



Hertfordshire Partnership
University NHS Foundation Trust



Young Carers Mental Health Booklet



Designed for Young Carers by Young Carers from Hertfordshire

Our  values

Welcoming Kind Positive Respectful Professional

Acknowledgements

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Image provided by Young Carers in Hertfordshire; Young Carers with the pizzas they made at the Young Carers Conference 2018

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What is this booklet about?

If you are under 18 and looking after a loved one who could not manage without your support, then you are a young carer.

Did you know that in Hertfordshire there are roughly 8,000 young people who are caring for someone in their family? Many of these are caring for someone with a mental health condition. **You are not alone!**

Anyone could become a carer at some point in their life. It doesn't matter what your culture is, your age, your family, where you live etc. The important thing is that you know that support is out there for you.

This booklet has been written to help you to understand a bit more about how a mental health condition might affect someone you are caring for and to show you what support can be found within Hertfordshire.

Myth-buster

Myth: *Mental illness does not affect young children as all children have mood swings.*

Fact: *Up to one in five children in the UK have a recognised mental health condition, and may not receive the support they need.*



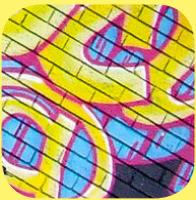
1 in 5

What is Mental Health?

Mental health is about how we feel about ourselves and how we see the world around us. When we talk about mental health we are usually talking about how healthy someone's mind is. We all have times when we are unhappy or moody but also times when we are happy and full of energy. Both of these things relate to mental health.

When someone has a mental illness it means that their mind has become unwell. This could also mean a change in the way they think and feel about things as well as a change in their mood. If you are caring for someone who feels like this it is important that you know how to get the right kind of support that is tailored to you and your family.

Mental illness is a lot more common than people think, but people are often too scared to talk about it. Talking about a mental health condition is the best way to make sure that someone feels supported to understand what is happening to them.



Myth-buster

Myth: *Mental health conditions are very rare.*

Fact: *Mental health conditions affect one in four people. Often people don't talk about their problems because they are embarrassed or afraid.*



1 in 4

Why do people become unwell?

Firstly it's really important to say that it is **NOT YOUR FAULT** that a loved one is unwell.

No-one really knows why people become unwell. Everyone is different and deals with life in a different way. The following table shows some of the things that can affect someone's mental health:

How is it caused?	What is the effect on someone?
Environment 	This could mean it is difficult to deal with things that are going on in your life. This could be a job, schoolwork or the break up of a relationship or problems at home.
Biology 	We all have chemicals in our bodies that can affect how we are feeling. E.g. excited, happy, sad, scared, nervous, afraid. For some people, these chemicals can change and make them behave in a way that is not usual for them. The person will not necessarily see that they are behaving differently and may hide the problem from other people.
Family History 	Sometimes more than one person in your family might have a mental health condition. Just because there is a history of mental health conditions in your family that does not mean to say that you will be affected.

Someone's mental health can be affected by one or more of these things; different people cope in different ways and this can be impacted by their own life experiences. Getting the right kind of support at the right time can really help someone to feel better.

Living with a mental health condition

It's important to remember that signs and symptoms can vary, depending on the particular mental health condition, circumstances and sometimes other factors. Symptoms from mental health conditions can affect behaviours, emotions and thoughts.

Below are common signs and symptoms of mental health conditions:

- Feeling stressed or anxious a lot of time
- Sudden mood changes
- Feeling depressed
- Feeling angry or irritated a lot of the time
- Problems sleeping
- Low energy or motivation
- Changes in eating habits such as bingeing or not eating
- Losing interest in things that you normally enjoy

In more serious situations it can also include things like:

- Feeling paranoid
- Hearing or seeing things that other people don't
- Self-harming behaviours, such as cutting, pinching or burning yourself
- Using lots of alcohol or drugs



Lots of different things can make someone become unwell. These are often known as 'triggers' because a situation, thought or feeling may trigger someone to become unwell.

