Response to the Emotional Wellbeing Task Group

Committee considering report:	Health and Wellbeing Board
Date of committee:	24 September 2026
Executive portfolio holder:	Councillor Heather Codling
Responsible director:	AnnMarie Dodds - Executive Director
	Janette Searle Public Health Principal, West Berkshire Council
Responsible officers:	Sonja Janeva Children and Young People Mental Health Commissioning Lead, Berkshire West, Thames Valley Integrated Commissioning Board

1 Purpose and Executive Summary

1.1 To provide a joint response from West Berkshire Council (WBC) and the Thames Valley Integrated Care Board (TV ICB) to the recommendations made by the Emotional Wellbeing Task Group ('the Task Group') which were reported to the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny (HASC) Committee on 15 July 2025.

2 Recommendations

2.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

(a) Approve the joint WBC and TV ICB response to the Task Group recommendations as presented to HASC; and

(b) Use this to inform its ongoing strategic oversight of mental health support and improvement for the children and young people of West Berkshire, including through steering the work of the newly formed All Age Mental Health Board and the Families First Board.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Financial
The responses below set out commitments WBC and the TV ICB can make utilising confirmed financial resources, recognising that the resources available are constrained.
Human resources
The responses below set out commitments WBC and the TV ICB can make utilising confirmed human resources There are no additional staffing resources available to take on further delivery. Workforce development activity, including trauma-informed practice, can only be progressed where funded training capacity exists.
Legal
No additional legal implications arise from the proposals in this report.
Risk management
The Task Group identified a number of issues and risks posed to the emotional wellbeing of children and young people in West Berkshire. The WBC and TV ICB response sets out what can be done to address or mitigate those risks within available resources, recognising the other obligations on those statutory services which limits what resource can be directed towards the Task Group's recommendations. This report mitigates the risk of failure to meet other obligations by identifying appropriate ownership, dependencies and constraints, ensuring expectations remain aligned with actual system capacity.
Council Strategy
The approach supports the Council's priorities around prevention, early intervention, partnership working and system sustainability, while maintaining a clear focus on statutory responsibilities and realistic delivery.
Other Implications
There are no direct implications arising from this report relating to property. Any future digital enhancements to service navigation or access will be progressed through existing programmes, subject to capacity and funding. Further improvements are planned but at a pace which is resource-dependent.
Equalities Impacts: Neutral
The report itself does not introduce service reductions or policy changes, and therefore does not pose any risk of adverse differential impacts. The responses per the proposal provide clarity on system roles and realistic delivery expectations, supporting equitable access by avoiding commitments that cannot be fulfilled. Future service developments will continue to be informed by recognising the particular needs of children, young people and families with protected characteristics, those living in rural communities or areas of deprivation, displaced communities, armed forces communities, and those who are care experienced.
Data Impacts: Neutral
No new data processing or data-sharing arrangements are introduced through this report. Existing governance and data protection arrangements remain in place.

Environmental Impacts: Neutral
There are no direct environmental impacts arising from this report. Where services are accessed digitally or through community-based delivery models, this may support reduced travel and improved local access.
Health Impacts: Neutral
The report recognises the importance of emotional wellbeing and mental health for children and young people. It sets out existing commitments directed towards improving health.

Consultation and Engagement:	WBC engagement with children, young people and families continues through Family First, the Local Offer, Community Hubs and partnership forums. Any future gap analysis or service development will be delivered through ongoing co-production rather than standalone consultation exercises. The ICB has completed a comprehensive review of Children and Young People's mental health needs and services across Berkshire West, drawing together population data, deprivation and school vulnerability indicators, segmentation analysis, and service performance information across early help, digital support, youth counselling, MHST, CAMHS and crisis pathways. This has enabled a clearer understanding of where need is greatest, how demand varies by locality, and how current service models are operating in practice. The review has also been informed by the voice and lived experience of children, young people and families, using existing engagement and feedback data to understand experiences of accessing and receiving support. Parent Carer Forums (PCFs) have been involved in the process, contributing insights, feedback and engagement findings to help ensure that service user perspectives are reflected throughout the review and subsequent recommendations.

