



The Matthew Elvidge Trust

Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: a Green Paper

Response from The Matthew Elvidge Trust

1. Introduction

The Matthew Elvidge Trust welcomes the Green Paper and is very encouraged by the proposed, further investment in children and young people's mental health. We also support the proposals to incentivize schools to appoint a designated mental health lead, fund new mental health support teams and pilot four week waiting times for access to specialist services, in addition to all the other proposals.

However we have three main concerns, which relate to:

- a long term vision, strategy and framework for children and young people's mental health
- the scope, pace and impact of the proposals and
- the need to move further and faster towards an asset based model

These main concerns are summarized in Section 1 below. Sections 2 and 3 set out further thoughts on Vision, Strategy and Framework (Section 2) and specific observations about the Green Paper (Section 3).

1.1 Long term vision, strategy and framework

The first concern is that the new proposals, combined with the action already taken and underway appear to be progressing in the absence of a prominent long term vision, strategy and framework for the wellbeing and mental health of all children and young people aged 0-25.

The Green Paper's Executive Summary says that *'our mental health and wellbeing are vital to our ability to thrive and achieve'*.

And in January 2017 the Prime Minister (PM) said that: *"Children want to grow up to be confident and resilient, supported to fulfill their goals and ambitions. So we are placing an emphasis on building resilience, promoting good mental health and wellbeing, prevention and early intervention looking at how we can do more upstream to prevent mental health problems before they arise."*

It would be valuable for all stakeholders to have a long term Vision, Strategy and Framework to perhaps 2035, so that work can be done to compare this Vision with the work underway and current proposals, in order to identify gaps and any misalignment across all the age relevant levers of change across all settings.

All stakeholders would then be able to work together towards this Vision.

1.2 Scope and impact of proposals

The second concern is that the Green Paper proposes encouraging changes that will only impact 20-25% of children and young people by 2023, due to workforce constraints. It is therefore difficult to identify the



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level of ambition the government has to develop and implement a whole population, whole organization, whole system approach and when this might be achieved.

We think it would be helpful to set out what is required to implement the proposed changes in all schools and colleges, including the appropriate changes needed in other settings, including universities, families, health and social care, communities and workplaces.

1.3 Moving further towards an asset model

The third concern is that the Green Paper and work currently underway seems to be very much focused on a deficit model, improving the support available for people with a mental health problem and preventing them from getting worse (early intervention), through the three pillars, which, although vital, misses a bigger opportunity.

The case for action set out in Chapter 1 of the Green Paper seems to provide sufficient evidence to support a wide ranging investment in age relevant education about the importance of wellbeing and good mental health for all children and young people, as they transition through life stages from 0-25, as set out in 2.1 and 2.2.

It would be encouraging if the Green Paper made more specific proposals for investment in an asset model, which are aligned with true prevention (keeping people well), as outlined in the Prime Minister's speech.

2. Vision, Strategy and Framework

We feel that the development of a Vision, Strategy and Framework would be a really valuable, cross party document, that sets the frame and foundation for all future reform and investment. There can be nothing more important for the future prosperity of our country than the wellbeing and mental health of our 0-25 year olds. The environment for change has never been more positive (see Appendix 1).

The Vision could, for example, be that:

“all children and young people in all settings (education, family, health and social care, community and workplace), and those that care for and develop them (teachers, staff, parent, carers, employers), have the opportunity to understand the importance of wellbeing and good mental health and develop the skills and resilience to keep well. They understand the signs of being unwell and are confident to ask for help. The support available in all settings is timely and appropriate and meets their needs”.

The Vision should articulate a time when health (mental health) becomes part of the language of children and young people and the people that care for them in every setting. Emotional wellbeing and health would permeate every aspect of education and community, and young people would learn all the skills to keep well and have education in all areas of risk that might lead to (mental) health problems.... from anxiety and relationships.... to gender, sexuality and internet safety (see Appendix 2 and 3).



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The objective would be to develop a strategic approach, which could be sustained over the next, perhaps, 17 years through to 2035, have a significant impact within five years, by 2023, and carry through to future governments. We could create a new generation of young people, who have a deep understanding about emotional wellbeing and mental health... and in turn become parents, school staff, nurses, carers and more. This could transform our society.

It is recommended that a specific proposal be made to develop this vision, strategy and framework for all future governments within the next six months.

