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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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

*The charity's 'A Million Minds Matter' campaign aims to enable 1 million school children to access high-quality mindfulness training 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** (Kessler RC et al. (2005). There is overwhelming evidence to suggest the urgency of finding preventative measures to counteract the growing scale of this problem, and this is something Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) is working to do.

The charity, which provides classroom-based 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; **mb** 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 - (Keynote 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 and disadvantaged communities, which may benefit from MiSP tools and training, which in turn can improve mental wellbeing.

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 equipping children with a life skill they can return to time after time.

With recent studies 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 spend the majority of the working week with 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!”

**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](http://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.**

**Notes to editors:**

1. Mindfulness in Schools Project has been established for over a decade, and over 400,000 young people have already benefited from their tools and training, with over 4,500 teachers and educational staff trained through their programmes.
2. Further comments from Mindfulness experts also available – including MiSP Founder Richard Burnett or Director of Curricula and Training Claire Kelly.
3. Further Case-Studies available upon request.
4. Self-Care Week takes place 12-18 November 2018 and has the theme “Choosing Self Care for Life.”
5. Self-Care Week is an annual initiative organised by the Self Care Forum to raise awareness about the benefits of self-care and what people can do to take care of their health. It is to promote and encourage more self-care across communities, families and generations.