



Priorities for Scottish Government's mental health and wellbeing strategy

In September 2022, Place2Be responded to the Scottish Government's mental health and wellbeing strategy consultation. We based our response on our experience of delivering frontline mental health services in Scottish schools over the past 22 years. Here are the key points from our response, alongside proposals for action:

1. Focus on prevention and early intervention

- 50% of mental health problems in adults first develop before the age of 14. We must focus on prevention, early intervention and providing support at an early stage. This would lead to fewer/more appropriate CAMHS referrals and a long-term benefit to society and the economy (as shown by Pro Bono Economics' recent independent [report](#), demonstrating a £8 return for every £1 invested in Place2Be's primary school services).

2. Systematically implement a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing across every school in Scotland

- There is growing consensus that a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing is an effective framework - but not all [8 principles](#) have been implemented.
- There should be full implementation and resourcing of the whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing for all primary and high schools. A timeframe should be set for this as a direct response to pressure on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and growing mental health needs amongst children and young people.
- This should include access to whole family approaches, parenting skills and support.
- Continuing professional development across the school workforce is essential – from strengthened approaches within Initial Teacher Education, to a Foundation level for all staff in a school (i.e. [Mental Health Champions Foundation](#)) and strategic training and support for Scotland's school leaders (e.g. [Place2Be's Senior Mental Health Leads training programme](#)).
- 'Reflective supervision' for teachers/school leaders (delivered by a mental health professional) should be embedded – building professional resilience alongside an understanding of mental health in a school context.

3. Embed targeted mental health support in every school

- Every school (primary and high school) should have embedded evidence-based mental health support for the whole school community. This should be from qualified professionals with expertise in working with children and young people, using quality assured/evidence-based universal and targeted interventions.
- There needs to be more clarity on how this support should be commissioned, funded and quality assured for schools, with a partnership approach between schools, local authorities and NHS Boards.

4. Invest in and diversify Scotland's children's mental health workforce

- The children's mental health workforce needs long-term investment if we are to deliver on mental health support across all Scotland's schools.
- Where the voluntary sector is a provider of training, qualifications, and an employer, they can be used as a partner, bolstering the workforce.
- Bursaries and subsidies for training with voluntary sector providers should be considered. There is also the option of looking at a national apprenticeship standard for counsellors/mental health practitioners working in schools.

5. Embed wellbeing in education from an early stage

- Physical education is a regulated part of the Curriculum for Excellence, but mental health and wellbeing education is not.
- Through children and young people's education, encourage an increased focus on the promotion of wellbeing and positive mental health.
- Education Scotland's school inspection frameworks to have increased emphasis on pupil wellbeing as part of a whole school approach to mental health.