Growing pains
Children’s mental health
Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

World Health Organization
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Children and young people are now facing the most complex future than any generation has in decades and we have an obligation to understand this. So, what are the challenges we need to address, asks Peer Support Worker Jacqui B in her article on page 10.

There are a number of factors impacting on children’s mental health, including social media and the pressure on children to present their perfect lives to the world. With the bar set so high, children are working towards a goal they don’t feel is attainable, which is soul destroying and anxiety-provoking. Children need to open up about this.

There are various campaigns currently emphasising the need for people with mental health challenges to talk, not to bottle up their feelings, and children need to be encouraged to do the same, and to follow an example that us adults hopefully set.

In this issue, we take a look at the role of the parents in supporting children with health challenges (p14). It can be difficult for parents to know when the changing behaviour of their child is simply due to them growing up and going through changes, or if they are experiencing mental health challenges. Again, this article emphasises the importance of talking, as well as a number of other factors that can help.

Sometimes though, the roles are reversed, and the child/young person becomes the carer rather than the cared-for. Recent research shows that one in five secondary school children may be a young carer. For many, their caring journey begins at a much younger age. Caring for someone can be very isolating, worrying and stressful and this issue, following Young Carers Awareness Day, we take a look at some of the obstacles faced and support available to such carers (p20).

There’s plenty more to read about in this winter issue, including the benefits of singing on wellbeing; an interview with the Every Mind Matters team; the benefits of group therapy; and how to make a complaint.

Enjoy – and have a happy and healthy new year!

Kelly Mansfield, Editor
Share your story

Want to tell your story? Would you like to share your physical or mental health journey with other Speak Your Mind readers?

Hearing about the ups and downs other people like you have been through can be a true source of inspiration, and a comfort to know you’re not the only one with such experiences.

So, no matter what stage of your journey you are at, whether the beginning or end, if you’d like to share your personal story with others then get in touch.

We like to feature someone’s story in every issue, so there are plenty of opportunities.

Email symmagazine@cpft.nhs.uk
**Mental Health Awareness Week 2020 focuses on sleep**

Mental Health Awareness Week 2020 will take place on 18-24 May and this year the theme will be sleep, the Mental Health Foundation has announced. The Week will focus on the connections between our sleep – or lack of it – and mental health.

Evidence clearly shows sleep can have a major impact on our mental health. The week will focus on providing information and advice and campaigning for change to improve wellbeing and recovery.

“Sleep is the unsung hero for our mental health,” said Mark Rowland, Chief Executive of the Foundation.

“By understanding what affects our sleep, we can help protect the mental health of millions of people and also support recovery.

“We want to start a national conversation about how we can all sleep better.

“We will investigate the changes we need to make, as individuals, communities and as a society, to get the rest and renewal we all need. We’ll also set out what our schools, universities, employers and policymakers can do to achieve that aim.”

There is evidence that digital technologies such as phones and computers, as well as night-time shift working, are part of the UK’s sleep problem. However, there are many other influences on sleep, including caring for young children and other dependents, stress, anxiety, noise and light pollution, obesity and experience of trauma.

More information will be available on the Mental Health Foundation website, find out how you can get involved at www.mentalhealth.org.uk

**Employees should not be silenced in discrimination cases**

Two years after the #MeToo campaign, the Equality and Human Rights Commission has launched new guidance on the use of confidentiality agreements (often referred to as NDAs) in workplace discrimination cases.

The guidance offers both employers and employees clarity on the law around confidentiality agreements and when and how they can be used.

Rebecca Hilsenrath, Chief Executive of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, said: “We’re calling time on NDAs, which have been used to cover up discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

“There are no more excuses. Everyone should have the power to speak out about harassment and victimisation. Nobody should be silenced.

“We all have the right to work in a safe environment and a healthy workplace needs employers to step up and make sure those who work for them have a voice.”

The guidance outlines some important dos and don’ts for the workplace:

- A worker should never be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement as part of their employment contract, which would prevent them from making a discrimination claim against the employer in the future.
- A confidentiality agreement should never be used to prevent a worker from discussing a discriminatory incident that took place in their workplace unless, for example, the victim has requested confidentiality around their discriminatory experience.
- A confidentiality agreement should not be used to stop employees from whistleblowing, reporting criminal activity or disclosing other information as required by law.
- A worker should always be given time to read and fully understand the terms of a confidentiality agreement.
- A worker should always be given a copy of the confidentiality agreement.
- The confidentiality agreement should spell out the details of exactly what information is confidential.

Read the full guidance at: www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/use-confidentiality-agreements-discrimination-cases

**Children’s Mental Health Week focuses on bravery**

From 3-9 February 2020 schools, youth groups, organisations and individuals across the UK took part in Children’s Mental Health Week, organised by Place2Be. This year’s theme was Find your Brave.

Place2Be is a children’s mental health charity that provides counselling and mental health support and training in UK schools.

Explaining this year’s theme, the organisation says:

“Bravery comes in all shapes and sizes and is different for everyone.

Bravery can be about sharing worries and asking for help, trying something new or pushing yourself outside your comfort zone. Finding your Brave can build your confidence, self-esteem and make you feel good about yourself.

“Life often throws challenges our way. Bravery isn’t about coping alone or holding things in. It’s about finding positive ways to deal with things that might be difficult, overcoming physical and mental challenges and looking after yourself.

“We all have times when we need to Find our Brave.”

Around three children in every primary school class has mental health challenges, and many more struggle with challenges from bullying to bereavement.

For more information go to: www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk
People with mental health challenges are being left to fall into a dangerous cycle of money problems and worsening mental health, because they are not being given crucial information on how their condition increases the risk of financial difficulty.

This warning is made in a new report by the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute, which looks at how health professionals – as well as public bodies, employers and essential services – can help prevent financial problems associated with mental health challenges.

GP’s and other primary care professionals have a particularly important opportunity to support people with mental health challenges to avoid financial difficulty, as nine out of 10 people receiving mental health treatment do so through GPs and primary care settings.

However, despite this, the research suggests that very few people are receiving support from their GP with their financial circumstances.

Money and Mental Health is calling on the government to task GPs and other primary care professionals with improving support to help people with mental health challenges avoid financial difficulty.

In particular, the charity says the government should introduce a ‘Brief Intervention’ for GPs, which would be modelled on existing interventions to address smoking and domestic abuse, and would involve GPs and other health professionals providing people with information about the link between mental health challenges and financial difficulty, and signposting or referrals to local sources of support.

MHFA England launches new mental health podcast – Just About Coping

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England has launched a new podcast, Just About Coping, exploring the future of mental health and wellbeing. Chief Executive Simon Blake is joined by a series of high-profile guests including Ruby Wax, Dr Ranj Singh and Jonny Benjamin to try and answer the question; how can we create a world where everyone is coping?

In 30-minute conversations, a diverse range of guests talk candidly with Simon about their own mental health, and imagine what a mentally-healthy world might look like. The series of six podcast episodes are being released each week, every Tuesday.

Simon’s first guest was Ruby Wax – writer, performer, comedian, and the ‘poster girl’ for challenges, Ruby has written three best-selling books on mental health and wellbeing. She holds a master’s degree in mindfulness-based cognitive therapy from Oxford University and is currently touring the country with her latest show How to be Human.

In episode one of the Just About Coping podcast, available now, Ruby discusses her interesting career, the pros and cons of social media, how she manages her own mental health, and the power of comedy when discussing serious issues.

The Just About Coping podcast can be accessed on the MHFA England website (including the transcript) and wherever you get your podcasts, on platforms including:

- Spotify: open.spotify.com/show/3r12GfPfa8RlZzhNXIBcS
- Google Podcasts: podcasts.google.com?feed=aHR0cHM6Ly9mZWVkcy5idXp6b3V0LmNvbS82NTI2MjQucnNz
- TuneIn: tunein.com/podcasts/Government/Just-About-Coping-p1257879/

Go to: mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/just-about-coping/

GPs are “missing a critical opportunity” to offer financial support

The report found that despite the high number of people receiving mental health treatment through GPs, very few people are receiving support from their GP with their financial circumstances. The report recommends that GPs and other health professionals should be trained to identify and address financial problems associated with mental health challenges.

MHFA England has launched a new podcast, Just About Coping, which explores the future of mental health and wellbeing. The series features high-profile guests such as Ruby Wax, Dr Ranj Singh, and Jonny Benjamin, discussing their own experiences and offering insights into how we can create a mentally-healthy world.

The podcast is available on various platforms, including Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, Stitcher, and TuneIn. It can also be accessed on the MHFA England website.

In particular, the charity is urging the government to task GPs and other primary care professionals with improving support to help people with mental health challenges avoid financial difficulty. The report suggests that a ‘Brief Intervention’ could be introduced, modelled on existing interventions to address smoking and domestic abuse, involving providing people with information about the link between mental health challenges and financial difficulty, and signposting or referrals to local sources of support.

