

# CYPMHC Strategy: Supplementary report

Authors: Charlotte Rainer and Kadra Abdinasir



**Children & Young People's  
Mental Health Coalition**

# Contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 1: The views and voices of young people, parents and carers and Coalition members</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Priorities for future change</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>28</b>

# Executive summary

In 2023, the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition (CYPMHC) underwent a strategy redevelopment process. As part of this process, we consulted with children and young people, parents and carers and Coalition members to gather their views on the future of the Coalition's work. In total, over 175 people contributed their thoughts, ideas and aspirations for the future of the Coalition, and we thank them for their time and support.

This report shares the findings from these consultations and outlines the rationale behind our new strategic priorities. This is a supplementary report to the [CYPMHC strategy document](#). The findings have also informed our manifesto asks for the forthcoming General Election.

## A changing landscape

The landscape for children and young people's mental health has changed significantly over recent years and the long-term impacts of the pandemic are still unclear. There has been a sharp rise in the number of children and young people experiencing a mental health problem, with one in six children and young people reporting a mental health problem in 2022 compared to one in ten in 2004 (NHS Digital). Inequalities within society are widening and have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

The Government has introduced a range of measures to tackle rising need and increase the availability of mental health support for babies, children and young people. Whilst

some positive progress has been made, far too many children and young people still struggle to get the help and support they need. High thresholds for support, rejected referrals and long waiting times are still the main tenants of the children's mental health system.

## Sources of support for children, young people and families

In our online survey, both young people and their parents and carers highlighted education settings as the most important place for improving the mental health of children and young people. Secondary school was seen to be the most important educational space, followed by primary school and then college and sixth form. When we asked young people if they feel confident that professionals in their lives have the relevant skills and knowledge about mental health, we received a mixed response. Whilst young people felt confident that professionals were able to form strong and positive relationships, they lacked confidence in professionals' understanding of the pressures young people face, their ability to listen well, and knowledge of local support services.

Parents and carers further expressed concern about being able to find the right support for their child. Nearly half of parents (49.1%) who responded to the survey stated that they did not feel confident at all in securing the right support for their child's mental health.

# The future of children and young people's mental health

When asked about the future, nearly half of young people (44%) said they believe children and young people's mental health will be better in ten years' time. In contrast, the majority of parents and carers (79%) stated that they believe children and young people's mental health will be worse. There was a sense of hope expressed by some young people, parents and carers that things will improve due to greater awareness and understanding of mental health. However, there was wide recognition that unless greater early intervention support is put in place and service provision improves, then children and young people will continue to face challenges accessing support and subsequently experience worsening mental health.

Young people and parents and carers highlighted the following as the biggest challenges that need to be solved in order to improve children and young people's mental health:

- Stigma.
- Addressing challenges within the education system.
- Access to early intervention support.
- Funding for services.
- Access to specialist mental health support.

# Priorities for future change

Following consultations with young people, parents and carers, and members, we have identified three priority areas that will shape our future work to influence change and improve the mental health of babies, children and young people over the coming years.

- **A mentally healthy generation** with a focus on reducing risk factors for poor mental health and ensuring all babies, children and young people have strong protective factors; and creating positive and supportive environments where good mental health is promoted.
- **Early intervention for all** with a focus on ensuring there is always a choice of early intervention services in a range of different settings and that groups of babies, children and young people at risk of poor mental health are prioritised in accessing early help.
- **Strengthening specialist services** to deliver the very best mental health care for babies, children and young people. This should have a focus on funding and access and making sure that if a child or young person has a mental health crisis, they receive the very best care and support.

# Introduction

The landscape for children and young people's mental health is ever-changing, and over the past decade there has been a significant shift.

There has been a sharp rise in the number of children and young people experiencing mental health problems. In 2004, one in ten children and young people aged 5 to 16 experienced a mental health problem. By 2019, this had increased marginally to one in nine 7 to 16 year olds. However, by 2022, we saw a significant rise within the same age group, with one in six young people now reporting a mental health problem (NHS Digital, 2022).

This increase in need has coincided with widening inequalities within society, many of which have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, 350,000 more children were pulled into relative poverty (after housing costs) in 2021-22, meaning 4.2 million children are now in poverty compared to 3.6 million in 2010-11 (Child Poverty Action Group, 2023). Experiencing social, economic and environmental inequalities such as poverty, racism and discrimination can put children and young people at much higher risk of poor mental health.

The Government has sought to introduce a raft of measures and policies to improve mental health outcomes for children and young people and the support available to them. This includes *Future in Mind (2015)*, *The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health (2016)*, *the Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision green paper (2018)*, and *The NHS Long Term Plan (2019)*. Whilst many of these have contributed to an increase in provision, policies introduced to date have not been ambitious enough to create the scale of change needed, and gaps in support still

exist (Rainer and Abdinasir, 2023). As a result, many children and young people continue to face challenges in accessing vital support for their mental health.

With enduring issues in the children's mental health system, a General Election on the horizon, and continuing changes in society, we undertook a review of our work, in consultation with young people, parents and carers and Coalition members, to ensure we can effectively respond. This report outlines the findings from this consultation process and sets out the vision for our future work. The report should be read in conjunction with the [CYPMHC strategy document](#).

## Our approach

In March 2023, the Coalition began the process of refreshing our strategy. To support the process, we commissioned an independent consultant, Richard Crellin, to carry out engagement work with young people, parents and carers, and Coalition members.

The consultant conducted two online surveys with young people and parents and carers in order to gather their views on future priorities for the Coalition's work. The surveys were live between April and May 2023 and were hosted via Google forms. We promoted the surveys via the Coalition newsletter, on social media and through targeted emails to organisations.

The young person's survey was specifically aimed at those aged 16-25. A total of 23 young people responded to the survey, and a total of 57 parents and carers responded to the parent-carer survey.

Virtual workshops were also carried out with Coalition members. A total of six sessions were carried out focusing on future aspirations for the Coalition. A total of 57 members took part in these workshops.

We have used the insights gathered via these surveys and workshops to inform this report. While the sample sizes are relatively small, we nonetheless gathered rich and invaluable qualitative data from children, young people, parents, carers and members to shape our strategic priorities for the future.



