

PERSON-CENTRED CARE IN CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

What you can expect from your service

Guidance for children and young people attending children and
young people's mental health services



EBPU Evidence Based
Practice Unit

A partnership of



Anna Freud
National Centre for
Children and Families



COMMON ROOM

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What is person-centred care?

In person-centred care (PCC), healthcare staff work **with** you. You are involved in planning your care, so that the treatment matches what you need. PCC does exactly what the name says – it puts you at the centre of your care.

Why is it important?

Everyone is different, so everyone has different care needs. Person-centred care makes sure that you get the care that is most suited to you; you should be treated as a person, not an illness. Being involved in your care can also help you better understand your treatment. It is empowering, meaning you're more likely to engage with services.

What does it mean in children and young people's mental health services?

Young people should be involved with decisions about their care. The level of your involvement in your care will depend on your current situation – but you have rights and your voice should be heard.




Person-centred care should...

- ✓ help you figure out what matters to you
- ✓ help you to set realistic goals that are relevant to what you want to achieve
- ✓ help you pick the treatments that you feel most able to complete, and that are best matched to your goals and abilities.


If your care is person-centred, these are the kind of questions that should be explored with you throughout your time receiving help and support.

First steps




What can I expect?
Why was I referred?
What treatment is available?
What can I do to help myself?

Understanding




What's going on for me?
What do I want to change?

Choice




What are the options I can try?
What shall we try?

Progress



How are we getting on together?
How are things going?

Reflection



Have we done as much as we can/need to?
How has this experience been generally?



First Steps

What should I expect?

Children and young people's mental health services offer many different treatments and some might work better for you than others. When using mental health services, you have several rights to protect you and make sure you have the best experience possible.

Consent

Your practitioner must check that you and your parents/carers agree to the treatment offered. They must explain other options if you don't accept it.

Needs support

If you need assistance to make treatment accessible, for example because of a disability, this must be provided.

Access to your records

You should ask a member of staff if you would like to see your medical records.

Complaints

You have the right to formally complain if you are not happy with the service. This should not affect the way you are treated.

Your voice

You have the right to have your views and ideas considered when adults are making decisions about you and your healthcare.

Confidentiality

The things you talk about are private – practitioners shouldn't tell anyone about the conversations you have without asking you first. If you or someone else is at risk of harm, practitioners have to break confidentiality to make sure everyone stays safe. Practitioners should explain what confidentiality is and when it might be broken. If confidentiality must be broken, they should involve you in how this happens.

Why was I referred?

If you have been referred to a mental health service it means someone thinks you might need some support. You might need help with your daily life (school, family, friends, eating, sleeping, or something else), emotions or behaviour. It is ok to ask why you were referred – you, your parents/carers and the professionals might see it differently. It is important that you all understand one another.



What treatment is available?

Treatments are available to help with low mood, anxiety, self-esteem, anger, stress, behaviours, eating, sleeping, relationships, and the effects of trauma or abuse (as well as many other things).

There are lots of different treatments, such as talking therapy or art therapy. You might be seen as an outpatient, day patient or inpatient. Treatments can be one-to-one, with family, or in a group. You may be given medication to help improve your mood or to help you engage with therapy, but you should be involved in this choice.

What can I do to help myself?

- ✓ Think about what's going on for you – what you would like to work on or be able to do differently. You could talk about this with an adult you trust.
- ✓ If you have an appointment with a mental health service, you can contact them to find out more about what will happen.
- ✓ Sometimes waiting lists can be long, so you can try some things to look after yourself in the meantime, such as self-care or using support lines.
- ✓ Contact your GP and school so they understand what is happening.
- ✓ Learn about the rights and guidelines that protect you. This way you can make sure you are always getting proper care.

“Knowing your rights is really important. They help you speak up when things aren’t going right.”



Understanding

What's going on for me? (assessment)

Your first visit to children and young people's mental health services will be for an assessment. This is to find out what is going on for you: what difficulties you may have, how they affect your life, and what you would like to change. The professional will ask you and your parents/carers some questions. A good assessment will let all the people in the room share their view (it's okay if you don't all agree). The language used should be easy for you to understand.

Before the assessment, think about how things are going for you. What are you struggling with? How are your moods and what affects them? How are you finding things like eating, sleeping, school and relationships? Is anything else a problem?

Services are there to help YOU, so don't be afraid to ask questions and talk about what matters to you. It is important to be honest when talking. Professionals should never judge you.

What do I want to change? (goals or aims of therapy)

After looking at how life is going for you, you might find some things you want to change. These are your therapy 'goals'. Goals should include what you think is important, what your parents/carers think is important, and what needs to happen to keep you safe and well.

