

**For release 28.1.120**

## **Transform Our World Press release: Turning anxiety into action**

**Headline: Half of teachers (51%) feel ill-equipped to deal with student anxiety around climate change**

- 1 in 3 teachers is seeing high levels of climate anxiety in students
- 77% of students say that thinking about climate change makes them anxious
- Transform Our World, a new hub for teachers, launches a set of free resources to help manage climate anxiety in the classroom.

Half of teachers feel ill-equipped to deal with student anxiety around climate change, according to new research from environmental charity **Global Action Plan**. Climate-anxiety is proving to be a key challenge in today's in school environment, adding to the stress levels of teenagers and teachers who feel ill-equipped to help their students.

In the UK, **as many as 1 in 6 young people will experience an anxiety condition** at some point in their lives. An existential threat such as climate change can only heighten this anxiety.

Sam Tarca, Head of Year 9 in Trinity Church of England School, Lewisham said: "Over the past few years climate change has increasingly brought a sense of anxiety. With the current crises being experienced throughout the world, you just need to look at the uncontrollable bushfires ravaging Australia - the impact is finally being seen as 'real'. Increasingly, students are wanting to help but not sure how and this leaves them confused and anxious"

### **Responding to eco-anxiety**

How can schools respond to this? 40% of the teachers surveyed feel that their senior leadership team is not engaging in climate change as an issue. Teachers can find themselves trapped in a cycle of inaction, as they have a lack of knowledge on how to respond and limited resources (or training) to help them discuss the issue with their students. With so many teachers feeling ill-prepared to deal with eco-anxiety this can lead to paralysis and a feeling that the subject is just too tough to tackle.

This lack of action by schools compounds the problem and creates a cycle of anxiety among young people, who feel this critical issue is not seen as important by their schools. 91% of the students surveyed would like to see their school doing more to engage with them about the issues around climate change.

### **Turning anxiety into action**

Now help is at hand, with teachers being offered a solution in the shape of a new campaign called **Turning anxiety into action** from online teacher resource hub, **Transform Our World**. Hub coordinators Global Action Plan, working with a specialist psychologist, have designed an **Introductory Guide** called Turning anxiety into action, which will be hosted on the Transform Our World site. The Guide is for teachers to help them manage student eco-anxiety and to facilitate conversations about climate action engagement with school leaders.

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Luke Wynne, Head of Youth and Schools at Global Action Plan said: “We work closely with teachers and have listened to what they are telling us – that they are worried and unsure of how to respond to climate anxiety. We’ve worked with partners across the Transform Our World hub to both design and curate a collection of resources to help teachers feel resilient and ready for the challenges ahead.”

The **Transform Our World** online teacher hub has been launched with support from the #iwill Fund to help achieve the #iwill campaign’s goal of making youth social action the norm for as many young people as possible. It empowers young people to tackle the root causes of the climate breakdown and biodiversity loss through social action. [www.transform-our-world.org](http://www.transform-our-world.org)

With the next climate strike scheduled for Friday 14<sup>th</sup> February, now is the time to make sure teachers feel equipped. Commenting on the launch of this guide, Dr Elly Hanson Clinical Psychologist says: “So many of us, children and adults, are feeling understandably anxious about climate change. The key is supporting and empowering one another so that we can harness our feelings about the crisis in a way which leads to positive action. This excellent new guide will help teachers raise the issue with young people such that they can channel their anxiety and prevent it becoming entrenched or paralysing. I hugely welcome it!”

The **Transform Our World** hub provides free resources which are picked and rated by teachers to most effectively empower young people to tackle the root causes of our climate and ecological crises. It inspires students to lead impactful projects that benefit their friends, family and local area, as well as the wider world. The resources are sourced from a range of partner organisations that are expert in inspiring young people to protect the natural world through schools’ programmes

Luke Wynne of Global Action Plan says “51% of teachers we spoke to agreed that there isn’t space in the curriculum for climate change as an issue. Campaigns like **Teach The Future** are calling for the educational system to be urgently re-purposed around the climate emergency and ecological crisis. And New Zealand and Italy are paving the way. It is time we made more space in the school day for students to discuss these complex and anxiety inducing issues”

#### Notes to editors:

1. **Data referenced was gathered in surveys from Global Action Plan** 166 teachers took our survey Teacher feedback : Supporting students on climate change between 21/10/19 and 06/1/20.

128 young people aged between 13 and 18 took our survey: **Environmental education at your school** between 23/10/19 and 06/1/20.

2. The **Transform Our World** hub provides free resources which are picked and rated by teachers to most effectively empower young people to tackle the root causes of our climate and ecological crises. It inspires students to lead impactful projects that benefit their friends, family and local area, as well as the wider world. The resources are sourced

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3. **Global Action Plan** is a charity that helps people live more sustainable lives by connecting what is good for us and good for the planet and has years of experience running environmental programmes for schools. Global Action Plan coordinates Transform Our World, supported by the #iwill campaign. [globalactionplan.org.uk](http://globalactionplan.org.uk)
4. **#iwill campaign** is a movement of over 1,000 organisations from across the UK that aims to make participation in social action – such as volunteering, campaigning, supporting peers and fundraising - the norm for young people aged 10 to 20. [iwill.org.uk](http://iwill.org.uk)
5. **#iwillFund** supports Transform Our World. The **#iwill Fund** is made possible thanks to £40 million joint investment from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to support young people to access high quality social action opportunities. The **#iwill Fund** brings together a group of organisations who all contribute funding to embed meaningful social action into the lives of young people.

#### **Luke Wynne – Head of Schools at Global Action Plan**

Luke, a former science and physical education teacher who joined GAP in 2010 oversees all of GAP's youth and schools programmes. He is responsible for overall stakeholder and relationship management with our key schools and youth programme partners and funders. He oversees GAP's education team to ensure the quality, consistency and continuous improvement of GAP's schools and youth programmes. Luke is also the network coordinator for the GAP International network.

#### **Sam Tarca - Head of Year 9 in Trinity Church of England School, Lewisham**

Sam has been a teacher for 9 years having completed his degree and teacher training in Australia. He has taught a range of year groups from Primary to A Level and specialises in History and Physical Education and has been teaching full time history over the past 7 years at Secondary level. He has also been Head of Year for the past 3 years in years 7, 8 and currently year 9. Over the past year he has been on the Extended Leadership Team and holds the post of Knowledge Lead to ensure that student knowledge is engrained into the curriculum.

#### **Dr Elly Hanson**

Elly is an independent Clinical Psychologist who works closely with organisations such as the PSHE Association and CEOP to apply psychology to education. She is particularly interested in how education can help tackle various societal issues through supporting young people's autonomy and values. She also undertakes therapy and psychological assessments, and has worked with children and young people (as well as adults who have experienced trauma) for over 15 years.



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