



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

Whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing framework guidance: impact assessment

An assessment of how the framework helps schools to review their wellbeing provision and make plans on their weaknesses and strengths.

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Contents

[Section 1 - what action is the Welsh government considering and why?](#)

[Section 7 - conclusion](#)

[Children's rights impact assessment](#)

Section 1 - what action is the Welsh government considering and why?

Background

Following publication of the Children, Young People and Education Committee (CYPE) [Mind Over Matter 1](#) Report (April 2018), work has progressed to examine how the emotional and mental health needs of children and young people are met. Activity has focused on what the Committee termed the 'missing middle' of young people with poor emotional and mental wellbeing, but who do not have a diagnosable mental illness and who would not meet the criteria for specialist service intervention. These young people often receive little or no support as a result. In particular the Committee pointed to the role of education in supporting these young people.

As a result the Ministers for Education and Health jointly convened the Task and Finish Group on a Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Health to advise them on the work needed to meet the needs of young people. As of January 2021, the group has met eight times.

In June 2019 Estyn published [Healthy and Happy](#), its report into how primary and secondary schools support the health and wellbeing of pupils. This showed that around two-thirds of primary and a third of secondary schools have an

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inclusive whole-school approach to pupils' health and wellbeing. These schools aim to make sure that the everyday school experience is consistent with messages about health and wellbeing in lessons, assemblies and in school policies.

In order to promote consistency and equity in June 2019, Ministers agreed the development of a framework, and supporting resources for schools to embed their own whole school approaches. The framework will support schools in reviewing their own wellbeing landscape and in developing plans to address their weaknesses and build on their strengths. It sets out the role of Welsh Government, LAs, Consortia, the NHS and others, such as the third sector in supporting the school. It also recognises that the school alone cannot meet all the needs of what is a complex population of young people. It is also intended to meet the wellbeing needs of teachers and other school staff as much as pupils.

Development of the framework has involved an extensive collaborative approach including extensive input from the Whole School Approach Stakeholder Reference Group. This comprises representatives of almost 40 organisations, including the Chair of the CYPE Committee; Children's Commissioner's Policy Officers; National Association of Head-teachers; other school representatives; health boards; and representatives of the Third Sector (i.e. Samaritans).

A 12 week **consultation** on the new framework guidance took place between 8 July and 30 September 2020. 142 responses were received. The purpose of the consultation was to establish whether the new framework guidance will promote consistent whole-school approaches and support the positive emotional well-being and mental health of all learners and staff. Views were also sought on whether the framework contains sufficient direction to promote collaboration between schools and key partners, and whether it provides the right balance between focusing on promoting and building emotional well-being and addressing the needs of those requiring targeted support for their mental health.

Most importantly we wanted the views of consultees on the extent to which the new framework provides the right level of support for school staff and senior leadership teams to develop and embed best practice for delivering a whole-school approach to emotional well-being and mental health. The consultation

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also asked for views on what implementation and awareness-raising activity would be necessary post publication early in 2021.

The majority of respondents (between 60 and 70%) agreed with the proposals in the framework in that it contains an appropriate range of whole school approaches which, if implemented by school leaders and staff, will make a measurable difference to children and young people. A majority also confirmed that the new framework provides sufficient instruction to promote collaboration between schools and key partners, in particular parents/carers, local authorities, education consortia, health and social care providers and the police.

The consultation responses were used to inform the development of the final framework document and the final WSA framework document published on 15 March 2021.

The research is consistent with the five ways of working:

Long term

The Welsh Government is committed to equality of opportunity and equity of provision in education for all children and young people, including those with emotional health and wellbeing difficulties. We want to make sure that all learners are supported to achieve their potential, regardless of their background or personal circumstances, and that all learners are supported to be resilient, imaginative, compassionate and ambitious – to aim high and achieve their goals.

It is estimated that one in eight pupils have a mental health problem and around a quarter of pupils experience periods of feeling low^[1]. In the context of the Covid pandemic, it is now more important than ever that our learners have early and easy access to good quality mental health provision including counselling which is proven to help prevent emotional health issues developing or becoming more serious. Data from the latest Welsh Government statistical release shows that 11,753 young people received counselling during 2018 to 2019.

