

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide, consisting of a dark blue square background with a large, lighter blue circle partially visible, creating a layered effect.

# Working with Parents/Carers to support mental health




## Aims

- Look at the prevalence of parental mental health difficulties.
- Examine the impact of poor parental mental health on children.
- Explore ways that parents can support the mental health of their children.
- Discuss how your service works with Parents/Carers.



# Breakout

How common are parental mental health difficulties?



## PREVALENCE

- Approximately 68% of women and 57% of men with mental health problems are parents.
- The most common mental health problems experienced during pregnancy and after birth are anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Perinatal mental health problems carry a total economic and social long-term cost to society of about £8.1 billion for each one-year cohort of births in the UK.

# PREVALENCE

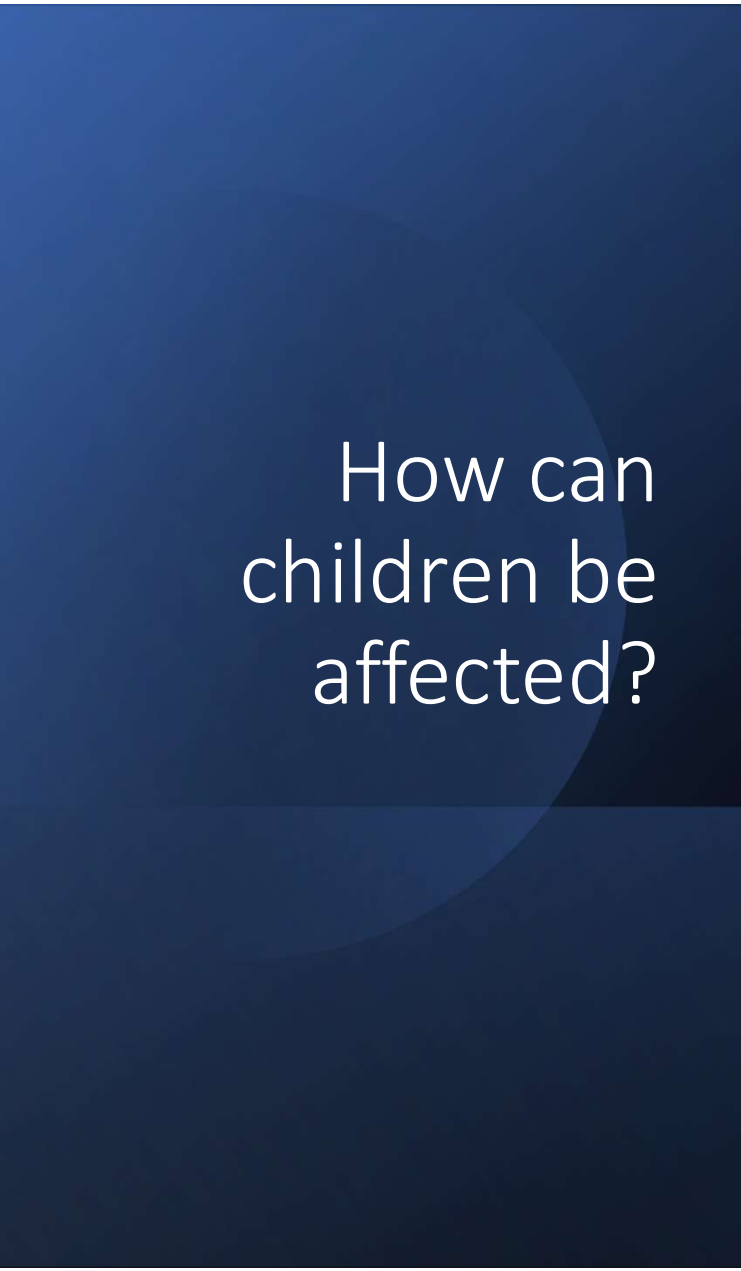
- A recent study in the UK, which used primary care data, reported that about one in four children has a mother with a current mental illness.
- The prevalence of maternal mental illness treated within primary care increased during childhood and during the period of analysis (2005–17). (Lancet)
- A Canadian national estimated that about 12% of children had a parent with a mood, anxiety, or substance use disorder.
- Another study from Australia estimated that about 23% of children had a parent with a non-substance use mental disorder.

## PREVALENCE

- In England alone, it's estimated that 2.9 million children and young people live with a parent who has reported symptoms of anxiety and depression –
- and that figure doesn't capture the whole of the UK, nor does it include parents with other illnesses such as schizophrenia, personality disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder.

