

Paper to West Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 16 th December 2025	Agenda item:
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Title of Paper: Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Review: Berkshire West

Paper is for: (Please ✓)	Discussion		Decision		Information	X
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Purpose and Executive Summary

This update outlines a proposal for the completion of a review that will strengthen system-wide understanding of population-level mental health and emotional wellbeing (MH&EWB) needs across children and young people in Berkshire West. The project will identify unmet needs and assess the effectiveness, accessibility, and responsiveness of current service provision.

It is proposed that the THRIVE Framework is adopted as the guiding conceptual model for delivery and transformation.

It is expected that an update and initial recommendations can be shared with the system by end of March 2026.

Action required

For information and update on progress.

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Date of Paper: 7 th November 2025

Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Review: Berkshire West

1. Document Purpose

This update outlines a proposal for the completion of a review that will strengthen system-wide understanding of population-level mental health and emotional wellbeing (MH&EWB) needs across children and young people in Berkshire West. The project will identify unmet needs and assess the effectiveness, accessibility, and responsiveness of current service provision.

It is proposed that the THRIVE Framework is adopted as the guiding conceptual model for delivery and transformation.

This review will serve as a critical local foundation for the development of a robust and locally responsive recommendations for Berkshire West. The plan will support the full and sustainable embedding of the THRIVE model across the local system.

2. The Case for Change

Children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing is both a national and Berkshire West system wide priority. The Government's ongoing reforms, underscore the importance of early intervention, integration of services and a partnership-led strategic approach. The latest data from NHS Digital (2023) reveals that one in five children aged 8–16 now experience a probable mental health disorder—an increase from 19% in 2022. This upward trajectory signals not only a population health concern but is also a call to action for system-wide transformation.

The mental health and emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people is as important as their physical health and wellbeing. Mental health underpins all aspects of child development – cognitive, emotional, social and educational. Mental health problems are a leading cause of disability in children and young people and can have long-lasting effects; 50% of those with lifetime mental illness experience symptoms by age 14. Certain groups are disproportionately affected, and disparities are compounded by structural barriers to access, stigma, and fragmented service pathways.

Locally, there is a recognised need for a coherent and collaborative response to address local mental health and emotional wellbeing need, ensure timely access to appropriate mental health and emotional wellbeing support and to reduce inequalities in outcomes. This requires a system wide, preventative and strengths based local approach.

Across Berkshire West, there is a fragmented understanding of population-level mental health and emotional wellbeing needs. Partners recognise the growing complexity and demand for MH&EWB services among children and young people. A robust understanding is essential to inform strategic commissioning and service design. Berkshire West data already reveals variation in access, outcomes, and service utilisation across geographies and demographic groups. This suggests that while some children

and families are well supported, others face unmet needs or fall through the gaps. The review will aim to better understand current needs and identify any gaps. The recommendations will then outline steps to address those gaps.

