
Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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Pwnc / Subject:	Estyn response Embedding a whole-school approach to mental health and well-being

Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, Estyn is independent of the Welsh Government.

Estyn's principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, Estyn must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by education and training providers in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Estyn's remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary schools, secondary schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and teacher education and training.

Estyn may give advice to the Assembly on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, Estyn has set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

Response

Introduction

We agree that this guidance is likely to promote more consistent whole-school approaches, supporting the positive well-being and mental health of learners and staff. It lays out clearly the rationale and background to this guidance. It also explains the key actions and requirements of all stakeholders through statutory guidance and non-statutory advice.

The guidance refers almost exclusively to 'schools' with very few references to pupil referral units, or children and young people in education otherwise than at school. We feel that, given that it is likely that many pupils in these provisions may suffer from poor mental health, the guidance should refer to these provisions explicitly.

Estyn believes that a key driver for the success of this guidance will be the proposed repository of resources and evidence-based interventions and staff professional development resources that is intended to complement this guidance. It would be helpful if Welsh Government would publish these documents, along with the 'toolkit' of good practice, at the same time as the guidance.

[Healthy and Happy](#) (Estyn, 2019) notes that "few teachers enter the profession with substantial background training in child or adolescent development, or how best to support children's health and wellbeing". This emphasises the need for training for all school-based staff to support children and young people's health and wellbeing, including specialised training for specific issues. Training should also cover ways of supporting pupils' emotional and mental well-being through blended learning.

The guidance provides direction to promote collaboration between schools (and PRUs) and key partners, and local authority and regional consortia roles should be made explicit in this regard. They would be in an ideal position to promote collaboration between schools facing similar challenges, or link schools together based on successful good practice in certain areas.

The guidance should be more specific about the importance of provision being available and accessible through the medium of Welsh.

There is a perception from schools that supporting agencies, including statutory health services, are understaffed, resources are stretched, waiting times are long and staff turnover is hampering continuity in provision. Ensuring that support services for children and young people have enough capacity to meet their mental health and wellbeing needs should be a priority.

Consultation questions

Question 1 – To what extent do you agree that the guidance will promote consistent whole-school approaches, supporting the positive emotional well-being and mental health of all learners and staff?

Strongly agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Slightly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slightly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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If you selected 'Slightly disagree' or 'Strongly disagree', please expand on what further amendments you think are necessary.

Supporting comments

Estyn agrees that the guidance makes it clear that consistent, whole-school approaches are necessary for supporting the positive emotional well-being and mental health of all learners and staff. This supports the main findings of [Healthy and Happy](#) (Estyn, 2019) and [Learner Resilience](#)ⁱⁱ (Estyn, 2020) which note that good schools understand that pupils' emotional wellbeing is the responsibility of all staff and that every interaction and engagement with pupils has an impact on their sense of worth.

The importance of staff wellbeing is reiterated in the [Evaluation of the CAMHS In-Reach Pilot Programme: Interim Report](#)ⁱⁱⁱ (Welsh Government, 2020), where high levels of stress among school staff were identified pre-pilot. The report notes that "there is evidence that high levels of staff stress and low levels of staff well-being undermine schools' efforts to promote pupils' well-being".

In the guidance, there is a clear expectation on headteachers and Senior Leadership Teams to have effective evaluation arrangements in place to identify their strengths and priorities for improvement. They are expected to undertake a holistic approach to ensuring the wellbeing requirements of all learners and staff are met. The expectation that a lead person should be appointed to lead the implementation of the guidance and to engage stakeholders could help promote a whole-school approach.

There is a clear onus on all staff, leaders and other stakeholders, including learners, to ensure they understand and respond to the guidance. As stated in [Learner Resilience](#) (Estyn, 2020), "Schools that are successful in building pupils' resilience have leaders that have developed a strong vision, supported by core values around promoting the wellbeing of all pupils. The vision is shared by all of the schools' stakeholders".

Question 2 – To what extent do you agree that the guidance 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?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slightly agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slightly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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If you selected ‘Slightly disagree’ or ‘Strongly disagree’, please expand on what further amendments you think are necessary.

Supporting comments

The guidance emphasises the responsibility for all school staff to take a whole-school approach to the promotion of good mental health and emotional wellbeing. It is also clear that the guidance must be adapted to individual schools’ circumstances. It clearly links this guidance to the Health and Well-being area of learning and experience.

It also highlights the responsibility of the senior leadership team to use the guidance to identify areas to improve and to adopt the correct approach, with an expectation of undertaking a review of emotional wellbeing needs and implementing a plan.

