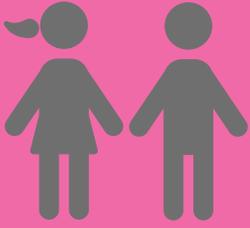


Why children's mental health is important



1 IN 10

children and young people experience a mental health issue at any one time

IN THE PAST YEAR ALMOST

20,000

young people contacted Childline with suicidal thoughts – that's more than double the number five years ago

In an average group of 30 15-year-olds:

10

Ten are likely to have watched their parents separate

6

Six may be self-harming

7

Seven are likely to have been bullied

1

One could have experienced the death of a parent



Public Health England, 2015

Mental health and emotional issues often develop during adolescence. Half of young adults with mental health issues have symptoms by the age of 15, and nearly 75% by their late teens. For those aged 5-19 years, suicide is the second most common cause of death (**ONS, 2015**).

Social media peer pressure, bullying, family units breaking down and an increased number of children in the care system have all been suggested as contributing factors to the rise in mental health issues in younger people. Many of these issues affecting mental wellbeing are multiple and often remain undetected and untreated unless agencies such as schools take an active role (**Partnership for Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools, 2015**).

Despite the focus in recent years, some young people still do not get the support and care they need. This can happen because there is a stigma associated with mental ill health. Young people may be reluctant to seek professional help or discuss mental health with friends and family because of their concerns about what others will think.

Young people may lack the insight to realise that they need help or that help is available. Some mental health issues can cloud clear thinking and decision making. A young person experiencing such issues may not realise that they need help, that effective help is available, or may be so distressed that they are unable to think clearly about what they should do.

GPs, counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists and other professionals can all help young people experiencing mental health issues. However, just as with accidents and

other medical emergencies, such assistance is not always immediately available when an issue first arises.

This is when key figures in the young person's life, such as parents, teachers, tutors, carers, and youth workers, can offer aid and guide them towards the appropriate professional support.

Although once seen as an optional extra, it has become clear that work in schools to promote mental health and wellbeing is central to overall effectiveness and should be prioritised. Recent evidence from **Public Health England** confirms that:

- Children with greater wellbeing and lower levels of mental health issues achieve higher grades, better examination results, better attendance, and drop out less frequently
- Academic achievement is more accurately predicted by social and emotional skills than by IQ
- The quality of PSHE (personal, social, health and economic education) in a school is strongly correlated with the school's overall effectiveness

As mental health becomes an increasingly recognised concern, the most recent **Ofsted inspection framework** includes a new judgement on "personal development, behaviour and welfare". Section 6.9.2 states that inspectors will be "**looking to see that learners are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves healthy, both emotionally and physically**".