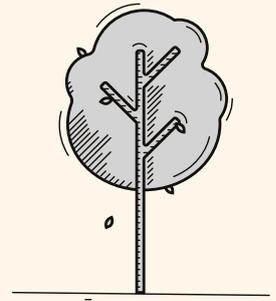


North Ayrshire Council

A local authority approach to challenging mental health stigma and discrimination.



What is it?

In February 2019, the Education service in North Ayrshire developed the Mental Health Operational Group (MHOG) to take a local authority approach to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination.

The MHOG is a multi-disciplinary group consisting of partners from the children and young people's sector including, health, social care, education and third sector partners. The MHOG steers mental health related action within the Children and Young People's sector in North Ayrshire by ensuring an informed approach is taken which involves partners and agencies across the local authority. To do so the MHOG is supported to:

- Co-ordinate activity around mental health in and around schools in North Ayrshire.
- Support effective outcomes.
- Be operationally focused (and inform other groups where necessary) .
- Support a culture of effective implementation both within education and between agencies – ensure consistency and focus on sustained implementation and action.

What was done?

The Education Service in North Ayrshire recognised the extensive work being done across the local authority in relation to the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. The MHOG's first meeting took place in February 2019 and runs on a quarterly basis throughout the year.

Who is it for?

The MHOG is utilised across the Children and Young People's sector. It guides and supports individuals and organisations that have a role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of pupils and the parents and carers of those pupils. Additionally, the MHOG supports individuals and organisations that create opportunities which allow schools to implement mental health and wellbeing education within their curriculum.

Why was it done?

After exploration of the abundance of activities and initiatives being carried out and implemented across the local authority, the MHOG was developed in order to centralise monitoring of, and guidance for, good practice.

What was the impact?

The MHOG has allowed for new initiatives to be shared and distributed among different professionals and agencies from across the Children and Young People's sector – providing a varied, yet expert, evaluation. The MHOG has provided opportunities for organisations to come together and learn from each other and has allowed for updates on current practice to guide action and sharing of resources that can be distributed within North Ayrshire's schools from, for example, CAMHS and NHS Ayrshire and Arran.

The importance and the need for appropriate training was recognised. This has since been actioned with See Me delivering Scotland's Mental Health First Aid (SMHFA) for senior pupils (240) and staff (36) from all secondary schools in North Ayrshire. Further outcomes include:

- New initiatives shared with the group and evaluated
- Organisations have worked collaboratively
- Planning and communication have been more effective and transparent (See Me in Schools; school counselling)
- Information has been shared and distributed
- Outside agencies have been invited to take part and share programmes being delivered in other authorities (e.g. Action for Children Blues Programme)
 - NHS Ayrshire and Arran Public Health have been involved with the group and provide updates on current practice
 - Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) have shared resources that are distributed to schools
- Training opportunities have been identified and actioned (for example Safe Talk; approach to SMHFA: YP)

All of this has been possible because planning and communication has been more efficient due to having one centralised group working towards the same outcome – to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.