

## £8m programme to boost pupil and teacher wellbeing

Schools and colleges will benefit from a new multi-million training programme run by mental health experts, to help improve how they respond to the emotional impact of the coronavirus pandemic on their students and staff.

Ahead of pupils returning to school and college in September, the Government has announced the scheme will be backed by £8 million to launch the programme, which will provide schools and colleges all over England with the knowledge and access to resources they need to support children and young people, teachers and parents.

The autumn term will be the first time many pupils have been with their classmates or colleagues since schools closed to prevent the spread of the virus.

The Wellbeing for Education Return programme starting in September – will support staff working in schools and colleges to respond to the additional pressures some children and young people may be feeling as a direct result of the pandemic, as well as to any emotional response they or their teachers may still be experiencing from bereavement, stress, trauma or anxiety over the past months.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

It is a national priority to ensure all children are back in their classrooms in September, because that is the best place for them to be for their education, development and wellbeing. Young people are looking forward to getting back to school or college and being reunited with their friends and teachers, and there is a growing confidence among parents about their children returning.

But this pandemic has impacted people in different ways, particularly young people dealing with the disruption of the last few months but also on our dedicated teachers and education staff, who have responded heroically to the challenges.

By investing in this tailored training programme, we can help schools and colleges to support their pupils effectively, enabling them to have sensitive and open conversations with pupils.

Wellbeing for Education Return has been created with input from health partners, mental health experts, local authorities, and schools and colleges. Part of the funding will be used to recruit local experts to deliver the training programme to nominated staff in schools and colleges, and provide advice to school leaders through to March 2021.

Children's Minister Vicky Ford said:

It is only natural that some children and young people – just like many adults – may still be feeling anxious or sad as a result of coronavirus, especially those who have been away from the classroom for so long.

We've provided webinars, online resources and training modules for teachers ahead of the new term to help them address mental health and wellbeing issues among children and young people as they return to school in September. Now, on top of this unprecedented package of support we are going further by launching this new scheme, backed by £8 million, to bring in additional expert advice to schools and colleges from trained professionals.

There is no one simple solution to solving mental ill health, but by providing this wide range of support we are adding to the wealth of resources available – building on millions the Government has already invested in mental health charities to support adults and children affected by the pandemic.

Mental Health Minister Nadine Dorries said:

This pandemic has had huge consequences for us all. Children, parents, teachers and school staff have had their lives turned upside down and it's important we recognise the effect this can have on mental wellbeing.

That is exactly why we are ensuring the right support is in place for when school returns this September.

This scheme will help empower staff and parents to spot the signs when children are struggling and enable them to offer emotional support, whether they are dealing with bereavement, stress, trauma or other anxieties triggered by recent events.

The training will be offered to every school and college in England to help support pupil and student wellbeing, resilience and recovery in the context of Covid-19 and to prevent longer-term mental health problems developing, as well as helping to manage and support those who have pre-existing difficulties that may have been exacerbated by coronavirus. Nominated staff will receive the training through interactive webinars, which can then be shared more widely within their school or college. All training materials will also be made available directly to staff to use,

The nationally-developed training programme recognises that teachers and other school and college staff may need additional support to be able to understand the range of reactions young people may have as they return to the classroom and get back on track. It will help give them the confidence to

support pupils, their parents, carers and their own colleagues, and know how and where to access appropriate specialist support where needed.

In the weeks leading up to the summer holidays up to 1.6 million children returned to school. The Government is clear that being in the classroom is the best place for every young person's education and wellbeing and decisions are being guided at every stage by the scientific and medical advice. Detailed guidance sets out the protective measures schools and colleges should put in place ahead of the new term.

The new programme follows extensive support from the Government, not just over the pandemic but since the publication of the Green Paper on children and young people's mental health services. It follows a 'virtual visit' on Thursday 13 August by Minister Ford to one of the pilot sites involved in extending mental health trials for children entering care, to discuss the work they are doing as a result of the Green Paper measures and the improvements they have seen in mental health assessments for children entering care.

It builds on a series of online resources published by the Department for Education in June, designed by health and education experts for schools and colleges to boost mental health support for staff and pupils. In partnership with various charities, videos, webinars and teaching materials, these are designed to help foster conversations about mental health and reassure many young people who are worried about the impact of the virus on their lives. They also focus on helping hundreds of schools and colleges to support their pupils to build relationships, boost resilience, and continue to tackle bullying both in person and online.

It adds to the £9.2 million of Government funding for mental health charities to help families and children during the pandemic, helping them expand and reach those most in need.

Paul Whiteman, General Secretary of the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT), said:

NAHT welcomes this investment in training to support mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges. School leaders are deeply concerned about the impact the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown may have had on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. We want to ensure that that all pupils and staff are supported as they return in September, including those for whom the impact of the coronavirus pandemic has created more serious levels of concern.

Professor Peter Fonagy, Chief Executive of the Anna Freud Centre, said:

This new school year may be the toughest that teachers and pupils will have ever faced. Deprived and marginalised children and young people with pre-existing conditions are likely to be the worst

affected by the fallout of the pandemic. Bringing together expertise from mental health and education in this programme is both necessary and welcome.

Ensuring that every teacher and school and college leader has the support they need to respond to their pupils' mental health and wellbeing needs is the single most important task we have on our hands in education. At the Anna Freud Centre we are proud to be playing a key role in contributing to this support.

#### Notes to editor

- The Department of Health and Social Care announced £5 million of additional funding for MIND and the Mental Health Consortia Alliance to be allocated to national and local mental health organisations. This will enable them to fund services for people struggling with their mental wellbeing during this time.
- The Government is also providing a further £4.2 million to support mental health charities, including charities like Young Minds and Place 2 Be, which specifically support the mental health of children and young people. This is part of the Government's UK-wide £750 million package of support for the voluntary sector announced in April.
- NHS mental health services have remained open, and our community, talking therapies and children and young people's services have deployed digital tools to connect with people and provide ongoing support. Mental health services are expected to liaise with local partners to ensure referral routes are understood, particularly where children and young people are not at school.
- Public Health England have published [guidance](#) for parents and carers on supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people during the Covid-19 outbreak.
- This Government remains committed to longer term plans to improve mental health support, which we have adjusted in light of the pandemic, including adapting existing Mental Health Support Teams and plans for establishing more teams. Government is continuing to invest in specialist NHS services, and will take forward training for senior mental health leads in schools and colleges, after reviewing the best way to train those leads building on this new initiative.
- Wellbeing for Education Return is a joint initiative from the Department for Education, Department of Health and Social Care, Health Education England, NHS England and Public Health England. It is being developed by

MindEd, the e-learning platform, and delivered by the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families with input from mental health and education experts, local authorities, the voluntary sector and school and college leaders. The funding will be used to appoint and train local experts to adapt and provide training and resources to nominated staff in all state-funded schools and further education settings in England; and provide advice and support through to March 2021.