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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board

Our Ref: JP/RB/jr
Your Ref:

Direct Line: 01633 435905

1st September 2014

William Powell AC/AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Dear Mr Powell

Petition Titles: Provision of IDB Services in Wales (Ref: P-04-560) and Secondary School Awareness of Self-Harm (Ref: P-04-559)

Thank you for your letters dated July 2014 and 21st August 2014 respectively, in relation to the above petitions. I noted from both petitions that they posed the same question, but that the first had attracted 664 signatures and the second had 12 signatures. Therefore, given that the wording was exactly the same for both petitions, I have taken the opportunity to provide a combined response to the two petitions. I should be grateful if you would find below a response from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

Within the Health Board's Specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), we have seen a significant increase in the number of deliberate self-harm assessments within our acute hospitals. In 2011 we completed approx 60 assessments, this increased to 125 in 2012 (a change in the age threshold contributed to this), and in 2013 we had 230 assessments. In the current year, our first 4 months activity is just under 90 assessments, therefore, we can forecast that there will be in excess of 250 deliberate self-harm assessments conducted on under 18s within the acute hospitals across the Health Board during this year.

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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan yw enw gweithredol Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board is the operational name of Aneurin Bevan University Local Health Board

Of course this is only those young people who present to our emergency departments, therefore, we are not fully aware of the scale of the problem in our wider communities. To our senior clinicians working in CAMHS, however, self harm appears to be becoming part of the norm for struggling adolescents with a range of emotional difficulties. The Health Board believes that the subject of self harm is not well understood and young people engage in self harm for so many different reasons. Therefore, the increasing incidence of self-harm in young people has also been strongly noted within our services.

The population that carries the highest incidence of self harm are those young people in secondary schools and therefore it is our view that the petition request to target secondary schools by increasing the number of educational programs is entirely appropriate. Both pupils and staff would benefit from such an approach. Recently the organisation 'MindfullUK' (www.mindfull.org.uk) petitioned for mental health to be included as part of the national curriculum in schools. There can be no doubt that this approach would have a positive impact on the understanding of young people and ultimately would mean less referrals to mental health services as the capacity of schools to support young people more effectively would also increase through this proposed initiative.

It is important to state that there is already a Department of Health initiative available to the whole UK in relation to increasing the understanding of adults (those who work in any capacity with children and young people) of mental health issues. The web resource available at www.minded.org.uk was launched in March this year and was fully supported by a range of professionals and third sector organisations including all the main Royal Colleges in health care. There are nearly 200 modules of online training and these include those on suicide and self harm. The Health Board would therefore suggest that this is something that could be utilised effectively in training programmes and would come at no cost to the user. The Schools Assistance Programme (SAP) is a model that has provided help to schools on a number of issues, including self-harm, that has been delivered in many parts of Gwent as well as elsewhere in South Wales. This model might offer an alternative means of supporting the capacity of schools to appropriately manage issues such as self-harm.

I hope this information is helpful to you. Should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me or Richard Bevan, Board Secretary on 01495 435938 or via richard.bevan@wales.nhs.uk

Yours sincerely



Judith Paget
Interim Chief Executive/Prif Weithredwr Dros Dro