Milton Keynes Mental Health Support Team

# MK MHST Schools & Families Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2026

## Welcome

As we head into September and a new school year, we're here to support schools, families and young people as they settle back into routines and start the new term.

We've had a busy summer running groups and planning new projects for the coming year. Take a look inside our jam packed newsletter for the latest updates, useful resources and ways we can support you.

Our aim is to keep schools and families informed about the support we offer, share helpful resources, and strengthen our partnership in promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

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# African Diaspora Day

On Saturday the 4th of July, teams from Milton Keynes Mental Health Services-including MHST, CAMHS and Adult Talking Therapies-joined the African Diaspora Day celebrations at Campbell Park.

It was a lovely day celebrating different African cultures and connecting with the local community.

It also gave us the opportunity to have open conversations about the importance of mental health and highlight the support available to individuals and their families.

It was great to be part of such a vibrant event and help raise awareness of the mental health support available across Milton Keynes.

# Let's Celebrate!

## Graduation

Congratulations to Kerry & Sam who have recently graduated from the University of Reading and have successfully completed the Postgraduate Certificate in Evidence-Based Supervision.

"We are thrilled to have passed the course and excited to use our knowledge, skills, and experience to support our colleagues in the MK MHST.".

Congratulations also to Neha, who has recently completed her EMHP training and graduated! Neha is looking forward to putting her skills into practice and supporting young people across Milton Keynes.

# FINALISTS!!

Have you heard of the GEM Awards? The GEM (Going the Extra Mile) Awards celebrate the amazing people and teams who make a difference across our NHS services.

This year, the MK MHST was proud to be shortlisted as a finalist!

While we didn't bring home the trophy, being recognised alongside so many inspiring teams is a huge achievement. We had a fantastic evening celebrating, and we're incredibly proud of the work we do with schools, children, young people and families every day.

# STAR-CAT

SupporTing pARents and their autistic Children through Anxiety Treatment

Milton Keynes MHST is pleased to announce that we are taking part in STAR-CAT, a national research study led by the University of Oxford. STAR-CAT is an online, parent-led programme, designed for autistic children or children with an autism diagnosis (or on the autism pathway) who are experiencing anxiety.

You and your child may be eligible to take part in STAR-CAT if:
1) Your child is aged 5-12 years old
2) Your child has had a diagnosis of autism OR you, and the clinical service that you are working with, consider that it is possible that your child would get an autism diagnosis if assessed
3) Your family are seeking treatment for your child's anxiety concerns.

We are open to referrals; If you feel your child could fit the criteria for Star Cat, you can refer to MHST by speaking to your school's mental health lead or by making a referral online (see later in this newsletter for help with making a referral)

Read more information about Star Cat: Summary Sheets or ask any of the team to find out more.

# Have Your Say

**Have your say on the MK MHST website and digital offer!**

The Milton Keynes Mental Health Support Team (MK MHST) is reviewing its website and digital offer, and we would like to hear from service users, families, professionals and community partners.

We invite children and young people, parents and carers, schools, GPs, social care teams, healthcare professionals, and members of the public to share their feedback by completing our **survey.**

Scan here using your camera for our online survey!

# CPD for Education Staff: Mental Health Ambassadors

## Supporting Student Voice in Your School

**Could your school benefit from a group of students who champion positive mental health and wellbeing?**

We're offering school staff the opportunity to take part in training to help set up and develop a Mental Health Ambassadors Group within their schools.

*We know that setting up a group is only the beginning!*

### INITIAL TRAINING SESSION

This session will provide practical guidance on how to get your group started, including:

- What a Mental Health Ambsaddors Group could look like in your school
- Recuriting / selecting students
- Potential barries in the early stages of setting up a group
- Supporting students to understand their roles and responsibilities
- The benefits of co-production

### FOLLOW UP SESSIONS!

Alongside the initial training, we are offering follow-up sessions throughout the year

These sessions will provide an opportunity for staff from different schools to come together, share ideas and problem-solve some of the challenges that can arise when estamblishing and maintaining a Mental Health Ambassadors Group.

## Interested in getting involved?

Look out for an email with further details on how you can book on.

