

News story: Secondary school staff get mental health 'first aid' training

From June 2017, teachers in secondary schools around the country will take part in a new training programme to help them identify and respond to early signs of mental health issues in children.

The programme, backed by £200,000 government funding, and delivered by the charity Mental Health First Aid, will eventually cover every secondary school in England, as part of a government commitment to improve support for children and young people.

Teachers and other school staff will receive practical advice on how to recognise issues including depression and anxiety, self-harm, and eating disorders.

They will also be invited to become 'first aid champions', sharing their knowledge and experiences across schools and communities to raise awareness and break down stigma and discrimination.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

Teachers already provide outstanding pastoral care and support for their pupils, but many have said that they would appreciate more training on how to understand and respond to mental health issues.

We know that identifying symptoms of mental illness early can help young people on the road to recovery. This training will mean more children receive the timely and sensitive support they need to stay well.

One in 10 school-aged children will have a mental health condition at any time, with half of all mental health conditions beginning before the age of 14, making early intervention and support vital.

The introduction of Mental Health First Aid training supports the government's pledge in the Queen's Speech to improve mental health services and protect those living with mental health problems from unfair treatment and discrimination.

Earlier this year, the prime minister announced that every secondary school in the country would be offered the training, as part of a comprehensive set of messages to transform mental health support for children and young people.