

Good Mental Health

Extracts from DfE publication: *Mental health and behaviour in schools Departmental advice for school staff*

Children who are mentally healthy have the ability to:

- develop psychologically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually;
- initiate, develop and sustain mutually satisfying personal relationships;
- use and enjoy solitude;
- become aware of others and empathise with them;
- play and learn;
- develop a sense of right and wrong; and
- resolve (face) problems and setbacks and learn from them.

Mental health problems in children and young people

Some children experience a range of emotional and behavioural problems that are outside the normal range for their age or gender. These children and young people could be described as experiencing mental health problems or disorders. Mental health professionals have defined these as:

- emotional disorders, e.g. phobias, anxiety states and depression;
- conduct disorders, e.g. stealing, defiance, fire-setting, aggression and anti-social behaviour;
- hyperkinetic disorders e.g. disturbance of activity and attention;
- developmental disorders e.g. delay in acquiring certain skills such as speech, social ability or bladder control, primarily affecting children with autism and those with pervasive developmental disorders;
- attachment disorders, e.g. children who are markedly distressed or socially impaired as a result of an extremely abnormal pattern of attachment to parents or major care givers; and

Key points

- In order to help their pupils succeed, schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy. There are a variety of things that schools can do, for all their pupils and for those with particular problems, to offer that support in an effective way.
- Where severe problems occur schools should expect the child to get support elsewhere as well, including from medical professionals working in specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), voluntary organisations and local GPs.
- Schools should ensure that pupils and their families participate as fully as possible in decisions and are provided with information and support. The views, wishes and feelings of the pupil and their parents should always be considered.
- Schools can use the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to help them judge whether individual pupils might be suffering from a diagnosable mental health problem and involve their parents and the pupil in considering why they behave in certain ways.
- MindEd, a free online training tool, is now available to enable school staff to learn more about specific mental health problems. This can help to sign post staff working with children to additional resources where mental health problems have been identified. Counselling MindEd, which is part of MindEd, is also available to support the training and supervision of counselling work with children and young people.
- There are things that schools can do – including for all their pupils, for those showing early signs of problems and for families exposed to several risk factors – to intervene early and strengthen resilience, before serious mental health problems occur.
- Schools can influence the health services that are commissioned locally through their local Health and Wellbeing Board – Directors of Children’s Services and local Healthwatch are statutory members.
- There are national organisations offering materials, help and advice. Schools should look at what provision is available locally to help them promote mental health and intervene early to support pupils experiencing difficulties. Help and information about evidence-based approaches is available from a range of sources (see Annex B).

Sources of support and information

Here are some national support and information services offering assistance for child mental health issues. We can only list national services but please remember to look around for local services too.

Childline – A confidential service, provided by the NSPCC, offering free support for children and young people up to the age of nineteen on a wide variety of problems.

Counselling MindEd – Counselling MindEd is an online resource within MindEd that provides free evidence-based, e-learning to support the training of school and youth counsellors and supervisors working in a wide variety of settings.

Education Endowment Foundation – The Sutton Trust-EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit is an accessible summary of educational research which provides guidance for teachers and schools on how to use their resources to improve the attainment of all pupils and especially disadvantaged pupils.

HeadMeds – website developed by the charity YoungMinds providing general information about common medications that may be prescribed for children and young people with diagnosed mental health conditions.

MindEd – MindEd provides free e-learning to help adults to identify and understand children and young people with mental health issues. It provides simple, clear guidance on mental health to adults who work with children and young people, to help them support the development of young healthy minds.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) – NICE's role is to improve outcomes for people using the NHS and other public health and social care services, including by producing evidence-based guidance and advice. Some of this guidance had been drawn on to produce this document and much of it is provided in non-specialist language for the public. This can be useful in understanding social, emotional and mental health conditions and their recommended treatments.

Place2Be – Place2Be is a charity working in schools providing early intervention mental health support to children aged 4-14 in England, Scotland and Wales.

Relate – Relate offers advice, relationship counselling, sex therapy, workshops, mediation, consultations and support face-to-face, by phone and through their website. This includes children and young people's counselling for any young person who is having problems.

Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPSYCH) Provide specifically tailored information for young people, parents, teachers and carers about mental health through their Parents and Youth Info A-Z. – 32

Women's Aid – Women's Aid is the national domestic violence charity that works to end violence against women and children and supports domestic and sexual violence services across the country. They provide services to support abused women and children such as the free 24hour National Domestic Violence Helpline and The HideOut, a website to help children and young people.

Young Minds resources available to professionals (including teachers) and run a helpline for adults worried about the emotional problems, behaviour or mental health of anyone up to the age of 25. They also offer a catalogue of resources for commissioning support services. – Young Minds is a charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. They undertake campaigns and research, make resources available to professionals (including teachers) and run a helpline for adults worried about the emotional problems, behaviour or mental health of anyone up to the age of 25. They also offer a catalogue of resources for commissioning support services.