One of the key purposes of the WSA framework is to ensure learners have early and easy access to good quality mental health provision which is proven to help

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prevent emotional health issues developing or becoming more serious.

Prevention

The debilitating effects emotional and wellbeing difficulties can have on children and young people's lives are well documented. The consequences of not receiving appropriate early support can mean that the young person is unlikely to achieve recognised qualifications, experience difficulty accessing the job market and be at risk of being not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Our new guidance will provide schools and others in local authorities with a framework that will help them develop and implement their own local whole school approaches, promoting consistency of provision and equity for young people with mental health difficulties. This in turn will ensure that a consistent and equitable service, fit for purpose, is quickly in place across the whole of Wales.

Integration

The WSA framework fits with the Ambitious and Learning chapter of Taking Wales Forward: the Welsh Government's 'Programme for Government', supporting young people to reach their potential. It also fits in with the wellbeing goal of 'A More Equal Wales'.

It also aligns with 'Prosperity for All: the national strategy', which recognises mental health as one of the five areas which have the greatest potential contribution to long-term prosperity and well-being.

Collaboration

Key partners with an interest in the new WSA framework are education consortia, the WLGA, local authorities, schools and other education providers, Estyn, and other agencies including third sector organisations. Given the obvious positive mental health implications, LHBs and other health related bodies and individuals also have a keen interest including healthcare

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clinicians. The afore-mentioned consultation has provided an opportunity for all parties to input into the development of the final framework document, in particular, parents, carers and young people themselves.

Involvement

As indicated earlier, collaboration with a wide range of key stakeholders has been undertaken which has included children and young people whose engagement has been consistent with the 'National Participation Standards'.

Impact

In June 2019, Estyn undertook a thematic review into the impact of school on pupils' health and wellbeing. The review found that around two-thirds of primary schools and a third of secondary schools in Wales have an inclusive whole-school approach to supporting pupils' health and wellbeing, with the remainder needing support to develop such an approach. The new framework document will to help every school in Wales do this effectively and in a consistent manner.

Costs and Savings

The costs associated with the development and consultation of the draft WSA framework document have been minimal in so far as they have been largely administrative to date. These have been met from within existing administrative budgets.

There will be costs associated with the publication and launch of the final framework document as well as with supporting its implementation and wider support to schools in meeting the emotional and mental wellbeing needs of learners. These will be met from within the whole school approach budget for 2020 to 2021. We anticipate that funding will also continue into the following 2021 to 2022 period, subject to future budgetary decisions.

The development and implementation of our new WSA framework will ensure that future funding to support the emotional health and wellbeing of pupils across

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Wales will be put to best use.

Mechanism

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to make arrangements to ensure their functions are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in school or another place of learning. This includes supporting the mental health and emotional well-being of learners.

In meeting the duties under section 175 of the Education Act 2002, local authorities and governing bodies must have regard to guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers under this section.

Section 21(5) of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on governing bodies to promote the well-being of learners at the school so far as related to the matters mentioned in section 25(2) of the Children Act 2004, which includes physical and mental health and emotional well-being, education, training and recreation, and social well-being.

The non-statutory advice contained within the Framework is issued in exercise of the Welsh Ministers' duty to promote the education of the people of Wales and their power in relation to the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well-being of Wales.

[1] Student Health and Wellbeing In Wales: Report of the 2017/18 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey and School Health Research Network Student Health and Wellbeing Survey

Section 7 - conclusion

7.1 How have people most likely to be affected by the proposal been involved in developing it?

Development of the framework has involved an extensive collaborative approach

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including significant input from the Whole School Approach Stakeholder Reference Group. This comprises representatives of almost 40 organisations, including the Chair of the CYPE Committee; Children's Commissioner's Policy Officers; National Association of Head-teachers; other school representatives; health boards; and representatives of the Third Sector (i.e. Samaritans). Parents/carers and children and young people have also been involved in development of the framework. The framework has also been consulted on with the Young People's Stakeholder Group, a group of children and young people specifically recruited and supported to engage and influence this work. The young people involved represent a diverse group geographically and socially, including service users.

