

Cross Party Group on Children and Young People

Date: Tuesday, 17 April

Time: 13:00 – 14:30

Venue: Committee Room 3, Scottish Parliament

Chair: Fulton MacGregor MSP

Minutes

Topic: How can we best support children and young people to experience positive mental health?

Attendees

Fulton MacGregor MSP	Brian Whittle MSP	May Chamberlain
Amy Woodhouse	Stella Gibson	Tiffany Mitchell
Sarah Paterson	Garry McGregor	Sophie Allan
Sarah Robertson	Nicki Wray	Sam Petrie
Jack Dudgeon MSYP	Fiona Cook	Rona Maclean Ross
Laura Pasternak	Elaine Stalker	Hazel Quinn
Harriet Hall	Carla Fyfe	Tommy Dey
Jonathon Wood	Nancy Fancott	Anna Fahlberg
Neil Young	Michael Shanks	Catherine Henderson
Zoe Mason	Elaine Leith	Annie McGovern
Carolyn Lothead	Donna Mackie	Lucia Hargasova
Lois Drake	Paul Sullivan	Mig Coupe
Mandy Morrison	Jessica Shields	Chris Purnell
Jackie Tolland	Katherine Anderson	Neil Seaton
Florence Burke	Joanna Shepard	Niamh Brett
Kay MacFarlane	Chris Sweeney	Anne Connor
Antonella Valbonesi	Linzi Clark	Andrew Sturgeon
Sharon McCluskie	Helen Reilly	
Margeurite Hunter Blair	Claire Hunter	
Eileen Prior	Rachel Le Noan	

1. Welcome & Introduction from Fulton MacGregor MSP

Fulton MacGregor MSP welcomed attendees and review of previous minutes and actions. No changes were made.

Fulton MacGregor MSP outlined introduced the topic, including the Scottish Government position.

The Mental Health Strategy 2017-27 sets out the Scottish Government's vision to improve mental health in Scotland. There are a number of actions in the Strategy aimed at ensuring that children and young people have good mental health and that agencies act early enough when issues emerge and

impact young lives. Fulton MacGregor noted the Scottish Government's commitment to improving access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for those children and young people who need them.

The Scottish Government have announced an additional £150 million for mental health services over five years to help to bring down waiting times and deliver sustainable improvement to services. This includes support to improve access to services, funding for staff, workforce development and for in-depth improvement support to local services.

Fulton MacGregor MSP also noted many of the issues with CAMHS waiting times and also various statistics in relation to children and young people's mental health.

2. Roundtable Debate

Carolyn Lochhead, SAMH

SAMH's Going to Be campaign is all about children and young people's mental health. Carolyn noted the scale of the problem and that many fail to get the support they need.

There are clear inequalities in mental health with associations between mental health and gender, age, ethnicity, social position, deprivation and being looked after/accommodated

Generally speaking, older boys and girls (S4 pupils) have worse mental health than younger ones (S2 pupils). Stresses of school life feature prominently, with a particular increase in girls reporting high levels of pressure from schoolwork. Bullying at a young age can affect mental health in later life.

Young people experience a diverse range of barriers to help-seeking, including fears about not being taken seriously, being judged, and about confidentiality

Three aims for the campaign in the short term to support positive mental health.

- By the end of this year, create a programme to train all school staff in mental health
- By 2020, provide counselling across Scotland's secondary schools
- By 2020, let children and young people stay in specialist services until age 25

Jonathon Wood, Place2Be

Place2Be provide mental health support in schools and also a range of high quality professional qualifications for those seeking to enhance their skills or to become a children's counsellor, as well as specialist training for professionals working with children and families.

Jonathon noted that the statistics on children and young people's mental health point to a lack of joined up thinking.

Place2Be feel that to promote positive mental health a whole school approach is required, this is where Place2Be focus. Interventions also focus on changing the culture around mental health.

Place2Be also ensure that children and young people are at the centre of their work and engage directly with them.

They have also been involved in a measure for How Good is Your School to support schools to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.

Jack Dudgeon MSYP

Jack Dudgeon gave an overview of the recent work of Scottish Youth Parliament on youth mental health including the *Speak Your Mind* campaign.

