

## 01 What is mental health?

Mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual recognises 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 his or her own community.

World Health Organisation, August 2014

## 02 Why it matters?

Schools have a central role to play in enabling their pupils to be resilient and to support good mental health and wellbeing. It is important that schools promote good mental wellbeing for all pupils. Education about relationships, sex and health can be important vehicles through which schools can teach pupils about mental health and wellbeing.

## 07 Prevalence of mental health problems in children

Children in Need, looked-after children and previously looked-after children are more likely to have SEN and to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues than their peers.

Schools should be a safe and affirming place for children where they can develop a sense of belonging and feel able to trust and talk openly with adults about their problems.



## 03 What schools should do?

A school's approach to mental health and behaviour should be part of a consistent whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing.

This should involve providing a structured school environment with clear expectations of behaviour, well communicated social norms and routines, which are reinforced with highly consistent consequence systems.

This should be paired with an individualised graduated response when the behavioural issues might be a result of educational, mental health, other needs or vulnerabilities.

School staff cannot act as mental health experts and should not try to diagnose conditions.

## 05

### Identification:

recognising emerging issues as early and accurately as possible;

**Early support:** helping pupils to access evidence based early support and interventions;

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### Access to specialist support:

working effectively with external agencies to provide swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment.

Schools should also have in place arrangements which reflect the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of their pupils. Mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

## 04 Early intervention

The school role in supporting and promoting mental health and wellbeing can be summarised as:

**Prevention:** creating a safe and calm environment where mental health problems are less likely, improving the mental health and wellbeing of the whole school population, and equipping pupils to be resilient so that they can manage the normal stress of life effectively.