Common triggers are:

- Work and family stress
- Financial stress
- Change such as a new house, new job or family break down
- Experiencing discrimination, perhaps because of their ethnicity, sexuality or religion
- Having long-standing educational difficulties
- Dealing with the death of someone close
- Having a long-term physical illness
- A traumatic childhood

Myth-buster

Myth: *Children are too young to get depressed.*

Fact: *Depression affects one in every 50 children under 12 years old, and one in every 20 teenagers. That's over 800,000 children in the UK alone.*



Myth-buster

Myth: *It is a normal part of ageing for old people to be tired and to lose interest in activities they used to enjoy. It's also normal for them to have problems sleeping.*

Fact: *These are all signs of depression. Depression in older people often goes unnoticed and untreated.*

Making it easier for you

Caring for someone can be very difficult, particularly if you are also coping with school, college or a job. Sometimes you might feel angry because you don't get to do everything you want to do. It's okay to feel like this but it is important that you get support so that you can have a break from caring and do the things that make you happy. This might be spending time with your friends, watching movies, going shopping or other things that you enjoy doing.

The person you are caring for will most likely be getting some support for their mental health condition from a local health service. This could be your GP (Doctor), a Counsellor, a Social Worker or someone else who is trained to give mental health support.

These people should be giving you information about how you can better support your loved one, but they can only do this if they are told that you are a carer.

If you would like to speak to someone about what support is available to you as a carer, and you are under the age of 18, you can contact:

- Hertfordshire Targeted Advice Service (TAS) on 0300 123 4043 and ask for the young carers team. They provide support for you and your family as well as one to one support for young carers
- Carers in Hertfordshire – Providing support to young carers once their needs have been assessed by TAS

Please see the contact page for more information on local support, including support for young carers who are aged 18 or under.

What is HPFT?

- Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (HPFT for short) is committed to providing excellent health and social care for both people with mental ill health and those with a specialist learning disability. We provide mental health and social care services to people of all ages
- The Trust works in close partnership with Hertfordshire County Council and also with other NHS organisations to promote and support mental health in the community. Some of our services are also provided in Buckinghamshire, Norfolk and Essex
- Our Trust Values have been developed in partnership with people who use our services, carers, staff, commissioners and stakeholders and put in place to ensure that as a Trust we provide a great service

Our  values

Welcoming Kind Positive Respectful Professional

Myth-buster

Myth: *People with schizophrenia are often dangerous and violent. It is common for people with schizophrenia to kill people.*

Fact: *People with schizophrenia are actually more likely to harm themselves than they are to harm other people. The incidence of violence in people with schizophrenia is not much higher than in the general population.*



Who's who in HPFT?

- **Clinical Nurse** – Specialist nurses with a particular interest in thoughts and feelings; they are there to listen to and support you and the person you're caring for.
- **Clinical Psychologists** – Professionals that are trained to help individuals find the link between their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. They may suggest different things for the person you are caring for to try and help them cope with their difficult feelings.
- **Dieticians** – Specialists trained to provide nutritional (Food and Drink) advice and to support and monitor you and the person you are caring for with these dietary needs.
- **Family Therapists** – work with the whole family to discuss changes that can help everyone in the family.
- **General Practitioner (GP)** – they are the first point of call for ANY health care needs, physical or mental. GPs do not work for HPFT but they do work closely with us.
- **Primary Mental Health Worker** – often accessed through a GP (Doctor) to provide support and advice to individuals with mental ill health.
- **Psychotherapist** – they offer more in-depth therapy to work through feelings and the reasons behind them with the person you're caring for.
- **Social worker** – professionals that work with you, the family and other services you are working with to ensure that everyone is supported and getting the help that they need.

Different types of common mental Health conditions

Depression

Depression is a term that is used to describe feelings of sadness about life, typically these feelings pass in due time. However, sometimes these feelings don't go away after a couple of weeks, or they come back. If you recognise some of these behaviors in the person you are caring for, it could be a sign that they are depressed.