In episode one, Ruby Wax discusses her fascinating career, the pros and cons of social media, and how she manages her own mental health through the power of comedy.

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In particular, the charity says the government should introduce a ‘Brief Intervention’ for GPs, which would be modelled on existing interventions to address smoking and domestic abuse, and would involve GPs and other health professionals providing people with information about the link between mental health challenges and financial difficulty, and signposting or referrals to local sources of support.

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Taking place this winter...

**Rethink Mental Illness Groups**
Rethink provide 140 life-changing peer support groups, run by people with experience of mental health challenges. They offer a non-judgemental space, empathy, acceptance and reassurance, and help to normalise experiences and reduce stigma. Whether it’s a listening ear, practical help, friendship, or a social activity, they can make coping with life’s challenges that bit easier.


**Arts for Positive Mental Health**
A series of friendly, weekly art workshops run by Arts and Minds for people experiencing depression, anxiety and/or other mental health challenges. Led by a professional artist and a qualified counsellor, they offer the chance to experience working with a wide range of materials and techniques, including drawing, printmaking and sculpture. Workshops last for two hours and are open to all abilities. No experience is necessary. You will have the opportunity to work on something creative, stimulating and absorbing with the aim of helping you to feel positive.

[www.artsandminds.org.uk/projects/arts-on-prescription](http://www.artsandminds.org.uk/projects/arts-on-prescription)

**Lifecraft art group**
The Art Course is a place where you can be creative with a range of art materials. The structure of the group is very free, you can either work on your own art projects or learn new art techniques with the guidance of an experienced art tutor. Those interested in attending the Art Course should contact Lifecraft to secure a place on the next course. The course runs on Mondays 2.30pm-4.30pm. For more information go to: [www.lifecraft.org.uk/ourservices/creative-groups/art-course/](http://www.lifecraft.org.uk/ourservices/creative-groups/art-course/) or call 01223 566 957

**The Green Backyard community project**
A vibrant community project in the heart of Peterborough, the team have transformed a once-dilapidated allotment site into a beautiful and productive community garden that is open to everyone. There are plenty of ways for anyone to get involved on site; gardening, animal care, building work and many more jobs need doing every day. Just drop in or visit [www.thegreenbackyard.com](http://www.thegreenbackyard.com)
They’re open 11am-4pm on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays.

**Illuminate Confidence for Change**
Confidence for Change is a unique course which focuses on building self-confidence and strengthening self-belief at a fundamental level, enabling people to make productive changes in their lives as they define them. This includes getting closer to work, volunteering, achieving health goals and managing anxiety and mental health. The course takes place over four days, one day a week, in a group setting.
To find out when courses are running, go to [www.illuminatecharity.org.uk/confidenceforchange_1.php](http://www.illuminatecharity.org.uk/confidenceforchange_1.php)
You can also email for further details at info@illuminatecharity.org.uk

**Meetup clubs and groups**
Meetup is a large network of self-organised clubs and community groups, making it easy for anyone to organise their own local group, or find one of the thousands already meeting face-to-face, to help its members better pursue hobbies, advance causes, network with peers, get health support, or just arrange a friendly playgroup for their kids. Find out what’s happening around the world and start meeting up with the ones near you at [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com)

**Michaelhouse Singers**
This friendly choir is open to anybody with mental health challenges – whatever their age – and their carers and friends. It meets in the Michaelhouse Centre every Friday and is supported through voluntary contribution from those attending. The Michaelhouse Singers give occasional public performances. Arts and Minds invites people to come and sing at Michaelhouse, Trinity Street, Cambridge CB2 1SU from 2.30pm to 3.30pm on Fridays. Read in-depth about the choir on page 24.
Telephone: 01223 353 053

**CP Learning Trust workshops**
CP Learning Trust delivers a range of fun, informative and creative workshops – from rug making to barge painting to gardening and much more – across Peterborough, Fenland, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire and Kings Lynn.
[www.cplearningtrust.org.uk/whats-on](http://www.cplearningtrust.org.uk/whats-on)
Telephone: 01354 696479
Make, Do and Mend Workshops
Make, Do and Mend hold a variety of workshops for people with mental health challenges, which are designed to nurture self-esteem, personality and character using a strengths-based approach. Workshops provide opportunities to master new skills in a supportive, relaxed environment. If you have experience of mental health challenges, live in Cambridgeshire and would like to attend one of the workshops you can sign up and become a member via the members page at www.makedoandmendinfo.co.uk/members or call 07736 916 431 or simply go along and see what they do!

VoiceAbility Dreamers Bar
Dreamers is a lively drop-in information bar in Huntingdon providing a safe area where local disabled people can access information about what is happening in their local community, and how they can get the support they need. Visit www.voiceability.org/services/cambridgeshire-and-peterborough/dreamers-bar or contact Lydia Eldridge via email on lydia.eldridge@voiceability.org or telephone 07920 481985.

Cafe Discussion Group
A small, friendly discussion group for those in recovery. A chance to air what’s on your mind amongst kindred spirits. Supported by Fulbourn Chaplaincy, the group runs on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at The Locker (Old Clowns Site), 54 Kings Street, Cambridge. For more information call Mark Woods 07432 600 102 or email coast@live.co.uk

Moodswings groups and workshops
A range of popular workshops designed to help people cope with a variety of difficulties. Delivered in a friendly, informal atmosphere by experienced trainers, these include: Anxiety Management; Self-esteem and Assertiveness; Sleep; Anger Management; Management of Psychosis (Funny Feelings); and Mood Management. Although priority is given to people on Moodswings’ Recovery and Support projects, other people can apply. www.moodswings.org.uk/what-can-we-do/workshops

Action for Happiness – Exploring What Matters course
The Exploring What Matters course gives you the chance to meet friendly, like-minded people and find simple ways to make yourself and others happier. This eight-week course is based in science and helps you:
- Meet with like-minded people to explore what really matters in life and find new ways of looking at things.
- Learn from the experts through videos, mindfulness exercises and a handbook full of resources to help you break big ideas into manageable chunks.
- Take small actions each week by taking time to reflect on how to create happiness for yourself and those around you.
To find a course near you visit: www.actionforhappiness.org

Richmond Fellowship community-based support
Support provided on a group or individual basis to help people access social networks and peer support and engage in everyday mainstream opportunities. Groups are incredibly diverse, from art studios and gardening therapy to cafes and musical support groups. All services are tailored to meet local needs and are designed to encourage each individual’s sense of security, purpose and fulfilment. Visit www.richmondfellowship.org.uk/our-range-of-support/community-based

Andys Man Club
A peer-to-peer support group for men, taking place in Peterborough. Men are welcome to come along for a “brew and a chat”. Based on the fact that suicide is the biggest killer of men under 45, the group aims to let men know that it’s ok to talk. To find your nearest group visit the website: www.andysmanclub.co.uk

Good Mood Café
Mind has teamed up with community faces across the county to run weekly Good Mood Cafes. These two-hour, informal ‘get togethers’ are designed to connect individuals to other like-minded people within their communities, to offer wellbeing support and share interests and skills. No need to book – just turn up! Find out more at www.cpslmind.org.uk

If you’d like to share your experiences of any the courses/groups featured, or indeed tell us about something we haven’t covered, please email us at symmagazine@cptf.nhs.uk
Children and young people: the challenges they face

Children and young people now are facing the most complex future than any generation have in decades and we have an obligation to understand this. So, what are the challenges we need to address, asks Peer Support Worker Jacqui B.

Children and young people are achieving more at school, but their wellbeing is at its lowest. They are feeling a massive amount of pressure to achieve great things, to carry responsibility, to be perfect in a world that is far from perfect. They are fighting stigmas and fighting for their futures.

Let’s be honest, in the current economic climate we all feel a weight of uncertainty. Stress levels are peaking, and happiness becomes a distant goal. Children are under pressure to grow up quickly, but in a world where the future feels so unknown it can be incredibly anxiety-provoking. Many children from low socio-economic backgrounds feel that there is no point in even trying because they won’t ever be good enough. Children from more affluent backgrounds feel that they are fighting for a world that no longer exists. Prof Louise Arseneault, ESRC mental health leadership fellow at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, Kings College London said: “Given the profound uncertainty surrounding recent political events and the fact that young people face the worst job prospects in decades, it’s not surprising to read that one in four young people aged 16 to 25 don’t feel in control of their lives. Although it’s alarming that these concerns play on young people’s minds, it’s encouraging to see that young people are actively taking an interest in actively shaping their own future.”

