



Recent Developments in Mental Health, ADHD, and Neurodiversity

July–Sept 2025

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Introduction

Since July 2025, there have been numerous significant developments in mental health, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and neurodiversity worldwide and in the UK. These include new research findings on rising mental health needs, innovative treatments and clinical trials, important policy initiatives, and public awareness efforts. The following report summarizes the most important recent developments, covering both children and adults, organized by global trends and UK-specific updates. A summary table at the end highlights key developments by region, impact area, and population.

Global Developments (July–Sept 2025)

Research and Treatment Innovations

- **ADHD Medication Benefits and New Therapies:** A large Swedish study published in July 2025 confirmed that ADHD medications are consistently associated with lower risks of serious outcomes like self-harm, accidents, and crime. However, as more people (including those with milder ADHD) receive treatment, the protective effects have somewhat weakened over time jamanetwork.com. In terms of new treatments, a phase 3 trial of **centanafadine** (an investigational triple-reuptake inhibitor) showed that high-dose centanafadine significantly improved ADHD symptoms in children aged 6–12, with benefits evident by week 1 of treatment contemporarypediatrics.com. This paediatric trial, published in *Paediatrics Open Science*, suggests centanafadine could become a novel once-daily ADHD medication pending further testing in both children and adults.
- **Advances in Mental Health Research:** August 2025 saw a notable breakthrough in neuroscience: researchers at Mount Sinai reported the first detailed mapping of the brain's **5-HT1A serotonin receptor** at the molecular level mountsinai.org. This receptor is a key target of antidepressants and novel therapies like psychedelics, yet had been poorly understood. The team discovered that 5-HT1A receptors intrinsically favor certain cell signalling pathways, a finding that could enable *next-generation antidepressants and antipsychotics* that more precisely target mood-related pathways with fewer side effects mountsinai.org. Such fundamental research paves the way for future treatment innovations in depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia.
- **Youth Mental Health and Substance Use:** In the United States, growing concern over teen mental health and drug use has prompted action. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched a new nationwide campaign called **“Free**

Mind” in August 2025 to provide teens and parents with resources about mental health and substance abuse. The campaign’s core message is that *“drugs and mental health don’t mix,”* aiming to prevent coping with emotions via alcohol or drugs [goodmorningamerica.com](https://www.goodmorningamerica.com). This prevention effort comes as data showed 40% of U.S. high schoolers experienced persistent sadness or hopelessness in 2023, and 1 in 5 seriously considered suicide [goodmorningamerica.com](https://www.goodmorningamerica.com). By addressing the connection between mental health and substance use, the Free Mind campaign represents a public health innovation targeting adolescents’ well-being.

Policy Initiatives and Reports

- **WHO Roadmap for Lived-Experience in Mental Health:** A major policy development was the World Health Organization’s new roadmap **“Transforming Mental Health through Lived Experience,”** unveiled in late July 2025. This WHO/Europe-led roadmap (the first of its kind at this scope) was co-designed by people with lived experience of mental health conditions and their families [who.int](https://www.who.int). It calls on countries to integrate “lived experience practitioners” into mental health policy and services as equal partners with clinical experts. The roadmap outlines six actions for governments – from strengthening national policy to formally include people with lived experience, to co-creating services and expanding peer support roles [who.int](https://www.who.int). The goal is to make mental health systems more recovery-oriented and human-centred by moving beyond tokenistic patient input to **paid, meaningful roles for those with mental health lived experience** in service design and delivery [who.int](https://www.who.int).
- **Global Economic Burden of Mental Health:** Underscoring the scale of mental health challenges, a July 2025 report by the Pan American Health Organization warned that mental health conditions (along with other noncommunicable diseases) will cost South America an estimated **\$7.3 trillion** in lost productivity and health spending from 2020 to 2050 [paho.org](https://www.paho.org). This figure – equivalent to the region’s annual GDP – highlights mental health as not only a health crisis but an economic emergency. PAHO’s report urged immediate investments in prevention and treatment, noting mental health disorders are rising and straining healthcare systems [paho.org](https://www.paho.org). The data adds impetus globally for governments to prioritize mental health funding as an integral part of economic development plans.

Public Awareness and Community Efforts

- **Minority Mental Health Awareness:** July 2025 marked **Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month** (also called BIPOC Mental Health Month) in the U.S., with advocacy groups turning *“awareness into action.”* Mental Health America released a 2025 toolkit to help communities of colour

strengthen mental well-being, build supportive connections, and advocate for better mental health care mhanational.org. The campaign honoured the legacy of Bebe Moore Campbell and addressed the unique challenges faced by Black, Indigenous, and people of colour regarding stigma and access to care. Such awareness efforts reflect a broader global push in 2025 to emphasize mental health equity and culturally informed support.

