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Embedding Young Future Hubs as part of a neighbourhood health vision for young people: A briefing paper

“Plans to set up Young Futures hubs will make it easier for young people to access mental health, career and pastoral support in their communities, with youth workers, mental health support workers and careers advisers on hand to support young people’s mental health.” [Department of Health and Social Care June 2025]

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Executive summary

Children and young people’s mental health in England is at a critical juncture, with one in five young people aged 8–25 now experiencing a common mental health problem.¹ This rise has been compounded by long waiting times, high thresholds for specialist services, and chronic underinvestment in early intervention. The Government has set out to tackle this crisis in children and young people’s health and wellbeing, and bringing open-access mental health support into communities is vital if this is to be achieved.

“A child born in Britain today should live to see the 22nd century. I want them to be part of the healthiest generation that ever lived.” [Wes Streeting, Labour Party Conference 2023]

Rising levels of poor mental health among young people are compounded by growing risks and barriers such as poverty, exclusion and lack of opportunity. These can increase vulnerability to

¹ NHS England. Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023 - wave 4 follow up to the 2017 survey. <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2023-wave-4-follow-up>

youth violence and crime, and poor employment prospects with high levels of young people aged 16 – 24 who are not in education, employment or training. Too many young people's life chances are being diminished as a result.

New Young Futures Hubs aim to tackle these issues holding young people back by providing accessible mental health hubs alongside high quality activities, trusted relationships and wider joined up support. The Hubs will operate within a new framework of reformed systems and services, including an increased emphasis on prevention in children's social care and on inclusion in schools.

“Labour’s new Young Futures hubs will provide open access mental health services for children and young people in every community.” [Labour Manifesto, 2024]

This briefing paper focuses on how Young Futures Hubs can deliver effective mental health support for young people. Aligned with the Government's *Fit for the Future: 10-Year Health Plan for England*, which aims to shift care closer to communities and focus on prevention, the Hubs are a key mechanism for achieving this ambition. It sets out how a national network of open-access hubs, co-designed with young people and grounded in prevention and equity, can provide timely, non-stigmatising support close to home and outlines the scale of investment required to make this vision a reality.

Introduction

The Young Futures programme

Young Futures is a new intervention model to prevent at risk young people from falling through the gaps in health, education and social care by providing the necessary support and opportunities to succeed. The programme comprises two core components:

1. Prevention Partnerships, led by the Home Office.
2. Young Futures Hubs, led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), with eight early adopters launching in 2025–26 and a further 42 by the end of the Parliament.

Young Futures Prevention Partnerships identify children and young people vulnerable to being drawn into crime and violence and ensure access to appropriate support, including via Young Futures Hubs and other appropriate interventions and services. They will also bring together services strategically to improve how children and young people access opportunities and support at community level, supporting them to thrive and promoting positive outcomes.

Hubs should be open-access, youth-friendly spaces where young people can meet friends, take part in activities, and build positive relationships with trusted adults, as well as receive early help without formal referral or diagnosis. The aim is to offer access to a core package of support — including mental health provision, mentoring, counselling, education, employment, advice and information — integrated under one roof.

Young Futures and a neighbourhood-based health model

Moving more support for young people's mental health in the community is an urgent priority. It is 100 times cheaper to treat a young person in the community, and many young people prefer

to access - and find it easier to access – more informal support in the community than through clinical settings such as NHS Children and Young People’s Mental Health Services (CYPMHS).^{2,3}

Operating at community level, Young Future Hubs can act as a local entry point for joined-up, preventative support for those aged 10 up to the age of 25. If youth and mental health services are embedded within neighbourhood multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) as part of Young Futures, the Hubs should make the aspirations of integrated health care tangible - offering early, holistic mental health support that prevents escalation and reduces pressure on NHS CYPMHS, A&E, and social care.

Young Futures Hubs will need to engage young people who are often underserved by traditional health services, including those from racialised communities, low-income families, or those involved in or at risk of involvement in serious youth violence. Co-designed with young people, they will provide spaces that are welcoming, inclusive, and responsive to local need - ensuring that support reaches those most at risk.

