

# MENTAL HEALTH, TRAUMA AND SERVICES

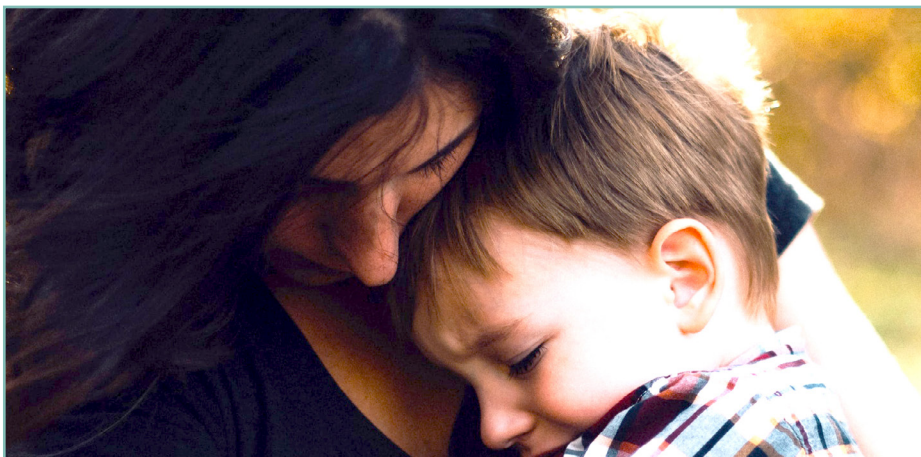
Life can be difficult at times for any child, young person or adult. Neurodivergent individuals might have increased vulnerability to mental health difficulties. With adequate support from families, peers and outside organisations, there is every possibility that mental health difficulties can be managed and overcome.

## Definition:

Mental health refers to:

- ▶ How we feel about ourselves and others.
- ▶ Our ability to make and keep friends and relationships.
- ▶ Our ability to learn from others and to develop psychologically and emotionally.
- ▶ Having the strength to overcome the difficulties and challenges we face in our lives at times;  
AND
- ▶ Having the confidence and self-esteem to make decisions and believe in ourselves.

There is no single reason to account for why mental health difficulties occur more frequently. Many hypotheses exist in attempts to explain why. Some of the symptoms associated with a neurodevelopmental disorder (for example, social difficulties, poorly developed sensory regulation, difficulties coping with change, emotional regulations difficulty, heightened responses to stress, poor understanding of emotions etc.) may increase a child or young person's vulnerability to mental health difficulties. The more recognition, understanding and acceptance of diversity, the more hope that these difficulties will become less frequent and have less impact on a person's quality of life.



Everyone experiences stress at times. If individuals are exposed to stressful environments over extended time periods, their mental health could be affected. ND children and young people may have negative or highly stressful experiences with their environment or interactions with others, if rejected or poorly understood, as trauma. A person experiencing frequent trauma can become hypervigilant, angry, have recurring nightmares and other sleep issues, or lead to depression, persistent fear, aggression, irritability or difficulty concentrating or remembering things.

Some ND characteristics may be more intense: regression of skills, increased communication issues, increased anxiety and meltdowns, reduced emotional regulation, etc. Providing children with adequate support may be the key to reducing the impact of any ND characteristics on the child's mental health. Strategies like using a child's strengths and recognising any weaknesses requiring support may be the key to building a child's self-esteem and the resilience to overcome negative experiences.

