

A Local Guide to Children's Mental Health

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan - Labour MP for Tooting



Message from Rosena

Throughout this pandemic, the resilience shown by our young people has been unquestionable. I have been in awe of the way that students, parents, and teachers have navigated such a challenging time. From juggling home-schooling to understanding new worries, the mental health of children and parents has been put in the spotlight.

As the Shadow Minister for Mental Health, and the local MP for Tooting, I have created this pack for schools, parents, and students. I do hope you find it useful.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rosena C. Allin-Khan".

Labour Member of Parliament for Tooting

Shadow Cabinet Member for Mental Health

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Where can I go nearby to help my mental health?

Tooting and Wandsworth are home to many great, affordable places to visit in order to help boost mental wellbeing. Being outside in nature, whether alone or with family and friends, has been proven to boost mood. All of the places below have free admission!

Tooting Common - Tooting Triangle:

The Common is undoubtedly a great place to enjoy a picnic, a game of football or a walk. A great place for young people on the Common is the Tooting Triangle Playground. There are two designated playgrounds - one for children aged 2-7 and the other for 7-16 year olds.

Location:

Emmanuel Road, SW12 0PP

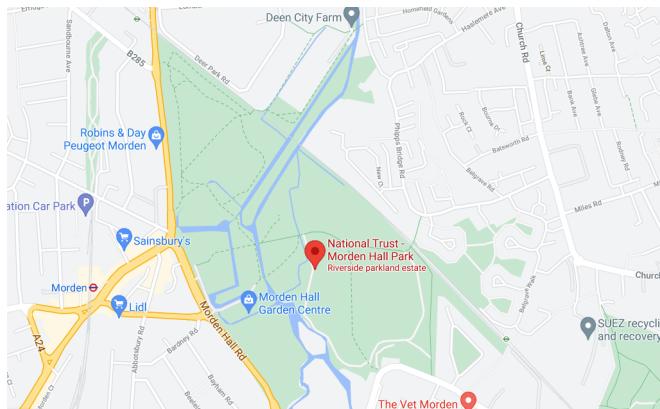


Morden Hall Park

The National Trust describes Morden Hall Park as "an oasis of green within urban South London." Open all year round, Morden Hall Park offers great scenery, a garden centre, a cafe, a playground, plus a number of educational activities for children.

Location:

Morden Hall Road, London, Morden, SM4 5JD



12 minute walk from Morden Tube Station (Northern Line) and 20 minute walk from South Morden Railway Station.

River Wandle Walk

The River Wandle consists of 15 miles of rich chalk stream habitat, beginning in South Croydon and ending in Wandsworth. Historically, the river had over 90 working mills, which makes for picturesque scenery. There are a number of routes of varying lengths along the River Wandle.

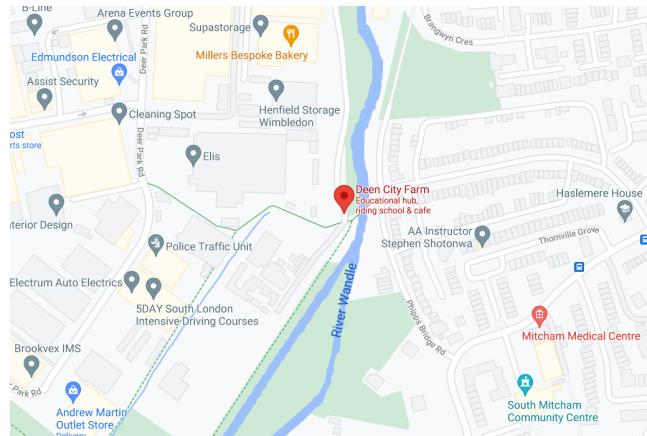
The official Wandle Trail Map offers useful information and routes to take. Merton Council also offers accessibility information on their website.

Deen City Farm

Located just off the River Wandle, Deen City Farm is an educational petting farm based in Merton, South London. The farm is open Tuesdays - Sundays 10:00-16:30 and is free to enter. It is the perfect day out for families.