# Chapter 1

**The views and voices of young people, parents and carers and coalition members**

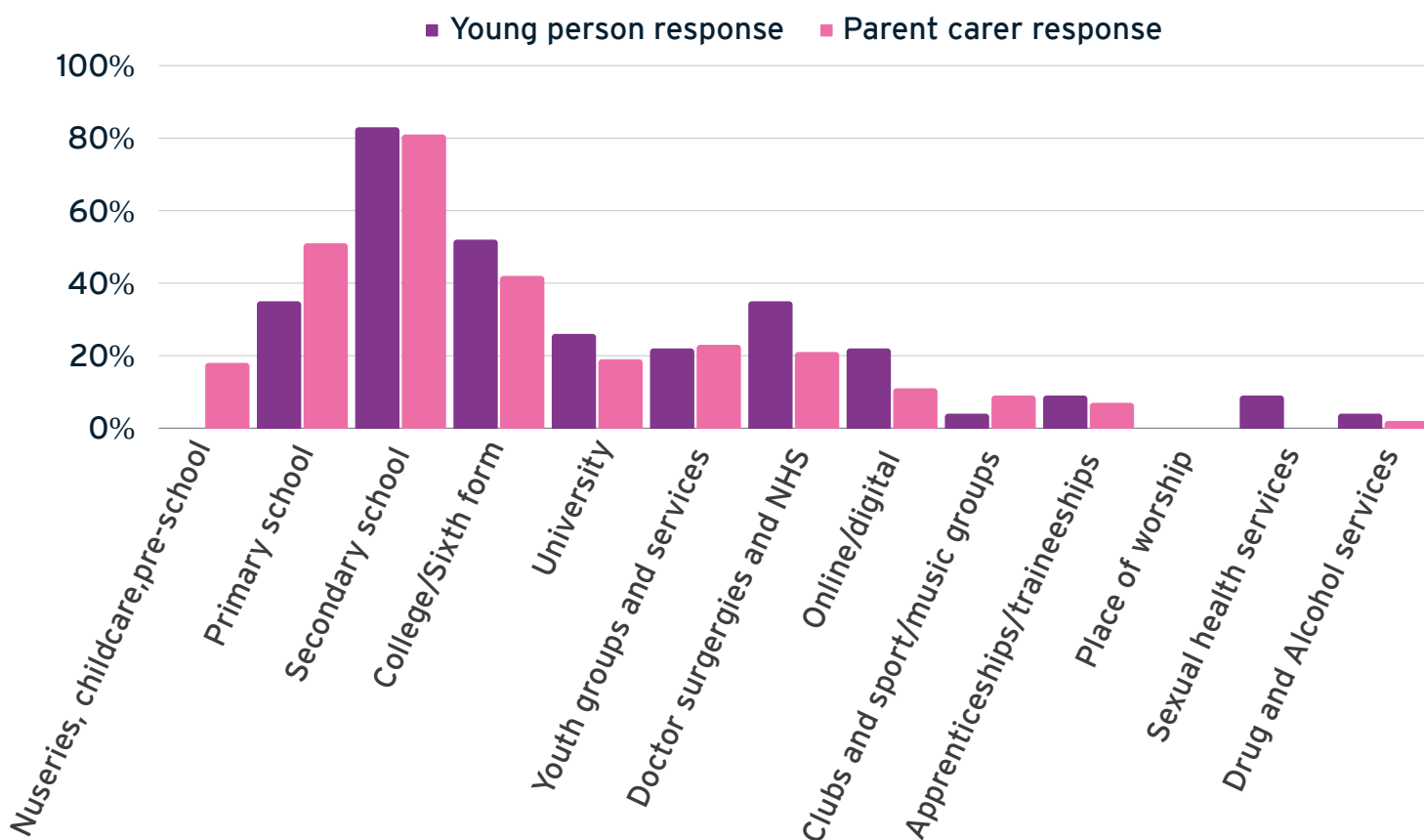


To inform the direction of the Coalition's new strategy, we consulted with young people, parents and carers and Coalition members to gain their views on priorities for mental health support and services in the future. Questions focused specifically on asking about the state of mental health support currently provided and the future of children and young people's mental health. This section of the report provides a summary of the insights gathered via these consultations.

## Sources of support

When asked about the most important places and spaces for improving the mental health of children and young people, education settings were overwhelmingly highlighted as the most important space by both young people and parents and carers. 83% of young people and 81% of parents and carers stated secondary school was the most important place, followed by primary school and then college and sixth form. Youth groups and services, and doctors' surgeries and NHS services, were also noted as important spaces by both young people and parents and carers.

