

# **Battle the Brain**

*Increases in mental health problems in children and young people sparks questions about sufficient support and awareness of the topic in schools.*

Over the past few years, there has been an increase in the amount of diagnosed cases of mental health issues in young people. The total number of recorded cases has reached over 850,000, which has caused many members of society to question the awareness and support that students can receive from their schools on the subject on mental health problems.

Mental health issues within children and young people are surprisingly common. One in ten children and young people are affected by a mental health problem, and research has shown that only 30% of those young people receive the appropriate professional support that they need. Surveys have shown that half of teenagers that suffer with mental health illnesses try to cope alone, and that a third of students don't feel confident enough to speak to an appropriate member of staff within their school.

There is a wide range of mental health issues that young people suffer with, some of the most common being:

- Depression
- Self-harm/ Suicidal thoughts
- Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Eating disorders

One in six young people will suffer from an anxiety-related problem, and in the UK alone, 1 in 25 people are affected. How long the anxiety lasts depends on the individual themselves, but without treatment, the problems can last for several years. Many people who suffer with anxiety suffer from panic attacks, enormous phobias and general nervousness and worry.

Depression is one of the most common mental health issues, although most people think depression only occurs in adults. That is incorrect, as in fact 2% of children aged 12 and under suffer from depression. It affects around 80,000 young people, and in extreme cases, depression has been known to lead to self-harm, and even suicide.

The UK has the highest rate of self-harm in Europe, according to research. 1 in 15, and in some cases even 1 in 12 young people self-harm, whether it be by scalding, cutting or burning. Most young people, however, don't self-harm so badly that they end up hospitalised, or seeking medical treatment. On average, 200 15 to 19 year olds and 400 20 to 24 year olds commit suicide every year.

Eating disorders are actually mental health problems, which is a fact that some don't realise. Eating disorders are up to 10 times more common in girls than boys, with more than 1.6 million young people in the UK affected by them. The most common forms of eating disorders are:

- Anorexia nervosa
- Bulimia nervosa
- Binge eating/ Comfort eating

These are just a handful of the mental health problems that millions of young people face every day. A petition has been launched to promote awareness and support available in schools. It has nearly 50,000 signatures, and its aim is simple: to make mental health education compulsory in primary and secondary schools.

The government have already mentioned a campaign to give teachers the correct training to deal with mental health problems that they could possibly encounter within their students. Our independent research shows that 4 out of 5 students from the Ramsey Academy would be in favour of being taught about mental health problems that young people can have.

By Tazmin