

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Ymchwiliad i Gwella Iechyd Emosiynol ac Iechyd Meddwl Plant a Phobl Ifanc | Inquiry into The Emotional and Mental Health of Children and Young People EMH 53

Ymateb gan: Amser i newid Cymru

Response from: Time to Change Wales

This response is being submitted on behalf of Time to Change Wales Young People's Programme by the delivery partners – Mind Cymru, Hafal and Gofal. In this capacity we will only be focussing on the consideration relating to links with education (emotional intelligence and healthy coping mechanisms) – lower level support and early intervention to prevent mental ill health in children and young people through the Time to Change Wales anti-stigma and discrimination campaign.

The Time to Change Wales Young People's Programme funded by the Big Lottery is a new campaign working with nine pilot schools across Wales (three in South, Mid and North Wales) to change and evaluate the way young people, parents and teachers think and act about mental health.

Building on work already carried out by Time to Change in England, we're working to improve and adapt existing programmes to fit the Welsh educational environment. And, following successful pilot projects, we hope to embed this improved attitude towards mental health problems within the Welsh curriculum.

We believe that tackling stigma has to be a central theme in improving the overall emotional wellbeing of children and young people. We have to create environments where pupils feel safe to explore their emotions and discuss difficult feelings, which enable them to develop their own solutions or seek help at the earliest opportunity.

About Time to Change Wales

Time to Change Wales is the first national campaign to end the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems, delivered by a partnership of three leading Welsh mental health charities: Gofal, Hafal and Mind Cymru.

Since our beginnings in 2012, our work, which has so far focussed on adults in Wales, has already seen a 4.8% positive change in public attitudes towards mental health. Following this success, we're now introducing our Young People's Programme – a focused anti-stigma and discrimination programme led by, and for, young people, using the knowledge and insight gained from our work on the adult campaign.

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In England, Time to Change have been running a tried-and-tested Young People's Programme since 2012. Their work so far has given us valuable insights and research into what has been successful in schools and gives us a strong basis from which to start in Wales.

"You don't have to do much, it's not a question of enormous resources, it's just a change of mind-set, giving children resources to manage their emotional wellbeing, you can do that through the curriculum, and it has a massive impact."

Kate Donovan, Deputy Head Teacher, Newall Green High School,
Manchester

Scoping the TTCW's Young People's Campaign

1 in 10 young people will experience a mental health problem and, sadly, 90% of those young people will experience stigma and discrimination. Stigma stops young people seeking help; it stops them living normal lives and sometimes makes them give up on their hopes and dreams. By normalising the conversations around mental health young people are less likely to feel stigmatised and more willing to seek help and support earlier to prevent long term mental ill health.

Mental health has been recognised as one of the most important areas for development by Welsh Government. It is one of the national indicators in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2014, is a priority area in Welsh Government's Together for Mental Health strategy and is highlighted as an important issue within the Welsh Curriculum Reform and by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

50% of respondents to a Time to Change Wales commissioned survey said it's not easy to talk about mental health in school. The majority of respondents had never talked about mental health with their teachers, and many commented they had never received any information about mental health in school, despite issues such as anxiety and depression being common amongst their peers.

Helping young people to develop the capacity to talk more openly about mental health can have a substantial impact on emotional wellbeing. Alongside this, increasing knowledge and awareness of what to do if they, or their friends, suffer from a mental health problem will assist pupils with dealing with challenging issues at crucial moments within their lives, as well as helping staff involved in their pastoral care. Improving pupils' wellbeing will improve their focus and help them perform well in their exams while dealing with normal life.

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What the Time to Change Wales campaign involves

Pilot schools are given support to embrace a 'whole school approach' to mental health by developing an action plan and signing the TTCW pledge to reduce the effect and potential risks of being unable to talk about poor mental health and empower students and staff to create an open and supportive culture.

We are working with nine schools (three in South, Mid and North Wales) over a three year period to provide face to face workshops to 5,000 pupils delivered by our Young Champions. Time to Change Wales Young champions (young people with lived experience of mental health problems) will visit the schools and share their stories with students from Year 9 upwards and staff which will help people learn more about mental health, stigma and discrimination and be able to speak more openly about mental health. All pupils receiving the workshop will be asked to complete 3 surveys – pre and post workshop and three months later to see if their perceptions and attitudes to mental health have shifted or remained the same during that period.

Pilot schools will support in the development of a toolkit of resources to give teachers and students the confidence to start conversations around mental health and be able to deliver their own Time to Change Wales campaign within their schools. These resources will be readily available online for all schools across Wales to access and use to end stigma and discrimination.

A wider TTCW social marketing campaign is also being launched over the forthcoming month to target children and young people and will be along similar lines as our #reachout campaign for adults and include digital stories to raise awareness and encourage young people across Wales to be proactive and join the campaign to end stigma and discrimination towards mental health.

Conclusion

Whilst we are at the early stages of this project, we would hope that the feedback we receive from pupils and the work of the campaign will provide valuable insight to inform policy and practice in the area of improving the emotional wellbeing of children and young people.