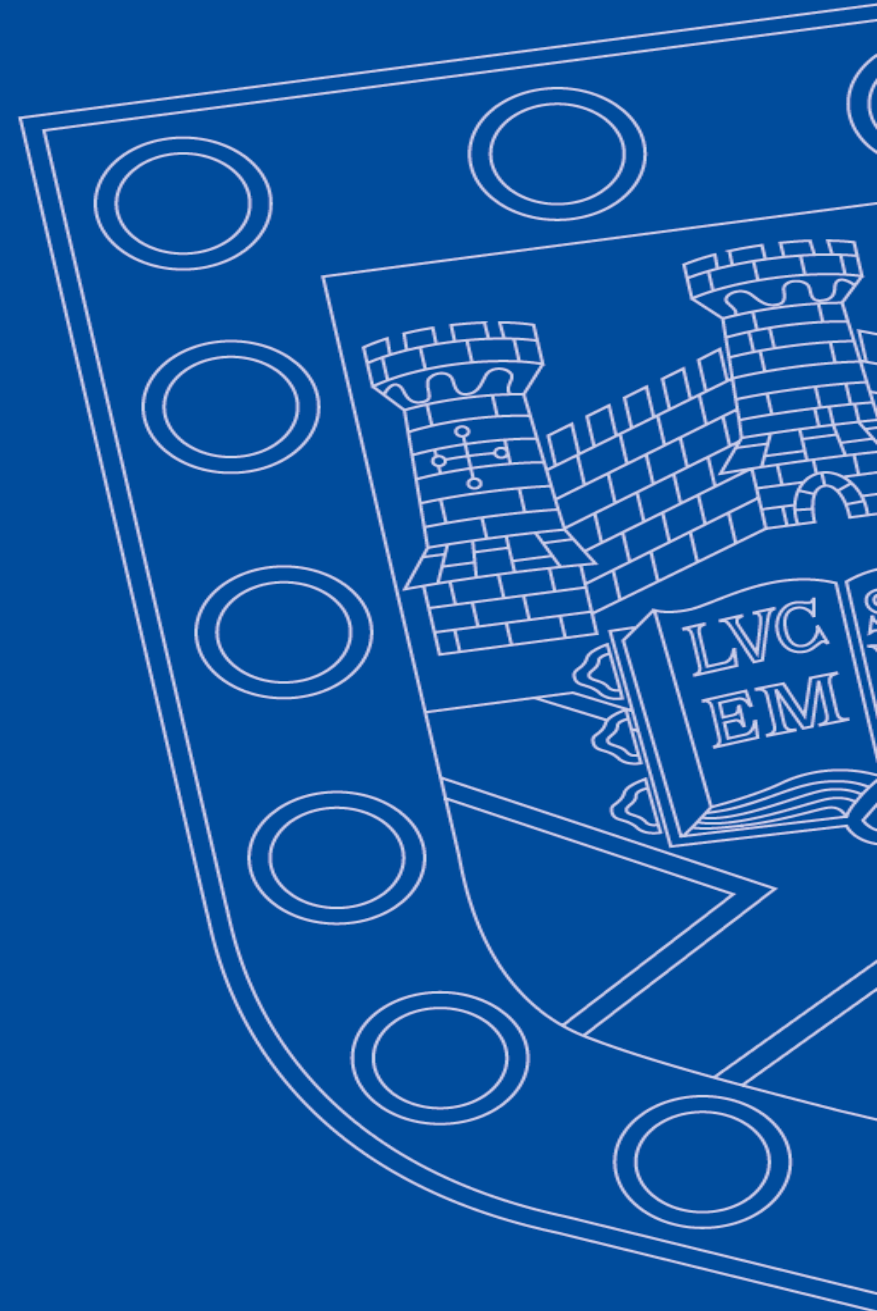




# Impact of Covid-19 on Children and Young People's Mental Health: What Do We Know and What Are the Implications for Schools?

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# How this talk fits with today's agenda

- What are the **other impacts** of SARS-CoV-2 transmission and control measures in schools? – *mental health*
- Need to understand this to:
  - Develop policy which balances risks and benefits
  - Target support and mitigations accordingly
- Complex decisions on public health protections and pandemic response need **best available evidence**

# Talk will cover

- Changes in children and young people's (CYP) mental health over time at population level in England
- Wider evidence on the impact of Covid-19 on CYP mental health
- Do we know anything about the impact of transmission and control measures in schools on CYP mental health?
- Implications for schools

