

Mental Health and Young People

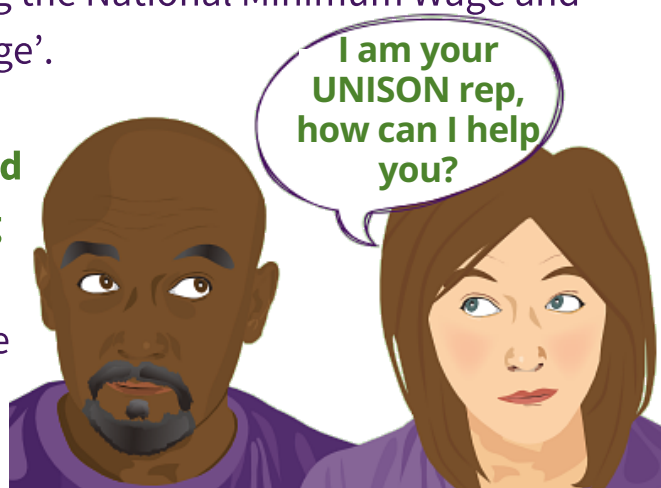
The Young Minds website includes the following statistics regarding common mental health problems experienced by young people:

- 8.9% of 16-24 year olds have self-harmed in their lifetime.
- 4.7% of 16-24 year olds screen positive for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- 3.6 of 16-24 year olds have a generalised anxiety disorder.
- 2.2% of 16-24 year olds in Great Britain experienced a depressive episode.
- 2.3% of 16-24 year olds have an obsessive compulsive disorder.

Austerity measures have had an enormous impact on young people with cuts to further education and student support, increases in youth unemployment, shortages in affordable housing, cuts to local services and social security and the rise in insecure employment such as the use of zero hour contracts. These are all issues that can have a considerable impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Trade unions can play an important role in supporting young people in the workplace. They can ensure that young workers have access to meaningful training, qualifications and sustainable employment. Union reps can also play their part in negotiating high-quality apprenticeships and workplace training programmes that support young workers with mental health problems. Low pay and inadequate affordable housing also affect young people and their mental health - trade union reps can ensure that they have access to information and advice about their rights. Trade unions should also ensure that employers are paying the National Minimum Wage and where employers can afford it, to pay the 'Living Wage'.

It is equally important that young people have a democratic voice in society and the workplace and trade unions are uniquely placed to enable young people to have a voice in the workplace. This includes encouraging young people to take an active role in their trade union and identifying barriers to young people's participation



Top tips for UNISON Reps

- **Ensure that your workplace has an appropriate mental health policy**, which is used and referred to regularly
- **Talk openly about mental health and wellbeing**, use nondiscriminatory language and challenge stigma and discrimination. Download Time to Change resources here: www.time-to-change.org.uk/resources/materials-downloads
- **Promote good mental health and wellbeing** for colleagues across your workplace - download health promotion materials such as the Five Ways to Wellbeing
- **Highlight available training** such as Mental Health First Aid to managers, reps and staff to help them spot the signs and respond appropriately. Find out more about Mental Health First Aid here: mhfaengland.org/ - or contact local mental health charities to enquire about other training opportunities.
- **Create a supportive environment**, be open about mental health, talk about your union's campaign to ensure good workplace practice on mental health and let members know that you're there if they need to talk - so that all members of staff along with volunteers feel comfortable to raise an issue.
- **Raise awareness of local mental health support services** – provided by the workplace and local community - so that they know where they can signpost those who require help (e.g. counselling services, local doctors, voluntary organisations or helplines). Leave literature in the staff room, in common areas and on notice boards.
- **Campaign for improved provision of mental health support services** and Employee Assistance Schemes within your workplace.
- **Encourage people to become mental health champions** within your workplace.
- **Lobby your organisation to support the Time to Change campaign** and sign the Time to Change employer pledge. Chart their development towards becoming an exemplar employer. Find out more here: www.time-to-change.org.uk/time-to-change-your-workplace
- **Encourage all members of staff to register with a local GP surgery** - so that they can easily access mental health support services if they need to.

