

Children
Report Card
July 2021

Health and Wellbeing Service

Overview

Looking After Me Journals

According to the Northern Ireland Youth Wellbeing Survey 12.6% of children and young people in Northern Ireland experience common mood disorders such as anxiety and depression which is around 25% higher than in other UK nations.

Previous studies also show that half of adult mental health disorders develop before the age of 18 so it is vitally important to ensure the right services are in place to address and stem emerging mental health needs in young people.

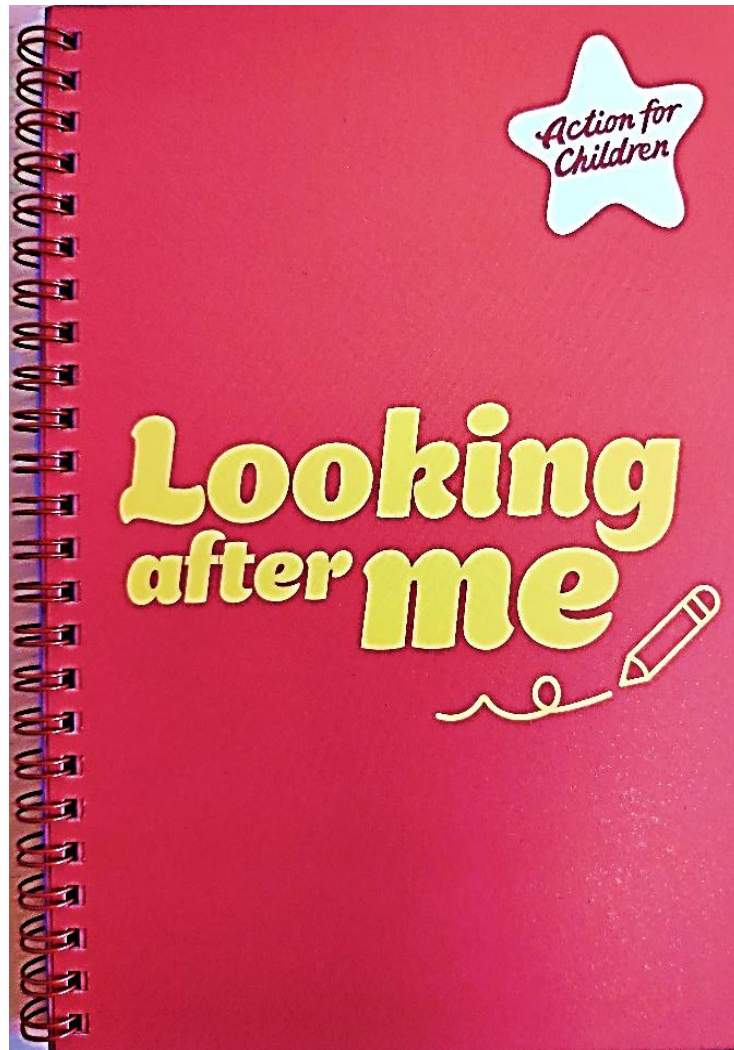
Mental health and emotional wellbeing has come up as a consistent issue in all the Northern Locality Planning Group meetings from both the organisations and members and also from parents and children/young people themselves.

The last year and a half has presented a unique challenge to children's mental health. Children have had to deal with disruption to their schooling and tests/exams, fears about the Coronavirus, home schooling, self-isolation, school outbreaks, separation from friends and family members and changing restrictions. Also they may have experienced family bereavements, change in family circumstances because of loss of jobs, and exacerbation of family problems.

Feelings like these will gradually ease for most, but prevention and early intervention are key to alleviating distress, allowing children to express their feelings, building resilience, teaching helpful lifelong coping mechanisms and preventing mental ill-health.

With this in mind the Locality Planning Group's decided to work to obtain "Looking After Me" journals from Action for Children to help children and young people explore and express their feelings through the use of a journal in a guided way.

817 children received the Looking After Me journals to support mental health and emotional wellbeing across Newtownabbey, Mid-Ulster, Antrim/Ballymena, Causeway and Carrickfergus/Larne localities.

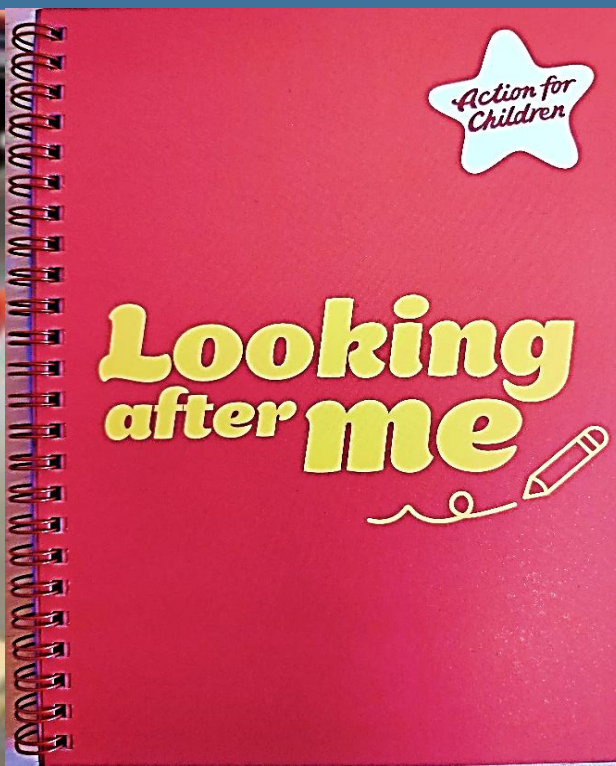


How well did we do it?

We worked in partnership with 20 organisations to support children's mental health in particular those children who needed mental health support or were at risk of poor mental health.

These organisations included the Education Authority, primary schools, post-primary schools, alternative education settings, Women's Aid, NIACRO, statutory, community and voluntary organisations.

They were delivered and disseminated to the children between April - June 2021 before the end of the school year.



Is anyone better off?

Antrim Grammar School will be using the journals as part of their induction programme for the coming term.

Maine IPS,
Magherafelt PS,
Carnmoney PS,
Ballykeel PS, Moyle
PS, Glynn PS:

P7 pupils worked
through the journal as
part of their transition
programmes.



Ballycastle High,
Cross and Passion
College and the
Rainey Endowed
School all used the
journals as part of
their “coming out
of Covid” support
for Year 8 pupils.