

East Sussex Mental Health Support Team

Information for parents and carers

The East Sussex Mental Health Support Team (MHST) support young people aged 7-17 experiencing mild-moderate mental health difficulties. The MHST can help with the following difficulties:

- **Anxiety**
- **Low mood**
- **Sleep**
- **Healthy eating**
- **Worry**
- **Low self-esteem**

MHST practitioners are based in schools and work in partnership with school staff to identify and support young people who may most benefit from the service. Some MHST practitioners are in training.

What type of support does the MHST offer?

MHST offers short-term support for children and young people affected by mild to moderate mental health needs. The main interventions offered by the MHST are based on low-intensity Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT). This approach explores the links between thoughts, feelings and behaviour, and helps young people develop strategies and behaviours to improve their wellbeing. Interventions normally last 4-10 weeks.

Who can access support from the MHST?

Referrals are assessed on a case-by-case basis to decide whether the MHST offers the most helpful form of support. MHST **can** support young people aged 7-17 who are experiencing mild-moderate difficulties in the following areas:

- Low mood, depression and low self-esteem
- Anxiety, including phobias, separation anxiety, social anxiety, school avoidance and excessive worry
- Poor eating patterns or diet affected by and/or affecting mood (not eating disorders)
- Sleep difficulties related to poor sleep routine, anxiety or problematic thoughts or worries at night

The interventions offered by MHST are not suitable for every type of difficulty. MHST cannot work with more complex or severe needs or those who do not consent to receiving support. The MHST is developing their service to meet the needs of young people with ASD and learning disabilities. Currently MHST are not able to accept referrals for young people with a confirmed diagnosis of ASD.

How do young people access support from MHST?

Referrals to the MHST are arranged through schools, often by pastoral staff such as a Pastoral Lead, Inclusion Manager or SENCo. Please speak to your child's school to discuss a referral to the MHST.

Frequently asked questions

How is the support provided?

Support sessions with young people usually take place weekly in school. The MHST may also offer online sessions in some circumstances, for example during school closures due to lockdown.

Is the service confidential?

Normally the service keeps the specific details of what has been said confidential, unless the young person consents to information being shared. There are some exceptions:

- **Safeguarding-** If any information is shared that relates to the safety of the young person, or someone else, the MHST service will need to share this information. All safeguarding concerns are managed in line with the policies of the school and the local authority.
- **School liaison-** MHST works in partnership with schools to provide mental health support to young people. Schools play a key role in identifying students who will benefit from the service and arranging the support sessions. Therefore, schools and the MHST will exchange some information about young people and their needs. However, the specific details of what young people have said in sessions will not be shared with without the consent of the young person (with the exception of information that relates to safeguarding).
- **Audio recordings-** Some MHST practitioners are in training. Trainees make audio recordings of sessions, which are shared with their tutors at the University of Sussex. Recordings are only made with the consent of the young person (and in the case of under 12s, their parent/carer).

What qualifications are held by the person who will be seeing my child?

Most of the MHST practitioners are Education Mental Health Practitioners (EMHPs). EMHPs have completed a postgraduate diploma in Education Mental Health Practice, which trains them to deliver low-intensity cognitive behavioural therapy interventions. Sometimes EMHPs will still be in training. Trainee EMHPs are closely supervised and supported by the University of Sussex, a Senior Mental Health Practitioner at East Sussex County Council and their placement schools.

In some cases young people will be seen by a Senior Mental Health Practitioner (SMHP). SMHPs are experienced mental health clinicians from a range of disciplines, including psychiatric nursing, counselling, psychotherapy, psychological wellbeing practice, social work and occupational therapy. SMHPs receive additional training in delivering and supervising low-intensity cognitive behavioural therapy interventions with children and young people in educational settings.

Will parents/carers be involved in the sessions?

In many cases it is useful for parents/carers to have some involvement in the support their child is receiving. If the young person agrees, the MHST often shares some information with parents/carers about what has been covered in the sessions. In some cases it might be useful for a parent/carer to attend sessions with their child, or meet with the MHST practitioner separately. Young people will normally be given some activities to do in between sessions, and parents/carers can provide vital support and assistance with this.

What happens if my child is not happy with the service they have received?

In the first instance, young people (or their parents/carers) are encouraged to raise their concerns directly with the practitioner they have been working with. If this does not feel possible, you or your child are welcome to contact the MHST Managers:

Fiona.Skinner@eastsussex.gov.uk or Lucy.Hill@eastsussex.gov.uk.

In many cases issues can be resolved quickly through this speaking directly with the MHST service. However, if the problem has not been dealt with satisfactorily then you may wish to use the East Sussex County Council complaints process:

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/contact-us/complaints/complain-about-a-service>

What happens if my child requires further help for their mental health?

The MHST works in partnership with schools to identify additional support options and make onward referrals where needed. This might include a referral to another service, such as School Health or CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service). Sometimes there is additional support available within schools, and in other cases there may be community-based services that could be of assistance. Please note, the MHST cannot guarantee whether another service will accept a referral, or what form of support they will offer.

The MHST offers short-term support focusing on a specific issue, normally for 4-10 sessions. If it is thought that a young person would benefit from another course of treatment with the MHST then a repeat referral can be made. However, following the end of treatment we normally require a minimum period of three months to have passed before a repeat referral will be accepted. This is to allow time for the young person to practice the skills and strategies they have learnt. Every referral is assessed individually to decide if support from the MHST would be appropriate.