

KENT HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11TH MAY 2022

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES UPDATE

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1. Summary

The impact of the pandemic on children and young people in Kent continues to be felt by communities, schools and services. As children and their families emerge from two years of lockdowns and uncertainty, there is clear evidence of significant increase in complexity/acuity of need and demand for services across all tiers/thresholds.

The children and young people's mental health system continues to collaborate to meet the challenges and partnership working across statutory agencies has been mobilised to respond quickly to demand. There are some clear examples of innovation and collaboration across the Integrated Care System (including regional and national support) to manage the unrelenting increase in service demand and pressure. This is particularly apparent in the collaboration to resolve issues associated with the crisis and complex pathway and challenge of access to Tier 4 inpatient beds.

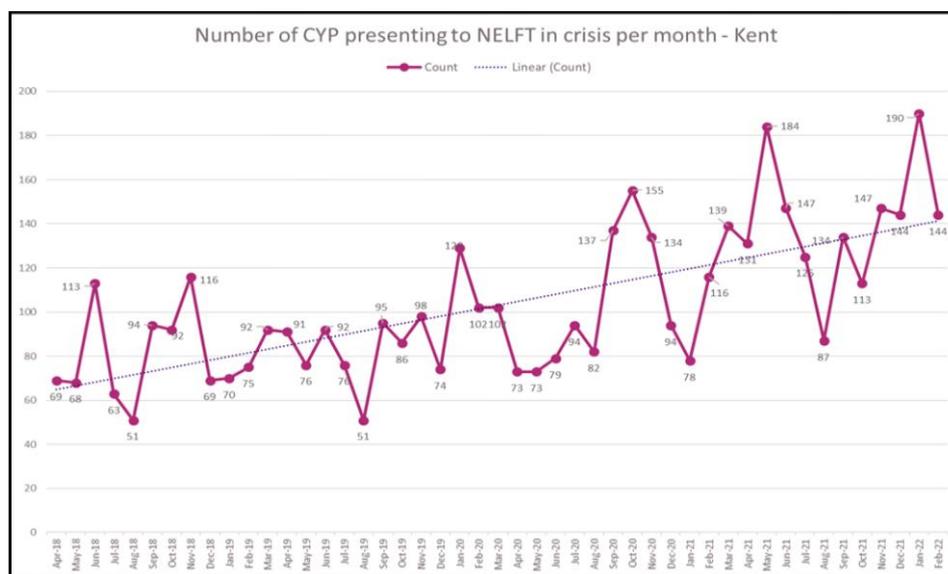
There continues to be a focus on specific issues, such as children and young people with anxiety presentation. There is clear evidence that children and families are experiencing levels of anxiety that adversely impact their ability to thrive. A number of expanded and new initiatives have been put in place to respond to the increased level of need. These initiatives respond to a range of issues including children and young people who are transitioning to adult services, who may have a neurodiverse need or require support around resilience and wellbeing.

2. Children and young people’s mental health and covid

We are continuing to see a significant impact on children, young people, and their families because of the pandemic. All children and young people’s emotional wellbeing and mental health services in Kent are experiencing an increased demand, and there continues to be a rise in acuity and complexity for children needing urgent or emergency care. The number of children and young people requiring support for anxiety has also increased since the first lockdown. The following section outlines some of the work underway to help manage the pressure on the crisis and complex pathways and the increase in anxiety presentation across the spectrum of need.

