



Improving support for mental health

Debate Briefing

Thursday 10th October 2024

The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition (CYPMHC) welcomes this Westminster Hall debate on 'Improving support for mental health' on Thursday 10th October, led by Sojan Joseph MP. This briefing covers the key statistics on babies, children and young people's mental health and change that we want to see.

Summary

- The mental health of children and young people has declined in recent years, with one in five children and young people aged 8 to 25 years with a reported mental health problem in 2023, compared to one in nine in 2017 (NHS Digital, 2023).
- Referrals to NHS Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (CYPMHC) have tripled from 40,000 in 2016 to almost 120,000 in 2024 (Darzi, 2024).
- Rising levels of need means that demand frequently outstrips service capacity to respond leaving young people facing long waiting lists, rejected referrals, and poor access to support.
- It is estimated that around 75% of young people experiencing a mental health problem are forced to wait so long that their condition gets worse, or they are unable to access any treatment at all (Local Government Association, 2023).
- The Darzi Review highlighted that dire challenges facing children and young people's and emphasised that 'too many are being let down'.
- The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition want to see substantial change to the mental health of babies, children and young people. This includes:
 - Implementing whole educational approaches to mental health and wellbeing across all educational settings
 - Full roll out of young futures hubs in every local area to provide open access, drop-in mental health support

The mental health of children and young people

- In 2023, one in five children and young people aged 8 to 25 years had a mental health problem. This is a rise from one in nine in 2017 (NHS Digital, 2023).
- The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated need, with analysis showing that 1.5 million children and young people under the age of 18 could need new or increased mental health support following the Covid-19 pandemic (O'Shea, 2021).
- Some groups of children and young people are disproportionately impacted by mental health problems largely driven by a complex interplay of social and environmental determinants of poor mental health. This includes children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), those from racialised and LGBTQ+ backgrounds, neurodivergent young people, those with physical health or long-term conditions, young carers, children in care and refugee and migrant children and young people (CYPMHC, 2023).



- The Darzi review highlighted that an increase in poverty and deprivation correlates with increased prevalence of mental health issues, poorer access to mental health services and increases in sectioning under the Mental Health Act (Darzi, 2024).
- The Darzi review also highlighted the chronic issues in the children and young people's mental health services including the surge in mental health needs, increase in waiting times and increase in referrals from 40,000 in 2016 to almost 120,000 in 2024 (Darzi, 2024).
- Evidence suggests that NHS specialist mental health services are turning away one in three children and young people referred to them for treatment (Local Government Association, 2023).
- It is estimated that around 75% of young people experiencing a mental health problem are forced to wait so long that their condition gets worse, or they are unable to access any treatment at all (Local Government Association, 2023).

What needs to change?

There are three key changes that the Government can make to improve mental health support for babies children and young people. This includes embedding whole educational approaches to mental health and wellbeing, young futures hubs in every local community and consideration of babies, children and young people in Mental Health Act reforms.

Embedding whole educational approaches

Education settings have an important role to play in promoting and protecting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. A whole education approach encompasses a complete, setting-wide, and multi-component approach to the promotion of children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. Such approaches are crucial in making every pupil feel valued, and in supporting positive mental health and wellbeing in education settings. However, while many schools are working to implement whole educational approaches this work is often underfunded, comes from core budgets, and remain optional within schools. We believe that the Government should embed whole educational approaches across all education settings. This would have a universal impact on the health of every child and young person.

We welcome the Government's commitment to having a mental health professional in every school. Providing targeted support within settings is a crucial element of a whole education approach. Positive progress has been made in rolling Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) across schools and colleges - MHSTs currently cover 44% of pupils and learners and is predicted to cover 50% by March 2025 – yet implementation remains slow. It is crucial that there is full national roll out of MHSTs to ensure that all children and young people can access mental health support within their school or college.

Rolling out Young Futures Hubs in every local community

At the first sign of emerging mental health needs, it is important that babies, children and young people get help to ensure that problems do not escalate. That's why we, alongside Centre for Mental Health, Mind, The Children's Society, YoungMinds, Youth Access, Black Thrive and British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy have been calling for the



full national roll out of early support hubs in every local area as part of the #FundtheHubs campaign

Early support hubs offer easy-to-access, drop-in support on a self-referral basis for young people with emerging mental health needs, up to age 25 and have been shown to have excellent outcomes for young people both internationally and in the UK.

The value of the early support hub model has been recognised by successive governments. The previous Government committed £8 million for 24 existing early support hub to expand their offer of support – this pilot is currently being undertaken and evaluated by the Department of Health and Social Care. The Labour party manifesto also committed to establish Young Futures hubs to provide open access, drop-in mental health support for children and young people in every local area. It is crucial that these hubs are rolled out as quickly as possible, are back by sufficient and sustainable resource and are centred on supporting mental health and wellbeing.

Reforming the Mental Health Act 1983

It is estimated that around 3,500 children aged under 18 are admitted to mental health inpatient settings a year (Article 39, 2021). Care of this kind is extremely expensive, with acute care costing over half a million pounds per child, per year (O'Shea and McHayle, 2021). Too many children and young people are also placed in inappropriate settings and on adult wards, and insights gathered from children and young people highlight that their experiences of inpatient care are often poor.

Reforming the Mental Health Act 1983 provides a key opportunity to not only improve care and strengthen safeguards for children and young people admitted to mental health hospitals, but also to reduce the number of people being detained under the Act, particularly those from racialised communities. It is imperative that children and young people's rights are explicitly protected and promoted in the new Mental Health Bill, and careful consideration must be given to how the reforms apply to this group. Reforms must centre on two key areas: ensuring parity of esteem in rights between adults and children and strengthening safeguards for children and young people in mental health hospitals. This should include introducing a statutory decision making test for under 16s and strengthening protections against children being placed on adult wards.

Questions to Government

1. To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether the Government will be implementing a Whole Educational Approach to mental health and wellbeing in all education settings?
2. To ask the Home Office what the timelines are for the roll out of the Young Futures Hubs?
3. To ask the Department of Health and Social Care how the Mental Health Bill will protect the rights of children and young people?
4. To ask the Department for Education whether there is continued commitment to rolling out Mental Health Support Teams?



About the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition

The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition is a collaborative network of over 300 organisations and individuals 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 well-being of children. 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.

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