## How can children be affected?

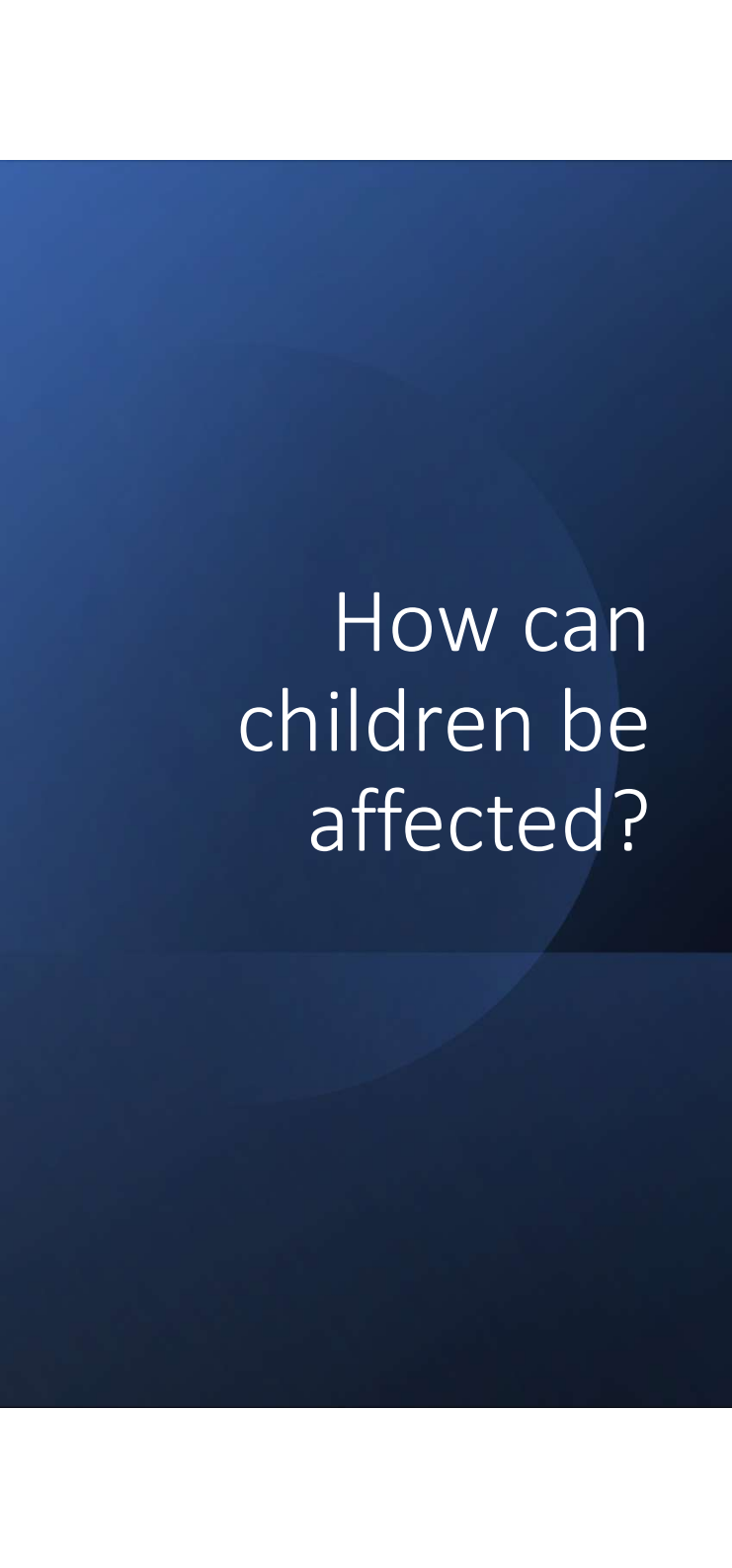
- Over a third of those who experienced some type of parental mental health problem also reported suffering from mental health problems in childhood as compared to the 7.77 percent among those who did not experience parental mental health problems.



How can  
children be  
affected?

Those who were exposed to poor parental mental health as a child have consistently higher distress across adulthood compared to those who were not exposed to this stressor.