Important places for improving the mental health of children and young people

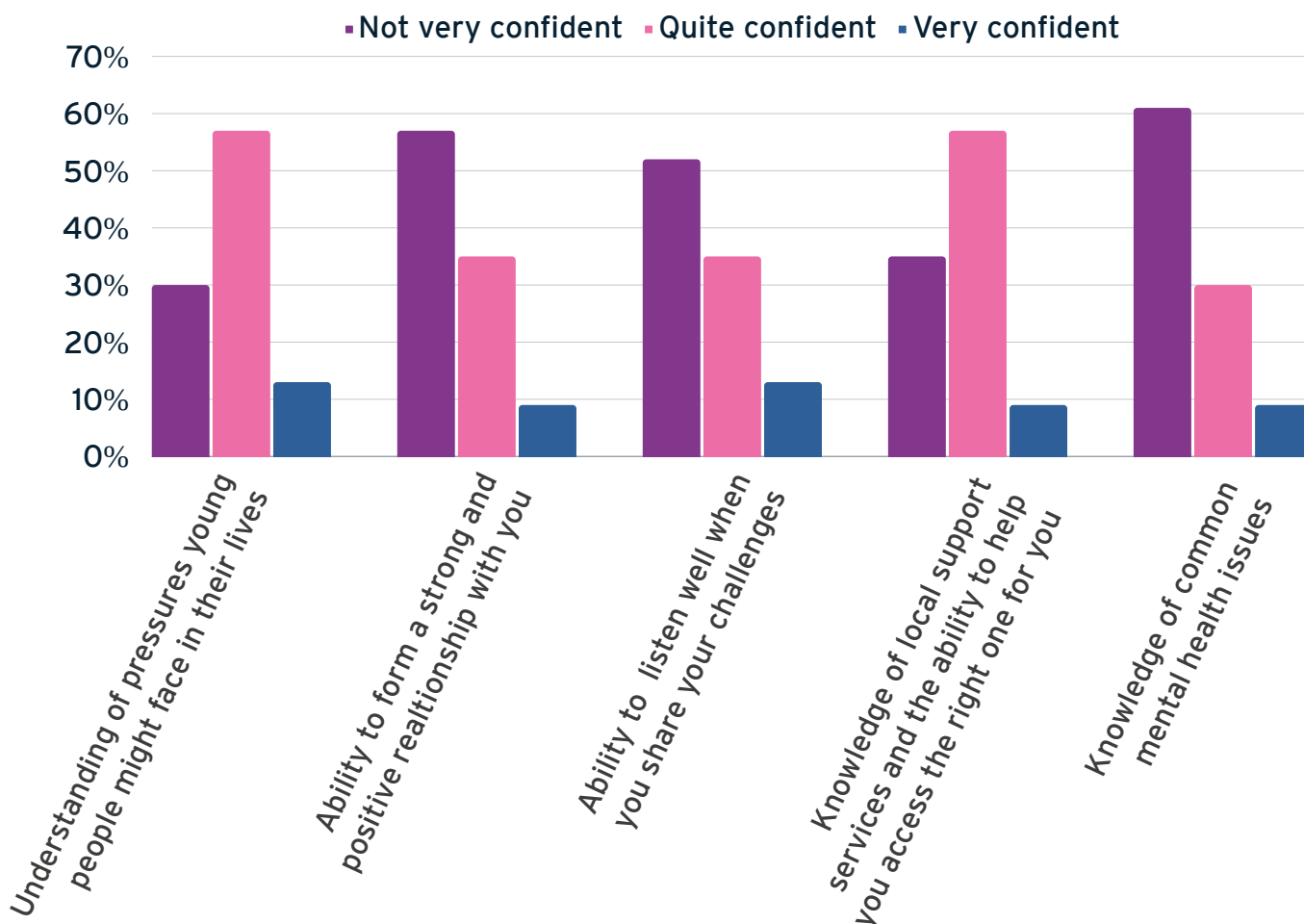




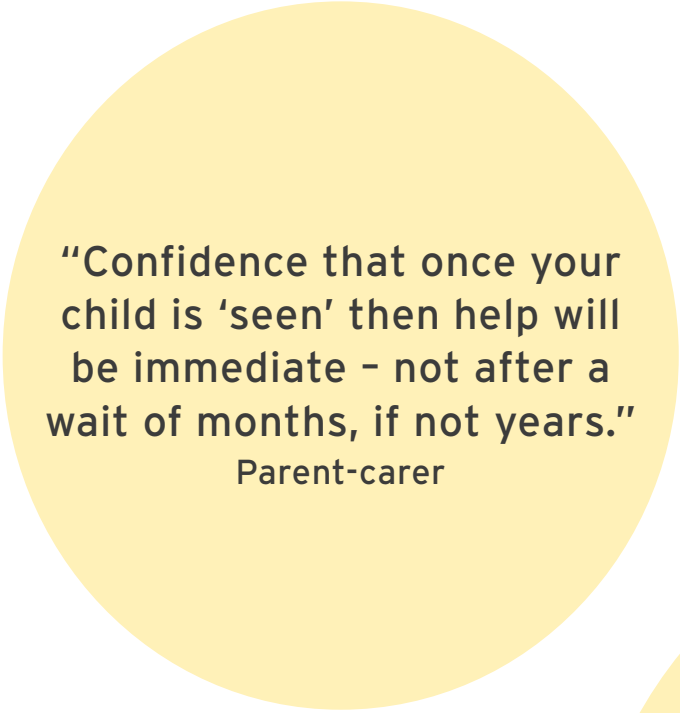
Professionals who support children and young people such as teachers, GPs, counsellors, youth workers, etc. have an important role to play in mental health and wellbeing. In our online survey, we asked young people whether they felt confident that these professionals have the relevant skills and knowledge about young people's mental health.

Overall, the young people reported that they lacked confidence in professionals' understanding of the pressures they might face in their lives (61%), in professionals' ability to listen well (52%), and in professionals' knowledge of local support services (57%).

**Knowledge of local support services and the ability to help you access the right one for you**




We asked parents and carers how confident they feel in being able to find and secure the right support for their child. Nearly half of parents (49.1%) stated that they did not feel confident at all, with only 1.8% stating that they felt very confident in securing the right support for their child.




**“Confidence that once your child is ‘seen’ then help will be immediate - not after a wait of months, if not years.”**

Parent-carer



**“Quick and reliable access to CAMHS and support services.”**

Parent-carer



**“Full and quick assessment by people who fully understand a child’s needs and understand that it’s not “one size fits all”. A service for neurodivergent children has to offer different support from a service for neurotypical children. This is not understood by professionals in my opinion.”**

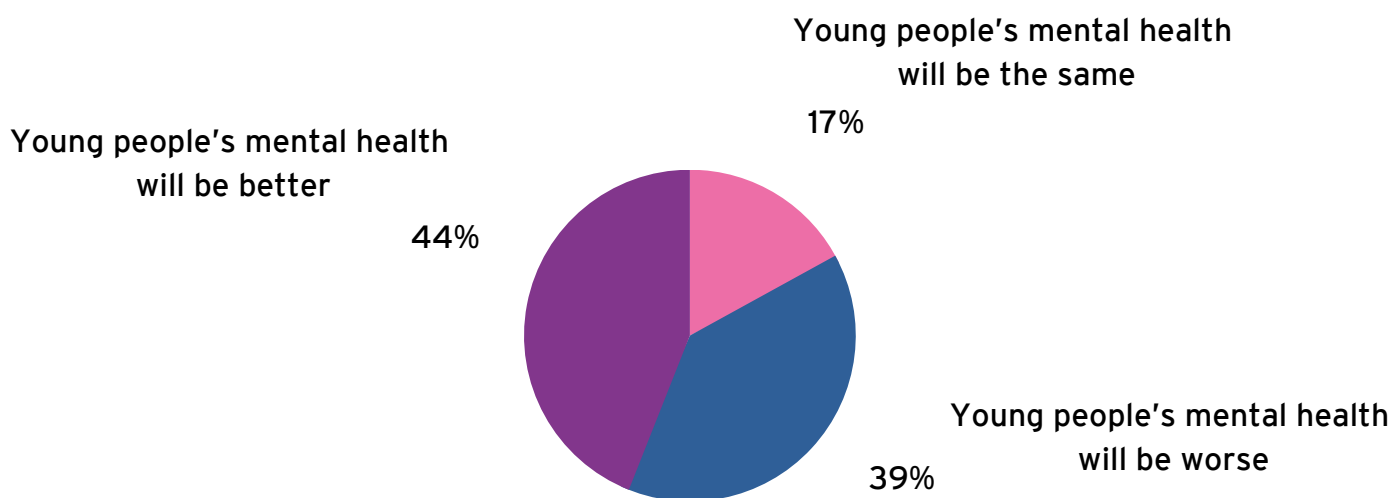
Parent-carer

# The future of children and young people's mental health

It is important to have hope for positive change within the children and young people's mental health system. Narratives about the system can be overwhelmingly negative and for those in the sector, children and young people, and families, this can be disheartening. We believe that small changes within the system can be transformative.

