

# **PE2091/A: Provide funding to have a CAHMS worker and a nurse based within Scottish high schools**

## **Scottish Government submission, 30 April 2024**

The Scottish Government would like to begin by thanking the Committee for the opportunity to respond to petition **PE2091**, submitted by Ms Solman, on behalf of the 'Stand with Kyle Now' Charity. We are sorry to hear of the negative experiences families have faced when seeking mental health support for children and young people, and we thank Ms Solman for raising these concerns.

Mental health and wellbeing support for children and young people in schools remains an absolute priority for the Scottish Government. Schools form a key pillar of our local communities and play an important part in helping children and young people as they move through different transition points in their lives. Schools support children, young people and families to understand internal and external factors that affect them and to build the skills and resilience they need to face challenges into adulthood.

### **Access to School Nurses**

With regard to Ms Solman's request on school nurses placed in high schools - all primary and secondary schools in Scotland are able to access the support of School Nurse Services. In Scotland, the school nurse role was transformed in 2018, to ensure a focus on areas which are most likely to impact on a child's health and wellbeing through each life stage. This includes a focus on emotional health and wellbeing. School nurses are able to use their professional skills and expertise to support the mental health of children. They are also able to make referrals to more specialist services (such as CAMHS) where appropriate.

The Scottish Government has invested over £34 million since 2018. This has supported the recruitment of an additional 216.16 whole time equivalent school nurses which has meant that all Health Boards in Scotland have been able to recruit additional school nurses.

### **Support and guidance currently available within schools**

Under Curriculum for Excellence, health and wellbeing is one of the three core areas considered to be the responsibility of all school staff to support. Therefore it is expected that all adults working in schools will take collective responsibility for supporting and developing children and young people's mental, social and physical wellbeing. This is outlined in our 'Whole School Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing – Framework', published in August 2021. The Framework can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/whole-school-approach-mental-health-wellbeing/>

The Framework provides practical measures schools and local authorities can use to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. It details the role of all school staff in working collaboratively with other agencies to support children and young people. The Framework also identifies that schools play a key role in

supporting those with poor mental health and wellbeing through implementing clear referral policies and developing pathways, should additional support be required.

The 'Whole School Approach Framework' is clear in outlining that fostering relationship-based and nurturing approaches - which are trauma-informed - is key to providing the support children and young people need. This means, where a child or young person may be identified as potentially benefiting from CAMHS support, schools should be equipped to provide appropriate and sensitive onward referral and discuss these concerns with partner agencies.

This multi-agency approach to supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing at school is particularly important when considering that the CAMHS workforce, as a bespoke group of clinical specialists, operates in a targeted way. A reliance on partnership working, with the wider school and children and families workforce, is important because for the vast majority of children and young people, the support they need should be found in local community supports. The Scottish Government has provided local authorities with over £15 million per annum to provide community mental health and wellbeing supports and services for children, young people and families. In total, over £50 million has been invested since 2020 with a further £15 million committed for 2024/25. Local authorities report that, in the first half of 2023, more than 58,000 children, young people and their family members accessed community-based mental health support.

A further example of this partner working is in educational psychology, where professionals work with other school staff who have identified children and young people experiencing problems which affect their learning. Educational Psychologists build capacity in schools, working with other school staff to support children with additional support needs. They implement person centred approaches to tackle the impact of learning differences, preventing these challenges from causing further harm to a child or young person's mental and emotional development and wellbeing.

By implementing a multi-agency approach, children, young people and their families can get the most appropriate support, at the right time, in a setting which best meets their needs and be appropriately referred to more specialist services such as CAMHS where necessary.

To further embed the 'Whole School Approach', the Framework has been developed and centred around the Scottish Government's 'Getting It Right For Every Child' (GIRFEC) approach. GIRFEC articulates the importance of partnership working and provides a shared language which professionals across all public and third-sector organisations can deploy to provide support. In line with the children's planning elements of GIRFEC, schools and children's services work closely with CAMHS, and other relevant health and social care partners, to ensure there are clear and streamlined pathways in place for onward referral.

The 'GIRFEC National Practice Model' supports school staff and their partners to consider ways in which they can help improve wellbeing for a child or young person; including support for parents/carers. It provides a structure to analyse information consistently, allowing professionals to holistically take account of a child or young person's needs. It allows for easy identification of the strengths and challenges they may face, and can assist in identifying the most appropriate offer for timely support.

More information regarding the model can be accessed at:  
<https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/national-practice-model/>

To further support school staff in the implementation of the 'Whole School Approach', in June 2021, we published a new professional learning resource for all school staff. The resource provides the essential learning required to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. This work has ensured staff have access to the training and support materials they need to develop the skills critical to implementing the 'Whole School Approach'. Although aimed at school staff, the resource is free and available to anyone who wishes to access it. The resource can be accessed at: [CYPMH – Professional Learning Resource](#).

In addition, Education Scotland provide tools, guidance, and self-evaluation, for school staff to further strengthen support to children and young people and aid in the implementation and evaluation of embedding the 'Whole School Approach'.

The Committee will also be aware that the Scottish Government continues to provide local authorities with an annual investment of £16 million to support counselling services in place through secondary schools. These services are available to all children in Scotland aged 10 years and over. Counselling is just one of a range of mental health supports available to secondary school pupils, but is a key investment in an important preventative approach. School counsellors have helped children and young people explore, understand and overcome issues in their lives to improve their resilience, which may prevent the need for higher tier treatment approaches. Local authorities report that 13,150 children and young people accessed school counselling between July-December 2022.

Alongside this focus on early intervention and prevention, we continue to tackle unacceptably long waits for those children and young people who require CAMHS support. Whilst still work in progress, it was encouraging to see significant and sustained progress in the latest quarterly performance statistics. National performance against the 18 weeks CAMHS standard was the highest achieved since the quarter ending March 2016 and, despite increased demand, 1 in 2 people referred to CAMHS now start treatment within 6 weeks. We will continue to work with Health Boards to secure future improvement.

The Scottish Government would like to thank Ms Solman for raising her concerns with the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee. We hope that the information outlined above assures the Committee that supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people through schools is a top priority for the Scottish Government. While we appreciate Ms Solman's call for CAMHS staff to be directly based in high schools, we hope the Committee is satisfied that the approach adopted in Scotland is focused on securing the best outcomes for all children, young people and families. This allows CAMHS staff to focus on their important clinical role, while ensuring all of the adults who support children and young people in schools have the skills, knowledge and links to partner services they need to get those they support to the right care at the right time.

**Mental Health Directorate**