Let’s add social media. The pressure to have this internet-ready lifestyle is impossible. So, ultimately, the comparison between my reality and your online presence creates a sense of failure. Too much screen time means that we are not learning the valuable lessons that come with genuinely socialising. Being within a peer group gives a sense of acceptance and social regulation. A good peer group becomes a mutual support and purpose. If you are not accessing this and viewing the world through a screen, you have no support, you miss out on learning these valuable social regulation skills and you’re comparing your reality to someone else’s unrealistic online presence. More and more young people are reporting feeling alone and isolated and it is commonly believed that this is because of our addiction to social media. There is an ever-growing trend within young people to boycott social media and to seek genuine connections. However, this is still only a small percentage of young people and the effects of social media platforms are still detrimental to vulnerable minds.

“This really is a crisis, but it’s a crisis that we can combat. Show your children that it is ok to talk about your feelings and to ask for help when we need it.”

So, where does this leave us? This leaves us with children that feel that the bar is set so impossibly high that they will never achieve it. With children that feel isolated and unable to connect with those around them, alone and unable to express their feelings. Being faced with a future where we must constantly keep working towards a goal we don’t feel is attainable is soul destroying and anxiety-provoking. This really is a crisis, but it’s a crisis that we can combat. By asking for help, lead by example. Show your children that it is ok to talk about your feelings and to ask for help when we need it. Creating open spaces to chat, reconnecting as a family, screen-free time. It not only benefits the child but every member of the family. Encourage children to
engage with their friends, to go out and be a child. To build those social skills that we all desperately need. Enable their resilience, show them that no matter what they face, nothing is insurmountable. Looking to the future, remind our children how changeable the world is and to hold out hope. Identify new learning experiences and work experiences. Show them how capable they truly are. These children are our future, so nurture them now. They truly are capable of wonderful things, but they need our support and understanding.

“Children are under pressure to grow up quickly, but in a world where the future feels so unknown it can be incredibly anxiety provoking.”
Fear of the unknown

Seventeen-year-old Ella shares her thoughts on the pressures of being a young person.

Two weeks. That’s all I have left. TWO WEEKS. Two weeks until the dreaded return to my final year at college: ‘adulting’ season begins. Gulp. Can you hear me shudder?

There’s nothing worse than that night before, the pit of your stomach filling with a tornado of anxiety – a virtually sleepless night tumbling around in excessive worry of all that’s yet to come. I’ve got so much to do this year and I am so cripplingly scared that I have formally decided to avoid thinking about it. Or I’ll cry – a lot.

The most upsetting part of this particular time in our lives is that we’re consistently waiting for things to get better. It’s like we accept the mundanity of our current lives as we know there’s hopefully good things to come. Of course, there always will be – but isn’t it sad that we feel we have to endure constant struggle and stress in what’s supposed to be the prime of our lives in order to get there? Like we have to achieve happiness? It baffles me that we’ve accepted this as normal – when it’s so not.

We are settling with the stress. We are working part-time. We are learning. We are doing extra curriculars. We are starting coursework. We are revising. We are driving (well, trying to). We are going out with old friends, new friends. We are quite simply: Doing. It. All.

On top of all that, for us young ones – we are choosing. I don’t think I ever could’ve prepared myself for so many decisions. And luckily for me, decision making just might be my worst trait. Ever.

“As strange as it seems, all of this decision making can accidentally wrap you up into a big ball of loneliness; ironic, really, considering we’re all in the exact same boat. But when it’s just you, alone, making some of what may be the most important decisions you’re ever going to make, it feels overwhelmingly isolating. Because nobody can decide for you. We’re ‘adults’ now.

I can feel the pressure, sitting on my chest like a tonne of bricks. It’s painful and draining and unhealthy and feels completely unavoidable – and at some point, it’s got to stop.

How? You ask. How can we escape a pressurised societal system that traps us in solitude whilst still achieving what is expected of us? Impossible, you may say. Perhaps it isn’t.

I believe making our way through this endless jungle of a year is only going to occur smoothly if we decide to put ourselves first and foremost, start living a little. Believing in the dreaming, the freedom of teenage years, the imagination and the spontaneity of growing up. Because it really can be fun if we let it. If we let go. If we stopped judging ourselves and one another for this constant goal of perfection: rather, just letting one another be.

So, I have changed my mind. The most important thing we’re doing?

We are trying. So hard. To better ourselves, our futures; and we’re trying the hardest we’ve tried in our entire lives.

I can say on behalf of myself and every young person who feels sucked into the pressure, that we are actively making mistakes whilst trying to live freely. We may be expected of a lot, by ourselves and others, but the only thing we can learn to do is treat ourselves better, with compassion: realise we can only do the best we can do.”

This blog was originally published by The Children’s Society. Almost a quarter of a million children in the UK are unhappy with their lives. The society works to prevent child sexual exploitation, end child poverty, help children access mental health support, prevent criminal exploitation and much more. Visit www.childrenssociety.org.uk.
My Heron hunt

By Kim Laidler

It wasn’t until I was a teenager that I really started to appreciate art and began to study it at college. We were taken to exhibitions; I found I got excitement from the atmosphere here. My head would be buzzing with inspiration from other people's work and I would need to pour all of my ideas out straight away.

At an older age my mental health challenges brought me to hospital in Cambridge and it was hard for me to find stimulation in such an unhappy environment. For weeks I was under section, feeling stuck. My landscape changed one day when I was allowed outside, and I found my first Heron graffitied on a wall not far from the hospital grounds. This was the start of a treasure hunt – an outside exhibition of someone’s work that brought excitement back into my life.

Hope from this discovery encouraged me to work towards more leave from the ward; each time I would challenge myself to find different Herons secretly displayed around the local area. When out in public I would worry about other people’s opinions of me and if I was making them happy. The fun of the treasure hunt made me focussed and I forgot about any anxieties I had; this gave me courage to discover the community. While out I would photograph each Heron I found and built up an assortment of photographs. It was like my own invention of a collection of Panini trading cards – I love collecting things!

This part of my recovery journey has had a big impact on me and has helped me understand myself more. I have learnt that as an introverted person, the best way I discover things is through independent curiosity; I find now I love nothing better than to discover a hidden pathway when out walking or looking closer at my familiar environment and to challenge myself and notice things I’ve never seen before. Another thing I’ve learnt is I love to contribute artistically with the similar rebellious style I see in the person who I know as Heron Heron.

“My head would be buzzing with inspiration from other people’s work and I would need to pour all of my ideas out straight away.”
It’s no secret that children and young people today face a huge amount of pressure – our Parents Helpline takes calls from parents on a range of matters, from anger and anxiety, to exam stress, self-harm and depression. More recently, a survey we conducted with over 7,000 young people who had previously looked for mental health support, showed that pressure at school and worries about the way they look both had a significant impact on their mental health.

Children adapt to a lot of changes as they grow up, so it’s normal for them to express raw emotions and change moods quickly. It’s important to remember that some of the challenges they face will be similar to those experienced by many other children and young people across the country. Worrying or difficult behaviour may be short-lived, so, if you’re concerned, give it some time. All children go through stages of feeling anxious or angry and this can manifest in lots of ways – for example, tantrums, crying, sleeping problems or fighting with friends or siblings. They might be adapting to a change in the family or in their school life, or just figuring out new emotions, and will generally grow out of worrying behaviour on their own or with family support.

With this in mind, it can be hard to know when to worry about your child’s mental health. While much of the behaviour they exhibit as they grow up can be considered normal, if your child is consistently struggling, for example if you see a sustained change in their sleeping or eating patterns, or if they seem to be upset over a long period of time, it’s important to take it seriously. Additionally, if your child is feeling anxious, the symptoms can manifest differently depending on their age and personality – while young children might describe physical symptoms like a feeling in their belly, older children might act out or want to spend more time on their own.

The following tips should come in useful for parents who are unsure of how to support their child if they’re struggling.

The power of talking
If your child is having a hard time, it’s important to talk to them about it. It can be really difficult to start conversations about mental health, but it’s a crucial first step. To make things less intense for you and your child, we recommend opening up a conversation when you’re doing an activity together that you both enjoy, for instance, going for a walk, baking, or playing sports. It doesn’t really matter what the conversation starts with – it’s about the opportunity it gives you both to talk about feelings and to provide comfort.

Even young children can understand feelings and behaviour if you give them a chance to talk about it. Take it gently and give them examples of what you mean, for example, ‘When you said you hated Molly, you looked really angry. What was making you so cross?’ or ‘When you can’t get to sleep, is there anything in your mind making you worried?’

It can also help to ask your child about what they think would help them to feel better – they often have good ideas about solving their own problems.

Keep in mind that your child may not be ready to open up. If this is the case, let them know that you’re concerned about them, and are there for them if they need to talk.

“Try not to blame yourself if your child is experiencing challenges. Although it can be upsetting to see them going through a bad time … remember that you are not a bad parent and that you’re trying your best.”
you. If you think they’re not comfortable talking to you face-to-face, sending a text or email can work better if your child prefers to communicate this way. Even if it takes a while for them to talk, don’t give up on them.

