



Humber and North Yorkshire
Health and Care Partnership



HUMBERSIDE
POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER



How to be a Trusted Adult

A guide for anyone working with
Children and Young People




HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership



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When a Young Person is having a difficult time which is impacting on their mental health, they will often first reach out to a “Trusted Adult” in their life. These are a broad circle of adults playing an active, positive, and crucial role within communities. This could be someone in their school, in their community or in their wider family.

The aim of this briefing is to provide information and support to anyone working in settings which children and Young People access who a Young Person may choose to be their “Trusted Adult.”

An important finding from the academic and policy literature, is that overall, a Trusted Adult leads to positive mental health outcomes. McPherson et al. (2014) found that children and adolescents reported fewer mental health challenges when they had a support network of high-quality relationships with peers and Trusted Adults outside of their immediate family.

The evidence strongly suggested that when Young People are struggling with their mental health, the emotional support that they get from a Trusted Adult is invaluable.



What is a Trusted Adult?

Research by Young Minds in 2022 with Young People and with staff who support them e.g., youth workers across the country including in Humberside produced the following definition:

“A Trusted Adult is chosen by the Young Person as a safe figure that listens without judgment, agenda or expectation, but with the sole purpose of supporting and encouraging positivity within a Young Person’s life.”

This definition is comprised of the characteristics that Young People identified as constituting a Trusted Adult, which were verified and further developed through conversations with youth workers. The definition was also influenced by the outcomes, expectations and benefits Young People saw themselves as receiving. This includes the informal mental health support that was often implicit but intrinsic and fundamental to their relationship.

Where and who are Trusted Adults

Trusted Adults are not adults who have been assigned to Young People through a formal programme, but instead are adults who Young People have independently chosen to trust. Young People do not expect Trusted Adults to be experts in mental health.

Young People found Trusted Adults in a range of settings, including in their local youth club, in pastoral teams in schools, sports clubs, lunchtime supervisors in schools, in their extended family or in places of worship.



The key characteristics of a Trusted Adult include:

- Coming with no expectations of what Young People will achieve or how they will behave.
- Being non-judgemental and refraining from trying to 'fix' a Young Person; instead, Trusted Adults help Young People to work through issues in their own way.
- Ensuring relationships with Young People have clear boundaries and limits. Trusted Adults should understand when a situation extends beyond their skillset.
- Being a good listener, using silence to give Young People space to open up and guide conversations.
- Prioritising honesty, asking hard questions when necessary and being vulnerable with Young People
- Being reliable, through making themselves available to Young People and engaging with them in a consistent way

The outcomes that Young People can experience through relationships with Trusted Adults include:

- Improved mental health and wellbeing as a result of having someone to turn to who enables Young People to explore issues in a safe environment without judgement.
- Mitigated effects of abuse and trauma as those with Trusted Adults in their lives can be more protected from child abuse and protected against the long-term effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).
- Positive educational outcomes as those with access to Trusted Adults are more ambitious in their educational expectations and goals due to having a positive role model.



Barriers to Young People accessing Trusted Adults include:

- Safeguarding policies, which mean Young People choose not to disclose certain types of information for fear it will trigger a larger response than they want.
- Past experiences of a lack of support from adults, meaning Young People are reluctant to make themselves vulnerable again.
- The taboo associated with speaking about mental health, particularly as the Young People we spoke to uniformly discussed mental health “issues” and understood mental health through a negative lens, rather than as something that everyone has.
- A sense of being a burden to others, which was felt particularly identified by Black and minoritised Young People for cultural historical reasons. Black and minoritised Young People also spoke of lacking the language to describe how they were feeling.

Being a Trusted Adult

Trusted Adults are a first line of defence for good mental health among the Young People they work with. They fill a gap where formal mental health support is not quite appropriate or where the Young Person is waiting to access a mental health service, Caring and considerate listening is a crucial intervention that prevents issues from escalating even if an adult does not see themselves in a position of trust within their community, a Young Person could see them very differently.

