

**Background:** Evidence suggests that children with mental health difficulties access mental health services through emergency departments (ED) (Campbell et al, 2020). The ED route is increasingly being used in relation to population demand for child/adolescent mental health service needs (Holder et al, 2017).

**Methods:** This scoping review was undertaken from March 2020 to November 2021 and is guided by Arskey and O'Malley's (2005) methodological framework. All types of evidence(s) relating to the prevalence of children with mental health difficulties presenting at emergency departments; current international child mental health care systems, structures and services; other issues relating to service organisation and delivery; child, adolescent and parent experiences. Databases searched included CINAHL, PubMed, BMC, HSE, Scopus, Lenus, Google Scholar; reference lists were searched on PubMed and Google Scholar.

**Results:** The data analysis revealed significant quantitative/empirical evidence about of the number of children presenting. However, less is known on the experiences of parents of children with mental health difficulties who access mental health services through the ED.

**Conclusion:** Current evidence indicates that there is a paucity of literature about parental experiences of accessing mental health services through ED. There is a need for more qualitative research data to explore the experiences parents have had while attending the ED with a child with mental health difficulties. This may lead to an exploration of the rationales for choosing the ED as a means of accessing mental health services, and further inform how mental health services in the ED can be developed.

**Keywords:** child and adolescent mental health; parents; Emergency Department; ED; A&E

#### **Learning outcomes**

1. Participants can describe the possible reasons why the ED route is increasingly being used in relation to population demand for child/adolescent mental health service needs.
2. Participants will recognise additional empirical research is required to explore the experiences parents have had while attending the ED with a child with mental health difficulties.

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