2.1. Continued pressure on the crisis and complex pathways

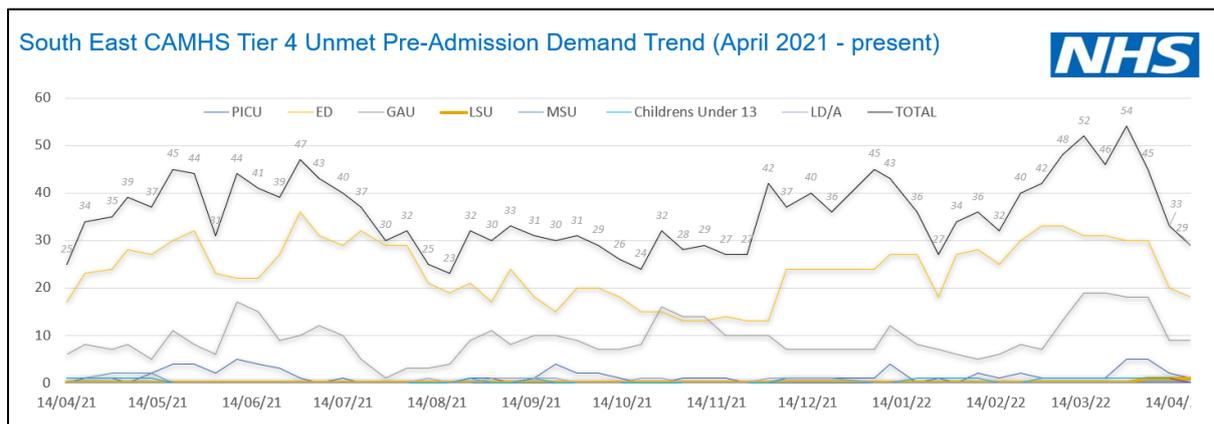
Pre covid (April 2018 to March 2020), an average of 85 children and young people presented to NELFT in crisis per month. In the last 12 months, between March 2021 and February 2022, the average number is 140 children and young people, an increase of 65%. These statistically significant increased numbers of children and young people presenting in crisis is indicative of pressures experienced throughout the mental health system including acute settings, social care and Tier 4 inpatient beds.



SOURCE: NELFT, NUMBER OF CYP PRESENTING TO NELFT IN CRISIS IN KENT PER MONTH - 1

The September 2021 report to HOSC outlined the system response to the challenges in accessing CAMHS inpatient care for children and young people in crisis and with complex needs. This system response delivered a marked reduction in the number of children and young people waiting for a CAMHS Tier 4 service, with 16 children and young people waiting for CAMHS Tier 4 services at the beginning of June 2021, reduced to just 3 by October 2021. The average waiting time for admission was also significantly reduced to 15 days.

Since October 2021, there has continued to be increasing pressure across the South East region. The graph below shows children and young people for which a referral has been received in the South East region where they are yet to be admitted. Delays in admission continue to have a significant impact on the local system where children and young people are held and managed at home or in acute paediatric wards. Health commissioners in the Provider Collaborative and KMCCG have continued to invest in the workforce in acute hospitals and the crisis response service to support management of these children and young people.



SOURCE: NHS ENGLAND, SE CAMHS T4 UN-MET PRE-ADMISSION DEMAND TREND, 2

Some of the greatest system challenges to date have included:

- a lack of available community resources to support children and young people including agency support that could potentially avoid Tier 4 inpatient admissions and family/placement breakdowns
- pressure on social care placement availability
- delayed discharges from both Tier 4 inpatient and acute paediatric settings when children and young people are ready for discharge.

In April 2022, the South East region saw another surge in demand for Tier 4 inpatient beds, which resulted in Anne Eden, Regional Director for NHS England and Improvement South East and Dr. Nick Broughton, Co-chair of the Regional Mental Health Programme, writing to each Integrated Care System (ICS) seeking assurance that action was being taken to address the current challenges. Kent and Medway ICS responded committing to working with partners to focus on a full pathway response to the Tier 4 challenges, improving flow and discharge in acute hospitals and strengthening community support services.

The Kent and Medway response to the continued pressure is described below:

1. KMCCG has recruited a permanent Associate Director of Pathways (Complex and Crisis Care) to support the system in collaborative partnership working when children and young people present with complex and crisis needs and are inappropriately placed within an acute paediatric setting. Since being in post

since August 2021, the Associate Director has consulted and provided involvement to 76 cases. The Associate Director chairs a weekly system call that reviews and discusses all children and young people in acute settings at a partnership level. On average, 11 children and young people are discussed weekly.

