



THE POWER OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

This research is presented in the 11-14 BrainWaves lesson:

Helping others for better wellbeing

About the strategy: Kindness and volunteering

Prosocial behaviour involves voluntary actions intended to benefit others, such as helping others, being kind, sharing, or volunteering. By taking the time to be kind to others, these acts provide a "double benefit": while they support the community, they also significantly boost the mental health and resilience of the young person performing them.

Key benefits for young people include:

- **Increased self-efficacy:** Helping others satisfies the need for "competence," making teens feel more capable of handling their own challenges.
- **Reduced isolation:** Volunteering is a powerful tool for social connection; 77% of 18–24-year-olds report feeling less isolated through these activities.
- **Emotional regulation:** Acts of kindness can promote brain changes linked to happiness and help counteract stress, anxiety, and low mood.

The scientific evidence behind the strategy

A large review of over 200 studies on adolescents found an “overwhelmingly positive relationship” between helping others (called prosocial behaviour) and better mental health. This includes benefits like higher wellbeing, fewer mental health difficulties, and better emotional outcomes.

- Hirani, S. et al. (2022) *Understanding the Role of Prosocial Behavior in Youth Mental Health: Findings from a Scoping Review*. *Adolescents* 2022, 2(3), 358-380.

Further reading

This website discusses why kindness is a key skill for mental health and offers practical ways to get involved:

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/kindness/kindness-matters-guide>