If you can, talk to your child’s other parent about your worries. Try and sort out how to deal with the behaviour together so you are using the same approach and can back each other up.

**Be the good cop**
Your child may be facing a lot of pressure already, so make sure they know you love them, and reassure them that you’re proud of them no matter what. Even when things are busy and stressful, a word or a hug can reassure them a huge amount. Try to praise them for the things they do well and be encouraging and hopeful.

Your child also needs to trust you, so don’t feel like you need to be perfect. We all get things wrong and shout or say
If your child is having a hard time, it’s important to talk to them about it. It can be really difficult to start conversations about mental health, but it’s a crucial first step.”

unkind things from time to time. What matters is that you’re honest about your feelings with them, so if things get out of hand, say sorry to your child afterwards and explain why it happened. This will show them that it’s okay to make mistakes, and that it doesn’t make you a bad person.

Supporting your child is crucial to their mental health, but owning your role as the parent and being clear on what is and isn’t acceptable to you will also help. Don’t be afraid to take tough decisions – if you’re struggling with your child’s behaviour, it can make them feel powerful if you give in to them or act scared. Children need to know what is okay and what isn’t, so set clear boundaries and set consequences for crossing the line. As their parent, your child needs to know you’re there to keep them safe.

Look after yourself
Try not to blame yourself if your child is experiencing challenges. Although it can be upsetting to see them going through a bad time, and it can make your relationship with them feel more stressful, remember that you are not a bad parent and that you’re trying your best.

If things are getting you down, it’s important to recognise this. Talk to someone you trust and see what they think, and don’t be afraid to ask friends and family for help if you need a bit of time to sort through your own challenges. Although it can be easier said than done, try to take some time to relax.

And remember, if you’re really struggling to cope with what’s going on, there’s no shame in popping in to see your GP. Asking for some support from your doctor or a referral to a counselling service is a sign of strength. Just think of the example you’ll be setting your child, and the amount of support you’ll be able to give them, if they see you are not afraid to prioritise your own mental health and wellbeing.

For more tips and advice for parents, visit our dedicated #Take20 Parents’ Hub at www.youngminds.org.uk/take20/
5 ways to wellbeing

With wellbeing being at the forefront of almost every major health campaign currently running, there is pressure being put on us to prioritise and manage our own health. But knowing where to start can be difficult. The NHS have kindly provided us with the five ways to wellbeing steps, outlining creative ways in which we can adopt simple actions into our lifestyle that can help us manage our wellbeing. Mark Battista presents them.

1. Connect

Connect with people in any social way; whether it is a family member or someone you have never met. Connecting can range from purely being present for someone who needs supporting, engaging in casual conversation with a friend or making new connections with a neighbour. Feeling close to or valued by other people is a fundamental human need and contributes to our wellbeing. Also expanding your support network can be meaningful and give you more purpose to continue that connection.

Activity: Draw out a mind-map of all your connections.

2. Be active

Poor health or illness arises from an interaction from our biological, psychological and sociological systems. Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups and is essential for slowing age-related cognitive decline and for promoting wellbeing. Exercise can include simple walks, yoga, gym classes, dancing, etc. Trying something new might be fun and make you feel better.

Activity: Go for a 20-minute or longer walk.

3. Learn

Learning something new can feel scary but can be made simple. Learning happens in a variety of ways and involves gaining more knowledge or a new skill. Try something new, rediscover an old interest, sign up for a course, learn to play an instrument or cook your favourite food. Continued learning through life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life. The practice of setting goals, which is related to adult learning in particular, has been strongly associated with higher levels of wellbeing.

Activity: Set yourself a SMART goal to learn something within the next week.

4. Give

Research is showing that giving to others or your community is strongly linked to wellbeing. Committing an act of kindness once a week for six weeks is strongly correlated with a promotion of self-wellbeing. Helping others might seem like a simple concept but is reported to have strong links with happiness. Acts of kindness can simply be smiling and saying hello, sending a text to a friend, making a phone call, spending time with a friend, asking ‘can I help you?’ or making small donations to charity; money or unwanted belongings.

Activity: Pay compliments to 10 people you see this week.

For more information go to: www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/

5. Take notice

Being in the present moment can focus your mind, bring your thoughts together and bring a heightened awareness of your self-understanding. It is important to allow your thoughts and mind to be curious, try to catch sight on the beautiful and the unusual. Notice simple aspects of your surroundings like the changing of the seasons, the temperature or simply the other people in the room: the world around you can influence the way you are feeling, taking notice of this will aid your understanding of place and time and help you appreciate what matters to you.

Activity: Take 10 minutes in a comfortable position to absorb all elements of your environment and practice nice even deep breaths.
Following a traumatic and devastating event that occurred on what was meant to be a beautiful family holiday, I experienced a year of terrifying psychological distress. My head was plagued with a sensation of anger, worthlessness and instability. Even within the “safety” of my own home I felt afraid.

After discussing my daily discomfort with multiple specialists, I got directed to Bernie, the EMDR specialist that helped me to feel safe and secure once again.

Beginning my EMDR I was informed of how it can feel quite emotionally intrusive but also of how effective this form of therapy is. Having faith in EMDR and hopefulness that I’ll find inner peace again, I agreed to begin attending sessions with Bernie.

My first session took over an hour and brought forward plenty of tears and raw emotion. However, it felt good waving goodbye to my worries as my psychological train arrived at my happy place – a child-friendly bungalow; spacious with chalk board wallpaper for children to colour on.

It’s amazing how EMDR also brings physical feelings to light and not just mental sensations. For example, in one of my sessions with Bernie I experienced a wave of flittering in my stomach. The image in my head that came with this was that I was undergoing a caesarean section, removing the child from my body. The child was called trauma.

My journey through EMDR therapy has had excellent effects on me and my psychological wellbeing. I believe that, after all this time, I now have inner peace, closure from my tragic case; but above all else, relief, and finally an exquisite feeling of being worthy of everything that I am, that I will be, and of where I want to be in my life. Finally, I feel at one with myself.

“My journey through EMDR therapy has had excellent effects on me and my psychological wellbeing. I believe that, after all this time, I now have inner peace … Finally, I feel at one with myself.”
What do you want to be when you grow up? Ask a child and they might give you an answer brimming with unlimited potential. An astronaut, race car driver, a famous sportsperson or star of stage and screen. Maybe something beyond the realms of our world, superheroes, time travellers and dragon slayers. Their answers are not impeded on by reality. Of course, some children do grow up to follow their fledgling dreams, but we can’t all reach that place. Circumstance and situation playing as much of a part as natural ability or determination.

Moody teenagers; you may be them (or have been them) or know them. The trope goes that they sulk and strop, speak in grunts, immerse themselves in the subculture of the day and believe they are hard done by, locked alone in their rooms listening to sad and/ or angry music. It is a pop culture cliché, the legend of the moody teen. An easy laugh for comedy writers and the cornerstone of teen drama, but for something to pass into the realm of trope and cliché it must first be prevalent in society. When an experience affects only one person, then it is a personal problem, but when it affects many people then it is an indicator of a wider problem. Hormones are often blamed as part of or all the reason for this turbulence, but this has been used often throughout history to invalidate and undermine people’s experiences.

Reframe the moody teenager, look at them as somebody looking for an identity, someone who is waking up to the realities of the life ahead of them. The protection that many are given in childhood is wearing off, the world around you comes into focus. Your childhood dreams may be faded already, maybe you’ve realised you’ll never get the chance to follow your childhood imagination into adulthood. Maybe you feel that your dreams were childish, but that often comes with the seriousness of growing up. When do our dreams morph from boundless and fantastic to dreams of safety and security. It is amid our teens. Do our childhood dreams not need to be mourned? Do our eyes not need to adjust to the reality that awaits?

One day we hung up our superhero capes for the last time, placed our astronaut’s uniform in the wardrobe and braced for the less glittering adventure that lay in wait.
Young carers

Are you a young carer? Perhaps you know a young carer? Or perhaps you don’t know what a young carer is? Lindsey Crawford, Policy and Development Officer at Carers Trust looks at the challenges faced by young carers and the support that is available.

What might a young carer do?

- Practical tasks – most young people do chores around the house. What makes young carers different is that their families are often reliant on them for work around the house, as well as for tasks that normally only adults would look after, such as making meals or doing the family shop.
- Physical or personal care – if a parent has physical health challenges, a young carer may need to help them with basic daily physical needs, such as helping them out of bed, and ensuring they are washed and dressed.
- Emotional support – many young carers will provide a listening ear to parents and siblings struggling with mental health challenges. They will often know the warning signs and be expected to support them when in distress.
- Collecting prescriptions and helping to give medicine – many adults with care and support needs may be unable to collect and take medication without support from a young carer in their household. For example, a young carer may need to help a parent with diabetes to inject their required dose of insulin.
- Managing the family budget – many young people with a caring role have a better grasp of finances and budgeting than you might expect of someone their age. This can be because their parents, unable to leave the house due to disability, depend on them to ensure bills are paid.
- Helping someone communicate – some young carers can act as an interpreter for a parent with care and support needs for whom English is not a first language. And others may need to help a parent or sibling with speech and language challenges to communicate in and outside of the home.
- Looking after brothers and sisters – young carers may have more responsibility for their brothers and sisters than other young people, either because their sibling has care and support needs, or because a parent needs extra help in looking after the sibling.

