

Response to Towards a Mentally Flourishing Scotland



Young Scotland in Mind – Background

Young Scotland in Mind (YSIM) is committed to improving the mental health and wellbeing of all children and young people in Scotland. YSIM is a network of over 160 voluntary sector organisations which fosters a culture of working and learning together, in order to promote the rights of children and young people to positive mental health and wellbeing in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The voluntary sector already makes a considerable contribution to the positive mental health and wellbeing of thousands of children and young people across Scotland through the provision of a wide range of services. Through the work of highly skilled paid staff and volunteers we are able to reach children and young people in a variety of settings, often where statutory services are unable to.

Young Scotland in Mind fully endorses the principles that underpin the National Programme for Mental Health and Wellbeing and HeadsUpScotland.

Furthermore, Young Scotland in Mind believes children and young people have the right to live in a family, community and society that nurtures them and promotes a positive sense of mental health and wellbeing. The Scottish Government has done much to address this; however Young Scotland in Mind believes that more still needs to be done. Unfortunately, for too many children and young people, the reality they face is of a life lived in poverty and exclusion where abuse and trauma are commonplace.

This response has been collated from a wide range of feedback to TAMFS submitted by members of Young Scotland in Mind. Our response does not specifically answer the three key questions asked in the discussion paper, however we have responded with comments and suggestions from our members which we hope will help inform the overall agenda for Mental Health Improvement in Scotland.

It's good that we are moving towards a more local approach but the danger of this is that we lose sight of the good work that national networks and bodies have done in co-ordinating ideas and sharing good practice and highlighting those issues that are important for everyone no matter where they are. So maintaining the supportive infrastructure of a solid national network such as Young Scotland in Mind is vital.

Some suggestions / thoughts from YSIM Members

- Despite all the successes in schools with bullying anti-stigma campaigns that have undoubtedly improved the mental health of the universal school population that little progress has effectively been made in achieving progress in respect of the mental health of LAC/Accommodated children. A suggested recommendation might be that performance in this regard has a specific measure in HMIe/other school inspections?
- A suggestion that for TC&AC services that in pathfinder plans reviews there is specific attention paid to YP transferring to Adult mental health services. We would consider many of these YP as vulnerable adults however often other agencies do not accept them as such - we should record this somewhere.
- One concern was the lack of stated and clear commitment in the document to the future involvement of mental health service users. Young people with a lived experience of mental health issues are key to this future agenda and therefore should be involved at the core of future planning, implementation and review. YSIM reflects the views of organisations based on their work with Children and Young People and it is hoped the Government has made specific efforts to engage with children and young people. This kind of engagement needs resources and a longer timescale than offered in the normal governmental consultation process.
- If we want to arrest the increasing mental health problems in society, we need to focus on all aspects of the health of children and young people.
- With the Scottish Government identifying work in the early years as a priority and the TAMFS proposed action plan expected to focus on promotion, prevention and support, we need to seek new and innovative ways to respond to the mental health needs of children and young people affected by parental substance misuse. Parents themselves are often attempting to manage a complex range of presenting and underlying issues with substance misuse being a form of self medication/self harm. For example, one local survey found that 36% of parents identified sexual abuse as contributing to self harm and/or thoughts of suicide. Many young people have self harmed and/or expressed suicidal thoughts due to the impact of parental substance misuse. This is just one example that demonstrates the unique needs of children and young people. No one service is best placed to respond effectively to the needs of vulnerable children/young people affected by their own or parental substance misuse whilst supporting adults/parents to affect change in their lives – partnership working is integral and should be promoted in any action plan.
- Young people should be included in every commitment, but there needs to be consideration given to how to involve the significant adults in young people's lives whilst maintaining confidentiality. With young people, the role of education and the educational support services is important and therefore considering the health needs of young people must include clear

consideration of multi-disciplinary working and support. There needs to be a more integrated approach and YSIM also feels that we need to see much more tying up of the various strands - such as the healthy schools agenda with this document.

- Any action plan must reflect the Children's Charter.
- If we do not continue to work at national level to raise awareness, network and pull together the key strands, smaller local organisations, especially user groups and those less well funded may lose their voice. Locally, health authorities may be given the key coordinating role and this is worrying as their track record in involvement and participation is not good, even for adults, and is pitiful for children. We need to ensure that the structures exist to continue to foster multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working and co-ordination, and that the voluntary sector have an equal role with other partners.

**Young Scotland In Mind
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