



Future in mind

Promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing



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Your future in mind – an open letter to children and young people

A few months ago, we were asked by the Government to work out what needs to be done to improve children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. Growing up is meant to be one of the very best times in anyone's life but it can also be tough. There are many pressures and some young people, such as looked-after children and those leaving care, are exposed to situations and experiences that can make them particularly vulnerable.

Experiencing mental health concerns is not unusual. At least one in four of the population experience problems at some point in their lives. Over half of mental health problems in adult life (excluding dementia) start by the age of 14 and seventy-five per cent by age 18. Although mental health issues are relatively common, it is often the case that children and young people don't get the help they need as quickly as they should. As a result, mental health difficulties such as anxiety, low mood, depression, conduct disorders and eating disorders can stop some young people achieving what they want in life and making a full contribution to society.

We were asked to work together and see how your mental health and wellbeing could best be supported to give you the best start in life.

That means we want to help you acquire the resilience and skills you need when life throws up challenges. We want you to know what to do for yourself if you are troubled by emotions or problems with your mental health. That includes knowing when and how to ask

for help and, when you do, to receive high quality care. We want services to be able to respond quickly, to offer support and, where necessary, treatment that we know works, to help you stay or get back on track. We believe that asking people who use services what they think about what happens now is vital. They are the ones who know what needs to change. So our first thought was to ask you – children, young people and those who care for you – how things could work better.

We also knew that lots of good work had been done in the past, so we looked at previous reports and reviewed all the evidence we have. We asked a group of people with a mix of experience and expertise that included young people, parents, people working in schools, in the voluntary sector, and in services as well as people who work for the Government to come together as a 'Taskforce' to help look at all the information we have and think about how we could improve.

What we have come up with is a vision that we hope reflects what you as well as your parents, carers and professionals told us was needed, with ideas about how to make it happen.

We have set out the vision by describing how we think the system should work for young people. The report lays out a map of how we could make those ambitions a reality. In this report, we tell you what we think can change now, but also what we think will take more time. Not all the changes can be made straight away, some are longer term ambitions. But we believe substantial

progress can be made over the next five years if we act now to make children and young people's mental health a priority.

Do let us know what you think about this report. You can add your comments to our blogs (see links below) and also share your opinions on Twitter using **#youngmentalhealth**.

And finally let's remember that there is one change that we can all contribute to. We can all look out for those children and young people who might be struggling right now. We can confront bullying and we can make it OK to admit that you are struggling with your mental health. We can end stigma. And we can support our friends in their treatment and recovery.

Let's make a start.

Useful links:

Taskforce website: www.gov.uk/government/groups/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-well-being-taskforce

Jon Rouse's blog: <https://jonrouse.blog.gov.uk/>

Dr Martin McShane's blog: www.england.nhs.uk/category/publications/blogs/martin-mcshane



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "MD McShane".

Dr Martin McShane, NHS England



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JR Rouse".

Jon Rouse, Department of Health

Our vision for children and young people's mental health

You have goals and ambitions you want to achieve. We want you to grow up to be confident and resilient so you can develop and fulfil these goals and make a contribution to society. To do this we must make sure:

Your parents and carers get the help they need to support you through your childhood and into adult life. Other adults such as GPs, midwives, health visitors, teachers and other people who work in schools, should understand emotional and mental health in children and young people, and know what to do and where to go if they are worried about you or those who care for you.

If you are having difficulty, you shouldn't have to wait until you are really sick to get help, and those around you should be understanding. Asking for help shouldn't be embarrassing or difficult and you should know what to do and where to go.

When you need help, you want to find it easily and to be able to trust it. To make sure this happens, we need to make sure that:

There are websites and apps that you know you can trust and use to help yourself and find out information on how to get more help.

You have a choice about where you can get advice and support from a welcoming place. You might want to go somewhere familiar, such as your school or your doctor. Or you might want to go to a drop-in centre, or access the help you need online. But wherever you go, the advice and support you are offered should be based on the

best evidence about what works. All the professionals you meet should treat you as a whole person, considering your physical and mental health needs together.

