

KMICB Children's Team

How the voices of children, young people and families are gathered and how they are used to improve their experience and outcomes.

Report for:

- NHS Kent and Medway Improving Outcomes and Experience Committee
- Section 11 Audit: engagement and voices section
- Kent and Medway Children and Young Peoples' Local Transformation Plan

September 2024

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Introduction

Children's and Families Act 2014: The Law states that:

Young people should be at the centre of planning for and making decisions about their future. Discussions should focus on what they want to achieve, and the support they will need to get there.

Kent and Medway ICB (KMICB) have long been committed to ensuring children, young people and their families' voice has been listened to and appropriately embedded in a non-tokenistic and collaborative practice across the ICS.

Over the past year, the lived experience voice has been more prominent than ever with increasingly robust mechanisms and structures to gather a wide range of voices and improve practices within the ICB and partners in embedding the learning and changing delivery to better meet the needs of the children and young people.

In 2024, the Kent and Medway Children's Programme Board endorsed the Lived Experience Engagement and Employment Framework, which describes the values that underpin lived experience practice as well as guidance for good practice. This provides a robust framework across the system to ensure that voice is gathered and used in the most sensitive and meaningful way. A copy of the framework is made available with this document.

Listening to children, young people and their families' experiences, is a core feature of the children and young people's system in Kent and Medway. Embedding a 'listening and acting culture' enables far reaching and long-term benefits to care children and young people receive. Moreover, gathering and respecting the voices of children and young people nurtures robust relationships, enhances learning and innovation in practice, reveals inequalities and improves quality of care and experience.

1. The people, projects and activities

In this section we outline the people, projects and activities that contribute to the children and young peoples' voices agenda for KMICB. Gathering, understanding and acting on their voices sits within a system infrastructure that is connected and interrelated.

The section below illustrates the breadth and depth of work undertaken in the last 12 months. This document will also be used to inform the Section 11 annual audit reporting for the ICB, which requires the organisation to evidence the actions taken to discharge their duty appropriately in respect of promoting the welfare of children and safeguarding under the requirements of the Children's Act. This document will also be used within the Kent and Medway Children and Young People's Local Transformation Plan refresh for 24/25.

a. The People

Lived Experience Lead

For the past year, Tamsyn Phillips has been employed as the Lived Experience Lead within the KMICB Children's Team. This post is funded through the mental health investment standard and the primary focus is on wellbeing and mental health, however Tamsyn also has a role to strategically embedded and continuously improve children and young peoples' voices in commissioning practice. Tamsyn works in conjunction with the Kent County Council (KCC) Lived Experience Practitioners to develop the Lived Experience Engagement and Employment Framework and run the Young People's Voice Project (both detailed below). Tamsyn is an expert in her field and has spoken at local and international conferences about lived experience and partnership working.



Lived Experience Practitioners

These roles sit within Kent County Council and work closely with parents of children that have mental health diagnoses and/or are neurodivergent. Some aspects of the role involved developing a Family Network for Kent and Medway to strengthen parent peer support by engaging with parents. They also reach parents who want to be involved and support service reviews and organised parent steering groups. They engaged with young people for the development of 'The Lodge' – a service that seeks to avoid a hospital admission for autistic young people with or without a learning disability. They work on strategy and policy and both practitioners used their lived experience to contribute to the training of Educational Psychologists at the University College London.

Participation Workers

KMICB fund Participation roles that sit within Kent County Council, Medway Council and Porchlight. These roles deliver an expert, mature and sophisticated programme of work which is coordinated across the ICS and targets children and young people who are impacted by health inequalities.

With KMICB support and funding, the Participation workers run the Big Mental Health Conversation in the autumn of each year. The report from last year can be found [here](#), which describes the event in which 250 Kent and Medway children attended and what was gathered and achieved from the day.

The Participation Workers are experts in their field and are often involved in new programmes of work from the inception to design the most appropriate and honest engagement with children, young people and families. They have co-developed with young people training for professionals (particularly decision makers, such as Members) on how to improve participation and engagement practice. This is delivered by young people to adults.



The Young Adults Participation Project (YAP), run by Porchlight, works directly with young adults who experience mental health difficulties. They engage with young adults and have 1 to 1 conversations with them and gather feedback on their experiences of the mental health services. This feedback is shared with KMICB and the providers to make service improvements which are then monitored through contract meetings.