The proposal suggests a policy, strategy led, change agenda, founded on a set of principles, which include:

- The fact that all children and young people have mental health and are on a continuum, which affects every part of their life
- A virtuous circle of improved understanding about mental health and how to keep well
- A leadership driven, self improvement model for every organization involving 0-25 year olds
- A whole system approach to local support and NHS care
- A policy led integrated approach to delivery across all the levers of change

2.1 All young people have mental health

The asset based model to improving mental health would be built on the principle that all children and young people have mental health (or, perhaps, 'health' as physical and mental health cannot be separated).

All children and young people should be taught about the importance of mental health in their lives and how to keep well (Appendix 2) and, through this understanding, they would be able to cope much better with all the risk and impacts they experience through life's up and downs (see Appendix 3).

This new level of understanding would go a long way towards eliminating the stigma (GP Para 115-116) associated with mental ill health and would result in earlier disclosure and help seeking, which is a fundamental aim of the Green Paper.



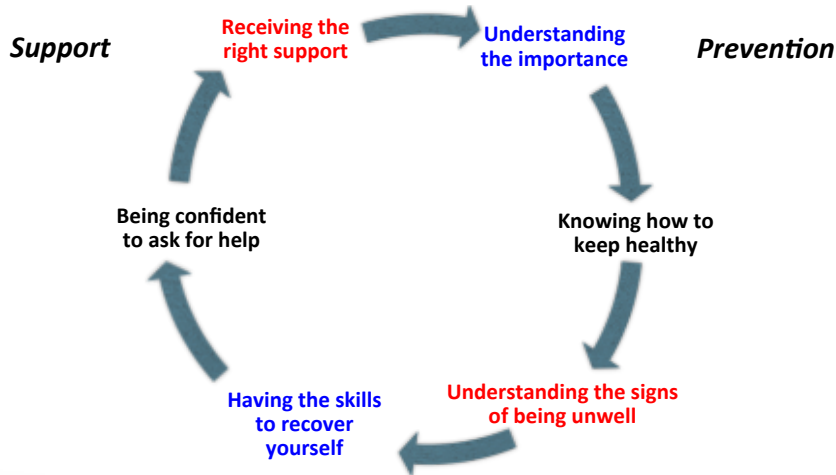
2.2 A virtuous circle of improved understanding about mental health

The Vision and Strategy would need to be founded on a whole organisation approach to wellbeing and mental health, with all leaders, staff/colleagues and students/children understanding the importance of wellbeing and good (mental) health, moving through to an integrated pathway for people to receive appropriate and timely support, when required.



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An example, which is relevant for education settings is below and there are similar approaches for other settings:



2.3 A leadership driven, self improvement model for every organization

This approach could be built on a self improvement model, which enables any organisation to understand the compelling, informed case, assess current practice, implement changes and learn from outcomes.



It is recommended that a framework is developed for leadership, which provides them with the confidence to continue or start a journey towards implementing a whole organization approach, recognising that every organization will need to embrace the needs of its place, setting and people. A good example is Universities UK's Vision and Framework – Step Change, launched in September 2017.



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2.4 A whole system approach to support

This whole organization approach is dependent on an effective, integrated system for the provision of mental health care and support by primary and secondary providers and the Green Paper will go a long way towards improving current services, particularly for schools.

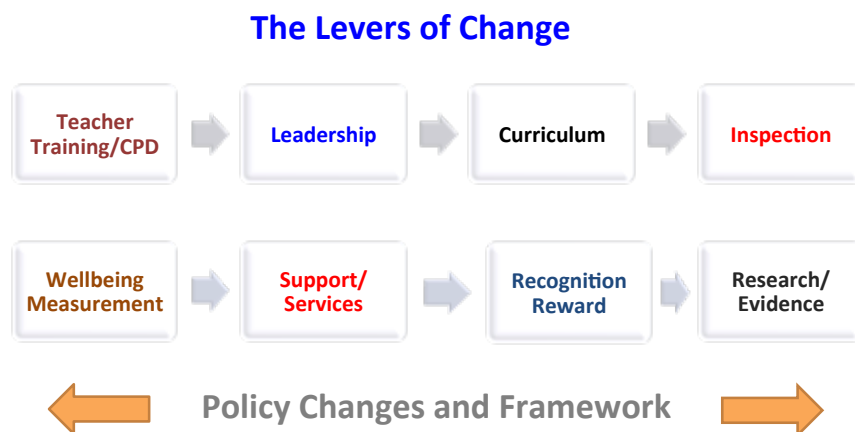
However the Vision will need to take account of all settings across 0-25 and bring the needs of all children and young people... and their families, carers and staff to the centre of Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and local Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs). This will ensure that services are designed to take account of the needs of all children and young people in all settings.