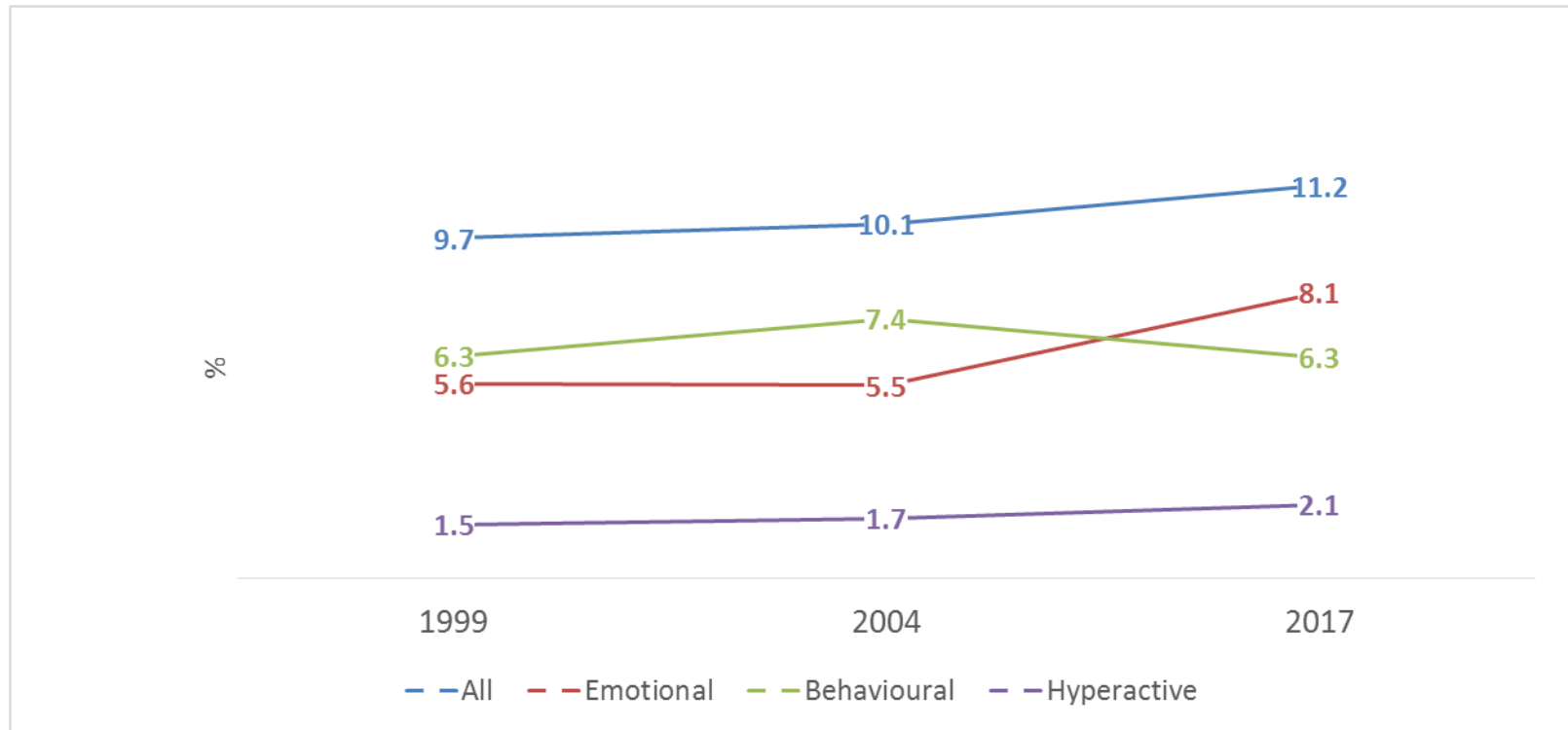
# Findings from national surveys

How has the mental health of children and young people changed over time?

# Mental Health of Children and Young People in England surveys

- National surveys provide England's Official Statistics into child mental health:
  - British Child and Adolescent Mental Health Surveys 1999 and 2004
  - Mental Health of Children and Young People in England (MHCYP) 2017
- Cross-sectional surveys with 3 year follow-ups;
- Probability samples: 2017 MHCYP used stratified multistage random probability sample of children and young people drawn from the NHS Patient Register database
- Baseline surveys used the Development and Wellbeing Assessment (DAWBA) to assign diagnoses based on clinical rating

# Population prevalence of problems already on the rise before Covid-19 (driven by apparent rise in emotional disorders)



Source: NHS Digital (2017) Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 5 to 15 year olds

# Race to research the impact of lockdown...

- Proliferation of convenience studies
- Follow-up to MHCYP 2017 in the field in August 2020 (Wave 1)
- Further follow-up wave in February/March 2021 (Wave 2)



## Survey Partners

Survey funded by the Department for Health and Social Care (2020 and 2021) and UK Research and Innovation (2021), and commissioned by NHS Digital.

