

# Press release: Improved mental health support for children in care

Up to 10 pilots across the country will trial new high quality mental health assessments, that ensure young people are assessed at the right time, with a focus on their individual needs as they enter care.

Statistics show that 62 per cent of looked after children are in care due to abuse or neglect, which can have a lasting impact on their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Currently half of all children in care meet the criteria for a possible mental health disorder, compared to one in ten children outside the care system. The pilots will identify a child's mental health and broader wellbeing needs, including whether a referral to a more specialist service is needed.

Minister for Children and Families, Nadhim Zahawi, said:

Children in care are some of the most vulnerable in society and have often experienced traumatic events, so it is vital they receive care and support that is tailored to their needs.

We want to improve support for every child in care and these pilots will help to provide high-quality mental health assessments when children enter the care system and make sure the right support is in place.

The Department for Education has awarded £240,000 to a group of organisations, led by the Anna Freud Centre, to work with Action for Children, Child Outcomes Research Consortium, Research in Practice and NSPCC, to deliver up to 10 local pilots over two years. The pilot areas will also benefit from a share of £650,000 to deliver the scheme.

The programme will look at which professionals should be involved in the assessment and develop best practice that ensures the child's unique needs are at the centre of the process.

A consortium led by SQW, an economic development and social research organisation has also been awarded £150,000 to carry out an independent evaluation to look at the effectiveness and impact of the pilots.

Sheila Redfern, Head of Specialist Trauma and Maltreatment Service at the Anna Freud Centre, said:

We are delighted to have been successful with our bid for these pilots. Looked after children are a key priority for the Specialist

Trauma and Maltreatment team here at AFNCCF and we will be working with Action for Children, Research in Practice, CORC and NSPCC to bring together a wealth of expertise and experience in this area.

Looked after children are highly vulnerable to emotional and relationship difficulties, putting them at risk of long-term mental health issues and placement breakdown with their carers, so it is vital they get the right help at the right time. The assessment process at an individual level is critical to achieving this. We are very excited to have this opportunity to support improvements through the pilots.

This announcement follows the publication of the Government's Children and Young People's Mental Health Green Paper in December 2017. Backed by £300 million in funding, this aims to improve access to mental health services for children and young people through designated mental health leads in schools and by reducing waiting times for mental health services.

Further information:

- [Statistics](#) on looked after children, including mental health.
- The Government has pledged a total of £1.7 billion to help promote, protect and improve children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. This includes an extra £300m to provide more support for school children.