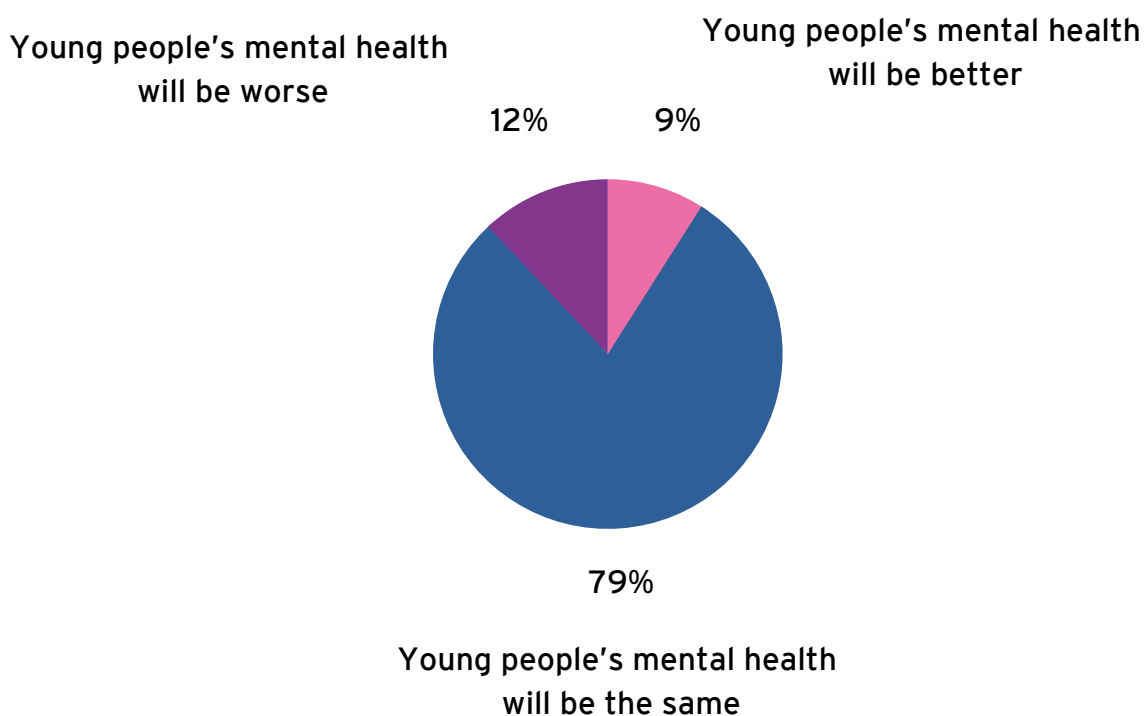
To support this, we were keen to explore young people's, parents', carers' and members' views about the future of children and young people's mental health. In our survey, we asked young people and parents and carers to tell us what they think will have happened to the mental health of young people in England in ten years' time. Nearly half (44%) of young people who responded believe young people's mental health will be better in ten years' time, whilst 39% believed it would be worse.

## What do you think will have happened to the mental health of young people in England in ten years time?



For parents and carers, the majority stated the opposite and told us that they believe that mental health will worsen, whilst only 9% said it will be better in ten years' time.

**What do you think will have happened to the mental health of young people in England in ten years time?**



Where young people and parents and carers said they believe mental health will improve in ten years' time, they attributed this to increased awareness and understanding of mental health.

*"I hope that the stigma around mental health will have reduced, therefore support will be more accessible for children and promoted by adults. Then I hope that the support will have improved, too, as awareness increases of the struggles young people have and the stigma of talking about emotions etc. reduces."* - Young person

*"There seems to be more awareness of mental health issues and the need for more support - therefore there is hope that more will be done over the next 10 years to enable some improvement - to what extent, it is hard to predict."* - Parent-carer

In workshops with Coalition members, hope was also expressed by some members that there will be increased societal understanding and awareness of mental health in the future. It was recognised that there will be advances in technology that could have a positive impact on how mental health support will be delivered to young people, but the unforeseen consequences of this were noted.

*"This next generation having an awareness of what is needed and being willing to ask for them, so hopefully policy changes as they get older, vote and are in positions of decision makers."* - Coalition member

*"Technology will play a much greater role to improve mental health outcomes. There are now many digital tools and apps available to help young people manage their mental health."* - Coalition member

*"Huge advances in technology and unforeseen consequences of this."* - Coalition member

Where survey respondents said that young people's mental health will get worse over the next ten years, a range of reasons were provided. Firstly, both young people and parents and carers noted the difficulties in accessing support from mental health services and the lack of investment in these services. This is due to growing demand outstripping capacity in the system.

*"Each year it gets worse for some people, but the suicide rates will increase each year, that will never reduce..."You don't fit the criteria" is what I hear from the mental health, social and crime services. (Like I said they will only help us unless we are close to dying)." - Young person*

*"I believe the current government will continue to not fund services appropriately, leading to the same underfunded, under-resourced, and non-accessible support (I hope I am wrong)." - Young person*

*"Because they can't get the support when they need it! The system is broken. There is not enough investment. There are not enough staff. We have a massive backlog of children and young people sitting on waiting lists with more coming through every day." - Parent-carer*

Some parents and carers also highlighted the lack of prevention and early intervention support that is in place, meaning that young people are left to reach crisis point with their mental health.

*"There is no will or funding to intervene early. Professionals are waiting until a child is in crisis before attempting anything and by that stage, they will have accumulated too many adverse experiences, and it becomes too difficult."* - Parent-carer

*“There is no will or funding to intervene early. Professionals are waiting until a child is in crisis before attempting anything and by that stage, they will have accumulated too many adverse experiences, and it becomes too difficult.” - Parent-carer*

*“Because we focus on cure rather than prevention.” - Parent-carer*

The impact of social media was emphasised by some young people as a potential contributing factor to worsening mental health, alongside harmful attitudes that still exist.

*“Mental health is not taken seriously enough, so until people’s attitudes change towards it, nothing will improve. Social media can also have a negative impact on people’s mental health, and these digital platforms will only advance.” - Young person*

*“I think that mental health will remain the same because as much as there are improvements, I feel as if we are also moving back as a society. For example, we have more mental health awareness in schools, however, this doesn’t stop the nonchalant and sometimes harmful ways that people in that community talk about mental health. Furthermore, I feel like as a society, young people are becoming more disconnected from one another due to the popularisation of social media (heightened even more by the pandemic).” - Young person*

Parents and carers and Coalition members further pointed to widening inequalities in society, and in particular, the Covid-19 pandemic was predicted to have a lasting impact on mental health, alongside growing worries about climate change.

*“Financial pressure, climate change, online harms, housing precarity, etc., resulting in increased prevalence of mental health conditions.” - Coalition member*

*“Impact of climate change creating more worries about the future.” - Coalition member*

Overall, Coalition members expressed concern that children and young people will continue to face challenges accessing support in the future due to rising need and continued under-investment. There is also a lack of clarity about future funding for children and young people’s mental health beyond 2023/24.

