

Education, Children and Families Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 6 March 2018

Supporting Children & Young People's Mental Health & Wellbeing in School

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| Item number | 7.11 |
| Report number | |
| Executive/routine | |
| Wards | |
| Council Commitments | 30 and 34 |

Executive Summary

According to the Mental Health Foundation and other research, 10% of children and young people (aged 5-16 years) have mental health problems. This equates to roughly 3 pupils in every classroom. Several risk factors can make a child more vulnerable to developing mental health difficulties. These range from socio-economic factors to individual characteristics, adverse childhood experiences and changes in family circumstances.

Although many of these risk factors need to be addressed as wider council, citywide and national responses, schools are in a unique position to support and promote children and young peoples' mental health, emotional wellbeing and resilience.

There is a wide range of excellent interventions, preventative approaches, training and initiatives working well in Edinburgh schools. These have benefited thousands of staff, pupils and families over the past 10 years and are coordinated and delivered by staff across the council. However, consultations with children and young people suggest more could be done, particularly in helping young people identify the people, supports and resources they can access when they are experiencing mental health difficulties.

This report provides an overview of the interventions, preventative approaches, training and initiatives available in Edinburgh schools and provided by colleagues in Schools and Lifelong Learning. It does not cover other support available to schools from partners such as NHS and specifically CAMHS to support pupil mental health and wellbeing. This report outlines what is currently known to be working well and what could be further developed or improved upon. The report contains recommendations to address these areas for development and improvement.

Supporting Children & Young People's Mental Health & Wellbeing in School

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Note the contents of this report and the close links with Year of Young People and Child Friendly Edinburgh
- 1.2 Recognise the volume and success of work being undertaken by staff across Communities and Families to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing in school.
- 1.3 Recognise that all schools as part of the NIF (National Improvement Framework) priorities are required to address Health and Wellbeing for pupils.
- 1.4 Endorse the approaches being taken to increase the number of schools that are taking steps specifically towards improving mental health and wellbeing outcomes for of pupils by accessing training, resources and other interventions available
- 1.5 Approve the work to update classroom and online resources (e.g. Cool, Calm and Connected and Think Good Feel Good), in consultation with young people, to increase awareness of, and access to better mental health support
- 1.6 Agree that young people are involved in the design of a young people's mental health survey for use in schools
- 1.7 Agree that staff in consultation with young people, continue to work together to identify a key adult or adults, who children and young people can talk to, and provide a safe space for these conversations to take place.
- 1.8 Agree that officers in consultation with young people, explore options for a self-referral process for pupils at point of need
- 1.9 Agree that the proposed Children's Conference includes mental health and wellbeing and is linked to Year of Young People, by ensuring young people are involved in planning the conference and have opportunities to influence the decisions that impact on their lives.
- 1.10 Agree that young people are engaged in shaping decisions relating to their mental health through several channels such as focus groups and including but not limited to, Year of Young People and Child Friendly Edinburgh (see Report 7.9)
- 1.11 Agree to receive a further report in March 2019.

2. Background

- 2.1 There are a number of reasons why children or young people experience mental health difficulties. Research frequently points to the presence of risk factors or adverse childhood experiences including but not limited to situations such as family breakdown, physical illness, poor peer relations, family violence, bereavement, poverty etc.
- 2.2 Research on resilience and promotion of positive mental health and wellbeing suggests that there are key protective factors which, if available to children and young people, will help them to better cope with whatever adversity they encounter.
- 2.3 While school staff cannot necessarily undo or prevent trauma, adverse childhood experiences or mental health issues, they can help mitigate these by building on protective and/or resilience factors.
- 2.4 These include, but are not limited to: building positive relationships (in particular someone who children and young people can talk to); being and presenting positive role models; developing good social and emotional skills; building on children's strengths, interests and passions; supporting participation and engagement, helping build a sense of meaning and belonging, helping build supportive families, schools and communities and, caring for others.
- 2.5 There is increasing research which suggests that trying to overprotect children from all setbacks, difficulties and risks, effectively undermines their development of resilience, problem solving skills and self-efficacy, leading to increased anxiety. To experience setbacks is a normal part of life which cannot be eliminated. However, children and young people can be helped and supported to develop the skills, strategies and relationships to better manage life's setbacks.
- 2.6 A number of positive interventions, preventative approaches, training and initiatives are currently rolled out across Edinburgh. These are aligned with Curriculum for Excellence, GIRFEC, Mental Health Strategies etc. and support schools to:
 - promote positive mental health emotional wellbeing and resilience in children and young people
 - develop the skills, resources and targeted interventions to respond sensitively and support those pupils who raise or display mental, social, emotional or behavioural concerns
 - engage proactively and build connections with families and wider community