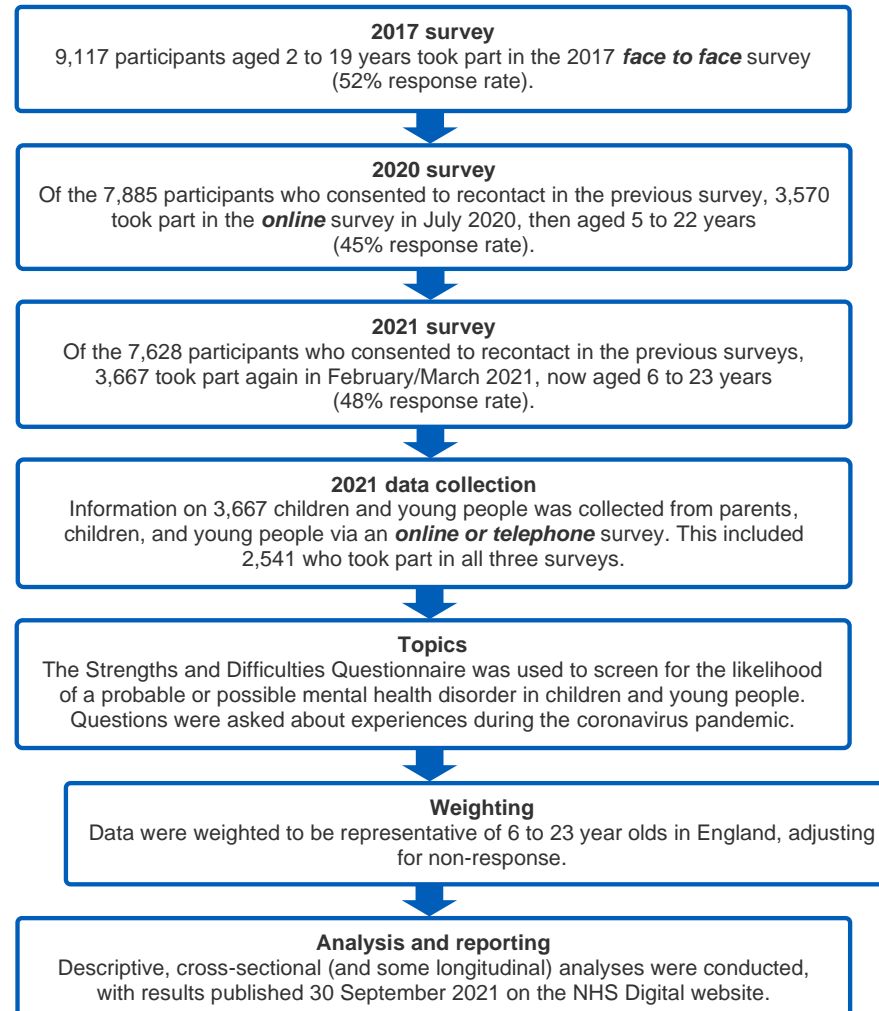


Survey was conducted by:

