



**Poems for Children:  
A Selection of Poems Great and Small, by and for,  
Families, Staff and Friends of the Bedfordshire Mental Health  
Services**

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**Abstract**

Every year, the Young Persons Service strives to undertake a creative project for Children in Need. Most recently, we tried to combine something which could be both therapeutic and clinically helpful for troubled young people. The end result was a 100 page book called Poems for Children, which included contributions from patients, their parents, family members and clinical staff.

Why poems ? Someone recently said to me that “If coal is the fuel of language, the best prose is silver, and poetry it’s gold and diamonds”. When we get stuck and just can’t say how we feel, sometimes we find that a few words, said in just the right way, can open a door. A poem can often convey strong feelings and can say more than we might be able to manage in ordinary speech, allowing some of our contributors to talk about secret places to which they retreat and from which they struggle to emerge.

The idea for this project came from working with children and adolescents. The aim was to publish a book of poems in recognition of all those young people who have found that a few well chosen words have helped them on their way. These poems are the fuel which light up our mental health service, which go with us on our therapeutic journeys and which help us to keep our promises to the young people we serve.

The aim of this presentation would be to focus on children, mental health and poetry. It would include excerpts from the book, and would also provide an opportunity for colleagues to join in, bringing poems of their own to contribute to the discussion on the therapeutic benefits of this unique literary approach.