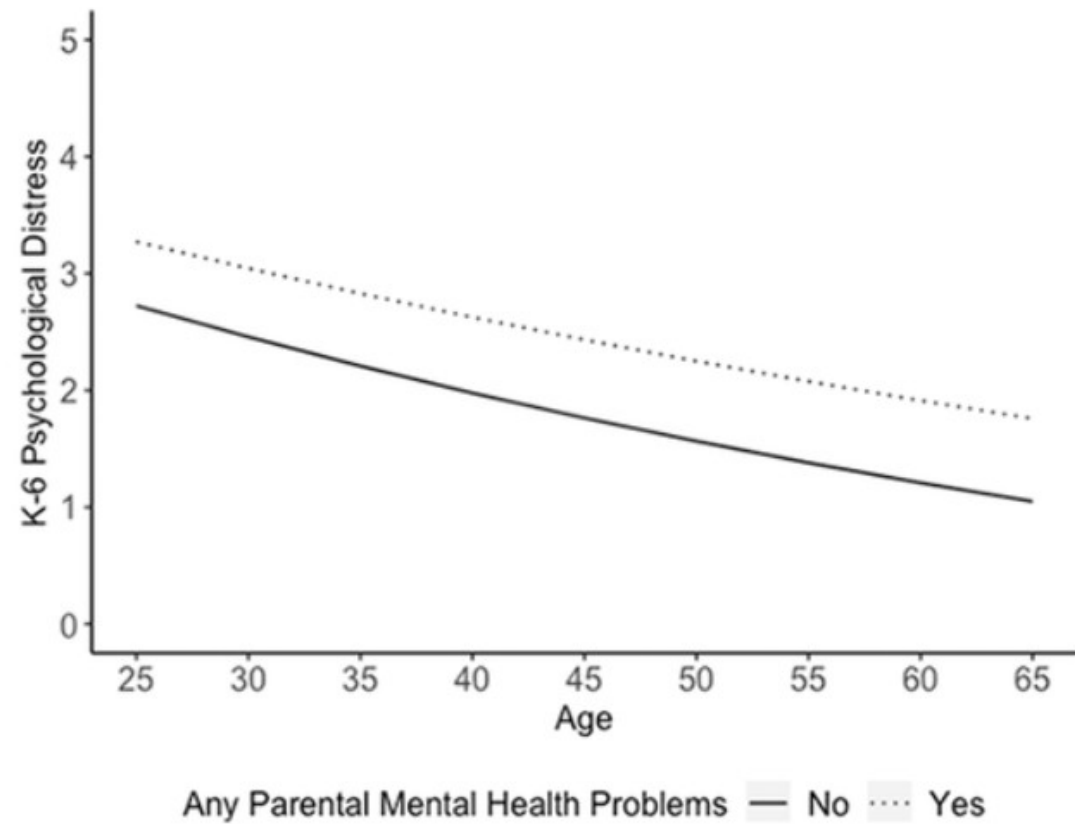




## How can children be affected?

Those with no experience with poor parental mental health follow a trajectory of declining distress with age, but those exposed to both maternal and paternal mental health problems have almost no decline of distress with age. Accordingly, the gap in distress between these groups grows across adulthood.

How can  
children be  
affected?





# Breakout

How might children or young people respond to having parent(s) with mental health difficulties?

## How can children be affected?

- worry about their parent
- take on a caring role
- put their family's needs above their own
- have negative feelings about their parent's mental health problem
- find it hard to make friends or experience bullying
- keep their worries to themselves and not feel they can share them with a trusted adult.
- Fear of developing mental health problems


# Protective Factors

- parents and carers who acknowledge their difficulties and are willing to accept support from services
- friends or relatives who are able to care for children and help with household chores when needed
- families receiving support for other challenges, such as income support, benefits and housing advice
- families receiving additional support from other professionals who can also monitor the situation and share concerns if necessary, for example teachers
- children having a trusted adult they are able to ask for help when needed
- wider community support



# Breakout

What should parents do if they are worried about their child's mental health?



What should I  
do if I am  
worried about  
my child's  
mental health  
and I think it's  
getting serious?  
(NHS)

- **Make time to listen to them:** Create a calm safe space where they can communicate how they are feeling without judgement.
- **Try to understand the problems and provide reassurance that you have heard them and are there to help. The problems could be something you are not aware of or don't notice at first, such as:**
  - relationship problems with friends and family
  - being bullied
  - experience of traumatic events such as abuse
  - self-harm or suicide by someone close to them
  - low self-esteem.

