



MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY AND ACTION IN EUROPE

JUNE 2022



Young people are increasingly impacted by poor mental health and wellbeing. To discuss this burden and develop calls to action, [NCD Child](#) and [The George Institute for Global Health](#) convened a multi-day virtual workshop entitled 'Mental Health Advocacy and Action in Europe'. A range of events were held virtually from June 21-29, 2022. This report summarizes the discussions and case studies that were presented during the workshop series, and highlights recommendations that emerged from the events. It is our hope that young people will benefit from the information and resources presented within this report.

The objectives of the four-part workshop series were to:

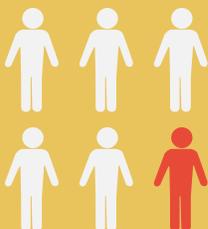
1. Present a diverse range of mental health case studies from experts working across Europe and globally.
2. Provide a platform for networking between policy advisors, researchers, advocates, students, and professionals with a mutual interest in protecting mental health.
3. Unpack the stories and lived experiences of people living with noncommunicable diseases (PLWNCDs) in Europe, to better understand NCD stigma, discrimination, and coping strategies.
4. Obtain feedback on the mental health modules of SickKids' advocacy course.



The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent economic crisis have aggravated pre-existing drivers of poor mental health across the globe. In addition to severe disruptions to psychosocial support for individuals with pre-existing conditions, increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression due to lockdowns, job insecurity and conflict are among a myriad of factors that have disrupted the mental well-being of citizens. Young people and lower-income groups are particularly at risk of these negative health impacts.

AROUND THE WORLD...

Mental disorders are the leading cause of years lived with disorders (YLD), accounting for **1 in 6 YLDs globally**.



People with severe mental health conditions, such as schizophrenia, **die on average 10 to 20 years earlier** than the general population, often of preventable physical diseases.

14 % of the world's adolescents aged 10-19 years lived with mental health diseases in 2019.

On average, countries dedicate

< 2 % of their health care budget to mental health.

Source: WHO - World mental health report 2022

EVENT 1: MAKING THE CASE FOR MENTAL HEALTH

JUNE, 21, 2022

Participants connected with experts in breakout sessions to explore various mental health-related topics. See below for two case studies from our expert speakers.

Climate Change and Mental Health: Opportunities for Action

Climate change and mental health are two of the biggest global crises we face, and are deeply interconnected. Despite growing awareness of these links, there has not yet been sufficient action at this intersection. Mental health and wellbeing can be impacted by the climate crisis in a myriad of ways, including through direct experiences of extreme weather events such as heatwaves, climate change-related disruption to food and water security, livelihoods, communities and health systems, and awareness of the climate crisis (e.g. eco-anxiety). These impacts are felt unequally; more vulnerable groups include children and young people, indigenous communities, and people with pre-existing mental illnesses. Climate action also depends on our mental health and wellbeing; people need to be equipped with the skills to cope with and act on the climate crisis. The climate and mental health crises also share many common causes, and recognizing these synergies creates opportunity for common solutions that can promote both better mental health and wellbeing and a safer planet.

Climate Cares is a joint initiative from Imperial College London's Institute of Global Health Innovation and the Grantham Institute - Climate Change and the Environment. We are a multidisciplinary team of researchers, designers, policy experts and educators, with the vision for all individuals, communities and healthcare systems to have the knowledge, tools, and resources to become resilient to the mental health impacts of climate change. Through research, cross-sector workshops and by listening to young people, *Climate Cares* has identified several key areas of need and opportunity for action. We must better understand the links between mental health, wellbeing and the climate crisis, and how impacts are experienced across different global communities. We must make this knowledge visible and accessible to those who have the power to transform it into policy and practice. We must overcome barriers of disconnection and misalignment in currently siloed climate action and mental health communities. Lastly, many interventions and stories of success and hope already exist; we must better map and scale them and share best practice.

Climate Cares' work focuses on three key pillars: building the global evidence base through [research](#); raising awareness of these interconnections through education and through cross-sector and global engagement ([see our briefing paper](#)); developing co-designed interventions to create [supportive spaces](#) for people to reflect, process their emotions, envision a better future and understand their role in creating impactful action.