“While their experiences can differ, there’s one thing that all young carers have in common: knowing what it feels like to have serious responsibilities falling on their young shoulders.”

Impact of caring on young people’s mental health and wellbeing

This, of course, can have a big impact on many aspects of young carers’ lives. They often find it hard to manage their studies alongside all their caring responsibilities. This is especially so when schools and colleges fail to identify a young person as a young carer who requires additional support because of all their additional responsibilities at home. These responsibilities often mean it’s hard to complete homework, or they can result in a young carer arriving late at school or even going absent. It’s hardly surprising therefore that on average young carers achieve nine grades lower in their GCSE exams than peers without caring responsibilities.

As well as their impact on education, caring responsibilities can make it hard to find time for hobbies and friends that other young people take for granted.

Coping with the pressures and challenges of caring can make it very difficult for young people to develop and maintain positive mental health and wellbeing. A YouGov survey of young
“A YouGov survey of young carers, conducted for Carers Trust, found that over a third of young carers aged 11-18 in the UK were experiencing widespread problems with their mental health.”
friendship. And less than half (44%) of the young carers responding to the survey felt they received enough support with their emotions and feelings. Additional research from NHS Digital suggests that young carers are also more likely to suffer from mental health challenges, such as anxiety or depression, than other young people.

How many young carers?
So, how many young people in the UK are experiencing the daily challenges and pressures of being a young carer? Research carried out last year by the BBC and Nottingham University suggested that one in five secondary school pupils aged 11-16 in England have a caring role. That means there could be as many as 800,000 young carers aged 11-16 in England alone. Once you factor in young carers under the age of 11, and young carers in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, it is likely there are more than one million young carers across the UK as a whole.

What support is available for young carers?
Help is available for young people struggling with their caring role. Since 2015, young carers and their families have the right to request a Young Carers Needs Assessment from their local council. Young carers can also access their local carers service, many of which operate as part of the Carers Trust network.

Carers Trust is a major charity, that works to improve support, services and recognition for carers of all ages through grants, programmes, campaigns and their UK-wide network of quality assured independent partners.

These services work in local areas to provide information, advice, as well as respite and social opportunities. Many young carers cite young carers services as an invaluable source of emotional support as they navigate the challenges of being both a young person and a carer.

Anyone can find their nearest Carers Trust Network Partner, and other advice for maintaining mental health as a young carer, by visiting the Carers Trust website – carers.org.

Lindsey Crawford is the Policy and Development Officer at Carers Trust. She runs the My Mental Health project for young carers: www.carers.org/article/young-carers-and-mental-health. To find out how you can support young carers in the UK, please visit the Young Carers Awareness Day page of the Carers Trust website: www.carers.org/young-carers-awareness-day-2019.

Lived experience
Hannah (not her real name), 17, is a young carer supported by Sutton Carers Centre, one of over 130 local carer charities that form part of a network operated by Carers Trust. She was 13 when she was referred to the service by her school in February 2015. Hannah cares for her mother who has a diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis.

Hannah’s caring role includes providing her mother with practical support which increases when her mum relapses. She found managing both school and caring challenging and stressful. Whilst school had identified her as a young carer, they did not understand how this impacted her education and her mental health.

As she approached adulthood, Hannah felt she had to make a decision between caring for her mum and having a career. She felt that she could not leave her mum, and consequently gave up any hope of university. As a result, her mental health deteriorated, resulting finally in self-harm and a referral to Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Thanks to Carers Trust’s Network Partner, Sutton Carers Centre, Hannah was able to access support like mindfulness sessions, complimentary therapies and opportunities where she was able to share her fears for her future and her concern over the lack of understanding and support from school. From this, the service has been able to address her specific needs through support, which has increased her confidence and encouraged her to aim for her career goals as she works through her A levels.

She now acts as a Young Carer Ambassador for the service and runs a peer support group, helping to highlight the needs of – and provide support for – other young carers in her area.

Lindsey Crawford is the Policy and Development Officer at Carers Trust. She runs the My Mental Health project for young carers: www.carers.org/article/young-carers-and-mental-health. To find out how you can support young carers in the UK, please visit the Young Carers Awareness Day page of the Carers Trust website – carers.org.

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Joining a group for therapy (or for any other reason come to that) can be daunting and anxiety provoking. There are many reasons why we may fear groups, some of which are very reasonable and understandable. Many people have experienced bad things happening in groups or groups behaving badly towards them – this may be in their family groups, peer groups, work groups, etc. and can have severe and lasting traumatic effects on our sense of identity and our ability to relate to others. We believe however, that if this anxiety can be overcome, a group offers potential benefits that are not available in individual therapy.

We are all born into groups. The group exists before the individual and it is this fundamental social element of being human that lies at the heart of our work in groups. Our lives are inextricably linked in multiple ways with other people. We see the group as an ideal setting for therapy for many of us, bearing in mind our social makeup and our needs for connection, communication and response.

A common factor among people with any type of mental health challenges is difficulties in relationships with others. Our groups provide a safe space where these difficulties can be explored, understood, worked through and different patterns of being more authentically ourselves with others can be tested out.

In an analytic group, we will re-enact problematic patterns of communication which affect us in our lives. It is then open to exploration, understanding change and healing. In groups we can learn from others and also be part of each other’s recovery. We can gain a sense of belonging and that we are not alone with our struggles, and give and receive support in working through the painful feelings and experiences that are at the root of our difficulties.

The Group Therapy Centre is a long-established, not-for-profit, psychological treatment service, and is unique in providing both short-term CBT groups, Schema-Focussed therapy groups and long-term Analytic Psychotherapy groups on a free or low-fee basis. We treat a wide variety of conditions ranging from depression and anxiety to bipolar, personality disorders and complex trauma. The short-term CBT groups are free and meet for nine weeks. The longer-term groups are open-ended, and people with often deep-seated challenges stay for as long as they need.

We receive vital financial support from the Cambridge and Peterborough NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, which enables our groups to be accessible to all. Fees for long-term psychotherapy are based on people’s financial situation. This can be just a few pounds a week for those on low incomes and we actually provide the only long-term psychological treatment available to them in the whole of Cambridgeshire. The short-term CBT groups are completely free of charge. Currently we see over 120 people in 22 groups that meet every week. Our groups meet at our bases in Cambridge, Huntingdon and Ely.

CBT is a short-term therapy which helps people to understand what they think and how they behave when they are feeling depressed or anxious. It teaches practical strategies for dealing with challenging thoughts and behaviours.

Schema-Focussed Therapy is an integrative therapy combining aspects of CBT, object relations and gestalt therapies. It is longer-term and has been designed to help people who experience challenges around relationships and emotional wellbeing.

Group Analytic Psychotherapy is a type of group psychotherapy that affects the deepest levels of the personality – it provides the setting for support, understanding and significant and long-lasting personal change, healing and growth. Therefore, this means that it is suitable for those committed to spending time on their therapy.

“We are all born into groups. The group exists before the individual and it is this fundamental social element of being human that lies at the heart of our work in groups.”

Andy Espey, Centre Director of the Group Therapy Centre, discusses how undergoing group therapy can offer benefits not available through individual therapy.
Singing is good for us! The profile of singing and wellbeing has risen in recent years through organisations like Rock Choir, which are demonstrating the health benefits of community singing.

Indeed, with other initiatives such as A Choir in Every Care Home and Singing for The Brain®, it’s easy to see why more and more of us are getting involved in our local choir or community singing group. But what are the benefits?

Singing supports body, mind and soul
There is good and growing evidence (to which the Michaelhouse Singers have added) about the benefits of singing including: improved motivation, social participation, physical health and emotional resilience. There is also growing evidence that participation can reduce demands on statutory services and resources and mitigate medication needs, demonstrated in the increased interest in social prescribing.

A new report from the World Health Organization (2019) states that “group participation in activities such as crafts and singing, are particularly effective at fostering cooperation, self-concept and a sense of social inclusion for children, adults, families and communities and across different cultures”.

Music and singing have also been shown to enhance and maintain wellbeing, particularly within an organised group programme. Groups such as Michaelhouse Singers can also help to prevent isolation, low mood and other mental health challenges (What Works Wellbeing, 2016), and promote faster recovery from postnatal depression (APPG, 2017). The charity Sing for Your Life promotes healthy ageing through the mantra of ‘a song a day keeps the doctor away’!

