



SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

Policy 3:

Prevention and early-intervention approaches, including education and community-based mental health services, should be invested in to support young people's mental health.

Endorsed by:



What's this all about?

Young people have told us that early intervention and prevention would stop their mental health from reaching a crisis point and becoming unmanageable. Prevention and early intervention come from youth work, community-based mental health services, and support services within schools and other education settings. Equipping young people with the skills, knowledge and support networks helps them feel seen and heard with their mental health, reduces stigma, and enables them to challenge misinformation.

"Just because we haven't lived as long as our elders, does not mean that we can't have mental health issues too. There is a lot of pressure on young people. Help us."

– Young woman aged 14-17, Clackmannanshire

"My community mental health team literally saved my life and are amazing but I had to reach crisis point to access support [...] We urgently need progress in this area."

– Young person aged 18-21, Stirling

What are young people in Scotland calling for?

- Young people call for a culture change and consistency across Scotland in which mental health support is promoted, delivered and maintained.
“Help should be easier to access and judgement-free, with flexible options to support everyone affected.”
– Young woman aged 18-21, Stirling
- The Scottish Government and Local Authorities should ensure there is long-term, sustainable funding to improve young people’s mental health and save lives across Scotland.
“Mental health is one of our biggest issues now and we need to do everything to help young people with this issue.”
– Young people aged 14-17, North Lanarkshire
- Decision makers must invest in school-based and community-based mental health supports and services, which work alongside CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and the NHS to reduce waiting times and make support more accessible.
“Creating a culture of care is vital to supporting young people’s mental health and that starts in our communities.”
– Young people aged 18-21, Highland
- Young people want more accessible support and a review of the impact that late interventions have on young people at a crisis point, and for decision makers to make the system better for everyone.
“I have been failed many times by mental health services and I feel there needs to be more in place for it. I have spent so long on waiting lists for mental health support. My mum refused my treatment when I was in high school due to her disbelief in mental health being a thing- she attempted suicide a few years later and I have still not received mental health support for the trauma I previously had on top of the trauma of finding and dealing with my mum.”
– Young people aged 22-26, Glasgow

Evidence and Support

- [Children in Scotland](#)’s current [manifesto](#) (from 2021 to 2026) has 10 themes including Health and Wellbeing. The vision for this theme is that “All children and young people living in Scotland achieve optimum health and wellbeing”. The manifesto calls on political parties to commit to investment in mental health prevention for children and young people to stop problems deteriorating to the extent they require specialist CAMHS services; ensure that PSHE Classes provide honest, non-judgemental opportunities to discuss health and wellbeing and are co-designed with children and young people; publish a series of rights-based wellbeing outcomes and indicators for children, young people and families to give future direction to

policy action to improve the health and wellbeing of children, young people and families living in Scotland.

- According to [Public Health Scotland](#), for the [quarter ending March 2025](#), 4,674 children and young people were on a waiting list to start treatment in CAMHS which is an increase of 7.0% (305) compared to 4,639 in the previous quarter. 50% of those starting treatment started within 5 weeks of referral, which is an increase from 4 weeks the previous quarter.

What has SYP done?

Previous [SYP Consultations](#) include SYP's consultation workshop on the [Scottish Government's Community Mental Health Supports and Services Framework \(2024\)](#) and [SYP's response to the British Council's call for evidence on how the cost of living crisis has impacted young people's health and wellbeing \(2023\)](#). The [SYP Policy Log](#) includes policies on mental health training for educators and health care professionals; incorporation of mental health education in the school curriculum; implementation of care experienced mental health services; improvements in CAMHS waiting times; improvements in transitional services for children and young people.