The campaign has three themes that are aimed at supporting positive mental health;

- **Prevention:** Working to prevent mental health problems before they arise.
- **Early Intervention:** Recognising early warning signs of mental health problems and knowing how to positively intervene before they reach a critical stage.
- **Services and Support:** Improving the quality of services and support for young people with mental health problems.

Speak Your Mind focusses on raising awareness of mental health, empowering young people to talk positively about mental health, reducing stigma and calls for accessible, high quality mental health services and information for all of Scotland's young people.

The campaign had 3 main resources;

- **Our Generations Epidemic** – Report on young people's experience and awareness of mental health services, support, and information.
- **World Mental Health Day Colouring Book** – Colouring book with images from young people drew images that examined what mental health meant to them, and their response to the findings of *Our generation's epidemic*.

- **Mental Health Action Plan Toolkit** – Toolkit to implement an action plan to promote mental health in education establishments.

Neil Young, St Paul's Youth Forum

Neil feels young people are being failed in Glasgow. Many find little safety net when they run into trouble. Neil described an example of young person who he works with to highlight the depth of the problem.

St Paul's Youth Forum's approach to youth work is based around a holistic approach to young people and building relationships. They adapt their work to meet the needs of the young people they work with.

The pupil Equity Fund is being used to meet the needs of young people in certain areas, however success is often dependent on the quality of the third sector organization.

Neil also described the issues in many of the communities he works in, including alcoholism, drug dealers and unemployment. For many young people drug dealing is a more valuable career than a low paid apprenticeship.

Neil's main recommendations for promoting positive mental health for children and young people;

- 1) Ensure that no one can slip through the cracks of the physiological needs (food, home etc). There are still too few Social Workers who have time to spend with non-emergency cases. The third sector can help, but only if we are valued as a partner.
- 2) Re-introduce community policing and tackle the low level drug crime – too many young people see drugs as an escape from the pressures of adolescence and a short, easy fix to help them face the next week's uncertainty.
- 3) Help young people find belonging – we need safe, attractive and affordable locations for families and young people to hang out together. Young people should be given ownership over these spaces.
- 4) We need to celebrate more. Young people across the country are doing amazing things and in our community, teachers are regularly surprised that difficult students are leading voluntary groups and achieving all four elements of the Curriculum for Excellence, in an out of school setting.
- 5) Finally, the Scottish Government and Local Authorities need to move beyond the 1 and 2 year funding cycles. It is very difficult to invest in

staff training and development when there is the possibility that funding won't be around the following year. Long term funding means we can build long term relationships

Zoe Mason, See Me Youth Volunteer

Zoe Mason gave an outline of See Me's work around youth mental health and her thoughts as a volunteer:

See Me have one big message for young people in Scotland; it is okay not to be okay. This message was developed by the See Me Youth Champions we want it to become part of the daily lives of children, young people and adults.

Their Education and Young People's programme is all about empowering young people to look after their own mental health and to understand the damage of stigma and discrimination. The aim is to support young people to look out for their friends.

The programme uses a Whole School approach where staff and pupils can learn and work within a supportive community in an environment free from mental health stigma and discrimination.

See Me have 36 Youth Champions, who all have experienced tough times with their own mental health. The champions train pupils to be Schools Champions who can lead in changing cultures in schools. It is important to have young people leading on this as other young people can relate to them when they have an issue.

See Me provide the only youth programme in Scotland with young volunteers who have been trained as trainers in Scottish Mental Health First Aid and are training other young people in the qualification. Young people felt that having the same training and knowledge in every school was important so everyone would know where to get support.

We have seen a real culture change in mental health in terms of attitudes from young people and provision from schools.

See Me's campaigns have success in promoting positive mental health because;

- they target the issues that real young people face today.
- it's easier for the young people to relate to us and feel comfortable speaking their mind instead of seeing us as teachers.

What needs to happen next;

- Adults need to lead by example, it's ok to admit you are not fine, we all have mental health and we do not see parity of esteem between adults and young people.
- It's really important that all teachers are trained properly.
- We also need services for 16-25 year olds and we need more young people at the heart of decisions about mental health care.

