



YOU

MATTER

YOUNGMiNDS

Our strategy for 2020-2023

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Why we matter

An introduction from our Chief Executive

The sheer scale of the problem we're faced with can feel overwhelming.

More young people than ever before need support for their mental health and accessing that support quickly, can make a critical difference to those young people. Yet, most of the time those young people need to wait. And wait. And wait.

So much of the problem is embodied in that wait. The gut-wrenching feeling of waking up each morning, knowing that you need help, knowing that you won't get it. Knowing that there is no-one you feel able to talk to, no-one who could help make things easier. Knowing that things are getting worse for you every day you go without support. That growing feeling of despair, anger, helplessness.

More than anything, when it feels like nothing is there for you when you need it most, you feel alone.

For far too many young people, this is their reality. When they need help and can't get it, it feels like they're being told they don't matter.

This is the result of a society that focuses on 'treatment' when things reach a crisis point rather than early intervention, and where mental health continues to be undervalued and underfunded. The severe mental health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are only exacerbating the situation, with the scale of demand set to grow further still from what the current system is able to cope with.

Our vision is clear: we want to see a world where no young person feels alone with their mental health. And to achieve this, that wait for support has to end.

If all young people can get the mental health support they need, when they need it, we can stop an emerging mental health need becoming a crisis.

This is our purpose – and we are clear about what we must do to make it happen. Through three bold, new strategic programmes, we are focusing our work to have as great an impact as we possibly can for the young people who need us.

We have called our strategy You Matter because, ultimately, that is what this is all about. We need young people to know that whatever they are going through, they matter and they deserve help. And each and every one of us needs to acknowledge that, to those young people, we matter and the role we can play is vital.

We are committed to this challenge and emboldened by the difference we know we can make for young people. Our mission has never been more important. We urge you to do whatever you can to join us.

Thank you,

Emma Thomas
Chief Executive, YoungMinds



Why we are needed

Imagine being a young person and wanting your life to end.

Imagine feeling this hopeless, this desperate, this lonely. Imagine the courage it takes to tell someone and to ask for help. Imagine the devastation when, having reached out, the support you need just isn't there.

Thousands of young people living in the UK don't need to imagine – this is their reality.

We live in a country where one in every six 5-16 year-olds has a mental health problem. Where the number of young people presenting at A&E with urgent mental health needs has tripled in the last ten years. Where a quarter of young women have a diagnosable mental health problem and where suicide is the single biggest killer of boys and young men. And these figures do not yet fully account for the young lives that have been turned upside down because of the coronavirus pandemic and the tsunami of mental health struggles we anticipate as a result.

The 'crisis' in young people's mental health is well publicised. But behind each and every one of these statistics is a real life – a young person who urgently needs help. Far, far too often, these young people are simply not getting that help. And for many, it is already too late.

Together, we can change this.

The change we want to see

At YoungMinds, we are clear in our purpose:

To stop young people's mental health reaching crisis point.

Every young person whose mental health ends up in crisis is a young person who has been failed. We know that the earlier young people can access the right help, the more likely it is that they can avoid these crises.

This is why YoungMinds is presenting a bold new vision for how things must change:

A world where no young person feels alone with their mental health.

We want to see a world where every young person who is struggling feels able to reach out, and has people and services around them who can really help.

And we will be unswerving in realising our new mission:

To make sure all young people can get the mental health support they need, when they need it, no matter what.

Whether they need a reassuring conversation, specialist mental health support or simply the knowledge that they are not alone in how they are feeling, we will make sure that all young people get support that meets them where they're at as quickly as possible.