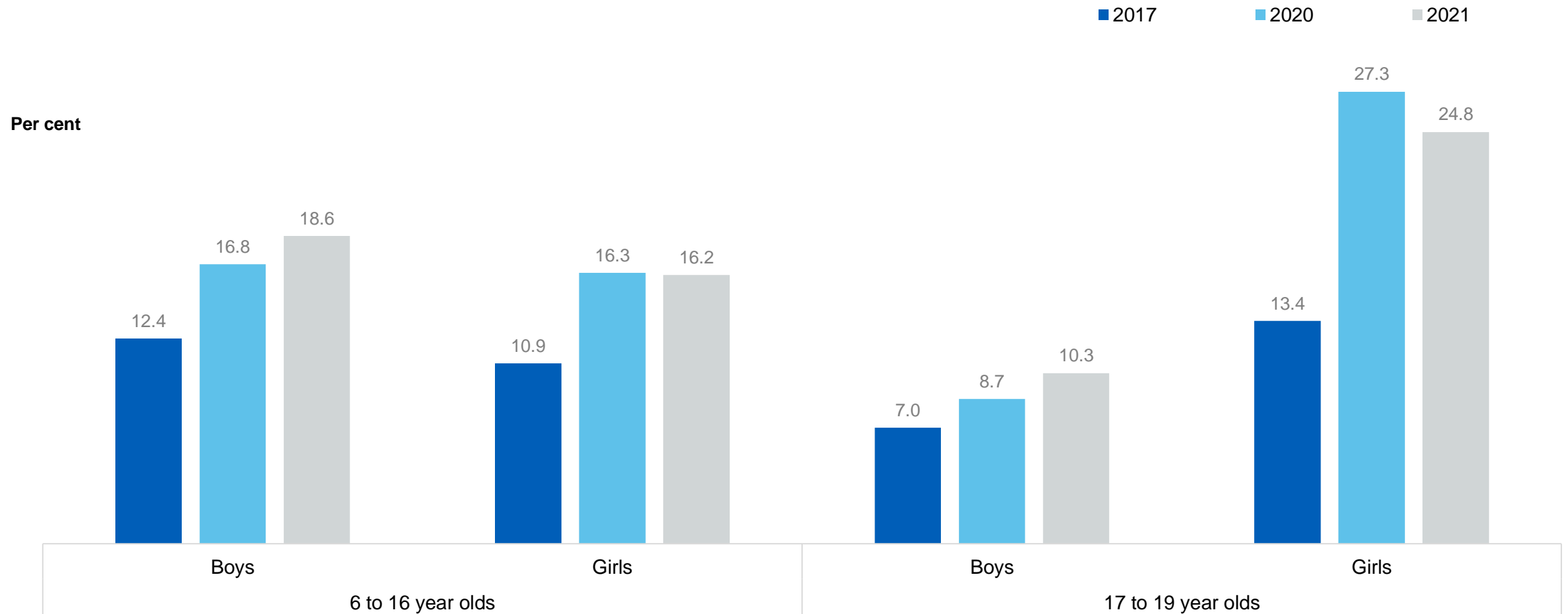




# Mental Health of Children and Young People in England follow-ups



# Rates of probable mental health problems between 2017, 2020 and 2021: cross-sectional comparison

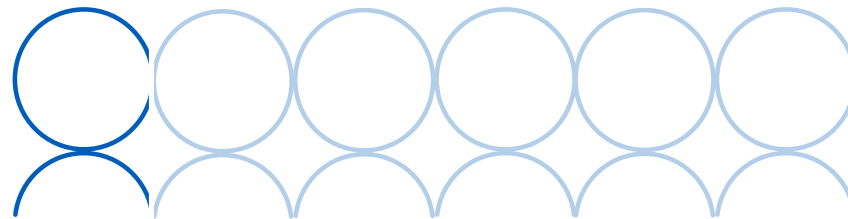


Source: NHS Digital, 6 to 19 year olds, England.

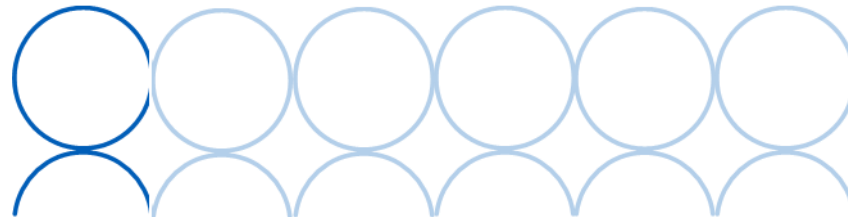


# Rates of probable disorder in 6 to 16 year olds: 2017 to 2021

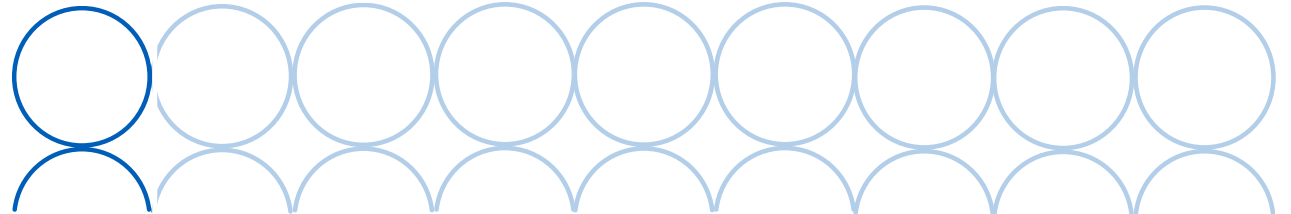
In 2021, **one in six** (17.4%) children aged 6 to 16 had a probable mental disorder



In 2020, **one in six** (16.6%) children aged 6 to 16 had a probable mental disorder

