

## TEACHER PANEL

### TEACHER HEALTH AND WELLBEING

#### Purpose

1. Covid-19, and the resultant rapid change in working practices, in conjunction with wider societal impact, is likely to put significant pressure on the mental health and wellbeing of the education workforce. This paper provides a current picture of the support for teacher health and wellbeing that is available nationally as well as the key issues identified.

#### Teacher health and wellbeing: the context prior to Covid-19

2. Supporting teacher health and wellbeing was a focus of the work of Education Scotland, and the wider education sector, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. In response to the Scottish Government's Mental Health Strategy (March 2017) and further commitment to supporting positive mental health in the 2018/19 Programme for Government, the Scottish Government set up a **Mental Health in Schools Working Group**. The group's objectives were to:
  - Develop a new mental health and wellbeing professional learning/training resource for primary and secondary school staff to support children and young people
  - Identify available training packages for school staff to support children and young people's mental health, to inform a gap analysis to identify what further resources may be required
  - Use the outputs from the group as a 'toolkit' of support for schools to support the delivery of the recommendations from the PSE review
  - Complement the range of whole-school and targeted approaches already available in schools and not duplicate any resources/training already available
4. Recognising that there were a number of levels on which the Mental Health in Schools Working Group needed to address mental health education and support within a school environment, this work was taken forward within a framework of three 'pillars':
  - Pillar One – development of a professional learning/training resource for all school staff; (*under development*)
  - Pillar Two – development of a framework on implementing, developing and evaluating a whole-school approach to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing; (*under development*)
  - Pillar Three – development of a 'one-stop shop' highlighting effective practical resources for school staff to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. [Resources for school staff to support positive mental wellbeing of children and young people.](#)

5. In addition to the Mental Health in Schools Working Group, the Professional Learning and Leadership team recognised the importance of reflecting teacher health and wellbeing in their programmes. Evaluation of Professional Learning and Leadership Programmes stressed that teachers of all levels can feel they are alone and unsupported, and Professional Learning programmes can support and enable networking and encourage peer support. Support for health and wellbeing has also been embedded in programme content (e.g. 'Creating a Mentally Healthy School' Excellence in Headship Learn sessions with Place2Be, coaching and mentoring sessions).
6. Prior to Covid-19, the Professional Learning and Leadership team, as part of the **Enabling Teacher Agency Advisory Group**, was in the process of taking forward proposals resulting from the 2019 pay agreement. These included the development of a new whole-school staff health and wellbeing professional learning programme, the introduction of access to reflective supervision support for teachers through a series of pilots, a new Teacher Innovation Fund, a review of digital solutions to aid workload and enhancements to Education Scotland's Teacher Leadership Programme, all with a core focus on supporting empowerment and agency within the teaching profession. This work has now been refocused and is being taken forward via CERG Workstream 6 (Workforce Support).

### **Teacher health and wellbeing in response to Covid-19: Education Scotland's response**

7. Following the closure of school buildings on 23 March 2020, Education Scotland established four initial working groups in order to build practitioners' skills and confidence in leading, preparing for and providing remote learning:
  - Learning, Teaching and Assessment
  - Health and Wellbeing
  - Leadership of Digital Learning
  - Learning at Home
8. The Health and Wellbeing working group undertook a needs analysis around Health and Wellbeing to:

'identify practitioner needs and develop a planned response to include planning and delivery of CLPL opportunities, using internal and external networks, evidenced based practice and research'.
9. The working group gathered data from a range of sources including: Professional Learning and Leadership Directorate survey; survey by the CLD Standards Council; anecdotal evidence, surveys with young people and intelligence gathered from Senior Regional Advisors. As a result, the following 'needs' regarding teacher health and wellbeing were identified:

- Education Scotland should play a role in curating and quality assuring high quality, suitable content that is currently available
- There is a need for the collation of/signposting to quality resources/materials in one place without having to go and 'search' for them to support practitioners who may feel overwhelmed with the volume of content available
- Professional learning to support staff: online video lessons/webinars, tutorials, presentations, courses, 'read/think/discuss' activities. Also, professional learning on supporting virtual learning, using Glow, Teams, online platforms and coding
- Support for virtual networking
- Sharing of effective practice (from Scotland and international sources) – specifically in using technology to teach, timings of work, workload and supporting learners with an Additional Support Need
- Teacher-uploaded content in Google Classrooms
- Pupil materials such as worksheets or webpages for each subject/topic/strand – able to be printed for learners with no digital access
- Support learning at home, specifically to support parents and carers – both with and without access to technology
- Advice on recovery planning and a clear national focus on health and wellbeing as a priority as schools do return

