

Draft framework guidance on embedding a whole-school approach

Consultation response form

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Responses should be returned by 30 September 2020 to:

Health and Well-being in Schools
Support for Learners Division
The Education Directorate
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: Mentalhealth.Schools@gov.wales

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

The guidance:

- takes account and reinforces the importance of both learner and staff wellbeing.
- recognises the link between wellbeing and learning.
- emphasises the fact that wellbeing is everyone's responsibility.
- highlights the importance of the school's culture and ethos in promoting wellbeing.
- emphasises the importance of working across clusters and sharing good practice.
- Provides a flow diagram for the implementation of a whole school approach that can be used by SLTs in schools across Wales.

We agree that the school is the hub and centre of community life and the ethos and culture of the school should be around wellbeing.

We believe that when discussing a whole school approach, this should be embedded in positive psychology and the use of positive language about strengths within the school setting should be encouraged. We would value some statement to this effect in the document.

Page 24 – is OECD the best measure of wellbeing? According to the link where it references the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the measures are strongly linked to academic attainment, whereas wellbeing is more complex / holistic than this.

Page 25 – The key points should include a 'Person Centered approach' to supporting learning and wellbeing in line with the ALN reform.

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

It is positive that the guidance emphasises that SLT will ensure that ‘interventions with a sound or innovative and developing evidence base are delivered’. The document needs to emphasise that although an intervention or program may be evidence based, whether the program works for the learner at that school should be evaluated as well. Schools should be undertaking their own evaluation of interventions and reflecting on these to modify them accordingly.

There is mention of WG developing a repository of resources, evidence-based interventions and CPD resources. It will be important that staff receive these alongside further examples of good practice.

We welcome the fact that the guidance emphasises the importance of accessing support from external agencies.

We feel that it is helpful that there is a list of key points on page 25 for SLTs to consider.

We feel that it would be beneficial to disseminate further information regarding how to access the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Support Hub and what they offer.

We welcome the focus on all-staff training relating to wellbeing, including teacher training, NQT and CPD opportunities. Further mention on the different training areas that could be relevant to staff may be useful, and the mention of refresher courses.

We feel that the ‘Scoping stage’ should include both quantitative and qualitative data, not just quantitative as it suggests in the document.

Page 26 - “The Estyn/OECD self-evaluation resource for schools enables senior leadership teams to review teacher well-being and identify common stressors such as high workload or excessive burdens of out-of-classroom activities”. – Are you able to provide data regarding how many schools use the OECD Self-evaluation resource to support the wellbeing of staff? How is its use quality assured?

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

We welcome the message that “larger schools should appoint a named person to lead implementation and act as co-ordinator and engage with other staff, learners, parents/carers and external agencies.”

The guidance highlights the importance of calling on support from external agencies and the third sector, and accessing the broad range of expertise in the LA, e.g. educational psychologists, school based counsellors, youth workers, advisory teachers, the safeguarding team and behaviour support services, which is positive.

The guidance encourages links with the LA, regional education consortia and other partners, e.g. WHNSS, which is positive.

We believe that it is important that the guidance reflects on collaborative, joined-up approaches with agencies such as CAMHS, and strengthening relationships between services, e.g. through multi-agency panels.

It is also important for the guidance to mention local authority parent partnership services or equivalent.

Page 35 – “Some school support staff have a specific role in relation to promoting/supporting well-being such as school counsellors, school nurses, educational psychologists and education learning support assistants.” - Please note that educational psychologists are not members of school staff and are often not based in schools, therefore this statement needs to be modified.

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 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

The importance of relationships is emphasised throughout the guidance.

Importantly the guidance:

- Emphasises the importance of the school ethos.
- Refers to the new curriculum and that all children and young people should have access to support for their wellbeing.
- Mentions empowering all learners to understand their own well-being.
- Mention of the importance of recognising the link between learner wellbeing and the school policies and actions.
- Identifies that some learners will need more targeted support and may need support at different times. Some learners will require more support at specific times, e.g. Transition.
- Recognises that the targeted intervention should be 'proportionate to need'.
- Identifies the importance of staff feeling confident to support learners, and that support should be available to staff.
- Identifies that "...targeted provision should not result in learners having to miss their preferred classroom or extra-curricular activities".

How widely used is the 'criteria for delivering a comprehensive universal offer' developed by the WHNSS? Is there any good practice that can be shared around its use?

Well-being approaches involving peer to peer support could be further emphasised as this would be empowering for young people. Peer mentoring is different in that the relationship involves an individual mentor supporting an individual mentee.

We agree with the following comment on page 30, "For young people, being able to talk to a trusted adult who they know well can be far more therapeutic than being referred to a remote professional they have never met before, and have to wait several weeks to see...Ultimately it supports a move away from a 'refer on' culture, to one where staff feel confident enough to be able to 'hold on'."

A 'toolkit' of good practice will be beneficial, and we would welcome the publication of this as soon as it is developed.

We are pleased with the graduated response to wellbeing, e.g. when providing statistics on page 11 it is highlighted that many of these emotional issues are not clinical in nature and did not require clinical interventions, with very few of the young people requiring any onward referral to more specialist services.

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.

There could be more mention of the impact that being at home has on the wellbeing of learners, parents/carers and staff, and the support that could be offered to them.

There should be reference to Elective Home Educated learners and the impact on their wellbeing and learning.

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 would likely be beneficial to provide training/awareness raising sessions for SLT, who could then disseminate key information to others, e.g. staff, governors.

Awareness raising at a Local Authority level would need to happen across different services.

Training would also need to be given to health colleagues, other agencies and third sectors.

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?

There may be a lack of understanding generally across Local Authorities and schools about the role of Regional Partnership Boards, and if they are holding stakeholders to account there would need to be guidance around this.

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 emphasises the importance of relationships. It is important to recognise that all children and young people should have the opportunity to talk about their concerns with adults in the language that they are most comfortable speaking.

The guidance could include the sharing of good practice through the medium of Welsh and the sharing of Welsh resources.

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

There could be a mention of Welsh resources that have been used in schools to promote the wellbeing of learners, e.g. Welsh medium ELSA resources. This could be emphasised in a case study.

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.

Page 15 - “Children and young people face many of the challenges adults face on a day-to-day basis. However, unlike adults who often have the experience and resilience to overcome their challenges, children and young people often lack the experience, maturity and ability to place their challenges in context. They are also unable to directly control certain aspects of their lives or to cope well when things go wrong”.

We feel that the above statement is overgeneralising. Given their stage of development it is unlikely that children would be stressed about the same things as adults.

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:

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