



#FundTheHubs: Joint Briefing for Parliamentarians on early support hubs

This is a joint briefing from the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition, Centre for Mental Health, Mind, The Children's Society, YoungMinds, Youth Access, Black Thrive and BACP in support of our joint #FundTheHubs campaign. We are calling for the national rollout of the early support hubs model which would ensure that young people in every area across England can access early support for their mental health.

The case for intervening in early mental health support for young people

In 2017, 1 in 9 children and young people were estimated to have a diagnosable mental health condition. Since then, this has risen sharply with the latest data from NHS Digital in November 2023 showing that 1 in 5 young people now has a probable mental health disorder.¹ This is a longstanding crisis that is now escalating:

- Research by UCL shows that in 2018-19, almost a quarter of 17-year-olds (24%) had self-harmed in the previous year.² 7% of 17-year-olds had attempted suicide at some point in their lives.
- Only just over a third of young people (37%) with a diagnosable mental health condition are able to access NHS specialist support.³
- Half of all mental health problems manifest by the age of 14, and 75% by the age of 24.⁴
- The number of A&E attendances by young people aged 18 or under with a recorded diagnosis of a psychiatric condition has tripled since 2010.⁵
- In 2017, suicide was the most common cause of death for both boys (16.2% of all deaths) and girls (13.3%) aged between 5 and 19.⁶
- Open referrals reached their highest level in 2023 – almost half a million young people were in the CYPMH system as of October 2023.⁷
- In England, children are waiting on average 21 weeks for a first CAMHS appointment.⁸
- There are clear inequalities when it comes to children and young people's mental health, with higher rates of mental health problems among young women (compared to young men), LGBTQ+ young people, young people with neurodiverse conditions, and young carers, alongside clear links between mental health and race, and mental health and financial insecurity.

Experiencing mental health difficulties in childhood or adolescence can have a significant impact across the life course. It has been shown to substantially affect young people's educational outcomes, earnings, employment, ability to maintain relationships, likelihood of engaging in risk-taking behaviour. The human and financial costs of failing to support young people are high and undermine our health as a society. That's why we are calling for a network of hubs across the country, which would provide early support for young people's mental health when their problems first emerge.

Early support hubs

Early support hubs offer easy-to-access, drop-in support on a self-referral basis for young people who don't meet the threshold for Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (CYPMHS) or with emerging mental health needs, up to age 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, these include: Counselling and psychological therapies, employment advice, youth services, sexual health, and housing support.

Figure 1: An early support hub (using the YIACS framework)



Early support hubs are based on existing services 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, so you may already have an early support hub in your constituency.

Building on the existing evidence base for these services, the early support hubs would reduce pressures on the NHS and improve young people's life chances by providing a community space to access flexible support for emotional wellbeing.

Early support hubs can form part of a comprehensive mental health and wellbeing pathway for children and young people and many existing hubs have established clear and effective pathways to specialist mental health and children's services for those requiring enhanced support. What is more, as an integrated service, early support hubs work with the wider system, such as NHS Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (CYPMHS), Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs), and safeguarding teams to ensure that they can get young people to the right support and address any risks.

Case study: 42nd Street, Manchester

42nd Street is a YIACS that plays a key role in Manchester's CYPMH infrastructure. They work with young people aged 13-25 years across Greater Manchester who present with mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, behavioural problems and self-harm. Their activities include counselling and psychotherapy; 1-1 mental health support; group work; a youth leadership programme; mental health promotion work and youth work activities.

Therapeutic interventions are combined with opportunities for young people to learn, develop new skills, be creative and demonstrate to themselves and others that they are able to recover from mental ill-health and achieve their full potential. Referrals to the services delivered by the charity come from a range of sources: young people themselves, parents, friends, GPs, social workers, teachers, specialist CYPMHS, A&E.

