

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Ymchwiliad i Gwella Iechyd Emosiynol ac Iechyd Meddwl Plant a Phobl Ifanc – Gwybodaeth Bellach | Inquiry into The Emotional and Mental Health of Children and Young People – Further Information

EMH FI 05

Ymateb gan: Gweithredu dros Blant

Response from: Action for Children

Information for Schools

The Blues Programme

A programme to respond to early signs of depression amongst young people

Introduction

Action for Children is committed to utilising evidence based programmes that have a proven track record in making a demonstrable difference to the lives of children and young people and improving outcomes for them. In recent times, increased attention has been given to the issue of young people's mental health both in the media and in government, resulting in a drive towards a better understanding of the nature and scale of mental health problems amongst young people. As local authority and health budgets come under more pressure, children and young people have more limited access to support and preventative mental health programmes in the UK.

Prevalence of depression in young people

The proportion of 15/16 year-olds self-reporting anxiety or depressed has doubled recent years:

- 1 in 10 children and young people aged 5 - 16 suffer from a diagnosable mental health disorder - that is around three children in every class
- Children with generalised anxiety disorder and those with depression had the most days away from school
- Depression is the most common mental health disorder among teens and adults.
- Between 10 to 15 percent of teenagers have some symptoms of teen depression at any one time.

(www.youngminds.org.uk) and (www.teenhelp.com)

The Blues Programme

Blues is a **6 week** Cognitive Behavioral Group Depression Prevention programme for **15-18 year olds** that actively engages students with depressive symptoms or at risk of onset of major depression in **weekly, one-hour group sessions** and home practice assignments. Sessions focus on building group rapport and increasing participant involvement in pleasant activities, learning and practising cognitive restructuring techniques, and developing response plans to future life stressors. In-

session exercises require participants to apply skills taught in the programme. Home practice assignments reinforce the skills taught and help participants learn how to apply these skills to their daily life. Research undertaken has demonstrated proven outcomes in the following areas:

- Depression and depressive symptoms
- Reductions in illicit Drug use and self-reported substance use
- Lower rates of major depression onset at six-month follow-up
- Effects on risk and protective factors (including social functioning in school)

The programme will be delivered in schools by Action for Children staff who will be trained in delivering the programme. Promotional literature and programme information will be made available to the school, parents and students beforehand.

Schools that are selected to be involved in the programme will be required to support the process by:

- Meeting with the delivery team to decide on timing of group work sessions
- Providing a private space in school for the group to meet
- Identifying space on student timetables for them to be engaged in the group work (there is also the option for groups to run pre-school, lunch time and after school if that is preferred by the school)
- Sharing promotional literature with parents and students
- Supporting student completion of a short (one side) screening questionnaire with all students aged 15-18 and returning the completed forms to Action for Children
- Reviewing the process for enabling student access to the programme, post group work delivery

Schools will also need to consider the work that will be required to achieve sustainable funding for continued delivery the programme after our initial delivery funding expires.

The process for selection of schools is yet to be defined, but decisions will be made shortly.

For more information or an informal discussion please contact **Lee Bridgeman**, Service Co-ordinator, Action for Children. Lee.Bridgeman@actionforchildren.org.uk
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The Blues

The Blues is a school evidenced based programme that addresses depressive symptoms in 15-18yr olds.

The Blues has been developed by Paul Rhode of Washington Institute and this programme is being brought to the UK for the first time by Action for Children due to their successful corporate partnership with Royal Mail.

The programme has evidenced positive outcomes on young people's depression scores:

Blues Outcomes

- Lower rates of major depression onset at six-month follow-up – studies showed a reduction of between 46%-83%
- Lower rates of major depression two years after the program ended - 40% lower for students in the Blues Program compared to the control sample
- Illicit drug use – studies showed a 60% reduction at follow up stage.
- Reductions in self-reported substance use
- Effects on risk and protective factors - rates of negative thinking patterns decreased ($p < .001$), engagement in positive activities increased ($p < .006$), and psychosocial functioning (i.e. how well the adolescent is doing in school and interacting with family and peers) ($p < .004$) improved for the first 6 months following the program.

*Results are based on findings from two separate studies 1) an efficacy trial in which research clinicians conducted the program with 341 adolescents who reported elevated depressive symptoms on a brief screener, and (2) an effectiveness trial in which school personnel conducted the program with 378 students who self-reported elevated depressive symptoms

The whole year group of students are informed about the programme then requested to fill out a questionnaire. The result of the questionnaire determines whether the student would benefit from the therapeutic intervention of the Blues programme. All students identified with a need will be offered a place on the programme, which is rolled out in the school until all students have been given the opportunity to take part (if they wish to do so). The programme runs for 1 hour for 6 weeks in group of 8-12 young people.

The Blues is a student led programme and not a referral programme and the consent and will to take part lies with the student.

The Blues offers cognitive reforming, coping strategies and supports self-reward. The programme gives students a tool kit to enable them to cope with their emotional wellbeing as adolescents and on their transition into adult hood. From research, we are aware that the mental wellbeing of an 18-year-old impacts on their emotional wellbeing as an adult and most adults tell us that their poor mental health started by the time they were 18yrs old.

The Blues programme will be delivered in schools and colleges as no cost to the establishment due to our corporate partnership with Royal Mail.

As a result of Action for Children's proactive approach, the delivery of Blues in Wales will bring a cost benefit income of £190.000 per team and there will be two teams in Wales.

Each Blues team is tasked with delivering the programme to around 500 students per year for two years, enabling around 2000 students in Wales to access the programme over the next two years.

Nationally we are aware that around 1:10 young people in this age range will have a diagnosable mental health disorder – approximately 3 per class.

Our early findings from the first 2000 questionnaires returned from schools shows that around 30% of students meet the criteria for Blues intervention.

We will also be working during those two years to extend and deepen our offer of the Blues in Wales and this we are certain will generate other income equivalent funding.

Action for Children will be able to demonstrate the outcomes of the delivery in Wales and the rest of the UK. We will be sharing the evidence of the programme with schools and colleges that take part and this can support any inspections and evidence portfolios they produce to show the work they are undertaking to support students' emotional wellbeing.

Name: _____ Gender: _____ Date of birth: _____

Year group: _____ Mobile number/Email: _____

School/College: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: please read each question carefully, then circle one of the numbers to the right to indicate how you have felt or behaved during the past week, including today.		Rarely or none of the time (less than 1 day)	Some or a little of the time (1-2 days)	Occasionally or a moderate amount of time (3-4 days)	Most or all of the time (5-7 days)
1	I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me.	0	1	2	3
2	I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor	0	1	2	3
3	I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with help from my family or friends.	0	1	2	3
4	I felt that I was just as good as other people	0	1	2	3
5	I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing	0	1	2	3
6	I felt depressed	0	1	2	3
7	I felt that everything I did was an effort	0	1	2	3
8	I felt hopeful about the future	0	1	2	3
9	I thought my life had been a failure	0	1	2	3
10	I felt fearful	0	1	2	3
11	My sleep was restless	0	1	2	3
12	I was happy	0	1	2	3

1 3	I talked less than usual	0	1	2	3
1 4	I felt lonely	0	1	2	3
1 5	People were unfriendly	0	1	2	3
1 6	I enjoyed life	0	1	2	3
1 7	I had crying spells	0	1	2	3
1 8	I felt sad	0	1	2	3
1 9	I felt that people dislike me	0	1	2	3
2 0	I could not get "going"	0	1	2	3