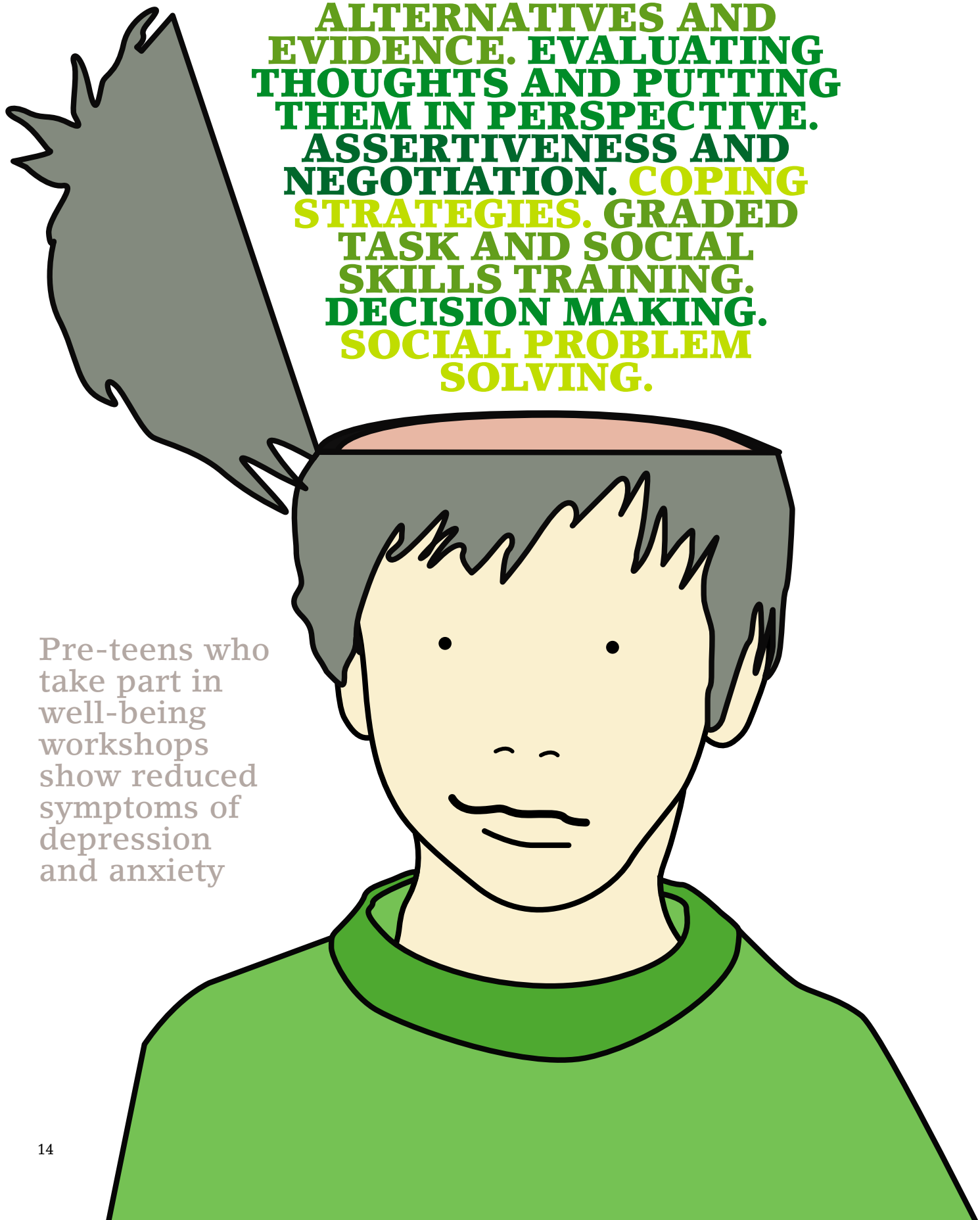


**THE LINK BETWEEN  
THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS.  
THINKING STYLES.  
CHALLENGING BELIEFS.  
ALTERNATIVES AND  
EVIDENCE. EVALUATING  
THOUGHTS AND PUTTING  
THEM IN PERSPECTIVE.  
ASSERTIVENESS AND  
NEGOTIATION. COPING  
STRATEGIES. GRADED  
TASK AND SOCIAL  
SKILLS TRAINING.  
DECISION MAKING.  
SOCIAL PROBLEM  
SOLVING.**

Pre-teens who  
take part in  
well-being  
workshops  
show reduced  
symptoms of  
depression  
and anxiety



in brief...

# Promoting children's well-being

A pilot programme of well-being workshops for 11 and 12 year olds is improving their psychological health, according to an initial evaluation by **Amy Challen, Stephen Machin** and LSE colleagues.

The first interim report on a controlled trial of the 'UK Resilience Programme' – a curriculum aimed at building children's skills to help them solve problems, feel happier and behave well – finds reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety among Year 7 pupils who participate in the workshops.

The preliminary results also suggest that disadvantaged children and children with below average educational attainment in Key Stage 2 tests at age 11 gain more from the workshops. So too do children who start from a worse baseline in terms of their reported psychological health.

Since September 2007, three local authorities – South Tyneside, Manchester and Hertfordshire – have piloted the UK Resilience Programme. The first year of workshops included around 2,000 pupils across 22 schools (the 'treatment' group for the evaluation) and many more have been involved subsequently.

The programme is the UK implementation of the Penn Resiliency Program, which was developed by psychologists at the University of Pennsylvania. The programme, which is based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), aims to build 'resilience' in children through teaching realistic thinking, adaptive coping skills and social problem solving.

The first interim report on the programme finds that:

- Pupils who participate in the programme have reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety – a positive short-term impact on their psychological well-being.
- These positive effects are different for different kinds of pupils. For example, they are larger for pupils who did not attain the national target levels in Key Stage 2 tests, and for pupils with worse initial symptoms of depression or anxiety.
- Pupils are generally positive about the programme. The majority report that they enjoyed the workshops and that they had learned skills that would help them solve problems, feel happier and behave well.
- Some pupils say that they have applied the skills in real life situations, and some show a good understanding of the key elements of the programme.
- The content of the programme is quite intellectually

demanding and some facilitators believe that some pupils struggle with this.

- Facilitators are extremely positive about the ideas underlying the programme and about the training they received. Most report using the skills themselves.
- Most facilitators believe that the skills could make a positive difference to pupils in various domains of their lives, including psychological well-being and peer relationships.

The positive short-term effects of the programme on children's psychological well-being are promising. Data being gathered now and next year will make it possible to evaluate its longer-term impact, including its effects on pupils' behaviour, attendance and academic attainment.

## Disadvantaged and relatively low-achieving children gain more from the workshops

This article summarises 'UK Resilience Programme Evaluation: Interim Report' by Amy Challen, Stephen Machin, Philip Noden and Anne West ([http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RR094%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RR094%20(1).pdf)). The evaluation was commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

**Amy Challen** is coordinator and lead researcher on CEP's evaluation of the UK Resilience Programme. **Stephen Machin** is research director of CEP and professor of economics at University College London. **Philip Noden** is a research fellow in the education research group (ERG) at LSE. **Anne West** is director of ERG and professor of education policy at LSE.

The UK Resilience Programme is one of seven strands of work under the Local Well-being Project, an initiative launched in 2006 to test practical ways of improving both individual and community well-being and resilience in three very different areas of the UK – Hertfordshire, Manchester and South Tyneside. The project brings together the three local authorities with CEP, the Young Foundation and the Improvement and Development Agency.