A new model of delivery for mental health support for young people

Mental health problems in children and young people have grown significantly in the last decade. One in five children and young people aged 8-25 now experience a common mental health problem, such as anxiety or depression. This is an increase from one in nine in 2017 and one in ten in 2004.⁴

The rise in need is compounded by the challenges young people face accessing timely mental health support. High access thresholds and long waiting times for NHS CYPMHS coupled with historic under-investment in early intervention support, means that too many young people are left to reach crisis point before they are able to access help. The Independent Review of the NHS, led by Lord Darzi, underscored the challenges facing children and young people’s mental health services and concluded that ‘too many are being let down.’

In July 2025, the Government published Fit for the Future: 10 Year Health Plan for England, setting out a roadmap to transform the NHS through three major shifts: from hospital to community, analogue to digital, and sickness to prevention. Crucially, the plan commits to meeting children’s mental health needs and recognises Young Futures hubs as a mechanism to deliver open access, drop-in mental health support to children and young people in local communities.

Investing in a national network of hubs of this kind provides a crucial opportunity to deliver the Government’s ambitions set out in the 10 Year Plan to not only deliver a model of

² Dr Guy Northover (2021) Children and Young People’s Mental Health Services: GIRFT Programme National Specialty Report. <https://gettingitrightfirsttime.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/CYP-Mental-Health-National-Report-22-11h-FINAL.pdf>

³ White SR, Soneson E, Fazel M. Networks of care for the modern adolescent. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/psychological-medicine/article/networks-of-care-for-the-modern-adolescent/9029B51D200FFB1E2EF144503E0569A4>

⁴ NHS England. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2023/11/one-in-five-children-and-young-people-had-a-probable-mental-disorder-in-2023/>

neighbourhood care, but also to reform the system by truly integrating and investing in early mental health intervention for children and young people.

What are Young Futures Hubs?

To tackle the growing level of mental ill-health among young people, as well as youth violence and youth unemployment, the Government has committed to introducing the Youth Futures programme. This follows the recommendation of the Commission on Young Lives to create a “Sure Start for Teenagers” model to provide a coordinated, cross-departmental approach to supporting young people experiencing vulnerabilities that is reflected in locally integrated support. It also responds to calls from the Fund the Hubs campaign for a nationally resourced network of early support hubs for young people’s mental health.

The Young Futures Hubs initiative sits under the Government’s Health Mission, with a commitment to provide open-access mental health services for children and young people in every community, improving mental health outcomes nationwide. It also sits within the Safer Streets mission, which commits to establishing a network of Young Futures hubs to stop young people being drawn into crime, with the aim of halving knife crime in a decade.

The programme is cross-government in scope, led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The Government intends for eight early adopters to open during the financial year 2025-26 and planning is already underway in chosen localities. A further 42 hubs will then open before the end of this Parliament.

“new [Young Futures] hubs will bring together vital community-focused services under one roof to help teenagers who face being dragged into violence and at risk of mental health challenges” [Prime Minister’s Office]

Hubs will operate a ‘no wrong door’ policy for young people, offering youth-led activities in inclusive and welcome spaces, with a physical and digital offer. They will also bring together services to help children and young people access opportunities and support at a community level, supporting them to thrive and promoting positive outcomes.

What will Young Futures Hubs look like?

Young Futures Hubs will operate as open-access spaces, welcoming young people without the need for referral or assessment to access universal and early-help activities. These hubs will act as a front door for a range of targeted services, bringing together support for young people in one accessible, youth-friendly environment. The focus will be on early intervention and prevention - offering practical, emotional, and social support in a non-clinical setting that helps young people build resilience, maintain wellbeing, and stay engaged in education, employment, or training. To support mental health, this support will be focused on early intervention in a non-clinical setting.

These hubs build on all the principles of the Youth Access model⁵ to combine open access drop in and group programmes with dedicated 1:1 support. They are accessible to all young people without entry thresholds, focusing on each individual’s needs. By combining the expertise of

⁵ <https://www.youthaccess.org.uk/our-work/championing-our-network/youth-access-model>

youth workers, advice workers, and counsellors, they build strong and trusted relationships that can guide and support young people across multiple areas of their lives.

While a degree of flexibility about what services are delivered in Hubs will be necessary depending on the local context of support services already existing in the local area, a clear and consistent ‘core offer’ will need to be set out by national government in cross-departmental guidance including Department for Work & Pensions, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Culture, Media & Sport, and the Department for Education.

