

Supporting mental health in schools and colleges

Background

We all have mental health. It is about our feelings, our thinking, our emotions and our moods.

It is quite common for someone to struggle with their mental health at some time in their lives.

One in every eight young people will have these problems in a year. Most serious mental health problems in adults start while people are still young.

This is why it is important to help children with their mental health and wellbeing while they are still at school and college. Lots of schools and colleges are doing things to support their students' mental health. There is not enough information yet about how to do this best.

Your school or college is part of a project to:

1. help understand what children and young people need
2. help understand how schools and colleges can help

The project is run by the Anna Freud Centre, which is a children's mental health charity. The project is funded by the Mercers' Company.

Helping to understand what children and young people need

The schools and colleges in the project use the wellbeing survey. It is a series of questions that students answer once a year. The questions are about their mental health and wellbeing. The information helps schools and colleges understand more about their students but individuals are not identified. Information about how this data is used can be found in the 'Mercers' wellbeing evaluation Privacy Notice'. A copy of this is available upon request from your school or college.



Helping to understand how schools and colleges can help

The project team helps schools and colleges to collect information to show whether the support they provide for students mental health is working. This is called an evaluation.

This information comes from surveys, interviews or group discussions. This sometimes involves students and sometimes teachers or other school or college staff.

Some of these evaluations have finished. These found successes and areas that the schools and colleges could improve in the future. Further information about these evaluations can be found here: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/evidence-based-practice-unit/sites/evidence-based-practice-unit/files/mercersreport_final_nov_2019.pdf



What else can we do to support young people's mental health?

Here are some tips about talking to your child if you are concerned about their mental health.¹

1. Make conversations about mental health a normal part of life

- Anywhere is a good place to talk; in the car, walking the dog or cooking together.
- Introduce talking about feelings, for example by speaking about how a TV character might feel.
- Make it clear that you are always available to talk.

2. Give your full attention, be interested and take it seriously.

- Offer empathy (understanding).
- Making children feel really understood may help them to manage their emotions.

3. Ask open questions.

- Such as "How did your day go today?" This will help keep the conversation going.

4. Take time to reflect.

- Thinking about what might be going on in your child's mind and being aware of your own thoughts and feelings may help you support your child.

¹ this content was drawn from the Anna Freud Centre's '[You're never too young to talk mental health: Tips for talking for parents and carers](#)' leaflet

Where can I go for more information and support?

National resources :

For more help on talking to your children about mental health visit the [Schools in Mind](#) webpage where there is advice for parents. www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/schools-in-mind/resources-for-schools/

The [On My Mind](#) website is a great place to find out more about mental health issues, support that is available and self-care activities that may be helpful. www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/

[Young Minds](#) offer a parents' helpline to offer advice to parents and carers worried about a child or young person under 25. Call 0808 802 5544.

If problems continue or become too much, we strongly recommend that you visit your GP.

If you would like to find out more about the evaluation please email: wellbeing.evaluation@annafreud.org



Local resources :

