



The Gordon Schools  
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9 September, 2018

To Whom It Does Concern,

**Letter of support:**

**The Gordon Schools & the Bydand Medical Practice with Networks of Wellbeing Ltd (NoW)**

Together we represent The Gordon Schools, Huntly and the Partners at Bydand Medical group in Huntly and are writing to commend to you a local charity, Networks of Wellbeing Ltd (NoW).

The Bydand practice has patient population of approximately 8000 and are considered 'rural' in Aberdeenshire. Over the past few years, services for mental health have been stretched across the NHS but this is felt very keenly in areas such as ours. We have a large number of patients with varying mental health needs who need a lot of support and input. This group can consist of particularly vulnerable individuals who are at increased risk of social isolation, self-harm and depression who find engagement in social activities and work environments very challenging.

For the majority of these patients what is needed is counselling, talking therapies, group activities and general support on a day-to-day basis but sadly these are not currently covered by the current NHS provision. Counselling services are reserved for severe cases only and can have waiting lists of over a year which you will appreciate is less than ideal. We have a practice counsellor, but again the waiting list can be up to a year. With increasing frequency, referrals to NHS psychiatric services are being declined due to strict criteria that must be met which leaves a significant number of patients potentially without any support beyond their GP.

However, as a practice, we at Bydand, feel immensely fortunate to have access to the wide-ranging services provided at no cost (!) by Networks of Wellbeing. Along with their extensive range of group activities provided by a remarkable group of volunteer staff, there is also a fantastic counselling service which has been invaluable to our patients. Their one-to-one work with patients has allowed a level of engagement that is just not realistically possible in a 10minute GP appointment.

Without a doubt, NoW improves the patient experience and gives us as a practice an extra treatment avenue not available to many in similar areas across the country and also frees up time to help meet the ever-increasing demand for appointments for other conditions. Without NoW we would be unable to meet the needs of these patients and see their work as vital in the community.

Over recent years, The Gordon Schools has been working closely in a very beneficial partnership with Networks of Wellbeing. This is a two-way relationship which has involved our pupils taking advantage of the various services offered by the charity as well as pupils here fundraising on their behalf.

The availability of the charity for families that come to our School is also an invaluable resource, as mental health issues are a feature of our community, like in every other community. Having a facility on our doorstep would allow us to foster closer links and more pupils to benefit during our school day. Pupils also respond better to leaving the School building to attend a community facility where the information and support comes from a specialist adult who they can build trust with.

Lately, with the support of a NoW trained tutor, we have been using the 'Mindfulness' approach with our younger pupils to promote resilience and more sustainable health and well-being. Our pupils have been given opportunities to develop their literacy through contributing to the local 'AB54' Newsletter and working with the charity to present at our local Youth Philanthropy Initiative competition. The 'Bike Shack' has provided invaluable support in providing skills for work for vulnerable pupils, at risk of missing out and exclusion as well as to our Mountain-biking group. This has also spawned links to other organisations, such as Sustrans, who have also enriched the educational experiences which we are able to offer our pupils. Many of our families also participate in the Huntly Fun Run and; we have offered pupils the chance to learn more about skills for life and work via the former 'No 11' drop-in facility in the town.

This year our current S1-S3 pupils donated a quarter of the proceeds from their all-night 'Sport-a-thon' to NoW this year because they feel so strongly about dealing positively with issues associated with health and wellbeing.

Both of our organisations strongly commend this Charity and the work they do in the local community to you. Any extension of their services will undoubtedly greatly benefit the health and well-being of the people of Huntly and the surrounding area.

Yours faithfully,

Phil Gaiter    &    Dr Fiona Reid  
Rector                      Bydand Medical Practice