The evidence base for early support hubs

There is broad support for a national rollout of early support hubs. A survey of parents by Mind revealed that nine in 10 parents (90%) think young people should have access to drop-in mental health support in their communities.⁹ Recent polling also demonstrates that improving mental health support services in communities was the number one mental health policy the public want the Government to prioritise to better support mental health and mental illness.¹⁰ In addition, over 5000 young people signed a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer urging him to fund early support hubs as part of the 2021 Autumn Spending Review.¹¹

Furthermore, the children and young people's mental health sector is united on the need to introduce a network of early support hubs. Just over 50 youth and mental health organisations also signed the open letter to the Chancellor. The Health and Social Care select committee recommended a national roll out of early support hubs in their inquiry into children and young people's mental health.¹² The Children's Commissioner for England has also backed the establishment of a network of community based mental health hubs for children and young people as part of her The Big Ask, The Big Answer report.¹³

Early support hubs have been shown to have excellent outcomes for young people, both internationally and in the UK.

- Jigsaw services are open access hubs that provide brief early mental health support to young people aged 12-25 across Ireland. O'Keefe and colleagues evaluated their impact and found that the service was successful in reducing levels of self-reported psychological distress.¹⁴
- Research that has been conducted on existing early support hubs in the UK, or Youth Information Advice and Counselling Services (YIACS), reports comparable clinical outcomes to those accessing therapy through CYPMHS or school, while also reporting significantly higher satisfaction amongst young people with their experience.¹⁵ For example, in a study of YIACS, 97% of young people reported that it was 'certainly true' that they 'were listened to', compared to 85% in CYPMHS.¹⁶
- An independent evaluation of the Headspace model in Australia was shown to have a significant reduction in suicidal ideation and the prevalence of self-harm for young people that accessed the service.¹⁷

A 2018 study also 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, Black and minoritised ethnic young people, and young people with experience of contact with youth justice.¹⁸ Analysis of Jigsaw services in Ireland found that almost half of the young people who engage with the service are young men, a group who do not traditionally seek help as often as young women.¹⁹

In addition, research has shown that the wider help provided by existing early support hubs through advice services is highly effective at improving young people's mental health, with the potential to avoid escalation of mental health issues related to common social welfare issues such as housing, debt and employment.²⁰

Case study: Service Six, Northamptonshire,

Service six is an award-winning Northamptonshire based charity, committed to changing lives and creating futures for children, young people, and their families. Support consists of counselling, play therapy and psychotherapy, youth work and youth clubs. Service Six deliver services from referrals received directly from the NHS, Social Services, GP's, schools, colleges, parents and CAMHS.

Service Six operates two wellbeing drop ins within Northamptonshire which is a service for children, young people, and their families. These are operated with a counsellor and a youth practitioner. Support is offered on the day, signposting to additional services or supporting by completing a referral to appropriate professional services which includes all Service Six provisions.

Investing in early support hubs

There are huge economic benefits to implementing comprehensive early support for young people. The annual cost of mental health problems in England is estimated to be £119 billion, measured in terms of spending on health and the impacts on an individual's work or education. Three-quarters of mental health problems first emerge before the age of 25, so it makes sense economically to invest in mental health support for young people, as well as making a huge difference to people's lives.

In a UK study investigating YIACS, for young people who reported that advice had improved their stress or health, savings in GP costs alone (and disregarding the cost of other health services) were estimated to equate to £108 per young person, exceeding the average cost of advice provision.²¹

To establish a hub in a local area, we estimate that capital costs could be in the range of **£825,000-£1,350,000 per hub.**

Annual operating costs per hub are in the range of **£750k-£885k**. It is important to note that there will be regional variations in costs as well as in access to existing infrastructure and properties, which will either reduce or increase costs.

Early support hubs provide a clear opportunity to bridge the gap in early intervention support that currently exists.

Case study: [Croydon Drop-In](#)

Croydon Drop-In is a 45-year-old YIACS deeply embedded in and trusted by the local community. They work across the London Borough of Croydon with children, young people and families from expectant mums up to young people aged 25 and their friends, parents/carers, guardians and grandparents.