Location:

39 Windsor Avenue, Merton Abbey, Nr. Wimbledon, Merton, SW19 2RR

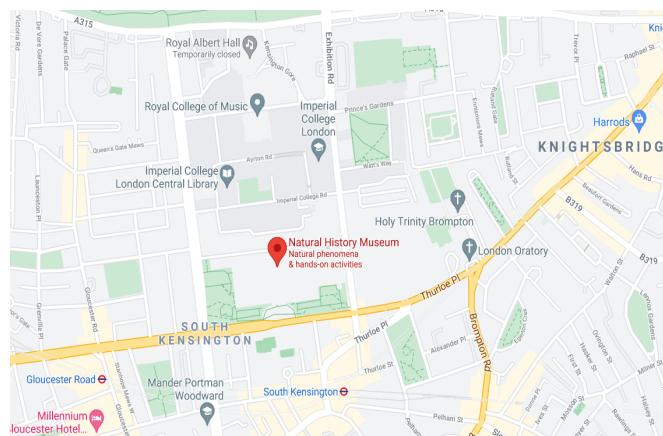


Natural History Museum and The Science Museum:

If able to travel to Central London, the Natural History and the Science Museums are great places to visit free of charge for a family day out. Free entry tickets can be booked online prior to visiting to avoid long queues on the day.

Location:

Cromwell Road, South Kensington, London, SW7 5BD



Crystal Palace Park

Crystal Palace Park is 80 hectares of Grade II listed park that has many child-friendly attractions, including the Dinosaur Trail, a maze, a fishing lake, children's farm and play area, Italian gardens and terraces, plus the Crystal Palace Museum.

Location:

Thicket Rd, London, SE19 2GA

12 minute walk from Crystal Palace Station - accessible via Southern Rail line from Balham

The 249 bus also takes you directly there in approximately 40 minutes.



Free Virtual Yoga Classes for Children in Wandsworth:

Yoga is great for both children and adult mental health. There are a number of in-person classes in Wandsworth that require a small fee, such as Mini Yoga where adults go free. For more information on this contact Naomi via email on naomi@miniyogawandsworth.com or call on 07855 334 769.

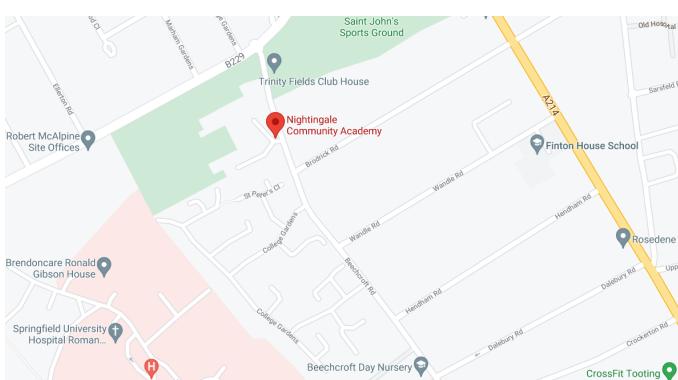
Free alternatives include great virtual yoga classes for children including:

- Cosmic Kids Yoga
- Rainbow Yoga Training
- KidsYogaStories

Tom's Farm - Nightingale Community Academy

Tom's farm is Tooting's very own farm located within Nightingale Community Academy on Beechcroft Road. The farm is primarily used to support students and provide opportunities to learn about empathy in looking after animals. However the farm has since expanded to connect with the local community.

Keep an eye out for the Tom's Farm family fun days on their Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/tomsfarmOHCAT/>



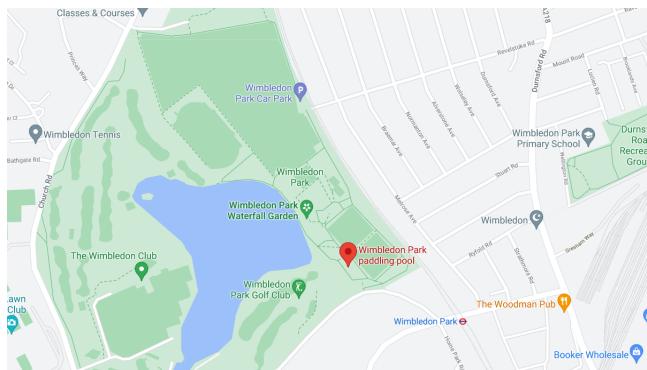
Wimbledon Sprinkler Park:

A great option for cooling down on summer days, Wimbledon Sprinkler Park has an interactive splash pad, six paddling pools and two interactive play areas - all with free admission!

