body in 2017 as a Head of House and now holds responsibility for Attendance, Student Voice and Student & Staff Wellbeing.

Nadirah studied Law at Queen Mary University, gained her QTS from the Institute of Education and completed her Master's degree in Applied Linguistics from UCL. Prior to joining Stratford School Academy Nadira worked in a school in Barking and Dagenham, as a Head of Year. Nadirah's passion includes education, wellbeing and working with young people. She wants to ensure that students develop and progress to their full potential and go on to lead fulfilling and purposeful lives.

## SESSION 4:

### A spotlight on a whole community approach to mental health: How Wandsworth is delivering a place-based partnership



**PANEL CHAIR: Jacqueline Vaughan**  
Regional Director for London and West, Place2Be

Jacqueline Vaughan is a highly experienced leader in education, mental health, and safeguarding, with operational oversight of Place2Be's services across London, the South, and the South West of England. With over 25 years' experience, Jacqueline has worked in and alongside schools, local authorities, multi-academy trusts, and commissioners to drive positive change for children and young people.



**Pasquale Brammer**  
Associate Director for Commissioning and Transformation Wandsworth Children's Services

Pasquale has over 15 years' experience in the public sector, working at a senior strategic level across the adults and children's agenda, within both the NHS and Local Authorities.

Starting in the criminal justice system, within drug and alcohol recovery, Pasquale has worked on a county, borough, and regional footprint, to lead and drive service improvement and deliver better outcomes for our young people and vulnerable adults. She has specialist experience within commissioning for children and adults safeguarding, child sexual exploitation, substance misuse and mental health and wellbeing.

Heading up children's commissioning teams for the last 7 years, Pasquale has led on quality and contract oversight in areas such as mental health, continuing care, social care, early help, VCFS, and SEND. She's developed numerous strategies, local policy change and project planning, through joint working and partnership approaches.



**Angelica McMillan**  
Strategic Relationship Manager, Place2Be

Angelica is a BACP registered integrative therapist and Clinical Supervisor, with extensive experience in working with children, young people and families. In her current role, Angelica is working with Multi Academy Trusts and our first ever community Place2Be offer, in collaboration with CAMHS Single Point of Access (SPA).

Angelica has a wealth of experience in various roles within the mental health and counselling field, including a number of different clinical and managerial roles at Place2Be. Angelica has previously worked as Clinical Lead in Governance and Participation for Kooth plc and is a Trustee for a Mental Health Charity in Sussex. With a background in psychology and counselling, Angelica is dedicated to improving the mental health of children, young people, and their families.