



MPs Support Vital Mental Health Education for Schools in Successful Westminster Hall Debate

Tuesday 07 November 2017

On Monday 6th November, MPs showed overwhelming support for improved mental health education in a Westminster Hall debate looking at whether mental health classes should be made compulsory in UK schools.

The debate was secured following a successful campaign by leading charity The Shaw Mind Foundation, the first UK mental health charity to ever achieve over 100,000 signatures on a government petition.

Led by Catherine McKinnell MP, the Labour member for Newcastle North, the debate brought together leading politicians from all the major parties. Conservative MPs including Rob Halfon (Chair of the Education Select Committee), Nicholas Soames, Oliver Heald and Lucy Allan joined Labour's Mike Kane, Shadow Minister for Education, Luciana Berger, Chris Ruane, Rachael Maskell, as well as Lib Dem Wera Hobhouse and SNP Dr Lisa Cameron (among many other MPs) to set out the failings in the current system and the importance of better mental health education in UK schools.

This debate proved a significant stride towards the ultimate objective of achieving compulsory mental health education in our schools. Lasting over two and a half hours and long into the parliamentary evening, it showed MPs dedication to the issue.

There is still, however, a distance to travel to achieve the mental health provisions needed in schools and in teacher training, according to leading campaigners including The Shaw Mind Foundation.

Speaking on behalf of the Government, Education Minister Nick Gibb assured the chamber that mental health for Britain's children is a key government priority. Yet, he fell short of committing any additional funds to mental health education or recommending its inclusion in the curriculum.

Adam Shaw, Founder of the Shaw Mind Foundation, who was present at the debate said:

"We feel there was not enough focus on the next generation coming through who don't have mental health issues, but still need to be armed with the knowledge and education about mental wellbeing and how it affects everything.

"The point needs driving home that if it isn't compulsory it isn't good enough. The Government are trying to patch up a school system that is decades behind in terms of the society our children are now being brought up in. We have heard the usual excuses that money is being invested here and there but it's just not good enough if that money is being used to support the wrong strategy – it misses the point. "We are not challenging the Government over money spent, we are saying they must take a step back and restructure the curriculum to put mental health education in from the start, it should be on the syllabus for the next generation of teachers as part of their training and qualification. That's where the money should be going.

"Industry demands that future generations are educated on mental health as a matter of course, to prevent the billions of pounds of lost productivity to the economy due to mental health issues each year."

Ends

Notes to Editors

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About the Shaw Mind Foundation

• **The Shaw Mind Foundation** is a charitable organisation, founded by Adam Shaw – ex-sufferer of OCD, anxiety and depression – and his psychologist, Dr Lauren Callaghan.

• Shaw Mind currently provides a website featuring vast amounts of information, including free guides on supporting the mentally ill, information about various mental health disorders and illnesses, and links to crisis and support groups all over the world (which can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week).

• The foundation exists to provide people with a voice via blogs and social media. It allows sufferers to share their thoughts and stories, to inspire others and raise awareness. It also works to create a social media platform in which people with mental illnesses can find like-minded people to engage with, without fear of judgement or negativity.



Registered charity in England (no. 1167947), and a registered company (no. 09921207) in the UK

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