

**‘Supporting Mental Health in Schools & Colleges’ - DfE**

**NatCen Social Research & the National Children’s Bureau**

**Research and Policy Team**

**Summary Report – August 2017**

Two-page summary by EPHA Executive Director – Nigel Hookway

Theresa May said in a speech in January 2017 that mental health is one of the *“greatest social challenges of our time”.*

This report summarises part of a wider, mixed methods project exploring mental health and character education provision in schools and colleges across England. There were 2,780 institutions completed mental health surveys across England, including 1,704 responses from Primary Schools. 15 Case Studies were conducted across all institutions during Autumn 2016. Locally in Essex, Cherry Tree Primary School in Basildon were involved with the research. Mrs. Barrand, Headteacher of Cherry Tree Primary School visited the DfE and contributed to discussions about mental health issues in primary schools.

**Three Aims:**

1. Robust national estimates on activities and support provided by schools and colleges
2. Qualitative evidence to explore models of delivery
3. Examples of specific activities that schools and colleges have found effective

**Key Findings:**

***How do*** ***educational institutions understand their role in supporting pupils’ mental health?***

* Promoting mental wellbeing by creating an environment where children and young people feel safe and happy;
* Identifying pupils’ specific mental health needs;
* Providing mental health support for pupils with particular needs; and
* Referring to and/or delivering specialist therapeutic provision

***What do institutions do to promote positive mental health and wellbeing among their pupils?***

* Normalise mental health issues;
* Raise awareness of how and where pupils can access support; and
* Support the development of emotional literacy and resilience to help pupils to explain, understand and find ways to manage their emotions and mental health.

***How do institutions identify pupils with particular mental health?***

* Identification by staff or other mental health professionals;
* During admissions or inductions process;
* Through children referring themselves, or their friends or parents doing this on their behalf

***What support do institutions offer for pupils with identified needs?***

* Educational psychological support (61%)
* Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) (18%)
* Clinical psychological support (14%)
* Having a dedicated space including nurture rooms/sensory rooms
* Monitoring tools sought impact measurement including such data as attendance, behaviour and achievement as well as SDQs were all used to assess support (94%)

***How do institutions fund their provision?***

* Almost all funded from own budgets – lack of external support in many cases
* Counselling services (93%) was the vast majority of costs, although difficult funding decisions were made by institutions to support spending on mental health
* Charities or practitioners provided free or low cost support on trial periods, however there was uncertainty over this approach and subsequent impact upon pupils’ mental well-being

***What plans and policies are in place to support mental health?***

* Majority of respondents (87%) had a plan or policy in place
* Case study settings found that some institutions had incorporated wellbeing and mental health into a variety of relevant policies including Safeguarding, Behaviour, SEN, Inclusion and broader health and wellbeing policies

***How do*** ***institutions work with external services to support pupils’ mental health?***

* Public health teams (74%)/ Specialist mental health services (73%) DfE guidance (59%) Mental health organisations (57%)
* Institutions used specialist mental health services including NHS, CYPMHS (93%) GPs (73%) and other specialist voluntary or independent services (53%)
* Most institutions had a dedicated member of staff for linking with external services (68%) but only 1 in 5 (19%) had a single point of contact for external services & help
* This single point of contact was seen as a **key barrier** to joint working

***What challenges do institutions face?***

* Difficulties in commissioning local services (74%)
* Lack of funding (71%)
* Long waiting lists, high thresholds for specialist provision
* Lack of internal capacity (59%)
* Quarter of institutions (26%) highlighted a lack of engagement from families

***What do institutions think is key to success?***

* Institutions that had created a shared vision and understanding of mental health along with a senior member of staff responsible; in addition, acknowledgment that staff had mental health needs too
* Whole school, clear approach which engendered trust and supported effective training
* The Government should:
* provide more resources
* support more training
* increase funding for specialist services
* support a directory of local services
* A menu bank of tools that have been proven to work
* Tips on how to monitor pupils’ mental health and impact of provision

***Conclusions:***

* There is a broad range of activities and approaches aimed at promoting positive mental health and wellbeing among all pupils
* Institution-wide approaches to mental health were commonly adopted
* A shared vision and ethos is the key to promotion of positive mental health as well as early identification of those in need
* Institutions worked in tandem with external mental health providers to offer specialist mental health provision, although a lack of time and capacity were problematic
* The DfE intend for this work to provide a foundation for future policy and research

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