The guidance places an expectation on local authorities and regional consortia to support schools in implementing the whole-school and system approach. The guidance also references tools that will help schools to develop and embed a whole-school approach, such as the National Evaluation and Improvement Resource and a repository of resources.

When developing the repository of resources, consideration should be made to recent publications by Estyn that highlight good practice in this area. Although recent publications looked at different specific aspects of mental health and emotional wellbeing, in [Learner resilience](#) (Estyn 2020), [Knowing your children](#)^{iv} (Estyn, 2020), [Healthy and Happy](#) (Estyn 2019) and [Effective school support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils](#)^v (Estyn 2020), there are many useful references to whole-school approaches.

These reports highlight areas that could support schools in embedding a whole-school approach to mental health and well-being. They support the messages in section 6.10 Staff Training by, for example, emphasising that the quality of relationships between staff and pupils and in peer relationships between pupils is a critical factor in whether pupils thrive in school. They exemplify the importance of focusing on the wellbeing of all pupils and of identifying staff members to whom pupils can turn when needed. They demonstrate the importance of providing a nurturing and supportive environment for all pupils and the benefits of working closely with families.

[Healthy and Happy](#) (Estyn, 2019) notes that “few teachers enter the profession with substantial background training in child or adolescent development, or how best to support children’s health and wellbeing. Only a minority of staff in schools think that the training or guidance they have received initially or in-service has helped them to support pupils with their wellbeing and mental health”. This emphasises the need for training for all school-based staff.

It would be helpful for schools if Welsh Government were to publish the repository of resources and evidence based interventions and staff professional development resources at the same time as the guidance. It would also be useful to inform headteachers, senior leadership teams and schools when these tools will become available, and the nature of these new documents (that is whether they will be non-statutory or otherwise).

Question 3 – To what extent do you agree that the guidance provides sufficient direction to promote collaboration between schools and key partners such as statutory bodies, the third sector and parents/carers?

Strongly agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Slightly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slightly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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If you selected ‘Slightly disagree’ or ‘Strongly disagree’, please expand on what further amendments you think are necessary.

Supporting comments

Estyn agrees that local authorities and regional consortia have an important role to play in promoting collaboration. We feel that the guidance provides appropriate direction in this area, citing important considerations, including guidance, mapping services and provision that support mental health and emotional well-being within a local authority footprint. It also provides clarity on relationships and protocols with other agencies, particularly health, social care and the police. The guidance also makes clear the local authorities and regional consortia’s role in co-construction of policies, coordinating services and delivering professional development opportunities for staff.

The guidance explains clearly the expectation that key partners such as the NHS and the third sector work collaboratively and openly with schools.

The [Learner Resilience](#) (Estyn, 2020) report notes the benefits accruing when schools share information between relevant professionals and adults involved with particular pupils effectively and in a timely manner. In the best cases, schools have processes for ensuring that all the relevant adults within the school are made aware of any concerns quickly and accurately. The report goes on to note that “good schools use the expertise of relevant external agencies to supplement their work. They bring skills and expert knowledge that are not always available within

schools and, when the relationship between all parties is strong, they work together in the pupils' best interest, strengthening their resilience and improving their lives".

It would be helpful if the guidance provided clearer direction for school leaders in how they could promote collaboration between schools. Schools may benefit from a system of sharing practices, experiences and resources when embedding a whole-school approach to mental health and emotional well-being. This could be facilitated by the local authority or regional consortia who would have a better insight into particular issues in different schools who would benefit from collaboration. It may be possible to convene meetings for the 'named person' from each school to attend and share their journeys including challenges and successes.

Question 4 – To what extent do you agree that the guidance 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?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slightly agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slightly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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If you selected 'Slightly disagree' or 'Strongly disagree', please expand on what further amendments you think are necessary.

Supporting comments

The guidance makes clear the importance of universal provision and targeted provision. It strikes a good balance between explaining the importance of a whole-school approach to addressing the emotional and mental health well-being of all pupils (linking this to successfully embedding the Health and Well-being AoLE), and the needs of individuals, at different times, that may need support over and above what is offered as universal provision. This is supported in the [Knowing your children](#) (Estyn, 2020) report that states that, "in the best cases, schools focus on improving the wellbeing of all of their pupils. While there is targeted and specialist support and interventions for those that need it most, there is also well-considered universal provision for building pupils' resilience and strengthening their emotional intelligence".

