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YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND
CARERS, WRITTEN BY YOUNG
PEOPLE

YOU
DON'T
CARE



NOTHING
IS
WRONG

Welcome!

This guide was written and illustrated by young people aged 13-20 from Croydon Drop In's Young People's Team – The Voice. It was put together specifically to be offered to parents, carers and any adults who live or work with young people.

In this booklet we speak about our own experiences of being supported through our own mental and emotional health challenges. There are quotes and tips from us and our peers as we felt it was important to include our words and thoughts.

All the young people we spoke to had similar experiences of the barriers they faced when attempting to access services and often felt that they were not taken seriously, were patronised and had been let down.

The experiences they had with their parents and carers differed, whereby some young people found their parents to be very supportive and helpful and others felt that the adults could have been better equipped at handling things.

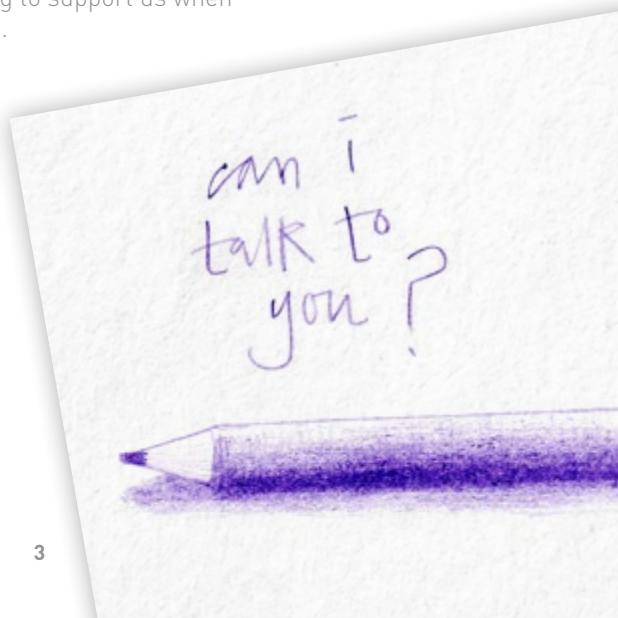
This guide is intended to draw these experiences together to inform adults who are trying to support young people and to pool together a list of services that are available to support young people and their families as well as professionals involved in our care. The Young People's Team exists to inform the work that CDI carries out and ensure young people are at the heart of the charity.

It is The Voice's hope that this guide will improve the experience of many more young people through raising awareness and educating parents, carers and professionals involved in our well-being to support us when we are experiencing challenging times.

Communicate with us

We discussed our experiences of communicating with parents, carers, teachers and professionals and talked about what worked well and what wasn't so effective.

We concluded that when we had experiences of good communication the outcomes were more positive and we were then able to go on feeling supported and understood.



Do try to...

- Listen – respond appropriately, let us speak
- Be understanding of situations
- Show that you care – “It’s going to be okay”, “What can I do to help you?”
- Be supportive – use open body language and appropriate eye contact
- Think about how you respond and your attitude towards us, keeping calm and collected
- Give useful advice and have shared decision making, research and take an active role to show you care
- Understand where we are coming from – be open to new ideas, be considerate and remember times have changed since you were a teenager!
- Be open-minded
- Take our opinion into account – let us have a say and allow us to express our concerns however we need to
- Give us your full attention, stop watching TV and put your mobile down – “If I’m coming to you it means I care about your opinion so make sure I’m your priority”
- Give us space if we need it
- Accept us, try and see beyond the issue in front of you and rather than ignoring us, ask simple questions like “What has happened?”
- Tell me I am doing good and give praise where you can
- Make us feel comfortable and that we can talk to you in confidence
- Give reassurance and let us know “It’s okay not to be okay”
- Be open and adjust to what we need
- Allow us to explore different opportunities and explore ourselves as individuals



Try to avoid...

