

**To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board**

**On: 17 March 2022**

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**Report by: Director of Children's Services**

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**Heading: Supporting the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Children & Young People in Schools & Early Years Establishments**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1. In line with the Children's Services priority to reduce inequalities and deliver improved health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people, a significant amount of health improvement activity has taken place across Renfrewshire establishments over the last 3 years.
- 1.2 We aim to prevent and treat mental health problems with the same commitment, passion and drive as we do physical health problems. Battling to get rid of the stigma surrounding mental health problems is ongoing.
- 1.3 Our ambition is that there is parity between emotional literacy and English literacy. Arguably, unless we get the emotional literacy part right, then learning in any other area can be very difficult. Our efforts are also concentrated on areas that affect mental health like substance misuse, RSHP (relationships, sexual health and parenthood), consent, coercive control and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual).
- 1.4 Our approach is 2-pronged and involves working closely with partners in Health, Social Work and the voluntary sector in:
  - Early Intervention and prevention work - curricular programmes and professional learning/training for staff
  - Provision of Supports – resources, signposting and counselling - tackling crisis situations and responding to distress in children, young people (CYP) and families
- 1.5 A variety of different curricular programmes, approaches and projects are currently in place. It is really important to us that all schools explicitly teach emotional literacy. All schools are currently using an evidence-based emotional literacy programme, for example, Promoting Alternative Thinking Skills (PATHS) and Emotionworks in Early Years/Primary schools and Living Life to the Full (LLTTF) in Secondary schools. These programmes promote

the emotional and social skills necessary to have better self-control, self-esteem, emotional awareness, basic problem-solving skills, social skills, and friendships. Overall, this builds resilience and ensures that our CYP are ready to learn, attain and achieve. Almost all of these programmes also provided recovery resources and adapted their training approaches in response to the pandemic.

- 1.6 In relation to factors that affect mental health like substance misuse, we have commissioned 'I am me Scotland' to develop online interactive and progressive curricular planners from early years to senior phase based on the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde materials. Children and young people are fully involved in the development work, as are those with lived experience. This work has been funded by Renfrewshire's Alcohol and Drugs Commission.
- 1.7 The national RSHP curriculum ([rshp.scot](https://www.rshp.scot)) is being used in most establishments and associated training is provided in partnership with Health colleagues to teachers and practitioners as and when required. Some schools are working towards the LGBT Charter Award with six schools having already achieved Bronze or Silver.
- 1.8 As part of the early intervention and prevention strategy, we have offered a wide range of training for senior leaders, practitioners and support staff. We need to be confident that our staff have the knowledge, understanding and skills to create a mentally healthy school, plan and deliver an appropriate Health and Wellbeing (HWB) curriculum, as well as being able to respond appropriately and confidently to support our CYP who struggle with poor mental health.

Training opportunities have included:

- ✓ Mental Health Awareness – annual update for all Renfrewshire staff
  - ✓ Understanding Self-Harm and Suicide – START (online), safeTALK, ASIST, AskTell, What's the Harm introduction session and 1 day training
  - ✓ Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood – introductory training on national resource and focused CLPL for PSE teachers on aspects of the resource
  - ✓ Early Protective Messages – early years staff
  - ✓ LGBT Scotland – offered to all establishments and bespoke support for Charter schools
  - ✓ SQA Mental Health Award – training, teaching and assessment resources with moderation activities
  - ✓ Mentors in Violence Prevention – peer mentoring programme in relation to gender violence. Whole school training offered with condensed offer to build capacity for PSE Teachers
  - ✓ Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOPS) – online safety
  - ✓ Healthy Minds and SAMH – promoting positive mental health and wellbeing
  - ✓ Seasons for Growth – coping with change, loss experienced due to Covid
  - ✓ Children's Mental Health Week Feb 2022 – staff information session focusing on skills, knowledge and their own wellbeing. Topics included self-harm, change, loss and grief, internet safety and mindfulness.
- 1.9 Of particular note, is our Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme which has been developed across the authority over the past six years. In

total eight secondary schools are currently delivering the programme with the remaining three secondaries coming on board next session. Through a peer mentoring model, our school communities are encouraged to think about the issues they experience which affect our relationships. Training also focuses on violence as a gendered issue, gender norms and recognising types of abuse and respect. Alongside our colleagues in Youth Services, our successful bid to Equally Safe in Scotland will see our mentors lead the development of MVP in the community. This work also involves offering colleagues from a variety of organisations (public and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector) across Renfrewshire an opportunity to access training appropriate to their setting.