- **Youth and Community Initiatives:** Around the world, youth-led and community-based mental health initiatives have been gaining traction. In addition to the CDC's Free Mind campaign noted above, students and young advocates continued to speak out about mental wellness in schools goodmorningamerica.com. International organizations highlighted *Self-Care Month* (ending July 24) to encourage daily mental self-care practices. Meanwhile, climate activists and health professionals collaborated to draw attention to **eco-anxiety** and the mental health impacts of climate change – an issue increasingly recognized in global forums. These diverse campaigns and events have kept mental health and neurodiversity in the public discourse, helping to reduce stigma and promote help-seeking across age groups.

United Kingdom Developments (July–Sept 2025)

Research and Reports on Mental Health

- **Worsening Youth Mental Health – Causes Identified:** A landmark UK study published in July 2025 offered new insight into the sharp decline in young people's mental health over the past decade. Conducted by the University of Manchester and UCL for the Youth Futures Foundation, this first-of-its-kind research examined the drivers behind rising anxiety, depression, and self-harm among youth. The findings point to a "*toxic combination*" of societal factors rather than just increased reporting youthfuturesfoundation.org. Key contributors include **financial insecurity and housing pressures** on young people (precarious jobs, high rents and mortgages) youthfuturesfoundation.org, declining **sleep quality** (an oft-overlooked factor in public policy) youthfuturesfoundation.org, and the pervasive effects of **social media** and smartphone overuse exposing youth to harmful content youthfuturesfoundation.org. The study also highlighted a 73% cut in youth services funding since 2010, leaving many young people without support – especially the most marginalized youthfuturesfoundation.org. Crucially, the authors debunked the notion that today's youth are simply less resilient or "over-reporting" distress; instead, they show that deteriorating youth mental health has concrete **societal and economic causes**, demanding urgent policy attention youthfuturesfoundation.org.

- **Rising Adult Mental Health Needs:** New data on adults in England emerged from the **Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2023/24**, published by NHS England in summer 2025. It reveals that **22.6% of adults (16–64)** had a common mental health condition (like depression or anxiety) in 2023/4 – a significant increase from 18.9% in 2014 natcen.ac.uk. Young adults were particularly affected, with 25.8% of those aged 16–24 experiencing a mental health condition (up from 17.5% in 2007) natcen.ac.uk. The survey also found lifetime self-harm more than doubled (10.8% of adults had self-harmed, a four-fold rise since 2000) and higher rates of PTSD in younger and disadvantaged groups natcen.ac.uk. On a positive note, treatment uptake has improved – nearly half of individuals with symptoms now receive some treatment natcen.ac.uk. Nonetheless, the trend is clear that adult mental ill-health has grown, not diminished, over the past decade. Researchers stressed the need for targeted support for at-risk groups (e.g. people in deprived areas, those with physical health conditions) and continued efforts to **reduce stigma and improve access** natcen.ac.uk. These findings serve as a barometer of the nation’s mental health and are informing NHS planning and resource allocation.

Policy Changes and Service Initiatives

- **NHS England ADHD Taskforce Report:** To address longstanding gaps in ADHD support, **NHS England’s independent ADHD Taskforce** released Part 1 of its report in June 2025 (with dissemination continuing into July). Commissioned in 2024 amid concerns about lengthy waits and “avoidable costs” of unsupported ADHD, the Taskforce’s initial recommendations call for a wholesale transformation in how society supports neurodivergent people pslhub.org. The report urges cross-departmental action – for example, better **data collection** on ADHD across health, education, and justice systems to identify needs and disparities pslhub.org. It recommends investing in early, *needs-led support* for children (rather than waiting for diagnosis) to “break the school-to-prison pipeline,” such as parenting programs and fully rolling out mental health support teams in schools with neurodiversity expertise pslhub.org. Critically, the Taskforce calls for **urgent steps to reduce NHS ADHD waiting times for both children and adults**, noting backlogs have escalated to crisis levels pslhub.org. Aligning with the government’s broader health missions (community care, prevention, digital innovation), these recommendations aim to ensure people with ADHD can access timely assessment and care, and achieve their full potential in school, work, and society. The UK government is expected to consider these proposals in its 2025 Spending Review, and a Part 2 report will detail longer-term strategy.
- **Mental Health Act Reform (2025 Bill):** A major legislative change in progress is the **Mental Health Bill 2025**, which is moving through Parliament to overhaul the Mental

