

Stane Primary School and Nursery Class



Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
2022-2023

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy 2019-20



Table of Contents

Policy Rationale, Scope and Aim	3
Lead Members of staff	4
Child's Plan	4
Teaching about Mental Health	5
Sign Posting.....	5
Warning Signs.....	6
Managing Disclosures.....	6
Protocol Flowchart.....	7
Confidentiality.....	8
Working with Parents.....	8
Mental Health First Aiders.....	9
Training & Policy Review.....	10

Appendices

A: Further information and sources of support about common mental health issues.....	11
B: Guidance and advice.....	14
C: Data Sources.....	15
D: Sources or support at school and in the local community.....	15
E: Talking to students when they make a mental health disclosure.....	18
F: What makes a good CAMHS referral?.....	21

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy 2019-20

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy

Rationale

In an average classroom, three children will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health condition. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for the many students affected both directly, and indirectly by mental ill health.

Policy Statement

Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (World Health Organization)

At our school, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and student body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable students.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. In an average classroom, three children will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for students affected both directly, and indirectly by mental ill health.

Scope

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all teaching staff and non-teaching staff.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our medical information in cases where a student's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the ASN policy where a student has an identified special educational need.

The Policy Aims to

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and students
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide support to students suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy 2019-20

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students. Staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

Child Protection Officer	Laura Simpson
CLPL Lead	Laura Simpson
Head of Health & Wellbeing	Laura Simpson/Julie Scott
Mental Health Lead & MH First Aider	Laura Simpson/Ashleigh Thomson
First Aider Lead	Julie Scott

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should speak to a member of the SMT in the first instance. If there is a fear that the student is in danger of immediate harm, child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the designated Child Protection Officer, or Head Teacher and a CP1 form completed. If the student presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the SMT.

Child's Plan

When a child or young person is diagnosed as having a mental health condition, it is important that a Child's Plan TAC (team around the child) meeting is created to support their individual needs. This should be drawn up by Pupil Support staff and will involve the pupil, the parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Who is a partner to the plan
- Reason for the plan - including details of a pupil's condition, special requirements & precautions, medication and any side effects
- Summary of the child's needs against the well-being indicators
- Desired outcomes
- Resources
- Timescales for action and change
- What needs to be done and by whom - who to contact in an emergency
- Any contingency arrangements, if necessary
- Arrangements for reviewing the plan

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy 2019-20

Teaching about Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our students to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental Life Skills and Health and Wellbeing Curriculum.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we are teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

We will follow the Curriculum for Excellence Health & Wellbeing guidelines to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, students and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. What support is available within our school and local community, who it is aimed at and how to access it is outlined in Appendix D.

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as the toilet doors and noticeboards and will regularly highlight sources of support to students within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of student help-seeking by ensuring students understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why to access it
- What is likely to happen next

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy 2019-20

Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns to Pupil Support.

Managing disclosures

A student may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff, so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure. (See mental health protocol).

If a student chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be **calm, supportive and non-judgemental**.

Staff should **listen**, rather than advice and our first thoughts should be of the student's **emotional and physical safety** rather than of exploring 'Why?' For more information about how to handle mental health disclosures sensitively see appendix E.

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and held on the student's confidential file. This written record should include:

- Date
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Recorded facts from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information should be shared with the Pupil Support staff who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps. See appendix F for guidance about making a referral to CAMHS.

Protocol

In the event of a pupil disclosing information to you, staff have been advised to follow the following protocol. The protocol poster will be included in forwards plans and displayed in the staffroom.

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy 2019-20

Confidentiality

We should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. If we it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a student on then we should discuss with the student:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

We should never share information about a student without first telling them. Ideally, we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and/ or a parent, e.g. where a young person up to the age of 16 is at risk.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the SMT, as this helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the student, it ensures continuity of care in our absence and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the student and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with. Parents should be informed and students may choose to tell their parents themselves.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the Child Protection Officer, LAURA SIMPSON , **must be informed immediately.**

Working with Parents/ Carers

Parents/ Carers are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to get about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our regular information evenings
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in HWB and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy 2019-20

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents, we should consider the following questions (on a case by case basis):

- Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.
- Where should the meeting happen?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the student, other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect.

