

# DON'T BE LEFT IN THE DARK

CHILDREN AND  
YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
MENTAL HEALTH



# HOW ARE CHILDREN AFFECTED BY POOR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING?

Good mental health is just as important as physical health. Having good mental wellbeing does not mean that you don't ever suffer from setbacks and difficult emotions, but that you have the resilience to cope, which in turn helps children become thriving, happier adults. It's not just about treating diagnosable mental health conditions. The consequences of not tackling problems can be lifelong, influencing educational and work prospects, the likelihood of committing a crime and even how long someone lives.

At least 1 in 8 children and young people are affected by mental health problems, and the latest figures are likely to be even higher. Young people are increasingly struggling with problems like anxiety, depression and self-harm, with nearly 19,000 young people admitted to hospital after harming themselves in 2015. That's a 14 per cent rise over three years. We are also just beginning to understand how the increasing prevalence of social media in young people's lives is negatively impacting their emotional health.

Although no one is immune from poor mental health some children and young people are more likely to need help than others, such as those living in the poorest households, looked after children, children in the youth justice system and children not engaged in mainstream school. Accessing support can also be more challenging when individuals have more than just a single issue to manage.



COUNSELLING AND THERAPY

YOUTH HUBS

FAMILY THERAPY

PEER SUPPORT

ONLINE TOOLS

CBT

# WHAT ARE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SERVICES?

Mental health and wellbeing services include **not only specialised units** providing treatment for diagnosable medical conditions, but **support** for less severe issues in the community, clinics and schools. Many other services exist to **support the wellbeing of children** coping with life's challenges, such as helping young people to **stay away from crime**, support for children experiencing **problems at home**, or helping those with **drug and alcohol problems**. Each stage of life can have its own particular struggles and services here can help to identify when more support is needed, such as when **a parent is finding it difficult to cope**, a child is **moving to a new setting** or the **pressures of school or home** become too much.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL SUPPORT

IN-PATIENT TREATMENT

NUTRITION SERVICES



## WHO FUNDS SERVICES?

The Government provides funding to clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), councils, schools and the community and voluntary sector for local mental health and wellbeing support. Councils also receive a public health grant and the Early Intervention Grant which contribute to early support services.

## WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

**There just isn't enough capacity in the system to meet the level of need**, leaving around 75 per cent of young people experiencing a mental health problem not able to access any treatment at all.

Demand for treatment has surged. Once through the referral process, which can take up to 200 days, and finally able to get specialist support, even young people with

life-threatening conditions can wait more than 100 days before receiving any form of treatment.

Often children and young people offered services find they don't meet their particular needs **leading to missed appointments**. As budgets shrink councils and their partners have found it harder to fund services, particularly early help. This then creates further challenges, as needs escalate and become more complex and expensive to treat.

Although in many areas, councils and CCGs are working closely together on local transformation plans to allocate funding, signed off by health and wellbeing boards, in reality there is **no certainty that the £1.7 billion set aside by Government has reached the right people**.

Health and wellbeing boards are not as involved as they should be in the decisions CCGs make, and facing a long list of urgent priorities, money is often spent on more critical care.



At the same time, Government funding for the Early Intervention Grant has been significantly cut, by almost £500 million since 2013. It is projected to drop by a further £183 million by 2020.

Between 2010/11 and 2015/16 **spending by councils on early intervention services for children, young people and families fell by 31 per cent in real terms.<sup>1</sup>**

## WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT DOING?

In September 2014, the Government established the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce, working with experts across education, health and social care, to set a clear direction for local leadership.

The Government has pledged an extra £1.7 billion by 2020 in funding for children and young people's mental health and introduced waiting time targets for young people with eating disorders.

The Care Quality Commission is due to publish the second part of a major review into children and young people's mental health services, focusing on improved access and the quality of services.

A Green Paper launched at the end of 2017 prioritised the message that children and young people who need help must be able to get it when they need it.

