

# YOUNG MiNDS



## CAMHS

Your guide to Child and Adolescent  
Mental Health Services

“The support I received from CAHMS was invaluable and I do not know where I would be now without it. I now study Health and Social Care and hope to study Psychology at university.”

- Aiden



# What is CAMHS?

CAMHS stands for **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services** and is how the NHS assesses and treats young people with emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties.

You count as a child or adolescent if you're under 18, however some CAMHS services have an upper age limit of 16 while others will only allow 16-18 year olds to use their service if they're still in full time education.



# What does CAMHS cover?

The support from CAMHS covers problems like:

- Depression
- Eating problems
- Low self esteem
- Relationship problems
- Anxiety and phobias
- Obsessions and compulsions
- Sleep difficulties
- Self-harming
- Violent and angry behaviour
- The effects of abuse or traumatic events

It also covers more serious mental health problems like psychosis, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and anorexia nervosa.

In some areas CAMHS will also cover developmental disorders like autism and ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) but it differs from one area to the next, so check your local service for more information.

# How can I get help from CAMHS?

Someone, usually your GP, needs to refer you for an assessment with CAMHS to see what help you could get. If you're being supported by social care, a youth offending team or a service at your school, they might also be able to refer you.

It's important to tell the person referring you as much as you can so you can get the help you need.

Most CAMHS have a website where you can look up how to get access to their service.

# Before your first visit: what to prepare

If you've been referred to CAMHS, it can be really useful to sit down and talk with a parent or carer, so you all know what to expect and so you can plan ahead. Try and think of information which might be useful for this first meeting. It can be useful to think about:

- When did the problem start?
- Is there a pattern in the behavior?
- Have there been any important events within the family such as divorce or bereavement?
- How do you get on with others in the family?
- How are you doing at school?
- How are your friendships going?
- Are there any health problems either now or when you were younger?
- Have your family had help from any other professionals?

# The CAMHS Process

## Step 1: Assessment

# 1

After you've been referred to CAMHS, you'll receive a letter with one or more appointments. It might be for you and a parent or carer, or they might involve other family members too.

This is your chance to talk to the CAMHS team about the referral. You'll be able to give your view and tell your story as well as input on what kind of help you want from the service. There may also be some activities for you or your family to complete to give your CAMHS worker a better idea of your needs. This is their opportunity to think about what could be causing the problems you're experiencing. They may be able to make a diagnosis at this point and share a written report with you or talk it through in a meeting. **Remember, if you don't understand anything, ask them to explain it.**

# The CAMHS Process

## Step 2: Treatment & Support

# 2

Following the diagnosis CAMHS will tell you if they're able to provide support, as well as what format it is likely to take, such as individual sessions, sessions with one parent or carer, or whole family sessions.

They'll give you a treatment plan which sets out what is expected from the treatment and how long it's likely to last.

**If CAMHS is not able to help, they'll tell you at this stage and they should refer you to a service in the NHS or elsewhere. You will still be able to access youth counselling services which are not run by CAMHS.**



# 3

## The CAMHS Process

### Step 3: Reviews & Ending Treatment

Your therapist will hold regular reviews to feed back to you on how the sessions are going and how you're progressing.

If they feel the treatment has been successful and can come to an end, they'll raise it and let you and your parent or carer have a say before agreeing on a timetable for ending it.

If you reach the upper age limit for support within your local CAMHS while treatment is still on-going, you'll be transferred to the appropriate adult mental health service. At this stage, they'll meet with you to get your input and plan the transition process together.

# Who's who in CAMHS?

There's a wide range of mental health professionals in CAMHS. Every team and every area is different, but here are some of the people you are likely to meet.

**Care coordinator:** Someone who will represent you and speak on your behalf.

## **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team (CAMHS):**

A team of people with different jobs who have experience of working with children and young people who have mental health difficulties. The team would include:

- Psychiatrists
- Social Workers
- Nurses
- Occupational Therapists
- Psychologists
- Counsellors
- Family Therapists
- Art Therapists
- Primary Mental Health Worker
- Outreach Workers

**Counsellors:** Use talking therapies to help people cope.

**Family Doctor or General Practitioner (GP):**

Contact your GP if you are worried about your health in any way. Your GP can help with:

- Talking through problems
- Prescribing medication
- Making referrals to specialists

**Family Therapist:** These are trained therapists who work with children, young people and their families together, to help them understand and manage the difficulties that are happening in their lives.