You are experts in your care and want to be involved in how mental health services are delivered and developed, not just to you and those who support you, but to all the children, young people and families in your area. To do this we must make sure that:

All services give you the opportunity to set your own treatment goals and will monitor with you how things are going. If things aren't going well, the team providing your care will work with you to make changes to achieve your goals. You have the opportunity to shape the services you receive. That means listening to your experience of your care, how this fits with your life and how you would like services to work with you. It means giving you and those who care for you the opportunity to feedback and make suggestions about the way services are provided. Services should tell you what happened as a result.

When you need help, you want it to meet your needs as an individual and be delivered by people who care about what happens to you. This means that:

You should only have to tell your story once, to someone who is dedicated to helping you, and you shouldn't have to repeat it to lots of different people. All the services in your area should work together so you get the support you need at the right time and in the right place.

If you have a crisis, you should get extra help straightaway, whatever time of day or night it is. You should be in a safe place where a team will work with you to figure out what needs to happen next to help you in the best possible way.

If you need to go to hospital, it should be on a ward with people around your age and near to your home. If you need something very specialised, then you and your family should be told why you need to travel further, and the service should stay in touch to get you home as soon as possible. And while you are in hospital, we should ensure you can keep up with your education as much as you can.

Throughout your care, there are likely to be changes so that you get the right care at the right time. You'll have the opportunity to make informed choices about your treatment and care. You'll keep getting help until you're confident that you're well enough to no longer need it.

If you need help at home, your care team will visit and work with you and your family at home to reduce the need for you to go into hospital. If you do need to go in to hospital, the team should stay in touch and help you to get home quickly.

If you need to move from one service to another, you'll be involved in conversations to prepare you for this and to agree exactly what is happening and when. You'll make the move when you feel ready for it. If you have to move from one area to another, the people responsible for your care will sort this out and involve you, so that you do not have to start from scratch.

You'll keep getting help until you're confident that you're well enough to no longer need it, even if sometimes you can't or don't want to attend appointments. If you don't keep your appointments, someone should get in touch to find out what they can do to help, not just leave you to it.

You want to know that, whatever your circumstances, you get the best possible care, support and treatment when you need it. You'll be able to get help wherever you are in the country, and the help you get where you live won't be worse than if you lived somewhere else. To make this happen we will need to make sure:

The people responsible for organising and delivering services to you know which services to provide to best help you and other children, young people and families in your community. The people who fund and provide your service should be dedicated to offering the best mental health services possible, and will be honest and open about how they do that as well as about how they are working to improve it.

1. Executive summary and key proposals

1.1 The Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce¹ was established in September 2014 to consider ways to make it easier for children, young people, parents and carers to access help and support when needed and to improve how children and young people's mental health services are organised, commissioned and provided.

1.2 Key themes emerged which now provide the structure of this report. Within these themes, we have brought together core principles and requirements which we consider to be fundamental to creating a system that properly supports the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people.

1.3 In summary, the themes are:

- **Promoting resilience, prevention and early intervention**
- **Improving access to effective support – a system without tiers**
- **Care for the most vulnerable**
- **Accountability and transparency**
- **Developing the workforce**

The case for change

1.4 Mental health problems cause distress to individuals and all those who care for

them. One in ten children needs support or treatment for mental health problems. These range from short spells of depression or anxiety through to severe and persistent conditions that can isolate, disrupt and frighten those who experience them. Mental health problems in young people can result in lower educational attainment (for example, children with conduct disorder are twice as likely as other children to leave school with no qualifications) and are strongly associated with behaviours that pose a risk to their health, such as smoking, drug and alcohol abuse and risky sexual behaviour.

1.5 The economic case for investment is strong. 75% of mental health problems in adult life (excluding dementia) start by the age of 18. Failure to support children and young people with mental health needs costs lives and money. Early intervention avoids young people falling into crisis and avoids expensive and longer term interventions in adulthood. There is a compelling moral, social and economic case for change. We set this out in full in **Chapter 3**.

