Making children's mental health a priority today: Mindfulness in Schools Project pledge to reach one million schoolchildren within 5 years.

Monday 12 November, 2018

The charity's 'A Million Minds Matter' campaign aims to allow one million school children access to their mindfulness courses for less than £5 per child by the end of the campaign. A Million Minds Matter has been launched in-line with 'Self-Care Week', as mindfulness is seen as a "lifelong toolkit for adults and children".

London, UK, Oct 2018 -- Did you know that **50% of those with lifetime mental illness experience symptoms by the age of 14** (Public Health England 2016)? There is overwhelming evidence to suggest the urgency of finding preventative measures to counteract the growing scale of this problem, this is something Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) is working to do.

The charity, which provides mindfulness training to teachers, is launching its "A Million Minds Matter" campaign, which pledges to reach one million school children within the next 5 years. MiSP is known internationally for its gold standard mindfulness curriculum; **.b** for 11-18 year olds and the equivalent **Paws b** programme for younger learners aged 7-11. There is a growing body of peer-reviewed evidence which indicates that mindfulness training is effective in improving pupils' and teachers' psychological wellbeing and health:

"We can apprehend and ascertain, through rigorous studies, the potential value that this [mindfulness] has. Because of children's vulnerabilities and the effects of stress on the developing brain in childhood, it's even more important to offer these kinds of practices to them than anywhere else… it has the potential to not only transform education but the younger generation as the future of the planet." Jon Kabat-Zinn - (Key-note address, MiSP Conference 2018)

"A Million Minds Matter" aims to reach out to all schools, removing cost as a barrier to any schools, including those within diverse, needy and disadvantaged communities, which may benefit from MiSP tools and training, which in turn can improve mental well-being.

When taught properly, Mindfulness is an essential life skill, and MiSP's programmes aim to provide a "lifelong toolkit for children and adults", enabling individuals to flourish and to provide anchoring in challenging circumstances.

This is why a "A Million Minds Matter" has been launched during Self-Care Week 2018* - an awareness week dedicated to building awareness and making self-care a lifelong habit. The slogan for this year is "*Choosing Self-Care for Life",* reflects the ethos of MiSP – their programmes are not a quick-fix which can solve all manner of mental health problems, but rather a process of teaching and equipping children with a life skill they can return to time after time.

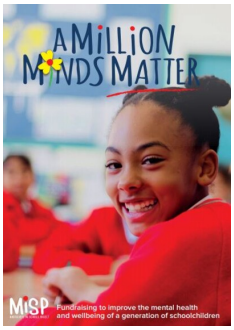
With recent results showing "Over three quarters (79%) of teachers have reported experiencing work-related anxiety" (NASUWT Survey, 2016), these issues are not just limited to schoolchildren, but also those who care for them. MiSP cannot bring mindfulness to children and young people if they do not first bring it to those who care for them. Their training pathway therefore begins by teaching mindfulness to school teachers, Heads and SLT members. MiSP's programmes ensure teachers are trained thoroughly in mindfulness before they begin delivering the sessions in their classrooms. As Chris Keates, General Secretary of the NASUWT states: "High quality education cannot be delivered by stressed and anxious teachers." (2016)

Richard Burnett, co-founder of *MiSP* states -

"The most important thing in schools is to start by training the teachers. Teachers are under huge pressure and if *they* genuinely feel the benefits of mindfulness then the kids will feel it too. There is no point in a teacher helping their class to manage their stress levels if later that day the kids see the same teacher kicking the photocopier. Teachers have to walk the talk!"

Despite the fact **1 in 4 children show some evidence of poor mental health** (Young Minds Trust), children are often unable to access the necessary support at the right time. With many finding they "have

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to reach crisis point before they are able to get help" (Care Quality Commission 2018). "A Million Minds Matter" looks to provide preventative skills to children before this crisis point and aims to improve the lives of a generation of children and young people.

For more information on how to get involved in the "A Million Minds Matter" campaign, please visit the 'Support Us' page on our website - mindfulnessinschools.org. For teachers or those in the education sector, find out more about upcoming courses and Information sessions and how to bring mindfulness to your school.

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