**Health Visitors:** Specialised nurses who work in the community.

**Mental Health Act Commissioner (MHAC):** Visit and privately interview patients in hospital or mental health nursing homes. They have limited powers to investigate a complaint and appoint panels to give second opinions on treatment.

**Nurses:** Trained to care for and support young people and may also prescribe medicine.

**Occupational Therapist:** Help people who have been unwell or had problems to build the confidence and skills to lead a normal life.

**Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS):** PALS help NHS users and their carers resolve issues with their care and treatment. Can refer to the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS) if the problem is not solved.

**Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS):** Free to use and not linked to the NHS. Deals with complaints about NHS treatment.

**Paediatricians:** Doctors who specialise in the physical health of children and young people.

**Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists:** Doctors, who specialise in children and young people's mental health. They are trained to diagnose and care for young people using a range of treatments like talking approaches and medications.

**Psychologists:** A group of professionals who help you understand the way you behave, feel and think about things. Includes Clinical Psychologists and Educational Psychologists who specialise in working with young people.

**Psychotherapists:** Understand how mental health difficulties start and develop over time, and help children, young people and their families to understand feelings and problems, and try out new ways of managing them.

**Researchers:** Perform tests to make sure treatment is working and help in the development of new treatments.

**Self-help and Support Groups:** Groups where you meet up with people in a similar situation to you. They help you realise that you are not alone and you can end up feeling better by being able to support someone else.

**Social Workers:** Some social workers help you if you are at risk of abuse or if you are in care while others are trained in mental health and can offer counselling. Psychiatric social workers are specialists who work with people during crises or over a long period of time.

## **Speech & Language Therapists and Occupational**

**Therapists:** Help develop skills in communication, physical ability and coordination. Other therapists include Art Therapists, Drama Therapists, Education Therapists and Music Therapists.

**Youth Offending Workers:** Work individually with young offenders to assess and find suitable programmes to help them and prevent future offending.

## **Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCO):**

SENCO staff are not based in CAMHS but they organise help in school for children with special educational needs such as learning difficulties.



# I'm on a CAMHS waiting list - what should I do?

Waiting lists vary from one area to the next, so it's always worth asking your GP what it's like in your area.

In the meantime, it's worth finding out what you can do to help while you wait.

Speak to your GP or your school to see if they can recommend anything that will help manage your problems while you're waiting.

**If you're concerned the waiting list is too long, you can contact your local NHS Trust's Patient Advisory Liaison Service (PALS) and you can also make a formal complaint or write to your MP if you feel you're not getting the service you need in a reasonable time.**

# Your rights during treatment

## Consent

You must agree to accept the support CAMHS is offering before they begin, you should also have other options explained to you if you do not give consent.

## Confidentiality

You have the right to tell the staff at CAMHS things which are kept confidential from your parents or carers. Equally, your parents or carers can tell them things which are confidential from you. However, the staff have a duty to break that if they think someone is being harmed or at risk of being harmed.

## Complaints

If you're unhappy with any CAMHS service, you have a right to raise it and ask the staff what can be done to



improve things. If you don't feel comfortable raising a complaint, you can ask for an advocate to speak on your behalf.

### **Your records**

At any stage, you have the right to see your medical records. You can ask your CAMHS worker informally or using the formal CAMHS procedures.

### **Support for particular needs**

If you need particular support such as a translator, make sure you explain this to the CAMHS staff so they can help and ideally before you are first seen in CAMHS so a translator can be identified for you.



# Other useful organisations

## [childpsychotherapy.org.uk](http://childpsychotherapy.org.uk)

Information on how child psychotherapists work, NHS services and how to find a private therapist

**Telephone:** 020 8458 1609

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## [bps.org.uk](http://bps.org.uk)

The British Psychological Society – provides information on how psychologists can help and where to find one in your area.

Tel: 0116 254 9568

## youthaccess.org.uk

Information and advice on counselling services for people aged 12–25. Visit the website and click 'Find a service'.

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## psychotherapy.org.uk

Hold the national register of psychotherapists and can give you details of local counsellors and psychotherapists.

**Telephone:** 020 7014 9955

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## bacp.co.uk

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. Provides helpful information on finding the right therapist, including both NHS and private therapists.

**Telephone:** 01455 883 300



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