

# CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH: THE FACTS

Children and young people's mental health has never been so high on the public agenda. But it's vital that we have the basic facts if we are to see realised our vision of better mental health for all children, wherever they live, whatever their background or class. The Elliot Simmons Foundation have generously supported the creation of this fact sheet to ensure that everyone in the conversation has access to the best evidence.

At any one time, a child or young person may be anywhere on a spectrum between being healthy and unwell. Many children move along the spectrum at different times.

Mental health spectrum tool



Every year, one young person in ten experiences a mental health problem.

The most common mental health problem affecting children are **conduct disorders** (severe and persistent behavioural problems). These problems are around twice as likely to be experienced by boys/young men than girls/young women.

(Green *et al.*, 2005)

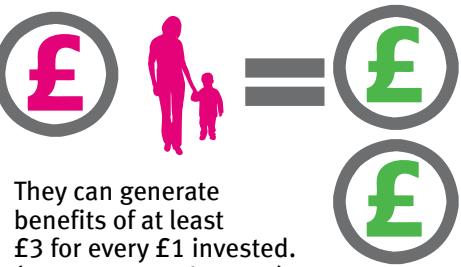
75% of adults with a diagnosable mental health problem experience the first symptoms by the **age of 24**.  
(Kessler *et al.*, 2005; McGorry *et al.*, 2007)

Severe and persistent behavioural problems starting before secondary school years which go unsupported can have long term impact on children's mental health and life chances.  
(Brown *et al.*, 2012)

5% children aged 5-10 have conduct disorder; this increases to 7% as young people approach secondary school years.  
(Green *et al.*, 2005)

Suicide is the largest cause of mortality for young people under 35.  
(Papyrus, 2018)

Group parenting programmes for conduct disorder in young children are effective.



They can generate benefits of at least £3 for every £1 invested.  
(Parsonage *et al.*, 2014)



Children from low-income families are **4 times more likely** to experience mental health problems than children from higher-income families.  
(Morrison Gutman *et al.*, 2015)



Among LGBT+ young people, **7 out of 10** girls and **6 out of 10** boys described experiencing suicidal thoughts. These children and young people were around **3 times as likely** as others to have made a suicide attempt at some point.  
(Statham *et al.*, 2012)

Male rates of suicide still remain consistently **threefold** higher than female rates. However, female suicide rates are currently at their highest rate for a decade. (Samaritans, 2017).

**1 in 5** young people aged 16-24 experience a common mental illness such as anxiety or depression at any one time.



Young women are more likely than young men to experience these types of problems.

(McManus *et al.*, 2009)

Young people in the youth justice system are **3 times** more likely to experience a diagnosable mental health condition than children who don't offend.

(Mental Health Foundation, 2002).

Children affected by learning disabilities are:

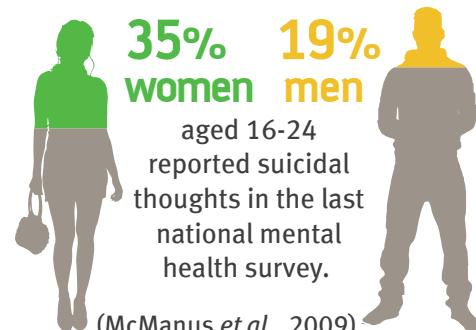
- **6 times** more likely to experience conduct disorder;
- **4 times** more likely to have a diagnosable emotional mental health problem;
- Nearly **2 times** as likely to experience a depressive episode.

(Emerson & Hatton, 2007)



of children raised in local authority residential homes meet the criteria for a psychiatric diagnosis.

(Luke *et al.*, 2014).



In 2015, **22%** of young people aged 15 reported having ever self-harmed (Brooks *et al.*, 2015). Young women in this age group were **3 times** more likely to self-harm than young men.

(Hawton *et al.*, 2002).

PTSD affects around **1 in 10** children and young people with refugee histories which is twice as high as rates among children from non-refugee communities.

(Almqvist & Brandell-Forsberg, 1997; Sack, *et al.*, 1999).



**Whilst three quarters of parents of children who are unwell seek help (mostly from schools), only one quarter of children receive NHS support.** (Green *et al.*, 2005)

In the last 20 years, young women's experiences of anxiety and depression have increased by around **38%**, whereas young men's experiences of the same conditions have decreased by around **2%** in the same period.

(McManus *et al.*, 2009)

Men and women from African Caribbean communities have a higher risk of being affected by some mental health difficulties.

Young men from these communities are more likely to receive mental health support through criminal justice routes rather than through health routes.

(McManus *et al.*, 2009)

Young South Asian females in the UK seem to have a particularly raised risk of self-harm.\* (Hawton & James, 2005)

\*But good quality data remains poor



Every £1 spent on group cognitive behavioural therapy for anxiety in adolescence produces benefits of nearly £7. (WSIPP, 2018)

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If you're struggling and would like to speak to someone, please reach out to:

- Childline: **0800 1111** / [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- Papyrus: **0800 068 4141** / [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org) / [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org)
- The Mix: **0808 808 4994** / [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

YoungMinds has lots of information: [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk) and a parents' helpline: **0808 802 5544**