Every education and community establishment would have a seamless, documented process for identifying problems, providing local support and, if required, engaging the services of local primary and secondary care.

We should look to evaluate current support available, understand the weaknesses in JSNAs and STPs and apply pressure for increased consideration of the needs of children and young people and further investment to secure improved support.

2.5 A policy led approach to change

There is a real opportunity to develop a policy led, strategic approach to change across each of the relevant levers that impact on children and young people's wellbeing and mental health across all the life stages and periods of transition. An example for schools is below and there are equivalent levers for colleges, universities and other organisations, as well as primary and secondary care providers.



The Challenges of Transition





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It is encouraging that changes are proposed in many of these areas, but it's more difficult to see how they work together towards achieving a longer term Vision.

It is recommended that the next stage from the Green Paper sets out how the various levers of change will work together to drive effective change.

It is also recommended that work is carried out across the transitions to define what skills and capabilities young people need as they move through the various stages and that this education is embedded as a statutory part of the curriculum. Workplaces, universities, colleges, and schools should be encouraged to work together to achieve this goal.

2.6. A potential approach to developing the Vision, Framework and an implementation plan

This approach could be tackled as follows:

2.6.1 Developing the Vision and Framework

The first step will be to develop a Vision and Framework for a whole organization, asset based approach and an integrated support system for children and young people's wellbeing and (mental) health.

2.6.2 Developing individual strategies to drive change

Each lever of change should be reviewed to identify the current legal, political, policy or other environments that shape current practice. This should then be reviewed against the Vision and Framework to identify opportunities to drive change across every life stage.

2.6.3 Identifying the gaps

This would then be followed by comparing the work underway and current proposals on each lever of change in every setting and identifying the gaps to fill.

2.6.4 Investing in Data, Information and Research

All the levers of change will need to be supported by the development of appropriate reporting of data, which help to analyse every aspect of children and young people's wellbeing and mental health and the potential solutions covering both prevention and intervention.

2.6.5 Creating a plan to deliver required changes

The above steps will then create a journey to deliver the vision, which would include many of the steps set out in the Green Paper, but providing a much longer term ambition.

3. Observations about the Green Paper

3.1 Levers of Change

The Green Paper talks about a number of levers of change, but it is unclear how all these will work together over time to deliver a long term Vision. A narrative should be provided, which delivers reassurance that all the levers are being developed in parallel to achieve a common goal.



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It will be important for any particular school or other organization that all the relevant levers are aligned to prevent conflict and, potentially, ineffective implementation.

A number of possible questions arise:

- How do the plans for implementing a whole school approach align with the planned changes to inspection?
- How do the plans for teacher training (both initial and CPD) align with implementation of effective whole school approaches
- How will investment in leadership be driven to align with the appointment of senior mental health leads?
- Could a possible gap in the inspection regime undermine all of the efforts to implement the Green Paper proposals effectively?

3.2 Teacher Training (Executive Summary and GP Para 101-103)

The Green Paper talks about work being done to embed mental health into teacher training. However there is no sense whether this framework is consistent with a whole school approach and sufficiently comprehensive. It is also unclear when the new curriculum will be embedded into all training establishments and what approach is being taken to CPD, such that all teachers will receive the appropriate mental health training by a specific date.

Many whole school approaches seek to help teachers support young people with anxiety and emotional wellbeing challenges, by training them to have the confidence to 'hold' students in the classroom and not need to refer them to a mental health lead and potentially to the support teams.

It is recommended that clear plans are made to embed wellbeing and mental health training into to all initial training and CPD, consistent with a whole school approach, by a specific date.

3.3 Leadership and strategy priorities

The Green Paper talks about a whole school approach and the role that a designated senior lead might play in providing oversight. The whole school approach will only be effective if this is led from the top... governors, heads and senior leadership teams. A senior lead will only be partially effective if they operate in isolation, without mental health being positioned as a strategic priority within the education setting.

It is recommended that clear plans are set out to embed mental health into the role of leaders and how this might be embedded as a strategic priority for every organization, which will be so essential for any effective implementation of a 'whole school approach'.

