

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Ymchwiliad i Gwella Iechyd Emosiynol ac Iechyd Meddwl Plant a Phobl Ifanc | Inquiry into The Emotional and Mental Health of Children and Young People
EMH 48

Ymateb gan: Achub y Plant

Response from: Save the Children

Save the Children Consultation response to the Children, Young People and Education Committee Inquiry into the emotional and mental health of children and young people in Wales

About Us

Save the Children works in more than 120 countries. We want a future in which all children have the best chance to achieve their potential, to support, enable and empower children to ensure that no child is left behind.

Introduction

We are pleased that the Children, Young People, and Education Committee are undertaking an inquiry into the important issue of the emotional and mental health of children and young people in Wales. Save the Children welcomes the opportunity to respond to this inquiry and strongly believes that issues of child mental health and resilience should be discussed from an early intervention and wellbeing perspective in schools.

Key Points

We believe that in this Inquiry the Children and Young Peoples Committee should consider the following:

- The positive significance of providing a universal opportunity for early intervention mental health support in schools for children's emotional wellbeing, mental health. Having a universal provision would encourage and destigmatise the take up of other services e.g. school based counselling services. This is of fundamental value to children and young people and to their development of resilience and positive coping mechanisms for dealing with life's challenges.
- That the ability to support large numbers of children through a group work approach can take some of the pressure off an already overloaded
- CAMHS system by being able to identify when additional support is required. There is clearly value for money in reaching more children early, preventing issues from escalating, avoiding costly interventions later and poor outcomes over a lifetime.
- How this type of approach can be applied to supporting children facing a diverse range of challenges, such as the impact of poverty on their day to day lives, awareness of or being directly affected by traumatic events



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happening in their community. There can also be additional stress, and potential for cyber bullying through having access to and issues around social media.

- How building the resilience of children and young people should be a fundamental priority in education policy, ensuring a positive impact on broader educational outcomes such as raising school attendance, attainment levels, and building strong positive relationships with others.

Context

Through our evidence based programme work we can highlight the importance and effectiveness of early intervention programmes in promoting the resilience of children through early intervention. We currently deliver a Save the Children programme called Journey of Hope which was devised in the US specifically in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina for promoting the resilience of children and supporting them in the long-term aftermath of traumatic events. In the UK we have predominantly used the programme in supporting vulnerable children, Journey of Hope has been delivered in a number of settings and areas including Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taf. We are also involved in testing the programme to support refugee children and young people in the UK. We are currently working in partnership with the schools based counselling organisation Place2Be to support children affected by the Manchester bombing and Grenfell Tower fire.

What is Journey of Hope?

Children process traumatic events differently from adults. Frightening or traumatic events, including: violent conflict, abuse, poverty or horrible accidents - can cause different responses among children and adults. Without any support children are at risk from disrupted healthy social, emotional, academic and physical development. The **consequences of trauma for children** include health problems, difficulties with learning, ongoing behaviour problems, impaired relationships, and poor social and emotional competence.¹ The ability to cope with adversity has an enormous impact on a child's future. Save the Children's Journey of Hope programme aims to help children develop **positive strategies to cope with traumatic events**, build their natural **resilience** and strengthen their **social support networks**. By providing structured activities that strengthen the emotional well-being of children, we can help bring back a

¹ US National Centre for Children in Poverty; Facts About Trauma for Policymakers: Children's Mental Health; July 2007 ² Journey of Hope UK testing phase 2015.



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sense of normality when their world feels unfamiliar, and help them to cope with future challenges.

Journey of Hope can also help break down barriers to learning by building children's confidence, self-esteem and aspirations. Participants can apply the benefits to school, community, and family situations: it covers **positive ways of understanding and discussing feelings** - such as anger, sadness, fear, self-esteem, and bullying - and enables children to build an effective range of coping strategies and peer support.

Journey of Hope gives mental health organisations and professionals the ability to support children in a school based group setting and to identify children who may need referral pathways to clinical services or additional support. This is an early intervention programme that supports children as part of the school curriculum and offers an opportunity for children who may not otherwise be identified early as having additional needs for mental health and wellbeing support.

Feedback from participants of Journey of Hope

91% of children who have taken part in Journey of Hope said it taught them **how to cope when they are worried**. 90% felt that they had learned how to deal with **bullying**.²

“When I was upset last week, I talked about it in the session and it really helped me to deal with the nasty things people were saying and to believe in myself.”

