

# Paediatricians Role in Children and Young People's Mental Health

---

**Dr Karen Street**  
**Consultant Paediatrician**  
**RCPCH Officer for Mental Health**



---

**Royal College of  
Paediatrics and Child Health**  
*Leading the way in Children's Health*

---

# Children's Health: What do we know?

---

1 in 6, 5-19-year-olds in England have a mental health problem (mental illness, emotional, behavioural and neurodevelopmental disorders)

75% of children and young people with a mental disorder also have a physical or developmental problem

Having any physical complaint (compared with no physical health condition) increases the odds of having a mental disorder by 82%

50% of all mental health problems are established by 14 years of age and 75% by age 24

# Children's health: What do we know?

---

Suicide is now the leading cause of death for both males and females 5-19 years of age across England and Wales

Risk of developing an eating disorder is highest in males and females between 13 and 17 years of age. Anorexia nervosa has the highest mortality of any psychiatric disorder in adolescence

Children and young people in vulnerable groups are even more at risk, including LGBTQ+ people, low income households, children in care, and those with parental mental health issues, special educational needs, on child protection plans, or in the criminal justice system.

# UK policy documents: Common themes

---

- Promotion of mental wellbeing
- Focus on mental health support in schools
- Early recognition of mental health problems
- Early intervention and support by the whole children's workforce
- Improved access to local specialist services

# Effects of the pandemic...

---

- Big increase in restricted eating disorders/weight loss/starvation
- Increase in self harm, suicidal thoughts, food/fluid refusal
- Increase in tic disorders
- Increase in anxiety, sleep problems, low mood
- Increase in acute psychosocial emergency presentations
- Safeguarding concerns
- Increasing waiting lists for neurodevelopmental assessment
- Long waits for CAMHS

## RCPCH Position Statement (2020): Key points

---

‘The mental health of our patients is our business’

‘Paediatricians should not be expected to work in isolation when managing severe cases of mental illness’.

## RCPCH Position Statement (2020): Key points

---

‘There should be provision for consultation and direct input from mental health specialists through age appropriate hospital mental health liaison teams’

‘All paediatric teams should have a nominated lead for mental health’

# What is RCPCH doing: Members

---

- Raising awareness, promoting parity of esteem for physical and mental health, reducing stigma associated with mental illness
- Promoting good mental health in all their interactions with children and young people (RCPCH&Us)
- Being aware of and signposting to appropriate online and community-based resources
- Assess using the biopsychosocial approach

# What is RCPCH doing: Members

---

- Develop knowledge and skills to identify, support and make appropriate onward referrals for common mental health problems
- Those likely to encounter high rates or greater complexity should develop additional competencies
- Consider regular screening for mental health problems in chronic health conditions
- Knowledge of the legislation around mental capacity and the legal frameworks within which mental illness can be assessed and treated without consent

# What is RCPCH doing: Members

---

- Protect from over medicalisation and harm from unnecessary investigation for physical symptoms when the biopsychosocial assessment suggests there are more appropriate pathways of support
- Feel comfortable explaining the link between mind and body to children and young people and their families

# What is RCPCH doing: Members

---

- Develop effective joint working and integration with mental health services for children and young people
- Provide patient centred pathways that meet mental health needs as well as physical needs
- Link with the wider children's workforce including the third sector, social care and education services.

# What is RCPCH doing: Training

---

- Child Mental Health Specialty Advisory Committee
- Specialist training: Grid training
- Sub specialist training: SPIN module
- Progress + curriculum for all paediatric trainees includes many mental health competencies
- Courses, training days, conferences
- Working with RCPsych re joint training/education

# What is RCPCH doing: Working with systems

---

- Professional organisations, including RCPsych, GP, RCN, BPS to build partnerships in training, research and policy
- Hosting a multi professional organisation steering group working alongside NHSEI and HEE to support the implementation of the NHSE Long Term Plan (LTP) for CYP mental health.
- Part of task and finish groups with the NHSEI National CYP Transformation and CYP Mental Health Programme teams around support for acute paediatric settings post pandemic