Additionally, there are physical health benefits from group singing for people with a range of health conditions. For example, it can enhance cognition, communication and physical functioning in people with a diagnosis of Parkinson’s disease, improve lung function and quality of life for people with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, whilst singing and listening to music can aid recovery from a stroke (APPG, 2017).

Michaelhouse Singers is an open-access, inclusive weekly singing group in Cambridge. You don’t need to read music to join in and we sing a wide range of music from folk song to ‘golden oldies’, songs from the shows to mediaeval rounds.

“Continued wellbeing and happiness through the fellowship of song – that’s worth singing for…”

(member)
The Michaellhouse Singers started life as the Michaelhouse Chorale 10 years ago as a joint initiative between Arts and Minds and the Michaelhouse charity, in Cambridge city centre. There are normally about 25 members who meet in the chancel (through the Michaelhouse café) every Friday afternoon (school term time) from 2.30 - 3.30 pm. Many members have had mental health challenges and friends and family are very welcome to come along as well.

“Basically, it’s a choir for everyone!” (Anne Taylor - Musical Director)

Everyone is welcome and all members are encouraged to choose songs. The main aim is to meet regularly, to form friendships and support each other, to have fun and to feel better, physically, emotionally and psychologically. We also perform in concerts two or three times a year, mainly to friends and families. The choir is a joint venture between Michaelhouse and Arts and Minds and is supported through the voluntary contributions of those attending and exit collections from the monthly concert series at Michaelhouse.

“What bingo might do for some people, this does for us!” Yvonne (member)

Michaelhouse Singers is part of a portfolio of creative activities for promoting the positive mental health of individuals and communities, run by Arts and Minds. Other programmes include: Arts on Prescription (arts workshops) and pottery classes for younger people with dementia. To find out more, visit www.artsandminds.org.uk or come along and sing with us at Michaelhouse on a Friday afternoon!

Listen to what choir members have to say about the group at www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=NAiPGKnezRU

Further information

APPG (2017) Creative Health


apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/329834/9789289054553-eng.pdf
Every Mind Matters

Every Mind Matters is a campaign and one-stop portal designed to enable people to take simple steps to manage their mental health. Clare Perkins, Deputy Director at Public Health England, tells Kelly Mansfield about the campaign’s goals.

What was the inspiration behind the Every Mind Matters campaign?
It’s increasingly recognised that mental health is as important as physical health, but our research told us that many people were still unaware of the simple and practical steps they can take to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

There is a real need for Every Mind Matters, as there is too much of a time gap in taking action for our mental health and no reliable ‘one source’ or portal for information on what can help and how to access this support. Preventing mental health challenges, providing easy access to information, and encouraging people to look after their mental health will bring benefits to people, families, communities and workplaces.

Who is involved in the campaign?
Every Mind Matters was launched by Public Health England in partnership with the NHS. The expert advice and tips were developed in consultation with leading mental health charities and community champions, community organisations, academics and clinicians, as well as testing with members of the public including those with experience of mental health challenges.

Key charities, community champions and organisations have supported with developing and promoting Every Mind Matters, including: Royal College of Psychiatrists, Royal College of GPs, Faculty of Public Health, Mind, Mental Health Foundation, MHFA England, Samaritans, The Royal Foundation, Centre for Mental Health, Rethink, Time to Change, NSUN, What Works Wellbeing, Good Thinking and Campaign to End Loneliness.

“There is a real need for Every Mind Matters, as there is too much of a time gap in taking action for our mental health and no reliable ‘one source’ or portal for information on what can help and how to access this support.”

All advice is based on the most robust evidence available and has been clinically assured by NHS England.

Was there a gap that you thought needed filling?
As with previous Public Health England resources and campaigns, it was important during the development phase to make sure that Every Mind Matters would meet a current need and would be genuinely useful for the public.

Every Mind Matters would not have been possible without the efforts of mental health organisations and campaigners who have opened up the conversation on mental health and challenged the stigma associated with mental health. As the public have become more aware of the importance of their mental health there is now an opportunity to encourage action.

Our research reflected that there was a gap in the market for a single, authoritative resource to promote good general mental health to the public and showed that people do not feel confident to take action on their own mental health, needing accessible, practical advice on what steps they can take. The ‘Your Mind Plan’ was introduced as a result, which is a new, interactive tool enabling people to generate a free online plan to improve their mental health. By answering five key questions, people will be given a tailored set of self-care actions, to help them deal with stress, boost their mood, improve their sleep and feel more in control. All of these actions have well evidenced benefits for improving and maintaining good mental health, which can help people to get more out of life,
feel better, have more positive relationships and manage difficult times – now and in the future. Every Mind Matters also provides advice on common issues and mental wellbeing, curating both original content and existing partner resources to help the public take action or get support where they need it.

Who is the campaign aimed at?
Through consumer research, we have identified that those who may feel they are not coping or struggling with life’s challenges, having difficulties with feeling low, anxious and stressed and having trouble sleeping, or have undiagnosed mental health challenges, may be more receptive to the campaign’s aims.

As part of PHE’s focus on addressing health inequalities, we are also targeting people at greater risk of poor mental health, including those from lower-socioeconomic or BAME groups, people with long-term health conditions, and people who are unemployed.

However, it’s important to note that mental health is an issue for everyone. We can all benefit from taking simple steps to look after our mental health and wellbeing and prevent issues getting worse. Even if you are not experiencing mental health concerns, the action plan supports you to build simple steps into your daily routine to help prepare for life’s ups and downs and reduce your risk of poor mental health.

Why do you think this is a campaign that some very high-profile people have got behind?
It was important to include a range of people with real lived experience of mental health concerns, including high-profile individuals, to illustrate that mental health affects us all.

Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and the Duke and Duchess of Sussex have played a huge part in helping to lift the stigma and encouraging people to talk about mental health. We are thrilled that they narrated our campaign film.

The powerful film features a range of people whose lives have been affected by poor mental health, including a cast of well-known faces: Glenn Close, Gillian Anderson, Davina McCall, Sir Bradley
interview

Wiggins, Alastair Campbell, Will Young, Professor Green, Nadiya Hussain, Rob Beckett, Joe Sugg, Mikey Pearce, Sarah Taylor and Jordan Stephens.

How does this differ from other mental health campaigns?
Many mental health campaigns have focused on the importance of eliminating stigma, improving education and awareness of mental health and mental illness issues. Every Mind Matters, which is endorsed by RCGP and clinically assured by the NHS, goes one step further by empowering people to manage their mental health and prioritise the evidence-based self-care actions that they can take to look after it every day, to be better prepared for life’s ups and downs and prevent problems escalating. At the heart of this is a new, free, online plan giving people a personalised set of self-care actions to deal with stress, boost their mood, improve their sleep and feel in control. Every Mind Matters builds on the fantastic achievements of our partners in the third sector and takes people from awareness into action.

What’s your view on the current approach to mental health in the UK?
The Every Mind Matters campaign complements the government’s wider mental health agenda, which includes preventing suicide and self-harm, improving the lives of people with mental health challenges and supporting their recovery and inclusion.

“Preventing mental health challenges, providing easy access to information, and encouraging people to look after their mental health will bring benefits to people, families, communities and workplaces.”

New mental health funding for the NHS was announced last year to the value of £2.3 billion a year over the next five years. The funding is part of a £33.9 billion commitment in real terms for NHS England by 2023-24.

Prevention is a key element of a systematic response to mental health challenges within the population, alongside investments in health and social care services.

By ensuring that people better understand their mental health and how to look after it, we aim to help individuals to stay mentally healthy and encourage them to seek help more quickly when they do need support. Like physical health, mental health is not only a medical issue but something that we can all take ownership of and act on, to help prevent common mental health concerns from becoming more serious, clinical issues.

Why do you think we have got to this point?
The reasons for poor mental health are complex. Just like physical health, our mental health is affected by life circumstances, where we live and the choices we make. So, as well as self-care tips, Every Mind Matters helps people know where to go for support with wider challenges in life that are affecting their mental health – such as debt and bereavement.

How could having the NHS behind this project help?
Every Mind Matters is a national campaign developed and delivered by Public Health England in partnership with the NHS. All advice is based on evidence and has been clinically assured by NHS England. The resource is available for the public and for GPs to advise their patients to use and the NHS will promote Every Mind Matters to its one-million-plus workforce. It has also been endorsed by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RGCP),

What’s the first step for people wanting to benefit from the project?
We encourage everyone to visit the Every Mind Matters website at www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters where they can develop their own Mind Plan.
Sunshine breaks through a cloudy sky,
For once I see it and don’t ask why,
Because I know after the dark comes light,
And I have faith I will win my fight.

A feeling comes over me like a wave,
I’m the one who controls how I behave,
So I can be happy when they’re all sad,
I deserve this because I’m not bad.

There is freedom in letting go,
I won’t forget at all I know,
But every day gets easier for me,
I just focus on the fact I’ll be free.