Location:

Home Park Road, Merton, SW19 7HU

A few minutes walk from Wimbledon Park Tube on the District and Circle Line or accessible via the 57 bus towards Kingston.



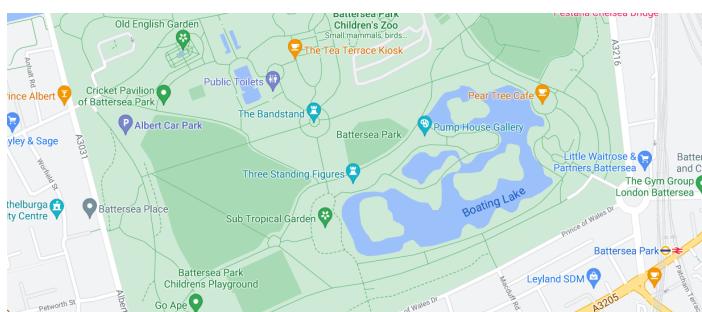
Battersea Park and the Codebreaking Walk:

Battersea Park is a stunning place to visit, with a riverside promenade, children's zoo, playgrounds, sports facilities and 200 acres of parkland. For 99p, the Tramble App can be downloaded to a smartphone to complete the Battersea Park Codebreaking Walk!

Location:

Battersea Park, SW11 4NJ

A short walk from Battersea Park station, accessible via Southern Rail services from Balham



Keeping Your Head Happy

Five child-friendly tips to promote positive mental well-being:

1. Kindness

Be kind to yourself and others. Smile at your friends at school. Always try and say something nice to them to brighten up their day too.

2. Acceptance

It's okay to feel sad, stressed and angry. Allow time for a rest and try to take part in something you enjoy, like reading a book or playing your favourite game.

3. Structure

Good bedtime routines can help you have a good night's sleep. Think about adding in some down time before you go to sleep and making this a habit. Switching off electronics and having a warm drink can help too.

4. Be active

Being active keeps you physically healthy and makes you feel good. Could you walk to school for some added fresh air and exercise?

5. Talking

You are **never** alone. Speak with friends or a trusted adult about your feelings, no matter how big or small the issue may be.

Support services for children in South West London

ChildLine

ChildLine is a free counselling service offered by the NSPCC for children and young people up until their 19th birthday. ChildLine offers confidential counselling to children on the phone, by email, or one-to-one instant messaging. The website is not visible on a browser history and the number will not show up the caller's phone or phone bill.

How to contact:

Phone 0800 1111 Monday to Friday 7.30am - 3.30am / Saturday and Sunday 9am - 3.30am

Start a chat via their [website](#) Monday to Friday from 7.30am - midnight / Saturday and Sunday 9am - midnight.

Kooth

Kooth is an online mental wellbeing community, offering peer-to-peer support, as well as access to one-to-one support with a trained counsellor through instant messaging. The service is available to all children in Wandsworth.

Kooth are able to offer weekly sessions with a counsellor free of charge at a time that suits the child. This may be talking counselling or a more specialised form of therapy, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

How to contact:

Children will be asked to register online and asked some questions to ensure they are eligible for the service. This includes being asked to confirm the local authority where they live, as Kooth is funded by local Councils - ours is Wandsworth, and then either Tooting, Earlsfield, Balham, Wandsworth or Wandsworth Town can be selected. They will not be asked for any other personal information or for their address.

To register for an account, see here: <https://www.kooth.com/signup/where-do-you-live>

SHOUT (In Partnership with Place2Be)

Shout is a free, confidential, anonymous text support service, which was previously only available to adults.

With the help of Place2Be, a charity which encourages positive mental wellbeing in schools, a dedicated text line for young people under the age of 18 has been set up.

How to contact:

Text CONNECT to 85258, free of charge.

Pzizz App

A free app available on the Apple Store or Google Play Store which aims to help quickly calm the mind, fall asleep fast, stay asleep, and wake up refreshed. It uses "dreamscapes" – a mix of music, voiceovers and sound effects designed using the latest clinical research to help improve sleep or take power naps during the day.

