

East Lancashire Spoke Team

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Lancashire Early Intervention Service
Hope – Health – Recovery

Young People and Mental Health

What to do when alarms bells ring?



Hope Recovery
Health

www.hope-health-recovery.org.uk
Email: info@hope-health-recovery.org.uk

- If necessary, refer you to a specialist source of help, such as a psychiatrist / psychologist or counsellor.
- Suggest other organisations who may be of help to you, such as:-
 - ▷ Your local Community Mental Health Team.
 - ▷ Young Peoples Counselling Services.

Sometimes families are anxious about consulting GPs or other agencies, especially if the young person concerned is refusing to discuss the situation or seek professional help.

For these situations there are a number of organisations which run help lines and information services on a completely confidential basis. It is worth checking your local yellow pages and the Internet for organisations in your area.

It can be particularly difficult to get the kind of help required if the young person concerned is refusing to co-operate. Carers have needs too and you will find that agencies will understand this.

Useful Telephone Numbers

Young people and mental health What to do when the alarms ring?

This leaflet tells you some of the signs and symptoms that may mean that a young person is developing a mental health problem. It also explains what you can do to get help about this. It has been written by carers who have all experienced this kind of situation and you will hopefully find the following advice and comments helpful.

A surprisingly large number of parents and carers become concerned at some point that their son or daughter may have a developing mental health problem. When this happens, it can be difficult to know what to do next:

- Is it a mental health problem or “just a difficult phase”?
- What if the young person concerned refuses to talk about the situation or give permission for you to seek advice outside the family?
- Where do you turn to get advice outside the family?
- Where do you turn to get advice or help?

How do I know if my son or daughter has a mental health problem?

Quite simply you don't.

Usually, changes in the young persons behaviour start to trigger your concern over time, such as:-

- Withdrawing from all social or family contact.
- Being uncharacteristically aggressive.
- Bizarre or other forms of behaviour which are greatly out of character.

You may start to feel that there is more to these changes than a teenager simply growing up and challenging the acceptable limit. This after all is fairly normal. The trouble is, there is no such thing as "normal behaviour", because all families are different. You may feel you are making a fuss and raising concerns unnecessarily, or opening a can of worms that you won't be able to close.

Many parents are concerned about setting "official wheels turning" which take their own course and become outside your control. The young person themselves may be unwilling or unable to talk about the situation.

Why does a young person's behaviour change?

Changes in behaviour in young people and young adults can have many different causes.

- Difficulties in personal relationships with friends or a school / college.
- Changes in behaviour that may be connected with use of alcohol or drugs.
- Physical illness.
- A mental health problem.

What to do, how to get advice, help or treatment?

If things reach the stage where you feel you need to go outside your family to deal with the situation, the best place for most people to start is to see your GP. They will be able to:-

- Give some initial advice, reassurance and advice about what needs doing.