A draft version of the framework was subject to a 12 week consultation which ended on 30 September 2020. 142 responses were received and were used to inform appropriate amendments to the final text.

The final framework guidance was published on 15 March 2021.

7.2 What are the most significant impacts, positive and negative?

The new WSA framework completely aligns with three of the Welsh Government's seven wellbeing goals namely;

- a resilient Wales
- a healthier Wales
- a more equal Wales

They will promote consistency and equity in the provision of emotional health and wellbeing services to children and young people in schools throughout Wales. The new framework will also outline the supporting resources available for schools to embed their own whole school approaches and above all will support schools in reviewing their own wellbeing landscape and in developing plans to addresses their weaknesses and build on their strengths.

The document will also sets out the role of Welsh Government, LAs, Consortia,

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the NHS and others, such as the third sector in supporting the school. It also recognises that the school alone cannot meet all the needs of what is a complex population of young people.

It is also intended to meet the wellbeing needs of teachers and other school staff as much as pupils.

7.3 In light of the impacts identified, how will the proposal maximise contribution to our well-being objectives and the seven well-being goals and/or avoid, reduce or mitigate any negative impacts?

The Welsh Government is working towards a more equal Wales; that is a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances.

We are committed to reducing inequalities and ensuring all children are able to achieve their potential and thrive in a learning environment which supports their needs. This is at the heart of Education in Wales.

We recognise that some children with emotional wellbeing issues will impact adversely on children and young people's ability learn. The benefits of early intervention are well documented. Therefore to ensure that children with emotional health problems from these communities are supported to achieve of their best, we need to equip education practitioners and schools with appropriate information and advice to ensure the development of a consistent whole school approach across Wales.

7.4 How will the impact of the proposal be monitored and evaluated as it progresses and when it concludes?

Locally, school senior leadership teams will be required to evaluate the effectiveness of their whole school approach plans as part of wider school improvement to ensure it is meeting their requirements, involving all parts of the school population in the evaluation. Supporting this we have recruited

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implementation leads to work locally with schools and partners to set a baseline against which to measure progress and support them as they progress.

In relation to the wider policy and agenda we have contracted with Cardiff University to undertake independent evaluation of the plans to support learner wellbeing. This is commencing with an evaluability assessment to set the baseline, identify the data, etc to help measure progress and identify any gaps in knowledge. The evaluability assessment will report later in 2021 and will lead to further work to measure the short, medium and long-term impact of the proposals.

Children's rights impact assessment

Describe and explain the impact of the proposal on children and young people

The new WSA framework guidance will ensure schools are supported in delivering consistent and effective emotional health and wellbeing support services for all children and young people in need. This will in turn, benefit a child or young person seeking support when anxious or distressed, and may help support relationships with families (the latest counselling statistics for 2018 to 2019 showed that family issues were the most common form of issue for children and young people who received counselling). There is evidence too that children with higher levels of emotional, behavioural, social, and school wellbeing, on average, have higher levels of academic achievement and are more engaged in school, so there is potential to reduce the number of young people who are NEET.

Involving children and young people will be a key aspect to the continued development and evolution of schools' individual WSA plans moving forward.

No negative impacts are envisaged for this piece of work.

Explain how the proposal is likely to impact on children's

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rights

The UNCRC articles most relevant to the proposal are:

- Article 6 – all children have the right of life. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential
- Article 12 – every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes and to have their views considered and taken seriously
- Article 19 – governments should ensure that children are properly cared for, and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents or anyone else who looks after them
- Article 24 – children have the right to good quality healthcare and to clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that they will stay healthy
- Article 39 – children who have experienced neglect and abuse must receive appropriate help and support which allows them to recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life

By giving local authorities and schools a template and other information, they will have the necessary means to develop their own effective whole school approaches to support children and young people with emotional health problems. This will improve children and young people in Wales' access to the rights set out in the above Articles.

No negative impacts are envisaged for this piece of work.

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