We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away where possible as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you're sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too e.g. parent helplines and forums.

We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next step and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

Mental Health First Aiders in School

The following members of staff are qualified Scottish Mental Health First Aiders.

Staff Member	Position
Ashleigh Thomson	
Robert Watson	

SafeTALK Trained Staff in School

The following members of staff are qualified Scottish Mental Health First Aiders.

Staff Member	Position
N/A	

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy 2019-20

ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Technique) Trained Staff in School

The following members of staff are qualified Scottish Mental Health First Aiders.

Staff Member	Position
Laura Simpson	Head Teacher

Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues and receive annual child protection training in order to enable them to keep students safe.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CLPL will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due developing situations with one or more students.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CLPL should be discussed with INSERT NAME, our CLPL Coordinator who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

The [Charlie Waller Memorial Trust](http://www.charliewallertrust.org) provided funded training to schools on a variety of topics related to mental health including twilight, half day and full day INSET sessions. For further information email admin@cwmt.org or call 01635 869754.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. It is next due for review in September 2022.

Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis. If you have a question or suggestion about improving this policy, please contact the school.

This policy will always be immediately updated to reflect personnel changes.

Appendix A: Further information and sources of support about common mental health issues

Prevalence of Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Issues¹

- 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.
- Between 1 in every 12 and 1 in 15 children and young people deliberately self-harm.
- There has been a big increase in the number of young people being admitted to hospital because of self harm. Over the last ten years this figure has increased by 68%.
- More than half of all adults with mental health problems were diagnosed in childhood. Less than half were treated appropriately at the time.
- Nearly 80,000 children and young people suffer from severe depression.
- The number of young people aged 15-16 with depression nearly doubled between the 1980s and the 2000s.
- Over 8,000 children aged under 10 years old suffer from severe depression.
- 3.3% or about 290,000 children and young people have an anxiety disorder.
- 72% of children in care have behavioural or emotional problems - these are some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

Below, we have sign-posted information and guidance about the issues most commonly seen in school-aged children. The links will take you through to the most relevant page of the listed website. Some pages are aimed primarily at parents but they are listed here because we think they are useful for school staff too.

Support on all of these issues can be accessed via [Young Minds](http://www.youngminds.org.uk) (www.youngminds.org.uk), [Mind](http://www.mind.org.uk) (www.mind.org.uk) and (for e-learning opportunities) [Minded](http://www.minded.org.uk) (www.minded.org.uk).

Self-harm

Self-harm describes any behaviour where a young person causes harm to themselves in order to cope with thoughts, feelings or experiences they are not able to manage in any other way. It most frequently takes the form of cutting, burning or non-lethal overdoses in adolescents, while younger children and young people with special needs are more likely to pick or scratch at wounds, pull out their hair or bang or bruise themselves.

Online support

SelfHarm.co.uk: www.selfharm.co.uk

National Self-Harm Network: www.nshn.co.uk

¹ Source: Young Minds

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy 2019-20

Books

Pooky Knightsmith (2015) *Self-Harm and Eating Disorders in Schools: A Guide to Whole School Support and Practical Strategies*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Keith Hawton and Karen Rodham (2006) *By Their Own Young Hand: Deliberate Self-harm and Suicidal Ideas in Adolescents*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Carol Fitzpatrick (2012) *A Short Introduction to Understanding and Supporting Children and Young People Who Self-Harm*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Depression

Ups and downs are a normal part of life for all of us, but for someone who is suffering from depression these ups and downs may be more extreme. Feelings of failure, hopelessness, numbness or sadness may invade their day-to-day life over an extended period of weeks or months, and have a significant impact on their behaviour and ability and motivation to engage in day-to-day activities.

