

Local Government Association Briefing

Mental health and wellbeing in schools

House of Commons
4 December 2018



Key messages

- Improving and maintaining good mental health for communities is a key priority for councils. Poor mental health can affect any of us at any stage of our lives, including in childhood. Intervening early to help prevent issues from escalating can dramatically improve an individual's life chances and save money in the longer term.
- It was pleasing to hear the Budget announce additional funding for the NHS to prioritise mental health services for children and young people, with more money for crisis care and schools-based support teams. Through their children, family and public health responsibilities, councils are also pulling out all the stops to give children and young people high quality mental health support, but worryingly, as a result of funding reductions, many councils are being forced to cut vital early intervention work which helps children avoid reaching crisis point.
- The government's children's services Early Intervention Grant has been reduced by almost £600 million since 2013 and is projected to decrease by almost £100 million more by 2020. Children's services are facing a wider funding gap of £3 billion by 2025. This is not sustainable if we are serious about tackling mental health in young people. Councils' public health budgets, which fund school nurses and public mental health services, have been reduced by £600 million from 2015/16 to 2019/20.
- Councils face a £7.8 billion overall shortfall by 2025. A range of services that contribute to the wider determinants of mental health are significantly underfunded, these include housing, leisure, green spaces, and culture. This makes it more difficult to promote mental wellness within communities.
- Increased investment in children and young people's mental health services is urgently needed. In particular, the Government must ensure all of the promised £1.7 billion for children's mental health is spent on children's mental health services, and not diverted elsewhere. Where it has been spent on other services, the Government should make up the shortfall. This will be in line with the implementation of Future in Mind and the reforms stated in the Government's green paper *Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision*.
- Councils and schools need to be given funding to offer independent mental health counselling so children have access to support as and when they need it.
- The LGA's [Bright Futures](#) campaign highlights the incredible early intervention and prevention work that councils across the country are doing to support our children and young people.

Briefing

Background

Good mental health is essential for a healthy and prosperous society. Unfortunately, it is easier to focus on what happens when a person becomes mentally ill, and how the health service intervenes, rather than how to keep our communities mentally well in the first place. It is essential to prevent mental health issues arising, intervening early if problems do start surfacing, and helping people manage their lives going forward. It is important that we focus on prevention and intervention at an early stage, particularly for children and young people. By doing this we will help prevent poor mental health blighting peoples' lives and improve the well-being of our communities.

Children's mental health

Supporting child and adolescent mental health and wellbeing continues to be a priority for councils. According to the latest data, at least one in 8 children and young people have a diagnosable mental health condition. Looked after children are four times more likely to experience mental health issues than their peers. Despite the increasing demand, funding for children's mental health has stagnated and only 6.7 per cent of mental health spending goes to children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).

Unfortunately, a lack of funding means around 75 per cent of young people experiencing a mental health problem either cannot access treatment or their health deteriorates whilst they are waiting. The government's children's services Early Intervention Grant has been reduced by almost £600 million since 2013 and is projected to decrease by almost £100 million more by 2020. Councils in 2015/2016 spent £8.3 billion in children's services; but they are facing a funding gap of £3 billion by 2025. This is not sustainable if we are serious about tackling mental health in young people. Councils' public health budgets, which fund school nurses and public mental health services, have been reduced by £600 million from 2015/16 to 2019/20.

It was pleasing to hear the Budget announce additional funding for the NHS to prioritise mental health services for children and young people, with more money for crisis care and schools-based support teams. Through their children, family and public health responsibilities, councils are also pulling out all the stops to give children and young people high quality mental health support.

The Government must ensure there is accountability at national level for the investment so it reaches the right services. There must also be improved accountability and oversight of the reforms and funding at local level, this should be overseen by Health and Wellbeing Boards.

It is crucial we focus on prevention and intervention at an early stage, particularly for children and young people. By doing this we will help prevent poor mental health blighting peoples' lives and improve the well-being of our communities.

In our response¹ to the Government's children and young people's mental health green paper, we highlighted that measures to tackle the crisis in children and young people's mental health are long overdue and we are pleased the Government's response confirmed it is taking steps to address this.

LGA Bright Futures campaign

The LGA's [Bright Futures](#) campaign highlights the early intervention and prevention work that councils across the country are doing to support our children and young people. We are calling on the Government to:

- Ensure all of the promised £1.7 billion for children’s mental health is spent on children’s mental health services, and not diverted elsewhere. Where it has been spent on other services, government should make up the shortfall
- Improve standards and makes sure funding is spent wisely. This includes strengthening the governance over how funding is spent and recognising the expertise of health and wellbeing boards locally.
- Prioritise prevention and early intervention funding to councils to allow them work with schools to commission independent school based counselling.

¹ LGA response to Government response on children’s mental health Green Paper,
<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-responds-childrens-mental-health-green-paper-consultation-response>