1.6 Evidence presented to the Taskforce also underlined the complexity and severity of the current set of challenges facing child and adolescent mental health services. These include:

- i. **Significant gaps in data and information and delays in the development of payment and other incentive systems.** These are all critical to driving change in a co-ordinated way.

¹ *Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce: Terms of Reference.* Available at: www.gov.uk/government/groups/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-well-being-taskforce

- ii. **The treatment gap.** The last UK epidemiological study² suggested that, at that time, less than 25% – 35% of those with a diagnosable mental health condition accessed support. There is emerging evidence of a rising need in key groups such as the increasing rates of young women with emotional problems and young people presenting with self-harm.
- iii. **Difficulties in access.** Data from the NHS benchmarking network and recent audits reveal increases in referrals and waiting times, with providers reporting increased complexity and severity of presenting problems.
- iv. **Complexity of current commissioning arrangements.** A lack of clear leadership and accountability arrangements for children's mental health across agencies including CCGs and local authorities, with the potential for children and young people to fall through the net has been highlighted in numerous reports.³
- v. **Access to crisis, out of hours and liaison psychiatry services are variable** and in some parts of the country, there is no designated health

place of safety recorded by the CQC for under-18s.

- vi. **Specific issues facing highly vulnerable groups of children and young people and their families** who may find it particularly difficult to access appropriate services.

1.7 These issues are addressed in considering the key themes that form the basis of this report and the proposals it makes.

Making it happen

1.8 The Taskforce firmly believes that the best mental health care and support must involve children, young people and those who care for them in making choices about what they regard as key priorities, so that evidence-based treatments are provided that meet their goals and address their priorities. These need to be offered in ways they find acceptable, accessible and useful.

1.9 Providers must monitor, and commissioners must consider, the extent to which the interventions available fit with the stated preferences of young people and parents/carers so that provision can be shaped increasingly around what matters to them. Services need to be outcomes-focused, simple and easy to access, based on best evidence, and built around the needs of children, young people and their families rather than defined in terms of organisational boundaries.

1.10 Delivering this means making some real changes across the whole system. It means the NHS, public health, local authorities, social care, schools and youth justice sectors working together to:

- **Place the emphasis on building resilience, promoting good mental health, prevention and early intervention (Chapter 4)**

² Green H, McGinnity A, Meltzer H, Ford T, Goodman R (2005). *Mental health of children and young people in Great Britain, 2004*. A survey carried out by the Office for National Statistics on behalf of the Department of Health and the Scottish Executive. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

³ National CAMHS Review (2008). *Children and young people in mind: the final report of the National CAMHS Review*. National CAMHS Review; HM Government (2011). *No Health Without Mental Health: A cross-government mental health outcomes strategy for people of all ages*. London: Department of Health; Department of Health (2012). *Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer 2012*. London: Department of Health; CAMHS Tier 4 Report Steering Group (2014). *CAMHS Tier 4 Report*. London: NHS England.

- **Simplify structures and improve access:** by dismantling artificial barriers between services by making sure that those bodies that plan and pay for services work together, and ensuring that children and young people have easy access to the right support from the right service (Chapter 5).
- **Deliver a clear joined up approach:** linking services so care pathways are easier to navigate for all children and young people, including those who are most vulnerable (Chapter 6), so people do not fall between gaps.
- **Harness the power of information:** to drive improvements in the delivery of care, and standards of performance, and ensure we have a much better understanding of how to get the best outcomes for children, young people and families/carers and value from our investment (Chapter 7).
- **Sustain a culture of continuous evidence-based service improvement** delivered by a workforce with the right mix of skills, competencies and experience (Chapter 8).
- **Make the right investments:** to be clear about how resources are being used in each area, what is being spent, and to equip all those who plan and pay for services for their local population with the evidence they need to make good investment decisions in partnerships with children and young people, their families and professionals. Such an approach will also enable better judgements to be made about the overall adequacy of investment (Chapter 9).