Online support

Depression Alliance: www.depressionalliance.org/information/what-depression

Books

Christopher Dowrick and Susan Martin (2015) *Can I Tell you about Depression?: A guide for friends, family and professionals*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Anxiety, panic attacks and phobias

Anxiety can take many forms in children and young people, and it is something that each of us experiences at low levels as part of normal life. When thoughts of anxiety, fear or panic are repeatedly present over several weeks or months and/or they are beginning to impact on a young person's ability to access or enjoy day-to-day life, intervention is needed.

Online support

Anxiety UK: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Books

Lucy Willetts and Polly Waite (2014) *Can I Tell you about Anxiety?: A guide for friends, family and professionals*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Carol Fitzpatrick (2015) *A Short Introduction to Helping Young People Manage Anxiety*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Obsessions and compulsions

Obsessions describe intrusive thoughts or feelings that enter our minds which are disturbing or upsetting; compulsions are the behaviours we carry out in order to manage those thoughts or

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy 2019-20

feelings. For example, a young person may be constantly worried that their house will burn down if they don't turn off all switches before leaving the house. They may respond to these thoughts by repeatedly checking switches, perhaps returning home several times to do so. Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) can take many forms – it is not just about cleaning and checking.

Online support

OCD UK: www.ocduk.org/ocd

Books

Amita Jassi and Sarah Hull (2013) *Can I Tell you about OCD?: A guide for friends, family and professionals*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Susan Connors (2011) *The Tourette Syndrome & OCD Checklist: A practical reference for parents and teachers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Suicidal feelings

Young people may experience complicated thoughts and feelings about wanting to end their own lives. Some young people never act on these feelings though they may openly discuss and explore them, while other young people die suddenly from suicide apparently out of the blue.

Online support

Prevention of young suicide UK – PAPYRUS: www.papyrus-uk.org

On the edge: ChildLine spotlight report on suicide: www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/research-and-resources/on-the-edge-childline-spotlight/

Books

Keith Hawton and Karen Rodham (2006) *By Their Own Young Hand: Deliberate Self-harm and Suicidal Ideas in Adolescents*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Terri A. Erbacher, Jonathan B. Singer and Scott Poland (2015) *Suicide in Schools: A Practitioner's Guide to Multi-level Prevention, Assessment, Intervention, and Postvention*. New York: Routledge

Eating problems

Food, weight and shape may be used as a way of coping with, or communicating about, difficult thoughts, feelings and behaviours that a young person experiences day to day. Some young people develop eating disorders such as anorexia (where food intake is restricted), binge eating disorder and bulimia nervosa (a cycle of bingeing and purging). Other young people, particularly those of primary or preschool age, may develop problematic behaviours around food including refusing to eat in certain situations or with certain people. This can be a way of communicating messages the child does not have the words to convey.

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy 2019-20

Online support

Beat – the eating disorders charity: www.b-eat.co.uk/about-eating-disorders

Eating Difficulties in Younger Children and when to worry: www.inourhands.com/eating-difficulties-in-younger-children

Books

Bryan Lask and Lucy Watson (2014) *Can I tell you about Eating Disorders?: A Guide for Friends, Family and Professionals*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Pooky Knightsmith (2015) *Self-Harm and Eating Disorders in Schools: A Guide to Whole School Support and Practical Strategies*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Pooky Knightsmith (2012) *Eating Disorders Pocketbook*. Teachers' Pocketbooks

Digital Wellbeing

Young people are growing up in a world where technology has always been present for them, which can have a positive and negative impact on their lives. Technology and the internet should be there to enhance and simplify our lives rather than be a cause of distraction, worry or upset. However, not all online experiences are positive for young people, and this can have a negative impact on how they feel about themselves, their friendships and relationships and even how they see the wider world. Digital wellbeing is a term used to describe the impact of technologies and digital services on people's mental, physical, social and emotional health. An overuse of technology can also impact upon a young person's attention span and contribute to behaviour problems. It is important that young people balance time online and take part in screen free activities, alongside understanding when technology is causing mental health issues and seek further support.

