

A better future for mental health provision in schools

This was passed at London Young Labour AGM January 2016.

London Young Labour notes:

1. 1 in 10 children and young people aged 5 - 16 suffer from a diagnosable mental health disorder - that is around three children in every class.
2. Between 1 in every 12 and 1 in 15 children and young people deliberately self-harm.
3. Nearly 80,000 children and young people suffer from severe depression.
4. The number of young people aged 15-16 with depression nearly doubled between the 1980s and the 2000s.
5. The proportion of young people aged 15-16 with a conduct disorder more than doubled between 1974 and 1999.
6. 50% of lifetime cases of diagnosable mental illness begin by the age of 14.
7. Early identification of a problem and early intervention to provide support are key to improving outcomes and yet many people wait more than ten years after the first onset of a disorder before seeking treatment.
8. That Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disability and youth mental health clearly overlap, with young people with learning difficulties being more likely to suffer from mental ill health.
(<http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/content/assets/PDF/publications/children-andyoung-people.pdf?view=Standard>)
9. That 25-40% of people with learning disabilities have mental health problems, and that the prevalence rate of a diagnosable psychiatric disorder is 36% in children and adolescents with learning difficulties, as opposed to 8% in those who do not have a learning disability. (ibid, at 6)
10. Research undertaken by the National Association of Special Schools (NASS) suggests that Special School (as in schools in general - <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/dec/25/teach-mental-health-in-primarieschools-says-advisory-group>) teaching and other staff show misunderstandings about mental health among young people in their schools. (<http://www.nassschools.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/public/Making-Sense-ofMental-Health.pdf> - at 7)
11. Guidance from the Department for Education advises that schools that behaviour interpreted as disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise, should be viewed as potentially arising from unmet needs of the young person.
(https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/416786/Mental_Health_and_Behaviour_-_Information_and_Tools_for_Schools_240515.pdf - Summary)

12. Responsibility for providing Special Educational Provision (SEP) is the legal responsibility of the young person's Local Authority.

London Young Labour believes:

1. Good mental health provision should be accessible for everyone.
2. School can be incredibly stressful period for young people and often there are not the resources needed to deal with it.
3. Ensuring that young people have access to good mental health services and are aware of the importance of mental health issues is extremely important.
4. Teachers should be better aware of how to deal with pupils with mental health issues and schools should be better equipped to help students who are suffering from mental health issues, and also generally better equipped to cater to the welfare needs of their students.
5. Teaching staff should be aware of the link between SEN and mental ill-health, and should work with the young person to support them, or to arrange support, in a way that is respectful and accessible for the young person.
6. That while the Government is ostensibly starting to take the issue seriously, their focus on "helping children to help themselves" and peer support is insufficient to deal with the problem.
7. Each and every school should have adults with the responsibility of helping children with mental health issues.
8. As such, children should be trained so as to be better aware of how to deal with pupils with mental health issues and schools should be better equipped to cater to the welfare needs of their students.
9. This should be alongside dedicated teaching of mental health and wellbeing to raise awareness among children and foster a more caring atmosphere in which children can express themselves without fear of stigma.

London Young Labour resolves:

1. To campaign for schools in London to...
 - a. Ensure that schools have a programme to help develop all children's emotional and social wellbeing.
 - b. Ensure that teachers and other staff are trained to identify when children at school show signs of anxiety or social and emotional problems. They should be

able to discuss the problems with parents and carers and develop a plan to deal with them, involving specialists where needed.

- c. Provide schools with resources to help refer children to mental health services, both in the public and third sector where that would be helpful for the child.
2. To campaign for Local Authorities in London to ensure that, according to their legal duties under the Children and Families Act 2014, children and young people's Special Educational Needs are assessed, identified and provided for.
3. To challenge the idea perpetuated by current public discourse that mental illness is purely a problem stemming from within the individual rather than from societal problems such as bullying within schools.

Sources:

http://www.youngminds.org.uk/training_services/policy/mental_health_statistics

http://www.youngminds.org.uk/training_services/young_minds_in_schools/sen/mental_health_secondary

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-23195837>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph12>

<http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/content/assets/PDF/publications/children-andyoung-people.pdf?view=Standard>

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/dec/25/teach-mental-health-in-primaryschools-says-advisory-group>

<http://www.nasschools.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/public/Making-Sense-ofMental-Health.pdf>

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/416786/Mental_Health_and_Behaviour_-_Information_and_Tools_for_Schools_240515.pdf

Children and Families Act 2014

Definition of SEN: A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she: has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions
Children and Families Act 2014, Part 3, S20.