

How to... promote young people's wellbeing within primary care



**RIGHT
HERE**

Introduction

This 'How to' guide is one of a series designed to bring together learning from the five-year Right Here programme initiated by Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) and the Mental Health Foundation (MHF).

Each guide focuses on a particular theme arising from the programme's work across the UK and aims to provide practical pointers and suggestions to support the development of innovative and effective responses to the mental wellbeing of young people aged 16–25.

This particular guide is aimed at those working within primary care settings to support the development of youth-friendly practice in relation to mental health and wellbeing.

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Why this guide is needed

It is now understood that adolescence and early adulthood is the peak age of onset for mental health problems and the period when there is a need for initial care.¹ Poor mental health is closely related to many other health and social concerns for young people, including educational achievements, employment, relationships, and substance use.²

Promoting good mental health and preventing mental health problems in young people is therefore an issue of considerable significance, in terms of both public health and social wellbeing.

General practice continues to be the place where most mental health problems are identified and treated – it is the key setting for mental health support across all age ranges.³

However, we know that many mental health problems continue to go undiagnosed in primary care settings,⁴ and that young people experience a range of barriers to accessing mental health support in primary care.⁵

Services are often not designed or delivered in ways that young people wish to engage with, and the fear of being stigmatised for having a mental health problem is also a major factor in young people's decisions not to access help from mainstream services.⁶

This guide has been designed to help GPs and other primary care practitioners develop practice that is 'young-person friendly', and better identify and address the mental health needs of the young people who come to see them.



What do young people think about primary care?

In 2011, young volunteers from Right Here Brighton and Hove undertook research with over 170 young people on the topic of their experiences of using primary care services, both positive and negative.⁷

This research highlighted a number of areas of primary care that influenced how young people viewed the quality of the support received.

These were:

- How GP practices are organised
- The attitudes and behaviours of those working within primary care
- The mental health treatment and support options available

In this guide, we explore these areas individually, describing some of the issues young people have experienced and highlighting ideas and solutions adopted by individual practices to address these barriers.

How GP practices are organised

The way in which GP surgeries are organised can sometimes seem mystifying or inaccessible to young people. However, there are also many examples of steps that individual practices have taken to make themselves more young-person friendly.

On the next page are the key organisational barriers and bridges, as suggested by young people.

“I wanted to see a woman, but I got given a man that I had never met before, and the appointment was really rushed so I just felt like he didn’t care... my mum asked me ‘did he say this, did he ask that’ and it really worried me that he hadn’t.”

Young person

✘ Barriers	✔ Bridges
<p>Young people often don't know what their rights are.</p> <p>Specifically, they may not know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how to make an appointment; ■ how confidentiality will be maintained; ■ that they can ask for a double appointment; ■ that they can request a specific GP. 	<p>Consider setting up a young person-specific page on the practice website, providing this information in clear accessible language.</p> <p>See: www.burnhamandberrowmedicalcentre.co.uk</p> <p>Promote this short film on your website and within your practice: www.howcanifilm.com</p>
<p>Young people can feel uncomfortable in waiting rooms, feeling visible and potentially judged by other waiting patients.</p>	<p>If possible, provide a private space where young people can wait.</p> <p>See: www.gashouselane.gpsurgery.net</p>
<p>Young people do not always know how they can provide feedback about their experiences.</p>	<p>Offer young people the opportunity to provide feedback on the quality of the service received through patient groups or written feedback.</p> <p>See: www.kingsnorthmedicalpractice.co.uk</p> <p>Promote your local Healthwatch, which can receive feedback about your practice.</p>
<p>Practices are often busy, highly pressurised environments that are not always conducive to reflection about mental wellbeing.</p>	<p>Think about how to support the mental health and wellbeing of the staff working within the practice, as well as the patients.</p>

“I just think that GPs should be trained to work with teenagers, and perhaps teenagers on their own in regards to mental health and physical health. There should be doctors that deal with teenagers and doctors that deal with adults.”

Young person

The GP Champions for Youth Health Project

The GP Champions for Youth Health Project aims to transform the delivery of health services for young people by creating new links between GPs and local voluntary youth organisations – particularly Youth Information, Advice and Counselling Services (YIACS).