Online support

Childnet - Digital Wellbeing: <https://www.childnet.com/help-and-advice/digital-wellbeing/>

Internet Matters: https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/manage-children-digital-wellbeing/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAlKmeBhCkARIsAHy7WVvEqB1nrKEOy9GKiedExlBGwimsJBLrYffCUFLDhUQ_QoceseTcVFIOaAqzSEALw_wcB

Books

Jayman, M., Ohl, M. and Jewett, L. (2021). *Supporting new digital natives : children's mental health and wellbeing in a hi-tech age*. Bristol: Policy Press.

A boujaoude, E. and Vladan Starcevic (2015). Mental health in the digital age : grave dangers, great promise. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

Appendix B: Guidance and advice documents

Appendix C: Data Sources

[Children and young people's mental health and wellbeing profiling tool](#) collates and analyses a wide range of publically available data on risk, prevalence and detail (including cost data) on those services that support children with, or vulnerable to, mental illness. It enables benchmarking of data between areas

[ChiMat school health hub](#) provides access to resources relating to the commissioning and delivery of health services for school children and young people and its associated good practice, including the new service offer for school nursing

[Health behaviour of school age children](#) is an international cross-sectional study that takes place in 43 countries and is concerned with the determinants of young people's health and wellbeing.

Appendix D: Sources or support at school and in the local community

Mental Health First Aiders in School

Staff Member	Position
Ashleigh Thomson	Teacher
Robert Watson	Teacher

Support for Young People

Organisation	Main contact details	Topic addressed
Samaritans	Call free on 116 123 (UK) Email: jo@samaritans.org	Confidential support service and are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
ChildLine	0800 1111: www.chidline.org.uk	Get help and advice about a wide range of issues, talk to a counsellor online
Breathing Space	Call for free on 0800 83 85 87 www.breathingspace.scot	Advice and support if you need someone to talk to. Their phone line is open 6pm-2am on Monday to Thursday and 6pm-6am on Friday to Monday.
Beat	The Beat Youthline is open to anyone under 25. Youthline: 0345 634 7650 www.b-eat.co.uk/	UK's leading charity supporting anyone affected by eating disorders, anorexia, bulimia, EDNOS or any other difficulties with food, weight and shape.
Aye Mind	www.ayemind.com/	Making a digital toolkit for all who work with young people too, to boost their ability to promote youth wellbeing
Young Scot	Call 0808 801 0338 www.youngscot.org/	It has information on a range of topics including mental health

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy 2019-20

7 Cups of Tea	www.7cupsoftea.com	An online emotional health and wellbeing service
LGBT Youth Scotland	Call us: 0131 555 3940 Text us: 07786 202 370 https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/ Email us: info@lgbtyouth.org.uk	Here to help support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people
SAMH	www.samh.org.uk/	SAMH is the Scottish Association for Mental Health. SAMH believe there is no health without mental health. We're here to provide help, information and support.
See Me	https://www.seemescotland.org/	See Me is Scotland's programme to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination
TESS: Text and Email Support Services	Text: 0780 047 2908 www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk follow links to email	For girls and young women affected by self-injury

Support for Parents/ Carers

Organisation	Main contact details	Topic addressed
The Samaritans	Call free on 116 123 (UK) Email: jo@samaritans.org	Confidential support service and are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
Young Minds	Parent helpline: 0808 802 5544 www.youngminds.org.uk	Free, confidential online and telephone support providing information and support
Parent Line Scotland	Call: 08000 28 22 33 Email: parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk	Scotland's free helpline, email and web-chat service, for anyone caring for or concerned about a child - open 9am- 9pm Mon to Fri.
GP	Contact your GP at your local Surgery	Speak to your GP if you are worried about your child's mental health
NHS Choices	http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/mental-health-helplines.aspx	Whether you're concerned about yourself or a loved one, the helplines listed can offer expert advice

