



A Boys In Mind assembly at Beechen Cliff

A new set of films and a website has been launched by a Bath charity to identify ways in which schools and other settings can be supported to meet the mental health and wellbeing needs of boys and young men.

The charity, 'Boys In Mind - Girls Mind Too' (BIM), was originally conceived three years ago by three women: Clare Laker from B&NES Public Health; Gill Welsh from CAMHS; and Kate Murphy, a former Personal Social & Health Education Lead for B&NES. "We were concerned that there was no national strategy around boys and young men's mental health, so we decided to develop a local strategy," said Kate.

"Traditionally, boys and young men are less likely to seek support when they are struggling and more likely to be excluded from school," she explained. "76% of suicides in the UK are male and suicide is the biggest killer of men under 49. Despite much work to challenge the stigma around mental health, many boys and young men are still unwilling and unable to open up about their difficulties and get help. They suffer in silence and tragically some go on to take their lives."

"One of our principles is to have men leading the strategy as they are hugely under-represented in the field of mental health and wellbeing and we want our message to be that mental health and wellbeing are as important to men as they are to women."

Through working with primary and secondary school staff, BIM hopes to help them understand

Boys In Mind

A Bath charity aims to help safeguard the mental health of boys and men

the issues around male suicide and mental health, while helping them to develop their mental health and well-being policies and practices for the whole school community. As part of this, the project involves young people developing films, assembly ideas and lesson activities that staff can use.

Among the schools taking part is Newbridge Junior School, and teacher Jim Cumpson explained, "Through working directly with schools, BIM is able to identify what is working well, how to develop new approaches and how best to share good practice. Children and young people are at the heart of everything we do, and are therefore involved at all levels of the strategy. This includes helping to drive the direction of BIM, deliver staff training, helping design the logo and website, and even run the launch event and conferences."

The 14 schools that are already involved are Beechen Cliff, Norton

Hill, Ralph Allen, St Laurence, Newbridge Primary School, High Littleton, St Mary's Catholic, Paulton Junior, Twerton Infants, Longvernal, Cameley, Welton, Farmborough and St Michael's Junior. Each school will have a focus group which will work alongside documentary film-maker Fran Landsman of Cling Films to make a film about good practice in their school.

"Children and young people are the heart of everything we do"

Through the film making, children and young people are encouraged to film each other asking and answering questions which relate to some of the BIM themes. "In this way they are not only making films which can be used



A Boys In Mind training day embraces input from all areas of the education experience

with staff, parents and carers and young people but they are also developing listening skills and being heard," said Andrew Hassenruck from Malthouse Films, one of the agencies working with BIM. "Young people tell us how valuable it is to hear their peers' stories and testimonies, and how this can encourage them to seek support and not to feel alone."

"I am so happy to be working with Boys in Mind, using my experiences to help others"

Among the Bath pupils who are actively involved in the BIM initiative is Gabe, Deputy Head Boy at Beechen Cliff School, part of its mental health team and a member of the Boys in Mind film project group. He explained, "At Beechen Cliff School, we were already embedding our mental health initiative before being directly involved with Boys in Mind. Susie Ingram (Sixth Form Pastoral Manager) and Polly Netto (Teacher of Religion, Philosophy and Ethics) had been to the first Boys in Mind Conference where they saw the first film, 'A letter to my younger self'. This gave us some inspiration for our first step in improving access to support at the school.

"We delivered extended assemblies to the Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth featuring interactive elements alongside the first Boys in Mind film and testimonies from sixth formers and teachers. The impact of these assemblies was phenomenal and a case study of its effects and what else we are doing at Beechen Cliff can be found on the Boys in Mind website.

"We were then approached by Kate Murphy from Boys in Mind, identified as having good practice when it came to support available



Boys In Mind is working with schools to help them to understand issues around suicide

for boys and young men at the school, and are now one of their lead secondary schools, working to promote what is going well and sharing our experience elsewhere.



"I volunteered to be part of the Boys in Mind strategy team, alongside my friend Alex, who is a

Lower Sixth student, to be filmed speaking about mental health and accessing help and support, and to film our peers talking about their experiences. It has been an incredibly rewarding experience.

"Originally, I volunteered to be on the mental health team at Beechen Cliff because of my experience of low mental health, and because I wanted to break down the stigma around it, with a view to getting more male pupils and students at the school getting support when it is needed. I am so happy to be working with Boys in Mind, using my experiences to help others."

To see the films and to find out more about Boys In Mind - Girls Mind Too, visit boysinmind.co.uk. ■



Newbridge Primary School pupils using calm bottles as part of a wellbeing session