



Young people's  
mental health services

We're in this **together**

Supporting working parents  
with young people's mental health

**A toolkit for managers**

# Mental health affects everyone, including young people

Young people experience lots of physical and mental changes as they get older. It isn't always plain sailing, but it can be especially tough for working parents who are caring for a child with a mental health problem. The stress and worry we feel when a loved one is suffering can spill into our work lives and make the pressures of work much more difficult to cope with.

Caregivers may need to take time off to look after their young person or to cope with the effects on their own mental health. Demand for mental health care is high and wait times are often long. That's why it takes all of us to make the difference to young people's mental health, including employers and people managers.

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### Share our toolkit

As a line manager, you play a key role in supporting employees who are caring for a child with a mental health condition.

We've put together a toolkit for caregivers to help support them in looking after a young person's mental health.

[Download and share our toolkit for caregivers >](#)



Read



Watch

Look out for helpful tools and resources.



Use the home button to return to this page.



# What mental health conditions might young people struggle with?

Children live with mental health problems just as adults do, and living with a condition can trigger many different symptoms. Remember, no condition is worse than another, and they're not a sign of weakness. We've added helpful support to the following topics that you can share in your own communications with your team.

## Anxiety

Lots of things can make a child feel anxious, like pressures at school, bullying or parents divorcing. There are many types of anxiety. You might have heard of general anxiety disorder (GAD), social anxiety or obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). All of which can make day-to-day living tough.

 [Anxiety information pages >](#)

## Depression

Everyone feels down from time to time. But with depression, a child will have a persistently low mood for a couple of weeks or more and will stop enjoying everyday life.

 [Depression information pages >](#)

## Eating disorders

If a young person has an eating disorder, they might have upsetting thoughts or emotions that lead them to control what they eat or what they weigh as a way of coping. You might have heard of anorexia or bulimia, both serious conditions that can leave a child very poorly.



 [Eating disorders information pages >](#)



# What other issues might young people struggle with?


## Bereavement

Losing a loved one is the hardest process most of us will experience. It can be particularly tough helping a child to cope with the death of someone they love when a caregiver is dealing with their own grief. How a child experiences and expresses grief can depend on their age and their understanding. There's lots of support out there to help both child and caregiver through this difficult time.

-  [Guide to grief and loss from Young Minds >](#)
-  [Read how grief may affect children from Marie Curie >](#)

## Staying safe online

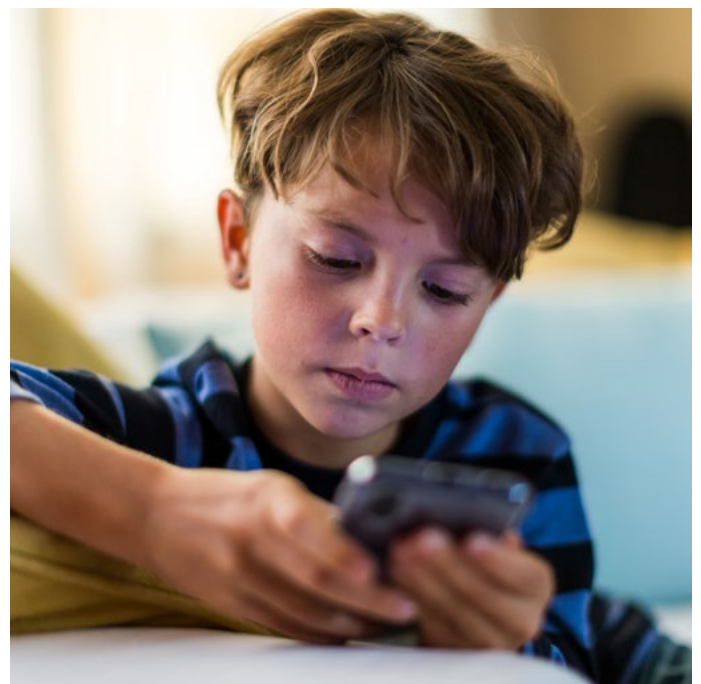
By the age of 15, most children use social media to interact with others. Whether it's TikTok, Snapchat or Instagram, these apps can be a fun way to bond with friends and learn about the world around them. We've put together some guidance, which you can share, on how caregivers can help their child develop good habits and a healthy relationship with social media.

-  [Our guidance on social media and children >](#)

## Burnout

Stress is normal and can be important for our motivation, but burnout is the result of long-term stress. Young people experience burnout just as adults do. Whilst an adult might experience burnout from a stressful job, a young person might struggle with pressures at school, friendship groups, or worry about the outside world. They might get to a point where they feel overwhelmed or emotionally drained. It's important to recognise the signs of burnout so caregivers can support their child if they're struggling.

-  [Share our Inside Health series on burnout in teenagers >](#)





## Self-harm

It can be extremely upsetting to think about a child harming themselves. There are lots of reasons why someone might want to hurt themselves. Sometimes, it's a way for somebody to manage difficult feelings, but it shouldn't be ignored.

[This guide to self-harm from Young Minds](#) has everything caregivers need to support a child through self-harm.

### Managing feelings



Share the parent's guide to feelings of loneliness in young people >



Share the guidance on helping a child with feelings of anger >



# What can affect a child or young person's mental health?

Lots of different experiences in a young person's life can have an impact on their mental health and wellbeing.



