

Children and Young People's Mental Health Inquiry – Submission of evidence

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26 February 2021



Submission of evidence to The House of Lords Health and Social Care Committee. Children and Young People's Mental Health – Professor Angie Hart, Louise Brinton-Clarke, Vicki Dunham, Mirika Flegg, Harvey Hill, Lindsay Jones and Anne Rathbone.

February 26 2021: In this submission to The House of Lords a group of academics, students, practitioners, parents/carers and young people working as and with disadvantaged communities share their thoughts on whether progress has been made by Government in its ambition to improve children and young people's mental health provision.

You can download the full submission here. You might think about sending our response to your local MP, who can then draw on it for their own lobbying purposes.

Submission of Evidence

Children and Young People's Mental Health Inquiry

26th February 2021

Centre of Resilience for Social Justice www.brighton.ac.uk/crsj/index.aspx

University of Brighton and BoingBoing CIC www.boingboing.org.uk/

Blackpool HeadStart [Headstart Resilience Revolution \(blackpool.gov.uk\)](http://Headstart Resilience Revolution (blackpool.gov.uk))

on behalf of the Resilience Revolution www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Health-and-social-care/HeadStart-Blackpool/HeadStart-Blackpool.aspx

Co-authors: [Professor Angie Hart](#), [Louise Brinton-Clarke](#), [Vicki Dunham](#), [Mirika Flegg](#), [Harvey Hill](#), Lindsay Jones and [Anne Rathbone](#)

Introduction

In this submission, we draw on our collective organisational and personal experiences, relating them to policy and practices associated with children and young people's mental health. We are a community of academics, students, practitioners, parents/carers and young people working together to beat the odds whilst also changing the odds, as and with disadvantaged communities. As co-authors we have experience of working in, and / or receiving support from children and young people's mental health services.

1. What progress have the Government made on children and young people's mental health?

1a) The ambitions laid out in the 2017 Green Paper

- In 2017, 10% of children and young people (CYP) experienced diagnosable mental health difficulties. By July 2020 this had risen to [16% of all CYP](#). A 2020 report by the [Children's Society](#) rated UK's CYP as experiencing a 'significant decrease in happiness with life as a whole' (p.22), and having the [lowest life satisfaction in Europe](#). [CAMHS referrals](#) have continued to significantly rise year on year. We would conclude, therefore, that the implementation of the 2017 Green Paper has made little to no impact on the mental health of CYP.
- We agree with the Green Paper's focus on prevention and early intervention. However, we believe that the preventative focus is largely limited to individual resilience building, ignoring the causal relationship between structural inequalities and resilience. There is strong [evidence](#) that those of us who are marginalised and face multiple disadvantages in society are more likely to experience mental distress. [The Boingboing approach to resilience](#) stipulates that to increase resilience, we must 'change the odds' for CYP by reducing the adversities they face in the wider system as well as supporting them to 'beat the odds' (helping individuals thrive despite the adversities they face). Whereas the Green Paper makes specific reference to the importance of meeting the needs of vulnerable groups, this will only ever have limited, if any, impact without any focus on wider systems change to reduce health and social inequalities.
- Elements of the Green Paper which had the potential to move away from traditional mental health models have been neglected in the roll out. For example, peer support was identified