Young Futures Hubs providing open-access mental health support

“Labour’s new Young Futures hubs will provide open access mental health services for children and young people in every community.” [Labour Manifesto, 2024]

Within each Hub, mental health support will form part of the core offer, which will include counselling and wellbeing support alongside mentoring and education, employment and family support. As Young Futures Hubs are designed first and foremost as spaces for young people, any involvement of families should be guided by the young person’s needs and wishes. Where appropriate, parents and carers of at-risk teenagers should be signposted to a clear, complementary offer delivered in partnership with Family Hubs.

This wraparound model ensures that emotional and psychological wellbeing are not treated in isolation, but as a holistic package of support. Trained youth workers and qualified counselling and wellbeing practitioners will work together to provide safe, non-stigmatising spaces for young people to access support before problems escalate.

While Young Futures Hubs should focus on early help and low-level mental health support, they will also need to be equipped to identify and respond safely when young people present with higher levels of need. Clear referral pathways and clinical governance arrangements will ensure hubs can hold and manage risk appropriately while working closely with specialist services, such as NHS CYPMHS, to secure the right help at the right time.

This model may increase demand for specialist provision as unmet needs are identified, and therefore local systems - including NHS CYPMHS, social care, and voluntary sector partners - may face increased demand on a local level. The emphasis remains on strategic collaboration across the system, so that the hubs complement rather than duplicate existing provision, strengthening the overall network of support available to young people.

A focus on a range of need, as well as clear and embedded pathways to specialist services, is essential if Hubs are not just going to cater to low-levels of need, which they will need to do to help tackle the treatment gap and the growing levels of increasingly complex need facing children and young people. Alternative models of care, such as the *headspace* model in Australia, have increasingly emphasised single interventions for low levels of complexity over pathways to more specialist services which, while effective in achieving broader aims of health

promotion and mental health literacy, has led to less “genuine early intervention” and clinical assessment.⁶

The Department for Health and Social Care should ensure that the development and delivery of Young Futures Hubs are fully aligned with Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) and local authority children’s and young people’s strategies to create a coherent, joined-up approach to mental health and wellbeing. Each Hub should be part of their respective local ICS partnership, with shared governance and data-sharing arrangements that enable effective coordination between health, education, youth, and social care services.

Embedding Hubs within existing local health planning and commissioning frameworks will ensure they complement rather than duplicate provision, strengthen local prevention pathways, and facilitate joint investment across agencies. Local authorities and ICSs should include Young Futures Hubs within their Children and Young People’s Plans and Local Health and Wellbeing Strategies, ensuring that mental health support for young people is integrated into wider neighbourhood health models. This alignment will promote system-wide accountability, sustainable funding, and equitable access to early help for all young people, regardless of where they live.

Principles for delivering a safe and effective in-reach model for mental health support

Young Futures will need a model for integration and in-reach with children and young people’s neighbourhood multi-disciplinary teams, to ensure that they bring together the whole system to improve mental health outcomes and boost opportunities for young people. An ‘in-reach’ model refers to an integrated pathway, providing a bridge between Young Futures Hubs and specialist services, such as NHS CYPMHS. This allows clinical oversight of the mental health and wellbeing offer within Hubs, as well as clearer and embedded onward referral to other services. Beginning with the early-adopter Hubs, there should be a clear plan to build the evidence base of what an effective mental health offer in Young Futures Hubs looks like. This would be supported by ensuring interventions are evidence-based and guidance establishes clear, agreed outcomes to guide the evaluation of the early adopters and inform the wider rollout.

This model for integration and in-reach will need to be built on the principles of:

1. Open-access wellbeing offer and mental health support

Clinical oversight would ensure that all staff, including youth workers, receive clinical oversight, supervision, and case consultation to help them feel supported and equipped to deliver the trauma-informed and evidence-based wellbeing offer. Mental health support is also embedded in Hubs for higher levels of need, as well as clear referral pathways to other services.

⁶ Hickie IB, Rosenberg S, Carpenter JS, et al. Novel youth mental health services in Australia: What differences are being reported about the clinical needs of those who attend and the outcomes achieved? <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00048674241297542#bibr30-00048674241297542>

2. NHS CYPMHS staff provide clinical oversight and governance

NHS support and clinical oversight and supervision in Hubs would ensure that children and young people with a wide range of needs can be appropriately supported with effective psychologically informed assessment and triage, safeguarding, and evidence-based interventions.

3. Interventions delivered in a non-clinical, community setting

Structured therapeutic interventions delivered in a non-clinical, community setting and by qualified professionals. Staff should present as one Hub team, rather than individuals from different services, so that young people become familiar with seeing them and normalise what they do.

