Three-quarters of young people seeking mental health support become more unwell during wait for treatment — new report

Three-quarters of young people looking for support from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) become more unwell before they can access treatment, according to a survey with parents in a new report by the charity YoungMinds.

The report warns that it remains far too difficult for young people with emerging mental health problems to get the help they need, because of inadequate access to clinical treatment alongside a “black hole” in local youth services.

YoungMinds carried out a survey with more than 2,000 parents and carers whose children have looked for mental health support, which showed that:

• Three-quarters (76%) of parents said that their children’s mental health had deteriorated while waiting for support from CAMHS.

• The longer children were left to wait, the more likely it was that their mental health worsened. 86% of parents whose children had waited more than six months for CAMHS said that their children’s mental health had deteriorated, including 64% who said that their children’s mental health had deteriorated a lot.

• Two-thirds (69%) of parents said that neither they nor their children had been signposted to any other form of support during the time they were waiting for support from CAMHS. [1]

With NHS England due to publish its Long Term Plan this Autumn, YoungMinds is calling for a new era for young people’s mental health, where help is available to every young person who reaches out. This would mean an ambitious new funding settlement matched by a fresh approach to supporting young people with emerging needs.

Emma Thomas, Chief Executive of YoungMinds said:

“We hear every day from young people who have been left waiting for support while their problems have got worse. Some tell us that they’ve started to self-harm, become suicidal, or dropped out of school because they can’t get the help they need.
“The crisis in young people’s mental health is real and it’s urgent. With the NHS Long Term Plan imminent, we cannot afford to miss the opportunity to build a system equipped to meet growing demand.

“Crucially we also need to invest in new ways for young people to get help early on, before they require more specialist treatment. Every community must have spaces where young people can go to feel safe, work through how they’re feeling, and learn strategies to help them manage and start to feel better.”

Alongside the new survey results, YoungMinds’ report shows that:

• Despite welcome extra investment in CAMHS since 2015, it remains the case that less than 1% of the total NHS budget is spent on children and young people’s mental health services.

• At the moment, around 8% of the total NHS mental health budget is spent on CAMHS. [2]

• Even with the Government’s investment of an extra £1.4 billion from 2015 to 2020, NHS Services will only be able to provide treatment to one in three young people in need of mental health support. [3] Given mounting evidence of rising prevalence there would need to be substantial new investment over the next ten years just to keep up with this target beyond 2020.

The charity’s proposals include increased funding for CAMHS, more investment in mental health support through youth and community groups and reformed care for young people going through a crisis.

Recommendations:

1. An ambitious new funding settlement that reflects the reality of the crisis

2. A bold new approach to getting the right support to young people before their needs escalate

3. Reformed crisis and specialist services, to improve the consistency and experience of care across the country

4. All young people given the skills, knowledge and resources to look after their mental health
5. An expanded specialist workforce, while making mental health the responsibility of all professionals working with young people

ABOUT YOUNGMINDS

Now in our 25th year, we are the leading charity fighting for young people’s mental health. We’re leading the fight for a future where all young minds are supported through life, whatever the challenges. We’re here to make sure they get the best possible mental health support and have the resilience to overcome life’s difficulties.

For further information please visit www.youngminds.org.uk

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For free advice and support for parents, call our helpline on 0808 802 5544

NOTES TO EDITORS

[1] All figures, unless otherwise stated, are taken from a YoungMinds survey hosted on surveygizmo.eu in August 2018, and promoted through social media. There were 2,323 responses to the survey from parents of children and young people who had looked for support for their mental health in the UK. 94.1% live in England, 2.1% in Scotland, 1.9% in Wales and 1.2% in Northern Ireland.