*“The threshold for receiving mental health care will be much higher, pushed up by increased demand for services and lack of resourcing of those services.” - Coalition member*

*“Services become even more stretched and diluted.” - Coalition member*

# Future areas of focus

Enduring challenges remain within the children and young people's mental health system. When asked about the key challenges that need to be solved in order to improve children and young people's mental health, young people and parents and carers highlighted:

- **Stigma:** *"The stigma that because they are young their problems will go away as soon as they become adults."* - Young person

- **Challenges within the education system such as a lack of support, inclusion and harmful behaviour practices:** *"The treatment of young people in secondary schools - many people I've spoken to struggle the most at this point in their lives, and it seems (from younger people I've spoken to and news articles) that over the past couple of years secondary schools have become even more harsh in terms of behaviour and are caring less and less about the impact that these policies have on students' wellbeing."* - Young person

- **Access to early intervention support:** *"Early identification of issues and help as soon as needed - not years down the line when it's escalated."* - Parent-carer

- **Funding for services:** *"Funding. If there is funding for support, the individuals that need it could access it earlier, rather than having to wait until crisis point."* - Parent-carer

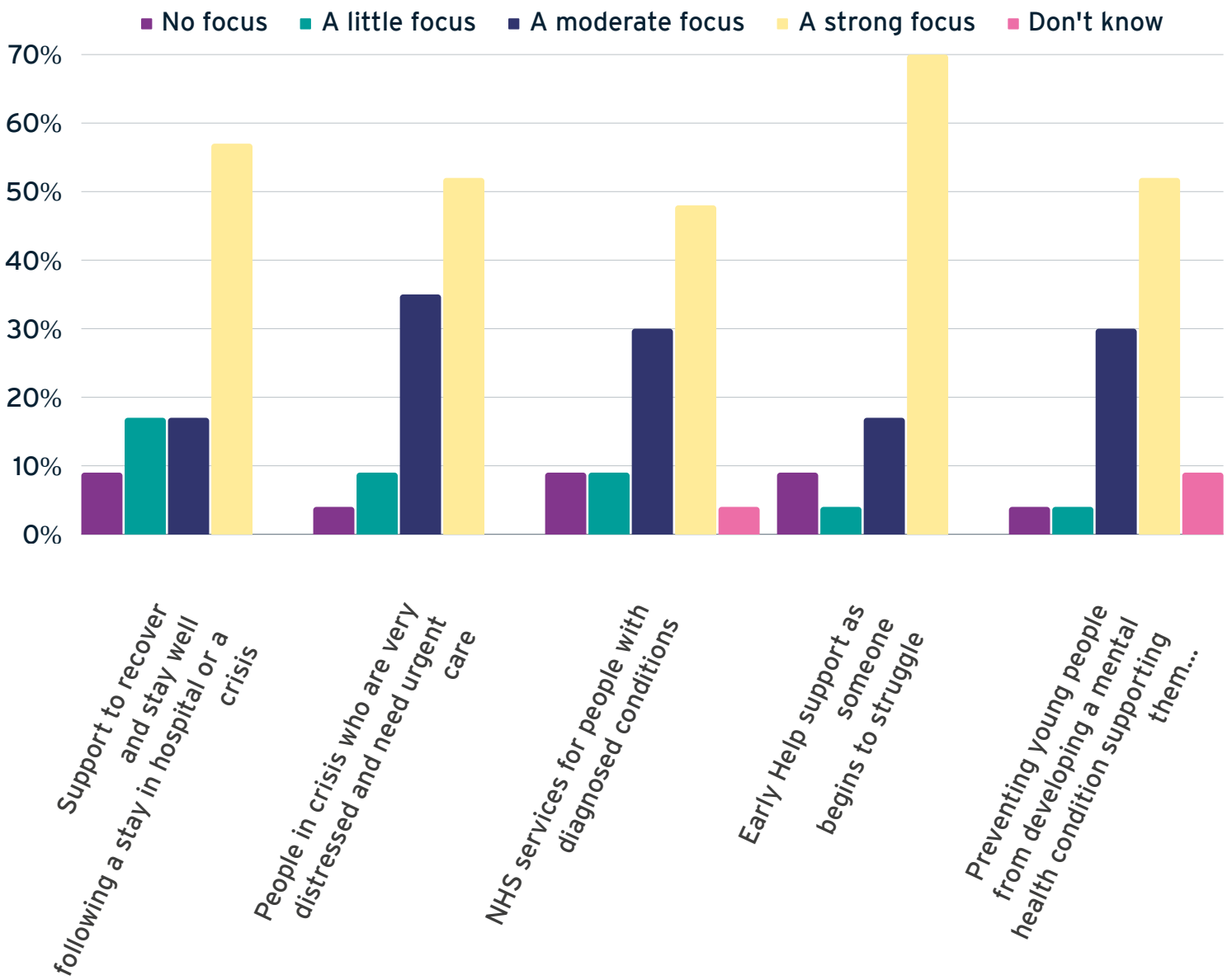
- **Access to specialist mental health support:** *"The long wait to get professional support. Whether that's by helping more in the early stages and trying to help people look after their wellbeing so that some mental health illnesses can be prevented. Therefore, the wait for professional support from NHS etc. wouldn't be as long."* - Young person

Finally, we asked young people, parents

and carers to indicate the areas the Coalition should focus on going forward. There was overwhelming agreement from young people and parents and carers in their top three priorities.

Young people highlighted supporting people in crisis as their top priority for the Coalition's work (70%), followed by preventing young people from developing mental health problems (57%), and early help (52%).

