



STILL WAITING

**A CHILD RIGHTS BASED
REVIEW OF CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S
EXPERIENCES OF MENTAL
HEALTH SERVICES**

Easy
read

NICCY
PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

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About this report



This report is by **NICCY**.
NICCY is the **Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People**.



It is our job to make sure children and young people's **rights** are protected.

This includes the **right** to good healthcare.



This report is about children and young people's experiences of **mental health services and support**.

Mental health is very important. It affects how you feel and think about life.



We found out that many children and young people are not happy with the quality of **mental health services and support**.

This needs to change.



We want the **government** to make changes to help all children and young people get good quality **mental health services and support**.



This report will tell you

- what we did
- what we found out
- what actions should happen now.

What we did



We already knew that **mental ill health** is a problem for a lot of children and young people.



The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** says that children and young people around the world have the **right** to receive good quality **mental health services and support**.



We spoke to children and young people about their experiences of **mental health services**.

This included

- young people with a learning disability
- young people with **alcohol and drug problems**.



We also spoke to

- parents and carers of children and young people
- adults who work in **mental health services**
- adults who support young people to access **mental health services**.



We looked at information that is collected by the **government** about **mental health services and support** for children and young people.



We looked at how much money is being spent on **mental health services and support** for children and young people.

What we found out

What needs to change



Lots of children and young people did not know what words to use to talk about their **emotional wellbeing** or **mental health**.



Not all children and young people are able to get the right help and support when they need it.

Some children and young people had to wait a long time to access **mental health services and support**.



Children and young people living in different areas are able to access different types of **mental health services and support**.



Some children and young people are not given a choice about the **mental health services and support** they can access.



Some children and young people who access **mental health services and support** did not think they were helpful.



Sometimes the people who provide **mental health services and support** do not understand

- learning disability
- **drug and alcohol problems**
- other problems young people might have.

What works well



We asked children and young people to tell us what makes a good **mental health service**.



Young people said that they want their support to be

- provided by a **professional** person or team
- in a comfortable and relaxed place
- **person-centred**.



Young people said that **confidentiality** and trust is very important when they are accessing **mental health** support.



Young people said that they wanted to be able to access support

- when they were waiting for an appointment
- in between appointments
- after they leave a service.



Young people said they wanted more choice about the support they receive.

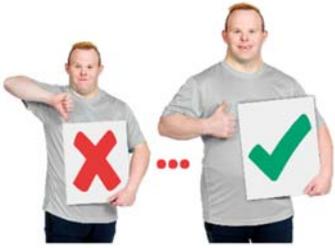
This includes choosing appointments to take place somewhere they are comfortable and at a time that suits them around school and other activities.



Young people wanted more support as they get older and are moving from services for children to services for adults.

This is called **transition**.

What we want to happen now



NICCY have written a report for the **government** with lots of **action points** to make **mental health services and support** for children and young people better.

Actions for the **government** are:

Actions to make services better



The **government** needs to listen to children and young people's experiences of **mental health services and support**.

This should happen as often as is needed.



The **government** needs to record more information about **mental health**.

This will help us understand what services work best.



The **government** needs to spend more money on **mental health services and support**.

This will help more children and young people to get **mental health** support when they need it.



The services that children and young people use need to work together and share information and **resources**.

This includes providing more support to change the things that are causing **mental ill health**.

This also includes providing support as early as possible to help children and young people's **emotional wellbeing**.

Actions for better information and education



Getting information about **mental health services and support** should be easy.

There should be better **communication** with children and young people about their **mental health**.



This includes being able to give **feedback** if you are not happy with the support you receive.



Adults working with children and young people need **mental health** training.

This includes doctors, teachers and social workers.



Everyone should be taught about **mental health** in schools and colleges.

Parents should also be able to access this information.



More information should be collected about children and young people using **mental health services**.

This will make it easier for them to receive more support if they need it in the future.



This will also make it easier to understand if children and young people are happy with the services they receive.

Actions to make services equal



Mental health services should not be different for young people living in different areas or for people with different needs.

Mental health services should be **person-centred**.



Children and young people with a learning disability should be able to access the same **mental health services** as other children and young people.



