

Young Person's Wellbeing Champion Project

Key findings and priorities identified by students

Emotional, mental health and wellbeing awareness & the environment

- ❖ Settings need to promote and share resources and information on emotional, mental health services to help students feel this is a prioritised area within their setting.
- ❖ The student surveys showed students want responses to mental health that show empathy, emotional understanding, and awareness. Having regular conversations about mental health and wellbeing helps students know this is valued and they have staff they can talk to.
- ❖ Some settings found it challenging to provide the support requested by students during times of difficulty, holding a view that support for emotional, mental health needs should be delivered through specialist external services.

'Students need listeners for anything they need to speak about. My form tutor was not especially trained for mental health topics but was always available and empathetically listened to everything I had to say. This ended up being more beneficial to me than any talks with school counsellors or people higher up – building this trustworthy relationship was essential to my daily life at the school.'

Accessibility & Confidentiality

Accessibility is how well students can seek wellbeing support in their school or college.

'Knowing where my tutor and classroom was provided a huge sense of security and safety for me – having permission to sit in the classroom quietly whenever I needed to, became an escape from the busy nature of the school day'

- ❖ Settings need to ensure key school staff or services who are available for emotional and mental health support are known of by students, helping

students to know who to go to and how to access this support as or when needed.

- ❖ 42% of students responding to the surveys felt mental health support at their setting was accessible and in a comfortable venue. Students should be able to seek help in a private space and at a time that doesn't disrupt their learning. Ensuring they feel valued and safe before they've even stepped inside a room.
- ❖ Students need clarity on boundaries of confidentiality providing safety to ensure a respectful and trusting relationship can develop between students and staff. This is also true for wellbeing meetings.

'I think confidentiality should be mentioned before meetings and all teachers should be aware of this. This should also be present in well-being groups and student council meetings as the discussion topics can be heavy and require confidentiality'

Staff

- ❖ According to both staff and students, wellbeing support could be improved by increasing the number of wellbeing staff available, students feel even 1 more staff member could make a difference to students.
- ❖ For most schools there is usually a school nurse and a school councillor, some schools have welfare officers and pastoral staff. However, most wellbeing staff work on a part-time basis or are in a role where wellbeing is only part of their remit.
- ❖ Students felt youth mental health training enables staff support to be backed by knowledge and can help students to feel secure when talking to staff.

Curriculum

A better awareness of mental health and wellbeing at school can be developed through the RSHE curriculum; giving students the opportunity to learn about wellbeing, establishing it as a **subject of value** alongside English and Maths.

- ❖ When students were asked what they thought were the most important issues for students to be taught about, they said: mental health, covid recovery, and LGBTQ+ history, representation and sex education as the **three most popular answers**, then bullying, climate change, capitalism, sexism, racism/diversity, sexual assault, consent, safety/crime, education, substance abuse, being safe online, life after education and digital skills.

LGBTQ+

12-14 members contributed their voices from Taunton 2BU. The group was described by its attendees as a safe, supportive community where young LGBTQ+ people can relax and be themselves with no judgement or boundaries. For them, it is an extended family, where they are seen and heard, offering the safety and support that many LGBTQ+ students struggle to find through school.

- ❖ Improved LGBTQ+ education in school, where students are taught about different identities, LGBTQ+ history and inclusive sex education.
- ❖ Ensuring RSHE is taught within safe guidance and boundaries where young people are not identified or turned to, to become the educators.
- ❖ Schools to be aware of issues facing young people around gender and sexuality and why it may affect their mental health. Teachers are an important part of setting the example of what students valuing and supporting each other should look like. Showing understanding, empathy, and kindness to demonstrate the behaviour students should show each other and themselves.

BME

Diverse Young Somerset, have also given their voice to this project

- ❖ Diverse Young Somerset felt improved education and understanding of relevant issues such as racism and xenophobia could support discrimination and bullying.
- ❖ Improved understanding for schools of why discrimination and being BME may affect wellbeing. If racial discrimination and the effect on students is properly understood, it gives students confidence that staff are there to help.

- ❖ Opportunities for students and staff to learn about each other's wellbeing and the different factors that may affect it as a starting point to creating an atmosphere where students don't feel alone.

Pupil Participation

'Student leadership positions/school council should regularly meet, and students should always choose the agenda, because students know best what issues they are facing'

- ❖ Many students feel pupil participation needs a regular time commitment for change to be delivered.
- ❖ A recognition that student wellbeing is constantly changing, and issues should regularly be discussed and reviewed.
- ❖ Regular meetings allow regular feedback, more opportunities to build change and more time for stronger peer relationships to be built.
- ❖ Pupil participation is more than listening to what students have to say, it is making what they say happen. For wellbeing groups and roles to be successful, it must be evident from the school that they view wellbeing as a priority, and they believe the suggestions and ideas from students have value.

'I think it's necessary to allow students to make some decisions, instead of stopping them, sometimes students will make decisions that can affect the school for better'

Student Autonomy

- ❖ Students can be encouraged to have autonomy through facilitating meetings, creating agendas and session plans and establishing less dependence on staff
- ❖ Students spoke positively of being involved in processes of electing their peer representatives. Students helping to decide peer representatives further ensures pupil participation is embedded throughout the school.

'Student voice is a fantastic opportunity for raising awareness of slightly more personal or individual problems within the school environment. Issues can be raised which lead to them being resolved because it isn't put off'

- ❖ Student voice groups have been more positively received by students over individual roles. Students get a lot of enjoyment out of group work and after-school clubs as they allow students to build positive social relationships and develop skills around teamwork.
- ❖ A group enables a more rounded approach, more student autonomy, less individual pressure, and more overall enjoyment. It is also useful for sharing the responsibility and ensuring the healthy wellbeing of representatives themselves.

'Wellbeing teams are really beneficial to schools as they serve as a reassurance for change to the students and offer lots of support.'