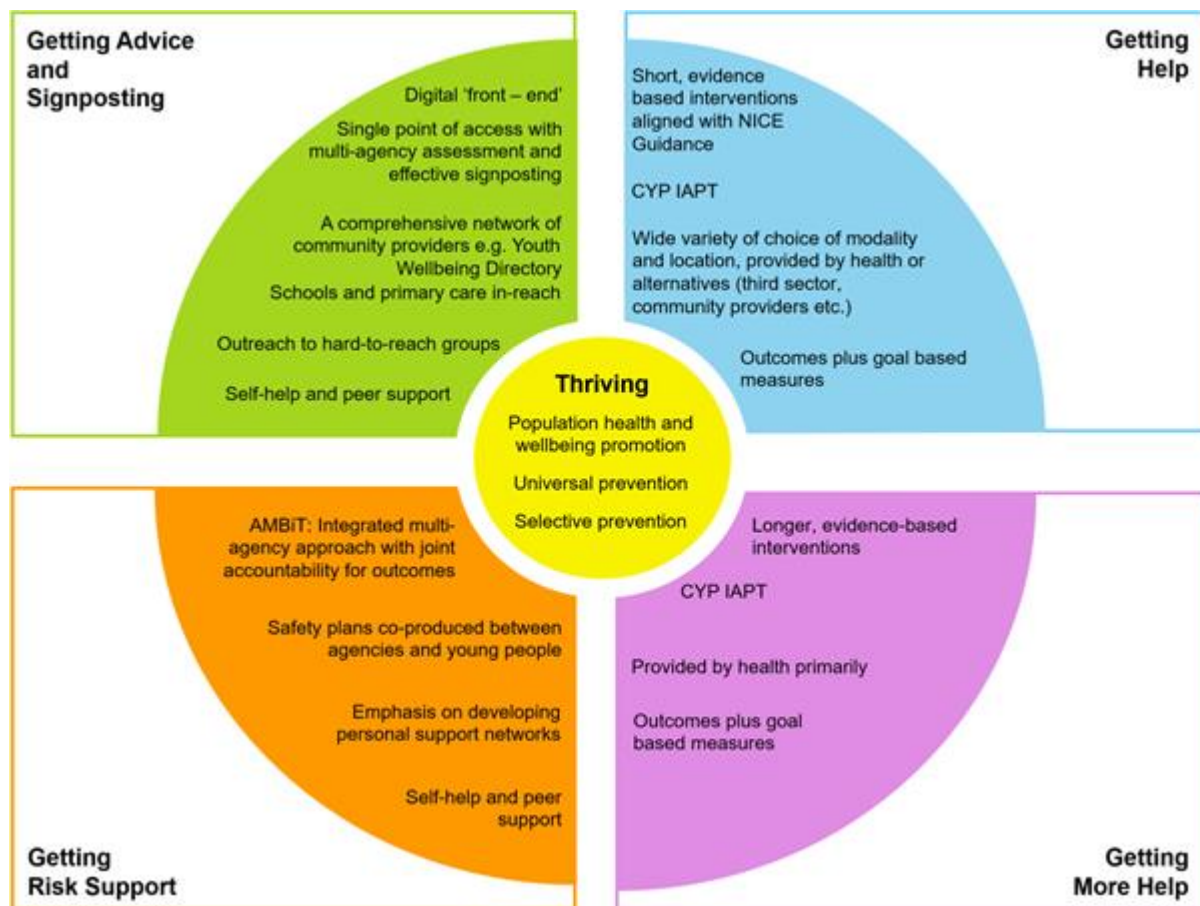
The review aims to support a strategic shift in how local MH&EWB services for children and young people are understood, commissioned, and delivered. It will be guided by the THRIVE Framework and responsive to both national imperatives and local priorities - aligned with the West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy to promote good mental health and emotional wellbeing for all.

3. The National i-THRIVE Framework

The National i-THRIVE Programme aims to improve children and young people's mental health outcomes. This is delivered by supporting localities across the country to implement the THRIVE Framework for system change (Wolpert et al., 2019) using an evidence-based approach to implementation. i-THRIVE was selected as an NHS Innovation Accelerator in 2016 and is now endorsed in the NHS Long Term Plan.

The Thrive Framework principles include:

- Enabled **COMMON LANGUAGE** to talk about mental health and mental health support that everyone understands
- **NEEDS-LED** approach based on meeting need, not diagnosis or severity
- Stresses the importance of explicitly engaging children and their families in **SHARED DECISION-MAKING** about the type of help or support they need
- Emphasis on **PROACTIVE PREVENTION AND PROMOTION** how to help children, young people and communities build on their own strengths
- Promotes **PARTNERSHIP WORKING** across health, education, social care and the voluntary sector, with shared responsibility, accountability and mutual respect
- **OUTCOME INFORMED:** Clarity and transparency from outset about children and young people's goals, measurement of progress movement and action plans, with explicit discussion if goals are not achieved.
- **REDUCING STIGMA:** Ensuring mental health and wellbeing is everyone's business.
- **ACCESSIBILITY:** Advice, help and risk support available in a timely way for the child, young person or family, where they are and in their community.



4. Review Aims and Objectives

Aims

- To develop the intelligence required to inform a comprehensive set of recommendations that aligns with the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategies to promote good mental health and emotional wellbeing for all children and young people.
- To embed the THRIVE needs-led model across Berkshire West, creating a coherent, accessible, and outcome-driven system of support that responds to the needs of children, young people, and families.