4 Background

4.1 At its meeting on 10 June 2024, the Health & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (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.

4.2 The review focused 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.

4.3 From a review of evidence provided from partners and officers, members of the Task Group highlighted a number of issues and concerns, and made recommendations as to where improvements could be made. On 15 July 2025 the HASC received these recommendations and agreed to put them to the WBC Executive and to the Integrated Care Board – then BOB ICB. Since addressing the Task Group's recommendations necessitates a joint response from the local authority and the NHS, WBC's Corporate Board requested that the response be issued via the Health and Wellbeing Board as the statutory partnership board responsible for integrated working towards health outcomes.

4.4 There have been some significant system changes since the remit of the Task Group was first scoped, and ongoing changes since the publication of the recommendations. These include: changes in responsibility for delivering certain services considered as part of the review; resource limitations impacting on deliverability; and service transformation aligned to current government direction. The responses set out below reflect current configurations and plans, mapping those back to the original Task Group recommendations where possible.

5 Proposals and Options Considered

5.1 The Council and the ICB would like to thank the Emotional Wellbeing Task Group for its work in highlighting the challenges and opportunities to improve emotional wellbeing and mental health support for children and young people in West Berkshire. This report responds to the Task Group's recommendations, setting out how they will be taken forward in alignment with current system partners' priorities so as to progress deliverable elements.

Option	**comment**
Option A: (recommended) The Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) collectively notes the response and uses this to inform its ongoing strategic oversight of mental health support and improvement for the children and young people of West Berkshire.	The response acknowledges that, in many areas, there will need to be ongoing work to address the issues raised by the Task Group. The response frames this within current and upcoming structures.
Option B: (not recommended) The Health and Wellbeing Board does not to approve this response and requires further consideration of the Task Group recommendations on the part of the Council and / or the Integrated Care Board at this time.	The recommendations as originally articulated by the Task Group: (a) do not reflect current structures; (b) include some areas outside the direct control of the Council or the ICB; and (c) would in some cases exceed current operational capacity and potentially

	compromise meeting statutory requirements.

5.2 The final recommendation of the Task Group was: 'Include Children and Young People's Mental Health as a priority for the Health and Wellbeing Board.' This has, in effect, already been implemented as the Board selected 'All Age Mental Health' as one of its three priorities at its meeting in January 2026. A new Mental Health Board is being formed as a HWBB sub-group to oversee a multi-year Delivery Plan.

5.3 The responses to the Task Group's other recommendations, which have different implications for the Council and for the ICB, are set out below.

Task Group recommendation 1:

Provide and promote a Local Youth Offer, including mapping services, improving access to facilities, and subsidised leisure access.

The Council recognises the importance of a comprehensive range of activities and support to young people in West Berkshire. Communities, the Council, NHS services, schools, and the voluntary sector all have a role. Mapping of and access to services will be delivered as part of the Families First / Family Hub offer. Opportunities for coordinated promotion of this offer and further collaboration to improve access will be explored by the Council and ICB, and implementation will be in line with existing resource.

Looked-after children and children we care for receive free memberships to the leisure centres. In addition, a limited number of vouchers for free access (average 40 per month) are given to Early Help and Families Hubs to distribute to families. 30 children eligible for free school meals are given a year of swimming lessons through the Sharks programme with Everyone Active. Additional free physical activity sessions are offered through the "Health in All Policies" PH-funded project for targeted groups, including children with SEND and Young Carers. Everyone Active also runs low-cost family activities during the holiday with their 'Everyone is Family' programme, which offers activities for £2pp.

Improving visibility and access to support is one of the ICB's key objectives for improving children's and young people's mental health. This will be achieved through clearer communication, better information sharing and improved data quality across health, education, local authorities and the voluntary sector.

Task Group recommendation 2:

Improve communication and navigation of local services, including a central hub and streamlined CAMHS overview.

The Council agrees this would significantly benefit families. The development of a digital hub and enhanced communications will be part of the Best Start, Family Hub, Family Information Service and enhanced SEND Local Offer.

