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**Will Quince MP**

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families

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Scott Mann MP

By email: [scott.mann.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:scott.mann.mp@parliament.uk)

Your ref: ZA44402

10 November 2021

Dear Scott,

Thank you for your email of 14 October, enclosing correspondence from students from Launceston College, about mental health support in schools.

May I begin by thanking the students for sharing their study on mental health issues in schools. It was interesting to read the results of their questionnaire and the feedback they received from the students. I agree that improving mental health for students and providing appropriate support to aid this, especially at this time, is incredibly important.

It might be helpful if I outline the support the department is providing to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. We have put in place an unprecedented range of action to help schools to develop whole-school approaches to mental health and wellbeing and to help them create an environment where promoting positive wellbeing and mental health is just as important as tackling mental illness. At the heart of this action is the new requirement for schools to teach about mental health and other aspects of wellbeing as part of health and relationships education, which is a major step towards ensuring a greater consistency.

As part of relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education, we have provided a mental health training module to give all children the understanding and tools to develop resilience and strategies for looking after their own mental health and wellbeing. The aim of teaching pupils about physical health and mental wellbeing is to give them the information they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing, recognise issues in themselves and others, and, when issues arise, seek support as early as possible from appropriate sources.

At primary school, health education focuses on understanding and communicating about physical health and mental wellbeing and the characteristics of a healthy lifestyle, alongside important knowledge about online safety, healthy eating, bullying and self-care, including the importance of prevention. At secondary school, teaching builds on the knowledge acquired at primary and further develops pupils' understanding of health. The content also covers understanding emotions, identifying where someone is experiencing signs of poor mental health, and simple self-care. More information about RSE and health education is available at: [tinyurl.com/dP9x5te7](https://tinyurl.com/dP9x5te7).

Throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, we have prioritised keeping schools open above all else, as long as it was safe to do so, because it is so vital for children and young people's wellbeing as well as their education. The support schools are providing to their pupils following the return to face-to-face education should include time devoted to supporting wellbeing, which will play a fundamental part in supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing recovery. The expectations for schools in this regard are set out clearly in the department's main guidance to schools, which also signposts further support. The guidance is available at: [tinyurl.com/5vst8taJ](https://tinyurl.com/5vst8taJ).

Schools already support the mental wellbeing of their pupils as part of their curriculum provision and pastoral support. This is paid for from schools' core funding. We do not place restrictions on spending because it is important that schools are free to decide how best to use the core funding they receive.

We remain committed to promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing support in schools and colleges. As you may know, in May we announced more than £17 million of mental health funding to improve mental health and wellbeing support in schools and colleges. This included £7 million of additional funding for local authorities to deliver the Wellbeing for Education Recovery programme. This builds on Wellbeing for Education Return in 2020/21 (details of which are available at: [tinyurl.com/s376h8PJ](https://tinyurl.com/s376h8PJ)), which provided free expert training, support, and resources for staff dealing with children and young people who were experiencing additional pressures from the last year – including trauma, anxiety, or grief.

Alongside this, we announced £9.5 million of funding to train senior mental health leads in up to 7,800 schools and colleges by March 2022, as part of the government's commitment to offer senior mental health lead training to all state schools and colleges by 2025. In September, we invited state-funded schools and colleges to begin booking the department's quality-assured training courses for their senior mental health leads, to support them to implement an effective whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing in their setting. This approach encourages staff to develop their own understanding of issues affecting their pupils, giving young people a voice in how their school or college addresses wellbeing, working with parents, and monitoring pupils where appropriate.

To sit alongside this, we have worked with the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities and the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition to update the guidance on whole school or college approaches to mental health, reflecting the most recent children and young people's mental health prevalence data, the role of the senior mental health lead in implementing approaches, and new case studies to illustrate this. This guidance is available at: [tinyurl.com/3k4Ytf5c](https://tinyurl.com/3k4Ytf5c).

Furthermore, we are funding an adapted 'Link' programme which is designed to improve partnerships between health and education leaders in local areas, raise awareness of mental health concerns, and improve referrals to specialist help when needed.

This is in addition to the £79-million boost to children and young people's mental health support that we announced in March. This boost will include increasing the number of Mental Health Support Teams – who provide early intervention on mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in schools and colleges – to around 400, to cover approximately 35% of pupils in England by 2023.

In response to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on mental wellbeing, the department convened a Mental Health in Education Action Group in March 2021, which is led by the department's ministers. Through this group, we are taking forward a number of key actions to ensure the right support for staff, children, and young people's mental wellbeing is in place both at this critical time and in the longer term. This is being backed by the Youth Mental Health Ambassador, Dr Alex George.

The department has recently brought together all its sources of advice for schools and colleges into a single site, which includes signposting to external sources of mental health and wellbeing support for teachers, school staff, and school leaders. This site is available at: [tinyurl.com/77ax9bud](https://tinyurl.com/77ax9bud). The site also includes guidance on relationships, sex and health education curriculum planning, covering the key issues that children and young people have been concerned about throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. This guidance is available at: [tinyurl.com/hPhtdbsw](https://tinyurl.com/hPhtdbsw).

To help parents and carers, front line workers, and volunteers support children and young people in emergency or crisis situations, PHE has launched a psychological first aid e-learning training package, available at: [tinyurl.com/22ebrx9s](https://tinyurl.com/22ebrx9s). Also available are online resources such as Every Mind Matters, available at: [tinyurl.com/k9m9Ptv6](https://tinyurl.com/k9m9Ptv6) and Rise Above platforms, available at: [tinyurl.com/5ffrsh8b](https://tinyurl.com/5ffrsh8b), which have been adapted to include advice and support about mental health issues that have arisen because of the COVID-19 outbreak. For those who need specialist support or help, all NHS Mental Health Trusts are providing 24/7 open access telephone lines to support people of all ages and continue to deliver mental health support to children and young people.

The government has also provided over £10 million of funding to mental health charities – including Mind, the Samaritans, Young Minds, and Bipolar UK – to help them adapt, expand, and reach those who are most vulnerable.

In the long-term, through the NHS Long Term Plan we are expanding children and young people's mental health services to support an additional 345,000 children and young people by 2023/24, backed by record investment of an extra £2.3 billion per year. Funding for children and young people's mental health services will grow faster than overall NHS and adult mental health spending.

Thank you for writing about this important matter. I hope the students of Launceston College find this reply useful.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Will". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Will Quince MP**  
**Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families**