

# Welcome to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services



## A Guide for You

*“Working together is at the heart of everything we do”*



# Introduction

This guide will give children and young people and families or other carers, information about the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

It offers you information about...

...what is CAMHS?

...who would you see?

...what care would you receive?

...how long would you attend?

...what would happen next?

These are important questions and we hope that this Guide will provide useful information for you.



# Thanking young people who helped develop the Guide

We are committed to listening to and involving young people in the development of services that they may need.

We therefore highly value their views and ideas for CAMHS.

We would like to express our thanks to all the young people who worked with us to produce this Guide. We would like to offer a special mention to Laura H, Lauren, Emer, Laura McG and Naomi who provided great advice about both what we include in the Guide, and how it should be designed.

# What is CAMHS?



CAMHS stands for **C**hildren and **A**dolescent **M**ental **H**ealth **S**ervices

This Guide has been designed to give you useful information about CAMHS, including what to expect when you come in contact with CAMHS.



# Why would I come to CAMHS?

WHY?

To answer this important question, it is useful to know what is meant by mental health; mental health is about how we feel inside, how we think and how we cope with our feelings.

It is normal to feel down at times but sometimes how we are feeling can get in the way of managing our daily lives. Sometimes we may need extra help to support us.

When this happens, it is important that you tell someone you know and trust, who may suggest you see someone from CAMHS.

There are different kinds of problems that CAMHS can help with. Some of these are listed below:

- Not knowing how best to cope
- Feeling isolated from friends and withdrawing from everyday pursuits
- Becoming preoccupied with thoughts and ideas
- Misusing drugs or alcohol as a way to feel better
- Feeling unhappy at school
- Noticing changes to the way you feel
- Harming yourself or thinking life is not worth living.

# Who in CAMHS will work with you to help you?

There are different staff working in CAMHS, including doctors, nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, psychologists, administration staff, and others.

You may meet and work with one or a few of these staff, depending upon the support you may need when you come into CAMHS.

When you meet the staff for the first time, they will explain what they do and how they will support you to get better.

If there is another service that would be better to help you, CAMHS staff will explain this and make sure that the help you need is arranged.

# What types of care and treatments will I receive?



CAMHS staff will work together with you and provide care and treatments which are based on your needs.

These are normally called interventions and may include talking therapies, working on social skills, promoting healthy lifestyles, medication, family work or group work.

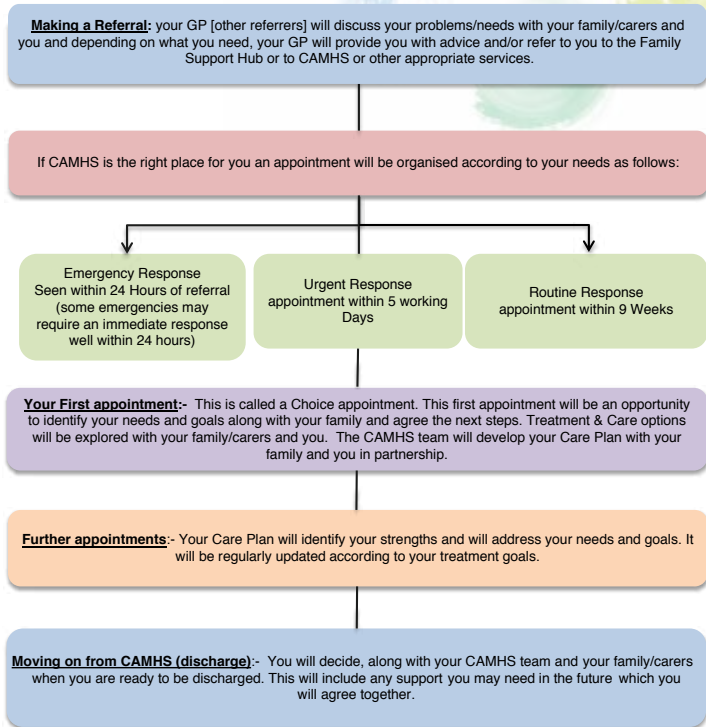
CAMHS staff might also work with your family and other carers to help them support you and build your skills.

The interventions you receive are always discussed with you and your family and other carers, and appointments will be made at suitable and convenient times for everyone



# Steps of Your Care

The following diagram shows you the different stages you will go through when you come to CAMHS for support



These are now explained in more detail on the following pages.



# Coming into CAMHS



When it has been agreed both by you and your family and other carers that you need extra help or support to make you feel better, a member of your family, teacher or a friend may approach your doctor or another caring professional, to make a referral to CAMHS.

When this request is made, CAMHS discuss the information they received and decide if they are the best people to support you.

If CAMHS is the right service for you, they decide who is the best member of staff to help you and how soon it will be before they see you.

You will receive information about what happens next, i.e. attending your first appointment. This is called a Choice appointment and it is a joint discussion between CAMHS staff, your family and other carers and you, to allow you to talk about your experiences and to get your family and other carers' views.

If CAMHS think that another service is more appropriate to help you, they will go back to the person who referred you and explain this and advise who is better placed to help you.

# Sharing Information and Agreeing The Way Forward

CAMHS will contact you and your family and other carers, either by letter or by phone, to come to your CHOICE appointment at a time that is suitable for you. They will give you information about where to find them.