10. As a result of the findings, Education Scotland collated the following information and resources:

Wellbeing (of and for staff)

- [Staff Health & Wellbeing](#) – wakelet of curated supports based on the five steps to wellbeing
- [Psychosocial mental health & wellbeing: Taking care of your staff](#) – new NHS support for staff

Wellbeing (professional learning to support the wellbeing of children and young people)

- [Compassionate & Connected Community](#): Professional Learning Activity (PLA) – Glow login required
- [Supporting children and young people through grief and loss](#): Professional Learning Activity (PLA) – Glow login required
- [Psychosocial mental health and wellbeing: Taking care of others](#) – new NHS pages
- [Resources for school staff to support positive mental wellbeing of children and young people](#) – new page on the National Improvement Hub outlining a range of available supports

Resources have also been collated focusing on the wellbeing of children and young people, supporting learning and teaching and supporting whole-school approaches to wellbeing.

11. The four initial Education Scotland working groups have now evolved to the following Education Scotland workstreams (which are complemented by continued regional working and development and delivery of Professional Learning and Leadership programmes):

- Support for digital practices in online remote learning
- Supporting School Leaders and School Staff
- Supporting learning at home
- Assessment within the Broad General Education
- Improvement planning in ELC and schools during remote working

12. The work of the Health and Wellbeing working group is now being continued within the 'Supporting School Leaders and School Staff workstream' and by CERG Workstream 6 (Workforce Support).

13. Importantly, Education Scotland is now offering a national platform and safe space where different groups of educators can connect online to discuss issues and challenges they are mentally working through and, where relevant, to share resources or to highlight interesting practice that is being undertaken.

14. A summary of the activity currently under way by Education Scotland is detailed below.

- The [National Improvement Hub](#) provides support for online learning, teaching and assessment across curricular areas, as well as specific support for areas such as Inclusion, Creativity and Developing the Young Workforce
- [Scotland Learns](#) (found within the National Improvement Hub) contains a range of ideas and suggestions of activities to help parents, carers and practitioners support learning at home. The activities are aimed at a variety of ages and new activities are added each week. A [weekly newsletter](#) for parents and carers and for practitioners also has additional ideas, hints and tips, and links to other useful resources.
- A [wakelet](#) has been created which signposts to useful resources and websites providing further support and advice on practitioner wellbeing
- [Resources](#) providing information on supporting children and young people in new circumstances
- [Webinar](#) sessions to support and upskill practitioners in digital learning and teaching (live and on YouTube) have been taking place. There are plans in place for further webinars in Term 4 to include areas related to inclusive education, wellbeing and support.
- The Professional Learning and Leadership [online resource](#) contains links to professional learning activities which support learning at every career stage. Professional Learning Activities are being developed regularly to include: Teaching Online and Digital Pedagogy, Using Glow to support Learning and Teaching, Relationships, Nurture and Compassion, The Importance of Wellbeing and how loss or trauma can impact learning, Staff Mental Health and

Wellbeing, Introduction to Inclusive Education for Pupil Support Staff, Adaptive Leadership, Family Learning.

- There is a new fortnightly Professional Learning and Leadership newsletter to share practice and learning, highlight new resources and programmes and connect in with work across the system including reference to a set of regularly updated [FAQs](#). [Sign up to the newsletter here](#).
- A series of online meets '[Big Blethers](#)' are scheduled throughout May to facilitate sharing learning and challenges and are organised by sector/stage of career. These have been followed by smaller '[Headspace](#)' online meets to provide reflective space for head teachers and '[Wee Blethers](#)' focusing on specific themes such as transitions, ASN and Blended Learning and Family Learning. A specific 'Headspace' meet in June will focus on the health and wellbeing of head teachers.
- The PLL team continues to engage with current programme participants enabling them to complete programmes where appropriate and continue with their learning. The closing date for applications to new Professional Learning and Leadership Programmes was extended and programmes are being redesigned for 2020/21 to continue to offer professional learning and leadership in the current context mainly through a blend of online meets and PLAs. Programmes have been reviewed and updated given the exceptional circumstances cohorts will find themselves in. The Teacher Leadership Programme for example has included a greater focus on the health and wellbeing of staff and learners, including the use of resources such as the Barnardo's and Public Health Scotland 'All about relationships' webinar and Harry Burns 'What causes Wellness' Ted Talk. The 'Creating a Mentally Healthy School' Excellence in Headship Learn session developed with Place2Be is now being delivered online.
- Signposting articles from the international community of leaders to learn from global experiences and responses to Covid-19, as well as pulling together Covid-19 related guidance from various sources into one, accessible document for school and system leaders. This information is live on the NIH and will be updated regularly.
- Facilitation of sharing current, effective practice around key areas identified by school and system leaders. Colleagues across the system have been approached to complete blogs to share their experiences and learning with these being shared via the PLL Newsletter and online resource. Blogs have been written by class teachers sharing their experiences, head teachers and system leaders.