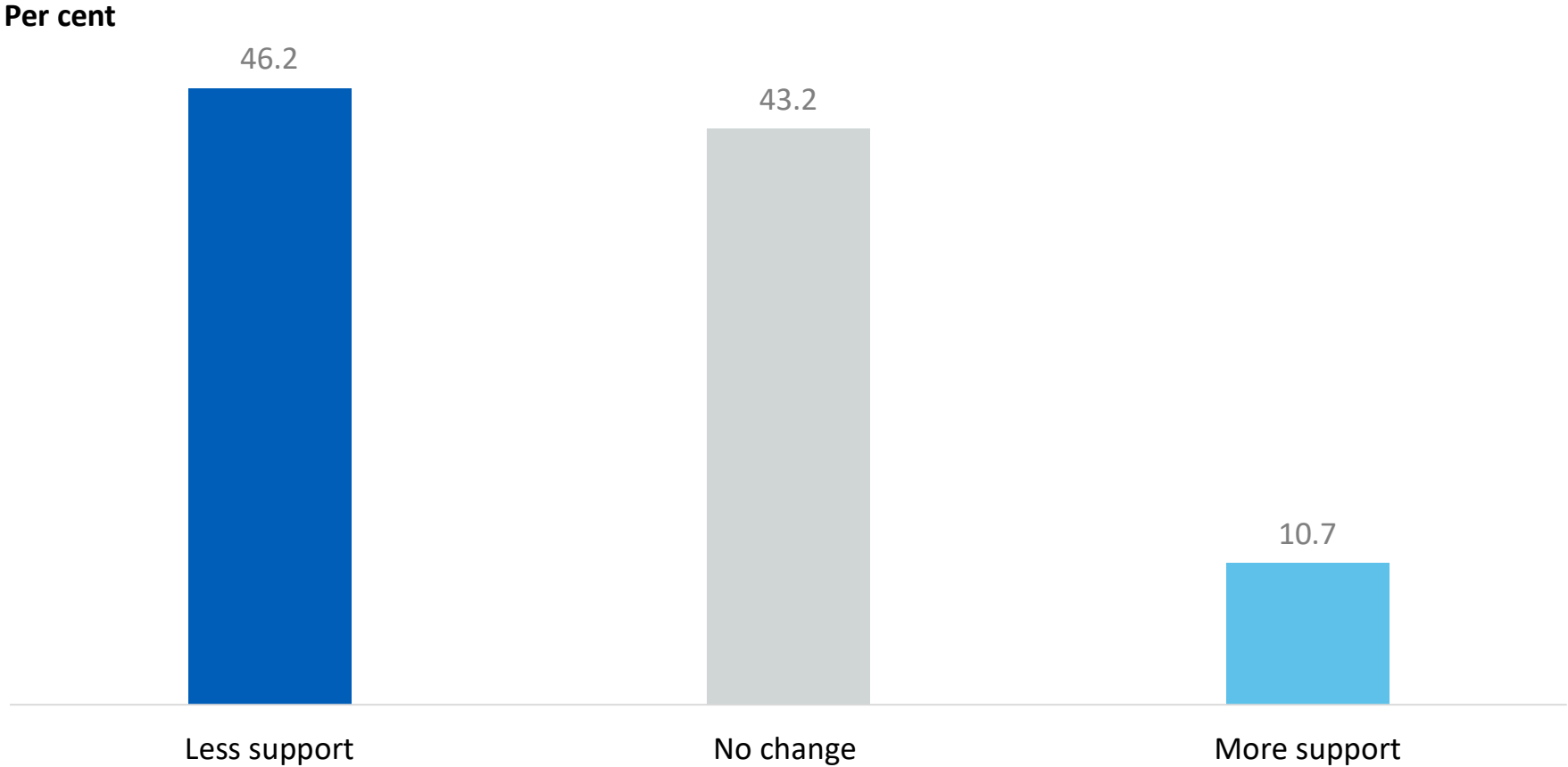


In 2017, **one in nine** (11.6%) children aged 6 to 16 had a probable mental disorder