If you can not attend your arranged appointment, it is important you make CAMHS aware as they can give this appointment to someone who may also be waiting. How long you wait for your appointment depends on how urgently you may need to be seen by CAMHS staff, but you should not wait any longer than 9 weeks.

When you come for your appointment CAMHS will talk to you about how you are feeling and also ask your family and other carers how things are. You may be asked different questions about your feelings, concerns, hopes, expectations and your safety.

The types of information they will ask you about includes:



- Your health
- School life
- Any difficulties you are having
- How you are feeling
- If other people are helping you or have helped you in the past
- Things you enjoy and things you are good at
- What help you would like from CAMHS

All of this information helps CAMHS staff to understand why you need help, and what help you might need. Often CAMHS staff may offer you and your family and other carers time alone to talk to them separately about the difficulties that you want/need help with.

At this appointment you will get information about the different people you may work with and the different interventions you may have. All of this information is recorded on a Care Plan which is developed in partnership with you and your family and other carers. You will receive a copy of your Care Plan once it is agreed.

It is important not to worry if you feel anxious, nervous or upset during this first appointment. CAMHS staff are there to help you and are very familiar with any concerns you may have.

# “Working Together to Get Better”



CAMHS staff may wish to talk to and/or involve other people or organisations in helping you to get better. This information will be written down in your Care Plan, including which organisations will be involved and what their roles will be in your care.

CAMHS staff will ask you and your family and other carers regularly about how well they think you are doing and update your Care Plan if any changes are required.

In order to check if you are making progress with your Care Plan, CAMHS staff will use questionnaires to ask you and your family or other carers how you are at various times during your treatment.

How long you will be involved with CAMHS depends on the kinds of difficulties you have and how well you are progressing with any interventions you are receiving.

# Moving on from CAMHS and Recovery

CAMHS staff will regularly check progress against your Care Plan and, when appropriate, will talk to you and your family and other carers about when it is time to be discharged from CAMHS.

When it has been agreed in partnership with you and your family and other carers that you are ready to be discharged, you will work on your Discharge Plan. This plan will identify things to help you stay well and the important information you need. It will also detail information about how to come back to CAMHS if you need to in the future.

Your GP will be sent a letter advising them that you are being discharged.

Giving feedback about your experience of CAMHS is very important. Your family and other carers and you will be given the opportunity to say what your experience of CAMHS was like. This information is very valuable to CAMHS as it helps them to determine if the service is of a good quality and if any changes may need to happen to make it better for others who may need to use it in the future.

Asking for your feedback may be done in different ways and you will always be asked for your consent before doing this.

If you are 18 years old and you need continuing support, you may transition to Adult Mental Health services. This will be discussed and agreed with you and a Transition Plan will be developed with you and your family.

# Key Messages from Young People



Young people with direct experience of benefiting from using CAMHS have offered the following key messages that they felt were important to tell young people who come into CAMHS:

“CAMHS is your time to share your story - the good, the bad and the ugly, without any fear of judgement.”

“The more you bring, the better you’ll feel!”

“It’s a really amazing feeling to have someone you can trust in life.”

“It’s all about making progress - perfection is just a point of view!”

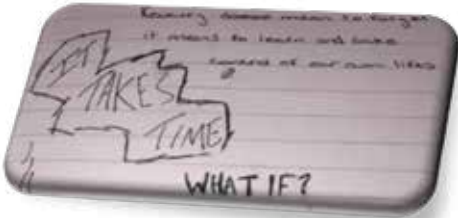


# Key Messages from Young People

“Have fun when you can, cry when you need to, punch pillows, go rosy cheeked with embarrassment, green with envy - you can either feel them all, or none at all. We know what it's like to be numb, and we promise you it'll get better.”

“It's so important to talk as soon as possible - mental illnesses do not just go away- they get more complicated with time!”

“You have Rights - and the CAMHS staff will help you to understand them.”



# Take5

steps to wellbeing

HSC Health and Social Care



[www.mindingyourhead.info](http://www.mindingyourhead.info)

Most of us know when we are mentally and physically well, but sometimes we need a little extra support to keep well.

There are five simple steps to help maintain and improve your wellbeing. Try to build these into your daily life – think of them as your ‘five a day’ for wellbeing.

## Take5

steps to wellbeing



### Connect

Connect with the people around you: family, friends, colleagues and neighbours at home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these relationships as the cornerstones of your life and spend time developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.



### Be active

Go for a walk or run, cycle, play a game, garden or dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity that you enjoy; one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.



### Take notice

Stop, pause, or take a moment to look around you. What can you see, feel, smell or even taste? Look for beautiful, new, unusual or extraordinary things in your everyday life and think about how that makes you feel.



### Keep learning

Don't be afraid to try something new, rediscover an old hobby or sign up for a course. Take on a different responsibility, fix a bike, learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy. Learning new things will make you more confident, as well as being fun to do.



### Give

Do something nice for a friend or stranger, thank someone, smile, volunteer your time or consider joining a community group. Look out as well as in. Seeing yourself and your happiness linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and will create connections with the people around you.

The five ways to wellbeing were developed by the New Economics Foundation. Artwork designed in association with Belfast Strategic Partnership.

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