- Being dismissive
- Being dramatic or over reacting (even though it might be difficult)
- Making it all about yourself
- Being judgmental
- Jumping to conclusions or making assumptions
- Comparing us to another child or sibling
- Telling us we are just attention seeking
- Being aggressive – don't shout or raise your voice
- Pressurising or adding to the stress – we already have a lot of academic stress like exams, and high expectations placed on us
- Giving a lecture
- Being patronising
- Comparing issues – yours are not more important
- Saying things like "You look fine to me", "There are people far worse off than you", "Smile", "You don't need pills", "You're just bored", "It's just a phase", "You're mad", "Stop feeling sorry for yourself", "You have money, why are you depressed?", "You have a loving family so what's the problem?", and "Get a grip"



Top tips

Make talking about mental health and other issues a normal part of life. If you are open and honest about mental health, drugs and alcohol, sexual health and anything else, we are more likely to come to you to talk.

Be sensitive to any changes you may notice. Look out for clues as to how we may be feeling. Pick up on things like our choice of words, tone of voice and body language. This doesn't necessarily mean there is an issue, but being able to distinguish between what's 'normal' for children and what isn't can be helpful and can show you care. Taking note of our behaviours can also give you an idea of what our triggers may be and this can help to better prepare us both for what could come.

When talking to us give your full attention, take us seriously, ask open questions and offer empathy. Put yourselves in our shoes sometimes. Let us know you are always there to talk when we are ready. If we become angry or upset try not to take it personally, we just need to talk and let it out!

Let us tell you what we need to in a safe space if you can. Think about the surrounding area and how maybe it'd be better to go for a walk or do an activity together while we talk. Allow us some privacy.

Try not to let your own feelings get in the way or let your fear of what we may need to say steer you away from having difficult conversations. Give yourself time to process what we have told you and to reflect afterwards. But promise to follow up and come back to us...



We have shared some experiences so that parents, carers and other professionals, like teachers, can get an idea of what has really made a difference for us...

- When I told my mum, she was disappointed and cried. She said things like “It will never be the same again” and “I can’t trust you”. I was upset and felt that I was hurting her by asking for help. I felt I was hurting other people and that it was all my fault. My step dad became over protective, he removed my ability to communicate with others, believing it was the influence of others that had made me this way. My mum supported me when she could finally understand. We got to know each other in a new way. our relationship has grown and is stronger now. She supported me by finding CDI and she kept me busy and helped me get my self-esteem up.
- My form tutor was the first person to help and arranged for a cover teacher to take her class so she could spend time talking with me. She said that they would need to let my parents know about how I was feeling. I saw Talkbus on my way home and found the advice supportive. They gave me the courage to speak to my mum myself when I got home. Mum was upset but said “We can sort this out”. This was helpful for me.
- One of my teachers said “You are who you are” and “Rise above it”, whereas another teacher said “It’s your own fault” and “Suck it up”.



- My head of year at school was helpful because he gave me time and understood what I needed. When I lashed out, he didn’t respond as a disciplinarian, he understood and he was honest and told the truth even if I didn’t want to hear it. Even though I am in a different year now I know I can find him in school and talk to him if I need to.

- When I found CDI I thought that it would be hard to talk to a stranger but I was pleased with my counsellor. She gave me helpful tips for dealing with negativity which made me feel it's alright to talk about it.
- My school referred me to a service but I found the professional patronising and they continued to focus on my family rather than me as an individual, which was unhelpful.
- My dad was told via my mum and then things between them became weird. My dad would use the things I had told him against me and throw things back in my face during arguments.
- It helps me if I write things down and then read it out to my parents. We also write and respond to each other using post-it notes and letters.
- It's about being comfortable. I don't feel that way with professionals – "It's not what you say, it's how you say it."
- Things were awkward with Mum and we couldn't speak to each other. We would shut ourselves in our own rooms and hide away.
- I was referred to a service and found it patronising and unhelpful because they would say things like "It will be okay", "Get a grip" and "I understand". This made me feel I was not 'ill enough' for them to be able to help me.



Support and signposting

Support for young people, parents and carers, families and other professionals

We have included lots of services that we have used and where you can find support for you and your young person in Croydon and online, but here are some things you may like to know about what is out there.

Your young person's GP should be able to help and is usually the first point of call if you have any concerns. If possible, accessing the GP on more than one occasion over a period of time can help to build up a picture of the young person's challenges and can be useful when referring to and accessing other services.

