

Review of the Partnership for Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools and the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition

Report summary

In June 2019, the National Children's Bureau (NCB), commissioned Lorraine Khan Solutions Ltd to complete a review of two membership groups - the Partnership for Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools (PWMHS) and the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition (CYPMHC).

The Partnership is hosted by NCB whilst the Coalition is hosted by Centre for Mental Health. The review has taken place with the full cooperation and support of both organisations.

The review aimed to:

1. Set out the vision, purpose, strategic priorities and business plan for both membership groups
2. Review work of both membership groups, identifying duplication, overlap and gaps
3. Review membership of both groups, identifying overlap
4. Seek stakeholder opinion via survey and interviews with 16 members and stakeholders from the Partnership and Coalition on the most effective way of moving forward
5. Review collaboration and influencing options
6. Make recommendations for way forward

The review sought information on what models might best achieve better outcomes for children and young people, and, moving forward, improve sector and government activity toward this outcome.

A particular concern was the extent to which there was overlap between strategic and operational activity and desired outcomes of the two groups and whether any overlap was detrimental.

The Review found there were "key difference" in the aims and objectives of both organisations." The Partnership focused on addressing mental health and wellbeing in schools, in particular promoting and implementing a Whole School Approach, and provided a strategic support role with regards to the policy environment.

In addition to campaigning and policy activity to improve children and young people's mental health outcomes for all young people, including those in school settings, the Coalition has a broader campaigning role and goals, person-centred and co-produced service approaches, including embedding a focus on mental health in national and local policies, addressing health inequalities, and promoting early intervention and cross-sector collaboration.

There is also a differentiation between the two groups' membership: the majority of Partnership members are schools, educational bodies or voluntary sector providers, while the

Coalition's membership has a much greater number of professional bodies and associations from the mental health sector.

Stakeholder expectations of both organisations provide key areas for improvement and concerns to be addressed. Firstly, concerns were raised around lack of transparency in processes (i.e. steering group membership), quantifying practical outputs from meetings, and the need for greater representation from schools and school leaders. Stakeholders also suggested a role for the Coalition as a facilitator and coordinator of sector-wide activity.

Government representatives reflected on the importance of key elements of relationships with membership groups, including the need for trust, and a safe, dynamic and creative space to troubleshoot issues with implementing legislation.

Respondents were equally divided as to the relative benefits and risks of a formal merger or a more formal partnership between the Partnership and the Coalition, with no clear consensus emerging from responses and interviews.

In terms of moving forward, there was a clear consensus that the Coalition should focus on 'bigger picture' transformative activity with regard to child and family mental health promotion, and generate blue sky thinking to drive the policy agenda forward. Stakeholders envisage the Partnership's role moving forward as maintaining a 'safe space' to trouble shoot policy and practice implementation issues, as well as promoting a whole-school approach to wellbeing and mental health.

The Partnership and Coalition have reflected on the findings and agreed that the most effective way forward is to create a more formalised joint working agreement between the two membership groups, to be underpinned by more robust and more explicitly agreed partnership working processes. Such arrangements will enable both organisations to maintain their unique identity whilst also minimising future overlap and duplication.