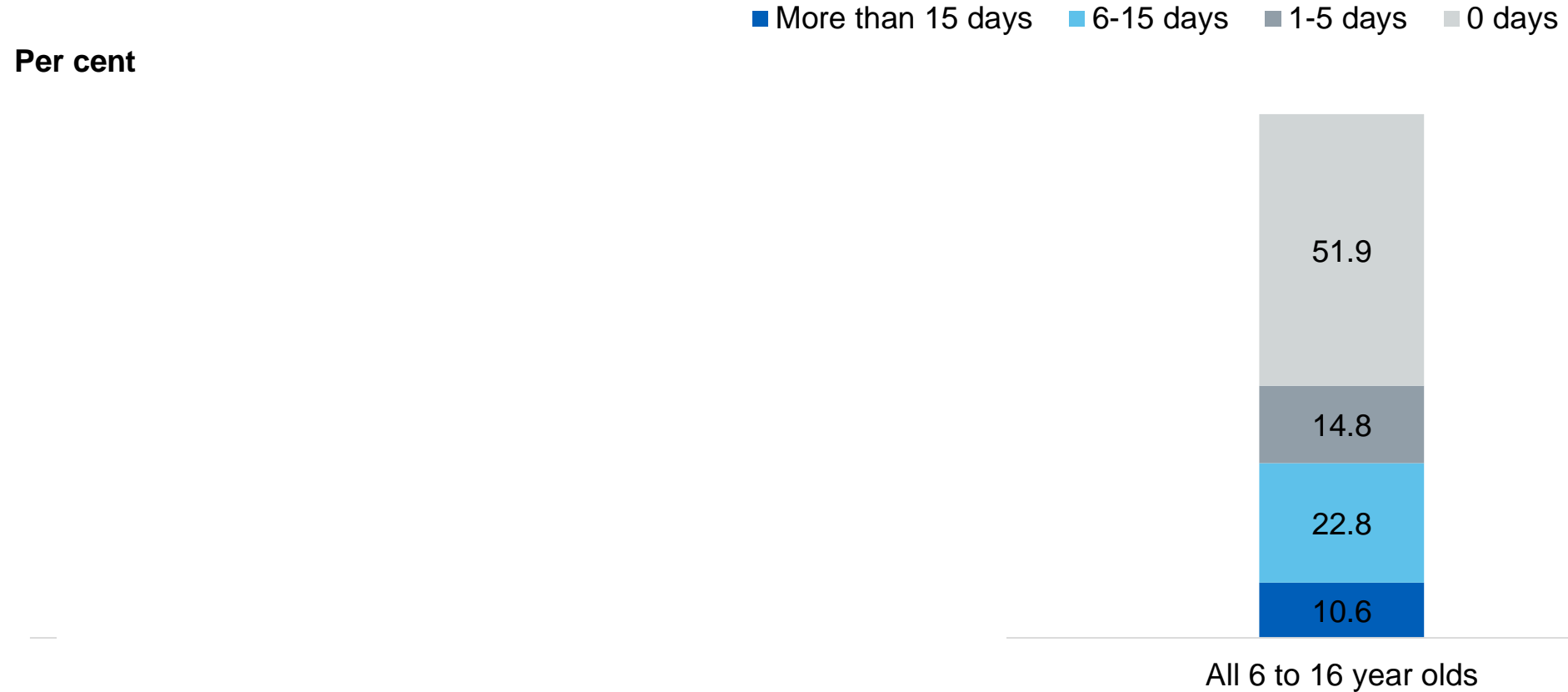


Source: NHS Digital, 6 to 16 year olds, England.

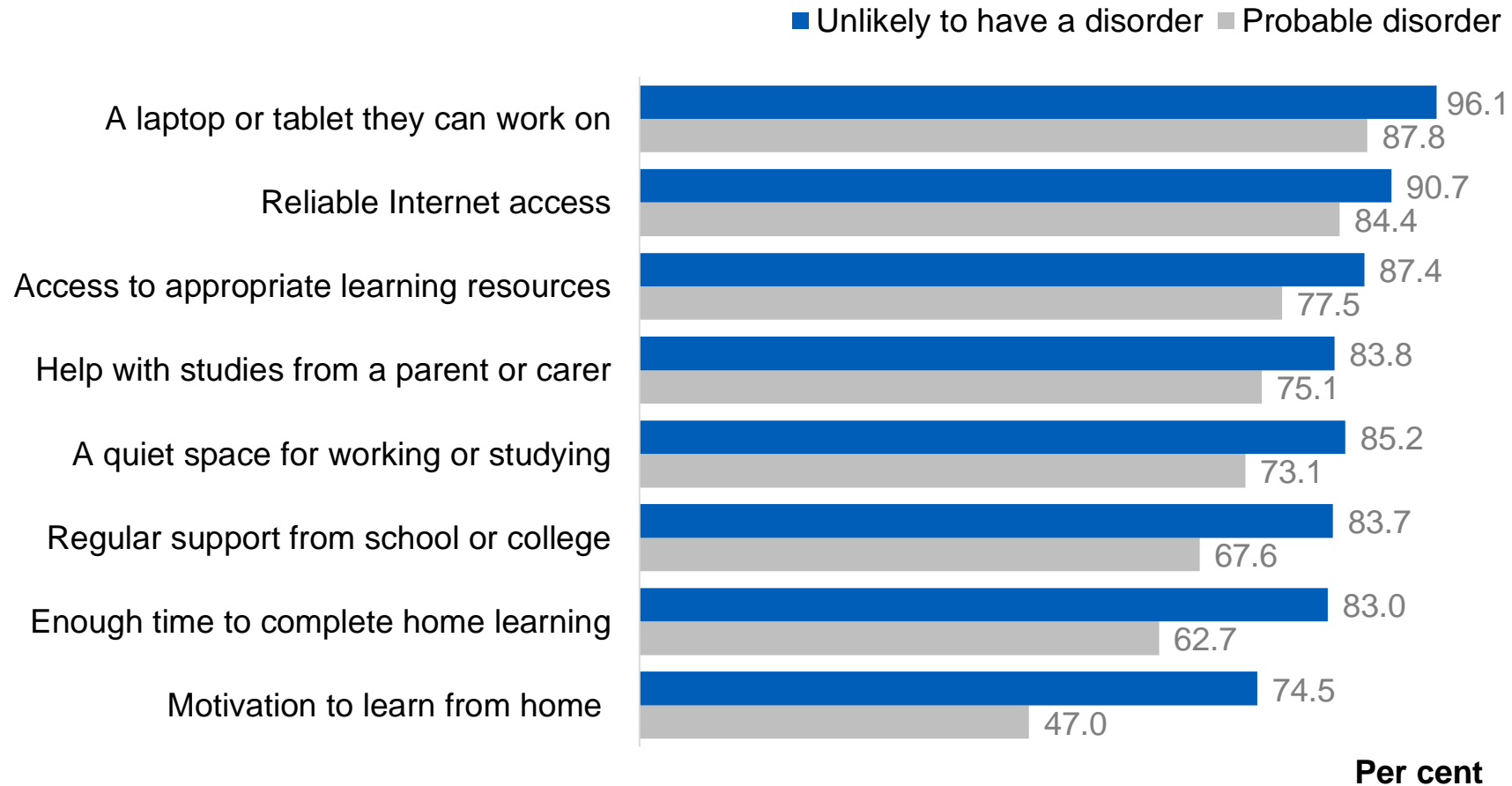
# Parents of 46.2% of 6 to 16 year olds with SEND reported a reduction in the support their child received due to the pandemic



