

# Keynote Speakers



**Hope Virgo** Author of Stand Tall Little Girl and Mental Health

Campaigner / Public Speaker @HopeVirgo

As the Author of Stand Tall Little Girl, and an international leading advocate for people with eating disorders, Hope helps young people and employers to deal with the rising tide of mental health issues which affect one in four people and costs employers between £33-£42 billion annually. Hope is also a recognised media spokesperson, having appeared on various platforms including BBC Newsnight, Victoria Derbyshire, Good Morning Britain, Sky News and BBC News. On 17th November 2007, Hope's world changed forever. She was admitted to a mental health hospital barely recognizable and forced to leave her family and friends, the hospital became her home. Over the next year, at her lowest ebb, Hope faced the biggest challenge of her life. She had to find the courage to beat her anorexia.



**Nicola McLean**

Former glamour model, TV & Media Personality & Mother

Nicola was one of the country's most loved glamour models and graced the pages of newspapers and magazines before making the move into reality TV shows, including; I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here, two stints in Celebrity Big Brother and countless appearances in topical discussions on Good Morning Britain and This Morning. Nicola has now transitioned into the world of broadcast media as a regular panellist on Channel 5's 'Jeremy Vine on 5' and takes part in magazine debates for titles such as Closer Magazine and Bella. Nicola is now also in favourite role as a Mum to two sons and is married to a former professional footballer. She plays an active part in the school PTA's and is a very hands on parent.



**Shan Ako** Singer Song Writer and X-Factor Quarter Finalist

A new name joining the list of Brit School Alumni in the music scene, is London UK based Singer/ Songwriter and Guitarist - Shan Ako. With influences from Soul, Gospel, Pop, R&B, Jazz, Folk & Reggae she began releasing self-produced music as a teenager, developing and sharing her message, drive and love for music, which still continues to this day. She has gained exceptional credits and performance experiences over years including the Pre-MOBO Awards at Cadogan Hall and at the Barbican for the London Jazz Festival, winning the Project Aloft Star (emerging artist competition run by Starwood Hotel Group & BBC Radio 1 DJs). After gaining a degree in Music Business, Shan went on to developing her talents through theatre and stage. She has also toured the UK & Europe in Theatre Productions, most recently playing the leading role in Whitney Queen Of The Night. Shan has also gone on to build her profile and online presence over the years, gaining support from legends in the music industry - to a growing loyal fanbase.



**Josh Connolly**

Life coach and Ambassador for Nacoa

Having grown up with an alcohol dependent father who he saw take his own life when he was just 9 years old, Josh had always found life a struggle. Josh began drinking alcohol and taking drugs when he was 12 years old and his life spiralled quickly out of control. He believes that looking back, alcohol addiction had already become a problem for him by age 16. He became a father at 18 and things continued to get worse until at 24 his life changed when he decided to quit alcohol and drugs for good. He has been on a healing journey ever since and now speaks nationally about his experiences with trauma and mental wellbeing in general.



## Tim Wheater & Cherub

### Masters of High Frequency

Award-winning composer, & world class musician, Tim has traveled far & wide performing alongside leading luminaries like The Dalai Lama & Ram Dass. Pioneering sound artist, Cherub - Founder of Cherabella & women's support network; Sister Sound Circle – is supremely dedicated to generating awareness for the importance of sound as a vibrational medicine tool. Together they have co-created many innovative sound projects, including film scores for Timothy Spall, & Steven Berkoff, an electronic project with Radio 1 DJ, B Traits, & an ambient soundscape album with Human League's Martyn Ware - performing its world in Hamburg and London.



## Dr Polly Casey

### Headstart Research Fellow

Dr Polly Casey is a Research Fellow at the Evidence Based Practice Unit (EBPU). Polly has been conducting research on families, children and family relationships for over ten years, after having completed her PhD at the University of Cambridge in 2012. Her current research interests concern mental health and resilience in young people, working in schools to explore which factors seem to protect some young people from deteriorating mental health in adverse circumstances.

Polly is the project manager for the national evaluation of HeadStart, a five-year, £58.7 million programme set-up by The National Lottery Community Fund which aims to explore and test new ways to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 10 to 16 and prevent serious mental health issues from developing in schools and the community.



## Nick White

### Director of Creative Social Change Company

Nick is the Director of Creative Social Change Company GEEYOU. GEEYOU uses the arts to benefit community cohesion through innovative education programmes. Nick is also Chair of Guildford First, a business consortium that promotes better Mental Health for businesses and young people in Guildford Borough that has successfully run free MH first aid courses for Guildford Borough since 2015. He also sits on the steering committee of InterMediaUK, promoting diversity and better LGBT+ integration in the creative industries and works freelance as a lecturer, writer, influencer and blogger.

[www.geeyou.co.uk](http://www.geeyou.co.uk)  
[@wearegeeyou](https://www.instagram.com/wearegeeyou)



## Charlene Wattley

### Champion for Child and Adolescent Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools (MSc CBT, Charity Trustee, MHFA Instructor)

Charlene is passionate about the role schools can play in building the resilience of all pupils and supporting those experiencing mental health difficulties. With experience in clinical, community and educational settings, and academic studies in Psychology and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Charlene has designed a CBT-based social and emotional skills curriculum which focuses on empowering children and young people to acknowledge emotions and thoughts, accept them, and use tools to stay in charge of them. She delivers training sessions to professionals on Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools and has recently undertaken training to deliver Youth Mental Health First Aid.



## Marion Young

### Meditation and Stillness Mentor and Journey Practitioner

Marion is a therapist, specialising in the work of Brandon Bays and The Journey, Retreat Facilitator and Stillness teacher. Marion is passionate about the power of silence and stillness for inner peace and guides others on how to find this still place within themselves. With over 35 years of experience of facilitating groups, Marion also trains Group Leaders as well as offering one to one sessions in a variety of modalities.