

Draft mental health and wellbeing strategy

General information

Your name (optional):

Steph Price –Chair of Wales Council for Outdoor Learning and Director of Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Wales

Stephanie.Price@DofE.org

Organisation (if applicable):

Wales Council for Outdoor Learning - [Our Work | Wales Council for Outdoor Learning](#)



Cyngor Cymru ar Gyfer
Dysgu yn yr Awyr Agored

Wales Council for
Outdoor Learning

Wales Council for Outdoor Learning (WCfOL) acts as a voice for the outdoor learning and environmental education sector bringing together organisations that support and deliver high quality teaching and learning in the outdoor environment.

The partnership shares good practice and influences policy development, highlighting the many benefits of outdoor learning and its contribution to the development of ethical and informed citizens of future generations.

Wales Council for Outdoor Learning helps to raise the profile of Out of Classroom Learning, aiming to foster greater understanding and appreciation of its value and its vital contribution to education for nature, climate, sustainable development and global citizenship.

More information can be found at: www.walescouncilforoutdoorlearning.org/

Your interest in the strategy. Please tick all that apply.

- Lived experience
- Carer
- Member of the public
- Health care staff
- Social care staff
- Third sector staff
- Other professional role
- Organisational response
- Prefer not to say

Which version of the strategy have you looked at? Please tick all that apply.

- Draft mental health and wellbeing strategy
- Children and young people's version
- Easy read version

If you want to receive a receipt of your response, please provide an email address:

Stephanie.Price@DofE.org

Responses to consultations may be made public. To keep your response anonymous (including email addresses) tick the box:

Consultation questions

Question 1

How much do you agree that the following statement sets out an overall vision that is right for Wales?

“People in Wales will live in communities which promote, support and empower them to improve their mental health and wellbeing, and will be free from stigma and discrimination. We will take a rights-based approach to ensuring that everyone has the best mental health possible. There will be a connected system of support across health, social care, third sector and wider, where people can access the right service, at the right time, and in the right place. Care and support will be person-centred, compassionate and recovery-focused, with an emphasis on improving quality, safety and access. Care and support will be delivered by a workforce that feels supported and has the capacity, competence and confidence to meet the diverse needs of the people of Wales.”

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 1a

What are your reasons for your answer to question 1?

Whilst the Council agrees with the aspirations of the statement above, there could be more focus on prevention, maintenance of good mental health and the ways of life that contribute to that. The first lines of the vision talk about improving mental health as if something is already wrong and overall, the vision indicates what we can do when someone is already in the position of requiring help rather than aiming to provide opportunities for people to stay healthy for example by promoting more access to nature.

We would like to see a link between good physical health and good mental health and how being in nature supports that.

We'd also like to highlight more efficient use of the cost effective interventions we already have. The role of the natural environment as a cost effective, calming space cannot be underestimated particularly for young people growing up in a digital society.

Question 2

In the introduction, we have set out ten principles that are the building blocks of the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Do you agree these principles are the right ones?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 2a

What are your reasons for your answer to question 2?

The 10 Principles are very clear in the Children and Young People's version and in the Easy Read version but do not stand out in the main consultation document.

All 10 principles appear to focus on support and treatment and are reactive. There is no principle to outline and support population wide prevention and the maintenance of good mental health. We question whether they are actually principles for the strategy itself or principles for the support element of the strategy.

We are pleased to see the Principles linked to the UNCRC Rights of a Child but with rights come responsibility that many young people are aware of in terms of responsibility for themselves and for the natural environment in which they live. We would like to see that encouraged.

In the strategy, we have a number of sections which are informed by four key vision statements. These four vision statements represent our overall aims. We would like to know what you think of each of them. You can answer questions about as many of the statements that are of interest to you.

Vision statement 1

Question 3

Vision statement 1 is that people have the knowledge, confidence and opportunities to protect and improve mental health and wellbeing. Do you agree that this section sets out the direction to achieve this?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 3a

What are your reasons for your answer to question 3?

The Council welcomes this aim feeling that working towards this will help reduce the impacts on people and the available services in the mental health and wellbeing system.

The strategy does give consideration to how people can develop their emotional intelligence to protect and enhance their own mental health (p.11) but a greater emphasis could be placed on prevention to ensure that those who are able to, can take personal responsibility to maintain good mental health. A focus on the daily lifestyle to build positive physical and mental health which would include being in and connecting to nature.

We welcome the inclusion of the natural environment and the role it can play in the prevention and treatment of poor mental health and well-being. We also welcome its inclusion in other strategies and plans such as the [Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing](#) and within the [National framework for social prescribing](#) but would like to see more emphasis on the mental health benefits that time spent in the natural environment can provide. Time spent in, and a meaningful connection to, nature is a recognised, cost effective intervention supported by a growing body of evidence.

'Connection to nature' or 'nature connectedness' is not specifically referenced in the document.

[The Equigenic Effect: How Nature Access Can Level the Playing Field for Children | Children & Nature Network \(childrenandnature.org\)](#)

[Nature Resources - Nature Connectedness Research Group - University of Derby](#)

[Why society needs nature - Lessons from research during Covid-19 - Forest Research](#)

[Valuing the mental health benefits of woodlands - Forest Research](#)

[Ambient greenness, access to local green spaces, and subsequent mental health: a 10-year longitudinal dynamic panel study of 2.3 million adults in Wales - The Lancet Planetary Health](#)

[Natural Resources Wales / What's your connection nature like?](#)

Question 3b

We've included a number of high-level actions for vision statement 1 in the strategy. Do you agree with these actions?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 3c

Are there any changes you would like to see made to these actions?

We welcome the inclusion that the role of the natural environment can play in the prevention and treatment of poor mental health and well-being but feel more emphasis could be made to highlight the mental health benefits that spending time in the natural environment can bring.