Health Act 1983. Introduced to the House of Lords in late 2024, the reform aims to strengthen patients' rights and reduce inappropriate use of involuntary treatment [local.gov.uk](https://www.local.gov.uk). Key principles of the new Act include improving patient **choice** in care, ensuring **dignity** and respect for people's values, using the **least restrictive** options for treatment, and strictly limiting detentions to what is necessary for safety [local.gov.uk](https://www.local.gov.uk). Notably, the Bill will **curtail the use of mental health detention for neurodivergent individuals** – specifically, it seeks to end the practice of sectioning people **solely due to autism or learning disabilities** in the absence of treatable mental illness [local.gov.uk](https://www.local.gov.uk). This responds to longstanding criticism that autistic people were being held in psychiatric units for lack of better support. The reform reflects recommendations from an independent review by Sir Simon Wessely and subsequent consultations [local.gov.uk](https://www.local.gov.uk). For local councils and health services, implementation will require retraining staff (especially Approved Mental Health Professionals) and bolstering community care so that fewer people reach crisis point. If passed, the Mental Health Act 2025 will modernize mental health law, emphasizing therapeutic benefit and human rights. It represents a significant policy shift toward more person-centred and neurodiversity-aware mental health services in the UK.

- Tackling ADHD Medication Shortages:** Over the summer, the UK continued to grapple with a **national shortage of ADHD medications**, an issue affecting both children and adults with ADHD. Supplies of several commonly used drugs (various long-acting methylphenidate brands, some formulations of atomoxetine and guanfacine, etc.) have been intermittently disrupted, leading to significant treatment delays for patients [nelft.nhs.uk](https://www.nelft.nhs.uk). The Department of Health and Social Care has projected staggered resolution dates for different products between July and September 2025 [cntw.nhs.uk](https://www.cntw.nhs.uk). In the meantime, the NHS issued guidance to clinicians on managing the shortage: for instance, **pausing new initiations** of certain medications, using available alternatives (like prescribing lisdexamfetamine in place of out-of-stock methylphenidate) and closely coordinating care [nelft.nhs.uk](https://www.nelft.nhs.uk). Patient advocacy groups such as Healthwatch England have raised alarms about the “hidden wait” many face even after ADHD diagnosis – some newly diagnosed patients are unable to start medication due to supply issues. Healthwatch has urged the government to **“act to mitigate the impact of medication shortages”** and to provide clear public information on timelines and support for those affected [pslhub.org](https://www.pslhub.org). By late August 2025, there were signs of improvement (e.g. restrictions on initiating guanfacine and atomoxetine were lifted as stocks recovered [nelft.nhs.uk](https://www.nelft.nhs.uk)), but many families and adults remained in limbo awaiting treatment. The concerted response to these shortages highlights the importance of pharmaceutical supply stability as part of mental health service resilience.

- **Innovative Service Models – The HOPE(S) Program:** The UK is also pioneering new approaches for complex neurodivergent patients in restrictive settings. An **evaluation of the National HOPE(S) programme** (published in 2025) showed remarkable success in ending long-term segregation of autistic people and individuals with learning disabilities in psychiatric hospitals. Since May 2022, the HOPE(S) model – which emphasizes person-centered, non-behaviourist care – supported 129 inpatients who had been held in **long-term segregation** (isolation). As a result, 86 of them (67%) were able to exit segregation, and 40% of those were **discharged back into the community** ndconnection.co.uk. Over the same period, there were significant improvements in patients’ quality of life: a 109% increase in meaningful activity and 84% increase in time outdoors/exercise, alongside reductions in restrictive practices (21% drop in physical restraint, 33% drop in seclusion use, and 12% less chemical restraint) ndconnection.co.uk. Staff reported reduced burnout and trauma, and an increase in compassion satisfaction when using the HOPE(S) approach ndconnection.co.uk. Importantly, a cost analysis found this model yielded a **12:1 return on investment** for every £1 spent ndconnection.co.uk – largely by moving people out of expensive hospital stays into community support. This initiative, developed by Mersey Care NHS Trust and partners, demonstrates that with the right support, even very challenging situations can be turned around. It aligns with the broader policy drive (including the Mental Health Act reforms) to stop warehousing neurodivergent individuals in hospitals and invest in community-based solutions.

Public Awareness and Community Engagement

- **Local Neurodiversity Strategy:** On the community level, efforts to improve public understanding and inclusion are ongoing. For example, the City of York Council, together with local NHS partners, launched a draft **Autism and ADHD strategy** in July 2025 aimed at making the city “a place that works for all.” The 5-year plan – co-produced with neurodivergent residents and families – focuses on **tackling stigma**, speeding up diagnosis, and enhancing support across education, employment, housing, and healthcare york.gov.uk. Public consultations invited feedback on how to create a more inclusive city where approximately 1 in 7 residents are neurodivergent york.gov.uk. This reflects a growing awareness in UK communities that societal barriers, rather than neurodivergent people themselves, often drive exclusion and poorer outcomes york.gov.uk. By engaging the public in dialogue and encouraging “small changes that make a big difference,” such local campaigns contribute to national goals of acceptance and support for neurodiversity.
- **Ongoing Mental Health Awareness:** While the major UK awareness events like Mental Health Awareness Week (May) had passed earlier in 2025, the late summer

period still saw high-profile conversations about mental well-being. Coverage of elite sports figures and celebrities openly discussing their mental health continued to reduce stigma. Charities and the NHS amplified messages around **suicide prevention** ahead of World Suicide Prevention Day on 10 September, given concerns about mental health in the cost-of-living crisis. Additionally, the back-to-school season prompted media focus on children's mental health, with experts offering advice on easing anxiety in students. Overall, between July and September 2025, the UK maintained a spotlight on mental health and neurodiversity – not only through policies and research, but via public discourse that encourages understanding, help-seeking, and community support for both young people and adults.

