

No. 322/2019

29 May 2019

Our Ref: P26/19

**To: All Branches**

Dear Colleagues,

**Petition to Add Mental Health Education to the Mandatory Teaching Curriculum For All Schools in the UK Reaches 197,600: Motion 2 (2018):**

Further to LTB114/2019 issued on 21 February 2019, this is an update report on the above campaign.

**The Petition**

In 2018 a campaign to have mental health education added to the compulsory curriculum for all schools in the UK was launched on the Change.Org Website.

This online petition centring on the lack of education around mental health being a real and very significant gap in our education system has now reached 197,600 and continues to grow daily.

**Key Statistics:**

- One in ten children aged between 5 and 16 years has been diagnosed with/shows signs of a mental health problem, and many continue to have these problems into adulthood.
- Over half of all mental ill health starts before the age of 14 years, and 75% of this has developed by the age of 18.
- NHS England estimates that poor mental health costs the NHS and society £105 billion a year in England alone.

The statistics are shocking, yet whilst there is a whole subject in the curriculum around our physical health in the form of PE, our young people are left without any knowledge of even the most common mental illnesses.

Not only does this leave them unprepared and vulnerable when it comes to looking out for their own mental health, but also sets the standard that Mental Health is not discussed. This plants a seed of stigma that many carry for their whole lives.

The very serious topic of suicide is frequently not even mentioned as part of schooling, and yet according to the BBC, suicide is the biggest killer of men under the age of 49.

The Petition calls upon those in power for a more extensive plan to better the lives of the nation's young people.

## **Campaigning For:**

- Mental Health education becoming mandatory teaching for all schools in the UK without the addition of any exams or homework on this subject.
- Every child having the ability to access a qualified counsellor through their school. This is something that many workplaces already offer.
- Every school offering Mental Health training for its staff.

## **Motion 2 (2018)**

In line with the policy established by the carriage of Motion 2 at 2018 CWU Main Conference, submitted by the CWU Disability Conference, calling for Trade Unions to lead the fight in improving access to mental health support for children and to campaign for improved provision for young people's mental health services, the CWU gave its full support to the campaign petition and associated initiatives.

Since then the response has been incredible and the petition has reached 197,600 signatures at the time of writing. It continues to grow and looks likely to surpass 200,000 signatures in the not too distant future.

A visit was made to Number 10 Downing St at the beginning of November 2018 to officially hand in the petition signatures received by that date, calling on government to make Mental Health Education mandatory teaching in all UK schools and that it be debated in Parliament. The collection of signatures in support of the petition has continued with the aim of reaching 200,000.

Having handed the petition into 10 Downing Street, news is awaited of confirmation that the subject will be debated in Parliament and when. To keep the pressure on to bring about change, lobbying of MPs has continued to get more politicians to join the campaign. This has resulted in widespread support from politicians across the political spectrum, from all parties; this petition is now supported by MPs from Labour, Green, Lib.Dem, SNP, Plaid Cymru and Conservative Parties.

## **Mental Health Foundation**

The Mental Health Foundation has now agreed to support the campaign cause and are in talks about how a joined up campaign can be organised to make change happen.

## **Department of Education and Government Proposals**

Since starting this petition the Department of Education lead by the Minister have put forward initial outline details of how to make Mental Health Education a part of their compulsory curriculum. These reforms were subject to a public consultation which received a large response at the end of 2018 and subsequently a government response to the consultation outcome was published indicating what government wants to do to help children and young people with their mental health. The plans outlined would, in summary involve;

- A designated, trained, mental health lead in every school and college who is responsible for the school's approach to mental health, giving advice, overseeing help and support to pupils and carrying out a Mental Health First Aid Role.
- Consider how children and young people should learn about mental health in school.
- Set up Mental health support teams working with schools and colleges. These will be trained staff linked to groups of schools and colleges. They will offer individual and group help to young people with mild to moderate mental health issues including anxiety, low mood and behavioural difficulties. These teams will work with the designated mental health leads and provide a link with more specialist mental health services. Mental health support teams will be the link between the NHS and schools. They will work alongside other people who provide mental health support including; school nurses, educational psychologists, school counsellors, voluntary and community organisations, social workers.

- Reduce the time it takes to get treatment from children and young people's mental health services. Some of the areas with new mental health support teams will try out ways of bringing this time to 4 weeks (quicker for young people who need very urgent help).
- Set up a new national partnership to improve mental health services for young people aged 16 to 25.
- Improve the understanding of mental health - working with the Children's Commissioner and the Chief Medical Officer to produce a report on the impact that technology has on children and young people's mental health.
- Carry out research in how to best to support families who need more help and support with the parents or their children's mental health.
- Carry our research in how to prevent mental health problems, bringing different mental health experts together to look at how mental health problems can be prevented. The group of experts will consider the best evidence and look at where more needs to be done on how to prevent mental health problems.

### **Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education)**

As support for this campaign continues to grow, another vital government organisation is now taking action. Ofsted, who monitor school standards are updating their regulatory inspection framework to also assess levels of mental health support in schools. This new framework could come into effect from September 2019, following consultation on this before the details are finalised. An Ofsted statement was issued stating; *"We agree that mental health and well-being are important issues, which is why children's personal development will be one of the four judgements proposed for the new Education Inspection Framework."* This is a major step forward in changing the culture in schools to support young people in their mental health. It should also take some of the pressure off schools to succeed on grades alone.

### **Welsh Assembly Petitions Committee**

The Welsh Assembly Petitions Committee is considering a petition to, "Add Mental Health Education to the mandatory teaching curriculum for all schools in Wales" as part of the upcoming Wales education reforms. This is another step forward which could mean Wales joins England as the second UK country to act on this cause. 2000 petition signatures have been received to date. The Minister's letter in response stated that; "To ensure greater support for mental health in schools the Welsh Government announced in September 2017, £1.4million jointly from the health and education budgets to pilot Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in-reach into schools across six local authority areas (three health boards), spanning two academic years until summer 2020. Pending the outcome of evaluation we will consider the merits, or otherwise, of rolling out the programme more widely across Wales, in either its existing or an amended form." **Only 5,000 signatures are needed on the Wales focused petition to secure a debate in the Welsh Assembly.** Every signature counts even if you don't live in Wales and it only takes a few seconds so please add your signature at: <https://www.mentalpodcast.co.uk/wales-petition>

### **Conclusion**

Thank you to all of you who have signed, shared and talked about this petition. Together we have shown that mental health is a growing concern and the lack of education around it must be addressed now. By teaching children that mental illness can be talked about freely and without judgement, they will be more understanding of others and themselves. This will break down stigma, empower them to speak up when they need help and be better understood when doing so. The reforms are in reach. This is our chance to make sure they definitely go through and are extensive enough to improve the lives of our nation's children.

Lastly we're nearly at 200,000 signatures so keep sharing. Together we can hold those in power to account on mental health education. To sign the UK wide petition to help bring us one step closer to making these requests a reality, thus helping safeguard the health of generations to come, go to:-

<https://www.change.org/p/get-mental-health-education-on-the-school-curriculum-mentalpetition-join-me-and-over-190-000-others>

Yours sincerely



**Dave Joyce**  
**National Health, Safety & Environment Officer**

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CWU 150 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London, SW19 1RX  
email: [info@cwu.org](mailto:info@cwu.org) Tel: 020 8971 7200 Fax: 020 8971 7300  
*General Secretary: Dave Ward*

 [@DaveWardGS](https://twitter.com/DaveWardGS)  [Dave Ward CWU](https://www.facebook.com/DaveWardCWU)