When understanding the support that Trusted Adults can give it is important to understand the distinction between being a Trusted Adult and when there is a need to refer Young People to mental health services. Workers have said that being able to refer Young People is an important tool when supporting them with their mental health.

Workers reported that during referral, Young People experienced a lack of confidence, uncertainty about what to do and dealing with new People, and that these challenges were often faced alone. Trusted Adults can support Young People during this process.



Workers have said they sometimes felt under-equipped to spot the warning signs of distress in the Young People in their care. Workers spoke of the need to better able to spot “changes in language or demeanour” and know how to respond appropriately.

Below are some resources which can help you be a Trusted Adult and specific resources on key issues Young People have said they reach out to Trusted Adults for support on. In addition, webinars and face to face training will be provided.

Below are links to general and topic specific resources for Trusted Adults which have been developed by Young minds in partnership with youth workers and Young People across the country including those in Humberside.

Helping
workers
to be a
Trusted
Adult

General resources:

- [How to be a good listener | Resource | Professionals | YoungMinds](#)
- [Supporting a Young Person to get help | Resources | YoungMinds](#)
- [Building positive mental health | Resources | YoungMinds](#)
- [How to talk to Young People about mental health | YoungMinds](#)
- [Building supportive relationships with Young People | YoungMinds](#)
- [When to check in with a Young Person | Resources | YoungMinds](#)
- [Supporting refugee children | Resources | YoungMinds](#)
- [Responding to Black Young People looking for support | YoungMinds](#)



Helping workers to be a Trusted Adult

Topic specific resources:

- **Low mood** - [Mood battery | Resources | YoungMinds](#)
- **Anxiety** - [Supporting a Young Person Struggling with Anxiety | YoungMinds](#)
- **Problems at school** - [Supporting school transitions | Resources | YoungMinds](#), [Transitioning to further education | Resources | YoungMinds](#)
- **Anger** - [Helping a Young Person Manage Anger | Mental Health | YoungMinds](#), [When Emotions Explode | Mental Health Resource | YoungMinds](#)
- **Self-harm** - [Supporting a Young Person Struggling With Self-harm | YoungMinds](#) [Responding to self-harm | Resources | YoungMinds](#)
- **Exam stress** - [Staying mentally healthy during exams | Resources | YoungMinds](#)
- **Stress** - [Stress Bucket Activity | Mental Health Resources | YoungMinds](#); [Mindfulness Activities | Mental Health Resources | YoungMinds](#)
- **Trauma /Abuse** - [Understanding trauma and adversity | Resources | YoungMinds](#)
- **Bullying** - [Bullying | Parents Guide to Support | YoungMinds](#)
- **Relationships with family** - [Family | Mental Health Advice For Young People | YoungMinds](#)
- **Body image or appearance** - [Body image | YoungMinds](#)
- **Grief and loss** - [Dealing with grief and loss | Mental health advice | YoungMinds](#)
- **Sleep problems** - [Sleep Problems | Mental Health Support | YoungMinds](#)
- **Loneliness** - [How To Cope With Loneliness | Mental Health Advice | YoungMinds](#)



Helping workers to be a Trusted Adult

The following websites have also been recommended by Young People as sources of self-care and support.

Local

- **Hull** - *How Are You Feeling?*
- **East Riding** – <https://www.eastridinghealthandwellbeing.co.uk/healthy-minds/Young-healthy-minds/>
- **North Lincolnshire** – *Life Central* – [NorthLincolnshire \(life-central.org\)](http://NorthLincolnshire.life-central.org)
- **North East Lincolnshire** - *Your mental health - LiveWell* (nelincs.gov.uk)
- **Humber and North Yorkshire** - *Home* (hnyhealthiertogether.nhs.uk)

National

- *Mental Health Support For Young People | YoungMinds*
- *Childline | Childline*
- *Papyrus UK Suicide Prevention | Prevention of Young Suicide* (papyrus-uk.org)

If you would like to find out more information about the work of the Humber and North Yorkshire Children and Young People's Mental Health Programme please get in touch

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Website: humberandnorthyorkshire.org.uk

www.humbervpp.org