Trauma and abuse

Growing up

The arrival of a new sibling

Exams or other pressures at school

Parents who separate or divorce

Life changes such as moving house or school

Bullying

Friendship groups and relationships

Bereavement

## Are some people more prone to mental health problems than others?

There can be lots of complex factors that affect our mental health. We don't fully understand what causes somebody to develop a mental health condition. Some research suggests that conditions can sometimes run in families, but this doesn't mean that a caregiver or their child are going to become unwell if a relative has a mental health problem.

# What struggles might caregivers face themselves?

Supporting a child with a mental health problem brings lots of challenges to working caregivers.

## Commitments

A caregiver might need to take time off to attend doctor's appointments, therapy sessions or school meetings. It's sometimes the case that families will attend therapy or counselling services together to work through a mental health problem. Navigating the healthcare system to find the right support can be overwhelming in itself. All of this can be a lot to juggle, and could mean they come to work much more stressed than usual.

## Emotions

It's not uncommon for caregivers to feel a sense of guilt, worry or fear that they aren't doing enough to support their child. They might also fear they aren't meeting their own work commitments. These feelings of self-doubt can affect their confidence, and in turn, their performance at work.

## Relationships

Relationships at home and at work can also be put under strain, as caregivers try to balance their emotional availability. This could lead to feelings of isolation if they don't have strong support networks around them.

### What are the signs that an employee might be struggling at home?

- changes in their mood or how they interact with colleagues
- reduced productivity
- appearing tired, anxious or withdrawn
- increased absence
- needing to make lots of personal phone calls

You know your team, but sometimes there aren't any signs an employee is under a lot of emotional strain. This is why it's important that your colleagues feel comfortable coming forward to ask for help.



# Your help can make the difference to working parents

Poor mental health can affect the individual and those closest to them. This can have a knock-on effect on your business.

Some caregivers may miss work to support their children. They could feel they're being pulled in different directions and are constantly worrying about their child. This could lead to forgetting tasks, missing deadlines or being absent during meetings.

Looking after a child with a mental health problem is often a long term commitment with lots of ups and downs. By standing by your employees, it sends a clear message that you're committed to supporting them through the struggles and strains of their family's journey. This could give them the reassurance they need to cope and remain in work, empowering them to continue to perform at their best.



**More than two thirds**  
of parents with children aged 9-18  
have been concerned about their  
children's mental health in the  
past two years.

The Morgan Stanley Alliance for Children's  
Mental Health, 2023.



# Why is it important for people managers to support caregivers?

Caregivers who look after a child with a mental health condition may need support from their employer, and that often starts with you as a line manager understanding their needs. If you are unaware of the issues your colleague is facing, or avoid talking about them, you will struggle to understand how you can help. This could mean they start to suffer in silence, affecting their performance at work.

Caregivers often put themselves at the bottom of their list of priorities, but those who don't have additional support networks around them are especially vulnerable. This makes your role as a people manager crucial for being a listening ear when your colleague might not have anybody else to turn to for support.

## Caregiver burnout

Caregiver burnout refers to the physical, emotional and mental exhaustion which is often brought on when a caregiver is caring for a loved one's wellbeing more than their own. These people may not get the opportunity to focus on their own self-care, and their own mental health might start to suffer if they are unable to take moments for themselves.



# What are some of the things people managers can do to support caregivers?

## Get to know your employee

Make time to listen and try to understand your employee to find out what they would find supportive. Sometimes, just feeling heard can be a big weight lifted off their shoulders.

## Be flexible

Consider flexible working arrangements, such as working from home, later starts or earlier finishes.

## Create an open culture

Challenge stigma and encourage open communication so that caregivers feel comfortable coming forward and asking for help.

## Signpost mental health services

Make sure caregivers know who and where to turn to for help, for their child and themselves. You'll find key support at the back of this toolkit.

## Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs)

Encourage employees to use their EAP, if they have one. It can give them professional, confidential and practical support.

### Ask the expert

Alison Green and Helen Sachdev from Work, Me and the Baby (WOMBA) answer questions on how to support working parents.



[Watch with JAAQ >](#)





# Where can caregivers get support?

If your employee needs help, we'll get them to the right place. If they have health cover with us, they can contact us using their usual Bupa helpline or through their My Bupa app.

## Family Mental HealthLine

If they have health cover with us and are worried about the emotional wellbeing of their young person, they can speak to one of our mental health nurses. They'll listen and give them clear guidance on what to do next. Using our Family Mental HealthLine won't affect their benefits or excess.

Your employee can also call 111 to speak to an NHS nurse or mental health nurse. Remember, they should always call 999 if somebody's life is at risk or they don't feel you like they can keep somebody safe.

 [Share our young people's mental health page >](#)

**Make sure your employees know where else to turn for support. There are lots of really helpful charities:**



[Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition](#)



[Heads Together](#)



[Rethink Mental Health](#)



[Mind](#)



[Young Minds](#)

## Fast treatment

If your employee has a young person on their policy and mental health benefits in place, we'll aim to provide treatment for a child's mental health problem within 10 days. Tell them they can get help by speaking to a GP remotely in their My Bupa app.

 [Find out more about our young people's mental health service >](#)

## Finder

Employees can browse our directory of Bupa-recognised consultants, psychologists, therapists, counsellors and other professionals. If they don't have health cover with us, they can still choose from our recognised consultants, they'll just need to pay independently.

## Accessing NHS CAMHS

Caregivers will usually need to speak to their GP first to get a referral to their local CAMHS. They can also ask their child's school to make a referral, either through their pastoral team or special educational needs coordinator.



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