Our Theory of Change

This is the **PROBLEM** we want to solve:

Young people's mental health needs are not supported early enough, and often only when they have reached crisis point



To solve this problem, we identified three priority **NEEDS** for young people:

Young people need to understand their emotions, how to take care of themselves and how to find help

Young people need better mental health support, including when their needs are first emerging

Young people need society to tackle the things that negatively impact their mental health

We will address these needs through the activity in our three **STRATEGIC PROGRAMMES:**

1. NEVER ALONE:

helping young people to look after their own mental health

2. SOMEONE TO TURN TO:

making sure young people have adults around them who can really help

3. POWERFUL YOUNG VOICES:

building a youth-led movement to make sure mental health support is there for anyone who needs it

And ensure we meet our **ULTIMATE GOAL:**

To stop young people's mental health reaching crisis point

This will mean that we achieve our **MISSION:**

That all young people can get the mental health support they need, when they need it, no matter what

And longer-term, this will lead to these **STRATEGIC OUTCOMES:**



Fewer young people need crisis or specialist support



The young people who need support get it quickly and at a high quality



There is a reduction in the things that contribute to rising mental health need in young people

Through this activity, we will achieve these **PROGRAMME GOALS:**

Young people are more able to look after themselves

The adults who young people turn to can recognise emerging needs and provide early support

Young people have better access to mental health services

Young people have a stronger voice in the things that impact their mental health

Our Values

At YoungMinds, we believe that how we do things is just as important as what we do.

Our values are therefore fundamental to who we are. Developed with our staff and with young people, they give us confidence that not only will we deliver the huge ambitions of our strategy, but that we will do so in the right way.

Our values drive everything we do – the decisions we make, the actions we take, the partners we choose, the way we treat each other. They are our statement to the world about what matters to us, but just as importantly, they are how we hold ourselves accountable for our own behaviour.



**WE CELEBRATE
WHAT MAKES
YOU YOU**



Whoever you are, we welcome you and always encourage you to be true to yourself.

**KINDNESS
IS OUR
STRENGTH**



Everything we do, we do with love, care and compassion.

**WE'RE NOT AFRAID
TO SPEAK UP FOR
WHAT'S RIGHT**



We know what needs to change because young people tell us. If they raise their voices, so do we.

**WE'RE
OPTIMISTIC**



Things get tough, but we never forget to celebrate progress and never stop looking for practical ways for things to get better.

Always alongside young people



We have always believed that the best way to make sure our work truly reflects the needs and experiences of young people, we have to deliver it alongside young people themselves.

For years, young people have been shaping our campaigns, lending us their ideas and co-producing our content as Activists. And our Youth Panel have been guiding and governing our charity, ensuring our strategic and operational decision-making always has young people's input.

Now, we want to go even further, with an ambition for as much as possible of what we do to be co-produced by young people or developed with input from young people.

From our training for teachers to our support for parents, our recommendations to Government to our advice for young people, we will develop or deliver all of our programmes alongside young people.

We also want even more young people's input into our internal-facing work – our safeguarding policies and our recruitment practices, our funding bids and our spending priorities.

By doing everything alongside young people themselves, we know it will always stay authentic, relevant and true to the real experiences of young people.

Programme 1: Never alone

Helping young people to look after their own mental health

Every single young person will have moments in their life when they are worried about their mental health.

They may have experienced a bereavement or a separation in their family that they are struggling to make sense of. They may have been the victim of racist abuse. They may be feeling anxious about how they look, or have felt unable to leave their room for days on end.

Whatever it might be that they are feeling, we know that they will very often look for help online. The problem is, it can be an overwhelming and disorientating experience. There is so much information and advice out there, a lot of which isn't written with young people in mind. It's hard to know where to start and what to trust.

Our vision is for no young person to feel alone with their mental health – and through our digital support, we can start to achieve exactly that.

When a young person lands on our website, they will no longer feel alone. They will find information and advice that speaks to them on their level. They will be supported to make sense of their feelings. They will know that there are other young people out there who are going through what they are. They will leave it armed with realistic, practical things they can do that will really help.

Goal: Young people are more able to look after themselves.

Our strategic aims

1. Every young person who needs us can find us quickly and easily.
2. Every young person we engage with feels more hopeful about their mental health and can do something positive to improve their situation.
3. Every young person who wants to be a source of support to their friends can come to us to gain the skills and confidence to do so.