Jessica Newberry Le Vay, Junior Policy Fellow in Climate Change and Health, Imperial College London. For more information on Climate Cares' research, interventions and engagement work to date, and on how to get in touch, [visit our website](#).



SMARThealth Pregnancy and Mental Health - The PRAMH study: Learning lessons from rural India

Around one in four women in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) experience a mental health problem during pregnancy, however, most of these women do not receive treatment or support. Stereotypically, pregnancy is seen as ‘a time when women are happy’, yet stigma, gender bias, and other forms of discrimination prevent women who experience mental distress from receiving the help they need. Depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts are common experiences during pregnancy and after birth and can turn into more severe or chronic mental health problems when left untreated. In addition, poor maternal mental health and well-being negatively impact babies and children, leading to low birth weight, restricted fetal growth, and impaired social, emotional, behavioural, and cognitive development.

Research on women’s mental health across the world is scarce, particularly in LMICs. In most contexts the exact prevalence of perinatal mental health problems is unknown, including the helpful and effective interventions to support mothers and their families.

The SMARThealth Pregnancy and Mental Health (PRAMH) study investigates mental health during pregnancy and in the first year following birth in women living in rural India. It aims to understand and assess the situation and context of perinatal mental health in the states of Haryana and Telangana and to develop a feasible, effective, and acceptable intervention to support women with mental health problems in their communities.

Providing screening and care for women’s mental health during pregnancy and their first year after birth have a great impact on their physical and mental health and wellbeing, as well as on the development and health of children and their wider families and contributes to gender equality and other structural changes. Even though PRAMH is being developed in an LMIC setting, the study findings may be applicable to contexts in the European Union. Learnings for the implementation and adaptation of community-based interventions could support European communities, for instance those living in lower resource settings or migrant communities.



The PRAMH study is led by Dr. Nicole Votruba, and working with researchers from the University of Oxford and the George Institute for Global Health (TGI), and is nested within the wider [SMARThealth Pregnancy](#) study, a randomized control trial to screen and support women who experience anemia, diabetes and hypertension during pregnancy and after birth. Like SMARThealth Pregnancy, the PRAMH study will draw on innovative, evidence-based mobile-health decision support systems to support women and their mental health needs.

EVENT 2: MEET UP FOR MENTAL HEALTH

JUNE, 23, 2022

Participants joined this speed networking session to e-meet others in the European region with an interest in mental health. A common sentiment among attendees was the need for tools and resources related to mental health. As a result, we have compiled a list of resources at the end of this report, and on the [NCD Child website](#).

Dr. David Nabarro, COVID-19 Envoy for the World Health Organization and Co-director of the Imperial Center for Global Health Innovation gave the [Keynote](#) for this event. You can also [read the narrative based on this speech](#).



Advocacy by young people is particularly important in moving the needle for systems leadership. For interconnected crises, interconnected solutions are needed. Systems leaders know how to weave the different issues together. They understand the need for whole system responses while still being able to focus on their components.

- Dr. David Nabarro

EVENT 3: MENTAL HEALTH AND ME: A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

JUNE, 27, 2022

The People Living with NCDs (PLWNCDs) working group, a sub-group within NCD Child's Young Leaders Program, led a focus group discussion to unpack the stories and lived experiences of people living with NCDs in Europe. The results from this discussion will inform their [#StandUpSpeakOut](#) campaign, which aims to combat stigma and discrimination among young PLWNCDs.



The focus group discussion brought out how stigma and discrimination create mental and emotional battles for PLWNCDs. These battles make it difficult for us to reach out for help.

- Joab Wako,
NCD Child Young Leader

KEY TAKEAWAYS: EVENT 3

- Internalized and externalized stigma are very dis-empowering for PLWNCDs, and negatively impact the personal motivation of PLWNCDs to manage their conditions
- Sharing lived experience leads to improved ability to articulate mental health experiences, but it can also be exhausting for PLWNCDs to constantly advocate and share their experiences
- Mental health treatments need to be culturally and medically appropriate; when these services are not available, PLWNCDs experience additional stress
- There are global differences in the profile of social stigma, however it remains a significant challenge across different regions and countries
- Victim blaming and/or judgement from health care practitioners, including a lack of continuity of care hinders health-seeking behaviour. This is concerning given that access to treatment improves patient outcomes for, and increases productivity of PLWNCDs.
- Mental health care should be person-centered rather than disease-focused, prioritize individual health needs, and involve consumers in planning/evaluating service delivery

WHAT'S NEXT?

