

## Who can you turn to for help and support?

### Childline

Anyone under the age of 19 can confidentially call, email or chat on-line about any problem big or small.

0800 1111 (24/7 service)

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

(to talk one to one with a counsellor register for an account with Childline on the website)

### The Mix

If you are under 25 you can contact The Mix free of charge to talk to someone. You can also use their text or webchat if you prefer by visiting their website.

0808 808 4994 (daily 1pm to 11pm)

[www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

### Youth access

Information and advice on counselling services for people age 12—25. Use their 'find a service' on the website:

[www.youthaccess.org.uk](http://www.youthaccess.org.uk)

**Numbers correct at time of publishing—  
some numbers may incur a charge.**

### Carers UK

Information and advice for carers of any age. The website has a directory of all local support groups.

0808 808 7777

Monday – Friday 10am—4pm

[www.carersUK.org](http://www.carersUK.org)

### Chat Health

You can contact a school nurse to ask a question about anything that might be bothering you.

Their text service is for young people aged 11-19. It isn't 24 hours but they will always get back to you as soon as they can.

07520 615723

### Changes YP

Free friendly confidential service. Offering mutual support for 11s to 18s.

01782 413355

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**NHS**

**University Hospitals  
of North Midlands**  
NHS Trust

## **LIVING WITH A FAMILY MEMBER OR CARER WHO HAS A MENTAL ILLNESS**

A guide for children and  
young people.



Please note the information provided in this leaflet is for guidance only and not designed to diagnose a specific condition. Contact your GP if you are concerned about any of your symptoms.



**PROUD  
TO  
CARE**

If someone in your family is diagnosed with a mental illness it can be very hard to deal with.

It can be confusing and difficult and sometimes you can be unsure about how you are supposed to act and you may worry about how people who are not in the family home will see you.

You may experience feelings of loneliness, guilt and responsibility.

You may be fearful or experience shame—fear that each day you wake up you won't know if they are having a 'good' or a 'bad' day and shame that other people in your life such as your friends or even other family members may find out.

Common mental illnesses include:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Psychosis—this includes bi-polar disorder and schizophrenia
- Eating disorders
- Personality disorders
- Post traumatic stress disorder

### Who is looking after who?

#### Parent

Depending on who is unwell you may feel that you need to look after them.

This is especially the case if it is a parent who is unwell, you may feel the need to parent them and look after them.

You find yourself being their carer instead of them looking after you. You may also find that if you have younger siblings you also take on the role of parenting them.

You may begin to experience a sense of loss for the childhood that you are not able to have.

#### Sibling

If you have a sibling that has a mental illness it can lead you to feel resentment towards them as your parent/carer may be spending so much of their time looking after them that you feel neglected by them. You may want to play or socialise with them but they don't want to be with you.

Sometimes social services need to become involved to ensure that as a child you receive support, this could be extra support from school or a social care support worker.

Having social services help is not a bad thing and it is not always about taking you away from your family.

### What can you do about it?

You should not feel burdened by anyone's mental illness. If you do seek some support and help.

First recognise that it is okay to feel frustrated about your situation and that any feelings of guilt are understandable given your situation.

Find someone you can talk to, perhaps another family member or a school counsellor/nurse.

Make sure that if it is your parent who is unwell that you take some time for yourself to do things you want to do and try to enjoy it without feeling guilty. Get out of the house and see your friends.

Ensuring you try to maintain your own social groups and continue to meet other people will help with your own wellbeing and improve your own resilience against mental ill health.