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy 2019-20

Support for Staff Members

Organisation	Main contact details	Topic addressed
The Samaritans	Call free on 116 123 (UK) Email: jo@samaritans.org	Confidential support service and are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
SAMH	www.samh.org.uk/	SAMH is the Scottish Association for Mental Health. SAMH believe there is no health without mental health. We're here to provide help, information and support.
	Call: 08000 28 22 33 Email: parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk	Scotland's free helpline, email and web-chat service, for anyone caring for or concerned about a child - open 9am- 9pm Mon to Fri.
GP	Contact your GP at your local Surgery	Speak to your GP if you are worried about your child's mental health
NHS Choices	http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/mental-health-helplines.aspx	Whether you're concerned about yourself or a loved one, the helplines listed can offer expert advice

Appendix E: Talking to students when they make mental health disclosures

The advice below is from students themselves, in their own words, together with some additional ideas to help you in initial conversations with students when they disclose mental health concerns. This advice should be considered alongside relevant school policies on pastoral care and child protection and discussed with relevant colleagues as appropriate.

Focus on listening

“She listened, and I mean REALLY listened. She didn’t interrupt me or ask me to explain myself or anything, she just let me talk and talk and talk. I had been unsure about talking to anyone but I knew quite quickly that I’d chosen the right person to talk to and that it would be a turning point.”

If a student has come to you, it’s because they trust you and feel a need to share their difficulties with someone. Let them talk. Ask occasional open questions if you need to in order to encourage them to keep exploring their feelings and opening up to you. Just letting them pour out what they’re thinking will make a huge difference and marks a huge first step in recovery. Up until now they may not have admitted even to themselves that there is a problem.

Don’t talk too much

“Sometimes it’s hard to explain what’s going on in my head – it doesn’t make a lot of sense and I’ve kind of gotten used to keeping myself to myself. But just ‘cos I’m struggling to find the right words doesn’t mean you should help me. Just keep quiet, I’ll get there in the end.”

The student should be talking at least three quarters of the time. If that’s not the case then you need to redress the balance. You are here to listen, not to talk. Sometimes the conversation may lapse into silence. Try not to give in to the urge to fill the gap, but rather wait until the student does so. This can often lead to them exploring their feelings more deeply. Of course, you should interject occasionally, perhaps with questions to the student to explore certain topics they’ve touched on more deeply, or to show that you understand and are supportive. Don’t feel an urge to over-analyse the situation or try to offer answers. This all comes later. For now your role is simply one of supportive listener. So make sure you’re listening!

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy 2019-20

Don't pretend to understand

"I think that all teachers got taught on some course somewhere to say 'I understand how that must feel' the moment you open up. YOU DON'T – don't even pretend to, it's not helpful, it's insulting."

The concept of a mental health difficulty such as an eating disorder or obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) can seem completely alien if you've never experienced these difficulties first hand. You may find yourself wondering why on earth someone would do these things to themselves, but don't explore those feelings with the sufferer. Instead listen hard to what they're saying and encourage them to talk and you'll slowly start to understand what steps they might be ready to take in order to start making some changes.

Don't be afraid to make eye contact

"She was so disgusted by what I told her that she couldn't bear to look at me."

It's important to try to maintain a natural level of eye contact (even if you have to think very hard about doing so and it doesn't feel natural to you at all). If you make too much eye contact, the student may interpret this as you staring at them. They may think that you are horrified about what they are saying or think they are a 'freak'. On the other hand, if you don't make eye contact at all then a student may interpret this as you being disgusted by them – to the extent that you can't bring yourself to look at them. Making an effort to maintain natural eye contact will convey a very positive message to the student.

Offer support

"I was worried how she'd react, but my Mum just listened then said 'How can I support you?' – no one had asked me that before and it made me realise that she cared. Between us we thought of some really practical things she could do to help me stop self-harming."

