

Presidential Roundtables

Wellbeing – Schools and pupil mental health: do we fix the child or do we fix the school?

Lead: Professor Jane Hurry, UCL Institute of Education
Speakers: Chris Bonell, Jess Deighton, Catherine Carroll
Discussants: Matthew Hopkinson, Ann Keane-Maher

BERA Presidential Roundtables provide compelling research reviews offering a state-of-the-art position on topics that are of interest to researchers, practitioners, policy makers and wider society.

There is an understandable eagerness to engage schools in supporting the wellbeing and mental health of adolescents. From an environmental perspective, young people spend much of their time there and school influences their development. Factors such as experiencing bullying and poor school connectedness undermine wellbeing and are risk factors for mental ill-health. From a medical perspective schools offer an opportunity for early detection of mental health difficulties and early treatment. There is evidence that intervention in school can improve wellbeing and reduce mental health difficulties.

School focus is principally on an academic curriculum. Addressing wellbeing and mental health is more discretionary and school staff mainly untrained in these areas. An alternative is to invite mental health professionals into schools. This approach was supported through the Green Paper, Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision (2017). However, external mental health professionals are not well-placed to change school environments. In this Roundtable we will consider the evidence base on school-based approaches to adolescent wellbeing and mental health with the particular intention of drawing conclusions about how schools and mental health professionals can reliably and consistently support adolescents in their contexts. The implications of social and medical models of intervention will be foregrounded, exploring the extent to which approaches adopt a 'deficit' model to adolescent wellbeing and the extent to which the adults in charge of the institutional space address wider environmental factors.

4 December 2020
10.30am-12.30pm

Online event – pre-registration essential

BERA Member: Free
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