

## Children and Young People's Mental Health

### Purpose of Report

For information.

### Summary

Officers have been undertaking work in the sphere of children's mental health after the 10-year mental health plan was replaced by a major conditions strategy. Although welcome to align physical and mental health, the plan does not have a specific focus on children and their mental health. This is against a backdrop of a concerning rise of children and young people requiring support with their mental. The LGA is therefore considering its existing lines regarding children and young people's mental health and how to continue to effectively influence in this area. As part of this, the LGA has developed a series of think pieces to bring different voices into this field and to consider how to tackle the rising demand in children's mental health that we are seeing.

This paper includes:

- A summary of LGA asks on children's mental health to date.
- Please see this link to the published children and young people [mental health think pieces](#)

**LGA Plan Theme:** Putting people first

### Recommendation(s)

**That the Board consider existing activity to date on children and young people's mental health and consider how it would like to refine and prioritise the policy approach on children's mental health going forward.**

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# Children and young people's mental health

## Background

1. Mental health needs of children and young people were rising even before the pandemic but these have been exacerbated by Covid-19. In 2022, NHS data found that are 1 in 6 children and young people who have a probable mental health disorder, an increase from 1 in 9 in 2017. This has had a significant impact on the system; with a 53 per cent rise in children presenting to councils with mental health needs in 2022 compared with 2018 and a 77 per cent increase in referrals for specialist mental health in 2021 compared to 2019.
2. Supporting young people's mental health should not be seen as solely an NHS issue, however, it needs to be recognised that council funding has not kept pace with that of the NHS resulting in councils being unable to provide vital services that are essential to supporting children and young people's wellbeing.
3. Children's mental health is a complex issue and it continues to be a pressing concern to children, young people, families and the public services around them. CYP mental health is one of the children and young people's board's priority areas and a cross-cutting concern.
4. The Government moved away from the development of a mental health 10-year plan and instead has focused on the development of a major conditions strategy. Although this mentions mental health and children and young people it does not go far enough to tackle the challenges councils and partners are seeing in terms of children and young people's mental health. A [recent LGA-commissioned report that looks at children's mental health policy](#) over the past 10 years shows the challenge facing the system after years of fragmented policies despite some significant investments.
5. There has been a range of activity across government, the NHS and councils on children's mental health, including the rollout of mental health support teams in schools (MHSTs) which provide mid to low-level support in schools and will be rolled out to 50 per cent of pupils by 2025. As set out in [research commissioned by the LGA](#), although many of the ambitions laid out by the Government to date have been a step in the right direction the policies implemented to date have not had sufficient impact in ensuring children and young people get the mental health support they need.

## Proposal

6. Given this context, officers are considering existing lines regarding children and young people's mental health and how to continue to effectively influence in this area. Following agreement from lead members, CYP officer holders have overseen a range of work with stakeholders to develop a series of [think pieces on children and young people's mental health](#). Board members are asked to consider and engage with the think pieces as they are published. All think pieces will be published on the LGA website by the end of November.

7. Following the publication of these think pieces, it is proposed to write a letter to the Children's and Mental Health Minister drawing attention to the issues presented in the think pieces and an initial LGA view.
8. In Appendix one is an overview of existing LGA asks on children's mental health.
9. The Board is asked to provide a steer on how to approach the ongoing development, refinement, refresh and prioritisation of policy lines on children and young people's mental health and to capture the impact of children's mental health on local councils. This could include establishing a task and finish group, having focused sessions at Board meetings or devolving work to officers with regular updates to the Board and Lead members.

## Implications for Wales

10. None, policy for children's mental health is devolved in Wales.

## Financial Implications

11. There are no financial implications for the LGA, any costs incurred will be met out of existing budgets.

## Equalities implications

12. Children and young people are more likely to have poor mental health if they experience some form of adversity, such as living in poverty, parental separation or financial crisis, where there is a problem with the way their family functions or whose parents already have poor mental health. Covid-19 and associated school closures increased pre-existing mental health inequalities by gender and age. There are also regional disparities in the prevalence of mental health and the available treatment for young people.
13. Sexual orientation and gender reassignment: Young people who identify as LGBTQ are more likely to suffer from a mental health condition.
14. Disability: Nearly three-quarters of children with a mental health condition also have a physical health condition or developmental problem.
15. Ethnicity: Black children are 10 times more likely to be referred to Children and Young People's Mental Health Services via social services, rather than through their GP, compared to white British children. Black people in England and Wales are 4 times more likely to be detained under the Mental Health Act than white people, and ten times more likely to be given a Community Treatment Order when they are discharged.
16. Sex: [Data](#) on reported self-harm shows a large increase over time for females and in 2014 with 20% of young women reporting that they had self-harmed, three times higher than in 2000.
17. Looked after children are four times more likely to experience mental health issues than their peers.
18. A third of people in the youth justice system are estimated to have a mental health problem.

## Next steps

19. The Board is asked to provide a steer on how to approach the ongoing development, refinement, refresh and prioritisation of policy lines on children and young people's mental health and to capture the impact of children's mental health on local councils. This could include establishing a task and finish group, having focused sessions at Board meetings or devolving work to officers with regular updates to the Board and Lead members.