

Talking points

The NNPCF is a membership organisation and our mission states that “we aim to empower our members to ensure that their voice is heard at a local, regional and national level.”

Working with our membership we have identified a number of key “talking points” - these are topics and themes that are the most important to our membership and the ones that have been prioritised by the NNPCF.

Based on feedback from our membership and from other partners and stakeholders, the “talking point” summarise:

- The lived experience of our members about each topic,
- What is working and what is not working, and
- What we would like to see changed.

The talking points have been created using a range of feedback which includes:

- Surveys (including the SEND surveys)
- Feedback from our annual conferences
- The topics raised at regional meetings
- Themes and topics raised by our membership on social media
- Face to face conversations with our membership

This is the latest version of the Mental Health and Wellbeing (formerly CAMHs) Talking Point.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Social, emotional, and mental health represents one of the four broad areas of need and support for Children and Young People (CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE) with SEN¹. The NNPCF believes that improving mental health support and services is critical to improving the wellbeing of all CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE with SEND.

Disabled Children and those with Special Educational Needs are more likely to achieve poorer educational outcomes than their peers or not be in education, employment, or training (NEET) due to their mental health needs².

The government recognises that wellbeing and mental health difficulties can be a barrier to CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE achieving good educational and wider outcomes³.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-children-in-need>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/transforming-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-provision-a-green-paper>

The SEND Code of Practice (birth-25) introduced Social Emotional Mental Health as a category of SEN in 2014, although the NNPCF recognises that it is important to understand that many Children and Young People (CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE) and their families, will not self-identify as having SEND solely due to Social Emotional Mental Health reasons. Others will recognise that their child or young person will be experiencing mental health or wellbeing difficulties associated with their primary need, for example high levels of anxiety associated with a diagnosis of autism.

CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services)

The NHS Long Term Plan⁴ sets out the priorities for expanding Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLEMHS). However, the children's commissioner⁵ asserts, that access to children's mental services is still not adequate with clear differentiation between local clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) on spend, wait time and referrals being closed out, without treatment, meaning that many families continue to face a "post code lottery" for support.

Many forums continue to report that children with SEND are often turned away from mental health services without being provided with support or treatment they are requesting. The children's commissioner highlights this as a key issue, with statistics showing that 70 local areas close 30% or more of their cases without the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE accessing the requested support.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on MH services

It is widely accepted the effect the pandemic has had on mental health. A report conducted by NHS in July 2020 reported that the prevalence of clinically significant mental health conditions amongst all children was 50% higher than a survey conducted in 2017⁶. The children's commissioner⁷ asserts that this rapid rise was the result of the pandemic.

Whilst these figures do not show a breakdown for Children and Young People with SEND, we are aware that Children and Young People particularly those with Neurodevelopmental Disorders, such as autism will have a much higher prevalence for a mental health condition, such as anxiety, with a recent meta-analysis⁸ showed a prevalence of anxiety disorder for a person with ASD at 20% compared to 7.3% of the general population.

⁴ <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/>

⁵ <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/cco-the-state-of-childrens-mental-health-services-2020-21.pdf>

⁶ <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2020-wave-1-follow-up>

⁷ <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/cco-the-state-of-childrens-mental-health-services-2020-21.pdf>

⁸ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(19\)30289-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(19)30289-5/fulltext)

A recent report published by Public Health England⁹ found that the challenges already faced by Children and Young People with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and the parents and carers who support them have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The report highlights the impact on Children and Young People with SEND mental health and wellbeing including Impact of the sudden changes to routines for Children and Young People with autism.

The potential impact that the pandemic has had on children's mental health has been well publicised including the compound impact on those with SEND. The NNPCF welcomes the focus on children, young people, SEND, learning disability, and autism in the government's mental health recovery plan.¹⁰

The NNPCF acknowledges that the demand on CAMHs services increased during the pandemic, largely due emotional impact of children and young people missing school impacted upon them. We continue to hear from forums, that families were reporting that their children and young people had increased anxiety, behavioural needs, and mental health concerns alongside the concerns of the capacity of the services to respond¹¹, which is clearly evidenced in the national data¹².

We continue to hear of inconsistent practice in schools, around children and young people with SEND who are "school refusers" as a result of anxiety with regards to being at school or not being at school, going out or not going out¹³. Whilst we accept many children and young people found remote learning very challenging, a minority flourished with the absence of the stressed of the school environment.¹⁴ The NNPCF would like the government to explore a more blended approach to learning to allow pupils to access the full curriculum but in a reasonably adjusted way that works for them¹⁵.

The NNPCF have made representations to the government^{16 17}, highlighting the impact of children and young people's mental health in relation to the 2021 summer exams¹⁸ and the

⁹ The impact of COVID-19 on London's children and young people PHE May 2021

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/973936/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-recovery-action-plan.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/cco-the-state-of-childrens-mental-health-services-2020-21.pdf>

¹² <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/mental-health-services-2020-21/> (Data tables)

¹³ <https://nnpcf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/november-lockdown-feedback-20201106.pdf>

¹⁴

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-series-briefing-on-local-areas-send-provision-november-2020>

¹⁵ <https://nnpcf.org.uk/2021/04/23/covid-19-the-medium-and-long-term-impact-risks-and-opportunities-for-children-and-young-people-with-send/>

¹⁶ <https://nnpcf.org.uk/2021/02/11/nnpcf-representations-on-catch-up-learning/>

proposed education recovery plans¹⁹. The uncertainty of the pandemic and change in routine for many children and young people in particular those with certain neurodiversity conditions have led to increased anxiety making it more difficult for them to learn. Therefore, we have asserted that a SEND focus on mental health is essential to ensure children and young people are ready to learn.