The guidance emphasises that Senior Leadership Teams should ensure that only those interventions with an established or emerging evidence base are used. This is highlighted in [Learner Resilience](#) (Estyn, 2020) that notes, "... successful schools base their approaches to building resilience on evidence-based research. They put these approaches into practice and monitor their impact over time. As practitioners become more experienced in using specific approaches, they adapt them to respond to the needs of individual pupils ... The most successful schools

reflect on their practice and review their approaches to address the wellbeing of their pupils and to help them become more resilient”.

It would be helpful for schools if Welsh Government were to publish the repository of resources and evidence based interventions and staff professional development resources at the same time as the guidance.

Question 5 – Following the introduction of remote learning as a result of Covid19, please explain what (if any) changes to the guidance could be made to ensure it fully supports a ‘blended learning’ approach which combines remote and traditional classroom learning.

It is important that the guidance should make clear that all children and young people should have access to a range of tools and support for their emotional and mental wellbeing at school, and also at home when necessary. This could be included, for example, in section 6.5 Universal Approaches. The guidance explains that “having trusted relationships with school staff, being able to talk about issues, and the way well-being is taught through a school’s new curriculum will be all that is required in many instances”. It should be made explicit that ‘being able to talk about issues’ should be possible for pupils even when at home.

The guidance also states (6.6 Targeted provision) “...In each case school senior leadership teams should have access to a range of evidence based interventions (delivered by the school staff or appropriate professional) to support the young person. This provision should be offered and delivered in as de-stigmatising a way as possible ...” It should be made clear that support should be provided for pupils who are unable to attend school.

There is one specific group of learners that could benefit greatly from a blended learning approach. As listed in 6.7 Provision for children and young people with specific needs, the pupils who fall into the category of ‘frequent school absences and those experiencing loneliness and isolation’ could access the appropriate support if protocols were in place to enable synchronous online activities.

The repository of resources and evidence based interventions and staff professional development resources to complement this guidance, along with the ‘toolkit’ of good practice should include opportunities for online and remote support.

Local authorities and regional consortia should be tasked with supporting schools in preparation for providing blended learning opportunities for pupils as universal and targeted provision (to be included in 4.3 Local and Regional Support).

Question 6 – Following publication of the guidance, what (if any) implementation activity (e.g. training and/or awareness-raising for specific audiences) do you consider will be necessary?

It is important that this guidance is communicated to all the intended audience listed on page 6. It should be shared widely using proven communication channels. It may be useful to produce resources such as posters summarising the content that could be circulated to all schools and PRUs for displaying in staff communal areas.

Professional learning opportunities should be provided for school staff when the repository of resources and evidence based interventions and staff professional development resources to complement this guidance is produced. Training should also be provided for school staff to develop their skills in planning and delivering blended learning. The blended learning approach may mean that the focus for professional learning will change, for example prioritising the development of digital skills for preparing distance learning. In addition, training should be provided for governing bodies (as proposed in the guidance).

Question 7 – Are our proposals for governance and accountability enough to ensure the guidance is embedded in practice? In particular, are Regional Partnership Boards best placed to hold all stakeholders to account?

The guidance makes it clear that ownership for the plan to embed a whole-school approach to mental health and emotional well-being sits with the Senior Leadership Teams and governing body.

The guidance sets out the benefits of joint working across education, health and social care sectors, though there is no statutory obligation to do so. It is reasonable to expect that progress against implementation of this guidance is reviewed periodically through Regional Partnership Board / Public Service Board arrangements.

Elected members will need to be briefed thoroughly on the guidance by relevant officers in order to provide informed scrutiny of the effectiveness of all partners and to hold stakeholders to account appropriately.

Question 8 – We would like to know your views on the effects that the guidance would have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- i) opportunities for people to use Welsh
- ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Supporting comments

The guidance does not promote the opportunity for the Welsh language to be used as an everyday, working language well enough. There is a lack of provision through the Welsh language in this area and this guidance does not increase the opportunities for Welsh to be used.

The importance of allowing pupils to discuss any concerns with outside agencies through the medium of Welsh, brings its challenges. To mitigate the risk that there are not enough Welsh speakers working in the Health service and wellbeing support agencies, it would be useful if Welsh Government promoted the benefits of encouraging and developing a bilingual workforce to echo the aims of the languages, literacy and communication area of learning and experience in the Curriculum for Wales. It would be useful if there was a drive to promote, for example, Welsh for Adult classes, sabbatical opportunities, and support to build a network of people to be able to converse in Welsh to alleviate mental health issues.

Careers advice is crucial through the medium of Welsh on Welsh-medium contexts so that there is acknowledgement of young people's bilingual and employability skills, which links to their well-being and self-belief.