This is an affordable alternative to other apps such as Calm or Headspace.

Link to download and more information: <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/pzizz/>

Panic Attack Relief

Suitable for all ages, this clip is a simple breathing exercise with a moving graphic to help ease a panic attack. Panic attacks can come on suddenly and without warning, so it can be helpful to have the following breathing exercise on hand to help calm someone experiencing a panic attack.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZBa63NZbbE>

Mermaids

Mermaids offers support to children and young people struggling with their gender identity with a team of eight trained counsellors and 28 trained volunteers on hand.

How to contact:

Helpline: 0808 801 0400, Monday - Friday 9am – 9pm

Text MERMAIDS to 85258

Online webchat open Monday to Friday 9am – 9pm:

<https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/helpline-support-services/>

Calm Harm

Calm Harm is a free app designed to help people resist or manage the urge to self-harm. It is based on the principles of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) - a type of talking therapy often effective in people with mood disorders.

The app provides tasks that encourage users to distract themselves from urges to self-harm and help manage in a more positive way.

Link to download: <https://calmharm.co.uk/>

South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust

24/7 Helpline:

It is always a good idea to go to your child's GP if they are struggling with their mental health. Their doctor may find it appropriate to make a referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), who are based in a number of community locations or at Springfield Hospital.

There is also a 24/7 urgent helpline available for support on 0800 028 8000.

Wandsworth Bereavement Forum

Wandsworth Bereavement Service provides one to one bereavement counselling for anyone who lives in Wandsworth, and also for residents of neighbouring Boroughs who have been unable to access bereavement counselling elsewhere.

Children and young people receive **free** counselling.

How to contact:

Email: children@wandsworthbereavement.org.uk

Their centre is based at 192 Lavender Hill, Battersea, London, SW11 5TQ.

Albany Trust

Albany Trust is a specialist counselling and psychotherapy charity, focusing on a positive approach to sexuality and relationships. The Albany Trust offers free LGBTQ+ therapy, including specialist sessions for those who communicate through British Sign Language (BSL).

How to contact:

Email: Info@albanytrust.org or practicemanager@albanytrust.org

Phone: 020 8767 1827

Or visit Albany Trust, Balham High Road, London, SW17 7BE

Chill Panda

Chill Panda is an app that helps people to relax and manage their worries. The app measures heart rate and suggests tasks to suit your state of mind. Tasks include simple breathing techniques and light exercises to take the mind off any worries.

To download: <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/chill-panda-calm-your-mind/id1184256407>

PAPYRUS

PAPYRUS is the national charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide. Their phoneline is available to anyone under the age of 35 experiencing thoughts of suicide, or anyone concerned that a young person could be thinking about suicide.

How to contact:

Phone: 0800 068 41 41 or 07860039967 9am – midnight every day of the year

Understanding mental health conditions in children

Anxiety

Most children, and adults, experience worry from time-to-time, and this is normal. However, in some children, anxiety can begin to interfere with their day to day lives.

Signs your child may be experiencing higher levels of anxiety than usual:

- finding it hard to concentrate
- not sleeping, or waking in the night with bad dreams
- not eating properly
- quickly getting angry or irritable, and being out of control during outbursts
- constantly worrying or having negative thoughts
- feeling tense and fidgety, or using the toilet often
- always crying
- being clingy
- complaining of tummy aches and feeling unwell

In teenagers, symptoms may appear differently as the following:

- feeling restless or worried
- having trouble concentrating or sleeping
- dizziness
- heart palpitations
- sweating and hot flushes

Treatments available:

CBT and talking therapies are often one of the most effective forms of treatments for anxiety. Relaxing activities such as yoga and mindfulness are also very beneficial.

Those with long-term anxiety conditions may be prescribed an SSRI if previous treatment has not been successful. Normally, medication will be prescribed simultaneously to a talking therapy.

Depression

Depression is a health condition which causes someone to feel persistently low for a prolonged period of time. This may have been caused by a particular thing, such as bullying at school, or may just develop without reason.