Parent Carer Forums value being part of conversations exploring local and regional approaches that take into consideration the nuanced needs of the SEND community in respect of mental health and wellbeing.

Elective Home Education

Over the last twelve months of the coronavirus pandemic, most local authorities (LAs) will have seen an increase in notifications from parents about Elective Home Education. A survey by the Association of Directors of Children Services in November 2020 estimated that at least 75,668 children were home educated across all 151 LAs in England. This is a 38% increase on 2019.²⁰

Consultation on Reforming the Mental Health Act

In October 2017, the UK government announced an independent review of the Mental Health Act (MHA) 1983 to look at how effective it was and how it could be improved. The review²¹ made 154 recommendations on how the Mental Health Act could be improved, and importantly stated that the MHA 1983 did not always work as well as it should for patients and their families and carers.

The government considered the review's recommendations and proposed changes to improve mental health services and people's experiences under the Mental Health Act, through a 'White Paper' which was published on 13th January 2021²².

The NNPCF made representations on behalf of Parent Carer Forums across England²³, for CAMHs services to be prioritised and resourced appropriately.

¹⁷ <https://nnpcf.org.uk/2021/01/20/nnpcf-input-into-assessments-consultation/>

¹⁸

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/953000/6743-1_GCSE__AS_and_A_level_grades_should_be_awarded_in_summer_2021.pdf

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-commissioner-appointed-to-oversee-education-catch-up>

²⁰ <https://adcs.org.uk/education/article/elective-home-education-survey-2020>

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modernising-the-mental-health-act-final-report-from-the-independent-review>

²² <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-the-mental-health-act/reforming-the-mental-health-act-summary>

²³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-the-mental-health-act/reforming-the-mental-health-act-summary#responding-to-the-consultation>

The NNPCF welcomes the commitment to reduce the reliance on specialist inpatient services for people with a learning disability and autistic people and to developing community alternatives. This is a key driver for the Learning Disability and Autism (LDA) admission avoidance project and key working pilots that the NNPCF are involved in at a national and regional level (see below).

The NNPCF highlighted the importance of early identification and intervention for children and young people with autism or a learning disability. We support the proposal that where behaviour is due to an unmet need (social, emotional or physical health need grounds for a detention under the MHA would no longer be justified and the detention should cease. However, there is an unclear and/or uneven pattern of support, delivery and provision meaning that too many children with SEND are not accessing the help that they need.

The NHS Long-Term Plan

The NHS Long-Term Plan²⁴ published in 2019 included new commitments to continue the expansion of NHS services for children and young people. The NHS Mental Health Implementation Plan outlines the role of NHS-Led Provider Collaboratives; groups of providers of specialised mental health, learning disability and autism services who have agreed to work together to improve the care pathway for their local population.

The plan addresses forums concerns over children and young people's Mental Health and Wellbeing which includes:

- Increased funding for Children and Young People's mental health
- Providing the right care for children with a learning disability.

The NNPCF are working closely at a national and regional level with NHS England other NHS organisations on several key projects to support these areas.

- Learning Disabilities and Autism (LDA) Admissions avoidance Project.

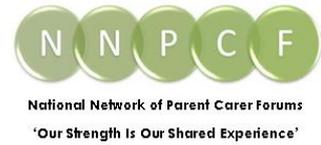
NNPCF are supporting 8 of its regional forums, who working with local Parent Carer forums to draw upon local knowledge, skills and experience to create a local offer to aid prevention of Inappropriate hospital admissions (Tier 4 Admission) in children and young people who are admitted to hospital who have with severe and/or complex mental health conditions.

- LDA Community Key working

Community Key working is how the NHS is delivering their commitment to children and young people who have a learning disability, autism (LDA) or both with the most complex needs. Initially a keyworker will be provided to children and young people who are inpatients or at risk of being admitted to hospital because of their mental Health, before being extended to the most vulnerable children with learning disability, autism or both.

²⁴ <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/nhs-long-term-plan-version-1.2.pdf>

Talking points



NNPCF have been heavily involved in the project both at national and regional level in the selection of the sites for the pilot phase which commenced in 2020 and the subsequent early adopter sites, which commenced in 2021 and in the ongoing community of practice workshops which monitor and evaluate the roll out of the community key working.

The NNPCF is committed to continue to work with NHS England, Regional NHS organisations and their partners to turn the ambitions in the Long Term Plan into improvements in mental health services for CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE with SEND in England. We will continue to listen to the feedback of our local and regional forums concerns regarding CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE and their family’s ability to access the *right* support at the *right* time, especially in light of the recent pandemic and feed this into our representations going forward.