



Scottish Liberal Democrats Debate: Mental Health

Briefing by Barnardo's Scotland - 27/11/2019

Key points

- Mental health difficulties begin in childhood and adolescence.
- More emphasis needs to be placed on ongoing support for frontline professionals rather than crisis interventions.
- Education professionals play a hugely important role in the lives of children and young people and require appropriate support for their own mental health and wellbeing.

Introduction

We welcome this debate on Mental Health and congratulate the Liberal Democrats for securing Parliamentary time for such an important issue. However we were disappointed not to see reference in the motion to the importance of Education professionals and the pressing need to provide ongoing mental health and wellbeing support to them in order for them to support the children and young people in their care.

We know that 50% of mental illness begins by age 14 and 75% by age 24¹ – so early intervention and prevention in childhood and adolescence is absolutely vital. Supporting the adults who are closest to our children and young people is one way of doing this; teachers and Education professionals are one of the constants in the formative years of our children and young people.

Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of Education staff

Education Support published their Teacher Wellbeing Index on the 11th of November this month. It revealed that **72% of all Education professionals described themselves as stressed**; this leaps to **84%**

¹ <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/warning-signs-of-mental-illness>



when it comes to **senior leaders**.² The EIS highlighted similar findings from their survey of 12,000 of their members in Scotland; they found that **76%** of respondents reported that they **felt stressed 'frequently' or 'all of the time'** within their jobs.

Barnardo's Scotland currently works in partnership with **over 400 schools across Scotland, in 13 Local Authority areas**. We can see that those working in Education are struggling and we have identified a lack of structured, ongoing support for their own mental health and wellbeing as a significant gap.

Supervision in Education

At Barnardo's Scotland we know from our work with children, young people and families that working in a relational way can have a significant impact on staff. Investing fully in children's lives can be emotionally and psychologically draining, as well as uplifting and fulfilling when things are going well.

Where we have Family Support Workers attached to schools they are noticing that Education staff are lacking in the kind of structured supports available to our workers. **Reflective or Professional Supervision is a requirement in other health and social care settings and we believe Education staff should have access to this too.**

However Supervision is not currently a requirement in Education and many staff will not receive any form of structured support for their own health and wellbeing to enable them to continue to support their pupils, and *to fill up their own cup*. That's why we want to see Supervision in Education seriously considered in Scotland.

We recently ran a survey which received **over 400 responses** from those working in Education - overwhelmingly respondents supported the principle of Supervision in Education as a way to support their own mental health and wellbeing, and to reflect on the impact the work has on them.

You can read more about our call for Supervision in Education [in our Discussion Paper here](#).

Nicki Lawrence – Policy Lead for Mental Health and Wellbeing
Email: Nicki.Lawrence@barnardos.org.uk
Phone: 0131 446 7033

² https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/sites/default/files/teacher_wellbeing_index_2019.pdf