3.4 The role of the Designated Mental Health Lead (Paragraph 67)

The Green Paper doesn't specifically recommend that the designated mental health lead should be selected from the Senior Leadership Team. Appointing this role from within the leadership team will be vital to have the appropriate influence and to fulfill the wide ranging responsibilities set out in Paragraph



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67 of the Green Paper.

This is a substantial role and it is recommended that it is evaluated for a number of different schools in different settings, from early years through to colleges and an estimate provided of the number of hours that may well be required to fulfill this role effectively and the level at which it should be appointed.

3.5 Curriculum (GP Para 67)

The Green paper talks about reflecting a whole school approach in the curriculum; however there doesn't appear to be any detail about how this might happen and over what period. There is an opportunity to embed wellbeing and mental health into every aspect of the school experience from assembly to the sports field and from learning new things in every lesson to PSHE.

This will only happen if mental health is a strategic priority for a school and it would be helpful to provide more guidance for schools and other organisations on ways to embed wellbeing and mental health into every aspect of the culture, curriculum and school experience.

3.6 Every child learning about wellbeing (GP Para 104-105)

One of the most fundamental ambitions must be that every child learns about the importance of mental wellbeing in its widest context. This is discussed in the much narrower context of RSE, but there is no sense from the Green Paper how this essential, wider education will be delivered and when.

It is recommended that age relevant wellbeing and mental health education is embedded into the curriculum on a statutory basis, including every aspect of the virtuous circle set out in Paragraph 2.2 and all the life experiences children and young people will face (see Appendix 2 and 3).

3.7 Parents, carers and students (GP Par 106-108)

The Green Paper refers to the need to publish policies and information for parents and carers.

It is recommended that this should go much further and that schools and other organisations should be encouraged to set out how they embed a whole organisation approach to wellbeing and mental health in their setting, so that the level of commitment and activity is totally transparent to all their stakeholders (parents, carers, staff, students, others).

3.8 Inspection (GP Para 109-110)

The Green Paper points to potential changes in Ofsted measurement in late 2019 and working with the DfE on ways to measure wellbeing and mental health.

It would seem vital that Ofsted is provided with clear guidance about what an effective whole school approach looks like, so that schools can be measured against a consistent framework and clear criteria.

3.9 16 – 25 year olds (GP Para 129-134)

The recommendation to establish a National Strategic Partnership is welcome and recognises that the Green Paper provides few proposals for this age group, which tends to perpetuate one of the main transition risks for young people.



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It will be important to ensure that this Partnership has sufficient funding, freedom and timescale (at least 5 years) to establish a long term, whole organization approach to wellbeing and mental health for this age group.

It will be vital to understand the vision and framework for all age groups (0-25), in order to develop the priorities for 16-25 year olds.

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Appendix 1

Current positive environment for change

The current environment creates a strong foundation for the establishment of this longer term vision, strategy and framework:

- the actions flowing from the Future in Mind and the Five Year Forward View
- initiatives announced by the PM in January 2017
- relationship and sex education becoming mandatory in 2019
- the recommendations from the Health and Education Select Committees
- the two multi-arm trials on 'mental health curriculum-based interventions' and 'approaches to promoting mental wellbeing'.
- Universities UK whole university approach to wellbeing and mental health, launched in September 2017
- the whole school approaches launched by the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition (CYPMHC) and Public Health England (PHE); and Partnership for Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools (PWBMHS) and the National Children's Bureau (NCB) in 2015 and 2016/17
- the launch of Thriving at Work, which is so relevant to 16-25 year olds

Appendix 2

Things that are good for wellbeing and mental health – for embedding into every aspect of the organisation's experience

- connecting with people
- being active
- taking notice of the world around you
- learning new things
- giving to others
- meditation
- building resilience
- mindfulness
- problem solving
- building relationships
- resolving conflict

Appendix 3

Things that children and young people need to know more about

- self harm
- anxiety and depression; how to spot the signs
- family life and domestic survival
- healthy eating, eating disorders, obesity
- puberty
- relationships
- financial literacy and money matters
- bullying
- suicidal feelings
- academic success
- social media pressures
- transition challenges
- sex and sexuality
- multiculturalism and racism
- drugs and alcohol
- gambling
- internet safety...pornography and sexting
- bereavement
- financial pressures