

A checklist for parents with children with mental health problems

Working in partnership with psychiatrists, members of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and parents

Introduction

This leaflet is aimed at:

- the parents or the carers of a child with mental health problems who provide continuing help and support, without payment;
- the psychiatrists or other members of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) who are involved in the care and the treatment of the child.

It suggests ways of improving communication and partnerships when the child has first been identified or diagnosed with a problem.

For the parents/carers

This leaflet has a list of questions which we hope will be helpful to you – the parent/carer.

Going to see a psychiatrist or other mental health professional about a child's difficulties can be a very daunting experience for a lot of parents. Parents often feel anxious and worried. The CAMHS team is there to work with you, in partnership, to help sort out the difficulties that you bring to them. They understand that parents can feel that nobody appreciates what it is like to have a child with problems, and that sometimes, parents feel that professionals do not believe them.

If a problem is easy to sort out, then most parents will be able to do this themselves. Sometimes, a problem needs more than that, but it is not always easy to ask for help.

If you are nervous about being able to explain clearly what the problem is, then taking a relative or friend along can be a great help.

Children can have a variety of different emotional and behavioural problems. Some of these will be short-lived, and others will be disorders that will need treatment. This checklist is to help you ask the questions to ensure that you get the information that you need as a parent seeking help for your child. However, this checklist cannot cover all the questions that could be asked.

When a parent takes their child to a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, they will be asked a lot of questions by the person who sees them, in order to gather information (carry out an assessment) to help determine the nature of the problem (or make a diagnosis), and decide what should happen next (treatment).

Not all the questions in this checklist will be relevant to your situation.

At the end of this checklist are some sources of information and support which you may find helpful.

This checklist provides some questions to ask about your child's:

- problem and/or diagnosis
- how to understand the problem and/or assessment
- treatment and/or help needed.

About the problem

Not every child will have a formal diagnosis. Many children have short-lived problems which will be resolved with help and support. Some may have behavioural problems which do not have an underlying diagnosis.

- What sort of problem does my child have?
- Is it mainly behavioural?
- Is it mainly emotional?
- Is it a mixture of both?
- Is it a mental illness?
- Is it a problem of learning and/or development?
- Is it a problem with relationships?

Assessment

Getting more information to help sort out a problem is important. You should be told how this information will be gathered.



Consent

- Can my child give their consent to treatment?
- What if they don't – can I decide for them?

What if I am not satisfied with my child's treatment and care, who do I speak to:

- to make comments?
- to get a second opinion?
- to make a complaint?

Further help

Young Minds

Provides information and advice on child mental health issues.
102-108 Clerkenwell Road,
London EC1M 5SA. Parents
Information Service; tel: 0800
018 2138;
www.youngminds.org.uk.

ADD Information and Support Service (ADDISS).

The ADDISS Resource Centre,
10 Station Road, London NW7
2JU; tel: 020 8906 9068; fax 020
8959 0727; email:
info@addiss.co.uk;
www.addiss.co.uk. Provides
information and resources about
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity
Disorder to anyone who needs
assistance – parents, sufferers,
teachers or health professionals.

The Princess Royal Trust for Carers

Further information for carers is
also available from The Princess
Royal Trust for Carers, 142
Minorities, London EC3N 1LB; tel:
020 7480 7788; www.carers.org

The Royal College of Psychiatrists

The college produces a series of
36 factsheets for parents,
teachers and young people
entitled 'Mental Health and
Growing Up'. These cover the
main emotional, behavioural
and mental health problems
that can affect children and
young people. Available from
the Royal College of
Psychiatrists, 17 Belgrave
Square, London SW1X 8PG, tel:
020 7235 2351 ext. 146;
www.rcpsych.ac.uk.