Harriet Hall, Children 1st

Children's policy in Scotland has long been shaped by an understanding of the importance of attachment for children's long-term health and wellbeing and there is a growing understanding of the impact of ACEs on a person's long term mental and physical health. However, our model of mental health provision is still viewed almost entirely through a lens of acute, medicalised support and CAMHS is often the only support mechanism.

Harriet noted that Children 1st rarely describe the impact we have in terms of children and families' mental health. They take a trauma-informed, rights based approach to family support that has a significant, positive impact on children and their families' emotional well-being.

To promote positive mental health in children Children 1st;

- Use an early intervention approach focusing on relational and systemic family support that can prevent problems from escalating and build resilience in children and their families. We also help parents to address any unresolved trauma from their own childhood.
- Investing in trauma informed family support services would give universal services another referral route than CAMHS when they are concerned about a child's mental wellbeing. It can help get quick support and prevent stigma. Investment in this area would also free up CAMHS resources for those who require specialist treatment.
- Harriet also referred to some specific examples of their work including that in schools and also to some research by Coalition of Care and Support Providers (CCPS) about what makes for effective family support services in Scotland.
- The current Scottish Government mental health strategy is still focused on acute care with children and young people being referred to CAMHS in the first instance, which may not be the best place to help them, hence the high rate of rejections. We need more family support and other support services as an alternative referral service to CAMHS

3. Floor Debate

Brian Whittle MSP

Brian noted the interest in the important issue and referred to the policy document he has prepared on food, exercise and mental health.

Brian suggested that we need to get away from talking about this issue in silos, it is an issue that goes across government policy portfolios. Physical activity, sport and nutrition is also a big part of the issue but not one that is being addressed as part of mental health at the moment.

Sam Petrie – Scottish Association of Family Therapists

Mental health does not happen in vacuum, need to bring family and relationships into the strategy going forward for this to work.

James Mackie

When you look back over the years nothing much has changed around this issue. We talk about mental illness but it is mental health. The wider picture is being ignored. Need to take away the stigma attached to mental health. It is crucial to work with families and other support networks.

Circle Services – Edinburgh

Circle Services project offers a voluntary support service for children and families affected by parents use of alcohol or drugs. They help parents to;

- manage their children's routines and behaviour
- access other services including drug agencies, counselling, employment and education, housing officers and social workers
- fill out forms and answer letters.

The project also works with other involved family members.

Circle Services provide support by listening to children and young people and getting them to school and out of school activities.

Circle Services also face issues with funding and more needs to be done to ensure sustainability of vital projects.

Michael Shanks, Includem

There are real challenges around supporting children and young people to attend CAMHS services. Services are not flexible, they are only open Mon-Fri

during the day. Despite agreement around family support, strategy aligns with the NHS so key work is not being supported or recognised.

Nancy Fancott, Coalition of Care and Support Providers

There are concerns about sustainability of family support services. The evidence clearly points to family support being key in terms of youth mental health.

Nancy also noted research being conducted by CCPS into family support. You can access the report here <http://www.ccpscotland.org/news/ccps-publishes-family-support-research/>

Brian Whittle MSP

All organisations, NHS, teachers, third sector need to work together to ensure services are not being duplicated and people can share best practice. Need to find a better way to fund the third sector.

George Heriot's School

Vulnerability of children and young people at transition stages. Needs to be a ladder of provision and a focus on the physical tying in with mental wellbeing.

May Chamberlain, Relationships Scotland-Couple Counselling Central Scotland

There is currently a lack of training and family counselling

Helen Skyes – HELM training

Families must be included within service design and we need to have proper training for schools and organisations that work with children and young people.

4. Close of Meeting and Agree Actions

Fulton MacGregor MSP thanked all the contributors and summed up the key themes of the meeting including;

- Those working with children and young people need for more training
- Family support is vital.
- A lack of services is meaning blanket referrals to CAMHS as lack of other services

Actions

- **The Secretariat** will prepare a short report on behalf of the CPG with recommendations for debate in Parliament and sent to the Scottish Government for comment.