



### Key principles for a new mental health strategy

The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition (CYPMHC) believe that the following key principles are critical to the development of a new mental health strategy which seeks to promote and improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

- 1. 'In time' interventions:** Interventions for children and young people needing mental health help must be 'in time' to prevent a minor disturbance escalating to become a serious, long term illness. Evidence shows that 75% of adult long term illness started in adolescence yet only 45% received treatment. Therefore teachers, GPs and other children's professionals must be trained to be able to identify and respond to emerging mental illness appropriately.
- 2. 'No decision about me, without me..':** Mental health services for children and young people will develop ways of involving young people in their treatment plans, outcome plans and evaluation as well as service design and commissioning. If young people are involved in their treatment plans this will improve transition planning in the statutory sector and implementation from CAMHS to AMHS, will increase their self confidence, self esteem, reduce DNA's and improve engagement with treatments – and so improve outcomes.
- 3. Commissioning:** the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment should have the requirement to assess children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing needs in the area. Psychological and emotional wellbeing affects outcomes in all other services e.g. education, youth crime

Specifically commissioning should ensure:

- a) the integration of psychological and emotional wellbeing into all aspects of services for children and young people e.g. maternity services, sexual health, children's hospital treatment.
  - b) services outside the NHS or statutory sector in general i.e. delivered by the private and not-for-profit sectors are included in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment in order to gain a full understanding of needs – both met and unmet.
  - c) commissioning for children and young people's mental health is particularly complex as children experience several developmental stages as they grow which require a different response. In addition services are delivered by local authority personnel, the not-for-profit sector and the private sector as much as by the NHS. Ensuring joint working with clear leadership and accountability is essential to meet children and young people's needs in the round. Services need to be provided in locations where children and young people visit and in an accessible manner, for example, outside of school and college hours. Services need to feel welcoming, non-stigmatising and appropriate to their needs.
- 4. Health Visitors:** The Coalition welcomes the additional resource for Health Visitors. Health Visitors can be the vital relationship to informally teach good parenting and an understanding of babies' emotional wellbeing. It is vital to maximise the potential of the Health Visitor relationship and not break the relationship of trust because of some parents' perception that Health Visitors have the power to remove their child. Health Visitors must be appropriately trained in both development of babies' emotional development, parenting and how to build relationships of trust and respect. They should be fully supportive of parents own mental health needs and help them develop coping skills, especially in the case of post-natal depression. Supporting the emotional health of parents has been shown to benefit the child.