1.11 In some parts of the country, effective partnerships are already meeting many of the expectations set out in this report. However, this is by no means universal, consistent or equitable.

A National ambition

1.12 This report sets out a clear national ambition in the form of key proposals to transform the design and delivery of a local offer of services for children and young people with mental health needs. **Many of these are cost-neutral, requiring a different way of doing business rather than further significant investment.**

1.13 **There are a number of proposals in this report which require critical decisions, for example, on investment and on local service redesign, which will need explicit support from the next government, in the context of what we know will be a very tight Spending Review.** We are realistic in this respect. At both national and local level, decisions will need to be taken on whether to deliver early intervention through an ‘invest to save’ approach and/or targeted reprioritisation, recognising that it will take time to secure an economic return for the nation.



The Government's aspirations are that by 2020 we would wish to see: *(The numbers in brackets refer to the proposals in and at the end of each chapter)*

1. Improved public awareness and understanding, where people think and feel differently about mental health issues for children and young people where there is less fear and where stigma and discrimination are tackled. This would be delivered by:

- a hard hitting anti-stigma campaign which raises awareness and promotes improved attitudes to children and young people affected by mental health difficulties. This would build on the success of the existing Time to Change campaign; (3)
- with additional funding, we could also empower young people to self-care through increased availability of

new quality assured apps and digital tools. (5)

2. In every part of the country, children and young people having timely access to clinically effective mental health support when they need it.

With additional funding, this would be delivered by:

- a five year programme to develop a comprehensive set of access and waiting times standards that bring the same rigour to mental health as is seen in physical health. (17)

3. A step change in how care is delivered moving away from a system defined in terms of the services organisations provide (the 'tiered' model) towards one built around the needs of children, young people and their families.

This will ensure children and young people have easy access to the right support from the right service at the right time.

This could be delivered by:

- joining up services locally through collaborative commissioning approaches between CCGs, local authorities and other partners, enabling all areas to accelerate service transformation; (48)
- having lead commissioning arrangements in every area for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing services, responsible for developing a single integrated plan. We envisage that in most cases the CCG would establish lead commissioning arrangements working in close collaboration with local authorities. We also recognise the need for flexibility to allow different models to develop to suit local circumstances and would not want to cut across alternative arrangements; (30)

- transitions from children's services based on the needs of the young person, rather than a particular age. (15)
4. **Increased use of evidence-based treatments with services rigorously focused on outcomes.** With additional funding, this would be delivered by:
 - building on the success of the CYP IAPT transformation programme and rolling it out to the rest of the country. (44)
 5. **Making mental health support more visible and easily accessible for children and young people.** With additional funding, this would be delivered by:
 - every area having 'one-stop-shop' services, which provide mental health support and advice to children and young people in the community, in an accessible and welcoming environment. This would build on and harness the vital contribution of the voluntary sector; (16)
 - improving communications, referrals and access to support through every area having named points of contact in specialist mental health services and schools. This would include integrating mental health specialists directly into schools and GP practices. (16)
 6. **Improved care for children and young people in crisis so they are treated in the right place at the right time and as close to home as possible.** This would be delivered by:
 - ensuring the support and intervention for young people being planned in the Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat are implemented; (12)
 - no young person under the age of 18 being detained in a police cell as a place of safety; (19)
 - implementing clear evidence-based pathways for community-based care, including intensive home treatment where appropriate, to avoid unnecessary admissions to inpatient care. (13)
 7. **Improving access for parents to evidence-based programmes of intervention and support to strengthen attachment between parent and child, avoid early trauma, build resilience and improve behaviour.** With additional funding, this would be delivered by:
 - enhancing existing maternal, perinatal and early years health services and parenting programmes. (4)
 8. **A better offer for the most vulnerable children and young people, making it easier for them to access the support that they need when, and where they need it.** This would include:
 - ensuring those who have been sexually abused and/or exploited receive a comprehensive assessment and referral to the services that they need, including specialist mental health services. (24)
 9. **Improved transparency and accountability across the whole system, to drive further improvements in outcomes.** This would be delivered by:
 - development of a robust set of metrics covering access, waiting times and outcomes to allow benchmarking of local services at national level; (36)
 - clearer information about the levels of investment made by those who

commission children and young people's mental health services; (38)

- subject to decisions taken by future governments, a commitment to a prevalence survey for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, which is repeated every five years. (39)

10. Professionals who work with children and young people are trained in child development and mental health, and understand what can be done to provide help and support for those who need it.

