



**Royal College of  
Paediatrics and Child Health**

*Leading the way in Children's Health*

## **Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) Wales response to Proposed Mental Health Standards of Care (Wales) Bill**

March 2024

Mental health and wellbeing continues to be a major challenge for children and young people across Wales. The [Children's Commissioner for Wales](#) found that almost two thirds (63.2%) of children aged 7-11 were concerned about their mental health or wellbeing. Children with the lowest levels of family affluence were statistically significantly more likely to be concerned about their mental health and wellbeing than those with higher affluence levels.

Additional research by the [Mental Health Foundation](#) found that 50% of mental health problems are established by age 14 and 75% by age 24.

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) Wales recently published a [paper](#) on the role of paediatricians in child mental health. The paper advocates for increasing resources into early intervention and prevention, building resilience and ensuring our workforce is trained to spot the signs of mental ill health and equipped to refer and support children.

### Summary

- RCPCH Wales welcomes the rights-based approach adopted by the Mental Health Standards of Care (Wales) Bill.
- RCPCH Wales welcomes the amendment that ensure there is no age limit upon those who can request a re-assessment of their mental health, but clarification is needed regarding extending the ability to request a re-assessment to 'people specified by the patient'.
- RCPCH Wales would welcome guidance to strengthen the criteria for referrals to CAMHS and support for those that are considered 'the missing middle'.

## Re-assessment

The Bill currently provides an amendment to the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010 that ensures there is no age limit upon those who can request a re-assessment of their mental health.

Children have the right under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to the best possible standards of healthcare (Article 24), and to express their views and to have those views taken seriously (Article 12), according to age and maturity.

The amendment would mean children and young people could request a re-assessment of their mental health, which is currently only available to adults. This amendment could establish parity within service provision.

RCPCW Wales agrees with the Children's Commissioner for Wales that these changes could empower children in line with the UNCRC, to which Welsh Government Ministers must pay due regard to.

However, the Bill should clarify what is meant by extending the provision 'to people specified by the patient'. This section should expand on the type of people (parents, siblings, carers for example) that are able to request a re-assessment and in what situation this could occur. The Bill should clarify if this will take on the form of a Nominated Person which is discussed in Section 8 of the Bill.

The Bill also needs to include the role of the trusted adult and how this would interact with the ability to request a re-assessment. It would be worthwhile outlining the safeguarding ramifications for potential changes to legislation relating to children and young people.

## Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

As set out in the background for the Bill, it seeks to improve the delivery of mental health plans for CAMHS. However, there is very little information contained in the explanatory memorandum that directly relates to the delivery of mental health plans for CAMHS.

RCPCW will continue to call for investment in the No Wrong Door approach and increased funding for community based mental health services so they can provide high quality and timely support to children who experience mental illness. However, we must also recognise that not all

young people with mental health difficulties need to be, or can be, supported by CAMHS.

An amended and updated Code of Practice should set out Wales-wide criteria on what constitutes an appropriate referral to CAMHS to avoid variation. This would support the intention of the Bill.

Furthermore, guidance on supporting those who do not meet the criteria for CAMHS but still require support, a group termed 'the missing middle', could feature in accompanying guidance for this Bill. This would include what other services working with children, young people and their families can do to support mild to moderate mental health needs. This would support the aspirations of the Bill.

As already stated, RCPCH published a [paper](#) recently on the role of paediatricians in child and young people mental health. The paper explains that while CAMHS has a significant of referrals, there are also a number of children seeking mental health support across primary care, in education settings, paediatric services, emergency departments and through online tools such as Kooth and Childline.

All services working with children have a role to play in supporting their wellbeing and addressing mild to moderate mental health needs.

RCPCH's paper provides recommendations that could feature in accompanying guidance, that would support the intention of the Bill to improve CAMHS.

### Resources

- RCPCH, 2024. [Role of Paediatricians in child and young people mental health](#)
- Senedd Children, Young People and Education Committee, 2018. [Mind over Matter.](#)

## About RCPCH Wales

The RCPCH works to transform child health through knowledge, innovation and expertise. We have over 600 members in Wales, 14,000 across the UK and an additional 17,000 worldwide. The RCPCH is responsible for training and examining paediatricians. We also advocate on behalf of members, represent their views and draw upon their expertise to inform policy development and the maintenance of professional standards.

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