

Mental Health In Schools Teams

Information for families

What are MHSTs?

The Mental Health in Schools Teams (sometimes referred to as Mental Health Support Teams) are based in a growing number of schools throughout Coventry and Warwickshire.

Our aim is to support children, young people and their families to achieve positive mental wellbeing.



Keep in touch at:  cwrise.com  [CWRise](https://www.facebook.com/CWRise)  [CW_Rise](https://twitter.com/CW_Rise)
 MHST@cowarkpt.nhs.uk

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Who are we?

Mental Health in Schools Teams are based in many Coventry and Warwickshire schools and offer short term support to children and young people who are experiencing symptoms of mild to moderate mental health difficulties. This might include anxiety (for example; separation anxiety, panic), some lower impact obsessions and compulsions, generalised anxiety (worry and social worries) and low mood. We are also able to offer some support for difficulties that might require a more intensive approach and will signpost to other services if we aren't the right people to help.

How do we do this?

We support parents/carers, children and schools using an 'early intervention' approach. This means that we try to respond quickly to problems as they are developing in order to prevent further deterioration and build resilience to prevent problems manifesting themselves in the future. This can be helpful for those who have noticed recent changes in their mental health or those who have not received support before. There are a number of ways in which we can do this:

- **Parent/Carer Work** - we offer 6-8 sessions (usually up to an hour each) and use a blended approach, using video platforms, telephone work and face to face sessions. Our aim is to teach parents/carers 'therapist skills', as the research shows that if parents/carers are taught the skills to work with their children, they bring the expertise in terms of knowing what is likely to work, what may be more challenging and how to best communicate, for the best outcomes. We can offer parents/carers work either in a group setting or as a 1:1 or 2:1 (if both parents/carers are able to attend).

Useful to know

- MHST works through term time and the school holidays. Young people and families can access support via video platforms, telephone-based sessions and some community settings (some schools are also staying open over the holidays and may be able to provide suitable spaces).
- Your information remains confidential. As an NHS service, we are obliged to maintain the confidentiality of information that has been shared with us either by young people, parents/carers or schools. We have conversations with parents/carers and young people in our first meeting about how this works and when we might need to share certain information and with whom (this is because we have a duty of care to keep young people safe which may mean needing to discuss risk or safety issues with others as part of this process). We usually communicate with the young person's GP after assessment and at the end of treatment as part of their complete medical records.
- We are not an emergency service. As part of the Rise Early Help, our purpose is to provide support that prevents further deterioration by intervening quickly. If young people are experiencing a mental health episode that causes concern about their immediate safety, we advise either contacting your GP or the RISE crisis service:

NHS 111

Select the Mental Health Option

For more information about Mental Health in Schools Teams, visit: [cwrise.com/mhst](https://www.cwrise.com/mhst)

How to access help

- If you would like additional information or support, or just want to discuss concerns about your child, please contact the Mental Health Lead at your child's school. They will discuss a referral with you which will be sent to our team, who will then be in touch. The school may also raise concerns with you if they notice signs of difficulties and should seek yours and your child's consent to make a referral. A referral should not be made to us without parent/carer (and preferably also the child/young person's) consent.
- The team will review the referral and if we think we can help, we will be in touch to arrange an assessment. This will be a conversation with you and your child to gain an understanding of what is happening and to agree a plan to move forward. As part of the assessment (and during treatment) we also use 'Routine Outcome Measures'- these are standardised questionnaires that can help to identify and monitor specific signs and symptoms. We usually ask parents/carers and young people to complete these, and they may differ in the responses.
- We know it can be a worrying time for parents and carers. We aim to work together with you as a family without judgement using a supportive, collaborative and problem-solving approach.



- **'Whole School Approach'** - in schools, we deliver staff training, hold classroom workshops and help to develop a "whole school approach", to include the school community and all aspects of school life. This approach aims to promote resilience, problem solving and develop coping strategies to support good mental health.
- **Individual low intensity cognitive behavioural therapy** - using a guided self-help approach, together with the young person, we make a 'toolbox' of strategies which equips the young person with skills to build their emotional resilience. We encourage young people to reflect on and adapt thinking patterns and behaviours that may be contributing to their difficulties. We help them identify healthy coping mechanisms which support young people to feel more empowered. We usually offer between 6 – 8 1:1 sessions.
- **Individual high intensity cognitive behavioural therapy** - we are able to offer access to more intensive CBT which means a higher number of treatment sessions enabling therapy with a greater level of detail and complexity. High intensity therapists are able to work with the anxiety disorders referenced above, in addition to Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Social Anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Health Anxiety.



Working with Anxiety

Anxiety is a completely normal reaction to threat or danger. When anxiety impacts our daily lives that's when therapeutic support can be helpful. Symptoms of anxiety can be different for everyone. Typical signs of anxiety can be withdrawal, avoidance of usual activities, tummy aches, headaches, worrying, difficulties with sleep and being reluctant to be away from home or parents/carers.



MHST can offer specific education around anxiety as well as guided self-help which may include graded exposure (gradual 'facing the fear'), worry management, understanding and managing panic, problem solving and challenging the negative thinking that often triggers and maintains anxiety.

Working with low mood

It is natural to experience periods of feeling low, particularly in response to difficult circumstances in our life. When low mood persists or starts to interrupt daily activities it is important to know how to manage symptoms and prevent this from getting worse. Typical signs of low mood could include tearfulness, withdrawal, lack of motivation and energy, sleep problems, irritability, changes to appetite and lack of enjoyment. MHST can offer education to support better understanding of what is causing and maintaining symptoms of low mood as well as the evidence-based treatment advised for managing symptoms of low mood, which is an approach called 'behavioural activation'.

This is based around the concept of using activity to improve mood.

Sometimes it can also be helpful to teach strategies to challenge the negative thoughts associated with low mood.