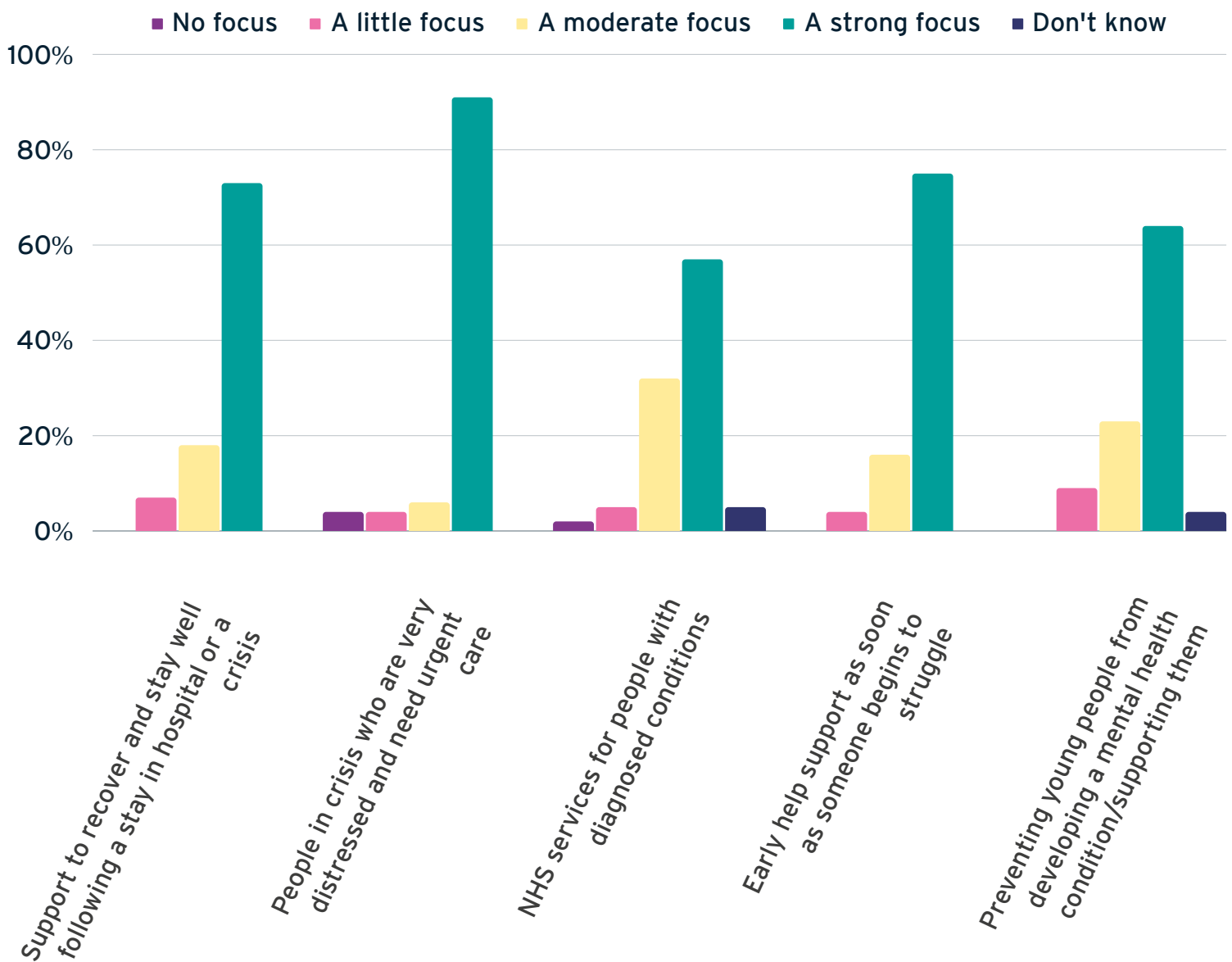
Young person's view on future focus of the Coalition's work





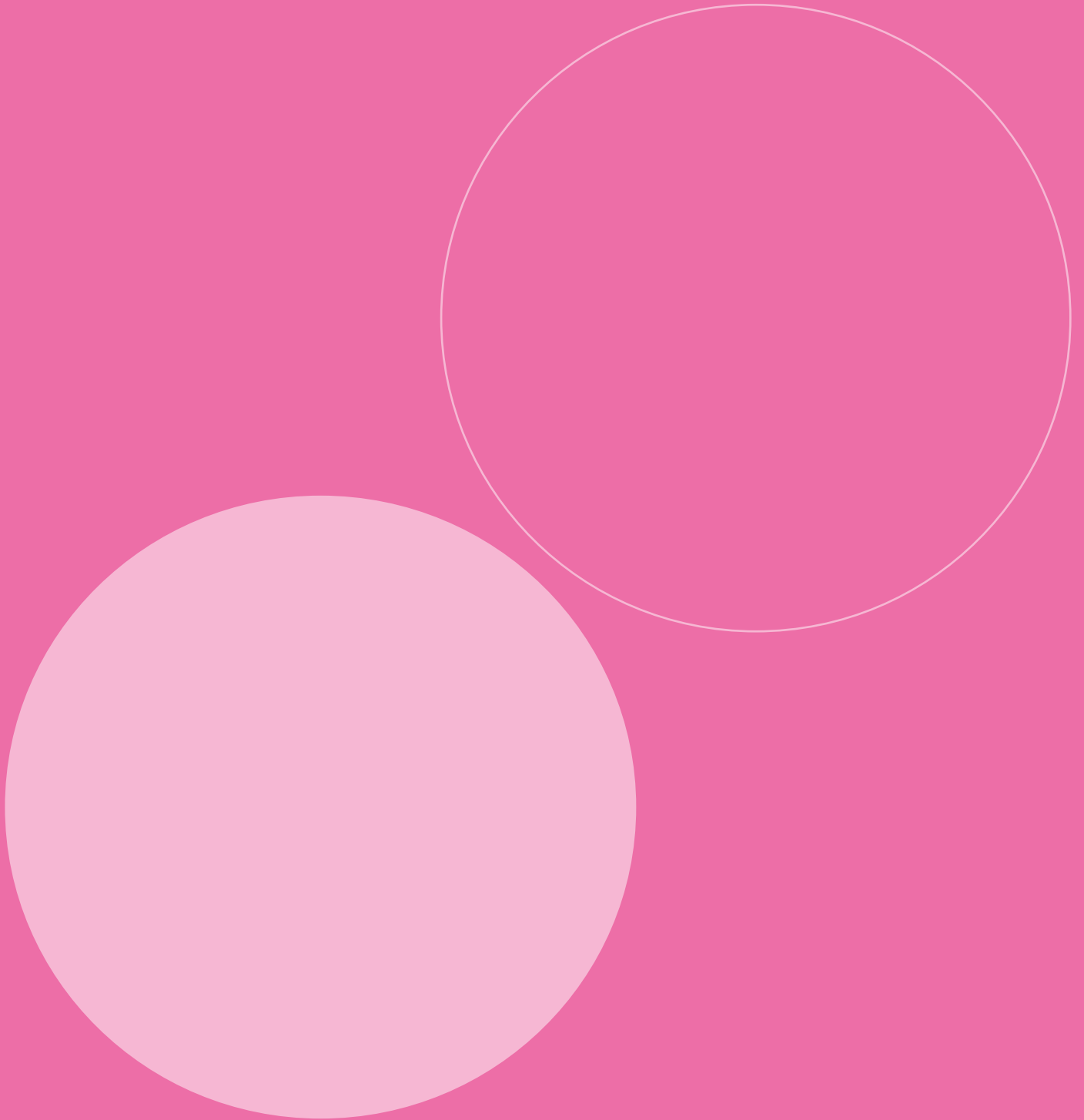
Parents and carers noted early help support as their top priority (91%), followed by support for people who are in crisis (75%) and preventing young people from developing a mental health condition (73%).

