

Young people with mental health issues

Research briefing for professionals working with young people

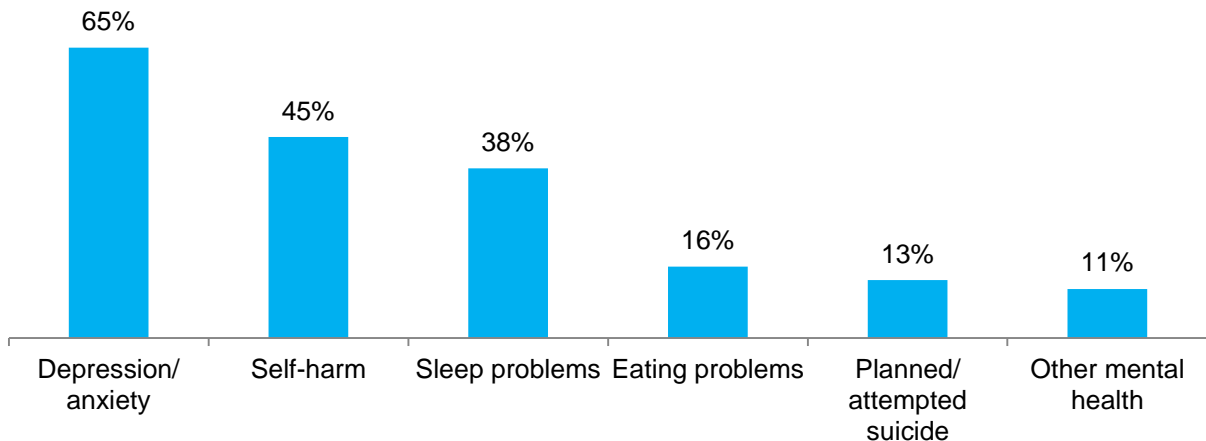
Three quarters (75%) of the young people supported by young people’s violence advisors (YPVAs) or other specialist practitioners disclosed mental health issues. More of these young people were not in education, employment or training, were homeless, and were experiencing current abuse than those without mental health issues. The support provided to young people with mental health issues was more intensive, with longer case lengths, more contacts and more interventions put in place. Mental health issues were more prevalent amongst young women, but increased use of risk assessment for young men supported may lead to improved identification.

In the year to January 2015, caseholders supported 255 young people who disclosed mental health issues.

Caseholders supported 255 young people (75%) who reported that a mental health issue caused them difficulty in their day-to-day life. This is disproportionately high compared to research¹ which estimates that one in 10 young people will experience mental health issues.

The most frequently reported cause of difficulty in day-to-day life was depression and/or anxiety, which was reported by 65% of young people. Nearly half (45%) of young people self-harmed and more than a third (38%) had sleep problems.

Mental health issues affecting day-to-day life



In addition to their own mental ill-health, more than a quarter (27%) of the young people supported were at increased risk as a result of parental mental health issues. Caseholders had concerns about the emotional wellbeing (84%) and feelings of blame (65%) for the majority of young people with mental health issues.

¹ www.time-to-change.org.uk/youngpeople

Fewer young people with mental health issues are in education, employment or training.

Almost half (46%) of young people who reported mental health issues were not in education, employment or training. This is compared to a third (33%) of young people who did not disclose mental health issues. Caseholders supported young people with education, training and employment. Of young people with mental health issues, 33% were supported with education and 22% were supported with training and employment.

A higher proportion of young people with mental health issues were homeless or had moved out of the family home.

Less than half (49%) of young people with mental health issues lived with their parents, which is compared to nearly two-thirds (65%) of those without. One in four (27%) young people with mental health issues lived independently, and one in twenty (5%) was homeless.

Living arrangement	Mental health issues	No mental health issues
(Step)parents	49%	65%
Lives independently	27%	15%
With partner	9%	5%
Other family	7%	8%
Homeless	5%	1%
Children's home	4%	3%
Other	4%	3%

Emotional abuse was the most frequently recorded type of abuse currently experienced by young people with mental health issues.

89% of young people reported current abuse, compared to 69% of those with no mental health issues. Emotional abuse, jealous and controlling behaviours, physical abuse and harassment and stalking were reported by more than half of the young people. Each type of current abuse was most frequently perpetrated by the young person's current or ex-boyfriend. Almost half (46%) of those experiencing current abuse had also experienced some form of historic abuse.

The majority (89%) of risk assessed young people with mental health issues were at high risk of serious harm or death, and 57% were referred to a MARAC.

Caseholders provided intensive support to young people with mental health issues.

Young people with mental health issues were supported for an average of 11 weeks, and had 12 contacts with the caseholder. 88% of young people had a safety plan completed, and 91% were supported with their wellbeing. Caseholders supported two-thirds (68%) of young people with help and advice around their health. One in four (29%) young people with mental health issues were supported to access counselling, and 18% engaged with mental health services.

In comparison, those who did not disclosed mental health issues were supported for a shorter period on average and had fewer contacts with the caseholder. Despite the intensity of support provided, safety outcomes for young people with mental health issues were less positive than for those without. At the point of case closure, 54% of young people with mental health issues reported that there were not experiencing any abuse. By comparison, 65% of those without mental health issues reported no abuse at case closure.

Increased use of risk assessment for young men may lead to improved identification of mental health issues.

Just one in three young men (35%) disclosed any difficulties related to their mental health. In comparison, the vast majority (80%) of young women disclosed one or more mental health issues at case engagement. Both the adult and young people's version of the SafeLives Dash risk checklist contain questions which intend to identify any concerns around mental health. In 65% of young men's cases, no risk assessment was completed. Completing a thorough risk assessment with all young people is integral to understanding their experiences and identifying additional vulnerabilities.