4. Embedded working relationships with specialist services

This would ensure there is not a narrow focus on low-levels of complexity, but rather the scope to provide early intervention of complex needs. For children and young people with more severe mental health needs, embedded working relationships would support onward referral to specialist services.

How hubs support marginalised and at-risk children and young people

Young Futures Hubs have a vital role to play in reaching marginalised and at-risk young people who are too often excluded from existing services. This includes young people from racialised communities, who are less likely to have access to mental health support in primary care and are more likely to end up in crisis care,⁷ and care experienced young people, who experience mental health problems at 4.5 times the rate of the general population of 5-15 year-olds.⁸ Girls and young women must also be actively engaged, given they are more likely to have a mental health disorder than boys and young men as they get older, and also more likely to suffer from particular problems such as eating disorders.⁹ Without identifying and specifically targeting these groups, Young Futures would not only risk missing these young people but also potentially exacerbating existing inequalities in mental health outcomes.

Reaching these groups is also crucial because, across all three of Young Futures' core aims, it is often the same marginalised groups that are most in need of support. For example, young people involved in or at risk of serious youth violence are more likely to be facing barriers to mental health support. These include: barriers to engagement, such as stigma or mistrust of

⁷ Race Equality Foundation (2019) Racial disparities in mental health: Literature and evidence review. <https://raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/mental-health-report-v5-2-2.pdf>

⁸ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2021) Looked-after children and young people. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng205/resources/lookedafter-children-and-young-people-pdf-66143716414405>

⁹ NHS England. Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023 - wave 4 follow up to the 2017 survey. https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2023-wave-4-follow-up/part-5-eating-problems-and-disorders?utm_source=chatgpt.com

services; barriers to access, such as geographic and financial, waiting lists, thresholds to access support, and a lack of information; and barriers to retention, such as building trusting relationships, communication barriers, and the home environment.¹⁰

The Youth Endowment Fund's recent report, *Access to mental health support for children and young people involved in or at-risk of serious youth violence across England and Wales: findings from a multi-strand project*, found young people at risk of or involved in serious youth violence have mental health needs which are too complex for lower-tier services, yet may not meet the threshold or "do not present in the 'right' way to access higher-tier clinical support".¹¹

Delivering a neighbourhood-based model of care through Young Futures Hubs would fill this gap in support, offering a place where all levels of mental health need can be met, from lower-levels which don't require clinical support to more serious cases which do.

Young Futures Hubs delivering a neighbourhood-based care model

The 10 Year Health Plan sets the ambition to transform the NHS through the creation of integrated neighbourhood health systems, a move towards place-based care delivered through local partnerships between the NHS, local authorities, social care, and voluntary and community organisations.¹² At the heart of this model are Neighbourhood Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs), working across physical and mental health services to provide joined-up, person-centred support. Specifically supporting young people's mental health in the community through these MDT's is essential, with young people generally perceiving 'formal' support such as NHS CYPMHS to be less helpful than other types of support, such as school mental health teams or support from family and friends.¹³ There is also an economic incentive, as delivering mental health treatment in the community for young people is 100 times cheaper on average than treating them as an inpatient.¹⁴

As the neighbourhood health model is rolled out, Hubs provide a vital opportunity to build on these early ambitions and foundations. Operating at neighbourhood level, they serve as a local entry point for mental health and wellbeing support for 10-25 year olds, offering a practical,

¹⁰ Youth Endowment Fund (2025) Access to mental health support for children and young people involved in or at-risk of serious youth violence across England and Wales: findings from a multi-strand project. <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/YEF-Access-to-Mental-Health-Support-Oct-25.pdf>

¹¹ Youth Endowment Fund (2025) Access to mental health support for children and young people involved in or at-risk of serious youth violence across England and Wales: findings from a multi-strand project. <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/YEF-Access-to-Mental-Health-Support-Oct-25.pdf>

¹² UK Government. Fit for the Future: 10 Year Health Plan for England. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6888a0b1a11f859994409147/fit-for-the-future-10-year-health-plan-for-england.pdf>

¹³ White SR, Soneson E, Fazel M. Networks of care for the modern adolescent. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/psychological-medicine/article/networks-of-care-for-the-modern-adolescent/9029B51D200FFB1E2EF144503E0569A4>

¹⁴ Dr Guy Northover (2021) Children and Young People's Mental Health Services: GIRFT Programme National Specialty Report. <https://gettingitrightfirsttime.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/CYP-Mental-Health-National-Report-22-11h-FINAL.pdf>

evidence-informed way to deliver on the vision of integrated, preventative and person-centred care. They bring together a blend of open-access support and youth-led activities in one welcoming, accessible space with no referral, diagnosis or appointment required. In doing so, hubs make the aspirations of neighbourhood-based care tangible for children and young people, offering the kind of early, joined-up support that prevents escalation and reduces pressure on more intensive services.