# — One in ten (10.6%) children missed more than 15 days of school during the 2020 Autumn term



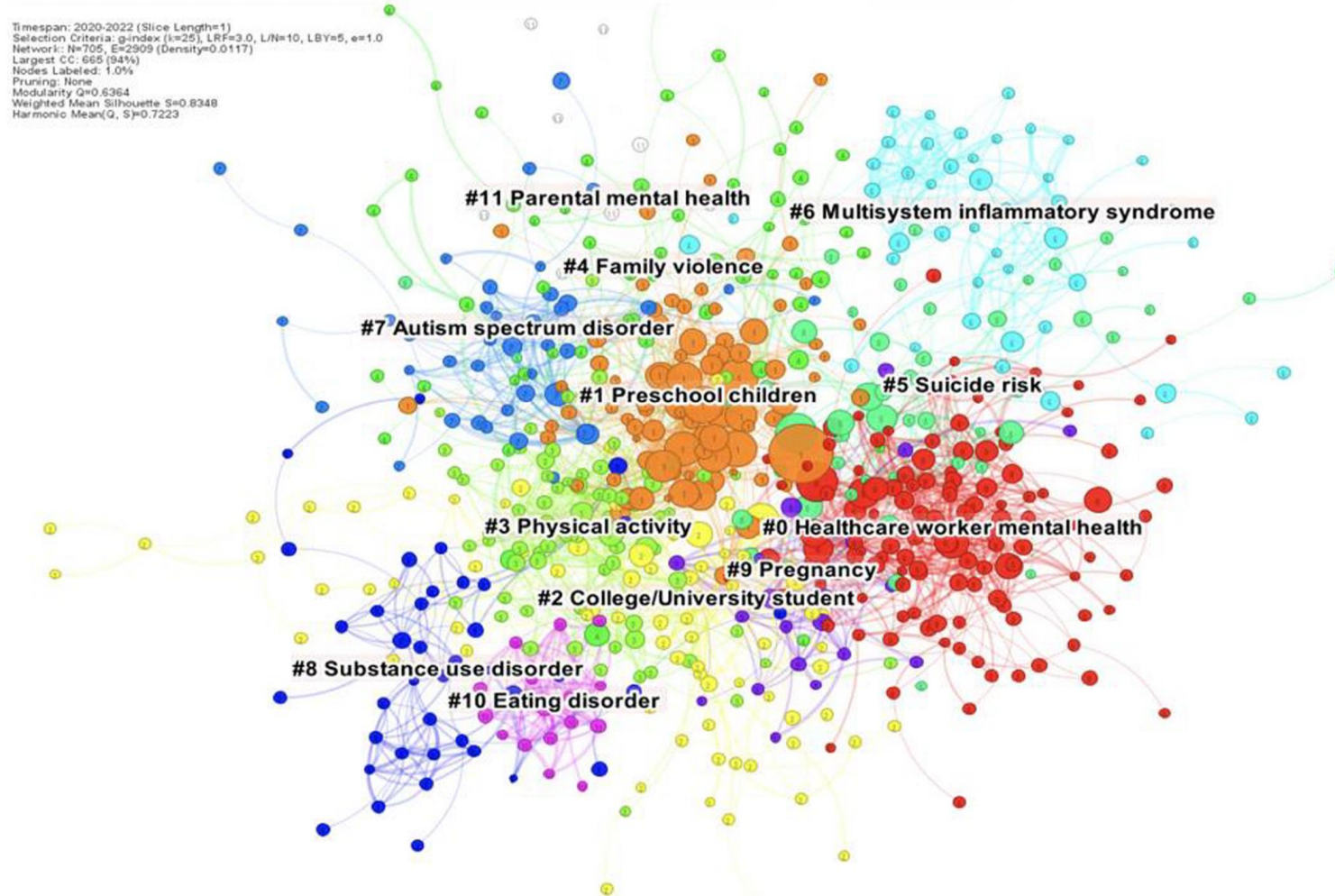
# Access to resources, MHCYP 2021



# What do other sources tell us?

“rapid pace, high volume, and limited quality of mental health evidence being generated during COVID-19 poses a barrier to effective decision-making” (Sun et al., 2021).

Editorial Perspective: COVID-19-related publications on young people's mental health – what have been the key trends so far and what should come next?



