# What do we know about mental health?





A partnership











Corporate trustee to the Mercers' Charitable Foundation



### How common are mental health difficulties?

In the last 18 years there has been a gradual increase in mental health difficulties in young people.2

Research tells us that most people (up to 83%) will experience a mental health difficulty at some point during their lives.1

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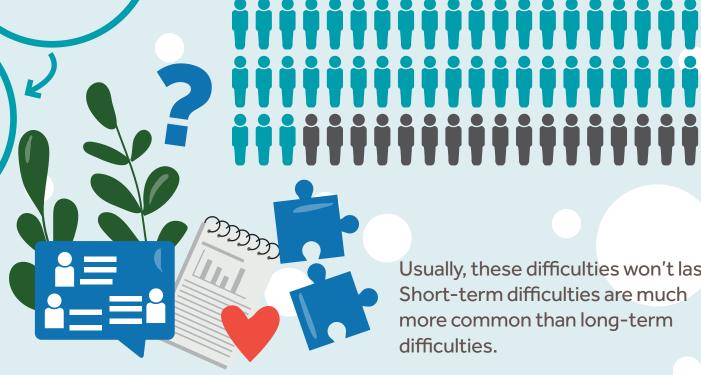
In 2004 1 in 10 children and young people had mental health difficulties.

In 2017 this increased to 1 in 8 children and young people



In 2021 1 in 6 children and young people had mental health difficulties

In surveys of young people across the country, one in six young people now report having mental health difficulties.



Usually, these difficulties won't last. Short-term difficulties are much more common than long-term difficulties.

# Facing challenges and things that can help

Young people go through lots of changes in their lives including some which are difficult. Some challenges that young people face make it more likely that they will experience mental health difficulties.<sup>3</sup>

Positive experiences and support can help reduce the likelihood of experiencing mental health difficulties.





Research shows that young people who experience a lot of distress when they are growing up are more likely to experience mental health difficulties.

Other things like money problems, family conflict, family health issues, discrimination and bullying might make it more likely that a young person will experience a mental health difficulty.





The more support young people have, the less likely they are to struggle with their mental health. Having support doesn't always make the difficulties go away but it can help young people to cope.<sup>4</sup>



The more of these kinds of difficulties people face in their lives, the more likely they are to experience a mental health difficulty.

# Positive signs for the future

It is a huge challenge to properly support young people's mental health. Yet lots of things are happening that we hope will help:

School staff are learning more about mental health and know how to support you to get help.

There are more support services in schools, such as counsellors and spaces to take time out.

Lots of people who work closely with young people are getting mental health training.

There is more focus on helping young people early to stop mental health difficulties increasing.

More young people have a say about what help and support they need.



We have hope that all of these will make it easier for young people to get treatment and support when they need it.

## Coping during difficult times

These are some things that young people have said they find helpful in coping during challenging times:

- doing activities they enjoy
- talking to someone they trust
- using techniques to manage emotions or to feel calmer

It is always a good idea to ask for help if you feel low or worried.



For more information about what helps young people cope with their mental health, visit **How I cope:** a young person's guide and the self-care pages of On My Mind For more information about mental health, advice and support try these sites:

- YoungMinds offer advice, information and support.
- On My Mind is a great place to find out more about mental health, support and self-care activities.

## If you need help right now

If you or someone you know needs help right now talk to a parent or carer or a trusted adult like your GP.



These organisations also offer confidential 24-hour support by text, email and phone:

- Text AFC Crisis Messenger if you are in a mental health crisis and need support.
   Text AFC to 85258.
- Call Childline for free on 0800 1111 or chat online.
- Call Samaritans for free on 116 123 or visit their website.
- Visit the Anna Freud Centre's urgent help page.
- If you're concerned that your life or the life of someone else is in danger, call 999.

# Where does this information come from?

The information in this briefing is all from research evidence. To find out more, use the links below:

- Schaefer, JD., et al. (2017) Enduring mental health: Prevalence and prediction. Journal of Abnormal Psychology. 126(2), 212-224. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1037/abn0000232">https://doi.org/10.1037/abn0000232</a>
- 2. NHS Digital (2021) Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2021 wave 2 follow up to the 2017 survey. Government Statistical Service. https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2020-wave-1-follow-up
- Deighton, J., et al. (2019). Prevalence of mental health problems in schools: Poverty and other risk factors among 28 000 adolescents in England. British Journal of Psychiatry, 215(3), 565-567. https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.2019.19
- 4. Stapley, E., et al. (2020). Shining a light on risk and protective factors: Young people's experiences. Evidence Based Practice Unit.

  <a href="https://www.ucl.ac.uk/evidence-based-practice-unit/sites/evidence-based-practice-unit/files/evidence-briefing\_6\_january\_2020.pdf">https://www.ucl.ac.uk/evidence-based-practice-unit/files/evidence\_briefing\_6\_january\_2020.pdf</a>



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### **About EBPU**

The Evidence Based Practice Unit is a child and youth mental health research and innovation unit based at UCL Faculty of Brain Sciences and the Anna Freud Centre. Founded in 2006, this collaboration bridges cutting-edge research and innovative practice in children's mental health. We conduct research, develop tools, provide training, evaluate interventions and disseminate evidence across four themes: Risk | Resilience | Change | Choice

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