Hubs also align directly with the aspirations of the neighbourhood health model; they are co-designed with young people, rooted in local communities and responsive to local need. They help shift the system towards prevention by offering early help before young people's needs escalate, thereby reducing pressure on more specialist services like NHS CYPMHS, A&E and social care. Crucially, they engage groups who often are underserved by traditional services, including young people who are from racialised communities, low-income backgrounds, or experiencing trauma, exclusion or family breakdown.

Embedding hubs within neighbourhood MDTs would ensure that mental health support is not a bolt-on but a fully integrated part of local care. It also enables the NHS and local authorities to build on models that already work - delivering value for money, improving outcomes and meeting young people where they are. As local systems develop their neighbourhood strategies, hubs provide a tested, youth-led platform to deliver integrated, inclusive, and preventative support as part of a modern, community-based health system.

Cost and value: what does it take to deliver mental health hubs in Young Futures Hubs?

Hubs need to be open to young people who need them, with inspiring activity programmes during the week and at weekends, that draw them in and away from unsafe environments; well-trained and skilled youth professionals who can establish trusted relationships; and ambitious leaders who can drive forward systems change across the local area.

For this to be possible, we recommend each Hub is backed by **£1 million** per year, jointly funded by government departments to cover staff and administrative costs, as well as rent and activities. Sustained and long-term funding is required to ensure that the aims of Young Futures is not undermined by instability and uncertainty; trust and recognition of the Hubs and their services will only be developed through embedding them in communities with long-term investment. The Labour manifesto includes a commitment to allocate **£95 million** over the course of this government to support this vision.

Mental health support needs to be a core aspect of every early adopter hub, as they will test out approaches for wider replication.

Learning from previous and existing models

Successive governments have sought to integrate support for children, young people and families through 'hub' models, including Sure Start which led to lower internalising behaviours, such as depressive and anxiety disorders, among young teenagers who accessed the centres

when they were younger.¹⁵ Family Hubs and Start for Life guidance also sets out minimum standards for Family Hubs, which includes mental health support for parents and carers within the Hubs, as well as a perinatal mental health strategy with clear referral pathways for families to ensure a coherent and joined up approach.¹⁶

The previous government invested £15m through the Shared Outcomes Fund to strengthen early mental health support for young people via 24 existing early support hubs between 2024 and 2024/25. This funding has since been extended for an additional year. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is overseeing the programme and has begun to put in place national infrastructure, including commissioning pathways and support mechanisms, to enable local delivery. To build the evidence base, DHSC commissioned the Mental Health Policy Research Unit at King's College London and University College London to carry out an independent evaluation of the role and impact of early support hubs. Early findings are promising, showing that hubs are highly valued by young people for their accessibility, holistic and non-clinical approaches, and for fostering a sense of community, friendship, and consistency grounded in youth-led philosophies¹⁷.

The aims of Young Futures hubs align closely with the services that these pre-existing early support hubs are providing to young people. The Young Futures Hubs policy represents a timely opportunity to consolidate and build upon the existing network of open access, early support hubs operating around the country, as well as the findings from the independent evaluation. This would ensure that future provision is evidence-based, responsive to young people's needs and embedded within the emerging neighbourhood model for children and young people's mental health.

“Working with the Home Office, the Department for Education and colleagues from across government, our hope is that the evidence and insights collected through the Early Support Hubs evaluation will support the delivery of Young Futures Hubs, alongside best practice and learning from other initiatives.” [Stephen Kinnock MP, Minister of State for Care]

No Limits in Southampton

No Limits is based in Southampton and provides a wide range of support including counselling and a drop-in Advice Centre, where young people up to age 25 can get help with anything they are going through. This includes mental health, sexual health, relationship support, housing and homelessness and other welfare concerns.

