



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Baroness Merron
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for
Patient Safety, Women's Health and Mental Health*

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Ms Shelley Kipling
Chief Executive
Oldham Council

By email to: shelley.kipling@oldham.gov.uk

8 August 2025

Dear Ms Kipling,

Thank you for your correspondence of 14 April to the Secretary of State and to the Prime Minister about young people's mental health. Your correspondence to the Prime Minister has been forwarded to this department, and I am replying as the Minister for Mental Health. I am sorry that you have not received a more timely reply and thank you for your patience.

I appreciate your concerns.

Children today, who have been brought up in an increasingly digitised age, are facing new and complex challenges. Around 20 per cent of young people are expected to experience some type of mental health issue this year, up from just 14 per cent in 2017. However, there are likely to be many thousands more struggling with their wellbeing that do not meet the threshold for a clinical diagnosis.

Through an extra £688million in Government funding for 2025/26, we are transforming mental health services by hiring more staff, delivering more talking therapies, and reducing waiting lists through our Plan for Change. This will enable children to have the best possible start in life. Early interventions in mental health support for young people can have a positive impact for the rest of their lives.

We want to provide access to mental health support in school to every child who needs it. To this end, over the course of this year we will roll out support to nearly one million more children. The Spending Review 2025 confirmed that all pupils will have access to mental health support in school by 2029/30.

Through NHS-led, evidence-based intervention during children's formative years, we can avoid mental health crises while cultivating much-needed resilience among the next generation. As set out in the NHS's *2025/26 priorities and operational planning guidance*, we are committed to increasing the number of children and young people accessing mental health services by 345,000 compared to 2019. We also expect local health systems to improve productivity and reduce variation in the numbers of children and young people accessing services across England.

There are five million pupils and learners who are currently covered by Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) in schools and colleges. This equates to 52 per cent of pupils in schools and further education learners in England. There are also 10,100 schools and colleges supported by an MHST, which equates to 41 per cent of schools and colleges in England.

The coverage of MHSTs at school and college level is lower than at pupil and learner level due to variation in setting size. We estimate that MHST coverage could increase to 62 per cent of pupils and learners and 48 per cent of schools and colleges by 31 March 2026. This prediction is based on the average number of schools, colleges, pupils and learners per MHST remaining constant.

There are currently around 65 locally funded early support hubs in England open to those aged 11-25. The drop-in centres offer mental health support and advice to young people without a referral by a doctor or school. Services provided include group work, counselling, psychological therapies, specialist advice and signposting to information and services.

In 2024/25, the Department took part in the Shared Outcomes Fund project, backed by £8million. The project evaluated the impact of 24 existing early support hubs and gathered evidence for early intervention. In doing so, it aimed to increase the Government's understanding of the effectiveness of early intervention and preventative action for children and young people's mental health delivered in a community setting.

The University College London Mental Health Policy Research Unit is conducting an external evaluation of the project. It aims to build a strong evidence base to inform the potential future expansion of the early support hubs model. The Unit aims to report its findings this summer.

We are also providing top-up funding of £7million to the 24 early support hubs to expand provision in 2025/26. The new funding will help the hubs to deliver at least 10,000 additional mental health and wellbeing interventions, supporting more children and young people.

I hope this reply is helpful.

All good wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Gillian', with a stylized flourish underneath.

BARONESS MERRON