

EVERYBODY THRIVING:

CREATING A CULTURE OF WELLBEING IN SCHOOLS

What do we want to achieve?

- Embed mental health and wellbeing as a core priority in schools.
- Create supportive, inclusive environments for all learners.
- Schools that value personal development alongside academic learning.
- An education system and a society where everyone can thrive.

Where are we now?

The education system places significant stress on students and educators. Pressures such as high-stakes assessments, a top-down curriculum and inflexible behaviour policies undermine the wellbeing of children, young people and adults, and contribute to an escalating mental health crisis.

How can we create a culture of wellbeing in schools?

1. **Adopt a multi-tiered approach.** Recognise that mental health and wellbeing are complex, multidimensional issues. Create a comprehensive strategy to address threats to mental health and wellbeing at their roots.
2. **Embed mental health and wellbeing in national policy.** Ensure national policies value mental health and personal development alongside academic achievement.
3. **Signal a paradigm shift.** Prioritise mental health and wellbeing by shifting from high-stakes accountability to 'do no harm'.
4. **Invest in mental health prevention.** Scale up proactive, as well as reactive, mental health support to address immediate needs and reduce future costs.
5. **Create a more diverse, responsive curriculum.** Create flexible programmes of study that allow for more relational and vocational learning alongside academic progression.
6. **Reform assessment methods.** Create a bottom-up, strengths-based assessment system that celebrates the successes and milestones of every student and which provides 'success for all'.
7. **Create a wellbeing-focused accountability system.** Build an accountability system that prioritises safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments.
8. **Publish national guidance for schools.** Provide clear guidelines around best practice in making mental health and wellbeing central to school policies and practices.
9. **Provide research-informed training on relational behaviour policies.** Equip educators with professional learning in trauma and attachment-informed approaches, restorative practice, and insights from neuroscience.
10. **Create a culture of belonging.** Cultivate a sense of belonging through strong, supportive relationships to make sure all children and young people feel seen, valued, and supported in their learning and development.

Why do we need to change?

The current high-accountability system, characterised by high-stakes exams and 'zero tolerance' behaviour policies, is eroding wellbeing and fuelling a mental health crisis. Rising levels of absenteeism, burnout and attrition illustrate the unsustainable nature of this approach. Reform is urgently needed to create schools that prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people, and adults, alongside academic achievement.