**A checklist for parents with children with mental health problems**

**Working in partnership with psychiatrists and members of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)**

This leaflet is aimed at parents or carers of a child with mental health problems and suggests questions they might ask at appointments to get information about their child’s condition.

Professionals may also find this checklist a helpful guide.

It suggests ways of improving communication and partnerships when a child has first been referred, identified or diagnosed with a problem.

Children can have a variety of different emotional and behavioural problems. Some of these will be short-lived while others will be disorders that will need treatment. Going to see a psychiatrist or other mental health professional about a child’s difficulties can be a very daunting experience for many parents.

The CAMHS team is there to work in partnership with parents and young people, to help sort out the difficulties that are brought to them. Professionals understand that parents can feel that nobody appreciates what it is like to have a child with problems and may worry that they will be blamed. They are also aware that it is not easy to ask for help. Sometimes taking a relative or friend along can be helpful in providing support or explaining the problem clearly.

**For parents/carers**

As a parent, you will be asked a lot of questions by the professional who sees you, in order to gather information (carry out an assessment) to help determine the nature of the problem (make a diagnosis), and decide what should happen next (treatment).

Some of the questions you may want to ask are listed below. However, the checklist is not exhaustive and you would have your own questions specific to your child or situation.  Please also refer to other sources of information below which you may find helpful.

**About the problem**

Not every child will have a formal diagnosis. Children may have had short-lived behavioural problems which do not have an underlying diagnosis and can be resolved with help and support.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **What sort of problem does my child have?** |
| Check box | Is it mainly behavioural? |
| Check box | Is it mainly emotional? |
| Check box | Is it a mixture of both? |
| Check box | Is it a mental illness? |
| Check box | Is it a problem of learning and/or development? |
| Check box | Is it a problem with relationships? |

**Assessment**

Getting more information to help sort out a problem is important. You should be told how this information will be gathered.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Check box | How will you (the professional) find out if there is an illness or diagnosis? |
| Check box | What information is needed? |
| Check box | What information do you need from me? |
| Check box | Will the school need to be contacted? |
| Check box | How long will it take to find out what is wrong? |
| Check box | What tests are needed? |

**If a diagnosis has been made**

At this stage, parents will have many questions. Make sure that you are given time to obtain the information you need.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Check box | Are any further tests/ specialist assessments needed? |
| Check box | How will my child be affected? |
| Check box | Will he/she grow out of their problems? |
| Check box | Where can I get more information about what is wrong with my child? |
| Check box | Are there any groups for parents whose children have this problem? |
| Check box | Is help available for brothers and sisters or other family members? |

**How might I be involved in my child’s care and treatment?**

Parents are very important in helping to sort out their child’s difficulties, whatever they are.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Check box | How can I manage my child’s behaviour better? |
| Check box | What sort of help and support can I expect? |
| Check box | Will I be expected to join a parents’ group? |
| Check box | Are there other parents I can share my experiences with? |

**The role of the school**

Children spend a great deal of time at school. It is important for CAMHS to have a good communication with schools, and to keep parents informed.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Check box | Does the school need to know about my child’s problem? |
| Check box | What if we don’t want the school to know we have asked for help? |
| Check box | How can school help my child? |
| Check box | Who do I need to talk to in school to get help? |
| Check box | Will we all need to meet together? |
| Check box | If the problem gets better, will my child do better at school? |
|  | **How might social services help?** |
| Check box | What services are provided by social services for children with mental health difficulties? |
| Check box | Can I receive any help or support in taking care of my child? |
| Check box | In what circumstances should I contact social services? |
| Check box | How can social services help if:   * My child is aggressive or hurting others? * My child is getting into trouble with the law? * My child is abusing substances? |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Involvement of other professionals** |
| Check box | Are there are professionals who may be able to help? |
|  | **Getting help** |
| Check box | If I need help, how can I contact you? |
| Check box | Who else can I contact? |
| Check box | Whom do I contact in an emergency? |

**Medication**

Some children may need medication, along with other treatments, although many do not.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Check box | Will medication help? |
| Check box | What would medication do? |
| Check box | Is it safe for children? |
| Check box | How does it work? |
| Check box | Has this medication been used with other children? |
| Check box | What are the side-effects? |
| Check box | Does my child have to agree to take it? |
| Check box | Would my child need any tests like blood tests before or while taking medication |
| Check box | How long will my child have to take medication for? |

**Hospital admission**

Very few children will need to go into hospital. However, for a very small number an admission to hospital might be necessary.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Check box | Why does my child need to go to hospital? |
| Check box | How will they help? |
| Check box | How long would he/she have to stay? |
| Check box | What will it be like for my child? |
| Check box | What will be the age of the other children there? |
| Check box | Can I stay with my child? |
| Check box | How often can I visit? |
|  | **Confidentiality** |
| Check box | Will you share the information that I give you with other professionals? |
| Check box | Can I speak to you in person without my partner or child? |
| Check box | If my child talks to a professional in team, will they tell me what he/she said? |
| Check box | If not, how will I be kept informed? |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **If, I am not satisfied with my child's treatment and care who can I speak to:** |
| **Check box** | To make comment? |
| Check box | To get a second opinion? |
| Check box | To make a complaint? |
| Check box | To get support? |

**Sources of information**

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has produced a factsheet on ‘Who’s who in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS?)’ which can be downloaded from [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/info](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/info)

[**C[](http://www.carers.org/about)arers' Trust**](http://www.carers.org/about)

Carers’ Trust is a charity which was formed by the merger of The Princess Royal Trust for Carers’ and Crossroads Care in April 2012. Carers’ Trust works to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, unpaid, for a family member or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems. With our Network Partners, we aim to ensure that information, advice and practical support are available to all carers across the UK.

[**Contact a Family**](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/) is a UK charity for families with disabled children. We offer information on specific conditions and rare disorders. Free helpline: 0808 808 3555; email: [helpline@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cafamily.org.uk);

[**Young Minds Parents Helpline**](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/parents) for any adult concerned about the emotions and behaviour of a child or young person. They offer information and professional advice, via telephone and email - contact 0808 802 5544 or [parents@youngminds.org.uk**.**](mailto:parents@youngminds.org.uk.)

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This leaflet was produced as part of the Partners in Care campaign, a joint initiative between the Royal College of Psychiatrists and The Princess Royal Trust for Carers. One of the aims of the Partners in Care campaign was to show that if all those involved in the care of people with mental health problems or learning disabilities can work together, a trusting partnership can be developed between carers, patients and professionals which will be of benefit to all.

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