The Council offers self-guided online learning to help parents and carers understand children's behaviour, emotions and development, from pregnancy to adolescence via *Togetherness,* a free NHS-backed parenting support programme

The ICB has completed a comprehensive review of Children and Young People's mental health needs and services across Berkshire West, drawing together population data, deprivation and school vulnerability indicators, segmentation analysis, and service performance information across early help, digital support, youth counselling, MHST, CAMHS and crisis pathways. This has led to the development of plans based on a clearer understanding of where need is greatest, how demand varies by locality, and how current service models are operating in practice. The review highlights that most need sits below specialist CAMHS and identifies gaps in early help capacity, increasing acuity, and inconsistent access to community-based emotional wellbeing support.

Task Group recommendation 3:

Convene professionals regularly, develop a system strategy, expand mental health workers in GP surgeries, and ensure Senior Mental Health Leads in schools.

Following the Health and Wellbeing Strategy prioritisation decisions taken by the Board in January 2026, a new multi-agency Mental Health Board is being formed as a HWBB sub-group to oversee a multi-year Delivery Plan.

The Mental Health Delivery Plan will align with the development of the Neighbourhood Health Model, another area of focus for the HWBB. Mental health support within and adjacent to Primary Care is an issue which will be addressed primarily through the Neighbourhood Health programme.

The Council will continue to convene networking events for Senior Mental Health Leads in schools to share challenges and best practice, and will also commission the 0-19 public health service, integrating health visiting, school nursing, and family support.

The ICB will be expanding the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) programme from the current level of approximately 63% coverage by: implementing one additional MHST in West Berkshire from September 2026; and implementing an additional MHST by September 2027, achieving 100% coverage across the system. Plans include the development of additional MHST capacity for special schools and post-16 settings towards the end of the three-year plan, reflecting required curriculum development within training programmes. The appointment of a Senior Mental Lead in each school participating in the MHST programme is expected and encouraged.

The ICB will also embed the new "Getting Help" service to bridge the gap between early intervention and specialist provision, supporting children with more complex or escalating needs, including those in schools not yet covered by MHSTs. Strengthening the "Getting Help" and wider early-support offer will reduce pressure on specialist CAMHS and crisis services, improve equity of access and prevent unnecessary escalation.

Task Group recommendation 4:

Embed trauma-informed practices district-wide, including training and workshops.

The Council supports trauma-informed approaches and already works to a trauma-informed model in Children's Social Care. The social care model follows national best practice which recommends embedding principles such as safety, trust, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural awareness, supported by leadership commitment and reflective

supervision. Additional delivery district-wide including training and policy development, requires significant investment and capacity, which are not currently available. However, the Council will continue to promote awareness through existing networks and explore external funding opportunities.

The ICB's review (see above) highlighted that many children, young people and families presenting across early help, education, community emotional wellbeing services, MHSTs and CAMHS may be affected by adversity, trauma and chronic stress, even where this is not the main presenting issue. Going forward, the ICB aims to have trauma-informed principles shape service design and delivery across the pathway, including earlier identification, more relational and psychologically informed responses, and triage and escalation processes that are sensitive to how trauma can present. This supports the ICB's wider aims around prevention, consistency, reducing escalation and improving equity of access.

Task Group recommendation 5:

Review smartphone/social media use and online safety, including best practice and parental support.

The Council acknowledges the importance of this issue, and recognises that it is a rapidly evolving area of national policy.

Some aspects of promoting online safety, e.g. limiting access, are within the discretion of local schools and governing bodies. However, the Council will continue to share national best practice and guidance with schools and via other agencies with reach to parents, encouraging regular reviews of local policies and the provision of education on online safety.

6 Appendices

None

Background Information

Task Group report:

3b. Appendix A - CMHEW Task Group Report HASC FINAL.pdf

Governance Pathway

Committee/Body	Date
Corporate Board	18.08.2026
Executive Briefing	03.09.2026
Health and Wellbeing Board	24.09.2026