Right Here Sheffield is leading one of ten pilots throughout England. With a particular focus on mental health, the partners are aiming to address current barriers in the GP system, particularly through identifying any specific barriers for different ethnic communities. The partnership is working with the Pitsmoor Surgery to improve referral routes for young people and support the practice (and its website) to be more ‘young person’ friendly.

The project is a partnership between the Association for Young People’s Health, Youth Access, and the Adolescent Health Group of the Royal College of GPs. Further details about the project and work in the other nine sites can be found here:

www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk/5/page/71/gp-champions-project

Attitudinal barriers

How young people who visit GP practices to talk about their mental health are made to feel is vitally important to their overall experience of the support received.

Young people involved in Right Here identified a number of attitudinal

barriers which prevented them from talking openly and honestly about their mental health concerns to GPs, which are described below.

We have also listed some of the suggestions young people described to overcome these barriers – in other words, the young people’s ‘Dos’ and ‘Don’ts’.

 Don't	 Do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Speak in medical jargon, particularly without explaining what these terms mean. ■ Act in an overly formal manner – it can appear intimidating. ■ Dismiss the concerns young people raise in consultations. ■ Make assumptions about young people’s lifestyles based on their age and stereotypes of young people, particularly in relation to alcohol, substance misuse and sex. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Make direct eye contact, smile and say hello on meeting young people. ■ Proactively discuss moods and emotions – if the GP mentions it, the young person knows it is ok to talk about it. ■ Show genuine concern and interest in what the young person has to say. ■ Treat young people as adults and respect their opinions about treatment options. ■ Discuss treatment options with the young person and involve them in making decisions about the best way to proceed. ■ Promote the Doc Ready website and app (see case example on page 7) to young people registered at your practice. ■ Treat every young person as an individual, not a stereotype. ■ Provide training for practice staff on mental health awareness and communicating with young people.

“I have now started to write letters to my doctor and take them in before my appointment and she thinks it’s great and the relationship has improved and I am now getting more of the help and support I want. I have been going to the doctors for five years to do with my mental health and only feel listened to now.”

Doc Ready User

Doc Ready website and app

Doc Ready is a website and app that aims to help young people get the most out of their GP appointments when it comes to dealing with mental health issues. By preparing young people with an agenda, details about their appointment, and information about what to expect from a GP visit, it is designed to help both the patients and doctors get the most out of the limited resources and time that they have to share.

The concept behind Doc Ready was generated by a group of young people through the Innovation Lab process, set up by Right Here, Comic Relief and the Nominet Trust. Young people have been involved in every stage of its development.

www.docready.org

The support options available

Of considerable importance to the young people involved in Right Here has been having a choice in the type of mental health support on offer. In particular, many expressed the desire for non-medical support options, focusing on talking therapies and social support.

Right Here developed a range of non-clinical approaches to supporting mental health, in recognition of young people's expressed needs.

These have included peer support, exercise and physical activities, 'gender-based' approaches, and arts and drama.⁸

Within primary care, young people described the barriers and bridges to good support, as presented in the table below.

"We need common sense and the human touch, not a person being clinical."

Young person

✘ Barriers	✔ Bridges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ GPs are often seen as being too quick to prescribe medication, with little discussion of alternatives. ■ Referrals to other services can take a long time. ■ GPs do not always know about the range of young people's services that are available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Get to know the young people's services in your area – young people value being seen by GPs who are well informed about the options available. ■ Consider signposting young people to voluntary organisations and physical and creative activities that can boost confidence and self-esteem. ■ Alternative solutions should be presented and outlined with discussions about the pros and cons to allow young people to make empowered choices. ■ Make use of Find Get Give (see page 9) and support its further development in your area.

"You would want comfort and for someone to take you seriously, then guide you through choices like medication and counselling."

Young person

Find Get Give

Find Get Give is an online listings database for mental health services working with 16–25 year-olds in England. It was born out of the same Innovation Labs process that generated Doc Ready (see page 7) and is being developed by Right Here Brighton and Hove.

