

Improving mental health crisis care for children and young people

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We Can Talk is a project utilising the experience and expertise of children, young people, hospital staff and mental health experts to improve mental health crisis support in acute hospital settings through training.

Research shows that acute staff hospital lack the confidence and competency to deal with children and young people presenting with mental needs, leading to a poor experience for the patient as well as a demoralised NHS workforce. There is also a recognised issue with support provided by Registered Mental Health Nurses (RMNs) sourced via agencies, who also frequently lack the skills to support children and young people. The real issue surrounds approach and engagement as opposed to clinical experience and results in an inability of children and young people to cope on discharge and to failure to attend community appointments, delaying necessary support.

We Can Talk improves the experience of children and young people attending acute hospital settings due to their mental health by improving the knowledge, skills and confidence of the staff who support them. Health Education England's mandate includes ensuring the workforce supporting children and young people has mental health awareness and skills training¹. Together **We Can Talk** and HEE can enhance the quality of service provided by trained professionals, irrespective of setting, and therefore improve the well-being of both staff and patients. The system will benefit from reduced costs, through more effective engagement and reducing agency staff spend.

We Can Talk is designed to support sustainable changes in practice, hospital culture, and in relationships between acute hospitals and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). To improve practice, **We Can Talk** has co-produced with hospital staff, young people, and mental health experts an evidence-based competency framework in children and young people's mental health for hospital staff and a one-day training based on the competencies. Organisations have reported a range of benefits including improved working relationships between acute and mental health providers, reduction in the use of agency staff to support young people presenting due to their mental health, improved quality of referrals to CAMHS and improved risk management of young people awaiting specialist assessment. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has recognised **We Can Talk** an area of outstanding practice and "the only programme of its kind in the NHS"² and the project has been nominated six times at Nursing Times Awards since 2017.

We Can Talk is currently supporting more than 40 partnerships between acute hospitals and local CAMHS across England. **We Can Talk** has delivered training to more than 10,000 acute hospital staff since 2017 with 99% reporting it will make a difference to the way they do their job.

¹Department of Health and Social Care mandate to Health Education England: April 2017 to March 2018
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674419/HEE_mandate_2017-2018.pdf

² Care Quality Commission, Barts Health NHS Trust Inspection Report, Published February 2019.
https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/new_reports/AAAH6372.pdf

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HEALTHY TEEN MINDS