¹⁵ Institute for Fiscal Studies (2025) The short- and medium-term effects of Sure Start on children's outcomes. <https://ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/IFS%20Report.%20The%20short-and%20medium-term%20effects%20of%20Sure%20Start%20on%20children%E2%80%99s%20outcomes.pdf>

¹⁶ HM Government. Family Hubs and Start for Life programme guide. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62f0ef83e90e07142da01845/Family_Hubs_and_Start_for_Life_programme_guide.pdf

¹⁷ Wright, L., Griffiths, J.L., Appleton, R., Begum, S., Clarke, C., Hunt, N.C., Lewis, H.K., Barnett, P., Bhutta, A., Driskell, E. and Edbrooke-Childs, J., 2025. A qualitative investigation of young people's experiences and views of Early Support Hubs. medRxiv, pp.2025-09.

The Advice Centre provides support to young people on any issue they present with and also acts as a host for other agencies, such as a sexual health clinic. The youth workers at the Advice Centre also offer support over the phone and through an online chat service. In addition, they manage the single point of access to triage referrals.

The drop-in Advice Centre enables young people to receive immediate practical support and advice on the same day with no waiting lists and no thresholds for support. It is particularly useful for those who may only need to visit a couple of times, those who don't have the confidence to engage with more formal services and those whose lives are too chaotic to manage appointments. The open access service also helps young people get to know No Limits, in turn lowering barriers to engaging with longer-term support in the future, such as counselling or support through the drug and alcohol team. The Advice Centre is based in an easily accessible location in Southampton and is open for over 40 hours a week, including some evenings and weekends, and provides outreach after hours.

The Nest in Southwark

Located in Southwark, The Nest is a youth-focused service dedicated to providing early intervention and preventative support for emotional and mental wellbeing. Aimed at children and young people experiencing low-level mental health challenges such as stress, anxiety, or general worries, The Nest offers immediate access to help, without the need for a professional referral.

The service is built around the principles of accessibility, empowerment, and holistic development. It provides a range of non-clinical interventions including youth work, person-centred counselling, psychological wellbeing practices, and traditional talking therapies. Support is delivered through various formats such as one-to-one sessions, group work, online resources, and peer mentoring.

A key component of The Nest's approach is its regular drop-in sessions, available to young people and their families. These sessions offer immediate support and act as a gateway for identifying those who may benefit from more sustained, personalised interventions.

The Nest is firmly integrated into Southwark's broader support network for young people. It works in close partnership with Family Early Help services, schools, NHS CYPMHS, GPs, Social Services, and Goldsmiths University. Additionally, through collaboration with the London Violence Reduction Unit and the Family Early Help team, The Nest is supporting the development of a parent and carer champion network. This initiative enables parents to deliver peer-to-peer support, backed by funding from the London Violence Reduction Unit.

Notably, two-thirds of referrals to The Nest come from young people from Black, Brown, and minority ethnic backgrounds - reflecting the diversity of Southwark. The service plays a vital role in promoting equity of access to mental health support. It helps to reduce stigma while serving as a model for other services seeking to broaden their reach and inclusivity.

Importantly, most referrals are self-initiated by young people themselves. Outcomes show a clear impact: 73% of those who access The Nest report feeling happier, and 78% experience improved wellbeing.

Health Spot in Tower Hamlets

Health Spot is a youth-focused, integrated health service based at the Spotlight Youth Centre in Tower Hamlets, London. Central to the initiative is a GP clinic embedded within a familiar, youth-friendly environment, ensuring that healthcare is accessible, non-intimidating, and responsive to young people's needs. The service supports 11–19-year-olds, as well as young adults up to 25 with special educational needs or care experience, and is now being replicated across other boroughs in North East London.

The on-site GP clinic provides comprehensive, holistic care in close collaboration with youth workers. Services include routine health appointments, mental health and emotional wellbeing support, sexual health and substance misuse services, speech and language therapy, social prescribing, and health education workshops. GPs also link young people to the centre's broader activities - including boxing, music, mentoring, and employability programmes - ensuring a seamless integration between health support and personal development opportunities.

Feedback from young people has been overwhelmingly positive, with all users reporting they would recommend Health Spot to a friend. Analysis of 800 consultations demonstrates that the service effectively reaches a representative cross-section of the borough's youth. Over two-thirds of attendees presented with mental health or emotional wellbeing challenges, more than half of whom were not accessing any other support. Additionally, 65% had involvement with children's social care, and 19% were not in education, employment, or training (NEET), underscoring Health Spot's success in engaging some of the community's most vulnerable young people.

