

Behaviour and mental health in schools' inquiry

Terms of Reference

Background

There has been growing concern from members of the Coalition in regard to how children and young people's behaviour is approached in education settings through the use of punitive approaches, and the subsequent impact of such approaches on mental health and wellbeing. This was raised as a prominent concern in CYPMHC Members' Report's [2020](#) and [2021](#).

There has also been a rise in mental health problems among children and young people, with one in six children and young people aged 6 to 16 experiencing a mental health problem in 2021 compared to one in nine in 2017. There is an emerging body of evidence that highlights the link between behaviours that challenge and mental health problems amongst children and young people. There is a need to better understand the drivers of poor behaviour, such as mental health, trauma and inequality, with evidence suggesting that these groups are disproportionately impacted by punitive approaches to behaviour management.

Improving behaviour and discipline in schools is a key policy objective for the Department for Education, with initiatives such as 'Behaviour Hubs' and a new national behaviour survey being implemented as part of their [behaviour programme](#). We are concerned that the links between mental health and behaviour are not being recognised in this work.

Purpose

The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition want to respond to the concerns of our members, and the children and families they work with, and bring together a comprehensive evidence base that demonstrates the links between behaviour and mental health. We also want to understand what role a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing can play in improving behaviour, mental health and wellbeing.

Scope

The inquiry will be focused on schools, both primary and secondary, as this is where current behaviour policy from national government is focused. The inquiry will cover England-only.

The inquiry will examine:

- Evidence on the links between mental health and behaviour
- How current approaches to behaviour management in school impact young people's mental health and wellbeing and their families
- What role a whole school and trauma informed approach can play in promoting a positive learning environment
- Examples of best practice.

Methodology

We will conduct desk-based research to explore existing and will gather new evidence through:

- Surveys for professionals, young people, and parent-carers
- Virtual evidence sessions with key stakeholders

We will bring together our findings into a final report, which will set out a series of recommendations for national government and for school-based practice.

The inquiry will also establish a Youth Advisory Group and a Parent-Carer Advisory Group to help inform the inquiry and to provide expert advice as the inquiry progresses. We will meet with both advisory groups three times through the course of the inquiry.

Timeline

The inquiry will work to the following indicative timelines:

- May 2022: Launch call for evidence
- June 2022: Call for evidence closes and analysis
- July-August 2022: Evidence sessions
- November 2022: Launch of final report

Contact information

Any communications concerning this inquiry can be sent to: Charlotte.Rainer@cypmhc.org.uk