

# Interventions to improve the mental health of children and young people with long-term physical conditions: linked evidence syntheses

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## Plain English summary

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## Plain English summary

Many children and young people with a long-term physical health condition also experience feelings of depression, anxiety and other mental health issues that affect their day-to-day life, their family and others around them. This review investigates whether or not interventions (treatments, strategies and resources) can help children and young people with their mental health. The study also reviewed studies that explored the attitudes and experiences of those involved in receiving or delivering similar interventions.

The study found 25 publications that evaluated 11 different types of interventions, including cognitive-behavioural therapy (seven studies) and music therapy (one study). There were some positive effects for the strategies tested on both mental health and other outcomes, but, because the studies were often small, exact effects were uncertain. Many of the studies were not very well designed or carried out and differences between research designs meant that it was hard to compare different studies.

The study found 57 publications that explored experiences of interventions. Analysis suggested that it is important that strategies involve building good relationships and are delivered in what feels like a safe space. Participants in studies tended to like interventions that provided social support and helped them feel better about living with a long-term physical condition. Successful interventions were viewed as accessible and engaging. These studies were often conducted well, but they focused on the range of interventions rather than the review evaluating how well interventions work.

There are many gaps in the research carried out so far. Some long-term conditions affecting children and young people have not been the subject of studies of mental health interventions, and some important outcomes, such as school attendance and self-care, have not been assessed. More carefully designed UK research consulting children and young people, parents and practitioners is needed before it can be clear what works for children with particular physical conditions to help their mental health, and why.



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