

IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Guide for Child Health Colleagues

The problem

- Diagnosed mental health conditions in young people are on the rise, highlighting a growing crisis that services are struggling to meet.
- Access to mental health services is deeply unequal, with children in deprived areas, girls, and those from minoritised communities facing the greatest barriers.
- Schools and health services are legally required to work together to safeguard children's wellbeing, yet services remain fragmented.

What you can do as a child health practitioner

- **Partner with schools to deliver early support on-site**, including via Mental Health Support Teams or local voluntary sector mental health workers.
- **Promote and support digital and parent-led therapies**, which are shown to be effective and can reduce pressure on stretched services.
- **Use wellbeing data from local surveys** (e.g., #BeeWell or Age of Wonder) to target support and identify at-risk groups in your area.
- **Highlight sleep and loneliness as key risk factors** in health consultations with children and families.
- **Work with professionals from other sectors** to co-design culturally responsive services, particularly for communities less likely to seek formal mental health support.

Evidence-based insights

Only **one-third of schools** in England currently have access to dedicated mental health support teams, leaving many unsupported at school.

Approximately **1.4 million children and young people** (aged 8-17 years) have a mental health condition in England.

Examples of good practice that you may wish to explore:

Age of Wonder

A longitudinal cohort study in Bradford working with young people and families to co-produce initiatives that focus on early intervention, community and psychosocial interventions, and public mental health approaches to prevent mental ill-health.

Online Social Anxiety Cognitive therapy for Adolescents (OSCA)

An internet-delivered, therapist-assisted cognitive therapy for adolescent social anxiety disorder showed promising results in an RCT, with 77% of participants who received immediate access to OSCA recovering, compared to just 14% in the waitlist control group.

#BeeWell Greater Manchester

A large-scale youth-led wellbeing measurement and improvement programme that guides schools and local services to act on student mental health needs.

Next Door but One

A York-based LGBTQ+ and disability-led theatre company that utilises the creative arts to help improve young people's mental health and wellbeing, and foster community cohesion - particularly among those who face barriers to accessing the arts.

Check out the innovative approaches outlined in this briefing and **consider taking inspiration from these approaches to reflect on how you can help create positive change.**



Scan the QR Code for the report

Please share this guide and start a discussion with your colleagues about how we can all play our role in building a country that works for all children and young people.