Systematic mapping: 3,692 relevant outputs on children and young people's mental health and Covid-19



# Evidence from recently completed systematic review

Newlove-Delgado T, Russell A, et al., in submission

- Current SR – screened nearly 5000 records
- ~50 studies meeting our inclusion criteria: validated MH measures and pre-pandemic to during-pandemic change

Evidence from recently completed systematic review  
**Newlove-Delgado T, Russell A, et al., in submission**

- Some studies reported improvements in conduct problems, peer relationships problems and prosocial behaviours; also possible increase in generalised anxiety but decrease in social anxiety
- Indication of greater increases in difficulties among children **without** prior mental health difficulties (e.g. Wright et al., 2021)
- On balance, **evidence supports a deterioration**
- Many *ifs, ands, and buts*

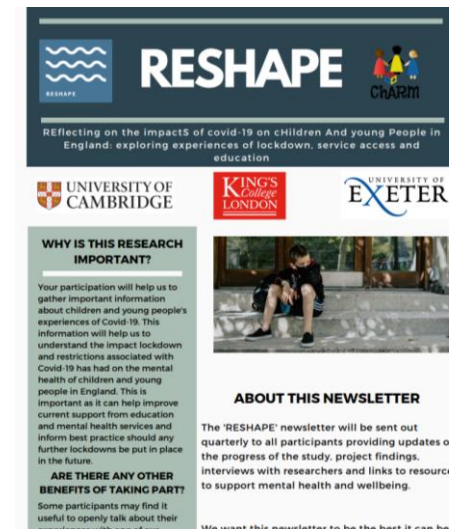
**What are the implications for schools?**

# Role of schools

- Controlling transmission in the community
- Protecting students, staff and families from infection
- Promoting healthy development, mental health, and wellbeing
- Identifying children with difficulties or at risk
- Education....
- And many more...

# Impact of public health measures in schools

- Little research has addressed the impact of school-based measures *specifically* on mental health in terms of a causal relationship (other than **school closures, and impact of masks in young children**)
- Some qualitative research on experience of some of these measures:
  - Research by UCL suggested children transitioning into Year 7 during the pandemic found bubbles to have some benefits IF there was flexible use (Leaton Grey et al.)
  - Negotiation of rules and routines on return to school could be anxiety-provoking (Cross et al., in preparation)



The image shows a newsletter header for 'RESHAPE' and 'CHARM'. The header includes the text: 'Reflecting on the impacts of covid-19 on children and young people in England: exploring experiences of lockdown, service access and education'. Below the header are logos for the University of Cambridge, King's College London, and the University of Exeter. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column has a section titled 'WHY IS THIS RESEARCH IMPORTANT?' with text explaining the importance of the research. The right column has a section titled 'ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER' with text explaining the newsletter's purpose and frequency. There is also a small photo of a person sitting on a bench.

**RESHAPE** **CHARM**

Reflecting on the impacts of covid-19 on children and young people in England: exploring experiences of lockdown, service access and education

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE KING'S COLLEGE LONDON UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

**WHY IS THIS RESEARCH IMPORTANT?**

Your participation will help us to gather important information about children and young people's experiences of Covid-19. This information will help us to understand the impact lockdown and restrictions associated with Covid-19 has had on the mental health of children and young people in England. This is important as it can help improve current support from education and mental health services and inform best practice should any further lockdowns be put in place in the future.

**ARE THERE ANY OTHER BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?**

Some participants may find it useful to openly talk about their experiences with one of our

**ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER**

The 'RESHAPE' newsletter will be sent out quarterly to all participants providing updates on the progress of the study, project findings, interviews with researchers and links to resources to support mental health and wellbeing.

We want this newsletter to be the best it can be

## “More research is needed...”

- Importance of gathering high-quality population level data over medium to longer term:
  - Population trends mask different trajectories
  - Effect on underlying inequalities
  - MHCYP Wave 3 and beyond
- More research on experiences of the different measures used
- Understanding what worked for some children and young people – ***how can we keep any silver linings?***
  - *e.g. flexibility, reduction of some pressures, inclusion, “welcome respite” (Widnall et al. 2020, Lockyer et al, Soneson et al. 2022)*

# How can schools support recovery in terms of mental health?

- Good evidence we can build on to take action:
  - Prevention and promotion
  - Targeted support
  - Improving access to specialist services for those who need it
  - Whole school approaches to: student engagement, student/teacher relationships, peer relationships etc.
  - Mitigate the impact on wider social and economic structures– supporting entry to education and employment, improving opportunities etc.

Barker R, Hartwell G, Bonell C, et al. Research priorities for mental health in schools in the wake of COVID-19J Epidemiol Community Health 2022;76:448-450.

# How to prioritise CYP in future pandemic response?

## Personal reflections

- Children and young people are “moving targets” - critical and sensitive periods
- Their needs should be explicitly considered and form part of risk and benefit assessment in any future pandemic response
- Protections in future pandemics should be carefully targeted and regularly reviewed
- Maintaining momentum: media focus may ‘move on’ but we as a society cannot afford to...



**Thank you**

# Funding and Acknowledgments

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**Dr Tamsin Newlove-Delgado was funded by an National Institute for Health Research Advanced Fellowship (NIHR300056) whilst undertaking this work. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NIHR, NHS or the UK Department of Health and Social Care.**

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**We would also like to thank all of the team members at ONS, NatCen, NHS Digital, University of Cambridge and University of Exeter for their hard work, and the children, young people and families who took part for giving their time so generously.**

# Key resource

- Some figures in this presentation taken from: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2021-follow-up-to-the-2017-survey>
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