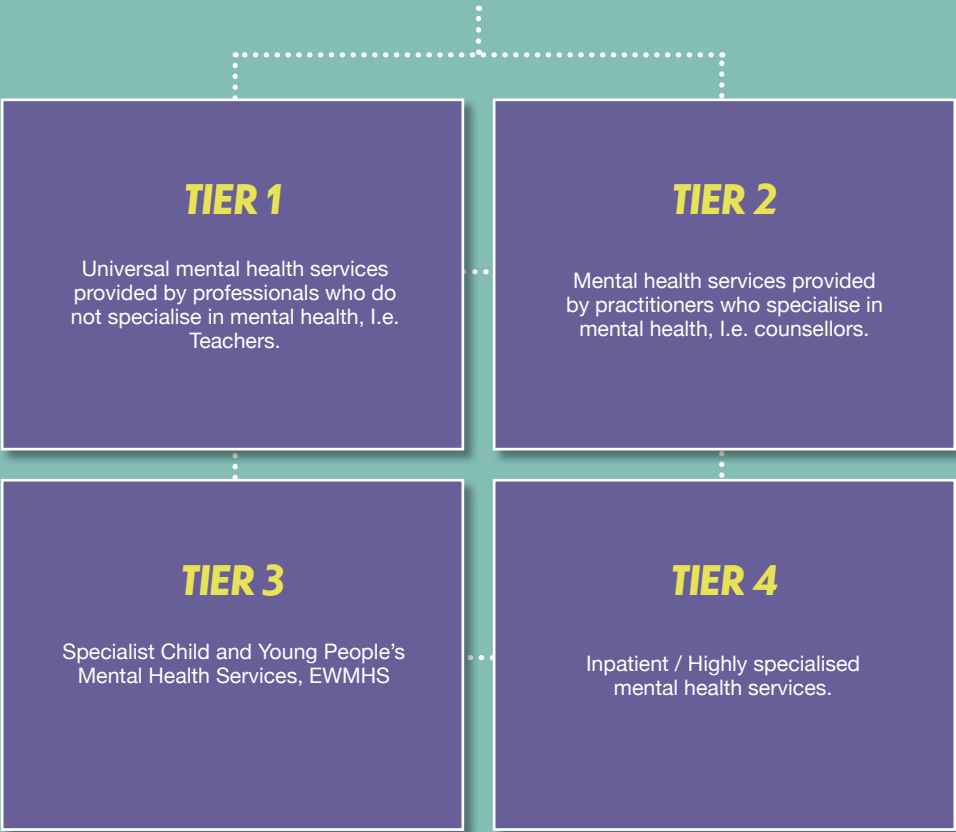
**Some of these strategies may include:**

- ▶ Educating adults and carers to recognise a child's difficulties
- ▶ Supporting a child to ask for help when they find tasks difficult.
- ▶ Helping a child to understand and take pride in what makes them different
- ▶ Praising for effort and celebrating achievements. Supporting an individual to recognise their strengths, along with any difficulties.
- ▶ Providing ample opportunities to take breaks from situations that can be stressful
- ▶ Supporting family members affected by neurodevelopmental disorders and developing coping strategies for managing stress
- ▶ Develop alternative means for communication when verbal skills are very limited.
- ▶ Addressing situations where needs are dismissed, belittled, misunderstood or ignored.
- ▶ Prepare well for transitions
- ▶ Provide an opportunity for appropriate challenges and expect achievement is possible in time
- ▶ Offer support when experiencing bereavement, including the death of a pet.

If you are worried about your child or family member's mental health, many resources are available to your child, young person and family. The first step would be to speak to your GP, Health professional or education professional.

The different levels of mental health services and support are referred to as 'Tiers', ranging from Tier 1, where mental health problems are relatively low, to Tier 4, in-patient mental health facilities.

Below are the details for each Tier that is available in the Southend borough.



There is a difference between feeling a bit low from time to time and a severe emotional or mental health problem. If your child or young person is feeling unhappy and low for a prolonged period of time, or if you have any other serious concerns about your child or young person, it is time to seek more professional help.

**Emotional Wellbeing and mental health service (EWMHS)**

You may find it helpful to speak to your GP, who may refer you to the specialist children and young people's mental health service (EWMHS).

If you need help for a mental health crisis or emergency, you should get immediate expert advice and assessment. Information is available from the NHS website. Or call the EWMHS Crisis Line on **0300 300 1600**.

EWMHS is a service for anybody aged between 0-18 living in the Southend, Essex and Thurrock areas and is free at entry. The service is also for young people with special educational needs (SEN) up to 25 years. Any young person experiencing emotional well-being or mental health problems, parent, guardian, professional or teacher of a child experiencing emotional well-being and mental health difficulties may access their service.

Call 0300 300 1600 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday, to be put through to their three CSPAs and seven Locality teams across Southend, Essex and Thurrock.

For their out of hours and weekend Crisis Support Service, please call the general NELFT switchboard on 0300 555 1201 to be put through to immediate Crisis Support help.

### OTHER RESOURCES

There are also free listening services, where you can speak confidentially to a trained volunteer about anything troubling you, no matter what that is, and they can help support you or your child/young person.

Call 116 123 to talk to the Samaritans or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) for a reply within 24 hours.

Text SHOUT to 85258 to contact the Shout Crisis Text Line, or text YM if you are under 19 years old.

If you are under 19 years old, you can also call 0800 1111 to talk to Childline. The number will not appear on your phone bill.

