



# Ten asks of the next government

Young people with lived experience of mental health issues, together with academic partners, have collated a summary of research-informed asks of the next government 2024

**1 Improve training for all primary, emergency, and mental health care providers**  
 Practitioners must protect young people's agency, i.e. their capacity to act independently and make their own choices, when they initially seek support for their mental health. Feeling in control of their own treatment can lead to better outcomes.  
 ([Bergen et al 2022](#); McPin project – [AGENCY](#)).

**2 Commit to providing personalised care for young people at risk of self-harm and suicide**  
 Our research shows that young people in crisis are more likely to seek help in the future if they feel listened to and accepted by their mental health care provider when expressing feelings of suicidality and self-harm.  
 ([Bergen et al 2023](#); McPin project – [AGENCY](#)).

**3 Refocus on the core components of good quality service design**  
 For children and young people experiencing common mental health issues, rapid access and short waiting times; clear information; compassionate and caring staff; and aftercare planning, lead to more effective and accessible care.  
 ([Pryjmachuk et al 2024](#); McPin Project – [Blueprint](#)).

*"We need the government to listen and act upon these findings to transform services for the better, which is what young people deserve."*

**GEORGIA NAUGHTON**  
 Young Person Peer Researcher

**4 Produce timely and specific interventions for young people at risk of eating disorders and self-harm**  
 Mental health services, including within primary care, have to expand to cope with the growing number of children and young people needing support. To ensure early identification, barriers to seeking help such as fear of stigma; inadequate mental health awareness in schools; limited access to digital health services or digital devices; and concerns about long waiting lists to access services, must be addressed.  
 ([Trafford et al 2023](#); McPin project – [CHOOSE](#)).

**5 Improve the lifestyle interventions for young people experiencing psychosis**  
 Young people need relevant, enjoyable and workable interventions. Our research has shown that the data-driven clinical tools like PsyMetRiC can help empower young people who have experienced psychosis to understand their future risk of developing physical health problems and encourage personalised treatment decisions.  
 ([Perry et al, 2021](#); McPin project – [PsyMetRiC](#)).

## 6 Take notice of the importance of sleep for mental health

Our research shows that young people with psychosis appreciate being offered sleep therapy as uptake was high and indicated possible sustained reductions in sleep problems. Improving sleep hygiene should be prioritised. (Waite et al 2023; McPin project – [Sleepwell](#)).

## 7 Proceed with caution using digital tools to treat young people with depression

Smartphones and wearable tech have been suggested as a way to improve the monitoring and treatment of mental health issues in young people. Our recent review highlighted some concerns and gaps in the use of this type of technology. We need to allow the evidence-base and data protection to catch up before any investments are made. (Walsh et al 2023; McPin project – [Remote Measurement Technologies](#)).

## 8 Raise awareness around anxiety, including social anxiety

Research findings suggest that young people are feeling increasingly anxious since the Covid-19 pandemic, including in social situations. The government must work with young people to develop resources on youth mental health and wellbeing for teachers, parents and carers, and young people themselves. Our Keep Cool video series on anxiety, sadness and anger was co-developed with young people about the impact of Covid on their mental health, and suggested everyday coping skills. (Watson et al 2022; McPin projects – [Co-Ray](#) and [Keep Cool](#)).

## 9 Develop a school curriculum that centres and celebrates diversity and inclusion

Our evidence has shown that positive representation, awareness and wider acceptance improve school life for LGBTQ+ young people. Interventions such as student pride clubs, inclusive antibullying and harassment policies, staff workshops and training could help to reduce discrimination and marginalisation. (Schlief et al 2023; McPin project – [Universal School Interventions](#)).

## 10 Increase education campaigns to end mental health stigma

A holistic, cross-sector approach can promote a better understanding of mental health issues. Our work has shown that using arts-based interventions can help raise awareness and debunk mental health myths. (Riches et al 2022; McPin project – [National Gallery Audio Tour](#)).

**Join us in calling for the next government to prioritise and take meaningful steps for young people's mental health**

The ten asks have emerged from research programmes involving the McPin Foundation over the last five years. They highlight specific evidence-based changes that, if implemented, would go some way to addressing current inadequacies in the youth mental health system across the UK.

Our research involvement programme works with young people with varied mental health experiences. It is made possible thanks to funding by major research organisations: The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) (asks 3, 4, 5, 6), UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) (asks 1, 2, 8, 10) and Wellcome (asks 5, 7, 9).

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