

Schools and colleges to benefit from boost in expert mental health support

- More than £17 million announced to improve mental health and wellbeing support in schools and colleges, part of Government's commitment to build back better for every young person
- New funding to train thousands of senior mental health leads, for school and college staff and to provide helpful resources
- Builds on Government's commitment to making mental health and wellbeing a central part of education recovery work

Thousands of children and young people will benefit from better support and expert advice in school and college thanks to a new multi-million package of mental health support designed to help them recover from the challenges of the pandemic.

As part of Mental Health Awareness week, the Government has today (Monday 10 May) announced more than £17 million to build on mental health support already available in education settings, as it continues to prioritise wellbeing alongside academic recovery.

Up to 7,800 schools and colleges in England will be offered funding worth £9.5 million to train a senior mental health lead from their staff in the next academic year, part of the Government's commitment to offering this training to all state schools and colleges by 2025.

Funding also includes a new £7 million Wellbeing for Education Recovery programme, which provides free expert training, support and resources for staff dealing with children and young people experiencing additional pressures from the last year – including trauma, anxiety, or grief. The programme builds on the success of the Department for Education's Wellbeing for Education Return, used by more than 90% of councils since its launch last summer.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

"I know how difficult the pandemic has been for many children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, and the next few months will be crucial in supporting their recovery. Getting back into the classroom was a vital step in this process but success in school and college goes beyond an excellent education – as parents we want our children to feel settled, calm and happy while they learn.

"That's why we're providing new funding to make experts available for support, advice and early intervention or specialist help, so every young person knows who and where to turn to as we build back better after the pandemic."

The Department for Education will also fund an adapted 'Link' programme which is designed to improve partnerships between health and education leaders in

local areas, raise awareness of mental health concerns and improve referrals to specialist help when needed.

The next Mental Health in Education Action Group, to take place on Monday 24 May, will continue to build on this support for all education settings, staff, parents, children and young people. Led by Ministers, and including Youth Mental Health Ambassador Dr Alex George, the work aims to better align the education and mental health sectors, including charities, to address concerns among leaders and staff about how best to support their pupils and students post-pandemic.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

“The past year has been incredibly difficult for so many children and young people whose resilience in the face of so much change has been heroic. Staff have been working so hard to support their pupils so I’m thrilled to be able to reassure them that we’re increasing funding, specialist support and training materials for expert care – building on the success of Wellbeing for Education Return and ensuring that the help is there for the children who need it.” Minister for Mental Health, Nadine Dorries, said:

“Our children and young people have faced unique challenges over the course of this very difficult and unsettling pandemic, and while they have shown great resilience, I recognise the need for additional support. “It is essential that children and young people can access the support they need and this extra funding further cements our commitment to their wellbeing, equipping them with the tools to look after their mental health.”

To support staff mental health, the Department for Education will also launch an Education Staff Wellbeing Charter this week, with a cross-sector commitment to protect and promote the wellbeing of all staff working in schools and colleges. The Department has also appointed Timewise – the national flexible working training provider – to train staff to implement flexible working where possible, and eight flexible working ambassador schools have been appointed to champion best practice and work with other schools locally.

Within the higher education sector, Universities Minister Michelle Donelan and incoming President of Universities UK Professor Steve West will jointly chair a new roundtable on suicide prevention in June. Through this they will develop and support the adoption of the Suicide Safer Universities framework and promote good practice in the sector, helping to make sure students are well supported during their time at university.

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan said:

“Students and university staff have faced disruption and uncertainty over the past year, and supporting their mental health and wellbeing remains a top priority.

“The Suicide Prevention roundtable with UUK is an important step in our commitment to supporting higher education providers to care for their

students experiencing mental health issues, and I am proud to be a part of it. I strongly urge anyone who is struggling with mental health issues to seek help from their local NHS trust, which now provides dedicated, 24-hour support lines, including suicide prevention support.”