3. Main report

- 3.1 There are a number of interventions, preventative approaches, training and initiatives currently rolled out across Edinburgh schools and are working well They are aligned with Curriculum for Excellence and GIRFEC, and are detailed below:

3.1.1 Promoting positive mental health, emotional wellbeing and resilience in children and young people. These include:

Building Resilience (Primary Classroom Materials) Cool, Calm & Connected (Secondary Materials), Growing Confidence (Staff training on mental health, Adverse Childhood Experiences, trauma, brain development, attachment, mindset, resilience, stress and empathy), GIRFEC training, CIRCLE materials (strategies to improve engagement and support for children with ASN), Mindfulness training, Inclusion Hub (share point site accessible for all learning and teaching staff with online resources to help them better support children's additional support needs including those related to mental health & wellbeing), Pupil Wellbeing Questionnaires, Supporting Children & Young People Guides, Rights Respecting Schools, Restorative Approaches, Mentors in Violence Prevention

3.1.2 Develop the skills, resources and targeted interventions to respond sensitively and support pupils that raise mental, social, emotional or behavioural concerns. These include:

Mental Health First Aid for Young People (staff training), Seasons For Growth (loss, bereavement pupil group work programme), Playboxes & Emotions Talks (1-1 targeted support for children who struggle at school needing support to understand their emotions and the impact on their behaviour), NURTURE approaches (which provide key adult dedicated social and emotional group work support for children and young people in a safe space), Emotionally based school refusal pathways, Pupil Support Officers (employed by 17 schools to date using PEF money who are part of a national NES pilot with a mental health and wellbeing focus who receive core training including Low Intensity Anxiety Management and supervision from CAMHS), Lego Therapy & Sensory Circuits (for children with ASN), Place2Be or other Counselling Services.

3.1.3 Engage proactively and build connections with families and wider community. These include:

Good family learning and engagement activities, evidence based parenting programmes (including Triple P, Incredible Years, Raising Children and Teens With Confidence, PEEP and Teen Triple P). Encouraging children and young people to develop positive links and engagement with voluntary organisations, community youth clubs, outdoor and creative learning activities and organisations that support health & wellbeing.

3.2 Adults who work with children and young people are well placed to model the importance of looking after your own mental health and wellbeing. Increasingly schools are seeking training and support for staff in this area, so that they are better equipped to support children and young people.