Mild depression can cause a person to be low spirited, which can make everyday life a bit hard. Major depression (known as clinical depression) can cause feelings of hopelessness in life.

Some forms of depression

- **Seasonal Affective Disorder** – this type of depression relates to day length and weather
- **Postnatal depression** – is found within new mothers and can be referred to as “baby blues”
- **Bipolar disorder** – this can cause major mood swings and alternate depression with periods of mania (a state of unusually high mood and energy levels). During the period of high mood a person may carry out over ambitious tasks or ideas and mania is normally followed by periods of severe depression

Anxiety

People with anxiety difficulties get extremely worried about things. Everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life. For example, you may feel worried and anxious about sitting an exam or having a medical test or job interview. Anxiety is the main symptom of several conditions, including:

- **Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)** – a long-term condition which causes you to feel anxious about a wide range of situations and issues, rather than one specific event. People with GAD feel anxious most days and often struggle to remember the last time they felt relaxed. GAD can cause both psychological (mental) and physical symptoms
- **Social anxiety disorder (social phobia)** – a persistent fear of social situations and being around people. It's one of the most common anxiety disorders. Social anxiety disorder causes intense, overwhelming fear over what may just be an everyday activity like shopping or speaking on the phone. People affected by it may fear doing or saying something they think will be humiliating

Post-traumatic stress disorder

The term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is used to name a range of symptoms that may develop in response to experiencing a traumatic event, like a family break down, a death and (very commonly) war and often shows as a delayed response to the event.

Eating Disorders

Attitude towards food that causes someone to change their eating habits and behaviors. A person with an eating disorder may focus excessively on their weight and shape, leading them to make unhealthy choices about food with damaging results to their health.

Eating disorders include a range of conditions that can affect someone physically, psychologically and socially. The most common eating disorders are:

- **Anorexia Nervosa** – when someone tries to keep their weight as low as possible, for example by starving themselves or exercising excessively
- **Bulimia** – when someone tries to control their weight by binge eating and then deliberately being sick or using laxatives (medication to help empty their bowels)
- **Binge eating** – when someone feels compelled to overeat



Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)

OCD symptoms can range from mild to severe. For example, some people with OCD may spend an hour or so a day engaged in obsessive-compulsive thinking and behaviours. For others, the condition can completely take over their life.

Although OCD affects individuals differently, most people with the condition fall into a set pattern of thoughts and behaviours.

The pattern of OCD:

- **Obsession** – your mind is overwhelmed by a constant obsessive fear or concern, such as the fear your house will be burgled
- **Anxiety** – this obsession provokes a feeling of intense anxiety and distress
- **Compulsion** – you adopt a pattern of compulsive behaviour to reduce your anxiety and distress, such as checking all your windows and doors are locked at least three times before leaving the house
- **Temporary relief** – the compulsive behaviour brings temporary relief from anxiety but the obsession and anxiety soon return, causing the cycle to begin again



Substance misuse

People with substance misuse difficulties are addicted to, or being harmed by, their use of drugs or alcohol. Generally this is a way of coping or expressing/suppressing overwhelming emotional distress. Your genes, mental health, family and social environment all play a role in addiction.

Risk factors that increase your vulnerability include:

- Family history of addiction
- Abuse, neglect, or other traumatic experiences in childhood
- Mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety
- Early use of drugs
- Method of use — smoking or injecting a drug may increase its addictive potential

Psychosis

Is a medical word used to describe mental health problems that stop the person from thinking clearly, telling the difference between reality and their imagination, and the way they act.

The two main symptoms of psychosis are:

- Hallucinations – where a person hears, sees (and in some cases smells) things that are not really there; a common hallucination is when people hear voices in their head
- Delusions – where a person believes things that, when examined rationally, are obviously untrue; such as believing that your next door neighbour is secretly planning to kill you

The combination of hallucinations and delusional thinking can often cause severe disruption to someone's view of the world, thinking, emotions and behaviours. This can be often referred to as having a psychotic episode.