Through this programme we will:

- provide rich, engaging information and advice that gives young people the encouragement and guidance they need to make positive choices for their mental health.
- meet young people where they are, with a big presence across all the digital channels that they use.
- invest in advanced digital technologies to give young people the reassuring, user-friendly experience they need to direct them to what they need most.
- reach out to young people who are more likely to experience mental health problems and less likely to know about us, including young people of colour.
- provide practical advice to young people to help them to be there for their friends, safely and appropriately.
- develop all of this alongside young people with lived experience, to make sure it is relevant, authentic and responsive to what young people really need.

Programme 2: Someone to turn to

Making sure young people have adults around them who can really help

We know that when a young person is having a hard time with their mental health, they will often first reach out to an adult in their life.

We also know that if a young person doesn't feel able to speak to someone, or perhaps doesn't yet realise themselves that they need help, the adults around them are most likely to notice first.

Those adults are parents, carers and family. They are teachers and other education professionals. And they are those adults, working in local communities, who build close, trusting bonds with the young people they work with – sports coaches, charity volunteers, youth workers. None of these people are mental health professionals – but the role they can play in supporting a young person who is struggling can be just as important.

What they all have in common is that they just want to help. They desperately want to do the best they can do for their children and for the young people they care for or work with. But so often, they feel at a loss. They do not have the knowledge, the practical skills and the confidence to be the best support they can be – the support those young people need them to be.

Through our programme of information, support and training, tens of thousands of these adults will be able to offer that crucial, early mental health response that young people need from them. As a result, we can make sure all young people have someone to turn to.

Goal: The adults who young people turn to can recognise emerging needs and provide early support.

Our strategic aims

1.

Every young person has adults in their life who they can turn to for help with their mental health, whether that's at home, at school or in their community.


2.

Every adult who wants to help a young person with their mental health can come to us to gain the skills and confidence to do so.



Through this programme we will:

- provide parents and carers with life-changing advice and support through our unique Parents Helpline, investing in digital developments to ensure we reach thousands more each year.
- form partnerships that enable us to reach local communities, offering training and support to the adults who need us most and who can make the biggest difference to young people.
- develop our online information and advice for adults to help them to guide and support young people when they need help with their mental health.

Programme 3: Powerful young voices

Building a youth-led movement to make sure support is there for anyone who needs it

We know that we will only achieve our mission by ensuring young people have the power to make the changes they need.

For many young people, the support we can offer them through our first two programmes won't be enough on its own. With more young people than ever experiencing mental health problems, we have to tackle the reasons behind this rising need. From exam stress to social media, inequalities in access to service waiting time, things have to change.

Like us, the young people who have lived experience of these issues are usually highly motivated to change things. They are determined to make sure no-one else has to go through what they did. That's where YoungMinds comes in. Through this programme, we will ensure that every single young person who wants to use their voice to start changing things for the better will be able to do so.

We will harness the creativity and energy of young people, driven by the urgency of their lived experience. We will train and support them, building their confidence and skills to be agents of change. And we will use the power of digital to mobilise young people across the country.

Through this, we will create a youth-led movement with the power to influence Government policy, service delivery and public attitudes in line with what young people really need.

Goals:

Young people have better access to mental health services. Young people have a stronger voice in the things that impact their mental health.

Our strategic aims

1. Every young person who wants to can influence the decisions that affect their mental health.
2. Every young person who needs support - whether from the NHS, from local services or online - can get it.
3. Some of the key factors behind the rise in young people's mental health needs are reduced.



Through this programme we will:

- increase our influence as a campaigning force for change, engaging young people in their thousands to ensure their voices are heard wherever they need to be.
- invest in digital innovations so that we can offer opportunities to thousands more young people and say 'yes' to every young person who wants to join us.
- radically expand our youth co-production approach so that everything we do, from our governance to our campaigns, our helpline to our training, has been shaped by young people's involvement.
- develop our capacity for grass-roots activism, supporting young people to take independent action, locally and online.
- empower mental health services to shape their services by listening to the voices of the young people who use them.



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