**Thursday 5th November 2026**
**16:00 - 17:30**
**Knowles Primary School**

**Did you know some of the schools we work with already have a Mental Health / Wellbeing Ambassadors groups!**

If this is you, and you already have a co-production group set up and running, we would love to hear from you and invite you to our follow up sessions.

Turn over to see an amazing poster created by the Wellbeing Ambassadors at Knowles Primary School!

TURN OVER

# Poster created by the Wellbeing Ambassadors at Knowles Primary School

## FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING

### AT HOME

### CONNECT

*Spending time with others helps us feel happy and connected. Here are some ways to connect at home:*

- Ask a friend toplay
- Read a book together
- Enjoya crafttogether
- Stay in touch
- Join aclub
- Play a board game

### BE ACTIVE

*Moving our bodies helps our minds feel great. Try these active ideas together this summer:*

- Play at the local park
- Splash Park
- Swimming
- The beach at MK Centre
- Caldecotte Lake
- At home exercise video

### NOTICE

*Taking time to pause helps us notice the world and how we feel. Try these ideas:*

- Cloud watching
- Make a diaisy chain
- Mindful breadthing
- Bug hunt
- Listen to some music
- Close your eyes and listen to things around you

### KEEP LEARNING

*Keep your mind curious and keep learning new things:*

- Go to the library
- Try a new recipe
- VisitMilton Keynes museum
- Visit Saplings: holiday programme
- Learn a new skill
- Watch Newsround togethher

### GIVE

*Giving to others makes our world a kinder place:*

- Give a smile
- Hold the door open for someone
- Draw a picture for someone special
- Offer to help people
- Spend time with family & friends
- Volunteer

KNOWLES Primary School

*Created by our Wellbeing Ambassadors*

# Case Study: Summer Anxiety Groups

## Summer Anxiety Parent/Child Group

This summer the MK MHST delivered a parent/child summer anxiety group at two different schools.
We explored what anxiety is, different coping strategies, identifying the different types of worries, introducing the worry tree concept, problem-solving, and the children created their own worry boxes.

We would like to share some feedback received from those attending the groups:

"Very informative sessions"

"Lots of handouts and practical ideas to work through"

"Learning different breathing techniques was helpful"

"No question was too small"

"I got to make a worry box"

"Staff were helpful and approachable"

"I liked hot chocolate and balloon breathing"

# Meet the MK MHST
## Who we are and how we can help

We are the Milton Keynes Mental Health Support Team (MHST), working in partnership with 90 schools across MK to support children and young people with their emotional wellbeing.

Our focus is on early support —helping families and young people before difficulties become more complex. We work closely with schools, parents and carers to provide practical, evidence-based support that makes a difference.

### Support for young people

We offer short-term, skills based support for difficulties such as:

- worries and anxiety
- panic
- low mood
- managing emotions
- early onset Tics + OCD

This might be through a group, single session, 1:1 or psycho education workbooks

### Support for Parents/Carers

We work alongside parents and carers to:

- build confidence in supporting your child
- share practical strategies that work at home
- offer workshops and groups (including evening options)

### Working with Schools

We support schools by:

- providing advice and consultation to staff
- staff training
- delivering groups and workshops for pupils
- promoting a whole-school approach to wellbeing

**Please note:**
We are not a crisis service.
If you need urgent mental health support, please contact the Urgent Advice Line (0800 023 4650), available 24 hours a day.
Or 111 Option 2.

👉 Turn the page to find out how to refer and what happens next

# How to refer

We want to make it as easy as possible for families and schools to access support.

Our process is simple, and our team will guide you every step of the way.

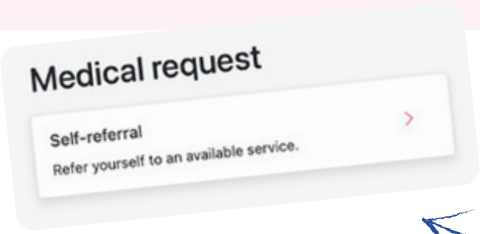
## Step 1 - Submit a Referral

Complete our online self-referral form

Referrals can be made by:

- parents or carers
- young people (age 15+)
- school staff and other professionals
- GP's

You don't need to create an account to refer, just click the self-referral button to get started.