Never leave this kind of conversation without agreeing next steps. These will be informed by your conversations with appropriate colleagues and the schools' policies on such issues. Whatever happens, you should have some form of next steps to carry out after the conversation because this will help the student to realise that you're working with them to move things forward.

Acknowledge how hard it is to discuss these issues

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy 2019-20

“Talking about my bingeing for the first time was the hardest thing I ever did. When I was done talking, my teacher looked me in the eye and said ‘That must have been really tough’ – he was right, it was, but it meant so much that he realised what a big deal it was for me.”

It can take a young person weeks or even months to admit they have a problem to themselves, let alone share that with anyone else. If a student chooses to confide in you, you should feel proud and privileged that they have such a high level of trust in you. Acknowledging both how brave they have been, and how glad you are they chose to speak to you, conveys positive messages of support to the student.

Don’t assume that an apparently negative response is actually a negative response

“The anorexic voice in my head was telling me to push help away so I was saying no. But there was a tiny part of me that wanted to get better. I just couldn’t say it out loud or else I’d have to punish myself.”

Despite the fact that a student has confided in you, and may even have expressed a desire to get on top of their illness, that doesn’t mean they’ll readily accept help. The illness may ensure they resist any form of help for as long as they possibly can. Don’t be offended or upset if your offers of help are met with anger, indifference or insolence, it’s the illness talking, not the student.

Never break your promises

“Whatever you say you’ll do you have to do or else the trust we’ve built in you will be smashed to smithereens. And never lie. Just be honest. If you’re going to tell someone just be upfront about it, we can handle that, what we can’t handle is having our trust broken.”

Above all else, a student wants to know they can trust you. That means if they want you to keep their issues confidential and you can’t then you must be honest. Explain that, whilst you can’t keep it a secret, you can ensure that it is handled within the school’s policy of confidentiality and that only those who need to know about it in order to help will know about the situation. You can also be honest about the fact you don’t have all the answers or aren’t exactly sure what will happen next. Consider yourself the student’s ally rather than their saviour and think about which next steps you can take together, always ensuring you follow relevant policies and consult appropriate colleagues.

Appendix F: What makes a good CAMHS referral?

If the referral is urgent it should be initiated by phone so that CAMHS can advise of best next steps

Before making the referral, have a clear outcome in mind, what do you want CAMHS to do? You might be looking for advice, strategies, support or a diagnosis for instance.

You must also be able to provide evidence to CAMHS about what intervention and support has been offered to the pupil by the school and the impact of this. CAMHS will always ask 'What have you tried?' so be prepared to supply relevant evidence, reports and records.

General considerations

- Have you met with the parent(s)/carer(s) and the referred child/children?
- Has the referral to CMHS been discussed with a parent / carer and the referred pupil?
- Has the pupil given consent for the referral?
- Has a parent / carer given consent for the referral?
- What are the parent/carers' attitudes to the referral?

Basic information

- Is there a child protection plan in place?
- Is the child looked after?
- name and date of birth of referred child/children
- address and telephone number
- who has parental responsibility?
- surnames if different to child's
- GP details
- What is the ethnicity of the pupil / family.
- Will an interpreter be needed?
- Are there other agencies involved?

Reason for referral

- What are the specific difficulties that you want CAMHS to address?
- How long has this been a problem and why is the family seeking help now?
- Is the problem situation-specific or more generalised?
- Your understanding of the problem/issues involved.

Further helpful information

- Who else is living at home and details of separated parents if appropriate?
- Name of school
- Who else has been or is professionally involved and in what capacity?
- Has there been any previous contact with our department?
- Has there been any previous contact with social services?
- Details of any known protective factors
- Any relevant history i.e. family, life events and/or developmental factors
- Are there any recent changes in the pupil's or family's life?

- Are there any known risks, to self, to others or to professionals?
- Is there a history of developmental delay e.g. speech and language delay
- Are there any symptoms of ADHD/ASD and if so have you talked to the Educational psychologist?