The opportunities for adults to learn Welsh via the Work Welsh Programme were expanded during 2018-19, with the programme providing training for over 2,500 workers in a wide variety of workplaces, including health and [childcare](#)^{vi}. It would be beneficial for Welsh-medium training opportunities in the workplace to be expanded further. In order for Welsh to thrive across every sector ([Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers](#)^{vii}), it is necessary to ensure that learners can get training and support in the workplace.

Question 9 – Please also explain how you believe the guidance could be formulated or changed so as to have:

- i) positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language
- ii) no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Supporting comments

The guidance should be more specific around ensuring access to services through the Welsh language. It should make clear the importance of the Welsh language to Welsh-medium and bilingual pupils, with these pupils being offered the opportunity to discuss and share their concerns in Welsh with external agencies, for example, school nurses, educational psychologists, school liaison police

officers, Youth Workers, school based counsellors, behaviour support officers, CAMHS etc.

The guidance should make clear that provision should always be available through the Welsh language if needed. Providing Welsh language services would support and encourage pupils with low self-esteem to speak, share and confide.

Having the TRAC programmes available through the Welsh language have been very well received to encourage pupils who are disaffected to participate in work based activities and recreational, outdoor pursuit activities to ensure that they do not become NEETS.

A [report^{viii}](#) on the website of the Welsh Language Commissioner highlights the importance of how communicating in Welsh makes a big difference to the physical and mental well-being of patients and their families at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

Question 10 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

The guidance lists pupil referral units (PRUs) and children and young people in education otherwise than at school (EOTAS) in its intended audience (page 6), yet there is no direct reference to PRUs within the guidance. Page 7 sets out what legislation the guidance is issued under. It refers to a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of “children in school or another place of learning” which includes supporting the mental health and emotional well-being of learners. However, the guidance refers only to schools.

The guidance should include PRUs and EOTAS provision explicitly, given that it is likely that many pupils in these provisions may suffer from poor mental health.

There is a perception that supporting agencies are understaffed, resources are stretched, waiting times are long and staff turnover is hampering continuity in provision. In its summary, the [Evaluation of the CAMHS In-Reach Pilot Programme: Interim Report](#) (Welsh Government, 2020) states that “Widespread concerns that pupils’ mental health and wellbeing is worsening and that schools and services like Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have struggled to meet rising demands have led to a range of initiatives, including the CAMHS In-Reach to Schools pilot programme”. The pilot programme also identified that before the pilot, “schools generally struggled to access specialist advice, liaison and consultancy when they needed it, given high thresholds and waiting lists for specialist services. Access to specialist advice, liaison and consultancy was generally felt to have deteriorated, given rising demand for services and cuts in provision”. The report concludes that “recruiting highly skilled workers has been critical to the pilot programme’s success thus far. However, sustaining the quality of work is likely to be a challenge going forward because, as engagement with schools strengthens (which is a success of the pilot programme),

the same sized staffing teams are delivering to, and working with, increasing numbers of schools, which risks diluting impact”.

Recruiting a full capacity of staff to provide support for pupils with their emotional health and well-being should be a priority.

The guidance refers to the the views of pupils in section 5.2, but the the importance of listening and taking into account the views of every pupil could be strengthened. The guidance could usefully refer to the [Children and Young People’s National Participation Standards](#). Estyn’s [Healthy and Happy](#) (Estyn, 2019) highlights the importance that staff and leaders place on listening to pupils, not just having systems in place for pupil representation.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here:

i

https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/www.estyn.gov.wales/files/documents/Healthy%20and%20Happy%20report%20En_0.pdf Accessed on 22/07/20

ii

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/www.estyn.gov.wales/files/documents/Learner%20resilience%20en.pdf> Accessed on: 22/07/20

iii <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-07/evaluation-of-the-camhs-in-reach-pilot-programme-interim-report.pdf> Accessed on: 12/08/20

iv

https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/www.estyn.gov.wales/files/documents/Knowing%20your%20children%20%20supporting%20pupils%20with%20adverse%20childhood%20experiences_0.pdf Accessed on 22/07/20

v

https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/www.estyn.gov.wales/files/documents/Effective%20school%20support%20for%20disadvantaged%20and%20vulnerable%20pupils%20en_0.pdf Accessed on 22/07/20

vi <https://socialcare.wales/learning-and-development/using-welsh-at-work>

vii <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/cymraeg-2050-welsh-language-strategy-action-plan-2018-to-2019.pdf>

viii <http://www.comisiynyddygyymraeg.cymru/English/News/Pages/The-value-of-the-Welsh-language-through-the-eyes-of-the-cancer-ward-workers.aspx> Accessed on: 22/07/20