Key Developments Summary Table

The table below summarizes key developments since July 2025 by region, area of impact, and the populations affected:

Region	Area of Impact	Affected Population	Key Development
Global	Research – ADHD	Both (children, adults)	<i>ADHD meds & outcomes:</i> Swedish study found ADHD medication use linked to reduced rates of self-harm, accidents, and crime, though benefits attenuate as prescription rates increased jamanetwork.com . Highlights importance of treatment while flagging need to monitor widening use.
Global	Treatment – ADHD	Children (and future adults)	<i>New ADHD drug trial:</i> Phase 3 clinical trial of centanafadine (novel NDSRI medication) in children 6–12 showed significant symptom improvement vs placebo, with effects seen in week 1 contemporarypediatrics.com . Supports centanafadine as a promising new ADHD treatment in development.
Global	Research – Mental Health	Both (youth, adults)	<i>Neuroscience breakthrough:</i> Mount Sinai researchers mapped the 5-HT1A serotonin receptor’s function at molecular level mountsinai.org . This new understanding of a key mood-regulating receptor could guide next-gen antidepressants and anti-anxiety drugs with greater precision.
Global	Policy – Mental Health	All (system-wide)	<i>WHO “Lived Experience” Roadmap:</i> WHO-Europe launched a roadmap to embed people with lived mental health experience into policies and services. The plan outlines formal roles for lived-experience practitioners and six actions for countries to create recovery-oriented, inclusive mental health systems who.int .
Global	Public Awareness	Youth (teens)	<i>CDC “Free Mind” Campaign:</i> In the U.S., CDC rolled out a national mental health & substance use campaign for teens (Aug 2025) stressing that “ drugs and mental health don’t mix. ” Provides resources to teens and parents about coping without substances goodmorningamerica.com . A response to rising teen overdose and mental health crisis goodmorningamerica.com .
UK	Research – Youth MH	Children & Young Adults	<i>Youth mental health decline:</i> UK study (July 2025) identified drivers of worsening mental health in young people – including economic insecurity, poor sleep, social media harms, and 73% cut in youth services since 2010 youthfuturesfoundation.org . Debunked idea that rise is due only to more reporting, pointing to real socio-economic stressors.
UK	Research – Adult MH	Adults (working-age)	<i>Adult mental health survey:</i> New NHS data showed 22.6% of 16–64 year-olds in England had a common mental disorder in 2023/4 (up from 18.9% in 2014) natcen.ac.uk . Young adults and those in

Region	Area of Impact	Affected Population	Key Development
			deprived areas bear the greatest burden. Self-harm and PTSD rates also climbed natcen.ac.uk , even as treatment uptake improved.
UK	Policy – ADHD	Both (children & adults)	<i>ADHD Taskforce recommendations:</i> An independent NHS Taskforce report (June 2025) urged cross-government action on ADHD – e.g. better data sharing, needs-based early support in schools, and urgent reduction of diagnosis & treatment waiting times for children and adults pslhub.org . Aims to transform ADHD services and integrate support across health, education, and justice sectors.
UK	Policy – Legislation	Neurodivergent groups, All	<i>Mental Health Act reform: Mental Health Bill 2025</i> progressing through Parliament will modernize the law to bolster patient rights and minimize coercion. Notably, it will prevent inappropriate sectioning of autistic people and those with learning disabilities under the Act local.gov.uk , addressing a key inequality. Emphasizes patient choice, dignity, and community care over detention local.gov.uk .
UK	Services – ADHD	Both (children & adults)	<i>ADHD medication shortages:</i> Ongoing 2025 shortage of ADHD meds in UK caused delays in treatment. NHS guidance advised pausing new starts and using alternatives amid limited supplies nelft.nhs.uk . By Aug 2025 some supplies were restoring, but Healthwatch England called for clearer information and action to support those waiting for medication pslhub.org .

Sources: Key information has been drawn from authoritative sources including academic journals and studies (e.g. *JAMA Psychiatry*, *PLOS ONE*, *Paediatrics Open Science*), official reports and press releases (WHO, PAHO, NHS England, UK government websites), and reputable news outlets

natcen.ac.uk

who.int/contemporarypediatrics.com

youthfuturesfoundation.org.