The work that has been undertaken on Find Get Give has been in conjunction with young people aged 16–25, living in Brighton and Hove, Eastbourne, Sheffield, and Newham. Young people have helped build, test, and give feedback on the design. Find Get Give is currently adding to the website to ensure it offers the widest choice possible to young people.

Find Get Give also offers young people the opportunity to give feedback about their experiences with different mental health services. While this feedback is moderated, it is felt that praise and/or criticism both enables other young people to make informed choices, and allows services to act upon the experiences their service users have had.

www.findgetgive.com

How to assess whether it's working

We hope that the suggestions provided in this guide will be useful in terms of providing direction for how to make general practice more accessible to young people, particularly with regard to supporting their wellbeing. However, to fully understand the mental health support needs of the young people in your practice, and the extent to which the practice is addressing them effectively, it may be necessary to undertake some broader needs assessment and evaluation activity.

Here are Right Here's top five suggestions for evaluation, based on our experience of working with primary care in our four project areas.

- 1 Undertake research with young people in your area to discover what their mental health needs and support preferences are. If required, work with a local youth organisation to support this activity.
- 2 Recruit young people to existing Patient Participation Groups, to enable them to give feedback about the service in your practice.
- 3 Routinely ask young people to give written feedback on the quality of the service they have received.
- 4 Work towards obtaining the Department of Health's 'You're Welcome' quality criteria, as an indicator that your practice is supportive and welcoming to young people.
- 5 Work with local youth organisations to support the development of a regional young person's primary care group to consult on regional primary care structures and commissioning process – issues that are wider than those that can be addressed at an individual practice level.

About Right Here

Right Here is a £6 million programme, which is running from 2009 to 2014, and is jointly managed by Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Mental Health Foundation. It aims to develop effective new approaches to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people in the UK aged 16–25. Right Here focuses on intervening early to help young people at risk of developing mental health problems and on tackling the stigma associated with mental health problems that often prevents young people seeking help.

Right Here operates across four different projects, in Brighton and Hove, Fermanagh, Newham and Sheffield. Each project is led by a youth charity, working with other voluntary and statutory organisations. The participation of young people is fundamental to how all of the projects operate, as is partnership working.

Young people work with youth workers and mental health professionals to design, commission and deliver activities, while Right Here's local delivery organisations work with public sector partners to increase the influence and impact of their work. The projects are intended to bring lasting benefits to the young people they work with, the lead organisations and their partners, and youth mental health provision.

Right Here is also a partner in the Innovation Labs initiative, which is developing a range of new digital tools to support the mental health of young people.

Right Here is being independently evaluated by the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR). The final evaluation report from IVAR will be published in the autumn of 2014.

PHF and the MHF will use the learning from these evaluations to influence practice more widely and make the case for policy changes, where appropriate.





Interim results from the independent evaluation of Right Here show that its activities have made a number of differences to young people's lives. They:

- Developed the confidence to consider and/or take up new opportunities.
- Acquired new skills and techniques for spotting and then handling changes in their emotions, especially the onset of feelings of anger and violence.
- Improved or made changes in their relationships with family members and their peers, including leaving violent or damaging relationships.
- Felt able to be themselves in groups, and forge relationships with others, sometimes for the first time. This helped combat isolation; it also helped develop a sense of security and identity.
- Come to realise that 'everyone has mental health' and grasped its relevance to themselves, as well as understanding that there is less difference between those who are 'well' and 'unwell' than they first thought.⁹

In December 2013, Right Here won the National Positive Practice Award for Mental Health and Primary Care.

References

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For further information about Right Here, including some of the resources developed through the projects, please visit www.right-here.org.uk

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www.
right-here.
org.uk

Paul Hamlyn Foundation
www.phf.org.uk

Mental Health Foundation
www.mentalhealth.org.uk



Right Here is a collaboration between Paul Hamlyn Foundation, a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (no.5042279) and a registered charity (no.1102927) whose registered office is at 5-11 Leake Street, London WC1X 9HY, and Mental Health Foundation, a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (no.2350846) and a registered charity (no.801130), Scottish registered charity (no. SC 039714), whose registered office is at Colechurch House, 1 London Bridge Walk, London SE1 2SX.