### **Teacher health and wellbeing in response to Covid-19: CERG Workstream 6 (Workforce Support)**

15. CERG Workstream 6 has a focus on workforce support and the specific remit of the group is to:

- Support school leaders, teaching staff, support staff and early years practitioners looking in particular at:

- Do staff have the skills, resilience and confidence to support children and young people in the new circumstances?
  - Staff wellbeing.
16. The Workforce Support Workstream has met five times to date, to discuss the health and wellbeing support required for educators across the system during the Covid-19 pandemic. A consistent and growing focus for the group has been the mental health and wellbeing of educators across the system and a desire for collaborative approaches to address issues in the current circumstances.
17. As a result, the first step of the workstream was to review the offer of support already provided by the organisations represented on the group, to provide a snapshot of provision nationally. The analysis emphasised that local authorities, RICs and national organisations are already working in partnership to ensure education professionals have access to relevant resources to support them as they quickly change their working practices whilst continuing to meet the immediate needs of their learners.
18. Given the breadth of offers already available from these partners, the group felt it was important to share these as widely as possible and as such a first version of a [joint communication](#) was created detailing the support already provided by the organisations represented on the group. A second version of the document (now published) includes supports from other organisations (with further versions to be created as additional relevant content is gathered). The joint communication demonstrates the commitment that all partners have made to rapidly respond to the needs of the workforce.
19. Within the joint communication, all members of Scotland's education workforce have been invited to respond to a [survey](#) aimed at identifying what additional professional learning and wellbeing support would be welcome to ensure educators can continue to work to meet the needs of all of the children and young people in these changing circumstances. Workstream members have made the commitment to regularly monitor and review the responses received through this online form to ensure that the work taken forward in partnership meets the needs of those working in the system.
20. Again, a consistent and growing focus for the group has been a desire for collaborative approaches to address issues in the current circumstances. Consequently, the workstream has agreed that proposals should be developed to ensure consistent external communication messaging to meet current health and wellbeing needs. A sub-group of the workstream is now developing a joint external communication toolkit based on the data gathered from the workstream survey. This will be discussed at the workstream meeting on Wednesday 17 June.
21. In order to further support the needs of the workforce, the workstream has agreed to support proposals made by GTCS to support Probationers and Recently Qualified Teachers in the 2020/21 session. Education Scotland and GTCS are

creating a Microsoft Teams site that will be available to all TIS probationers and a series of post-probation 'Blethers' will be held here.

22. The workstream has also agreed to support proposals that Education Scotland work in partnership to develop a new, optional, online professional learning programme for teachers in their first year post-probation based on the delivery model of the Teacher Leadership Programme to launch in August.

23. Additionally, it is proposed that Education Scotland (working with partner organisations and local authorities) will develop an online coaching offer, with an emphasis on those in a career transition, or new to the profession, and in the longer term to support the profession more generally as teachers adapt to new working practices.

### **Teacher health and wellbeing in response to Covid-19: key issues**

24. The work of both Education Scotland and CERG Workstream 6 has raised the following key issues with regard to teacher health and wellbeing:

- The need for tailored support for probationers, newly qualified and early career teachers in the 2020/21 session
- The importance of ensuring there is support in place for teachers new to posts, regardless of the stage of their career (e.g. new HTs, new PTs etc.)
- The importance of communicating with support staff and ensuring they are adequately supported
- Ensuring teachers have the skills, confidence and resilience to support children and young people in the new context and as circumstances change and develop
- The importance of supporting early years professionals in both the private and public sectors with tailored support and advice
- The need to continue supporting innovation in learning and teaching

25. Importantly, the group has also recognised that:

- Consistent, joint communications are necessary to ensure the same messages are being provided to the workforce. Joint messaging from across the sector is also considered more meaningful and impactful.
- The needs of the workforce are likely to change as time progresses. What the workforce needs now (as they return to school buildings) is likely to be different to what is needed as the new term begins in August, which will be different to the support required after a time of providing blended learning. The workstream therefore expects to continue meeting and ensuring a joint approach to the developing needs of the workforce.