

Developing a model of mental health self-care support for children and young people through an integrated evaluation of available types of provision involving systematic review, meta-analysis and case study

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

'Self-care support' means helping (supporting) people to look after their own health. It is a common approach to helping children with long-term physical conditions like diabetes and asthma. Children and their families like it because it puts them, not professionals, in control. We wondered whether or not self-care support could also be useful for children with mental health needs so we carried out this research project.

Our research was about finding out what types of self-care support existed, and which types of support might prevent mental ill health occurring in children or speed recovery from it. We carried out 'systematic reviews of the literature' which involved us looking at all the material people had written about the topic to see if we could find out what worked, and what children and their families liked about it. We also identified real-life self-care support services in England and Wales, visiting six services to interview children and parents who had used them, as well as those who ran them, to find out how the services worked alongside services provided by official bodies like the NHS and local councils.

We found that self-care support can help with children's mental health needs and that it is connected to an idea called 'recovery'. We also found that children and their families want choice and flexibility in how, when and where self-care support is provided, staff to be available in case they need them when any therapy has finished, and services and staff that are welcoming, helpful and non-judgemental.

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