- 3.3 These interventions, programmes and training are not used consistently across all schools and not all staff necessarily access them as part of their CLPL (Career Long Professional Learning). Schools are encouraged to access them, albeit on a voluntary basis. Consequently, not all pupils in Edinburgh schools benefit from the same range of resources and training that is available to staff.
- 3.4 In the bi-annual Pupil Wellbeing Survey conducted with Edinburgh primary school pupils, indications that these programmes, training and initiatives make a difference are consistently encouraging. The most recent survey conducted (2016/17) with over 13,000 primary pupils (90% of the relevant population) found:
- 77% would talk to the adults if they were very upset.
 - 87% could ask for help if they needed it
 - 90% felt cared for by teachers and other adults at school
- 3.5 The bi-annual Pupil Survey conducted with pupils in secondary schools (last undertaken in 2016/17) found:
- 75% have adults in school they can speak to if upset or worried about something.
 - 79% feel they can get help if they need it
 - 62% feel cared for in school
- 3.6 Regarding mental health & wellbeing specifically, the picture may be different. A national survey conducted by Scottish Youth Parliament in 2015 with 1,453 young people aged 12 to 26 found that across Scotland:
- 27% do not feel supported to talk about mental health in their school, college, university, or workplace
 - 20% do not know where to go for advice and support for a mental health problem and
 - 74% do not know what mental health services are available in their local area.
- 3.7 A similar piece of research was undertaken in Edinburgh by Youth Edinburgh Action (YEA) who consulted with a total 240 young people in 2014 and 2017. They reported similar findings to the national picture, but better than the national average with 70% reporting that they were comfortable talking about their mental health. However they also raised that secondary age young people wanted:
- more training and support offered to teachers to have conversations about mental health with young people
 - increased level of information about mental health, dealing with stress and promoting resilience
 - more clarity as to where and how to access support and advice.
 - more safe spaces for young people to talk about how they are doing.

- 3.8 To address young people's wish for someone to talk to at the point of need, there can be a tendency for schools to rely on professional outside input. However, some research indicates that counselling has limited long-term effect and that it is much more important that the relationships and community surrounding the child or young person are better supported to respond to children's distress and emotional needs.
- 3.9 Consultations with young people conducted by YEA found that they most young people preferred to talk to someone they had a relationship with. 50% of young people said they would talk to their family about any mental health concerns and the majority of the others would choose a teacher, GP, youth workers or friends. The most commonly mentioned teacher that young people would talk to was their guidance teacher, although others mentioned a specific teacher with whom they had a good relationship. Ultimately, one of the most common factors that young people mentioned as to why they would choose a particular person to ask for help was that they had a strong existing relationship with that person, trusted and felt comfortable with them.
- 3.10 This indicates that initiatives, resources and training programmes for schools, communities and parents/carers, identification of key adults that are able and have protected time and space to talk with children and young people when they need to are a more effective way to address the issues illustrated by the statistics above.
- 3.11 In order, to address how young people would like to be better supported in schools, the Health & Wellbeing team in Lifelong Learning will involve young people in the design of a Young People's Mental Health & Wellbeing survey which could be used in secondary schools. A similar approach has been piloted in Scottish Borders Council by the Health and Wellbeing Team as part of work commissioned by the Borders. This survey will help schools generate a baseline and a platform to encourage ideas from young people themselves about how they could be better supported (strengthening learner voice). Follow up focus groups with pupils could be conducted by the school and/or independently by Communities and Families staff to help schools draw up individual action plans.
- 3.12 Some schools have already identified key adult (s) within their staff teams and have built this into their approach, others are using PEF and other funding streams to employ youth workers, counsellors, Pupil Support Officers or similar to meet this need. Many schools have already identified safe bases, nurture rooms, sensory rooms or similar for children who need some time and space to calm down or a safe place where they can share their concerns.
- 3.13 Ongoing work will take place with children and young people, officers and school staff to extend the identification of a key adult(s) to talk to and a safe place to do so within schools.