# What is RCPCH doing: Working with systems

---

- In England 'RCPCH Ambassadors' to work with local ICSs to advocate for the needs of children and young people with a spotlight on children and young people's mental health
- Developed standards for paediatric care which includes timely access to mental health services
- Workforce models looking at Paediatricians in 2040

## RCPCH Position Statement (2020): Key points

---

‘There should be provision for consultation and direct input from mental health specialists through age appropriate hospital mental health liaison teams’

‘All paediatric teams should have a nominated lead for mental health’

## Other calls for paediatric leadership and liaison teams in mental health

---

Mental Healthcare in Young People and Young Adults (2019)  
*National Confidential Enquiry into Patient Outcome and Death*

NHS Long Term Plan. 2019

Joint College statement on meeting the mental health needs of children and young people in acute hospitals.

*RCPsych, RCPCH, RCEM. 21 December 2021*

CYP with mental health needs within acute and paediatric settings. A framework for support.

*NHSE CYP Transformation Programme and CYP Mental Health Programme. March 2022*

# NHSE Framework for supporting acute settings




---

The national CYP Transformation and CYP Mental Health Programme teams are co-leading a project on supporting improving integration between Children and Young People Mental Health Services and Acute Trusts. The aim of our work is to ensure that the paediatric workforce:

- is supported when caring for CYP presenting to hospital (A&E and paediatric wards) with acute physical and mental health needs such as eating disorders or crisis presentations
- understand where to get additional support should they need it
- are working within a wider multi-disciplinary team and within a wider systems in providing support and care for CYP with acute mental health needs

# We continue to develop the evidence base around service and workforce innovations

- During our the September 2021 Task and Finish Group meeting, including representation from NHS regional teams, systems, Royal Colleges and professional bodies, we asked them to consider which innovations may be the most beneficial and feasible to take forward within the current workforce constraints and estates environment. Three innovations were suggested, highlighting the importance of aligning any implementation to the 'developing sensory friendly environments pilots' being led by the Learning Disability and Autism team.
- In addition, following recommendations from RCPCH and NCPOD, a CYP mental health / physical health lead role was suggested ensuring there is designated time within each paediatric unit to champion the change needed to support the paediatric workforce in caring for these CYP, as well as linking in across the system
- We would encourage systems to pilot these, or expand these where they are already in place, to help to enhance the evidence base.

		Available evidence	
1	<b>Place of sanctuary</b>	To provide a safe space alternative to a health-based Place of Safety for CYP whilst health and social care assessments can be undertaken	
2	<b>Liaison Team</b>	By skill sharing the paediatric and mental health workforce, improving early support for CYP with physical health or mental health needs	
3	<b>CYPMH Decision Unit</b>	Triaging CYP with mental health needs away from the A&E environment to support de-escalation and assessment.	
4	<b>CYP Mental Health / Physical Health Lead Role</b>	Ensuring there is designated time within each paediatric unit to champion the change needed to support the paediatric workforce in caring for these CYP, as well as linking in across the system	

## Workforce: CYP Mental Health / Physical Health Lead Role

- As recommended by RCPCH and NCPOD, we propose ensuring there is designated time within each paediatric unit to champion the change needed to support the paediatric workforce in caring for these CYP, as well as linking in across the system
- This role is not intended to provide a greater share of the clinical care for CYP with mental health needs, rather it aims to empower colleagues to feel competent and supported
- Further consideration will be made on supporting leads through a national network.

### The role

- A children and young people's mental/physical health lead role established in each provider that admits paediatric patients (1 PA per week will be allocated to clinical leads)

### Eligibility

- Any senior clinician who can admit CYP to a paediatric ward and holds clinical responsibility for paediatric inpatients/outpatients.
- Likely a paediatrician / senior paediatric nurse / senior paediatric AHP

### Function

- The role will have four key functions:
  - To build team confidence and morale across the department
  - Encourage uptake of training
  - Facilitate joint working across mental health and physical health Trusts and clinical colleagues
  - Provide leadership and link into Trust governance structures

## Message to our members

---

‘As services begin to recover, the time is ripe to connect across the entire child health workforce and local, regional, and national boundaries. Together, we can work to develop improved and integrated mental health services.’

# Questions

---