

School-based mental health support results in positive outcomes for children

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A study of more than 18,000 children across England found that embedding mental health support in schools as part of the Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) programme led to greater improvements in self-reported behavioural problems among primary pupils. The benefits were even more pronounced where schools also provided pupils with self-help leaflets explaining how children could help themselves if they were feeling stressed or troubled.

The three year longitudinal study followed children in 25 [local authorities](#) across England and also found that tools designed to improve communication between health and education professionals (such as the Common Assessment Framework), good links between schools and specialist Child and Adolescent [Mental Health Services](#) (CAMHS) and the provision of mental health information to pupils were all associated with reductions in pupils' difficulties in controlling aggression and anger in secondary [school](#).

These findings come from an independent evaluation of TaMHS, led by UCL (University College London) and involving eight academic institutions and other organisations across the UK (Universities of Manchester, Leicester, Durham, York and Glasgow, The Anna Freud Centre, the Institute of Psychiatry and the National Institute for Economic and Social Research).

Over the course of the project, researchers tracked and analysed the progress of 18,235 children in 526 schools.

The TaMHS programme aimed to help schools deliver targeted support to those with, or at risk of, [mental health problems](#). Between 2008 and March 2011, £60 million was allocated across all local authorities in England in order for them to develop additional provision of mental health support in selected schools, including individual, group and whole-school interventions.

One in ten children in the UK has a clinically diagnosable mental health problem and the authors of the report recommend intervening early as a key to managing behavioural problems. "It may make sense to prioritise mental health work with primary school pupils in relation to behavioural problems to have maximum impact before problems become too entrenched," says the report.

The report also suggests that inter-agency working and improved relationships between secondary schools and specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, as well as provision of materials to help young people find and access support, should be prioritised.

Dr Miranda Wolpert of the UCL CAMHS Evidence Based Practice Unit led the research. "This report indicates that targeted help in primary schools has helped reduce [behavioural problems](#) and should continue," she says. "It also indicates the need to build on the good work already happening across schools and the [health services](#) to ensure joined up services and support for [mental health](#) needs."

More information: Full report and briefing note available at: www.education.gov.uk/publicati...tail/Page1/DFE-RR177

Provided by University College London

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