

A group of diverse young people, including a young man with dark curly hair, a young man with glasses, a young man in a tan jacket, a young woman with sunglasses on her head, and two young women with long hair, are smiling and looking towards the camera. They are standing in front of a red telephone booth with the word 'TELEPHONE' and a crown emblem on it. In the background, the Big Ben clock tower is visible. The overall scene is bright and positive.

Rethink
Mental
Illness.

Closing the
treatment gap:

a snapshot of what's needed

Seven key principles

A whole-system approach to children and young people's mental health must be based on the following key principles:



Preventative:

Developmentally appropriate and needs-based support focused on prevention and earlier intervention is essential for addressing the development and escalation of mental health needs before these persist into adulthood.



Integrated and partnership-led:

Strong collaboration across sectors, such as education, health, and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations, ensuring a holistic approach is taken to supporting children and young people's mental health.



Co-produced:

Engaging children, young people, and their families in service design can ensure that mental health support is responsive, culturally sensitive, and shaped by lived experience.



Accountable:

Clear policy goals and accountability mechanisms guide service delivery, ensuring that local services meet the government's mental health ambitions for children and young people.



Non-stigmatising:

Accessible, non-stigmatising routes into support ensure that children, young people, and their families feel comfortable and are not discouraged from engaging with mental health services.



Comprehensive and sustainably resourced:

Sustainable funding and targeted support are essential for bridging gaps between services, providing continuity of care and preventing disengagement, particularly during transitions.



Evidence-based and data-driven:

An effective whole-system approach relies on shared data, integrated information systems, and robust research to improve service planning and treatment outcomes for children and young people.

Partnerships in action

Several successful partnerships between the NHS and VCSE organisations demonstrate the importance of this approach.

Circle - an alternative to A&E for children and young people in crisis

Circle is a specialised centre providing immediate mental health support for children and young people in crisis, offering a safe and welcoming alternative to Accident and Emergency (A&E) visits. Collaboration with various service providers, including CAMHS teams, social care, and drug and alcohol services, Circle aims to reduce A&E admissions by providing timely intervention and guiding young people to appropriate care pathways¹.

Boost - an interim support service for young people on CAMHS waiting lists

Boost is a collaborative initiative between Together As One and Berkshire CAMHS, designed to offer immediate support to young people with complex mental health needs while they await specialist therapy from CAMHS clinicians. Through personalised plans and one-on-one support from Boost Workers, they aim to empower young people, improve their understanding of mental health, and prepare them for their upcoming CAMHS therapy, ensuring they receive timely assistance during the waiting period².

Mental Health UK's Bloom and Your Resilience - educational workshops that help young people learn about mental health

Mental Health UK's Bloom and Your Resilience programmes collaborate with schools, community organisations, and mental health professionals to improve youth mental health resilience. Between 2022 and 2023, these initiatives reached over 34,000 young people and 2,300 adults initiatives, providing training in school settings, summer camps, and local authorities. To ensure that the programmes meet diverse needs, they engage in co-production with underserved communities and partner with existing mental health services, including Mental Health Support Teams and CAMHS, to extend their reach and effectiveness^{3 4}.

1. Mind - [Circle - Hammersmith, Fulham, Ealing and Hounslow Mind](#)
2. Together As One - [Boost Programme](#)
3. Mental Health UK [Bloom](#)
4. Mental Health UK [Your Resilienc](#)

We've Got This - a peer mentoring programme for young people needing mental health support

We've Got This, coordinated by Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership, is a peer mentoring programme for 16-25-year-olds in Somerset needing mental health support. The programme is delivered by five partner organisations offering diverse activities including sports, arts, music, and technology, allowing young people to choose mentors based on shared interests. As part of Somerset Open Mental Health's integrated community care, We've Got This can both receive referrals from and connect participants to a wide range of clinical and social support services.

Sheffield Safe Space - a community based alternative to hospital admission for young people

Sheffield Safe Space was a pilot residential service offering up to 72 hours of round-the-clock support for young people experiencing a mental health crisis, providing a community-based alternative to hospital admission. The service addressed a 53% increase in youth mental health crises in Sheffield over four years, offering tailored wellbeing activities and non-clinical interventions to help young people manage their current crisis and prevent future ones. Staff collaborated closely with other professionals, including CAMHS teams and local authority social care, to integrate the service into the mental health crisis pathway and ensure comprehensive support during and after a young person's stay. Impact assessments showed improvements in young people's wellbeing following their time in the service, with professionals reporting that nearly two-thirds of referrals prevented a Tier 4 admission, demonstrating the programme's effectiveness in providing appropriate care and reducing pressure on hospital services.



