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# Children's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Task & Finish Group – Final Report

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<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	15 July 2025
<b>Task Group Chairman:</b>	Councillor Martha Vickers
<b>Date Task Group Chairman agreed report:</b>	10 June 2025
<b>Report Author:</b>	Vicky Phoenix

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## 1 Purpose of the Report

This report presents the work undertaken by the Children's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Task and Finish Group. The report makes recommendations based on the evidence gathered for improvement.

## 2 Recommendation(s)

To consider the Task and Finish Group's final recommendations as outlined in Section 5 of the report and to agree whether these be referred to the Executive and the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) for consideration.

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. However, financial implications will be considered by the Executive when deciding whether to implement the recommendations.
<b>Human Resource:</b>	There are no HR implications arising directly from this report. However, HR implications will be considered by the Executive when deciding whether to implement the recommendations.

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<b>Legal:</b>	There are no Legal implications arising directly from this report. However, legal implications will be considered by the Executive when deciding whether to implement the recommendations.			
<b>Risk Management:</b>	There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report, although if the Task and Finish Group's recommendations are accepted, this may result in risk management implications, which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.			
<b>Property:</b>	There are no property implications arising directly from this report, although if the Task and Finish Group's recommendations are accepted, this may result in property implications, which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.			
<b>Policy:</b>	There are no policy implications arising directly from this report, although if the Task and Finish Group's recommendations are accepted, this may result in policy implications, which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report. However, if accepted, proposals may have a positive impact on addressing health inequalities in children's mental health and emotional wellbeing.
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		The proposed decision does not have any impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics. However, if accepted, the Task and Finish Group's recommendations may have a positive impact on people with protected characteristics.

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<b>Environmental Impact:</b>		X		There are no environmental impacts arising directly from this report.
<b>Health Impact:</b>	X			The report makes a number of recommendations, which if implemented would help to improve children's mental health and emotional wellbeing.
<b>ICT Impact:</b>		X		There are no ICT impacts arising directly from this report.
<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>		X		There are no impacts for Digital Services arising directly from this report.
<b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b>	X			The report makes a number of recommendations in relation to the provision of mental health support and reducing the wait times for children's mental health services. These are captured in Priority 2: A Fairer West Berkshire with Opportunities for All.
<b>Core Business:</b>		X		There are no impacts on Core Business arising directly from the recommended actions at this stage.
<b>Data Impact:</b>		X		There are no data impacts associated with this report.

<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	<p>A full list of stakeholders and expert witnesses consulted is contained in the Task and Finish Group's report.</p> <p>The following officers and partners have been consulted on the report's recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Neil Goddard (Service Director Education and SEND)</li><li>• Steven Bow (Consultant in Public Health)</li><li>• Nerys Probert (Senior Programme Officer, Public Health)</li><li>• Louise Noble (Service Director, Children, Families and All-Age Services, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BHFT))</li><li>• Helen Alderman (Service Director for Universal and Specialist Children's, Family and Neurodiversity Services, BHFT)</li></ul>
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## 4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This report presents the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group set up by the Health Scrutiny Committee (HSC) to review Children's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing, and the recommendations arising from that review.
- 4.2 Members of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC) are invited to review the recommendations and consider whether these should be put to the Executive and the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB).

## 5 Supporting Information

### Introduction

- 5.1 At its meeting on 10 June 2024 the HSC established a Task and Finish Group to look at Children's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing. The Terms of Reference were drafted in collaboration with officers in Public Health, Children's Services and Health. The scope of the review focussed on three key areas:
  - Part 1: Assessment of the current needs and provisions in West Berkshire.
  - Part 2: The system approach to prevention, early intervention and mental health support for young people.
  - Part 3: Extensive, evidence informed treatment and crisis services.
- 5.2 The Task and Finish Group's terms of reference is provided in the Task and Finish Group's report (Appendix A).

## Background

- 5.3 The Task and Finish Group held five sessions between November 2024 and May 2025 to hear from key stakeholders. These included Council officers and representatives from the BOB ICB, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BHFT), Berkshire Youth, Time to Talk, Swings and Smiles, and local schools. A full list of the witnesses is provided in the Task and Finish Group's report (Appendix A).
- 5.4 Through the review of evidence provided from partners and officers, Members have highlighted a number of issues and concerns and have identified recommendations where improvements could be made.

## 6 Proposals

- 6.1 The Task and Finish Group has developed a set of recommendations as set out below.
- 6.2 Subject to the approval of the HASC, these recommendations will be referred to Executive accompanied by a management response and to the BOB ICB.
- 6.2 All recommendations should be targeted to support children and young people most in need and to address health inequalities. In particular, for children living in deprived areas and children eligible for free school meals.
- 6.3 The final report will also be shared with the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee.