Making it happen more broadly: embedding Hubs into local systems

To ensure Young Futures Hubs effectively support children and young people's mental health, coordinated action across government and local partners is essential. These recommendations focus on securing sustainable funding, embedding mental health as a core service, aligning Hubs with Integrated Care Systems and local strategies, and centring youth voice in design and delivery.

- **Funding:** The Treasury scales up investment into joined-up support for young people and families over the next decade to strengthen and extend provision and embed Young Futures Hubs into communities for the long-term. Each Hub should be backed by £1 million per year, to cover staff - including management, practitioners, counsellors, and youth workers - and administrative costs, as well as rent and activities.

In addition, the Department for Health and Social Care should extend the £7 million early support hub funding beyond March 2026 to support early adopter Young Futures Hubs to establish a safe and skilled mental health workforce, building from the findings of the Early Support Hub evaluation.

- **Government should establish a cross-departmental Young Futures Plan:** This should bring together and be co-signed by the Department for Work & Pensions, the

Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Culture, Media & Sport, and the Department for Education. This Plan should establish a shared ambition for the Young Futures programme and join up existing and future policies and funds to maximise the role of Young Futures Hubs as a key means of delivering a range of ambitions, including new neighbourhood health models, the Education White Paper, Best Start, Child Poverty Strategy, Growth Plan, and the National Youth Strategy. Departments which are co-signatories to the Young Futures Plan should also publish a comprehensive, joint guidance document for Young Futures Hubs. Government should design and issue national guidance setting out a clear ‘core offer’ of services to be delivered through the Hubs.

- **Co-ordinating with local systems:** The Department for Health and Social Care should ensure that the development and delivery of Young Futures Hubs are aligned with Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) and local authority children’s and young people’s strategies from the start, to create a coherent, joined-up approach to mental health and wellbeing. Each Hub should be part of their respective local ICS partnership, with shared governance and data-sharing arrangements that enable effective coordination between health, education, youth, and social care services.
- **Embedding youth voice:** The Department for Culture, Media & Sport should commission and issue guidance to local authorities on effective ways to embed co-production with young people into service design, supported by the sharing of best practice and practice guides. This should include involving Young People in local design teams as Hubs are established. The Open University and McPin Foundation recently produced a guide on how to co-design Young Futures Hubs in local areas¹⁸.

¹⁸ Billingham, L and Jones, H (2025) Co-designing young futures hubs in local areas: A guide. Available here: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/luke-billingham_co-designing-yf-hubs-activity-7356958682925961216-FyXC/

About us

About the Centre for Young Lives:

The Centre for Young Lives, founded by Baroness Anne Longfield CBE in early 2024, is an independent think tank and delivery unit working to improve the lives of children, young people, and families across the UK - with a particular focus on those facing the greatest challenges. The Young Futures approach and Hub model is based on a central recommendation of the Centre's previous incarnation – the Commission on Young Lives, which was also led by Baroness Longfield CBE and launched in September 2021 to put forward a national plan to transform the outcomes of the most marginalised teenagers.

The Centre for Young Lives recently published a framework for Young Futures Hubs: [Transforming opportunities for the most vulnerable young people](#).

About Future Minds:

In the face of a major and growing crisis in children and young people's mental health, four of the UK's leading children and young people's and mental health organisations – Centre for Mental Health, the Centre for Young Lives, the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition and YoungMinds, with the support of the Prudence Trust – have joined forces to call on the Government to deliver urgent reform and investment, ahead of the major long-term policy decisions that will be taken in the forthcoming Spending Review and 10 Year Plan for Health in England.

Earlier this year, Future Minds set out the economic case for investing in young people's mental health: [Why investing in children's mental health will unlock economic growth](#).

About Fund the Hubs:

Since 2020, the Fund the Hubs campaign has been calling for a national network of early support hubs across the country, which would provide early support for young people's mental health when their problems first start to emerge. The campaign is led by Black Thrive Global, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition, Centre for Mental Health, Mind, The Children's Society, YoungMinds and Youth Access.

In March 2025, Fund the Hubs published [A blueprint for Young Futures hubs](#), which includes designing and delivering hubs in line with the [Youth Access model](#).



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