

CLAHRC BITE **Brokering Innovation Through Evidence**

10 A bite-sized summary of a piece of research supported by NIHR CLAHRC West Midlands

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Exploring Levels of Teacher Stress and Impact on Providing Mental Health Education and Support

Background:

UK Government guidance suggests that for teachers to be effective in the support and management of young peoples' mental health there needs to be a "whole-school strategy" emphasising "the emotional well-being of students and school staff" (Pinfold, et al. Br J Psych. 2003; 182(4): 342-6). Through this approach the young adults of tomorrow will be well prepared to face the life challenges they may meet.

Objective:

To explore levels of teacher stress in Birmingham, UK and examine how teachers feel their stress impacts on their professional capacity to provide mental health education and support for the young people in their care.

Method:

An online survey of 320 teachers in Birmingham, UK.

Supporting teachers in delivering mental health education for students

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Results:

- Our findings mirror existing literature revealing high levels of stress in the teaching profession,
- Almost one quarter of teachers in our survey reporting having taken sick-leave due to stress
- Many respondents had considered leaving the profession altogether because of stress.
- Time pressures and workload were cited as the most common cause of stress, with fear of stigma acting as an obstacle to help-seeking.

Conclusion:

- Heavy workloads have been identified as a key barrier for teachers with regard to their ability to effectively identify the early warning signs of mental health issues in children and young people (Centreforum, 2014). Teachers often have to prioritise academic issues at the expense of a young person's emotional needs (UK House of Commons Health Committee, 2014).
- The findings of our survey highlight the need for greater support for teachers' own mental health, if they are to be responsible for providing effective support for the young people in their care.

Reference

Palmer CJ, Connor C, Newton BJ, Patterson P, Birchwood M. Early intervention and identification strategies for young people at risk of developing mental health issues: working in partnership with schools in Birmingham, UK. *Early Interv Psychiatry*. 2015. [ePub]. DOI: 10.1111/eip.12264.



Recommendations for Practice

Greater provision of mental health training, guidance and support for teachers with regard to their own mental health, and improved collaboration between schools and mental health partners are key priorities for future policy makers. These will have important consequences for the mental health of the next generation.

What is NIHR CLAHRC West Midlands?

The Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC) is a partnership between universities (Birmingham, Warwick and Keele) and a number of health and social care organisations in the West Midlands. We are funded by the National Institute for Health Research with a mission to undertake high-quality applied health research focused on the needs of patients to improve health services locally and beyond.

For further information, visit:

www.clahrc-wm.nihr.ac.uk

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