



## Research Article

# Systematic review of integrated mental and physical health services for children and young people with eating and functional symptoms

Efthalia Massou,<sup>1\*</sup> Josefine Magnusson,<sup>2,3</sup> Naomi J Fulop,<sup>2</sup>  
Saheli Gandhi,<sup>2</sup> Angus IG Ramsay,<sup>2</sup> Isobel Heyman,<sup>4,5</sup> Sara O'Curry,<sup>6</sup>  
Sophie Bennett,<sup>7,8</sup> Tamsin Ford<sup>4</sup> and Stephen Morris<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Primary Care Unit, Department of Public Health and Primary Care, University of Cambridge, UK

<sup>2</sup>Department of Behavioural Science and Health, University College London, UK

<sup>3</sup>Department of Women and Children's Health, King's College London, UK

<sup>4</sup>Department of Psychiatry, University of Cambridge, UK

<sup>5</sup>Psychological Medicine Team, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, UK

<sup>6</sup>Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust, Cambridge, UK

<sup>7</sup>Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, KCL, London, UK

<sup>8</sup>UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, London, UK

\*Corresponding author [em716@medschl.cam.ac.uk](mailto:em716@medschl.cam.ac.uk)

Published January 2025

DOI: 10.3310/ELPT1245

## Plain language summary

Systematic review of integrated mental and physical health services for children and young people with eating and functional symptoms

Health and Social Care Delivery Research 2025

DOI: 10.3310/ELPT1245

NIHR Journals Library [www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk)

This article should be referenced as follows:

Massou E, Magnusson J, Fulop NJ, Gandhi S, Ramsay AIG, Heyman I, et al. Systematic review of integrated mental and physical health services for children and young people with eating and functional symptoms [published online ahead of print January 8 2025]. *Health Soc Care Deliv Res* 2025. <https://doi.org/10.3310/ELPT1245>

## Plain language summary

Children and young people with eating disorders (which involves issues with thoughts about food, eating, weight and shape, as well as eating behaviours) and functional symptom disorders (physical symptoms without clear medical explanation) need specialist health care that includes both physical and mental health services. To address the needs of these children and young people, whose number is growing, more recent trends in care are based on team-based care. This kind of care involves healthcare professionals from various specialties and encourages greater collaboration among them. There are studies that show that children and young people receiving this kind of care – also known as integrated care – might have better outcomes.

The aim of this review was to search the relevant literature for studies that explore how this care is implemented and what its impact is on patients with these two conditions. We reviewed existing studies to see how integrated health services (combining mental and physical health care) are being used for these conditions. We specifically looked for studies that compared integrated services to regular, non-integrated services. We found only one study exploring the impact of this kind of care for children and young people with eating disorders. We extracted useful information from this study, and we assessed its quality. That study found that integrated care had better outcomes for children and young people with eating disorders compared to the standard care. Integrated care reduced the hospital admissions to psychiatric wards. However, the study's quality was weak as it evaluated an integrated care model from over 20 years ago and from a single location. For this reason, these findings should be interpreted with caution.