**Submission of paper for 3rd Conference of the International Society for Child Indicators**

**York, 27th-29th July 2011**

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**Title**

The YeSS! Project. Supporting vulnerable learners in their transition to secondary school: a randomised controlled trial

**Abstract**

This paper reports on an 18-month randomised controlled trial, which was conducted with ten North Yorkshire secondary schools (2009-2010). The study sought to develop, implement and evaluate a new 10-week small group, school-based intervention for supporting vulnerable Year 7 children in their transition to secondary school. A shorter version of the programme had been piloted in three schools with promising findings (Nash, 2008). The intervention programme was developed by the first author and colleague (Nash and Teasdale), and focuses on promoting psychological resilience and emotional literacy, and equipping children with effective strategies for coping with change. Research continues to show that children’s emotional well-being is integrally linked to their progress at school. Thus, by supporting vulnerable learners as they adapt to a new learning environment, it was anticipated that they would gain the necessary confidence and resilience, to make the most of their new school, in terms of their learning potential and making rewarding friendships.

The 247 participants (11-12 years old) were selected for the project according to the nature of their needs. They had a variety of learning and socio-emotional difficulties, which made their transition to a new school especially challenging. Members of school staff were trained to deliver the intervention programme to the children, on a weekly basis in school time.

In this paper, reference is made to the development, implementation and evaluation of the intervention programme to date. Attention will also be given to the extent to which the two main research questions have been addressed in the study, namely the impact of the Year 7 intervention upon the children’s levels of resilience and upon their mental health. The wider methodological issues of running randomised controlled trials in school will be discussed, as will the implications of the findings for schools and the relevant practitioners.

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**Reference**

Nash, P. (2008) Supporting vulnerable learners in their transition to secondary school.

Dyslexia Review, Vol. 20, No.1, 26-30.