

## PA48 Faith in Families

Senedd Cymru

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Absenoldeb Disgyblion

Ymateb gan Ffydd mewn Teuluoedd

Welsh Parliament

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Pupil absence

Evidence from Faith in Families

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Record your views against the inquiry's terms of reference, which have been grouped into 5 themes.

### 1. Reasons

Our Brighter Futures project started to work in Swansea in 2019, initially with 6 local primary schools and 2 practitioners. Children's mental health issues are increasing colossally since the pandemic and our Brighter Futures project is having an ever-increasing demand for their services.

During 2020-21 we were working in 12 primary schools across Swansea, now in 2021-22 working with over 30 primary and secondary schools. This has enabled us to increase the support to children by working on a 1-2-1 basis with over 212 vulnerable children providing over 6,360 hours of intensive, researched play therapy which is an increase of 164%.

We have also increased our group work by 329% delivering peer support to some of the most challenging children in 5 local primary schools.

"IR has previously been supported by the service a few times in the past few years. On this occasion, he was referred as he did not settle back to school well following the first lockdown. He struggled with the new guidelines and got very upset and angry if others did not follow the rules. He fell out with some friends and got in trouble in school. Mum was very concerned that these issues would re-occur following the second lockdown and wanted to prevent this if possible and Mum made a referral to the project. I worked with IR on strategies to manage his emotions with a focus on returning to school. We discussed and role-played scenarios that may occur to suggest strategies to handle them more effectively whilst managing his emotions. I encouraged him to pause, step back and think before reacting. Upon returning to school, IR settled back far better than the previous lockdown. He managed his emotions positively when friends were not following Covid rules and helped them by giving advice rather than getting upset or angry. His teachers were very pleased with his progress and he was proud of himself too. His mum observed him using the strategies I introduced regularly at home and even said they've helped her also. His SDQ has improved by four points during the support. The questionnaire indicates that he is now more generally calmer at home for his Mum and does what is asked of him. There has also been a significant improvement in all areas of peer relationships which will benefit him in school and in his social life."

### 2. Risks and consequences

I was asking for help for my daughter for years, and was shuttling back and forth between the GP, HV and school with no success. After all the traumas my daughter endured in her young life, I knew we needed help and it was so frustrating not getting it.

From the moment the Brighter Futures team started working with us they listened - really listened - to all my concerns without judgement or pity, but with quiet empathy.

P loved her from the first meeting and was always excited to see her. When lockdown started I assumed that would end her sessions so I was relieved and delighted to be able to carry them on, especially as the situation had, of course, heightened P's anxieties.

Before P started her sessions, she was having daily meltdowns that could last hours, she would lash out physically, wet the bed and generally exhibited what I worried was PTSD or some kind of disorder such as bipolar or ODD. This meant we perceived her as having something 'wrong' with her and whether subconsciously or not treated her accordingly.

I noticed P's behaviour beginning to change when she would show me techniques she had been taught in the sessions. She began learning to self-regulate her emotions better and would stop just before losing control and would practice these techniques with increasing success.

There was a real breakthrough for us when she'd had over half of her sessions, she told me she'd been really honest about her feelings and behaviour and this seemed to have a massive impact with her outbursts reducing to very occasional and her demeanour becoming much more confident and settled.

For myself, the real true impact of these sessions has been on my own understanding of my daughter's personality and needs. Thanks to the project their insights and the way of explaining these to me I finally felt I had actual answers to what I was instinctively feeling but not understanding. Learning that my child has not got something 'wrong' with her that needs fixing, feels like an enormous weight has finally lifted off my shoulders - I can view her with much more compassion instead of concern and anxiety which has completely changed my parenting methods. I truly believe it is this, coupled with the techniques and self-knowledge P now has, which has the real potential to change P's whole life for the better. With these skills, we can strengthen our own relationship and hopefully set the bar for P's future relationships, and self-worth.

These sessions have been genuinely life-changing and I will forever be so grateful to the Brighter Futures project for giving us this chance, for giving my beautiful, funny, clever, and EMPATHIC child a chance at a fulfilling, happy life without so much anxiety and fear holding her (or us) back. Thank you so much I don't think you know the difference you have made to our family.

### 3. Impact

Children are denied their basic right of education, they are on limited timetables,

"The Brighter Futures project supports the work in our school and enhances the experiences of pupils, enabling them to work in a safe objective space with a trained adult who can support them to transfer the skills they learn into their school and home lives. The Brighter Futures team are communicative and responsive, and have built strong relationships with the team as well as the pupils they work with. The project responds swiftly to applications submitted by the school, and form an integral part of the pastoral support plans that we offer to our pupils and their families" R. Barker Trallwn Headteacher

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"The Brighter Futures project, has been able to develop some excellent relationships... as a result we are experiencing significantly improved learner wellbeing outcomes" Portmead Head

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"None of us got to where we are alone. Whether the assistance we received was obvious or subtle, acknowledging someone's help is a big part of understanding the importance of saying Thank you. Thankyou Bright Futures for your dedication and support which has been invaluable" Pastoral care officer

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“Faith in families has been part of our school for a few years. They have been an invaluable support to me as Family Liaison Officer of a large primary school. Their commitment and enthusiasm are a massive strength of theirs as a team. The families I have referred speak highly of them and the children love to see them and respond well to their sessions. They are always prepared to go that extra mile which proves their dedication to Faith in Families and its success. Thank you, you are all amazing” Family Liaison  
Cwmrhydyceirw Primary School

#### 4. Effectiveness of policies

More needs to be done to support Childrens basic rights to education. They need to have their needs met - not be hungry, cold, tired or isolated and if they are going to have any chance of living their best lives, thriving not just surviving we need to do something about this now before we lose not just future generations but the current one.

#### 5. Other

“We have referred a number of families with varying needs to the Brighter Futures project since its commencement. The application process is simple and the response is speedy and efficient. All the families referred have been allocated a key worker as a single point of contact and this keyworker has then gone on to complete both face to face and remote work and support with the parents and the children. The children and parents involved in the Brighter Future project have thoroughly enjoyed it and have felt worked with not worked 'at'. The children have looked forward to their weekly contact sessions with the key worker and updates from parents on the front gate have been really positive. All of the children and parents involved in this project so far have had great success in achieving the outcomes that have been set for them - with the support of the staff running the programme. It was also lovely to see that the support did not run term time - the support ran through the holiday periods which is often when children and parents need support the most. A huge thank you to all those involved” Allison Christopherson, Headteacher, Pentrechwyth Primary School