Parent-carer views on future focus of the Coalition's work



# Chapter 2

## Priorities for future change



The insights gathered from young people, parents and carers, and members provide hope that things can change for the better. Yet the mental health system is currently struggling to respond to increased demand, making change harder to achieve. Whilst there are many areas of mental health support for babies, children and young people that need to be improved, we have identified the following areas of priority for the Coalition going forward based on the feedback received and the expertise of our collective membership.

- A mentally healthy generation.
- Early intervention for all.
- Strengthening specialist services.

This section of the report will outline these priority areas in more detail and set out the policy context for each.

## A mentally healthy generation

Addressing the risk factors and stressors that can impact children and young people's mental health, and building the protective factors, cannot begin early enough. Securing a greater focus on this within policy making has long been an ambition of the Coalition, and it is clear from the feedback from our members, young people and parents and carers that this work needs to continue.

It is widely recognised that the risk factors for poor mental health are the social, economic, and environmental circumstances which can lead to the development of mental health problems (Abdinasir, et al., 2020). These can include experiences of trauma, adversity, inequality, racism and discrimination, poor housing, having a parent with mental health problems, and parental conflict.

Whilst the evidence base on the risk factors for poor mental health is now well understood, little action has been taken at a national level to address these and prevention remains a neglected area by the Government. As a result, we have seen rising levels of inequality in recent years. The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent cost-of-living crisis has further exacerbated inequalities and has brought racial disparities into sharp focus.

Prevention can play a crucial role in addressing the social factors and stressors that impact population health, yet there is no clear or coherent approach to prevention, and funding for mental health has predominantly focused on the acute end of the system. For example, analysis by the Health Foundation shows that the Public Health Grant has been cut by 26% on a real terms per person basis since 2015/16 (Finch, 2023). These cuts adversely impact essential services for children and young people, such as school nurses and health visitors, who play a key role in prevention and early help.

Coalition members consistently tell us that without action to address the risk factors for poor mental health, other efforts to improve mental health will not be effective in creating change.

**Our first priority in this area will therefore focus on ensuring that decision-makers have robust and long-term strategies to reduce the risk factors for mental health problems and to enhance the protective factors that promote good mental health.**

Educational settings can play a key role in promoting and protecting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. Our consultations also found that young people and parents and carers view schools and colleges as key spaces for improving mental health for children and young people.

Our *Making the Grade* report in 2019 highlighted both the positive and negative effect of educational settings on young people's mental health (Abdinasir, 2019).

Timetables, lessons, policies, environments and cultures can all have an effect on the mental health of children and young people. However, where the school or college culture builds trust, allowing responsive relationships between staff, families, and children to flourish, these can be protective factors against poor mental health.

Whole education approaches to mental health and wellbeing are now widely used across schools, colleges and universities to ensure that mental health is embedded within all parts of the culture. Implementing such approaches has also been central to the Government's vision of increasing the availability of mental health support in education settings, as demonstrated by the *Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision* green paper.

Whilst positive progress has been made in implementing these approaches, they are not yet fully embedded across all education settings. It is crucial that such approaches are used as a framework to create inclusive cultures that promote, protect, and support every child's mental health and wellbeing. But education settings are not the only places where such approaches should be embedded - early years, youth services, children's social care and the youth justice system all have a role to play in promoting positive wellbeing.

**Our second priority in this area is to ensure that all the environments babies, children and young people encounter are properly supported and equipped to promote good mental health.**

## Spotlight on our work: Behaviour and mental health in schools inquiry

In 2022, the Coalition launched an [inquiry on behaviour and mental health in schools](#). The inquiry was established following concern from our members that often children and young people get punished for behaviour that is linked to their mental health, and that some responses to behaviour can further harm young people's mental health.

The inquiry had three key aims: to explore the links between behaviour and mental health, to look at the impact of school behaviour policies on children and their families, and to understand what can be done to better support the approach to both behaviour and mental health in schools.

We conducted an open call for evidence via three surveys with young people, parent-carers and professionals and practitioners. In total we received over 800 responses across all three surveys. To gain further insight, we held virtual evidence sessions with key stakeholders. We also established a young people's advisory group and a parent-carer advisory group to make sure that their voices were at the centre.

The inquiry found that persistent poor behaviour may be an indication that a child has unmet or undiagnosed need or is struggling to communicate or to regulate themselves. The young people, parents and carers, and professionals who gave evidence to the inquiry highlighted that a young person's behaviour is linked to both their mental health and to their special educational needs and disabilities.

Our findings also suggest that more punitive approaches to behaviour management, such as the use of removal rooms, may be harming children and young people's mental health. What is more, such approaches may not even be effective in improving behaviour as they often ignore the root causes of poor behaviour, such as mental health problems, meaning that the circumstances behind it are never actually addressed. In some cases, these techniques can have the opposite effect.

The inquiry highlighted the importance of building inclusive and supportive school environments where all children are valued and where their needs are met. To support this aim, we are calling for whole school and college approaches to be implemented across all education settings.

# Early intervention for all

There was consensus across our engagement with young people, parents and carers, and members that improved access to early intervention support is needed. Early intervention support can take many different forms, such as support in schools, wider support services in the community, and digital support.

Whilst many government policy initiatives have referenced the importance of early intervention support, there has been a lack of progress in developing services of this kind. At a local level, responsibility for the provision of early support services in the community is shared between the NHS and local authorities. However, there is a significant lack of accountability and transparency across local areas as to who is responsible for ensuring provision is available. As a result, the availability of these services is patchy and there is no standard model for the type of support that should be in place.

Most recently, attention has been paid to increasing the availability of early support in education settings through the roll out of Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs). Whilst significant progress has been made in rolling out MHSTs, with over 500 teams expected to be in place by 2024, there have been significant concerns about the speed at which all areas of the country will have access to this additional support. Funding for future roll out is also yet to be decided, meaning there is no guarantee on how much further or how quickly this provision will be expanded.

A lack of attention has also been paid to the early support that can be provided in other settings such as in the community and digitally. There has been growing consensus for models such as early support hubs in

order to expand support in the community.

**That is why we will advocate for choice in early intervention support. We need a mix of digital, community and education-based services to intervene early and prevent mental health needs from escalating.**

What is more, there are some groups of children and young people who face particular barriers in accessing support for their mental health. This includes young parents, children in the care system, neurodiverse young people, children with long-term health conditions, children who have a parent or carer with a mental health problem, LGBTQ+ young people, and children from racialised groups. Early intervention services, particularly those delivered in the community, have been found to be an effective gateway to support for young people facing the greatest mental health disparities.