Ref	Recommendation	Lead
1	<p>Provide and promote a Local Youth Offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Include mapping of services, facilities and activities available to young people.</li><li>• Collaborate with key stakeholders, including town and parish councils, to identify any gaps and opportunities for improvements.</li><li>• Provide improved opportunities for young people to use local facilities. Including school facilities and other local community spaces to be made available out of hours and the twinning of schools to share opportunities.</li><li>• Provide subsidised access for children and young people eligible for free school meals to use leisure facilities.</li></ul>	Children's Services - lead for the development of the Family Hub 0-19 service

2	<p>Improve the communication about and navigation of local services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a clear road map of the early help services available from all local organisations.</li> <li>• Provide a streamlined overview of Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). To incorporate research currently being undertaken regarding signposting and to ensure there is no 'wrong door'.</li> <li>• Review the support offer for parents including creating a central hub of information for support and a calendar of events and activities. Identify gaps and opportunities for improvement particularly for parents of older children, children eligible for free school meals and those living in deprived areas. Ensure support and engagement is targeted to address existing health inequalities.</li> <li>• Provide clear communications to parents and the public about the Children and Young People's Neurodiversity services and the new pathway process. Work closely with schools as the new process is embedded and monitor impacts.</li> </ul>	<p>Children's Services – Lead for the digital offer (Family hub development)</p> <p>BHFT – Service Director, Children, Families and All-Age Services</p> <p>BHFT - Service Director for Universal and Specialist Children's, Family and Neurodiversity Services</p>
3	<p>Provide and promote opportunities to regularly convene the wide range of professionals working with children and young people and supporting their mental health and emotional wellbeing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an evidence-based system strategy for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing with a strong focus on health inequalities.</li> <li>• Collaborate, network and share best practice to drive improvements.</li> <li>• Expand children and young people mental health workers in GP surgeries into West Berkshire, prioritising GP surgeries in deprived areas.</li> <li>• All schools to have a Senior Mental Health Lead. Schools in deprived areas to be identified and supported first.</li> <li>• Emotional and mental wellbeing to be given high priority in the recommissioning of the 0-19 health visiting and school nursing service.</li> </ul>	<p>Children's Services</p> <p>Public Health – Senior Programme Officer</p> <p>BHFT – Service Director, Children, Families and All-Age Services</p> <p>Children's Services - lead for the development of the Family Hub 0-19 service</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mental Health Support Team (MHST) Funding to cover all schools in West Berkshire.</li> </ul>	BOB ICB
4	<p>West Berkshire to become a Trauma informed district that acknowledges the impact of trauma by providing policies, training and resources to create supportive, understanding, and healing-centred environments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A commitment to embrace and champion trauma-informed practices and to formalise trauma-informed practices into district-wide policies.</li> <li>Provide guidance to help schools and other organisations to assess their current practices and implement trauma-sensitive approaches.</li> <li>Professionals working with children to undergo training in trauma informed care and for ongoing workshops to be provided.</li> <li>Provide workshops and resources for families to navigate trauma-informed approaches at home.</li> </ul>	<p>Public Health – Senior Programme Officer</p> <p>Education – Service Director Education and SEND</p>
5	<p>A full review of smart phones, social media use and online safety for young people in West Berkshire be carried out and to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review best practice and initiatives from other local authorities.</li> <li>Consideration for school-policies and their implementation.</li> <li>Support and advice for parents on the use of social media by children and young people and online safety.</li> </ul>	<p>Public Health – Senior Programme Officer</p> <p>Education – Service Director Education and SEND</p>
6	<p>The West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board to include Children and Young People's Mental Health as one of their priority areas of focus, and to develop their action plan to reflect this.</p>	Health and Wellbeing Board

## 7 Other options considered

- 7.1 The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee may choose to accept the Task and Finish Group's recommendations in full or in part or amend the recommendations before putting them to the Executive. Alternatively, the Health and Adult Social Care Committee may choose not to put any of the report's recommendations to the Executive and the BOB ICB if it considers that they are not appropriate.

## 8 Conclusion

- 8.1 The proposals outlined in Section 6 above have been agreed by the Task and Finish Group, based on the evidence presented. It is considered that these would help to improve children's mental health and emotional wellbeing in West Berkshire.
- 8.2 While some of these proposals could be actioned relatively quickly, at minimal cost and with existing resources, it is recognised that others would have financial and resource implications.

## 9 Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix A – Task and Finish Group Report

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### Background Papers:

None

### Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is to note only	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Wards affected:** All wards

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