Your young person may be referred to CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services). There may be a short wait before the counsellor or psychiatrist gets in touch but there are other places you can find help.

CDI (Croydon Drop In)

Check the website for opening times and to check where the Talkbus is.

You can even check on Instagram at [cdi_talkbus](#)

132 Church Street, Croydon, CR0 1RF

t: [020 8680 0404](tel:02086800404)

www.croydondropin.org.uk

The Bridge/Metro

[11-25's LGBTQ]

t: [020 8305 5004](tel:02083055004)

e: youth@metrocharity.org.uk

www.metrocharity.org.uk

Croydon Talking Therapies

[18+ IAPT]

t: [020 3228 4040](tel:02032284040)

e: croydoniapt@slam.nhs.uk

slam-iapt.nhs.uk/croydon/contact-us

Getting It On

[13-19's sexual health]

www.gettingiton.org.uk

Croydon Young People Service

youngcroydon.org.uk

MIND in Croydon

t: [020 8668 2210](tel:02086682210)

e: admin@mindincroydon.org.uk

www.mindincroydon.org.uk

NHS Go

Free app [16-25's]

www.healthylondon.org/our-work/children-young-people/nhs-go

Off The Record

[Counselling/refugees/asylum seekers/young carers]

t: [020 8251 0251](tel:02082510251)

e: croydon@talkofftherecord.org

talkofftherecord.org

Off The Record Online Counselling

[14-25's]

talkofftherecordonline.org

Parents & Professionals

www.practitionerspacecroydon.co.uk

Carers Centre

t: [020 8688 7219](tel:02086887219)

www.croydoncarers.org.uk

Croydon Voluntary Action

t: 020 8253 7060
www.cvalive.org.uk

Turnaround Centre

(14-21's drug and substance misuse)
t: 020 8760 5530
www.croydon.gov.uk/community/youthsupport/turnaroundcentre

Girls Youth Club

Every Thursday 5-7pm
The Cassandra Learning Centre
1433a London Road
Norbury, SW16 4AW
t: 07534 904618

Fathers Forum

A support group for fathers to share issues, advice and offer support to each other
t: 07939 041428
e: fathers.forum18@gmail.com

Parents of Teenagers

A support group for parents with teenagers, Mondays 6:30-8pm
St Stephens Church
e: parents-of-teenagers@outlook.com

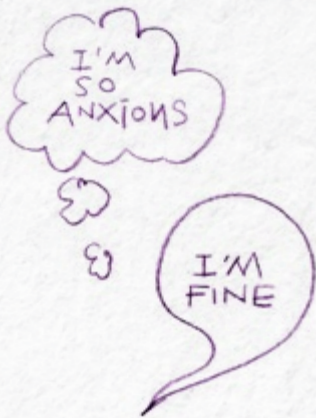
Family Lives

Contact us about all aspects of family life including child development, issues with schools and parenting/relationship support. We provide support around family breakdown, aggression in the home, bullying, risky teenage behaviour and mental health concerns of both parents and their children.

c/o Carers Information Service
24 George Street, Croydon, CR0 1PB
t: 020 8663 5653
24hr helpline: 0800 800 2222
e: familysupport@familylives.org.uk

Relate

Children and young people's counselling
Croydon Relate
122 Church Street, Croydon, CR0 1RF
t: 0300 100 1234