Objectives

I. Stakeholder Co-Production

Ensure the review is shaped through meaningful co-production with key stakeholders from West Berkshire by:

- Facilitating cross-sector collaboration among partners in health, education, social care, SEND, Public Health, Schools and the voluntary/community sector, as well as parents and children and young people.

- Drawing on lived experience, professional expertise, and system intelligence to co-create a shared understanding of needs, strengths, and opportunities for change

II. THRIVE-Based Gap Analysis

Apply the THRIVE Tool to help assess how effectively the current service landscape meets identified local needs, and to:

- Identify gaps in provision, duplication, and misalignment.
- Inform prioritisation of commissioning and service redesign efforts.

III. System Mapping and Service Audit

Undertake a detailed mapping of the current MH&EWB offer for children and young people, including:

- Commissioned and non-commissioned services across health, WBC children's services, within schools/Education services, Public Health and the voluntary sector
- Service functions, referral pathways, access points, eligibility criteria, waiting times, and alignment with THRIVE principles.
- Geographic coverage, population reach, and workforce capacity.
- Consideration will also be given to support available within the system to impact on the social and economic influences on mental health and emotional wellbeing,

IV. Establish a Data-Driven Understanding of Local MH&EWB Needs

Develop a comprehensive, evidence-informed profile of children and young people's MH&EWB needs in Wokingham by:

- Integrating national prevalence data with local demographic, service utilisation, outcomes, and user feedback.
- Conducting trend analysis to forecast future demand and identify emerging unmet needs and risks.
- Highlighting inequalities and gaps in access for vulnerable and underrepresented groups.
- Synthesising the latest research and evidence base.
- Mapping local assets and social determinants that contribute to positive MH&EWB outcomes.

5. Project Deliverables: Foundations for System Transformation

The review will:

- Serve as a strategic baseline for redesign, improved coordination, targeted investment, and effective resource deployment
- Produce strategic recommendations/ a phased implementation roadmap for the full embedding of the THRIVE Framework across Berkshire West's CYPMH&EWB system.

- Produce strategic deliverables to inform, guide, and enable the production of a local Transformation Plan for C&YPMH&EWB

The following principles will guide, shape and underpin the review:

- Timely and equitable access, ensuring that children and young people receive the right support at the right time.
- Early identification and intervention, enabling needs to be addressed before they escalate.
- Good clinical outcomes for children and young people accessing CAMHS.
- Support for universal and targeted interventions across schools, early years settings, and community environments that promote resilience and mental health literacy from the earliest age.
- Appropriate specialist, multi-agency support for those with complex needs.
- Involvement of children, young people, and families in shaping their care and the wider system.
- Clear information and understanding for children, young people, and families of what support is available, how to access it, and what to expect when they do.

6. Review Scope Considerations

The Thrive Framework Implementation Assessment Tool advises that:

“For implementation to be successful, all parts of the system should be considered in scope, including commissioning and interagency work, the services that provide care for families, and the individual interactions with service users.”

In alignment with this guidance, the review will take a local whole-system approach. However, it is proposed that the following areas will be excluded from scope:

- Adult mental health and emotional wellbeing services that are outside the scope of transition and do not require a formal handover from children’s services. However, transition services themselves will be in scope and require planned coordination between children’s and adult services.
- Neurodiversity pathways and service offers where there is no clear interplay with mental health needs
- NHSE-commissioned inpatient mental health services

7. Stakeholders

Key stakeholders include but are not limited to:

- Children, young people, and families
- Berkshire West ICB
- Local Councils Children’s Services

- Public Health
- Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BHFT)
- Primary Care
- Schools and education settings
- Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)
- Family Hubs
- Early Years providers
- Parent Carer Forum

8. Next Steps

A detailed project plan that will outline key milestones, timelines, and responsibilities across the two phases of implementation is being developed.

- Phase 1 will focus on system understanding and assessment.
- Phase 2 will build the recommendations plan.

It is expected that an update and initial recommendations can be shared with the system by end of March 2026.