Self-Harm

Self-harm is when somebody intentionally damages or injures their body. It is a way of coping with or expressing overwhelming emotional distress. Often the intention is to punish themselves, express their distress or relieve unbearable tension. Self-harm can also be a cry for help.

There are many different ways people can intentionally harm themselves, such as:

- Cutting or burning their skin
- Punching themselves
- Poisoning themselves with tablets
- Misusing alcohol or drugs
- Deliberately starving themselves (anorexia nervosa) or binge eating (bulimia nervosa)



Treatments and Therapies

Talking Therapies

- **Cognitive Behaviour Therapy** – is a form of talking therapy that aims to help change the way that someone thinks about a problem or issue, which will help them to manage their problem. CBT can be used in tackling conditions such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, drug addictions and eating disorders
- **Psychotherapy** – is another form of talking therapy that treats emotional problems and mental health conditions. It allows you to look deeper into your problems and worries and deal with troublesome habits and a wide range of mental health conditions
- **Group therapy** – Group Psychotherapy or group therapy is a form of Psychotherapy in which one or more therapists treat a small group of people together

Family and Systemic Psychotherapy

Family Therapy helps people in a close relationship help each other. It enables family members to express and explore difficult thoughts and emotions, to understand each other's experiences and views and to appreciate each other's needs, whilst building on strengths and making useful changes in their relationships and their lives.

Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT)

Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) is a time-limited treatment that encourages someone to regain control of their mood. This treatment typically lasts 12–16 weeks.

Art therapy

Helps people to find an artistic outlet for often complex and confusing emotions, which they may find hard to express verbally. They can also gain self awareness and confidence.

Drama therapy

Uses role play, voice work, myth, ritual and storytelling. Movement and objects can also be used expressively without words. This type of therapy can help increase a person's self awareness and offer a creative way for an individual or group to explore and solve personal and social problems.

Medication

Doctors may prescribe medication for some people. Medication can be a short-term solution used to get some people over the immediate crisis. Although for some people medication may be a long-term treatment that enables them to live or manage with severe or long-term mental health condition. Many people do not want to stay on medication for a long time, but it can help some people to lead the kind of lives they want to lead, without relapses and re-admissions to hospital.

For further information on medication go to <http://www.choiceandmedication.org/hertfordshire/>

Top Tips from young carers

Although many Young Carers put the person they are caring for first a lot of the time, it is important to remember that you are important too, and looking after your health is just as important as the health of the person you are caring for! The following tips are provided by young carers in Hertfordshire:

- Take time out when you can to enjoy yourself
- Be Proud
- Don't be afraid to ask for help
- Make time for friends
- Meet other young carers
- Bullying is not OK
- Find a homework club
- Take time for yourself
- Try to get in a routine where possible
- Eat regularly and try to get enough sleep
- Find an activity
- Don't give up
- Remember that YOU are important and there is support available for you



We are proud to support the Hertfordshire Young Carers app, developed by Carers in Hertfordshire in partnership with East and North Herts NHS Trust, which can be downloaded on the Google Play store at:

play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ycih.main.app

What celebrities say about mental health...

Prince Harry – “I have probably been very close to a complete breakdown on numerous occasions when all sorts of grief and sort of lies and misconceptions and everything are coming to you from every angle. The experience I have had is that once you start talking about it, you realise that actually you’re part of quite a big club.”

Demi Lovato – “I just think mental illness is something people need to learn more about. I want people to know it’s okay to ask for help and it’s okay to have a mental illness.

Wentworth Miller (talking about what you can do yourself) - “The reality is you might have to be your own tribe. You might have to be your own best friend. That’s not something they are going to teach you in school. So start the work of loving yourself.”

Kristen Stewart – “Between ages 15 and 20, it was really intense. I was constantly anxious. I was kind of a control freak. If I didn’t know how something was going to turn out, I would make myself ill, or just be locked up or inhibited in a way that was really debilitating,”

JK Rowling – “What’s to be ashamed of? I went through a really rough time, and I am quite proud that I got out of that”

Lady Gaga – “I said to myself, ‘Whatever is left in there, even just one light molecule, you will find it and make it multiply. You have to for you. You have to for your music. You have to for your fans and your family.’”

