

Response from Barnardo's Scotland

Scottish Government/COSLA: Suicide Prevention Strategy Development Questionnaire

Barnardo's Scotland previously [submitted views](#) to the consultation on the development of the Suicide Action Plan 2018, in which we focused specifically on the needs of children and young people. In responding to the suicide prevention strategy development questionnaire, our comments continue to remain focused on the needs of children and young people, specifically in relation to early intervention.

For further information please contact Barnardo's Scotland Senior Policy and Public Affairs Lead, Kirsty-Louise Hunt at kirstylouise.hunt@barnardos.org.uk

What is currently working well to support early intervention?

Barnardo's Scotland welcomed the opportunity to contribute views on the development of the previous Suicide Prevention Action Plan in 2018. At that time we stated the importance of including the needs of children and young people, and it was welcome that the needs of young people were ultimately referenced in action point eight – having been excluded from previous drafts.

At Barnardo's Scotland, we believe that continued focus on the wellbeing of children and young people is crucial for subsequent suicide prevention strategies, particularly in light of the impact of social isolation and loneliness caused by Covid-19 restrictions.

Barnardo's Scotland provide over 150 services for children and families, including working across 400 schools across Scotland where our approach is based on building relationships. A recent survey¹ of our schools-based staff revealed that children and young people are struggling more with their mental health now than they did pre-pandemic, and that mental health worries was the top concern identified by staff.

Barnardo's has worked tirelessly since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020 to ensure that young people continue to be supported. Some examples of our services which support young people with their mental health and wellbeing include:

- Our Side by Side Service in Stirling, which has been developed alongside Stirling Council Youth & Community Team, to support young people aged between 16 and 19 who have been identified as requiring additional support to access activity agreements. Using a trauma-informed approach we work with the young person on a 1-1 basis to improve outcomes in relation to their mental health and wellbeing.
- Falkirk Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing Service, which provides early and preventative support to children and young people aged 5-26 who may be struggling with issues such as maintaining healthy and positive relationships, staying safe online, low self-esteem and poor body image.

¹ https://cms.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-12/22890_MHWP%20Survey%20Report.pdf

The service also offers parenting support for children and young people of all ages.

However, from our experience, demand and referrals for services almost always outstrips the available funding – alongside short-term funding arrangements, this remains a huge challenge.

What needs to improve from what currently happens?

At Barnardo's Scotland, we want to see a much more comprehensive response to the mental health needs of Scotland's children and young people including:

- Much greater investment in support to families through a network of family support services that offer a wide range of help within communities across Scotland
- Listening meaningfully to young people with lived experience and involving the views of young people in how services are designed.
- Increased mental health services to support children & young people's emotional wellbeing, working closely with existing CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services) and other services.
- Better support to groups of young people who have particular support needs such as care leavers, for example, tailored housing support through the Barnardo's Gap Homes initiative
- More consistent triggering of significant case reviews in the case of child deaths so that we learn all the lessons to prevent further tragedies and identify where resources and support need to be targeted.