## Step 2: Initial Contact

Once we receive your referral:

- Our senior team will review the information
- You will get a letter via text with the outcome. Look out for a text from 'NHS No Reply'.
- For all accepted referrals, we will then be in contact via telephone within 4 weeks.

## Unsure?

Not sure if MHST is right for you? Stuck with the referral form?

Get in touch:
give us a call on: **01908 725691**
or email: **cnwl.mhst@nhs.net**

## Step 3: Getting the Right Support

We will:

- talk through your child's needs in an initial assessment
- decide together what support would be most helpful

This might include:

- 1:1 support
- a group or workshop
- signposting to other services if needed

If MHST is the right service:

- we will agree a care plan with you
- support will usually take place in school or online

# Back To School

Going back to school can bring lots of different feelings. Some people feel excited, nervous, worried, or a combination of all three! Here are some top tips to help you settle into the new academic year.

Positive self-talk

Using positive self-talk is a great way to improve your mindset when tackling new experiences.

Pick your favourite idea and circle it, screenshot it or write it down to remind yourself throughout the week!

## Calming the worry storm

If you're worried about something specific, use this activity to understand your worry more and find one small step you can take towards managing it.

# World Mental Health Day

**World Mental Health Day – 10th October 2026 💚**

This October, we will be recognising World Mental Health Day, an annual opportunity to talk openly about mental health, reduce stigma and remind ourselves that looking after our emotional wellbeing is just as important as looking after our physical health. World Mental Health Day takes place on Saturday 10 October 2026.

For our children and young people, mental health is something we can support every day through the small things we do: listening, connecting, encouraging healthy routines and creating opportunities to talk about feelings.

For more World Mental Health Day resources, click here:
World Mental Health Day Resources

# World Mental Health Day

Below are some tips on how to talk to your children and young people about emotions this World Mental Health Day and every day.

## How to Talk to Children and Young People About Their Emotions

Warm. Validating. Connected.

### 1 Be curious
- Ask open, gentle questions and listen without immediately correcting, judging, or trying to fix the situation.

### 2 Name and acknowledge emotions
- Help children put feelings into words and check that you've understood them correctly.

### 3 Validate feelings while setting boundaries
- Accept the emotion without necessarily accepting unsafe or inappropriate behaviour.

### 4 Avoid minimising feelings
- Take children's concerns seriously, even when they may seem small to an adult.

### 5 Give them time and choice
- Don't pressure children to talk; let them choose when and how they communicate.

### 6 Don't rush to solve the problem
- Ask whether they want you to listen, help find a solution, or simply give them space.

### 7 Normalise emotions
- Reassure children that all emotions are normal and that having difficult feelings doesn't make them "bad."

### 8 Regulate before reasoning
- When emotions are intense, focus first on calm, safety and connection, then talk through the situation once the child is ready.

# Upcoming MK MHST Groups
## Parent Groups

We offer a range of evidence-informed parent groups to support families in understanding and responding to their child's emotional and behavioural needs. These groups are offered following an MHST assessment and are delivered online by our clinicians.

**Helping Your Child with Fears and Worries**
For parents/carers of children aged 5–11 experiencing anxiety, fears or panic.
A practical, evidence-based group to help you support your child's emotional wellbeing and reduce anxiety.

Next group:
- Thurs 5 Nov, 9:30–11:00am (Zoom, 6 weeks)

**Reflective Parenting**
For parents/carers of children aged 5–11 who want to better understand their child's emotions and behaviour. A guided group using CBT and mentalisation approaches to strengthen relationships and support calmer responses.
- Builds understanding of what sits behind behaviour
- Supports parents to pause, reflect, and respond more calmly
- Improves connection and reduces conflict

Next groups:
- Mon 12th Oct, 5.30-7pm (Zoom, 8 weeks)

**Positive Parenting (Incredible Years)**
For parents/carers of children aged 5-8 with behavioural or emotional difficulties
- Build positive relationships and support emotional regulation
- Focus on praise, routines and clear boundaries
- Strategies for managing challenging behaviour
- Boosts confidence and family connection

Next group:
- Weds 4th Nov, 9:30–11:00am (Zoom, 8 weeks)

**Interested in attending?**

**Make a referral to us now to secure your spot**