

Mental Health, Wellbeing and Education

Main activities and events of the SIG in the past year.

a) The SIG has significantly increased its membership numbers this year from approximately 60 to 226. Not only has the SIG attracted a high number of members but the membership is diverse reflecting the concerns and interests of academics, practitioners, researchers, students and so on across the sector. Membership is spread across the four nations, for example, we have members in Swansea, Dundee and Belfast as well as across England. We also have international members for example, Canada, Australia, India and Malaysia. b) We have produced regular newsletters (three, in December 2019 and April and September 2020) to keep members informed of SIG news, activities and events as well as wider issues, debates, policy updates and external events. Our newsletters include an open invitation for our members to contact us about issues they'd like to see taken up. c) We have maintained the SIG web pages to stay up to date with current issues and offer a discussion forum. d) In July 2020 we ran the first BERA virtual online conference after live events were cancelled entitled: The impact of Covid-19 on the mental health and wellbeing of education professional, pupils and young people. Approximately 80 people attended the event, both BERA members and non-members from across the education sector. Feedback was extremely positive from attendees. e) On 27th July we ran another successful online conference on Student and Teacher Wellbeing with approximately 60 attendees. Feedback was again extremely positive from attendees. f) BERA conference (before it was cancelled) - we submitted a paper as part of a symposium. In total, the SIG received 38 submissions from members to the conference, of which 26 (68%) were accepted. Submissions included: 5 individual papers from new researchers, 5 from post-doctorates and 9 individual research papers; 3 posters and 3 symposiums. One of these symposiums was delivered as a virtual conference (Student and Teacher Wellbeing – see above) g) We were asked to run a workshop at the BERAs British Curriculum Forum event, 'A curriculum for Wellbeing' event that was due to be held in East London on the 14th March. Unfortunately, this was cancelled due to Covid-19. However, a shortened version of the session was recorded for BERA and it is now available as a digital online resource. In addition, there is also a publication of the conference proceedings currently in press. h) We produced two extracts for BERAs July inaugural podcast that highlighted the impact of Covid-19 on mental health and wellbeing issues relevant to our SIG. i) In February, Professor Jonathan Glazzard, one of the SIGs co-conveners, was invited to attend a discussion at Downing Street to discuss addressing government concerns about the mental health of young people aged 16-24, particularly those not in education and training. We will keep you updated on any further developments.

What are the key issues currently affecting your Special Interest Area?

- The impact of Covid-19 on the mental health and wellbeing of young people as a result of the pandemic, specifically the effect of school closures and cancelled exams as a result of the national lockdown in March, April and May 2020. Also, looking forward into 2021 and the continued disruption to education.
- Supporting the mental health of children, young people, young adults/adults (in FE/HE) and staff across all educational settings. Especially in the context of the ongoing pandemic and the impact on teaching and learning delivery and access to learning spaces.
- Wider political decisions and systemic factors which have an impact on mental health and wellbeing in the context of education in particular the introduction of the new national Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education curriculum and staff training and support to deliver this effectively.
- Policy changes in relation to supporting mental health and providing services in schools and colleges and the real-world implications for all stakeholders.
- The acceleration of new technologies and their growing use in education and the potential impact on mental health and wellbeing. One of the resulting major concerns is digital poverty in relation to education and the impact on pupils/staff/parents and families' mental health and wellbeing.

Are there any particular developments for your SIG on the horizon, e.g. newsletters, publications, blogs, events, projects?

a) We have an online conference scheduled for the 18th February 2021. The focus of the event will be mental health and technology. Originally the conference was scheduled to take place in Leeds in July 2020 but was postponed due to Covid-19. b) We hope to increase our social media profile making more effective use of Twitter, blogs and so on and plan to recruit a social media champion from our membership to take this forward. This is particularly important given the geographical reach of our membership. c) We will continue to send out regular newsletter to our members. d) We hope to work collaboratively with other SIGs to hold joint events and are delighted for the support of the Educational technology SIG for our next conference.

What other organizations does your SIG collaborate with?

The Educational technology SIG

How has your SIG worked to encourage diversity amongst your membership? How do you plan to encourage diversity in the future?

We promote the work of the SIG and its members through our various professional national and international networks. We are looking at the possibility of hosting/co-hosting future events in the four nations.

a) We have promoted the SIG and its work across the different stages of education to ensure a breadth of views from members from early years to universities to adult education, from academic researchers and professors to school practitioners. Our current membership list reflects this diversity. b) We have also encouraged those at different stages of their career to be part of the SIG. c) We have ensured events are widely advertised, affordable and where possible scheduled for dates / times that allow for the maximum take up. For example, running our online conference in mid-July when teaching loads are lightest.