2. KMCCG has funded a Band 6 mental health liaison nurse within each acute site across Kent and Medway. These posts are reported to be having a significant positive impact to children and young people with mental health needs admitted to the wards.
3. KMCCG has also invested significant funding to enhance NELFT's Crisis and Home Treatment Team pathways and All-Age Eating Disorder Service to focus more on community intervention and support. Using the additional investment, the Crisis Team have restructured by integrating hospital and community services under a new management structure to increase throughput on the unit and enhance the Home Treatment offer. The service has been renamed and is now the Crisis Response and Enhanced Support Team.
4. The Provider Collaborative and KMCCG are working with NHS England and Improvement to secure funding to continue investment into crisis care, including bed expansion across the region. Since transfer of Kent and Medway Adolescent Hospital (KMAH) to NELFT in April 2020, work was undertaken and completed on the bespoke children's health-based place of safety Section 136 suite located in the building. Building works are near completion to address ligature risks throughout the unit. In addition to this, NELFT recently secured further funding for three additional General Adolescent Unit beds plus three 72-hour short stay/crisis beds. These additional beds are planned to be available for use from the end of April 2022. The short stay beds will be opened in a phased manner whilst the process is established.

2.2. Increased anxiety, particularly in schools

Many of our commissioned services are reporting high levels of anxiety amongst the children and young people they support. Having anxiety can be very disruptive and debilitating for children and young people, impacting their home-life, school attendance, attainment, and ability to build and maintain meaningful relationships.

We also receive anecdotal evidence around young people's levels of anxiety; for example, Porchlight reported:

“School is providing many young people with a “perfect storm” as mock exams and practice tests are reportedly being cascaded out to all year groups. Due to the loss of learning over the past two years our clients feel that their teachers/schools are continually setting tests and exams even though

there are big gaps in their learning which becomes very transparent in this setting - many report that there are whole sections of exam questions that they simply have not ever been taught. The majority of our clients are already struggling with anxiety and so this added pressure is having a significant negative impact on their mental, physical and emotional wellbeing.”

KOOTH provide online counselling for children and young people aged between 10 and 25 across Kent and Medway. Their quarterly statistics for Q3 of 2022/23 showed that the most common presenting issue for both males and females was anxiety and stress. Anxiety and stress were also in the top five presenting issues for children and young people who are agender or gender fluid. This finding has been consistent throughout 2022/23 to date (see graphic below).

Top 10 most prominent issues Service Users presented								
Q1			Q2			Q3		
#	Issue	SU	#	Issue	SU	#	Issue	SU
1	Anxiety/Stress	114	1	Anxiety/Stress	131	1	Anxiety/Stress	136
2	Suicidal Thoughts	88	2	Suicidal Thoughts	78	2	Suicidal Thoughts	114
3	Self Harm	86	3	Self Harm	69	3	Self Harm	100
4	Family Relationshi..	55	4	Family Relationshi..	48	4	Family Relationshi..	62
5	Friendships	39	5	Sadness	41	5	Friendships	59
6	Self Worth	37	6	Friendships	34	6	Self Worth	45
7	School/College iss..	28	7	Self Worth	33	7	School/College iss..	45
8	Eating Difficulties	27	8	Eating Difficulties	32	8	Eating Difficulties	44
9	Sadness	25	9	School/College iss..	29	9	Depression	37
10	Depression	25	10	Depression	25	10	Sadness	36

SOURCE: KOOTH, TOP PRESENTING ISSUES 3

The second and third most prominent issues reported by Kooth service users related to suicidal thoughts and self-harm. The Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention Programme continues to deliver a programme of work to reduce suicides and to support those who have been bereaved by suicide. In July 2021 the programme published a Positive Practice Audit Report into how best to support Care Leavers who experience suicidal thoughts. The Mind and Body self-harm reduction programme which is delivered to 13–17-year-olds across Kent, using KMCCG funding, has been extended to support 13–25-year-olds in Kent and 18-25 year olds in Medway, through KMCCG’s contribution to the Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention Programme.

A number of initiatives are underway, or planned:

- KMCCG has been awarded funding to develop additional Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) (known in Kent as Emotional Wellbeing Teams (EWTs)) by 2023/24, which will provide coverage of 51% of the school population across Kent and Medway by this time. MHSTs are a national programme to deliver education-based support to children, young people, parents/carers and teaching staff for low-level emotional wellbeing and mental health needs. Kent and Medway have eight teams live and four teams in mobilisation. Each team supports 7,000 to 8,000 pupils and they work with

both individuals and groups. The teams are delivered by NELFT, and the programme management is led by HeadStart Kent. MHSTs provide parent/carer training on anxiety and provide 1:1 and group work to children and young people attending schools in which they are based.

