

Barnardo's Cymru briefing for Members of the Senedd

Welsh Conservatives debate - Mental Health

Like all of us, children and young people in Wales have been through an incredibly traumatic period over the last 18 months.

We are only beginning to understand what the longer-term physical and mental health impacts of this will be, but data from Barnardo's Practitioner Survey suggests that mental health and emotional wellbeing has been – and continues to be – significantly affected.

Barnardo's UK-wide Quarterly Practitioner Survey includes an 'Emerging Issues' section where the headline question is:

'Are there any new issues you are seeing emerging, or new things you are hearing from children, young people or families over the past few months?'

Since April 2020 respondents have consistently ranked 'Increase in mental health and wellbeing issues among children, young people and families' as their number one emerging issue.

In July 2021 a specific section on mental health and emotional wellbeing was included in the survey and **95% of 275 respondents said that they thought 'There has been an increase in the number of children and young people experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues compared to before the Covid-19 pandemic.'**

Mental health and emotional wellbeing of young people will continue to be a very important issue as we seek to build the recovery from Covid-19 in Wales. As such, Barnardo's Cymru would make several recommendations to the Welsh Government at this pivotal time for our children and young people.

Barnardo's Cymru recommendations:

- Make the mental health of children and young people a core priority of the recovery from the pandemic with a focus on how this can be facilitated in schools as part of the wider roll out of the Whole School approach.
- Increase community-based, non-clinical therapeutic support for children and their families. An example of this is our Cardiff Family Wellbeing Service, or Golau providing mental health support to young people on Anglesey who are pre-CAMHS. The Welsh Government's Together for Mental Health Strategy should be reviewed in light of this.
- Ensure that there is a sufficiently resourced, genuine 'no wrong door'¹ approach with tie-in between services across the board.
- There is a need for increased availability of mental health resources for young people with a complex mental health need.

Questions for the Minister:

1. How will Welsh Government ensure that the mental health of children and young people is a priority for government policy?

¹ https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/NoWrongDoor_FINAL_EN230620.pdf

2. What work will Welsh Government do to understand the scale of the mental health challenges facing Wales' young people in the wake of the pandemic and the provision of effective support?
3. How will the Minister ensure that the voices of children and young people inform the review of the Together for Mental Health Strategy?
4. How will Welsh Government work with third sector organisations in order to adapt to a new mental health landscape created by Covid-19?

About Barnardo's Cymru

Barnardo's Cymru has been working with children, young people, and families in Wales for over 100 years and is one of the largest children's charities working in the country. We provide almost 65 diverse services across Wales, working in partnership with local authorities. Last year we worked with over 10,000 children, young people, and family members.

Barnardo's Cymru has been a leading source of support for children and young people during the pandemic. We have responded directly to the challenges of Covid-19 by launching our **See, Hear, Respond service** which provided therapeutic support including counselling and practical advice. Barnardo's Cymru has also been one of the leading advocates for children and young people during the pandemic, having published [Lessons from Lockdown: Supporting vulnerable children and young people returning to school and to learning](#) which was authored by Barnardo's Cymru and Action for Children Cymru.

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