

Experiences of children and young people from ethnic minorities in accessing mental health care and support: rapid scoping review

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Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.

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Plain English summary

Mental health care for young people from ethnic minorities

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Plain English summary

The problem

Mental health problems are common among children and young people in the UK. Compared with white British young people, those from ethnic minority backgrounds often have greater difficulty accessing mental health support and poorer engagement with services. They may also prefer different types of support, perhaps because of cultural influences.

Our aims and methods

We aimed to discover the amount and type of research that exists on the experiences of children and young people from ethnic minorities (non-white British) when they are seeking or receiving care for mental health problems. We also aimed to summarise the studies' findings. We searched for studies based on interviews or group discussions with young people experiencing mental health problems and accessing services. Studies about the experiences of their parents/carers or those involved in providing care were also included.

What we found

We found 22 relevant studies published from 2012 onwards. There were studies of refugees/asylum seekers ($n = 5$) and university students ($n = 4$) and studies among young people experiencing particular mental health problems: schizophrenia or psychosis ($n = 3$), eating disorders ($n = 3$), post-traumatic stress disorder ($n = 3$, all of asylum seekers), substance misuse ($n = 2$), self-harm ($n = 2$) and obsessive-compulsive disorder ($n = 1$). There were also three studies of ethnic minority young people receiving particular talking therapies.

Most studies had been carried out in young people or their parents from a range of ethnic backgrounds. However, nine studies were about young people from particular ethnic groups: asylum seekers from Afghanistan ($n = 2$), and black and South Asian ($n = 2$), black African and black Caribbean ($n = 2$), South Asian ($n = 1$), Pakistani or Bangladeshi ($n = 1$) and Orthodox Jewish ($n = 1$) people.

The studies also suggested factors that may negatively affect ethnic minority young people's care-seeking and access to mental health care, such as lack of understanding of mental health problems, low trust in care professionals and social stigma.

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