- ✓ It is okay to ask for things to be explained and there are no silly questions.
- ✓ You can take notes to the appointment so you don't forget anything.
- ✓ You can ask to talk without your parents/carers being in the room.
- ✓ You have time at the end to ask any extra questions and to check your understanding at the end.
- ✓ You can ask for some information to take home, or ask about how to look after yourself and find other support until your next appointment.



“Before I went, I sat down with a friend and went over all the things I wanted to talk about. I took a list. This really helped me feel more organised and in control of my appointment. I wasn't worried I'd forget anything.”

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Choice

What are the options I can try?

Your options will depend on your situation. Children and young people's mental health services should tell you what treatments are available, and explain what each treatment involves. Some options will have longer waiting times. Some treatments might be more intensive or require you to put in lots of work outside of the sessions. It is important to pick a treatment that fits in with your life and goals.

It might feel like you don't have any choice. Sometimes professionals can forget to involve young people in decisions. It is ok to challenge this, because your opinion matters! You have the right to have your views taken into account when adults are making decisions that affect you. Whatever your situation, you deserve personalised, suitable care.

What shall we try?

After thinking about the options, you, the professionals and your parents/carers will agree what happens next. After making a decision, staff should go over the plan so that everyone is clear on what your treatment is, how often you meet, and how long for. Your mental health service should give you a treatment plan – this says what you agreed, what to expect, and can help you track your sessions and progress.

- ✓ You should talk about what the pros and cons of each treatment are, and if you feel able to do the treatment.
- ✓ You should feel supported to make decisions; your options should be explained so that your decision is informed, and you should have time to think it through.
- ✓ It's okay to decide that you want someone else to make the choice for you, or to say that you don't want treatment. You can change your mind too!

“We agreed on a timeline for treatment. It helped me feel in control.”



Progress



How are we getting on together?

When we talk about progress, you might think this only matters after you have been having treatment for a while – but it is important to get things right from the start and make changes if you aren't happy, wherever you are in your treatment journey.

Are you getting on with your mental health team? Would you like them to do something differently? This can be something small, such as the layout of the therapy room, or something bigger such as changing treatment, medication or goals. Maybe you always forget what you talk about in sessions, and this stops you from making progress. You could agree to write down some key points with your therapist at the end of each meeting. And if you are really not getting on with a particular staff member, it is ok to talk about this. Often problems can be solved, but if not you can ask to see someone else.

How are things going? (symptom/goal tracking)

The whole point of using mental health services is so that you feel better. Is your treatment helping? Are your symptoms getting better? Are you and your therapists making progress towards your goals? These questions should help you to see if what you're doing is working. Mental health professionals will help you track your progress and goals, often with questionnaires.

- ✓ If you are sectioned, you have the right for your section to be reviewed regularly.
- ✓ Remember you have a right to complain if you think someone is doing something wrong.
- ✓ If you don't think things are getting better, you can talk about trying a new treatment.
- ✓ It is ok to change your goals.



“I didn't feel like anything was working, so I spoke to my therapist about what we could try.”



Reflection

Have we done as much as we can/need to?

When you first started treatment, you may have agreed on a timeline of when treatment would finish. Treatment can go on for longer, depending on your needs (you may also 'transition' to adult services if you would like support after your 18th birthday). Your therapists will say when they think your treatment should end, but this decision should include your views and your parents'/carers' views. Ending treatment should be a shared decision that everyone is prepared for.

Your progress should be monitored to help decide when treatment will end. This might be done by repeating the questions you were asked at the start of your treatment to see how your answers have changed.

How has this experience been generally?

When you finish treatment you should have the chance to give feedback on your overall experience. This won't affect your care, but it will help the service to learn and improve for other young people who use these services in the future.





The Health Foundation Person-centred care resource centre

Information about person-centred care together with resources from The Health Foundation and recommendations from around the web.

personcentredcare.health.org.uk



The Child Outcomes Research Consortium (CORC) is the UK's leading membership organisation that collects and uses evidence to improve children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

www.corc.uk.net

EBPU

Evidence Based Practice Unit

Founded in 2006 as a collaboration between UCL Faculty of Brain Sciences and the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, the Evidence Based Practice Unit (EBPU) bridges cutting-edge research and innovative practice in children's mental health. We conduct research, develop tools, provide training, evaluate interventions and disseminate evidence across four themes: risk, resilience, change and choice. Our vision is for all children and young people's wellbeing support to be informed by real-world evidence so that every child thrives.

www.ucl.ac.uk/ebpu

COMMON ROOM

Common Room is a consultancy led by lived experience. We connect the expertise of children, young people, researchers, practitioners and policymakers across disability, health and mental health to:

- Enable professionals and services to find the best ways of involving young people in decisions about their lives, services, and support
- Develop and deliver training to support professional to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to have difficult conversations with young people about a range of issues including safeguarding, mental health
- Involve children and young people as partners in research, policy, and service improvement projects
- Learn from lived experience through consultation and research with children, young people and families