

Select Committee Inquiry:

Children and young people's mental health - role of education

1. I am employed by Portsmouth City Council and my role is "Education Support Manager and Principal Educational Psychologist".
2. As chair elect of the executive committee of the National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists, known as NAPEP, I am making this response on behalf of NAPEP.
3. NAPEP seeks to support, advise and influence the leadership of educational psychology services and supports the continuing development of our profession in order to achieve the most positive, inclusive outcomes for children, young people and their families. An eligible principal educational psychologist is defined as: "the most senior qualified and registered Educational Psychologist actively managing a team of EPs - who are commissioned to work within a local authority - as all of or a part of their substantive role". The title of the role is not a qualifying criterion. There are no formal membership arrangements or subscriptions. All Principal Educational Psychologists, known as PEPs, are entitled to involvement with and support from NAPEP as a community of peers and to have access to our email communication list, NAPEP-L.
4. NAPEP recognises that principal educational psychologists and educational psychologists within their Services have key skills in understanding the interface between the curriculum, emotional development and the educational environment and in helping others to apply their skills most effectively, and in evaluating outcomes.
5. Principal Educational Psychologists (PEPs) work at a strategic level within Local Authorities, taking responsibility for Educational Psychology Services that typically work at three levels (1) with individual children and young people, assessing, advising and supporting them (2) with schools or settings as a whole, at an organisational level, offering consultation, training or support to facilitate cultural or process changes (3) At a systemic level, using evidence informed psychological theory to develop policy and practice across a Local Authority.
6. As such PEPs are well placed to understand the needs of children and young people in relation to emotional well-being and mental health, the needs of staff working with children and young people, and the approaches and support that

is working well within Local Authorities and where there are gaps in support and provision.

Executive Summary

7. NAPEP recognises that principal educational psychologists and educational psychologists within their Services have key skills in understanding the interface between the curriculum, emotional development and the educational environment and in helping others to apply their skills most effectively, and in evaluating outcomes.
8. Addressing the culture of the school is key to ensuring that we can support discussion about mental health openly without stigma. Preparation of the whole organisation supports a receptive ethos for both general emotional well-being as well as promoting the efficacy of more specialist interventions.
9. NAPEP is aware that school staff do not always feel equipped to deal with the issues faced by children and young people in relation to emotional well-being and mental health, and there appears to be a gap between the level of support they can offer and what is available from other agencies such as CAMHS. Educational psychology services can help bridge that gap.
10. Schools need to be sure that they are accessing quality- assured, evidence based training and that it is easy to access.
11. Bullying is not a new concern for children and young people but it has been exacerbated by social media. There is a need for children and young people and the adults working with them to not only be "emotionally literate" but also "digitally literate". Training for schools and support for children and young people needs to be provided regularly.
12. NAPEP wishes to demonstrate that we welcome the Select Committee Inquiry. Educational Psychology Services already make a significant contribution to supporting children, young people and educational settings with regard to emotional well-being and mental health and NAPEP considers that it is essential that this involvement is recognised and strengthened

Promoting emotional wellbeing, building resilience, and establishing and protecting good mental health

13. Wellbeing and resilience underpins all aspects of education and learning. NAPEP members report that they are called upon to support the development of strategic plans because of our understanding of school cultures and organisation and our links with partners in Education, Health and Social Care. In Portsmouth consultation and input form a range of professionals and

stakeholders has led to the production of the "Whole School Strategy to Promote Well-being and Resilience"¹

14. PEPs recognise the importance of "prevention rather than cure" and of developing an emotionally literate climate in schools. Addressing the culture of the school is key to ensuring that we can support discussion about mental health openly without stigma. Preparation of the whole organisation supports a receptive ethos for both general emotional well-being as well as promoting the efficacy of more specialist interventions. To this end many Educational Psychology Services were involved in the roll out of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) and Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) and there is still remains a legacy within many schools. Northamptonshire Educational Psychology Service, for example, works with schools to ensure they are "mental health aware"; schools are supported to take on whole school initiatives as an underpinning to more tightly focused or specialist pieces of work.
15. Looked After Children are a particularly vulnerable group. Staffordshire Educational Psychology Service and Portsmouth Educational Psychology Team work with their respective Virtual Schools to offer training on attachment which is available to all school staff to improve awareness and skills, especially in relation to resilience.
16. NAPEP recognises the value of Nurture Groups in schools because of the role they can play in building emotional health and well-being of those children finding it difficult to cope in a mainstream class due to social, emotional, behavioural and/or mental health issues. In many Local Authorities educational psychologists train and support staff working in nurture groups
17. NAPEP knows that many EP Services provide critical incident support to schools and a timely and effective response to schools when a distressing or traumatic event occurs can make a significant difference to outcomes for the children and young people involved, and also to staff. In January 2017 Camden EP Service ran a one day workshop open to all EP Services to share good practice and refresh skills.