From under one roof they offer counselling, psychotherapy, advice & advocacy support (welfare benefits/school exclusion/insecure housing), young people's participation group, outreach (Talkbus mobile unit in schools/estates/leisure & shopping centres), parent & carer helpline, C4CC workforce webinars, parent & infant relationship service, health education workshops (gender identity, sexual health, youth violence, drugs & alcohol) and Mental Health Support Teams in educational settings. The ethos being 'You Talk We Listen'!

How you can support #FundTheHubs

Write to the Prime Minister

- You can write to the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, to urge him to make young people's mental health a priority by funding a national rollout of early support hubs.

Visit a hub

- You can arrange a visit to an early support to find out more about the service model and how they work to support children and young people.

Support the campaign on Twitter using these suggested tweets

- Early support hubs will provide young people with accessible, drop-in mental health support when their problems first emerge. I'm supporting the #FundTheHubs campaign and calling for the Government to make early intervention a priority.
- Many young people report that too often they can't get support when they first need it. This is why I'm calling on the Government to #FundTheHubs and make early

intervention a priority.

- Accessing early mental health support is still too difficult for many young people. Early support hubs, allowing young people to access advice and support without an appointment, would change that. #FundTheHubs

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- ¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2023/11/one-in-five-children-and-young-people-had-a-probable-mental-disorder-in-2023/>
 - ² <https://cls.ucl.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Mental-ill-health-at-age-17-%E2%80%93-CLS->
 - ³ NHS Mental Health Dashboard Q2 2020/21 Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-mental-health-dashboard/>
 - ⁴ Kessler RC et al. (2005). 'Lifetime Prevalence and Age-of-Onset Distributions of DSM-IV Disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication'.
 - ⁵ <https://youngminds.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/ae-attendances-by-young-people-with-psychiatric-conditions-almost-doubled-in-five-years-new-figures/>
 - ⁶ Office for National Statistics (2017) 'Deaths registered in England and Wales' Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsregisteredinenglandandwalesseriesdr/2017#suicide-accounted-for-an-increased-proportion-of-deaths-at-ages-5-to-19-years-in-2017>
 - ⁷ NHS Digital, December 2023
 - ⁸ <https://www.politicshome.com/thehouse/article/child-adolescent-mental-health-care-crisis>
 - ⁹ <https://www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/news/new-research-from-mental-health-charity-mind-shows-that-parents-and-grandparents-are-so-worried-about-young-peoples-mental-health-it-s-giving-them-sleepless-nights/>
 - ¹⁰ Britons and Mental Health: Time to Act (moreincommon.org.uk)
 - ¹¹ <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/stephen-fry-and-53-organisations-back-thousands-of-young-people-calling-for-better-early-mental-health-support/>
 - ¹² <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cmhealth/17/report.html>
 - ¹³ https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2021/11/occ_the_big_ask_the_big_answer_2021.pdf
 - ¹⁴ <http://archive.headstrong.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Final-version-IJPM-Paper.pdf>
 - ¹⁵ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/papt.12206>
 - ¹⁶ Malangone, L., Youth Access. 2020. "Young people's experience of counselling in community settings." Youth Access. November. <https://www.youthaccess.org.uk/resources/practice-resources/76-young-peoples-experience-of-counselling-in-community-settings>.
 - ¹⁷ <https://www.headspace.dk/en/about-us/documentation-and-reports/economists-without-borders>
 - ¹⁸ <https://bpspsychub.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/papt.12206>
 - ¹⁹ <http://archive.headstrong.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Final-version-IJPM-Paper.pdf>
 - ²⁰ The Legal Problems and Mental Health Needs of Youth Advice Service Users: The Case for Advice, Balmer, N.J., and Pleasence, P., Youth Access, 2012
 - ²¹ <https://www.youthaccess.org.uk/downloads/yamentalhealthinterventionbriefingfinal1.pdf>