- 1.10 To support our school communities returning from lockdown, we created our own 'Skills for Recovery' programme. This was initially a block of lessons for P6 to S6 focusing on what we know and what we can do to feel better. This resource developed in the form of digital leaflets and supports in response to the needs of our CYP and parents/carers when so many were isolating.
- 1.11 To improve emotional wellbeing and provide therapeutic support for CYP, staff and parents, counselling services are in place for all children and young people in primary, secondary and special schools in Renfrewshire provided by The Exchange Counselling Service. In addition, there are school-based counselling services in targeted schools, delivered by Place2Be. In the period July 2021 – December 2021, over 840 children and young people in Renfrewshire were supported through our counselling services.

Mindful of the impact on school staff of supporting CYP in distress, The Exchange are now offering a new service around supervision support for staff. This provides a safe confidential place for staff to talk about the impact on their emotional wellbeing and support them to develop healthy responses through self-reflective insight.

- 1.12 Our HWB Development Officer provides support in a variety of different ways; organising and providing training, developing digital policies, working with health and voluntary sector, providing bespoke support to schools, coordinator of Mentors in Violence Prevention, curriculum development work, signposting to services, producing monthly newsletters and maintaining our blog and Twitter page.
- 1.13 Our Health and Wellbeing [blog](#) as well as monthly health and wellbeing [newsletters](#) and Twitter @RenEdHWB are used to signpost school staff to professional learning opportunities, share good practice, provide information about services, and celebrate successes.

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## 2 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Education and Children's Services Policy Board note the content of the paper and recognise the ongoing commitment of Children's Services to improving the mental, emotional and social wellbeing of children, young people and staff.

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### 3. Background

- 3.1 The Scottish Government and COSLA have demonstrated their shared commitment to improving the mental health of children, young people and their families by working with delivery partners to invest in preventative services. The recommendations and actions from the [Better Mental Health in Scotland \(2018\)](#), [Audit Scotland Report \(2018\)](#) and [Mental Health Strategy 2017-27](#) highlight the significant need to provide opportunities for early intervention and prevention to avoid the unnecessary escalation of emotional distress in children and young people.
- 3.2 The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the way of life of every single person in Scotland. We know that the mental health impact of Covid-19 will not have been felt equally across Scotland. We also know that some of the mental health impacts of the pandemic will take time to materialise. As we recover from the pandemic, it is particularly important that there continues to be a focus on promoting good mental health and wellbeing and that support is provided whenever it is needed.
- 3.3 The Scottish Government publication [Mental Health – Scotland’s Transition and Recovery summary/](#) October 2020 cites some key themes from findings of the Research Advisory Group into the impact of Covid-19. These include elevated rates of stress or anxiety, loneliness and the effects of economic pressures on families. Rates of traumatic reactions are expected to increase; including substance misuse, domestic violence, self-harm and suicide.
- 3.4 In August 2021, Scottish Government published [Mental Health and Wellbeing: Whole School Approach: Framework](#) a whole school approach framework for schools to support children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing. It is vital that there is a consistent high quality approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing across all Renfrewshire education establishments.

#### Implications of this report

##### 1. Financial

None.

##### 2. HR and Organisational Development

None.

##### 3. Community/Council Planning

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|--------------------------|---|
| Our Renfrewshire is well | - Promotes wellbeing and resilience in children and young people.   |
| Our Renfrewshire is fair | - Aims to ensure that all children and young people have the opportunity to access appropriate support from skilled adults. |
| Our Renfrewshire is safe | - Aims to protect vulnerable children and young people and reduce the risk of harm.   |

Building strong, safe and resilient communities

Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all

Working together to improve outcomes

Promotes effective support for vulnerable children and young people.

- Aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all children and young people.

- Provides professional learning opportunities for staff to support improved health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people within Renfrewshire

**4. Legal**  
None.

**5. Property/Assets**  
None.

**6. Information Technology**  
None.

**7. Equality and Human Rights**

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

**8. Health and Safety**  
None.

**9. Procurement**  
None.

**10. Risk**  
None.

**11. Privacy Impact**  
None.

**12. Cosla Policy Position**  
None.

**13. Climate Risk**  
None.

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## List of Background Papers

Background papers are contained as live links within the Board Report.

The foregoing background paper will be retained within children's services for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is Tracy Stewart, Head of Service, email: [tracy.stewart@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:tracy.stewart@renfrewshire.gov.uk) 0141 618 7194

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### *Children's Services*

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