

City of Wolverhampton children and young people's emotional and mental needs assessment summary

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 An Anna Freud project

This assessment of children and young people's emotional and mental health needs was carried out over the spring and summer of 2023

Children and young people's emotional and mental health has been getting worse in recent years, in Wolverhampton and across the country. The coronavirus pandemic increased the strain on many families, children and young people.

This needs assessment brings together information that can be used by organisations in Wolverhampton to improve emotional and mental support for children, young people, and those who care for them.

It considered:

- what children and young people need
- what support is available for them
- how we could improve support
- what we need to know more about

A team was brought in to look at research in this area and at information collected by services and by Government. They also spoke to young people, parents, carers and professionals in Wolverhampton during late spring and early summer 2023.



Some large-scale surveys carried out in Wolverhampton tell us about the emotional and mental health of children and young people

A survey of people of all ages in 2022 found that people living in Wolverhampton experience lower mental wellbeing and higher anxiety than people in the UK generally.

Surveys of primary and secondary school pupils in Wolverhampton show that mental wellbeing got worse between 2018 and 2022.

In 2023:

- in primary schools, mental wellbeing stayed at a similar level with nearly 1 in 5 children saying their mental wellbeing was low, or medium-low
- in secondary school, mental wellbeing slightly improved but a third of young people still said their mental wellbeing was low or medium low
- girls reported lower mental wellbeing and more emotional difficulties than boys, from about Year 6 onwards.

What do we mean by mental wellbeing?

“Mental wellbeing means feeling good - both about yourself and about the world around you. It means being able to get on with life in the way you want”

NHS Inform

In the Wolverhampton school survey, mental wellbeing is measured using recognised, tried and tested questionnaires about how people feel and function.

A range of challenges and experiences may be affecting children and young people's emotional and mental health

There are approximately 83,000 children and young people under 25 in Wolverhampton. Many live in situations that can put stress on emotional health, for example:

- a third of children and young people live in families with low incomes
- compared to the UK more widely, in Wolverhampton there is a higher proportion of single parent families and of women conceiving aged under-18, and there are more incidents of domestic abuse
- national research suggests about 30% have a parent with a mental health difficulty.

Challenges for children in Wolverhampton are visible early in life. At age two and a half, 65.5% of Wolverhampton children were at an expected level of development, compared to 80% of children nationally.

Wolverhampton's population is ethnically diverse, and 39% of 0 to 25 year olds are Ethnic Minority (that is non-White British heritage). We know that different ethnic groups have different needs and use services differently.

We know from research that for some groups of children and young people with particular life experiences mental and emotional health challenges are more likely to arise

Data suggests that..	And in Wolverhampton..
25 to 33% of young carers experience mental health difficulty 	10 to 20% of 10 to 17 year-olds have caring responsibilities
Around 50% of LGBT people (of all ages) have experienced depression, and 60% have experienced anxiety 	20% of 14 to 15 year-olds identified as LGBTQ+ in the annual cross-city school survey
In England, 13% of all pupils receive special educational needs (SEN) support; for 21 % of these, their main need relates to social, emotional and mental health 	14% of children attending school have SEN; for 19% of these, their main need relates to social, emotional and mental health
50% of all children Looked After in England meet the criteria for a possible mental health disorder 	Emotional and mental health is a concern for 36% of the 500 children and young people Looked After by the local authority
Being a refugee or an asylum seeker can raise a range of mental health challenges 	The number of asylum seekers (of all ages) is increasing
About 30% of out of work young people report a mental health problem 	Over 100 young people were not in education, employment or training at age 16 and 17

Young people and professionals also told us about other experiences in children and young people's lives that affect their emotional and mental health



A wide range of organisations in Wolverhampton support children, young people and families with their emotional and mental health

The NHS, schools and colleges, voluntary services, community organisations and council services all have a role. Some work with particular difficulties, or groups (for example with new parents, young offenders, families in need), while others are open to everyone.

These services report increasing demand for emotional and mental health support. Even though investment has been made to increase support in some areas, services are under strain, and children and young people are waiting a long time for help.

The difficulties that professionals see most frequently are anxiety, behavioural issues and depression.

Self-harm is also common, as are issues arising from trauma, from relationship difficulties, and from differences in brain functioning (neurodevelopmental conditions such as Autism or ADHD).



This needs assessment heard that some things are working well in Wolverhampton, but that there are also gaps and challenges.

What works?

There are a number of helpful services in the city

A lot of valuable support is available in schools

There are lots of community groups and faith groups that children and young people go to

Some services work well together and collaborate to support children, young people and families

There has been investment in improving and increasing mental health services and support

Support isn't always available early enough to stop difficulties getting more serious.

It can be hard to find out what support is available and when, where and for whom.

Demand is increasing, services are stretched, and children and young people often wait a long time for mental health support.

Support for parents and carers is limited.

Schools' approaches to emotional mental health are very different.

Services are not always able to support all the different types of children and young people with their diverse needs.

Services, schools, doctors and community groups don't always work together as well as they could.

Gaps and challenges

Twelve recommendations are made in the needs assessment

1. Work needs to be done to reduce the time children wait for help from child and youth mental health support service in Wolverhampton.
2. There should be clear and up to date information about what support is available and how to get it
3. Support should be available to all children and young people before difficulties start and when they first begin. This means that trusted adults in places where children and young people are - for example in school, in the community, in clubs or online - should be able to help.
4. All schools and colleges should provide a consistent quality of emotional and mental health support for pupils.
5. There should be more help for parents, carers and families, including information, advice, and emotional and mental health support.
6. More attention needs to be given to supporting children and young people who have special education needs and disabilities, including those whose might have different ways of thinking to the majority (eg those with Autism or ADHD)

Twelve recommendations are made in the needs assessment

7. More exploration is needed with communities and organisations to make sure services meet the needs of children and young people in minoritized ethnic groups
8. There needs to be some work to better support the needs of some particular groups of children and young people (those who are LGBTQ+, young carers, refugees or new communities, have long-term health conditions, have experienced trauma).
9. Training needs should be explored and addressed so the wide workforce who are in contact with children and young people can support their emotional and mental health.
10. A review should be done to make sure the way emotional and mental health support is overseen in Wolverhampton, and the way services work together, results in the best possible experience for children, young people and those who care for them
11. Children, young people, parents, carers, and the voluntary and community sector should be involved in designing, planning and improving emotional and mental health support.
12. Services should improve the collection of information needed to make decisions about improving support.

Thank you to all those who contributed to this work

- The Emotional Mental Health and Wellbeing Board.
- The Young People Advisory Group: the six young people from Wolverhampton who came together to help guide our approach and inform this needs assessment.
- The project steering group.
- The young people and parents who gave up their time to share their experiences and perspectives.
- The professionals who made time to meet with us, share data, join workshops, and provide written survey responses.

To see the full needs assessment, please visit

<https://insight.wolverhampton.gov.uk>

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