Mental health issues in schools: UK perspectives

Tony Cline

OECD Meeting, Paris   **26 April 2010**

Outline

- Identifying children and young people at risk

- The development of services for students, families and schools

- Recent initiatives on prevention, intervention and support

- Some current and future challenges

2

Identifying children at risk

- Vulnerable groups

- Additional risk factors

- Protective factors

- Strategies of identification

3

Vulnerable groups

- Looked after children
- Young people in contact with the youth justice system
- Children with disabilities or learning difficulties
- Children of refugee and asylum seeking families
- Unaccompanied asylum seekers of school age
- Children in families living in poverty
- Children of armed forces personnel

4

Additional risk factors

- Temperamental risk factors

- Negative personal experiences

- Direct and indirect impact of damaging experiences in the family

- Failure of normal family support

- Stigma, hostility and neglect at school and in society at large

5

Protective factors and sources of resilience

- Ability to communicate feelings, wishes and needs
- Ability to cope with stress
- Adaptability
- Capacity to act autonomously with feelings of mastery and control
- Feelings of security and confidence (linked to early attachment and bonding)
- Problem solving skills
- Pro-social behaviour
- Self-esteem
- Skills in negotiating with peers and managing conflict

6

What does this mean?   (Adapted from Baxter, 2009)

- Those most at risk of mental health problems can be identified and targeted for particular help and support.

- Intervention can be planned to promote mental health both universally and for targeted vulnerable groups and individuals.

- Public policy can be designed to mitigate risk.

- It is possible to promote resilience at different levels – nationally, communally, within families and individuals.

7

Key issues in childhood identification

- Is earlier always better?
- What risks arise from false positives and false negatives?
- Are the costs reasonable and commensurate with the benefits that will be obtained?
- Can a balance be struck in attending to visible and invisible disabilities associated with poor mental health?
- How can parents best be involved?
- How can full collaboration be achieved between all who work with a child?
- How can the process be given a low profile?

8

Preventive work in schools

- The school as a key location for enhancement and repair
  - Transitions, challenges, protections, support

- School ethos and the pastoral care tradition
  - The historical roots of the pastoral tradition in UK schools
  - Responsibility for promoting social and emotional development

- Mental health promotion in the curriculum
  - Curriculum priorities and preparation for citizenship
  - The development of the SEAL initiative
  - Time and space for reflection, silence and calm

9

## The development of services
for support and intervention

- Changes in the funding, communication and coordination in multi-agency services over time

- Recent national and local initiatives (including *Every Child Matters*, *CAMHS* Review, *TaMHS* and local responses)

10

The organisation of child guidance (1974)

Four separate services contribute staff and have joint working arrangements for a child guidance service:

- School psychological services (Education)

- Child psychiatric services (Health - regional)

- Social work services (Social Services)

- Child health services (Health - district)

11

12
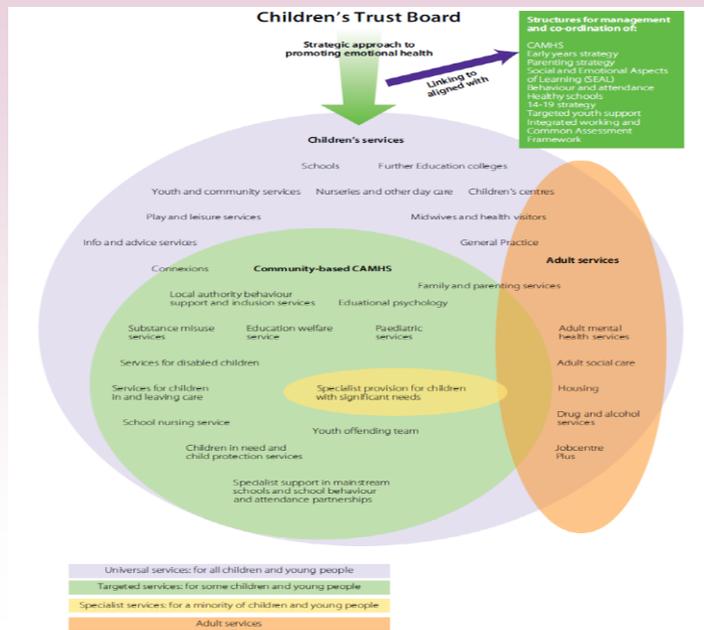
Some recent national and local initiatives

- *Every Child Matters*

- *Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Review*

- *Targeted Mental Health in Schools (*TaMHS project*)*

- Local initiatives to meet the specific needs of vulnerable groups

- Code of Practice on age-appropriate environments for young psychiatric patients

13

Some current and future challenges

- Should SEAL be compulsory?

- Are we relying too much on prevention and early intervention?

- Can funding of preventive projects and specialist services be sustained and enhanced in the future?

- Can we develop a framework that takes account of the child mental health implications when designing changes in policy and regulation?

- Can we develop a smoother transition route from child to adult mental health services?

- Can we translate inclusive education into inclusive employment for psychologically vulnerable individuals such as those with Asperger's syndrome?

14