We suggest the following amendments/additions:

The section should include:

- Connection to nature in 'Factors influencing our mental health and wellbeing'.
- Overweight and obesity needs to be referenced as part of poor physical health contributing to poor mental health.
- In the bullet point under 'Protection and improving our mental health and wellbeing' change 'Engaging with nature' change to 'connection with nature'
- In 'The role of the community in supporting mental health and wellbeing, Community Assets, include green AND 'blue spaces' or use the term 'nature-based' assets .

We recommend a separate action point addressing connection to nature as we are seeing wide acceptance of the research on the benefits and the uptake in many education settings, health boards and health professions of nature based interventions, for example the forest school approach being used as a trauma intervention in schools.

Vision statement 2

Question 4

Vision statement 2 is that there is cross government action to protect good mental health and wellbeing. Do you agree that this section sets out the direction to achieve this?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 4a

What are your reasons for your answer to question 4?

We recommend an addition to 'The principles that underpin this approach' section, where it says 'ensure a healthy standard of living for all'. Include access to green and blue space (also for play).

As in Q 3, we welcome the inclusion that the role of the natural environment can play in the prevention and treatment of poor mental health and well-being but feel more emphasis could be made to highlight the mental health benefits that spending time in the natural environment can bring.

For example, in the 'Give every child the best start in life' section it would be beneficial to add the positive impact immersion in the natural environment (connection to nature) can have on maternal health. There is much evidence and research on this topic as well as the importance of maintaining a connection to nature for babies and young children. All are born intrinsically connected to the natural environment but over time our culture slowly reduces the depth of that connectivity. If our babies and young children maintain and strengthen their relationship with nature, their future will be better and this links to the ask from young people to provide support for babies and young children (p3).

In this section we say what different parts of Welsh Government will do to meet the objectives of vision statement 2:

- what mental health policy can do (question 4b)
- what wider Welsh Government will do (question 4c)

Question 4b

Is there anything else that mental health policy can do to ensure that work across Government improves mental health outcomes?

No comment.

Question 4c

There is lots of work happening across Government that could improve mental health outcomes. Is there any work we have missed that you think we should include?

The Council would like to see more joined up policy and action across the Environment, Health and Education departments to help ensure the alleviation of [climate anxiety](#). We need widely established behaviours that support our planet, in terms of nature (biodiversity) and climate (adaptation) which in turn will support the nations mental health and overall wellbeing.

Question 4d

We've identified a number of high-level actions for vision statement 2 in the strategy, do you agree with them?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 4e

Are there any changes you would like to see made to these actions?

It may be worth noting in the Curriculum for Wales section that the outdoor environment is now equal to the indoor learning environment with outdoor learning now a recognised pedagogy. Approaches like Forest School are used by trauma informed schools to support pupils and the increased physical activity afforded by the outdoor environment is recognised to benefit learners mental health and wellbeing.

Vision statement 3

Question 5

Vision statement 3 is that there is a connected system where all people will receive the appropriate level of support wherever they reach out for help. Do you agree that this section sets out the direction to achieve this?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 5a

What are your reasons for your answer to question 5?

The Council agrees that connected systems are essential.

Question 5b

We've identified a number of high-level actions for vision statement 3 in the strategy, do you agree with them?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 5c

Are there any changes you would like to see made to these actions?

No comment

Vision statement 4

Question 6

Vision statement 4 is that people experience seamless mental health pathways – person-centred, needs led and guided to the right support first time without delay. Do you agree that this section sets out the direction to achieve this?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 6a

What are your reasons for your answer to question 6?

As previously mentioned, given the significant increase in poor mental health and well-being in society, greater emphasis should be placed on prevention to help those who are able to, to take a personal responsibility to maintain good mental health. As an example, nature is free and open to all – we need to ensure it is also accessible to all.

Question 6b

We've identified a number of high-level actions for vision statement 4 in the strategy, do you agree with them?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 6c

Are there any changes you would like to see made to these actions?

No comment

Question 7

We have identified some areas where action is needed to support the mental health system as a whole. These areas are:

- digital and technology
- data capture and measurement of outcomes
- supporting the mental health workforce
- physical infrastructure (including the physical estate of services)
- science, research and innovation
- communications

Do you agree these are the rights areas to focus on?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 7a

What are your reasons for your answer to question 7?

No comment

The strategy overall

Question 8

The high-level actions in the strategy will apply across the life of the strategy. They will be supported by delivery plans that provide detailed actions. These delivery plans will be updated regularly. Are there any detailed actions you would like to see included in our initial delivery plans?

The Council would like to see a greater emphasis on the role nature can play and an action to highlight this across the health sector providing training and awareness raising where needed.

Question 9

This is an all-age strategy. Whenever we talk about our population, we are including babies, children, young people, adults and older adults in our plans. How much do you agree that the strategy is clear about how it delivers for all age groups?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 9a

What are your reasons for your answer to question 9?

The actions in the young people's version are clear.

Question 10

We have prepared impact assessments to explain our thinking about how our strategy may impact Wales and the people who live in Wales. We have thought about positive and negative impacts. Is there anything missing from the impact assessments that you think we should include?

No comment

Question 11

We would like to know your views on the effects that the strategy could have on the Welsh language. How could we change the strategy to give people greater opportunities to use the Welsh language? How could we change the strategy to make sure that the Welsh language is treated as well as the English language?

Many of the partners, members and supporters of Wales Council for Outdoor Learning are subject to Welsh Language Standards under Section 47 of the Measure and would expect the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and supporting services to offer equal opportunity for both languages treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Question 12

We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

As mentioned throughout our response, the strategy should acknowledge the importance of nature connectedness in ensuring people and nature can thrive and flourish together promoting pro health and pro environmental behaviours.