- 3.14 Currently, schools do not have a consistent system or process which gives pupils the option to self-refer, either to speak to a key adult or another identified person (ideally selected by the young person themselves) at the point of need. Some schools successfully use worry boxes, stress boxes or time out cards to enable pupils to do this. Other local authorities have email or telephone support or helplines.
- 3.15 In consultation with children and young people, officers and schools staff will explore the development and introduction of a self-referral process for pupils at point of need.
- 3.16 In order to address the need for classroom and online resources to increase awareness of and better access to, mental health support.
- The Health & Wellbeing Team will work in conjunction with young people and school staff to update secondary school PSE and Peer Education materials, **Cool, Calm & Connected**. The team will link in with Young Edinburgh Action researchers and young people who have already used the materials with the intention of strengthening the mental health component and signposting young people towards available support.
 - The Inclusion Team is in the process of developing a Microsoft share point site, **Think Good, Feel Good**, which will be accessible to all secondary pupils and will hold a wide range of online resources and support around mental health & wellbeing.
 - The ASL service is extending the **CIRCLE** materials into Secondary Schools.
 - All Primary Schools are being encouraged to use the new **Building Resilience** whole school approach which has been developed by the Health & Wellbeing Team in partnership with schools. This is a 3 year programme which highlights the 10 things that help to support our mental, emotional wellbeing.
- 3.17 Children and young people will be involved in planning and contributing to a proposed Children's Conference to be held in September as part of the Year of Young People. This will include a mental health and wellbeing theme and provide a useful forum to raise some of these issues and give pupils the opportunity to share their views and experiences of what has helped support them.
- 3.18 Other channels such as Year of Young People, Child Friendly Edinburgh and Young Edinburgh Action are also holding focus groups to give opportunities for children and young people to engage with and influence the decisions that impact on their lives.
- 3.19 With regards to wider family and community work, a new 'Additional Support for Learning and Family Support' service is being commissioned. This will be in place from May this year and will build on evidence based programmes aforementioned to aid with early identification and intervention.

- 3.20 In order to help address consistency in provision highlighted in 3.3. different initiatives and training opportunities will be collated as part of the development of Inclusion and Health & Wellbeing strategies. This could help highlight the expectations and ongoing actions staff could take to fully embed these core approaches in the ethos and culture of the school.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 All schools as part of the NIF (National Improvement Framework) address Health and Wellbeing for pupils, including mental health and wellbeing.
- 4.2 More schools are taking steps towards specifically improving mental health and wellbeing outcomes for of pupils by accessing training, resources and encouraging greater use of Pupil Surveys
- 4.3 A Young People's Mental Health Survey is available for schools to use and they are encouraged to do so
- 4.4 Cool, Calm and Connected and Think Good Feel Good mental health resources are used effectively in most schools
- 4.5 There is an identified adult in each school who children and young people can talk to and a space for these conversations to take place.
- 4.6 A self-referral process is available that pupils can use at point of need.
- 4.7 A legacy of the Year of Young People is a Children's Conference which this year includes mental health and wellbeing and may become an annual conference with themes chosen by young people

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 All activity described within this report is contained within service budgets and/or external funding and is delivered through effective partnership working.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 There are no adverse impacts arising from this report.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 The report has been considered in relation to equalities and human rights and no negative impacts have been identified.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The recommendations of this report are focussed on ensuring sustainability for Edinburgh's young people, particularly regarding their emotional and mental health and wellbeing.
- 8.2 There are no adverse economic, social or environmental impacts resulting from these areas of activity.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Consultation has taken place with and by the Lifelong Learning Strategic Youth Work team, Young Edinburgh in Action, Parent and Carer Support, Health & Wellbeing Team, Schools, Educational Psychologists and Additional Support for Learning, Inclusion and Quality Improvement Teams, Scottish Youth Parliament and NHS.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 Mental Health Statistics
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/file/1750/download?token=TGrdFSpM>
- 10.2 Scottish Youth Parliament Findings
http://www.syp.org.uk/our_generations_epidemic
- 10.3 Supporting Children & Young People Guides
http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/download/721/guides_on_supporting_children_and_young_people
- 10.4 What Children Tell Childline - <https://www.theguardian.com/nspcc-childrens-services/2017/nov/20/childline-nspcc-empowerment-listening-annual-review-children>
- 10.5 All research and evaluation on questionnaires, reports, programmes, resources, and training delivered in Edinburgh mentioned above are available on request.

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11. Appendices

None.