There needs to be better support for young people with **alcohol or drug problems** who also need **mental health services**.



It should be easier to make appointments.

Appointments should take place close to home.

More time should be given for appointments.



There should be better **mental health services** available in an emergency situation.

A&E staff need more training about **mental health**.



Children and young people should have a choice about the type of support they receive.

This includes a choice of support other than medication.

Actions for NICCY



The **actions** for the **government** will make it easier for children and young people to get the **mental health services and support** they need.



NICCY will talk to the **government** and organisations that support children, young people and their families about this report.



NICCY will ask the **government** to complete the **actions** in this report.



NICCY will check if the **actions** have been completed.

Find out more

We have written a bigger report about our mental health review. You can find out more about this and other work we do by



Calling us on **028 9031 1616**



Sending an email to **info@niccy.org**



Sending us a letter to
NICCY
Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DP



Sending us a message on
Facebook **@nichildrenscommissioner**
Twitter **@nichildcom**



Visiting our website at **www.niccy.org**

Hard words and what they mean

A&E - is short for Accident and Emergency. It is the part of the hospital you go to when there is an emergency situation.

Action points / actions – things to do to make services better.

Alcohol and drug problems – when you drink too much alcohol or use drugs. It can be bad for your health. It can also affect other parts of your life.

Childline – a free advice and support service for children under 18 years old.

Commissioner – a person with an important job to protect a specific group of people.

Communication – sharing information, this includes talking and listening.

Confidentiality – when you keep information private.

Emotional wellbeing – looking after your mental health.

Feedback - when you give your opinion about an experience.

Government – the elected people who decide what public services there should be.

Lifeline – a free advice and support service for adults over 18 years old.

Mental health – how you feel and think about life.

Mental ill health – when you have a long-term and/or serious problem with your mental health.

Mental health services and support – there are lots of different mental health services and support.

More about **mental health services and support**

For this report we asked young people about:

- GP services
- school and college
- voluntary and community organisations, like charities
- specialist mental health services
- A&E and hospital stays.

NICCY – Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People. The commissioner is called Koulla Yiasouma. She works as part of a team of people.

Person-centred – providing services that meet an individual’s needs and involves them in decision-making.

Professional – someone who has received expert training.

Referral – when someone makes a referral, they arrange for you to see someone else.

Resources - what things are available in a service such as time, money and people.

Rights – something everyone is allowed to have because the law says so.

Transition – when you get older and become an adult instead of a child.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child - is a legal agreement that sets out what the rights of all children in countries all around the world are.

What is also important to know about is the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities** – this is another legal agreement that sets out what countries have to do to make sure that disabled people have the same rights as everybody else.

What to do if you are worried about your mental health



Mental health is very important. It affects how you feel and think about life.

Mental health can be good or bad.



It is important to ask for help if you have bad **mental health** for a long time or if it is affecting how you feel and what you do.



If you are worried about your **mental health** you should speak to someone you trust, like

- a parent/carer
- a doctor
- a teacher
- a social worker.

childline
ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME

If you are under 18 years old and feeling very low you can contact **ChildLine** on **0800 1111**. The number is free to call. You can call them at any time.

Lifeline

If you are over 18 years old and feeling very low you can contact **Lifeline** on **0808 808 8000**. The number is free to call. You can call them at any time.



There are lots of different types of **mental health services and support**.

You might need a **referral** from your doctor to access them.

My notes page

Use this page to write or draw about how you can look after your mental health. We have given some ideas to get you started.

Who I will speak to if I am worried about my mental health



Parent/carer	Friend	Doctor	Social worker	Support worker

Things I can do when I am feeling down



Talk to a friend	Go for a walk	Arts and crafts	Have a nap
Volunteer or work	Listen to music	Watch TV	Sing and dance



Front cover image:

We would like to thank the children and young people from the Upper Springfield Youth Team in West Belfast who kindly allowed us to use this artwork as part of this report. It was created with support from local youth worker David McComb and artist Fra Maher as part of a project in which they explored the issues impacting on local young people's mental health.



Easy words by Mencap NI
www.mencap.org.uk