## What to do

- **Or it might be something more noticeable, such as:**
  - a recent death of a friend or family member
  - worries about schoolwork, exams or exam results
  - worries about employment opportunities
  - coping with a chronic illness or disability
  - substance misuse problems
  - coping with pre-existing mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and eating disorders.



## What to do

- **Take time to talk to the child or young person you care for:** This is particularly key in relation to children and young people, who may feel overwhelmed by a changing situation which isn't being clearly explained in a way they can understand.
- Some young people may find it easier to talk while doing something together such as playing in the park, going for a walk, painting or other activities.

## What to do

- **Keep an eye on the child or young person you care for:** Look out for symptoms that your child's mental health may be deteriorating, including symptoms of anxiety and low mood or worrying changes in behaviour.
- Seek specialist health advice and support and increase vigilance, including checking if they are accessing websites about self-harm, suicide or pro-eating disorders.

## What to do

- **Help the child or young person you care for do positive activities which means they aren't isolating themselves:**
- Positive activities including exercise and safe contact with family and friends can provide a distraction from negative thoughts and may help them open up about their feelings.

## What to do

- **Provide structure and routine (including for sleep):**
- Many children and young people may experience difficulties with their sleep. Providing structure through the development of daily and weekly timetables, including bedtime routines, can be helpful in providing some predictability for children and young people

## What to do

- **Seek specialist advice and support quickly if you think the child or young person you care for is having suicidal thoughts or are self-harming:**
- It is important that you do not ignore these symptoms and that you speak to a GP or crisis mental health helpline urgently to get the right help and support

## What to do

- **Finally, as a parent or carer, look after your own mental health too:**
- This will help you to best support yourself and those you care about. Remember to talk to your family and friends about how you are feeling, and seek help for yourself from the NHS and other support services if it's all getting too much. It's okay not to feel okay.



# Breakout

What can all parents do to nurture their child's mental health?

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

- **Make sure they know you love them and are proud of them.**
- Even when things are busy or stressful, and it feels like you are in survival mode, a word or a hug can reassure them a huge amount. Praise them for what they do well, and encourage them to try new things.



## TIPS FOR PARENTS

- **Be honest about your feelings - you don't have to be perfect.**
- We all get things wrong and shout or say unkind things from time to time. If this happens, say sorry to your child afterwards and explain why it happened, They will learn from you that it's okay to make mistakes and that it doesn't make you a bad person.

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

- **Be clear about what is and isn't acceptable - and tell them why.**
- Children need to know what is okay and what isn't, and what will happen if they cross the line. Follow through on what you say as otherwise they may get confused or stop respecting the boundaries.

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

**Own your own role - you are the parent, so don't be afraid to take tough decisions.**

If your child sees you are scared of their reaction and always give in to them, it can make them feel very powerful, which can be frightening. Children need to know that you are there to keep them safe.

# 10 WAYS PARENTS CAN SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN TO BUILD POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH HABITS



**01**  
Encourage your child to openly talk about their feelings and thoughts



**02**  
When your child is worrying help them to effectively problem solve



**03**  
Support them to connect and build positive relationships with others



**04**  
Encourage them to look after their physical health (Sleep, food, exercise)



**05**  
Help them to stay focused on the present moment using mindfulness



**06**  
Highlight the importance of looking after both physical and mental health



**07**  
Be a mental health role model. Demonstrate positive behaviours



**08**  
Praise, encourage, motivate and regular support your child to build their self esteem



**09**  
Work together to learn some coping skills such as deep breathing



**10**  
As your child grows up encourage and support autonomy



@BELIEVEPHQ



# PACE

(Stephen Scott)

- Try keeping clear routines, and both adults and children should try to engage in one each of **PACE** activities per day:
- **Physical** - going outside, or even doing a Joe Wicks type video exercise at home together promotes well-being, releases endorphins and reduces cortisol and other stress hormones.
- **Achieve** - doing something that leads to sense of achievement, be it for the child completing homework, or for the parent tidying a room. It is important to name the activity before and congratulate each other on getting it done.

# PACE

- **Connect** - planning and then chatting to somebody important, even if it is online. Yes it is not the same as being face-to-face but it does make everybody feel better.
- **Enjoyment** - do something that you really like, and it doesn't have to be virtuous, it could be eating a slice of your favourite cake! Again, celebrating that you have done it is important.



# Breakout

What should parent/carers expect from a good mental health service supporting their child/young adult?