- HeadStart Kent, an emotional health, wellbeing and resilience programme, focusses on resilience in schools and is part of the wider Early Help offer. HeadStart Kent have been working with the system around a whole school approach which includes training regarding trauma, building resilience, Youth Mental Health First Aid and mindfulness. As part of the whole school approach, and to support children and young people's wellbeing, resilience conversations, safe spaces and peer mentoring programmes have also been delivered in schools.
- HeadStart Kent oversees the DfE Wellbeing Return to Education programme in Kent, which over the past year has included funding The Education People (TEP), Kent Education Psychology Service (KEPS) and Open Access to deliver emotional wellbeing training to school staff. There is a focus on the highly anxious and anxiety-based school avoidance.
- The Reconnect programme in Kent has been used to support initiatives relating to anxiety, including Intensive and Volunteer mentoring work and a pilot to use a cognitive behavioural approach intervention with children and young people in selected schools whose attendance has fallen below 90% for reasons including anxiety.
- In early 2022, Kent Reconnect Programme and Public Health funding was invested into increasing capacity and reducing waiting times for Kent County Council commissioned Children and Young People's Counselling Service.
- Kent County Council also contributed funding towards Kooth online counselling service.

The national HeadStart programme concludes in 2022 and all funded programmes will end by August 2022. Within Kent this means that support and several services for children and young people will end without alternatives having been commissioned. With the increasing demand on services, this is a concern for the Kent system.

3. Children and young people's mental health services

The Children and Young People's Mental Health Service (CYPMHS) commissioned by KMCCG, and delivered by NELFT, delivers emotional wellbeing and mental health advice and support for young people and their families across Kent. Kent County Council (KCC) are close partners to KMCCG and contribute financially to the CYPMHS contract. A supplementary briefing on the KCC view of the service is provided as Appendix 1.

3.1. CYPMHS Service Update

Referral volume into NELFT’s CYPMHS remains at its highest since transfer, with around 27,093 referrals (including Neurodevelopmental and Learning Disabilities Service (NLDS)) received since April 2021. The current caseload volume is also significantly high with over 15,296 patients being actively managed by the service.

The complexity and acuity of mental health conditions remains at increased levels with patients requiring longer treatment and care planning by practitioners in the teams. This has resulted in an increase in waits for assessment and treatment.

Within the Crisis service, NELFT have noted a significant increase in referrals since April 2020. A review of data indicates that a total number of referrals received for 4-hour assessment rose from 396 between January 2021 – March 2021 to 494 between January 2022 – March 2022.

The following table summarises key activity across NELFT’s service from April 2021

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
CYPMHS Referrals	5,811	5,142	5,695	6,393
Neuro Referrals	1,138	811	1,246	857
Total Referrals	6,949	5,953	6,941	7,250

to March 2022:

SOURCE: NELFT, 2021/22 REFERRALS 4

There has been an overall reduction for children and young people waiting over 18 weeks for a mental health intervention as NELFT continues to prioritise and focus on patients experiencing long waiting times.

NELFT is one of five providers across Kent and Medway that deliver diagnostic assessments for autism and ADHD. For those children and young people waiting for a NELFT diagnostic assessment, the service remains in communication with any child or young person waiting over 52 weeks while the service prioritises high risk patients for assessment and treatment. All providers are working with KMCCG, KCC, Medway Council and NHS England and Improvement to improve support within the neurodevelopment pathway and the waiting times to diagnostic assessment. Regionally, demand for diagnostic assessment is significantly high, and this is experienced in Kent. A programme of transformation, investment and improvement, is progressing under the oversight of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Improvement Programme.

NELFT, in partnership with the adult mental health provider (KMPT), is leading transformative work focussed on children and young people who transition out of the CYPMHS service at 18. A clinical strategic lead has been appointed and is working with all partners to improve the transition journey for children into adult services.

3.2. *New services and development*

There have been a range of new services that have been commissioned in the last 6 months in response to the increased demand for children and young people's mental health support. Appendix 2 gives an outline of new services and developments within Kent.