The PLWNCDs working group is pleased to announce the launch of the *#StandUp SpeakOut* podcast series which aims to better understand the lived experiences of young people living with NCDs, with a focus on their experience of stigma and/or discrimination. Are you a young change maker (age 35 or younger)? - it might be of particular interest to you! The series will be available on Spotify and Apple Podcasts.

EVENT 4: BECOMING A MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE: A FEEDBACK SESSION

JUNE, 29, 2022

Participants gathered to provide feedback on the mental health modules of NCD Child's upcoming advocacy course. This course will feature content on NCD prevention and management, and empower learners to advocate for policies and decisions needed to tackle the growing burden of NCDs.



The lived experience of mental health conditions can not be understated.

Advocacy initiatives must consider cultural, social and economic factors.



CONCLUDING REMARKS

Across the sessions, participants expressed the need for access to reliable data and statistics on mental health, and voiced concerns about absent or archaic mental health legislation across Europe and globally. It was clear that young people are willing to advocate and take action on mental health initiatives, but they require practical tools and support. We can all play a part in moving the needle.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report reflects the collective insights of participants in the Mental Health Advocacy and Action workshop. It was written by Amanda Giancola and Claudia Selin Batz. Many thanks to all participants, speakers and moderators that joined to make it a successful workshop series.

NCD CHILD

NCD Child is a global multi-stakeholder coalition championing the rights and needs of children, adolescents, and young people who are living with or at risk of developing non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The mission for NCD Child is to ensure that issues related to NCDs are addressed and prioritized in national, regional and global policies. Visit www.ncdchild.org for more information.

THE GEORGE INSTITUTE

The George Institute is a leading independent global medical research institute with major centres in Australia, China, India and the UK, and an international network of experts and collaborators. Our mission is to improve the health of millions of people worldwide, particularly those living in disadvantaged circumstances, by challenging the status quo to find the best ways to prevent and treat non-communicable diseases (NCDs), injury and violence. Visit www.georgeinstitute.org for more information.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE LIBRARY

Reports and publications

- [The impact of climate change on mental health and emotional wellbeing: current evidence and implications for policy and practice](#) – Grantham Institute, Imperial College London
- [Special Report on Mental Health](#) – Resolve Global Health
- [Mental Health and Climate Change: Policy Brief](#) – World Health Organization
- [WHO Mental Health Report: Transforming mental health for all](#) – World Health Organization
- [Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030](#) - World Health Organization
- [Improving children and young people's mental health services: Local data insights from England, Scotland and Wales](#) - Health Foundation
- [Young Persons' Psychological Responses, Mental Health and Sense of Agency for the Dual Challenges of Climate Change and a Global Pandemic](#)- Institute of Global Health Innovation, Imperial College London
- [Temperature and Mental Health: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis](#)- Imperial College London
- [Online peer support training to promote adolescents' emotional support skills, mental health and agency during COVID-19: Randomised controlled trial and qualitative evaluation](#)- Peer Support Young People's Advisory Group
- [Agents of Change for Mental Health: A Survey of Young People's Aspirations for Participation Across Five Low- and Middle-Income Countries](#)- University of Oxford

Blogs and opinion pieces

- [Providing mental health support in humanitarian emergencies: an opportunity to integrate care in a sustainable way](#)
- [Mental Health, Climate Change and COVID-19](#)

Databases

- [Mental Health Data Hub](#) – NHS Digital (UK)
- [Mental Health Atlas 2020](#) – World Health Organization (compilation of data provided by countries around the world on mental health policies, legislation, financing, human resources, availability and utilization of services and data collection systems - update expected in 2023)

Training/advocacy materials

- [Advocacy for Mental Health](#) – World Health Organization
- [My Mental Health Guide](#)- National Institute of Mental Health of the Czech Republic
- [Teacher's Guide to support social and emotional learning among adolescents](#)- World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- [Helping Adolescents Thrive Toolkit](#) - World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Videos

- [Mental Health in the Climate Crisis](#) - Panel Discussion, Global Development Hub, Imperial College London
- [Youth Mental Health Matters](#) - UNICEF Jamaica

Websites

- [Youth Era](#)
- [Uplift](#)