<sup>1</sup> The Children's Society, NCB and Children & Young People Now

## WE ARE CALLING ON THE GOVERNMENT TO:

- **Ensure the extra £1.7 billion has been spent on child and adolescent mental health and not diverted elsewhere.** Mental health services for children and young people are buckling under rapidly increasing demand – local areas urgently need the funding they have been promised and for funding to be guaranteed after this Parliament.
- **Improve standards and make sure funding is spent wisely.** It is critical that Government ensures care pathways and services are quickly accessible and appropriate for all, including those with complex needs. They must also strengthen governance over how funding is spent, recognising that health and wellbeing boards are best placed to ensure that funding reaches the right services.
- **Prioritise prevention and early intervention; provide funding to councils so they can work with schools to commission independent school based counselling in every secondary school.** Children and young people's chances of thriving dramatically increase the earlier we provide help as well as saving money in the longer term. Cuts to the Early Intervention Grant must be reversed, counselling introduced in all secondary schools as part of an integrated whole-school approach and funding spread across all services.



WE NEED THE **PROMISED £1.7 BILLION** TO REACH THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO NEED IT MOST AND WE NEED REASSURANCES THAT THE FUNDING WILL CONTINUE BEYOND 2020

## PRIORITIES

Funding accountability and transparency

Prevention and early help services

Counselling in secondary schools; training for front line staff

## PRESSURES

Historic underfunding

Rising demand

Cuts to funding

Workforce capacity

## HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARDS

Health and wellbeing boards are the main forum where political and clinical leaders come together to shape local care and health systems on a democratically accountable and statutory basis.

Established and hosted by councils, they bring together local politicians, the NHS, local Healthwatch, public health, children's services and adult social care to plan how best to meet the health needs of communities.

Local transformation plans are developed and refreshed annually, setting out how local services will improve children and young people's mental health across the 'whole system'.

## PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Prevention services aim to stop or reduce the likelihood of mental health problems occurring in the first place. Early intervention services help people at the first signs of trouble. Early intervention avoids young people falling into crisis and avoids expensive and longer-term interventions in adulthood. Some prevention programmes target those children and young people who are most at risk of poor mental health. It's one of the most cost-effective ways of spending money, as it prevents far greater costs for treatment and associated social problems down the line.

Not enough money for prevention and early intervention

Added pressure on specialist services and escalation of need and risks

Increased waiting times and higher thresholds for treatment

Inadequate national and local accountability for how funding is spent

Money is used to fund other NHS pressures

Services don't meet the needs of children and young people

Inpatient and community services not sufficiently integrated

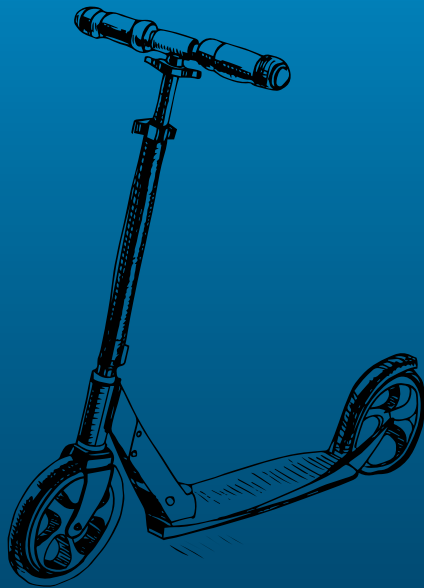
Lack of pathways of support for children with complex needs

Vulnerable young people are left without the urgent help they need

## PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Children and young people with mental health problems are at greater risk of physical health problems, and those with a physical ailment are more likely to need mental health support. To make sure those in need are given clinically effective support, rather than considering problems in isolation, mental health must be given equal value to physical health (Health and Social Care Act 2012).

To counter the disparity between how physical and mental problems are treated – funding, stigma, access – NHS England has committed to developing access and waiting time standards for mental health, which are normal practice for physical health services.



Want to find out more?

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FUTURES

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