Symptoms of depression in children often include:

- sadness, or a low mood that does not go away
- being irritable or grumpy all the time
- not being interested in things they used to enjoy
- feeling tired and exhausted a lot of the time

Your child may also:

- have trouble sleeping or sleep more than usual

- not be able to concentrate
- interact less with friends and family
- be indecisive
- not have much confidence
- eat less than usual or overeat
- have big changes in weight
- seem unable to relax or be more lethargic than usual
- talk about feeling guilty or worthless
- feel empty or unable to feel emotions (numb)
- have thoughts about suicide or self-harming
- actually self-harm, for example, cutting their skin or taking an overdose

Treatments available:

Children suffering from depression may be offered counselling.

In some cases, children can be prescribed medication to help them cope with their depression.

Panic Attacks

Panic attacks are a type of fear response. They're an exaggeration of the body's normal response to danger, stress or excitement. The symptoms of a panic attack are not dangerous but can be very frightening.

Symptoms of a panic attack include:

- difficulty breathing/ shortness of breath
- chest pain/ tightening of the chest
- rapid heart rate
- dizziness
- numbness
- sweating
- trembling
- pins and needles or tingling sensations
- ringing in ears
- feeling of being unreal or outside of your body
- hot flushes
- choking sensation
- shaky limbs

Most panic attacks last between 5 and 20 minutes, but some have been reported to last up to an hour. It is also normal to feel unwell after a panic attack and symptoms of anxiety may persist following one.

If your child is having a panic attack, try to stay calm and talk to them in a gentle and soothing voice. Tell them to take deep breaths and reassure them that the panic will be over soon. Once the panic attack seems to be subsiding, give them plenty of time and space to calm down.

Treatments available:

CBT, mindfulness and talking therapy can be very effective in treating panic attacks. CBT will teach your child techniques to help deal with a panic attack.

Medication is sometimes provided for children who are unable to use therapy as a way to combat the attacks on their own. Medication can range from beta blockers, a tablet which slows down the heart rate and can ease anxiety symptoms, to an antidepressant, which can help in long-term prevention of panic attacks. These tablets are not cures and are only effective in conjunction with therapy and coping mechanisms.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) occurs when someone has obsessive thoughts accompanied by a compulsion, which helps to relieve obsessive thoughts.

Symptoms of OCD in children:

- an obsession with dirt or germs
- a great need to know or remember things that may be very minor
- ongoing thoughts about doing offensive acts or forbidden, taboo behaviors
- long periods of time spent touching things, counting, and thinking about numbers and sequences
- interfering thoughts about violence, hurting or killing someone, or harming themselves

Compulsions may help to ease obsessive thoughts and help your child feel safe. These can include:

- Repeating a word, phrase or question
- Touching or tapping something a certain number of times.
- Counting to a certain 'good' number, avoiding 'unlucky numbers'.
- Going in and out of doorways a repeated number of times
- Repeated hand washing (often 100 or more times a day)
- Following firm rules of order, such as putting on clothes in the very same order each day

Support Options:

Primarily, children with OCD will be offered a psychological therapy, such as CBT.

As a secondary option, medication can be offered with the consent of both the child and parent. The most common form of medication given to children with OCD is sertraline, an SSRI antidepressant.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder caused by stressful, frightening or distressing events. Someone with PTSD often relives the traumatic event through nightmares and flashbacks, and may experience feelings of isolation, irritability and guilt.

Symptoms to look out for in children:

- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Bed wetting
- School avoidance or avoidance of certain areas or activities
- Feeling unreal and losing touch with reality
- Having physical symptoms of anxiety, such as headaches or stomach pain.

Support Options:

Children with PTSD will often be offered CBT or Eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR).

The medicine sertraline is licensed specifically for the treatment of PTSD - this is a type of antidepressant that helps boost serotonin in the body. This will only be offered if psychological therapies have not worked, or if the clinician feels medication will be beneficial alongside a psychological therapy.

Self-harm

Self-harm is when someone hurts themselves on purpose to relieve feelings of distress. People sometimes self-harm when life feels hard to cope with. The physical pain of hurting themselves can feel like a distraction from the emotional pain they're struggling with.