Stephen Fry – “If you know someone who is depressed, please resolve never to ask them why. Depression isn’t a straightforward response to a bad situation; depression just is, like the weather.”

Nicole Sherzinger – “I had such a great life on the outside, the Pussycat Dolls were on top of the world, but I was miserable on the inside. I’m never letting that happen again; you only get one life”

Myth-buster

Myth: Addicts are weak people. They aren't sick and money shouldn't be wasted on helping them get 'well'.

Fact: Over half of all people addicted to drugs and alcohol have a mental health condition. The most common are depression and anxiety conditions.

Dictionary

Advocacy – is when an independent professional supports an individual to get their views heard on issues that affect their life.

Assessment – this is where professionals may talk to you and the person you are caring for to discuss the difficulty they are experiencing and to think of a plan of action that may help them.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) – is a type of talking therapy that can help someone to manage their problems by changing the way they think and behave.

Compulsion – is an irresistible impulse to act, regardless of the rationality, it's a feeling of being compelled and is related to Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

Confidentiality – means not telling others what you tell our service professionals in private. There are rules about confidentiality and professionals are only told what they need to know in order to help.

Consent – means giving your permission to something that affects you, such as receiving a service, or having information about you shared.

Discharge – is when the person you are caring for officially leaves the service. This could be from an inpatient unit or a therapy group.

Fact – a fact is something that is proven to be true.

Hallucination – is something someone sees, hears, smells, tastes or feels things that doesn't exist outside their mind.

Informed Consent - means that you fully understand what you are agreeing to.

Intervention – this is another word for treatment, it means that the person you're caring for is working with professionals to help with their mental health condition. Intervening is like stopping a problem from going further, with the hope that it will make the situation or difficultly better over time.

Isolation – this is when someone withdraws from wanting to be around people, places or things.

Myth – a myth is something that is untrue.

Referral – this is when a service is asked to offer some support to the person you are caring for.

Triggers – lots of different things can make someone become unwell. These are often known as triggers because a situation, thought or feeling may trigger someone to become unwell.

Myth-buster

Myth: *People aren't discriminated against because of mental health conditions.*

Fact: *Nine out of ten people with mental health conditions experience stigma and discrimination.*



Answers to your questions

What is mental health?

Mental health is about how we feel about ourselves and how we see the world around us. When we talk about mental health we are usually talking about how healthy someone's mind is.

Should I let my school know, I'm a Young Carer?

Informing your school or college that you're a Young Carer will allow them to be able to offer you additional support and they will also be more understanding about meeting your needs.

What is the definition of a Young Carer?

Young Carers are children and young people who look after someone in their family who has an illness, a disability, or is affected by mental ill-health or substance misuse.

Young Carers often take on practical and/or emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult. The tasks undertaken can vary according to the nature of the illness or disability, the level and frequency of need for care and the structure of the family as a whole.

What do I do if I become unwell?

If you become unwell it's important that you get the support you need, you should be able to get this support from your GP, Carers in Herts and the Targeted Youth Services.

How can Carers in Herts help me?

Carers in Herts are able to arrange for a Carers Assessment to be carried out to see what support they can offer you, as well as offering you the chance to meet other young carers via their Carers Council and organised activities.

Contact page

National Organisations

- **Carers Trust** – Carers Trust works to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, unpaid, for a family member or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems. With their Network Partners, they aim to ensure that information, advice and practical support are available to all carers across the UK.

Tel:0844 800 4361

Website: www.carers.org

- **Young Minds** – The UK's leading charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people.

Website: www.youngminds.org.uk

- **Carers UK** – Carers UK is a charity set up to help the millions of people who look after an older, disabled or seriously ill family member or friend. Carers UK provides information, advice and support for carers. By bringing carers together, they provide a stronger voice which shapes their campaigns to make life better for carers and influences policy makers, employers and service providers, to help them improve carers' lives.