What needs to happen?

The government's plans to expand mental health support in schools and open early access hubs are positive steps towards closing the treatment gap. These programmes will be essential pieces of an integrated mental health system where all providers work together effectively, and no young person misses out on support.

1. A long-term strategy

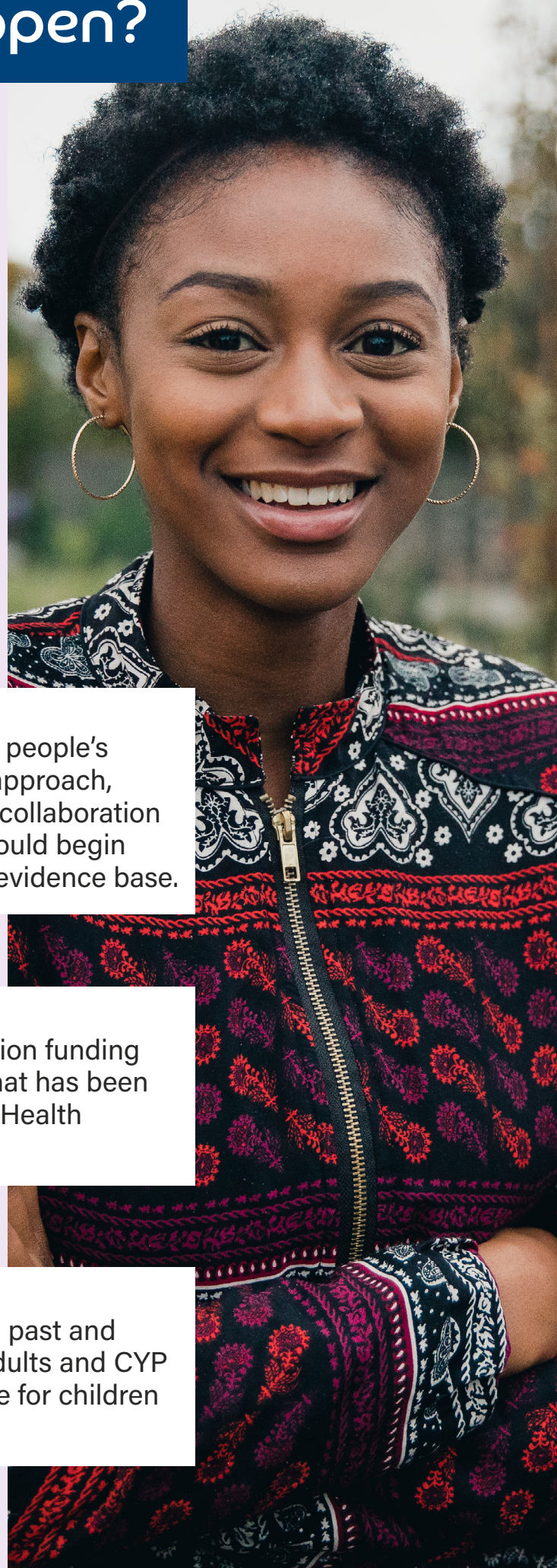
A long-term strategy for children and young people's mental health which takes a whole system approach, prioritising service integration and effective collaboration between NHS and the VCSE sector. This should begin with piloting trailblazer sites to develop the evidence base.

2. Resource

Dedicated annual transformation or integration funding for CYP mental health services mirroring what has been provided to support the Community Mental Health Transformation for adults and older adults.

3. Continuous learning

Continued efforts to monitor and learn from past and current transformation initiatives for both adults and CYP to support a whole-system approach to care for children and young people.





facebook.com/rethinkcharity



x.com/rethink



rethink.org

Leading the way to a better quality of life for everyone severely affected by mental illness.

For further information on Rethink Mental Illness
Phone 0121 522 7007
Email info@rethink.org

rethink.org



Rethink Mental Illness, a company limited by guarantee. Registered in England Number 1227970. Registered Charity Number 271028. Registered Office 28 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7GR. Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (Firm Registration Number 624502).

© Rethink Mental Illness 2024.