By Sophie Westwood
@8polarised
Schools: putting mental health at the heart of education

Schools have a significant role to play in preventing and supporting the mental health of children, but there is still a long way to go. Kelly Mansfield takes a look at where their responsibilities lay.

In April 2019, the Independent reported that the mother of an autistic child who tried to take her own life in an isolation booth at an academy school was threatening legal action against the government.

The girl was put in isolation by her school in Kent for more than a month, where she was forced to remain silent and had no directed teaching.

The report revealed that lawyers were seeking to take High Court action against the Department for Education (DfE) on behalf of the girl and another boy at a school in Nottinghamshire, amid concerns that government guidance on isolation booths is damaging the mental health of thousands of children.

The law firm, Simpson Millar said the DfE had failed to recognise the consequences of a widespread use of isolation booths, where pupils are sent when they are removed from a classroom, adding that the areas have been used as a “dumping ground” for children with special educational needs (SEN).

In a pre-action letter, lawyers said extended time in isolation had had a significant impact on the teenage girl. “It has caused her depression. It also led to her taking an overdose while in the booth is damaging the mental health of thousands of children.

“Schools are in a unique position, as they are able to help prevent mental health challenges by promoting resilience as part of an integrated, whole-school approach that is tailored to the needs of their pupils.”
isolation room itself,” they said. This is an extreme case but does highlight the hugely important role and influence that schools can have on children’s mental health.

The DfE does offer extensive guidance on the role and responsibility of schools in managing students’ mental health, commenting, “Schools have an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their pupils, by developing approaches tailored to the particular needs of their pupils. All schools are under a statutory duty to promote the welfare of their pupils, which includes preventing impairment of children’s health or development, and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.”

So, what action should schools be taking to support the mental health of its students? Let’s take a look at some of the DfE guidance.

**Early intervention**

Schools can help to avoid the development of mental health challenges in children via:

- **Prevention**: creating a safe and calm environment where mental health challenges are less likely, improving the mental health and wellbeing of the whole school population, and equipping pupils to be resilient so that they can manage the normal stress of life effectively. This could include teaching pupils about mental wellbeing through the curriculum and reinforcing this teaching through school activities and ethos;

- **Identification**: recognising emerging issues as early and accurately as possible;

- **Early support**: helping pupils to access evidence-based early support and interventions; and

- **Access to specialist support**: working effectively with external agencies to provide swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment.

**Mental health policy**

Schools are required to produce a range of policies which can be used to promote and support mental health and wellbeing. These policies need to be consistent with schools’ duties under the Equality Act 2010. For example, where a pupil has mental health challenges that amount to a disability and this adversely affects their behaviour, the school must make reasonable adjustments to its policies, the physical environment, the support it offers, and how it responds in particular situations.

Treating all pupils the same may be unlawful where a disability affects behaviour.

**Special educational needs (SEN)**

Schools are under a duty to use their ‘best endeavours’ to identify and support pupils with SEN and meet their special needs. Further information:

- **Mentally Healthy Schools**
  www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/

- **DfE: Mental health and behaviour in schools**

- **YoungMinds 360 Schools**
  https://youngminds.org.uk/youngminds-professionals/360-schools/

- **Mental health in schools: Make it Count**
  https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-schools-make-it-count
educational needs. As part of this duty, it is important that schools consider how best to use some of their SEN resources to provide support for pupils with mental health challenges that amount to special educational needs.

Safeguarding
Mental health challenges can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. It is essential that staff are aware of their responsibilities. If staff have a mental health concern that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken. School and college staff are particularly important as they are in a position to identify concerns early, provide help for children, and prevent concerns from escalating.

Creating a whole school culture
The culture, ethos and environment of the school can have a profound influence on both pupil and staff mental wellbeing. Environments that are hostile, aggressive, chaotic or unpredictable can be harmful to mental health, and can lead to stressful teaching and working conditions. Schools are in a unique position, as they are able to help prevent mental health challenges by promoting resilience as part of an integrated, whole-school approach that is tailored to the needs of their pupils. A whole-school approach is one that goes beyond the teaching in the classroom to pervade all aspects of school life, including:

- culture, ethos and environment: the health and wellbeing of pupils and staff is promoted through the ‘hidden’ or ‘informal’ curriculum, including leadership practice, the school’s policies, values and attitudes, together with the social and physical environment;
- teaching: using the curriculum to develop pupils’ knowledge about health and wellbeing; and
- partnerships with families and the community: proactive engagement with families, outside agencies, and the wider community to promote consistent support for children’s health and wellbeing.

Putting mental health on the curriculum
The Mental Health Foundation is campaigning for mental health to be considered part of the curriculum, commenting, “Young people continue to be judged on academic performance with little regard for their mental health. Literacy and numeracy are seen as the key markers of success, yet young people are facing unprecedented pressures in life, leading to anxiety, depression and eating disorders… We want to put emotional wellbeing at the heart of the school curriculum. To do this, we need to re-balance the curriculum by giving health and wellbeing the same importance as literacy and numeracy, and creating mentally healthy schools where pupils and teachers can thrive.”

The Foundation tells Iain’s story, who experienced mental health challenges at school. He comments: “When considering the Mental Health Foundation’s recommendations for mental health support in schools, I think that these would have had a huge impact on my experience at school, and my ability to identify poor mental health. The recommendations ask for support and awareness to be implemented and talked about at every level: leadership, pupils, teachers, the curriculum and extra support workers.

“Mental health is not extracurricular, it is one of the most important things that can be taught in schools and I would like to see active changes to prevent any young person feeling alone and scared due to how they are feeling and not understanding where help can be sought.”
MAKE SURE
THAT THEY SEE ALL THE GOOD THINGS
AS WELL AS THE NOT SO GOOD
AND BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF
The transition of a young person from child/adolescent (CAMHS) services to adult services is everybody’s business. It involves the young person, care coordinators, the team around them and the young person’s family, all working together to consider where the needs are best met for a young person approaching 16 years and nine months.

Transitioning is a process, and no one plan fits all. Rather, it is person-centered, young person-led and co-produced. There is an importance in services working together and managing the expectations of the family and the young person as to what service provision may look like. It is key that a discussion needs to happen before a clear agreed plan can be made. This can be a daunting process and therefore it’s essential to have a neutral guiding hand to walk the journey with a young person.

The core foundation for transitioning is getting to know the young person, building a therapeutic relationship of trust and alliance while hearing their voice and goals. We (peer support workers) discuss how things have been for them, we peel back the layers around their challenges and discuss techniques they may have found helpful, such as: labelling their emotions as hot and cold; the step-ladder approach/ breaking our goals into small achievable steps; mindfulness and having a wellbeing box/sensory box; or changing our environment by going for a walk or jog.

We normalise feelings we experience along our recovery journey and throughout the transitional period. For many young people endings and change can feel difficult and I am able to be a constant support during this time. Throughout this process I watch the young person blossom, allowing them to be their own person, and go at a pace that feels comfortable for them. I affirm what I have seen the young person achieve; maybe it’s that they have demonstrated great self-awareness by actively seeking ways to help themselves and keep themselves healthy and safe or it could be how they have

“We normalise feelings we experience along our recovery journey and throughout the transitional period. For many young people endings and change can feel difficult and I am able to be a constant support during this time.”

From children to adults: supporting young people through the change of services

Sarah tells us of the important role of peer support in helping young people transition to adult services.
demonstrated learning by reflecting on their mental health challenges.

I observe the young person growing in confidence, dealing with situations that arise in a calm and effective way. We talk about mental health within families and how it affects everyone and how, with lived experiences like our own, we can use what we know to help others. For some young people I work with it is about understanding their current presentation of mental health challenges and/or the impact of the systems around them on them personally. I provide time for the young person to talk and I can support them with building independence, enabling them to get out of the house and explore activities within their community.

Many young people face challenges around their low mood, anxiety, self-harm and thoughts of taking their own lives, which we can explore in the comfort of their home or within a therapeutic setting at a CAMHS centre. They may also have other things going on for them such as being a young carer or struggling at school/college. They could be on a reduced timetable or not attending school/college due to their emotions and anxiety around school. I listen to friendship struggles and difficulties around learning and provide creative and meaningful activities to help with these difficulties, enabling them to navigate life’s obstacles.

Some young people may want to explore options and ways of increasing their ability to manage life independent of services. Some feel support from a peer support worker has motivated them to want to pursue this line of work and given them hope for the future. I feel very honoured to be able to work with the young people I meet and to be a part of their recovery journey and am grateful to them as they in turn are a very special part of my recovery journey.

A personal story of peer support

Although I haven’t been meeting with Sarah for long, I am already feeling the benefits from her role. She began meeting me after I was discharged from child services and transitioning into adult services.

