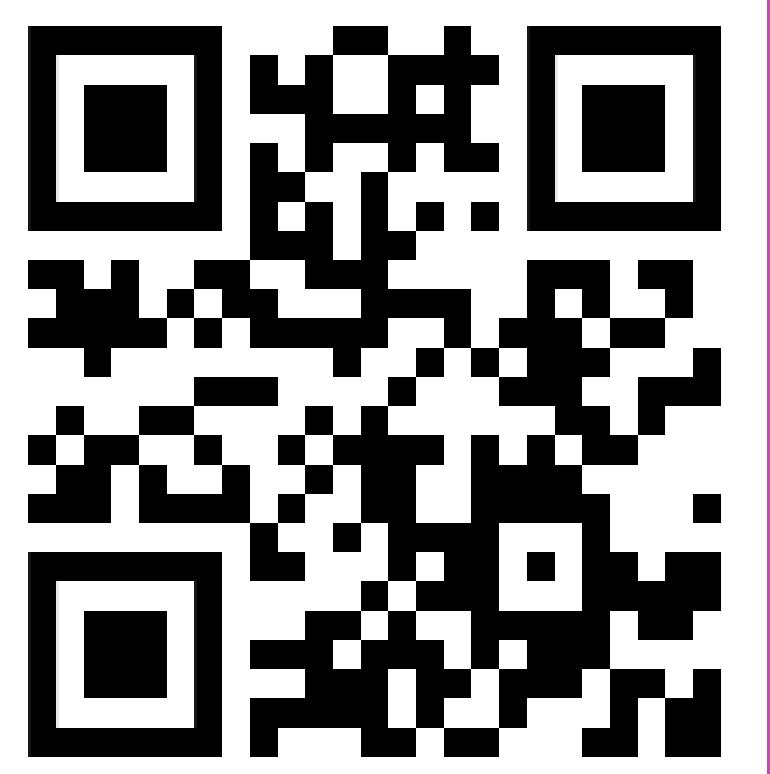




Emerging Minds: Developing and addressing research challenges for children & young people's mental health

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Website



Emerging Minds was a **mental health research network** funded by **UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)** between **2018 and 2022**. We aimed to facilitate research with the potential to reduce the prevalence of mental health difficulties amongst children & young people (CYP), inspired by the Department of Health & Social Care's ambitious goals in this area.¹

In 2019 we worked with **YoungMinds** & the **Centre for Mental Health** to hold priority setting workshops with **young people, family members, practitioners, & policy makers** to inform **4 research challenges**.

Our 4 Research Challenges

The Big Question

Why even when we know "what works" isn't this necessarily implemented in policy and practice? How do we **improve evidence-based decision making**? How can we increase **implementation** of research into practice at **scale**, in ways that are **accessible & effective**?

Embracing Complexity

How can we best meet the needs of CYP who have **intersecting needs and face complex situations**? E.g.

- are not in school or at risk of exclusion
- experience communication challenges
- have neurodevelopmental conditions
- experience physical health conditions.

Supporting the Supporters

How can CYP & families be better enabled to **help each other** promote good mental health, and prevent and overcome emerging mental health problems? How can **settings and activities** where young have regular interactions with adults support mental health promotion, prevention, and early treatment?

Voices, Power & Attitudes

How can we **amplify CYP's voices** in ways that positively impact on mental health? How can societal **structures, attitudes, and behaviours** be changed in ways that have a positive impact on CYP's mental health and wellbeing?

Addressing our Research Challenges

Embracing complexity

The big question

Supporting the supporters

Voices, power and attitudes

We worked with young people, their families, and so many colleagues **across sectors & disciplines** to tackle these 4 research challenges.

We encouraged research collaborations through funding and supporting 16 **research projects**, 19 new **Special Interest Research Groups**, and 4 **cross-sector placements**.

We supported 18 early career researchers (ECRs) through our **GROW researcher development programme**, & 5 **interns**.

Spotlight on... Voices, Power & Attitudes

For our 2nd funding call in 2020 we focused on an area underrepresented in research: **the impact of racism on the mental health of CYP in the UK**. We recruited an **intern** and **two lived-experience advisors** to carry out priority-setting workshops with key stakeholders & a literature review. The trio shared findings through webinars, two journal commentaries, and a systematic review (pending publication). They also led a workshop at our Summit in 2022 on their experiences of **co-production in research**.

We funded 3 research projects through the call, including **TRADE**. Led by **early career researcher** Dr Yasmin Ahmadzadeh, alongside the Centre for Mental Health (where she had previously undertaken an Emerging Minds **cross-sector placement**), the project examined the *Transmission of experiences of Racism, Anxiety and DEpression in families*. The team spoke with parents & teenagers with lived experience of exposure to racism, both directly themselves and indirectly through parents. A mental health impact was evident in both generations. Findings were shared through **cross-disciplinary** events involving poetry, art, and storytelling.

Next Steps

We have identified some critical **next steps** for addressing our 4 research challenges including: enabling those with **lived experience to drive the research agenda**, making the most of **existing collaborative initiatives & data sets**, investment in **infrastructure** to foster **research collaboration across sectors & disciplines**, and **supporting early career researchers**. To this end we have:

- continued to run the **GROW researcher development programme** through the NIHR Mental Health Research Incubator (<https://mentalhealthresearch.org.uk/>)
- established a new **Mental Health in Development Theme** focusing on CYP through the NIHR Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre (mhdevelopment@psych.ox.ac.uk).

How will we, as a research community, come together to build the relationships, attitudes, & infrastructure needed to halve¹ the number of children and young people experiencing persistent mental health problems? And how can the Emerging Minds research challenges help focus our work to achieve this ambitious goal?

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¹Department of Health & Social Care (2017) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-framework-for-mental-health-research>.