

# Supporting Young People's mental health in Scouting

Mental health can sometimes feel like a complex and intimidating subject. However, anyone can experience a mental health problem, so being able to talk about it is important to us all. You don't need to be an expert on mental health, often, small everyday actions can make the biggest difference. And Merseyside Scouts have invested in ensuring every District has a Mental Health Awareness Coordinator to support you.

## 1 in 4 adults and 1 in 8 young people experience a mental health problem

### What is mental health?

Mental health refers to the way we think, feel and act. Everybody has mental health, much the same way as everybody has physical health, and we need to look after it.

If you go through a period of poor mental health, you might find that the ways you're frequently thinking, feeling or reacting can become difficult, or even impossible, to cope with.

### Spotting the signs & symptoms

As leaders we are not responsible for diagnosing mental health problems, or expected to be a mental health expert, but you might notice behaviours or signs that a young person in your group is struggling. These might include:

- Tearful or frequently upset
- Avoiding friends or social events
- Not enjoying activities they enjoyed before
- Struggling with normal tasks and daily stresses
- Restless
- Changing their eating habits
- Abusing alcohol or drugs
- Angry for prolonged periods of time
- Having paranoid thoughts
- Self-harming or talking about suicide

If you are concerned about any young person's wellbeing, try to stay calm and have a conversation with the young person, or where appropriate their parent/carer.

### How to start a conversation

#### Do your research

Having an understanding of what mental health and wellbeing is will help you feel confident to start the conversation and answer questions they may have.

#### Create a safe space for them to open up

This should be somewhere they feel comfortable and you are unlikely to be distracted. Always remember your responsibilities within the Yellow Card and remain within these guidelines.

#### Listen

Let them know that this time is for them to talk, and you are there for them. Try not to offer solutions right away and ask what they think could help.

#### Be open

Some people find it difficult to talk about mental health and wellbeing. Being open and gently encouraging conversation helps mental health to become an everyday topic that people are more comfortable to talk about.

#### Be honest

They may have questions about mental health and wellbeing, and you may not have all of the answers. Be honest about not knowing and agree how you will follow up.

#### Encourage them to seek help

Encourage the young person to speak to their parents or carers, or to a GP, about how they are feeling. You might also signpost them to support in your local area

## Safeguarding

In line with the Scout's safeguarding procedures, if you are concerned that the scout is at risk of harm from themselves (or others) you will need to pass this information on. Inform the young person where possible that you are required to pass any concerns on. Agree with them on how you will inform their parents – will you do it directly, or support the young person to do so? If you have any doubts about what you need to do, then follow the 'Young People First' code of practice (Yellow Card) <https://scouts.org.uk/media/996788/Yellow-Card.pdf>

Source: <https://members.scouts.org.uk/supportresources/4860/mental-health?cat=299,303&moduleID=10>

## Promoting good mental health in your group

Just like our physical health, there are things we can all do to improve our mental health. The five ways to wellbeing have been researched thoroughly, and there is evidence to show that they can improve our ability to feel good and function well. The five ways are:

**Connect...** with people around you, your family, friends and neighbours. Put five minutes aside to find out how a member of your group really is. Spend time in meetings strengthening relationships between leaders and young people.

**Be active...** by doing something your group can all enjoy together. You don't have to be Olympic Athletes to be active. Go on a walk or hike, spend some time gardening, or do an activity such as cycling or having a kick about in your local park.

**Take notice...** by being more aware of your surroundings and what is happening right now, for example the changing seasons, or the local environment. Ask your members what was good about their day.

**Keep learning...** by trying something different. Complete a badge as a unit that stretches the group, find out about scouts around the world, research an issue important to your members.

**Give...** to others, to feel good yourself. Start a community impact project or volunteer with a local charity

## Additional Help

Remember, we might not find the support and help that fits or feels right for us first time. What's important is that we don't stop seeking the support we need, and it's good to keep your GP informed, as they can help too.

### National

**NSPCC's Childline:** 1-to-1 chat support and 24-hour helpline for young people.

**Phone:** 0800 1111 **Website:** [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

**HOPELineUK:** A specialist phone service giving non-judgemental support, advice & info to young people.

**Phone:** 0800 068 4141 **Website:** [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

**On My Mind:** Information for young people to make informed choices about their mental health and wellbeing.

**Website:** [www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind](http://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind)

**NHS Go:** NHS confidential health advice & support for young people under 25. Download app to your phone.

**Website:** [www.nhs.go.uk](http://www.nhs.go.uk)

**NHS – Moodzone:** guidance on coping with Stress, Anxiety and Depression - including links to resources.

**Website:** [www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/)

### Local (Merseyside)

There are many other organisations to those listed above, both nationally and locally. If you would like a more comprehensive list of provisions near you, then you can either speak with your District Mental Health Awareness Coordinator, or visit the County website for more information: [www.merseysidescouts.com](http://www.merseysidescouts.com)

The role of our Mental Health Awareness Coordinators is not to act as practitioners for providing mental health support, but is intended to provide your District team, Group, Section or Unit with information and guidance on how to help others access support; and share resources to help with programmes and planning around mental health awareness that provide our young people with space to develop positive self-esteem, values and resilience.

Merseyside Scouts are committed to supporting all our members with developing good mental health and wellbeing, and providing support and direction on how to build mental resilience; all within the guidelines of The Scout Association's Policy, Organisation, and Rules.