Support for young people with mental health problems

18. Members of NAPEP note that there is a gap in provision for children and young people with mental health problems. This view has been formed through Local Authorities/Area consultations. For example in Portsmouth children and young people² have said that they want more self-help and peer

¹ Portsmouth Whole School Strategy to Promote Well-being and Resilience(2017-2019) (draft)

²Portsmouth Stakeholder consultation report. March 2016

support available for themselves and and parents/ carers. They also want improved access to specialist services and to be able to see the same key worker over time. They also would like to be able to receive support in school rather than always go to a clinic setting.

19. Across the country PEPS report that their EP services train and supervise Emotional Literacy Support Assistants, known as ELSAs. ELSAs are employed by schools to provide support to children and young people experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. They work with pupils individually and/or in small groups. They have a key role in providing early identification and preventative work and for teaching children emotional literacy skills to build resilience. ELSAs report that the issues and needs brought to their attention are growing in frequency and intensity. They do not always feel equipped to deal with the issues and there appears to be a gap between the level of support they can offer and what is available from other agencies such as CAMHS. Psychologists provide supervision for ELSAs and bridge in the gap between ELSA competence and confidence & referral to CAMHS. EPs can minimise the need for referral to specialist health agencies and ensure that the referrals made are appropriate.

Building skills for professionals

20. NAPEP considers that it is hugely important to develop and maintain the skills of professionals to support staff working with children in relation to social, emotional and mental health. Practically all EP services have a range of training opportunities for school staff (individuals or whole staff groups) focussing on aspects of emotional well-being and mental health. For example, Gloucestershire EP Service has a directory of courses including "Therapeutic story writing", "Developing resilience in children" and "Nurture Groups". Derbyshire County Council EP Service is shortly to hold a conference for school staff called "Mental health Matters; aiming to raise awareness of and promote good mental health for staff and students". Schools need to be sure that they are accessing quality- assured, evidence based training. Special Needs Coordinators and Pastoral leaders in schools in Portsmouth asked for all training opportunities for Social and Emotional Health to be promoted in one place to make it easier to find all relevant training opportunities. All courses offered by the EP service, the Multi-Agency Behaviour Support service and CAMHS adhere to an agreed set of training standards and are now grouped together on the Services Network.
21. NAPEP wishes to highlight the role that educational psychologists can play, along with CAMHS colleagues, in skilling up not just the schools workforce but many others in the wider workforce and the potential positive impact which research suggests can be achieved when a whole local system - everyone from midwives and health visitors to early years settings, schools, targeted early help and social care, adopts a consistent theoretical framework - such as restorative approaches - to help build emotional resilience in children, young people and families.

Social media and the internet

22. NAPEP recognises that the internet can provide advice and support for children, young people and parents. However, there is a bewildering range of sites offering advice and guidance and it can be difficult to be sure of the quality of information. Social media is an everyday part of life now for many children and young people. Research investigating the relationship between the social networking site Facebook and well-being is limited and inconsistent but there is some evidence that Facebook can be negatively associated with well-being, with decreased levels of self-esteem and life-satisfaction³. Bullying remains a significant for children and young people and it has been exacerbated by social media. In response to these finding and the changing nature of bullying experienced by children and young people, The South of England branch of NAPEP has invited Professor Andy Phippen from Plymouth University to share his research on young people's use of social media and the need to be not only "emotionally literate" but "digitally literate" at a regional PEP professional meeting in March 2017, so that we can share ideas and practice within our own Local Authorities.
23. In conclusion, NAPEP wishes to demonstrate that we welcome the Select Committee Inquiry. Educational Psychology Services already make a significant contribution to supporting children, young people and educational settings with regard to emotional well-being and mental health and NAPEP considers that it is essential that this involvement is recognised and strengthened.

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18.01.17.

³ Kalpidou, M., Costin ,D. & Morris, J. (2011) The relationship between Facebook and the well-being of undergraduate college students. *Cyberpsychology, Behaviour and Social Networking* 14 (4) 183-9

