

Sue Chandler
Chair
Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Dear Sue,

Thank you for your letter dated 11th April 2019, regarding your concerns following the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Kent County Council (HOSC).

In response to your concerns regarding the current provision of the Children and Young Peoples Emotional and Wellbeing mental health services in Kent, we have reviewed the issues you have raised.

As you have highlighted, North East London Foundation Trust NELFT (who currently have a CQC rating of 'Good' at their last inspection) were awarded the contract for five years with a possible extension of a further two years. Following an integrated procurement process with the local authority in 2016 for provision of Children and Young Peoples Emotional and Wellbeing mental health services in Kent and commenced delivering against the contract in September 2017. It is recognised that the initial length of the contract reflected the complexity of the task to transform the system in order to fully meet the needs of children and young people in Kent.

During the migration and mobilisation of the contract in activity to NELFT in 2017, it became evident that there was a considerable hidden waiting list, particularly around the neurodevelopmental pathways, that was not included in the overall activity agreed at point of transfer.

Once the hidden waits were visible and addressed, this resulted in an initial four year wait for full assessment for neurodevelopmental conditions.

To militate against the risk, NELFT have led a system wide collaboration to ensure visibility of all new CYP pathways to meet the increase in demand.

The system in Kent as a result of the waiting times has invested an additional £1.2million into CYP MH services from Department of Health future in mind allocation, focussing on staffing and workforce to reduce the waits and meet the access standard.

NHS England and NHS Improvement



As part of NELFTs strategic transformation plan we have seen the provider introduce a Single point of access (SPOA) ensuring that children and young people are seen more quickly, and every young person referred into the service now has an initial screening. A clear focus on early intervention as a preventative measure, as well as the development of specialist care pathways (including specific focus to improve the all age autism pathway) has significantly reduced the waiting time to full assessment in neurodevelopmental conditions to two years. An improving and encouraging trajectory cutting the original wait by 50% in 18 Months.

The prediction from NHS Digital is that NELFT will exceed the 32% access standard in 2018-19 if performance remains on the current trajectory, and there are clear plans and actions that have been submitted to NHS England/Improvement to meet and/or exceed the 34% access target for 2019-20 as part of the operational planning process for CCGs and the STP. The plans are articulated in the Kent local transformation plan.

Whilst we fully acknowledge that it is unacceptable for young people to wait for treatment, we understand that there are multifactorial system reasons for this. We also acknowledge that there is a national workforce issue around specialist provision supported by a national strategy and these issues will not necessarily be resolved by additional funding and as such requires whole system solutions to address.

We can give assurances that NHS England/Improvement has a clear and robust assurance process which is fully engaged with local CCGs, the STP and providers in Kent. We recently held a specifically focussed 'deep dive' in relation to CYP performance and challenges in the system in Kent and were assured by the clear joint working and ability to articulate the current position and challenges faced within the system.

There is also ongoing improvement support provided to CCGs, STP and Providers from our local Clinical Network and intensive support teams.

We welcome HOSC's continued focus on children's and young people's agenda in Kent and we trust this gives additional assurance in supporting the continued transformation for services in Kent.

Yours sincerely



Anne Eden
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