

National Assembly for Wales

Children, Young People and Education Committee

CAM 18

Inquiry into Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
(CAMHS)

Evidence from : Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above consultation.

Here at the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority we recognise the benefits of the outdoors for the health and wellbeing of all the children and young people in Wales.

We believe that access to managed green space and 'wilder' countryside plays a vital role in supporting positive mental health and supports the development of social and emotional skills. We are responding to this because we believe that it is important that the 'health assets' of the natural environment and landscape of National Parks have an important part to play in nurturing positive mental health in our children and young people.

We have a long history of working with our communities in supporting their access to and understand of the natural environment. Much of this work has been directly and indirectly of benefit to mental health. In more recent time we have two main projects that are able to deliver tangible benefits to mental health; these are 'Walkability' and 'Your Park'. Walkability is largely a healthy exercise project whilst Your Park focuses more on social inclusion. Both contribute to the mental health of participants and both work with children, young people and their families.

There is a wealth of evidence that shows that the mental health of children and young people is improved through having access to and experience of the natural environment. This includes conditions such as depression, anxiety and attention deficit disorders.

Here at the National Park Authority we would relish more opportunities to work closely with the health and social care sectors to help develop innovative projects and programmes of work that would draw upon the intrinsic therapeutic qualities of the natural environment to promote mental health. Our Rangers have a wealth of experience in working with children, young people and families and many of them have additional training to work with more vulnerable individuals and groups.

In times of tighter budgets and service constraints we believe that we can help services develop innovative approaches to mental health, such as using outdoor 'wild' play to promote positive parenting or nature conservation work



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*Croesawn ohebiaeth
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We welcome correspondence
in English and Welsh*



to promote self-esteem.

Although we are involved with many local networks to promote our work including West Wales Action on Mental Health and have links to the Hywel Dda Health and Social Care Wellbeing Board, we would very much like to build on this work and become more embedded in both early intervention services. The natural environment can be a significant preventative factor in reducing the emergence of mental health problems in the first place as well as being involved in the delivery of interventions for those children and young people who are experiencing mental health problems.

In the next few months we will be further embedding health and wellbeing outcomes work into the Management Plan of the National Park, and we will also be working closely with the three other National Parks in Wales on this agenda.

I look forward to hearing back from you and would gladly provide further evidence orally on the work we do or alternatively submit a more detailed written report.

Yours faithfully



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Michael James
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