National

Calm Harm

(Self-harm awareness)
Free app: calmharm.co.uk

Childline

t: 08001111
www.childline.org.uk

FRANK

(Advice on Drugs)
t: 0300 123 6600
www.talktofrank.com

Gendered Intelligence

genderedintelligence.co.uk

Rape & Sexual Abuse Support

t: 0808 802 9999
www.rasasc.org.uk

National Self Harm Network

www.nshn.co.uk

Samaritans

t: 116123
e: jo@samaritans.org

#StayAlive

Free app: www.prevent-suicide.org.uk

Young Minds

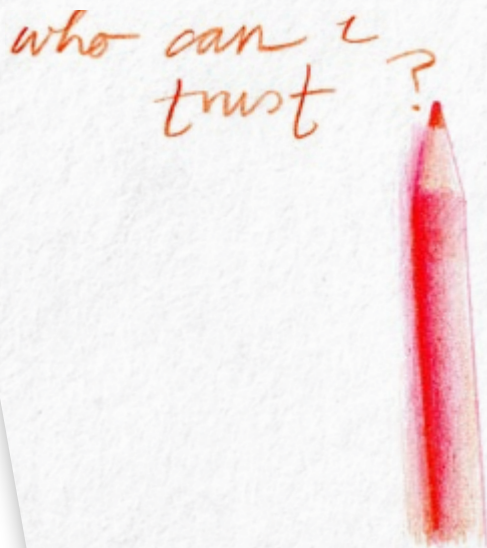
(Parent and carers)
t: 0808 802 5544
www.youngminds.org.uk

Youth Access

www.youthaccess.org.uk

NSPCC

t: 0808 800 5000
www.nspcc.org.uk



SANEline

A national out-of-hours mental health helpline offering specialist emotional support, guidance and information to anyone affected by mental illness, including family, friends and carers. Open every day of the year from 4.30pm to 10.30pm

t: 0300 304 7000

Time to Change

(Challenging mental health stigma and discrimination)

www.time-to-change.org.uk

Peaceful Parent

(A useful newsletter for parents)
www.peacefulparent.com

Eating Issues

Spotting an eating related issue can be difficult as the symptoms can be hidden quite well, but if you do notice a change in a young person's eating habits or diet there is advice and support available:

Beat

Helpline: 0808 801 0677

Youth line: 0808 801 0711

www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk

To Be Honest

Helpline: 03000 11 12 13

Option 1 – support line

Option 2 – family and friends

e: support@anorexiabulimiacare.org.uk

www.tobehonest.org.uk



Drugs and alcohol

It's not unusual for young people to experiment with substances, but you can have an open conversation about this and provide them with all the information they may need:

Frank

www.talktofrank.com

Turning Point

www.turningpoint.co.uk

Sexual health

It can sometimes be embarrassing to speak to a young person about sex, for both of you, but being comfortable and open can help the young person come to you with any questions. Below are some places that you could signpost for sexual health advice and services:

The Point

Croydon Sexual Health Centre
Croydon University Hospital
(Formerly Mayday), London Road,
Croydon, CR7 7YE
Tuesdays 3-5:45pm (Under 18's only)
t: **020 8401 3002**

Getting it On

(A useful website where you can look up all the services in your area)
www.gettingiton.org.uk

Self-harm

If you need immediate and urgent help, always call 999 and ask for an ambulance. It can be difficult for someone to open up about self-harm and sometimes they may not be able to explain why. Self-harm could be a way of coping with difficult emotions and therefore it is important that the young person can keep safe whilst seeking for help and support. The best thing is to be calm and patient. There are some good sites for advice and support online:

National Self-Harm Network

(Has a forum for support)
www.nshn.co.uk

SelfharmUK

(Dedicated to self-harm recovery, insight and support)
www.selfharm.co.uk

Get Connected

(Offers help by telephone and email for young people under 25 who self-harm)
t: **0808 808 4994** (1pm – 11pm)



Suicidal thoughts

If you suspect a young person may have had dark thoughts or are feeling that they want to end their life, it can be very scary for both of you. The first step is to not be afraid to talk about it! It is important that they know that they are loved and that you are there for them and that you are willing to listen to them without judging, making assumptions or panicking.

You could start by finding support from the following places:



GP

This could be your first point of call and they could attend with you or a friend if they wanted to. The doctor will be able to advise or refer to services for support or else here are some ideas....

Papyrus

(Suicide prevention advice for young people)

HOPELINEUK: 0800 068 4141

Text: 07786 209697

e: pat@papyrus-uk.org

www.papyrus-uk.org

Samaritans

(24 hour support for anyone going through a crisis)

t: 01273 772277

Text: 07725 909090

e: jo@samaritans.org

R U OK?

(Advice on having that conversation with anyone who you think may be struggling)

www.ruok.org.au

Grassroots Suicide Prevention

Free app #Stayalive available from prevent-suicide.org.uk

If Immediate and urgent help is needed go to A&E with the young person or call 999 and ask for an ambulance.

