



2020-0052206VFPO

**Vicky Ford MP**

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT  
tel: 0370 000 2288 [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus)

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP

By email: [george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk)

10 September 2020

Dear George,

Thank you for your email of 4 September, addressed to the Prime Minister, on behalf of a number of your constituents about children's mental wellbeing and the Children's Society's Good Childhood Report. Your email was passed to this department and I am replying as the minister responsible for this policy area.

May I begin by wishing you well in these challenging times.

The government appreciates the concerns raised about the findings of The Children's Society's Good Childhood report. We believe that the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is of fundamental importance and would like to assure you that the government is working to identify the individual needs of children early. We remain committed to promoting and supporting the mental health of children and young people, and access to mental health support is more important than ever during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. NHS mental health services remain open, and the government has provided over £9 million to leading mental health charities to help them expand and reach those most in need – including a number of programmes which specifically support the mental health of children and young people. The NHS has also set up 24-hour open access telephone lines for urgent mental health support for people of all ages.

In the longer-term, we remain committed to our joint green paper delivery programme with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England, including introducing new mental health support teams, and testing approaches to deliver four week waiting times for access to NHS support.

We assure you that we do look at the range of data that is available on children's mental health and wellbeing and use this to help inform our decisions. On World Mental Health Day last year we published the first annual "State of the Nation" report to highlight the trend and issues in young people's mental health wellbeing. The report brought together existing data to improve understanding and help to inform the support we provide to children and young people. We are planning to publish a second report this year.

Getting children and young people back into education, with settings devoting time to supporting wellbeing, will play a fundamental part in supporting children and young people's mental health during the COVID-19 outbreak. We have been working hard to ensure that all pupils and learners will return to a full high-quality education programme in September. Our £1 billion COVID catch-up package, with £650 million shared across schools over the 2020/21 academic year, will support education settings to put the right catch-up and pastoral support in place.

The Education Endowment Foundation have published a COVID-19 support guide to support schools to direct this funding, which includes further information about interventions to support pupils' mental health and wellbeing. It can be found at: [tinyurl.com/Y7Ye9kPk](https://tinyurl.com/Y7Ye9kPk).

As pupils return to school, staff need to be equipped to understand that while some children and young people may be experiencing feelings such as anxiety, stress or low mood as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, these are normal responses to an abnormal situation. Our Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools Advice includes information about what to look for in terms of underlying mental health issues and the sort of support that might be suitable. It can be found at: [tinyurl.com/Q7d23dz](https://tinyurl.com/Q7d23dz) and can be used alongside our checklist for school leaders on behaviour and attendance to support full opening which was published on 9 July at: [tinyurl.com/PP9vcu8](https://tinyurl.com/PP9vcu8).

We have also developed new online resources to help schools and colleges respond to the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. Our webinar to support teachers in promoting and supporting children and young people's mental wellbeing had over 5,500 attendees and has now been made available online to allow more teachers to access the content. This is available at: [tinyurl.com/Y5QQvlu5](https://tinyurl.com/Y5QQvlu5). We have also published a mental wellbeing teacher training module to support all schools in their preparations to deliver relationships, sex and health education. This is available at: [tinyurl.com/Y9cezhwQ](https://tinyurl.com/Y9cezhwQ).

From September, the government is investing £8 million to launch the new Wellbeing for Education Return training programme, which is providing schools and colleges all over England with the knowledge and practical skills they need to support teachers, students and parents, to help improve how they respond to the emotional impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Wellbeing for Education Return aims to equip education staff with resources and training to promote children and young people's mental wellbeing and resilience and support mental health recovery, in light of the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown. It comprises:

- a new, nationally developed training package aimed at education staff
- funding for local authorities to appoint local experts to work with local partners to adapt the nationally developed training to local contexts, to deliver it on to leads in education settings when pupils and students return to school, and to provide ongoing advice and support until March 2021.

If this information or the links included do not answer your question, my office will be happy to let you know of a future MP drop-in session.

Thank you for writing on this important matter, and I hope this response assures you that we are committed to providing mental health and wellbeing support for all children and young people.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vicky Ford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

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