First of all, I really enjoy meeting her. I had and still have huge anxieties about change. Sarah is approachable and has a lovely laugh. The fact that I can meet her for a coffee makes things easier because I don’t have the anxiety that the town centre causes.

Sarah has given me some great advice, particularly in sharing a mindfulness playlist on YouTube, as well as one of her coping methods – a self-help box.

She doesn’t go into huge details about her situation, which is fine because that’s private, and not what we are here to talk about. But she does share her beneficial coping/self-help techniques that may work for me.

Sarah is supportive and treats me like an adult. She doesn’t dismiss any paranoid thoughts I have, nor does she force things out of me; she encourages it but doesn’t demand it. I think that’s the positive way she handles her role.

I think Sarah’s role will continue to benefit me during the early stages of being in adult services, by giving me extra support and someone else to talk to. Also, her own experiences and the techniques she has developed from that, will benefit me before the personality disorder ‘classes’ behind and will stick with me after.
We would like to encourage everyone to speak with their clinical team if they are unhappy with the care, treatment or support provided. However, if people prefer not to speak directly with their health team, they can contact the Trust’s Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

PALS provides service users, their carers and families with confidential help, information and support to resolve concerns quickly and efficiently.

PALS helps by liaising and working in partnership with staff and managers, other PALS services and health-related organisations. The service provides information about the Trust’s services and other health-related issues and we act as a gateway to independent advice and advocacy support.

PALS is a free service and works as part of the Trust but is not part of any clinical team.

Your feedback is important to us, and we also like to hear when our services are good and when not as good as we expect.

PALS contact details
Tel: 01223 219 444. Freephone: 0800 376 07775. E-mail: pals@cpft.nhs.uk
Write to: Freepost: CPFT PATIENT EXPERIENCE
(All capitals)

Complaints Team
If you would like to make a formal complaint you can do this in writing via email or post.
Your correspondence should be addressed to our Complaints Team.

The Complaints Team provides a service for people who wish to make a formal complaint about the services provided by CPFT.

The Trust welcomes feedback and complaints about the services we provide. It is important for CPFT to learn from complaints and PALS enquiries and make any necessary changes to improve the quality of our services.

If you wish to make a formal complaint it is best to do so as soon as possible and within 12 months of realising you have cause to complain.

Please put your complaint in writing via email, or post your complaint to: Complaints Team, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust, Elizabeth House, Fulbourn, Cambridge, CB21 5EF
E-mail: complaints@cpft.nhs.uk
Tel: 01223 219 440 / 01223 219 441
Freephone: 0800 052 1411

Other avenues of support
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
The CCG is responsible for planning and buying local NHS services, such as care received in local hospitals and in the community, as well as ensuring they provide the best possible care and treatment for patients. People can choose to contact their local commissioner (CCG) and ask the commissioner to help.
Write to: Patient Experience Team, Lockton House, Clarendon Road, Cambridge, CB2 8FH
E-mail: capccg.pet@nhs.net
Tel: 0800 279 2535

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
If you wish to highlight anything that has gone wrong, but you don’t want to speak to your local NHS you can speak to Healthwatch. Healthwatch’s job is to make sure that those who run local health and care services understand and act on what really matters to local people. Healthwatch listens to what people like about services and what could be improved. It shares what people tell them with those with the power to make change happen and encourages services to involve people in decisions that affect them.
Write to: Freepost RTHA-RTYE-SATT, Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, 6 Oak Drive, Huntingdon, PE29 7HN
E-mail: enquiries@healthwatchcambspboro.co.uk
Text on: 0752 0635 176
Tel: 0330 355 1285

"Your feedback is important to us, and we also like to hear when our services are good and when not as good as we expect.”
Useful sources of support and information

ACAS
Information and advice on workplace relations and employment law
www.acas.org.uk
0300 123 1100

Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families
Children’s mental health charity
www.annafreud.org
020 7794 2313

Anxiety UK
Charity for people with anxiety, stress and anxiety-related depression
www.anxietyuk.org.uk
08444 775 774

Arts and Minds
Arts and mental health charity in Cambridgeshire
www.artsandminds.org.uk
01223 353 053

Best Beginnings
Supports the mental health of pregnant women and new mothers
www.bestbeginnings.org.uk

Blurt
Support for people affected by depression
www.blurtout.org

Campaign Against Living Miserably
Charity dedicated to preventing male suicide
www.thealmszone.net
0800 58 58 58

Carers Trust
Support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring
www.carers.org
0300 772 9600

Centre for Mental Health
Charity specialising in research, economic analysis and policy influence in mental health
www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk
020 7717 1558

Change Grow Live
Help and support across a wide range of areas including mental health, substance use, criminal justice and homelessness
www.changegrowlive.org

Citizens Advice
Free advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities
www.citizensadvice.org.uk
03444 111 444

Crisis
Charity for homeless people
www.crisis.org.uk
0300 036 1987

Dancing With The Black Dog
Charity dedicated to the eradication of the stigma of anxiety and depression
www.dancingwiththeblackdog.com

Do-it
National volunteering database
www.do-it.org

Equality and Human Rights Commission
Statutory body dealing in discrimination and human rights
www.equalityhumanrights.com
0800 800 0082

Heads Together
Campaign inspiring charities that are tackling stigma, raising awareness, and providing vital help for people with mental health challenges
www.headstogether.org.uk

The Helpful Clinic
A social venture that helps people cope better with everyday life
www.thehelpfulclinic.com

Illuminate
Provides coaching and personal development courses throughout the east of England
www.illuminatecharity.org.uk
01223 520124

Imroc
Works with communities to develop services, systems and cultures that support recovery and wellbeing
www.imroc.org
0115 9691300 ext 12485

Inclusion Recovery Cambridgeshire
Support for people affected by drugs and alcohol
www.inclusion-cambridgeshire.org.uk
0300 555 0101

International Workplace
Employee relations advisor
www.internationalworkplace.com
0333 210 1995

Keep Your Head
Local support for children and young people
www.keep-your-head.com

Life Craft
User-led organisation offering creative activities, recovery groups, social activities and employment and volunteering opportunities
www.lifecraft.org.uk
01223 566 957

Loch Employment Law
Specialist employment lawyers acting for employers and employees
www.lochlaw.co.uk
0203 667 5400

Make, Do and Mend
Skills workshops, volunteering opportunities and peer support to people who have experience of mental health challenges
www.makedoandmendinfo.co.uk

Making Money Count
Provides financial information and support across Cambridgeshire, West Norfolk and Peterborough
www.makingmoneycount.org.uk

Mental Health First Aid
Offers training for all in mental health first aid
https://mhfaelangland.org
020 7250 8062

Mental Health Foundation
Charity for mental health, aiming to find and address the sources of mental health challenges
www.mentalhealth.org.uk
(0)20 7803 1100

Mental Health Handbook, Lifecraft
Information and contact details for relevant organisations such as advocacy, hospital services, housing, employment guidance, education, benefits advice and carers
www.lifecraft.org.uk/our-services/information/mental-health-handbook

Mind
Charity which provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing mental health challenges
www.mind.org.uk
020 8519 2122

Mind CPSL
Support those recovering from mental health challenges
www.cpslind.org.uk

Money and Mental Health Policy Institute
Independent charity committed to breaking the link between financial difficulty and mental health challenges
www.moneyandmentalhealth.org
0207 848 1448

MQ
Championing and funding research into mental health
www.mqmentalhealth.org
0333 440 1220

National Sleep Foundation
Dedicated to improving health and wellbeing through sleep education and advocacy
www.sleepfoundation.org

Recovery College East
Delivering courses and workshops to explore and improve personal wellbeing
www.cpfet.net/about-us/recovery-college-east.htm
Cambridge 01223 227510
Peterborough 01733 746660

Red2Green
Cambridgeshire charity supporting people with learning disabilities, on the autistic spectrum or living with mental ill health
www.changingthedelightsgreen.co.uk
01223 811662

Rethink Mental Illness
Expert, accredited advice for everyone affected by mental health challenges
www.rethink.org
0300 5000 927
rethinkyourmind.co.uk

Richmond Fellowship
Recycle-focused organisation offering a range of mental health support services
www.richmondfellowship.org.uk
0207 6973300

Samaritans
Offers a safe place to talk at any time about whatever is getting to you
www.samaritans.org
116 123

Scope
Provides support, information and advice to disabled people and their families
www.scope.org.uk
0808 800 3333

The Mix
Support service for young people
www.themix.org.uk
0808 808 4994

The SUN Network
Aiming for everyone in Cambridgeshire to have equitable access to mental health and/or drug and alcohol interventions and services
www.sunnetwork.org.uk
07712 358172

Time to Change
Campaigning to remove stigma around mental health
www.time-to-change.org.uk
020 8215 2356

YoungMinds
Charity committed to improving the wellbeing and mental health of children and young people
www.youngminds.org.uk
“Be happy with what you have. Be excited about what you want.”

Alan Cohen