A 2018 study found that, compared to children and young people's mental health services (CYPMHS) and school-based counselling services, voluntary sector organisations were serving a greater proportion of 'older' young people, as well as higher proportions of LGBTQ+ young people, young people from racialised communities, and young people in contact with the youth justice system (Duncan *et al.*, 2018).

**We will therefore focus on ensuring that groups of young people particularly known to be at risk of developing mental health problems are able to access early intervention services that work for them.**

## Spotlight on our work: #FundTheHubs campaign

The Fund the Hubs campaign is a joint campaign between CYPMHC, Centre for Mental Health, Black Thrive, the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy, Mind, Youth Access and YoungMinds. The campaign calls for a network of early support hubs to be set up across the country, which would ensure that young people in every area across England can access early support for their mental health.

Early support hubs offer easy-to-access, drop-in support on a self-referral basis for young people with mild to moderate mental health problems, up to the age of 25. They are community-based and are often delivered in partnership between the NHS, local authorities, or the voluntary sector depending on local need and existing infrastructure. A mix of clinical staff, counsellors, youth workers, advice workers and volunteers provide a range of support on issues related to mental health and wellbeing, while additional services can be co-located under one roof, including employment advice, youth services, sexual health and housing support.

Early support hubs are based on existing service models from the UK and internationally. Youth Information Advice and Counselling Services (YIACS) and other early support hubs are already operational in some areas of England. Building on the existing base, early support hubs can help to reduce pressures on the NHS and improve young people's life chances by providing a community space to access flexible support for emotional wellbeing.

# Strengthening specialist services

It was clear from the feedback we received from young people, parents and carers, and Coalition members that much more work is needed to improve the specialist mental health support available to babies, children and young people. In fact, access to support was identified as one of the biggest challenges that needs to be overcome in the next ten years.

A range of policies have been introduced by the Government aimed at improving access to support and the quality of care for children and young people's mental health. Whilst some positive progress has been made, unfortunately the pace of change has not been fast enough. Many children and young people still face high access thresholds for support and rejected referrals, followed by long waits if they do get accepted into services.

What is more, rising mental health need now means that demand outstrips service capacity, with the Covid-19 pandemic placing additional pressures on provision. Analysis of NHS data by YoungMinds found that the number of open referrals to NHS CYPMHS reached 466,250 in May 2023, the highest number on record (YoungMinds, 2023). Transitions between child and adolescent mental health services and adult mental health services also continue to be a persistent issue. It is widely recognised that young people aged 18-25 often struggle to move between services and are poorly supported with transition, meaning that young people can fall between the gaps in support.

The combination of unmet need prior to the pandemic and additional need subsequently created by the pandemic means that the scale and speed of planned improvements

are insufficient, and that services are at risk of going backwards (Health and Social Care Select Committee, 2021). **We will therefore continue to work to ensure that NHS-funded mental health services for young people aged 0-25 receive the investment they need to deliver high-quality support to all young people who require it.**

Urgent referrals of children to crisis teams have also reached a record high. Analysis shows that urgent referrals of under-18s reached more than 3,000 in April 2023, the first time on record that numbers reached over 3,000 in a single month (YoungMinds, 2023). For some young people, this may lead to them receiving care within an inpatient setting.

Evidence suggests that far too many children continue to be admitted to inpatient units far from home, without adequate understanding of their rights, and subject to restrictive interventions and inappropriate care (Health and Social Care Select Committee, 2021a). Furthermore, children and young people's experiences of inpatient care are not consistently good. Recent insights gathered by the Children's Commissioner for England shows how children and young people within inpatient settings can find them frightening places to be, separated from their friends and families, and often seeing and experiencing high levels of restraint (Children's Commissioner, 2023).

This in itself can be deeply traumatic for children and young people, exacerbating their mental health problems. We will carry out work in this area to ensure that when children and young people are having a mental health crisis there is a high-quality response that wraps around young people, their families and the wider professionals that support them.



## Spotlight on our work: Ensuring children's rights are protected in the reforms to the Mental Health Act 1983

The proposed reforms to the Mental Health Act 1983 provide a rare opportunity to improve how people experiencing mental health crises are treated by the law. If enacted and implemented successfully, the Bill has the potential to improve mental health care for people of all ages, including children and young people.

To inform our work in this area, we formed a working group of experts from our membership including Article 39, the British Psychological Society, Centre for Mental Health, Carers Trust, Just Equality, Mind, Our Time, the National Children's Bureau, the NSPCC, Voiceability, and YoungMinds.

Following the publication of the *Reforming the Mental Health Act* white paper in January 2021, we have been working to ensure that children's rights will be upheld and protected within the reforms. Within consultation responses to government and in evidence to the Joint Committee on the draft Mental Health Bill, we have raised concerns regarding a decision-making test for under-16s, safeguards for children and young people admitted to inpatient care informally, the use of inappropriate placements, and the gaps in data relating to children in mental health hospitals.

Unfortunately, a new Mental Health Bill to reform the Mental Health Act was not introduced as part of the 2023 King's Speech. However, we will continue our work to ensure that children's rights are protected and promoted within mental health care and treatment.

# Conclusion



The children and young people's mental health system has seen significant change in recent years. With mental health needs among children and young people increasing and inequalities in society widening, mental health services are struggling to respond to this growing demand. The feedback gathered through our consultations with young people, parents and carers, and Coalition members makes clear the challenges that still exist within the children's mental health system. Whilst plans and strategies have been put in place to expand access to support, they do not account for the significant growth in need. As a result, children and young people continue to fall through the gaps in support.

But young people, parents and carers, and Coalition members also expressed optimism and hope that things can improve. To achieve this change, a shift in the system is required - to one that is focused on reducing risk factors for poor mental health, implementing early support, and investing in and properly resourcing specialist services.

Our new strategy sets out the priorities for our future work, to ensure that we achieve our vision that all babies, children and young people grow up in a society that prioritises and protects their mental health and wellbeing. Our previous work has set the foundations which we can build on, and we look forward to working with our members, young people, parents and carers, and partners to achieve this.

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## About The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition

The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition is a collaborative network of 271 organisations dedicated to advocating for and influencing policy in relation to the mental health needs of babies, children and young people.

Our coalition consists of diverse stakeholders, including mental health organisations, youth support services, educational institutions, and concerned individuals, all united by a shared commitment to improving the wellbeing of children. Our members work across the United Kingdom, regions, ages, and specialisms.

Our vision is for all babies, children and young people to grow up in a society that prioritises and protects their mental health and wellbeing. We aim to raise awareness of the importance of mental health and ensure that children and young people have access to the necessary support and services.

For more information, check out our website: [www.cypmhc.org.uk](http://www.cypmhc.org.uk)

Follow us on X (formerly Twitter): @CYPMentalHealth

Contact us: [info@cypmhc.org.uk](mailto:info@cypmhc.org.uk)



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