Signs a child or young person may be self-harming:

- Covering up, for example by wearing long sleeves a lot of the time, especially in summer
- Unexplained bruises, cuts, burns or bite-marks on their body
- Blood stains on clothing, or finding tissues with blood in their room
- Becoming withdrawn and spending a lot of time alone in their room
- Avoiding friends and family and being at home
- Feeling down, low self-esteem or blaming themselves for things
- Outbursts of anger, or risky behaviour like drinking or taking drugs

Support Options:

Children who are self-harming will often be given the same care as those suffering with depression or anxiety, as the two are closely linked. A clinician may refer a child who is self-harming to the community mental health team (CMHT) and if they feel there is a significant threat to the child's life.

Anorexia (Anorexia Nervosa)

Anorexia is a type of eating disorder, which causes people to limit how much they eat and drink. As well as limiting how much they eat, they may do lots of exercise, make themselves sick, or misuse laxatives to get rid of food eaten. The underlying cause of anorexia often relates to body confidence and a fear of being overweight or unhealthy.

Symptoms to look out for in children:

- Saying they have eaten earlier or will eat later, or that they have eaten more than they have
- Irregular or stopped periods
- Counting the calories in food excessively
- Missing meals (fasting)
- Hiding food
- Feeling dizzy
- Feeling cold or have a low body temperature
- Cutting food into tiny pieces to make it less obvious they have eaten little or to make food easier to swallow
- Wearing baggy clothing to hide their body, due to self-consciousness or to make weight loss less noticeable
- Growth of soft, fine hair all over the body (called lanugo)
- Drinking fizzy drinks to fill them up so they do not have to eat
- Blood sugar swings, potentially leading to mood swings and fainting

- Swelling in their feet, hands or face (known as oedema).

Bulimia (Bulimia Nervosa)

Young people with bulimia are caught in a cycle of eating large quantities of food (called binging), and then trying to compensate for that overeating by vomiting, taking laxatives or diuretics, fasting, or exercising excessively (called purging).

Signs to look out for:

- Frequently checking their body weight or looking at themselves in the mirror
- Organising life around shopping, eating and purging behaviour
- Feeling anxious and tense, especially around meal times or when eating in front of others
- Damage to teeth
- Swollen salivary glands
- Disappearing during or soon after eating (in order to purge)
- Hoarding food
- Distorted perception of body shape or weight
- Calluses on the backs of the hands if fingers are used to cause vomiting

Binge Eating Disorder

Those with Binge Eating Disorder (BED) eat very large quantities of food without feeling like they're in control of what they're doing. Research suggests that BED is the most common type of eating disorder.

Signs to look out for:

- Buying lots of food
- Organising life around bingeing episodes
- Weight gain
- Constipation
- Feeling anxious and tense, especially over eating in front of others
- Eating until uncomfortably full
- Eating when not hungry

Support options:

In most cases, eating disorders can be treated in outpatient facilities through a number of psychological therapies. More intensive treatment in day patient and inpatient units might become necessary if the condition worsens, if health doesn't improve in response to outpatient treatment, or there are other high risks to physical health.

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

ADHD is a behaviour condition that may make your child appear restless, unable to concentrate, or be impulsive. Symptoms of ADHD often appear from a young age and are usually picked up by schools.

Signs to look out for:

- Having a short attention span and being easily distracted
- Appearing to be unable to listen to or carry out instructions
- Being unable to sit still, especially in calm or quiet surroundings

- Excessive talking
- Interrupting conversations
- Appearing forgetful or losing things

Support options for ADHD:

There is no cure for ADHD, but the following medications can be prescribed to help ease symptoms: There are 5 types of medicine licensed for the treatment of ADHD: methylphenidate, lisdexamfetamine, dexamfetamine, atomoxetine, guanfacine.

Mental Health Glossary

Antidepressant: a medicine to help lift mood by rebalancing chemicals in the brain. There are different groups of antidepressants, like SSRIs (e.g. fluoxetine and citalopram) and tricyclics (e.g. amitriptyline).

AMHS: Adult Mental Health Services

Beta Blocker: A tablet often prescribed to relieve symptoms of anxiety and panic. They work mainly by slowing down the heart. They do this by blocking the action of hormones like adrenaline.