At A&E you can request to see the duty psychiatrist who can assess you and give you appropriate help.

Looking after yourself

When looking after a young person and their needs, it is easy to forget that you need to take care of yourself too.

If we make time for ourselves to recover, recuperate, relax and reflect, you can better support young people as you will be in a better place yourself.

Some things you can do to look after yourself or relieve stress could be to eat healthily, get enough sleep, stay active, do some exercise – maybe go for a jog or a swim, walk the dog or even dance! – listen to music, take an adult education class, start a new hobby, meet new people, see your friends or have a soak in a bubble bath.

You can't get it right all the time and that's okay. We all make mistakes and if we learn from them then we'll know better next time.

So even if you lose your temper, just apologise so that young people know it's okay to make mistakes and you can both move forward.

But remember, sometimes it's better to pick your battles and walk away.

It may also be a good idea to find someone you can talk to yourself. You can find other parents to talk to in support groups or on online forums where you could even post anonymously.

You may need to consider some form of counselling for yourself if your child's behaviour has brought up past feelings for you.

Although you are responsible to keep children safe, accept that your child's behaviour is not always all your fault. You may be overwhelmed or not the best person to help so don't be ashamed to ask for help yourself. It could end up helping both of you...



Glossary

Here is a list of terms that you may have seen within this booklet or that you may come across whilst accessing services.

ADD / ADHD

Behavioural symptoms that include hyperactivity and impulsiveness.

Anorexia

An eating disorder characterised by immoderate food restriction and irrational fear of gaining weight, as well as a distorted body self-perception.

Anxiety

Range from feelings of uneasiness to immobilising bouts of terror, including panic attacks. If a person cannot shake their worries, or if the feelings are affecting their everyday activities, talking to someone would be the first step.

Bipolar

AKA manic depression, often with extreme mood swings with recurrent episodes of depression and mania (being high or up).

BME

Black and minority ethnic.

CAMHS

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

CBT

Cognitive behavioural therapy – a talking therapy that can help someone manage problems by altering the way they think and therefore behave.

Counsellor

Someone who provides advice and support to another person or persons.

Depression

A mood disorder characterised by intense feelings of sadness that persist beyond a few weeks. It is associated with many physical symptoms such as disturbance of sleep, appetite and concentration. Often associated with anxiety.

Dual diagnosis

A term used to describe patients with both mental health issues and substance misuse.

EMDR

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing – a therapy to try and reduce your reaction to memories and triggers, often related to a traumatic event.

LGBTU

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and unsure.

OCD

Obsessive compulsive disorder – which can cause severe anxiety in those affected.

Panic attack

A period of intense fear or apprehension that can happen suddenly and last minutes or hours.

Personality disorders

A group of conditions characterised by an inability to get on with other people and learn from experience. People with a personality disorder may find that their beliefs and attitudes are different from others and their behaviour is unusual, unexpected or offensive.

Primary care

Health service provided by your GP.

Psychiatrist

Someone who can diagnose mental health problems and prescribes medication.

Psychologist

Someone who deals with the way the mind works and helps people to cope more effectively with their mental health issues.

Psychosis

A mental health issue that may stop a person from telling the difference between reality and their imagination.

PTSD

Post traumatic stress disorder – a type of anxiety caused by stressful, frightening or distressing events.

Resilience

The ability to recover quickly from difficulties or problems.

Schizophrenia

A disorder that can make people experience things that may not be real, there are many different types of schizophrenia and one person's experiences may be different from others.

Self-harm

A way in which someone might express distress or choose to communicate. There are many different forms, for example scratching, cutting or hitting.

Secondary care

Medical care provided by a specialist or facility, usually through a referral from a GP.

Stigma

Judging something negatively before you fully understand it.

Suicidal thoughts

A thought about ending your own life, possibly including making plans.

Wellbeing

Someone's mental state, how they feel and how well they can cope day to day. Our wellbeing can change from day to day, month to month or year to year.



Thank you

To CDI's Young People's Team - The Voice who bravely and confidently told their stories with the intention of helping to improve the lives of other local children, young people and family members. Tinika Wynters, Eleanor Towner, Shannon M, Emily Anaya, Jacob, Skye, Gina and Danique.



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