Tel:0808 808 7777

Website: www.carersuk.org

Hertfordshire

- **Carers in Hertfordshire**

They give support and information to unpaid family and friends who look after someone. They provide a space for Carers to discuss practical and emotional concerns around caring and opportunities to share experiences with others. Carers in Hertfordshire offer a free service to all carers who live in Hertfordshire or care for someone who lives in Hertfordshire.

Tel: 01992 586969

Website: www.carersinherts.org.uk

- **Young Carers in Herts**

Provides support and services for young carers in Hertfordshire; including access to young carer advisors and the opportunity meet other young carers to get support, share stories and talk about what it's like being a young carer.

Web: www.ycih.org

Tel: 01992 586969

- **YC Hertfordshire (formally Youth Connexions)**

YC Hertfordshire provides youth work projects and programmes, information, advice, guidance, work related learning, outdoor education and support for young people aged 13-19 (to 24 for young people with learning disabilities). For young people leaving care, support is provided to the age of 21. YC Hertfordshire also run young carers projects all across Hertfordshire.

Web: www.ychertfordshire.org/advice-and-support/young-carers/

Tel: 0300 123 4043

Hertfordshire

- **Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (HPFT)**

HPFT is committed to providing excellent health and social care for both people with mental ill health and those with a specialist learning disability.

Our main phone number is: 01707 253800

Membership Office: 01707 253903

Website: www.hpft.nhs.uk

If you need to talk about an urgent mental health problem please contact the Single Point of Access: 0300 777 0707 between 08.00 and 19.00 hours or 01438 843322 between 19.00 and 08.00 hours

- **Hertfordshire County Council**

Hertfordshire County Council's services, and those provided by District and Borough councils in Hertfordshire. Please email for carer information.

Tel: 0300 123 4040

Website: www.hertsdirect.org/services/healthsoc/carersupport

Email: hertsdirect@hertfordshire.gov.uk

- **Families First Young Carers Team**

This service can provide young carers and their families with a range of support. It is part of Children's Services at Hertfordshire County Council. You can ask a member of staff to refer you for support.

Website: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/familiesfirst

You are not alone

“Don’t be afraid to talk to someone”

Shannon

“Stay strong”

Kasey

Samaya’s Story – age 18

Being a carer is never easy, no matter what your age. There are similar challenges faced every day by young, adult and young adult carers and the feelings and emotions experienced are much the same too. However being a young carer or a young adult carer often seems the hardest as it’s the time when you should be experiencing life and learning and growing yourself, but instead are left caring for somebody. People often don’t realise the work that goes on behind closed doors when caring for somebody or the physical or emotional strain that the carer is put under. It’s okay to feel sad and alone, to be confused or angry or to want to go out with your friends and to do the things that other people your age are able to do without a second thought, or to feel like nobody understands; in fact feelings like this are very normal. But you are not alone and there are people that understand and can give you the support that you need, and they can also introduce you to other young carers too! You don’t have to feel alone anymore.

Samantha's Story – age 15

Samantha helps care for her sister who has Epilepsy, a learning disability and struggles with her mental ill health.

Her mum suffers with Arthritis and Samantha worries about her mum and her sister when she is at school.

“Don't stress”

Annie Rose

“Being a young Carer is not easy, but you are not alone”

Kiera

Ben's Story – age 11

Ben cares for his mum who suffers with Mental ill health.

Ben says that he get stressed sometimes because he does not get to go out as a family, mum doesn't like crowded places, she suffers with Agoraphobia. Ben would like to meet with other young carers at his school.

Myth-buster

Myth: *People with mental illness never recover.*

Fact: *People with mental illness can and do recover.*

If you require this information in a different language or format please contact the Trust on 01707 253903 or speak with the service providing you with support.

Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust works toward eliminating all forms of discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for all.

We are a smoke free Trust therefore smoking is not permitted anywhere on our premises.

www.hpft.nhs.uk

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