CAMHS: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. They are a team of people with specialist training and experience of working with children and young people with mental health difficulties.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT): CBT is a type of talking therapy used to help patients understand how they think about things and change any unhelpful behaviours. A course of CBT normally lasts between 12 and 20 sessions.

CPA: Care Programme Approach. A way that care can be planned and reviewed, often used with young people experiencing mental health problems. It involves the young person identifying their needs and making a plan of care with professionals.

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT): A type of talking therapy designed to help people understand their feelings and change unhelpful behaviour. DBT is normally undertaken for around six months. It also often involves working with groups.

Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR): a type of therapy used to help people process distressing memories and reduce their emotional impact. It is often used for those suffering with PTSD.

Interpersonal Therapy (IPT): IPT focuses on helping people address problems in their relationships with important people in their life. It is normally suggested for people struggling with depression who have already tried other types of treatment.

Mental Health Act (MHA): This is the main law that covers the treatment and rights of people with a mental health disorder.

Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT): A team of different professionals involved in a young person's care. This may include a consultant, key worker, healthcare assistants, unit doctors, therapists or social workers.

Serotonin: a chemical in the brain that helps relay signals from one area of the brain to another. Imbalances of serotonin are involved in depression. Also known as 5-HT.

Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs): A type of antidepressant. Examples include Citalopram and Fluoxetine.

WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan): A recovery system developed by people with mental health difficulties. It supports people to create their own recovery action plan by setting out their goals, the help they need to get there, and what keeps them well.

Conversation Starters

Talking to your child about their mental health can be difficult but these conversation starters might help:

"How are you feeling at the moment?"

"You don't seem your usual self."

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"I'm happy to listen if you need a chat"

Making conversation about mental health a normal part of life can encourage children to open up about their feelings and reduce stigma surrounding mental health. Anywhere is a good place to talk; in the car, walking the dog, or cooking together.



Support for Parents

As a mother myself, I fully recognise the challenges of parenting. When a child begins to experience a mental health issue, it can be easy to blame yourself. Although it can be upsetting and worrying if your child is having a bad time, and it makes your relationship with them feel more stressful, you are not a bad parent. Children often take it out on those closest to them, so you might be feeling the effect of their very powerful emotions.

Asking for some support from the GP or a referral to a counselling service is a sign of strength. These support outlets may also help:

Young Minds' Parents Helpline and Webchat

Call Young Minds for free on 0808 802 5544 Mon-Fri 9.30-4pm

Webchat service is open Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-helpline/#parents-webchat-and-email-service>

Samaritans:

Phone their helpline 24 hours a day on 116 123 for free. Or email jo@samaritans.org



Incorporating my role as the local MP and the Shadow Minister for Mental Health



In April 2020, I was delighted to take up the role of Shadow Minister for Mental Health in the Shadow Cabinet. As an A&E doctor working at St George's, I regularly console and care for young people experiencing a mental health crisis, whether caused by adverse childhood experiences, pressures from school, or for no obvious reason.

More often than not, young people arriving in A&E could have been helped much sooner with early intervention. Too many parents locally will be able to share their experiences of being unable to access mental health support for their child or experiencing long waiting times for CAMHS. Indeed, in 2019, 144,000 children had their referrals closed before treatment, because services are under huge pressure to meet targets and closing referrals keeps waiting lists down.

While the work of NHS staff is incredible and the number of charitable organisations available are vast, young people and their families deserve a functioning system that offers quick and compassionate care to help them overcome any mental health issues they may encounter.

Like many others across the country, our community is desperate for support. Time after time, I have questioned Ministers as to why waiting lists are so long and how the Government is going to implement real, tangible change in the mental health sector. I know so many are counting on us as policy makers for real change to be effective. That is why I take my role as Shadow Minister for Mental Health so seriously.

If there is ever anything I can be of assistance with, please do get in touch with me via email rosena@drrosena.co.uk or by phoning my office on 020 3621 2509.



Acknowledgements

A big thank you to the team at Ignite!Worthing, made up of child psychologists from the University of Brighton, parents, mental health professionals and families, who served as the inspiration behind this pack.

As always, a huge thank you to the organisations supporting young people's mental health, where much of the information included in this pack has originated from, including Mind, Young Minds and NSPCC's ChildLine.

