
Healthwatch West Berkshire - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Survey Feedback Report February 2021

Report being considered by: Health and Wellbeing Board

On: 09 December 2021

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Report Sponsor: Healthwatch West Berkshire

Item for: Decision



1. Purpose of the Report

To present the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Survey Feedback Report, which was a follow-up to a CAMHS parents focus group run by Healthwatch in July 2019. We hope this report will be a springboard for root and branch transformations that will improve the mental health and emotional wellbeing of our children and young people in West Berkshire.

2. Recommendation(s)

For the Health and Wellbeing Board to:

- (a) note the report;
- (b) endorse the report's recommendations; and
- (c) ask key partners to act upon the report's recommendations.

3. Executive Summary

This report presents the results of Healthwatch West Berkshire's recent work seeking feedback from the families of children using local CAMHS and the recommendations arising from this work. The report makes a series of 12 recommendations, which are designed to address the issues raised in the survey responses.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 In February 2021, Healthwatch West Berkshire undertook an online survey exploring the views and perceptions of the parents/guardians of children who were currently using the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
- 4.2 The survey highlighted the following issues:
 - Very long waiting times for help
 - Children's conditions worsening due to the long wait times
 - Children's education suffering

- Adverse impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of other family members
- Many parents have resorted to paying for private treatment and diagnoses
- A widespread belief that earlier access to CAMHS would have made a difference
- An overall feeling that the CAMHS service was not satisfactory or effective
- Poor feedback about information received on discharge and where to get help.
- The urgent need to reduce waiting times and provide more support at all stages.
- The need for better communication with families.
- A general plea for more / more experienced staff.

4.3 Commissioners have recognised the need to improve CAMHS provision locally and a Local Transformation Plan was developed to this end in 2015. This has been regularly refreshed and in January 2020 a report was taken to West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board to present the [refreshed version of October 2019](#). The LTP provided an update on service development and improvement across the comprehensive CAMHS system. Many of the priorities for action listed in the LTP relate strongly to the Healthwatch West Berkshire CAMHS survey.

4.4 The backdrop driving activity and improvement in this area included a continued increase in demand for children's mental health services and thus increased waiting times; difficulty recruiting the CAMHS workforce, despite additional resources for specialist CAMHS teams across Berkshire West; concerns about the self-harm rates in all three Local Authorities for people aged 10–24 and self-harm rates for 15- to 19-year-olds across all three areas that were higher than the national average.

4.5 Since January 2020, we have suffered a Coronavirus pandemic which has taken the lives of over 127,000 people nationwide. Many NHS service developments have had to be put on hold in order to deal with this pandemic. It is evident that there has been commitment at the highest levels locally in Berkshire West CCG and the 3 Local Authorities to improve CAMHS and address the mental and emotional health and wellbeing needs of children and young people. However, this survey demonstrates that the CAMHS in West Berkshire is still not meeting these needs and the service users are unhappy with many aspects of the service.

5. Options Considered

The recommendations listed in this report will dovetail with the action plans that have been developed as part of the LTP to improve the mental and emotional wellbeing services for our children and young people.

6. Proposal(s)

The report makes the following recommendations:

- (1) Decrease the waiting times for children and young people to receive a diagnosis, having been referred to CAMHS, to a level that is acceptable and reasonable.

- (2) Decrease the amount of time taken for a child/young person and their parents/guardians to be seen by CAMHS for any reason following referral.
- (3) Initiate an internal review as to why parents and guardians of young people who have been seen by CAMHS do not believe that it made any difference to their child. Develop an action plan to improve outcomes of the service.
- (4) Improve the quality of information and advice that all children and young people and their families receive from CAMHS when they are discharged from the service.
- (5) Ensure that all children and young people and their parents and guardians are signposted to other mental and emotional health and wellbeing services as appropriate.
- (6) Increase the support given to children and young people and their parents/guardians throughout the whole CAMHS journey from referral, diagnosis and treatment through to discharge or referral to another service.
- (7) Improve communication between the CAMHS team and parents/guardians and children and young people being referred to the service at every stage of their CAMHS experience.
- (8) Increase the number and quality of staff working within the CAMHS team to meet the needs of the children and young people and their families.
- (9) Ensure the most up to date Local Transformation Plan for Children and Young People's Mental Health in Berkshire West is fully implemented and all aims and objectives in any accompanying plans are fulfilled and reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- (10) Ensure that all Public Health data relating to the ongoing mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in West Berkshire is regularly reported to the West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board and local service commissioners.
- (11) Improve the preventative and early intervention services available to all children in West Berkshire in order to improve and maintain their mental health and wellbeing and help to prevent the number of referrals to CAMHS.
- (12) Improve communication and liaison between mental health services in schools and CAMHS to help ensure that children and young peoples' needs are met and there is clear and logical continuity of care across settings.

7. Conclusion(s)

Though much investment has come into Children's Mental Health Services recently with some excellent work by commissioners and providers being done, waiting lists for some children experiencing Mental Health issues remain too long and little support

is in place to mitigate this delay. As Children's Mental Health forms a key priority of the newly launched Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, all efforts should be made to improve access to services for ALL children in West Berkshire regardless of their condition.

8. Consultation and Engagement

The report was informed by the HWWB CAMHS focus group and residents of West Berkshire who were able to respond to the survey between February and March 2021. The report has also been shared with the Berkshire West Integrated Care Partnership Mental Health and Learning Disability Board, and Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group prior to release.

9. Appendices

Appendix A – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Survey
Feedback Report February 2021

Background Papers:

The state of children's mental health services 2020/2021:

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/mental-health-services-2020-21/>

Berkshire West Local Transformation Plan (LTP) For Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing 2021:

https://www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk/media/5486/children-and-young-people-s-mental-health-and-emotional-wellbeing-ltp_final.pdf

Berkshire West Children and Young People's Mental Health Needs Assessment (2021):

https://www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk/media/5485/health-needs-assessment_cyp-berkshire-west_2021.pdf

Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2017 [PAS]

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2017/2017>

Health and Wellbeing Priorities Supported:

The proposals will help achieve the following Health and Wellbeing Strategy aim(s):

- ☐ Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people
- ☐ Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives
- ☐ Help families and young children in early years
- ☒ Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people
- ☐ Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Health and Wellbeing Strategy priority / priorities by focussing attention on Children's Mental Health Services and waiting lists.