Local Transformation Plans

1.14 Delivering the national ambition will require local leadership and ownership. We therefore propose the development and agreement of **Transformation Plans for Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing** which will clearly articulate the local offer. These Plans should cover the whole spectrum of services for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing from health promotion and prevention work, to support and interventions for children and young people who have existing or emerging mental health problems, as well as transitions between services.

1.15 In terms of local leadership, we anticipate that the lead commissioner, in most cases the Clinical Commissioning Group, would draw up the Plans, working closely with Health and Wellbeing Board partners including local authorities. All these partners have an important role to play in ensuring that services are jointly commissioned in a way that promotes effective joint working and establishes clear pathways. Lead commissioners should ensure that schools are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of Transformation Plans.

1.16 To support this, NHS England will make a specific contribution by prioritising the further investment in children and young people's mental health announced in the Autumn Statement 2014 in those areas that can demonstrate robust action planning through the publication of local Transformation Plans.

1.17 What is included in the Plan should reflect the national ambition and principles set out in this report and be decided at a local level in collaboration with children, young people and their families as well as providers and commissioners. Key elements will include commitments to:

Transparency

- A requirement for local commissioning agencies to give an annual declaration of their current investment and the needs of the local population with regards to the full range of provision for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.
- A requirement for providers to declare what services they already provide, including staff numbers, skills and roles, waiting times and access to information.

Service transformation

- A requirement for all partners, commissioners or providers, to sign up to a series of agreed principles covering: the range and choice of treatments and interventions available; collaborative practice with children, young people and families and involving schools; the use of evidence-based interventions; and regular feedback of outcome monitoring to children, young people and families and in supervision.

Monitoring improvement

- Development of a shared action plan and a commitment to review, monitor

and track improvements towards the Government's aspirations set out in this Report, including children and young people having timely access to effective support when they need it.

Next steps in 2015/16

1.18 At a national level, we will play our part to deliver the ambition by:

- delivering waiting times standards for Early Intervention in Psychosis by April 2016;
- continuing development of new access and waiting times standards for Eating Disorder;
- commissioning a new national prevalence survey of child and adolescent mental health;
- implementing the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Minimum Dataset, which will include the new CYP IAPT dataset;
- continuing to focus on case management for inpatient services for children and young people, building on the response to NHS England's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Tier 4 Report;⁴
- testing clear access routes between schools and specialist services for mental health by extending the recently established co-commissioning pilots to more areas;
- improving children's access to timely support from the right service through developing a joint training programme to support lead contacts in mental health services and schools. This will be commissioned by NHS England and the

Department for Education and tested in 15 areas in 2015/16. DfE will also support work to develop approaches in children's services to improve mental health support for vulnerable children;

- improving public awareness and understanding of children's mental health issues, through continuing the existing anti-stigma campaign led by Time to Change and approaches piloted in 2014/15 to promote a broader national conversation;
- encouraging schools to continue to develop whole school approaches to promoting mental health and wellbeing through a new counselling strategy for schools, alongside the Department for Education's other work on character and resilience and PSHE.

1.19 In the medium to longer term, the Taskforce would like a future government to consider formalising at least some parts of this national ambition to ensure consistency of practice across the country. This would also give a more precise meaning to what is meant by the existing statutory duties in respect of parity of esteem between physical and mental health, as they apply to children and young people.

⁴ CAMHS Tier 4 Report Steering Group (2014). *CAMHS Tier 4 Report*. London: NHS England.