Child Participant, Journey of Hope UK

“I need help with bullying, I get bullied every day, this group has helped me to stand up for myself.”

Child Participant, Journey of Hope UK

Professional feedback reflecting the importance of wellbeing support in educational settings through the Journey of Hope approach:

‘Journey of Hope has been an invaluable programme. Our school is at the centre of a socially deprived area, with 90% of our children brought to school in buses from outside. Many of our pupil’s face difficulties at home for a variety of reasons, and Journey of Hope gave us the opportunity to identify children who really needed to be involved in a focus group. ‘Journey of Hope’ is designed to support children with needs outside the classroom, and the pupils identified responded positively to Sarah and the E.L.S.A trained staff. They all made progress in specific areas during their ‘journey’, including emotional well-being,



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self-esteem and dealing with unhappiness. I would highly recommend the 'Journey of Hope' programme. It is an additional resource for children who struggle with the day to day pressures of life.' **Head teacher**

'We really are pleased about this project and have had such fantastic feedback from the children and staff. It has also given a voice to children who are perhaps under the radar and are not as vocal about things normally.' **Deputy head teacher**

Evidence based outcomes

1. Journey of Hope teaches children to recognise and manage their emotions, which builds confidence, self-esteem, and "I believe I can" attitudes.
2. Journey of Hope develops positive peer relationships, which help children experience a collaborative environment based on respect and understanding.
3. Journey of Hope decreases disruptive behaviours, which creates more concentrated learning time in class.

The evaluation design has been accepted for review for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Registry for Evidence-based Programmes and Practices (NREPP) and is included in the Early Intervention Foundations directory of evidenced based programmes.

Journey of Hope can be part of an on-going preventative early intervention strategy, which very much aligns with the consultation focus of this inquiry.

Our partnership with Place2Be

Place2Be's highly skilled practitioners deliver services in 282 schools across the UK in England, Scotland and Wales. P2B offer a menu of services for primary and secondary schools, providing support for children, parents, teachers and school staff.

P2B have been building a cohort of staff trained in Journey of Hope since 2015. Their Cardiff and Bath cluster is now fully operational including taking responsibility for quality assurance of the programme. We are also working with Place2be to offer a long terms support plan with Journey of Hope for the Incidents in Manchester and Grenfell Tower which will reach approximately 800 children in the next two years.

Appendix:

HOW JOURNEY OF HOPE WORKS

The programme is delivered in schools and runs over eight sessions. It is implemented by **trained mental health professionals** who are already working with schools and who can identify children that may need additional support. The sessions are designed as follows:

Session	Theme	Activities
1	Creating Safety	Every session involves games and activities to develop trust and positive coping mechanisms. These include parachute games to illustrate different feelings, art and writing activities to help children explore these themes in a personal context and group discussions to develop positive support networks with their peers.
2	Fear: Understanding and Coping	
3	Worry: Understanding and Coping	
4	Sadness: Understanding and Coping	
5	Anger: Understanding and Coping	
6	Bullying: Understanding and Coping	
7	Self Esteem and Taking Action	
8	Me, My Emotions, and My Community	

Impact

These sessions combine to:

1. **Increase positive coping skills** - participants have increased skills and knowledge about their emotions and the coping skills available to them in dealing with these emotions.
2. **Improve emotional well-being** - participants have a stronger sense of self-esteem, self-control and self-efficacy and feel empowered because they are more able to identify and control their emotions in an encouraging environment.
3. **Strengthen interpersonal communication and peer relationships** - participants build positive relationships with peers and have the words they need to express their feelings.
4. **Improve focus and concentration in school** - disruptive behaviour is reduced and participants develop techniques that enable them to concentrate more easily on tasks in school and to feel more confident and ready to learn.

“When I grow up I will still use the things I learnt in the group”

Child participant, Journey of Hope



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Programme evaluation

Children complete pre - and post-questionnaires to track their awareness of resilience before and after the programme. The children give their feedback through activities and discussions using a range of tools such as puppets and reflecting on their work. This all feeds into a global evaluation of Journey of Hope.

100% of our partners who have delivered Journey of Hope say that they want to run it again.²

² Journey of Hope UK testing phase 2015.

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