

# 7. Mental health: under-resourced and under pressure

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The level of anxiety or depression is increasing. Adult mental health services in England received a record 4.6 million referrals during 2022 (up 22% from 2019). In children and young people, the situation may be even worse – with rates increased from 1 in 8 (2017) to more than 1 in 6 (2022) aged 7–16, and from 1 in 10 to 1 in 6 aged 17-19. Demand for care far outstrips current resources.

## WHAT ARE THE FACTS?

- Those in the poorest 5th of the population are twice as likely to develop mental health problems
- **Public services are not resourced to meet such demand, and there are long waits and high thresholds for treatment; an estimated 1.4 million (2021) are waiting for help**
- The private sector provides 30% of mental health hospital capacity with 50% of Child and Adult Mental Health Support (CAMHS) beds and almost all secure beds
- **17,340 serious incidents were reported by services to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in the last year**
- **There are not enough staff:** 1 in 7 FTE medical roles and 21% of nursing posts are currently vacant across England (June 2023) while true vacancy rates are likely much higher as cash-strapped hospitals may not advertise posts
- Learning disability and mental illness beds have seen the largest reduction since 2010/11 – 69% and 24% respectively

## WHAT MUST HAPPEN NOW?

- Safe services should include: access to professional assessments; careful self-harm prevention and protection; community support during a crisis; wards, or other places of safety, with more beds, better environments, and more skilled staff with more time to care; ongoing support to keep us well and common standards throughout England for good community and hospital care
- Meeting increased demand must be addressed by government with adequate funding, protected against inflation - the 2019 promised increase in budget for services needs to be doubled to £5.2bn
- More psychotherapists are required for people with complex needs
- More inpatient mental health beds are necessary in England to eliminate the need for inappropriate out of area placements
- More skilled staff are needed to achieve 'safe staffing' for the greater, safer inpatient capacity; there should be no more than 85% bed occupancy
- Beyond hospitals there should be venues to go to during the day for those of us with long-term mental health needs for access to both peers and professionals