Between May 23 – May 24 the YAP service engaged with over 1,500 young adults at 96 events and at creative workshops that they deliver. The project continues to receive positive feedback from young adults and from the organisations that it works closely with to support these people.

Co-production leads

Within KMICB commissioned services, such as Mind and Body and NELFT's Children and Young People's Mental Health Service, there are staff dedicated to co-production and participation. These roles ensure best practice is reviewed with service users and improvements based on user experience are embedded.

Some examples of improvements include:

- Children and young people said they preferred using a longer version of a wellbeing scale to the condensed one. The service worked with the children and young people to amend the evaluation tool and it has now been adapted as a result of their engagement and feedback.
- Co-produced communication materials with parents to explain their child's safety plans that are developed by the service with the young person.

In 2024, the Kent and Medway children's mental health provider, NELFT employed a dedicated Patient Experience, Complaints and Compliments Lead. This role has had immediate impact in improving patient experience for children and their families through increased bespoke communication as they wait for autism and ADHD assessments. These improvements are monitored through contract meetings and the Neurodevelopment Pathway Transformation programme.

b. The Projects

Children and Young People's ICS Strategic Framework

The KMICB Strategy Team have led the way in the development of the Children and Young People's Strategic Framework which has involved developing a shared approach to strategy across all sectors, guided by four core ambitions. The ambitions will help share the approach to effective, compassionate and equitable care, they are:

- Reducing inequalities in care
- Personalised and individual care
- Experience and environment
- Workforce Development

These ambitions not only underpin the strategic objectives, but also act as a compass for the actions and decision-making processes. They ensure that the services meet the diverse needs of all young people in the communities.

Over 200 children and young people were directly engaged, with more through digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Engagement with children and young people has been integral throughout this strategy development and will continue to be during future development.

New models of care for children and young people's mental health

In 2023/24, KMICB embarked on a programme of engagement informing the development of the future children and young people's mental health model. Over 1,000 children and young people were engaged and shared their views through online engagement, group work and one to one interviews.

After the initial phase of gathering their views and opinions, we produced a video animation for children and young people that described the future models of care based on the feedback we received. That animation can be viewed [here](#). We then continued to undertake more specific engagement as part of phase two of the project. The work that was undertaken has been published in two reports on the Kent and Medway ICS website:

- [Kent and Medway Children and Young People's Mental Health Have Your Say survey responses analysis – November 2023](#): Analysis of 981 written responses were received, plus 1 poem, 1 drawing, 5 podcasts, and 10 short films
- [Kent and Medway children and young people's mental health services procurement: Report on engagement activity and outcomes – January 2024](#): An independent review of over 60 reports and case studies with children and young people in the previous 18 months, to inform the future model of care.

A further, 'you said, we did' report has been drafted (due to be signed off) that explicitly shows how children and young people's mental health feedback and insights gathered from the engagement activity have influenced the future approach to children and young people's mental health services.

Young People's Voice

This project allows young adults (16–25-year-olds) their parents, carers, families and anyone involved in their mental health care, to feedback about their care experiences. Data is collected through an online platform and engagement and is collated and thematically analysed. Reports are written and sent out to stakeholders and commissioners for review and to build into contract meetings and development of future services.

Quarterly Local Mental Health Network Meetings (LMHN) are held with stakeholders (organisations that work with young adults), which are opportunities for them to talk about key themes that have been reported, and network to create a more joined up network of support for young adults. The meetings are held for the four HCP areas that make up Kent and Medway so that we can understand local needs.

We also hold a bi-annual Mental Health Action Group (MHAG), which hosts commissioners and heads of local mental health services, to speak about the mental health experiences of young adults and how this feedback is used to ensure actionable, non-tokenistic positive outcomes for young adults. This project is run by Tamsyn Phillips from the children's team.

In addition to the LMHNs and MHAGs, we hold meetings with stakeholders and partners, particularly voluntary and community sector organisations that support young people, school wellbeing leads and care leavers organisations. Feedback is given and discussed with senior members of the organisation about improving care based on child and young person's experience.

We have facilitated a direct channel for feedback from stakeholders and partners to NELFT and are in the process of developing a similar model with KMPT (the adult mental health provider in Kent and Medway) in respect of young adults. With the young adults' pathway going up to 25.



Lived Experience Engagement and Employment Framework

The Framework can be accessed [here](#). It has been co-produced with engagement from children, young people, young adults, families and carers, with input from employees from NHS Kent and Medway ICB, Kent County Council, Medway Council and other local stakeholders. This has been developed to support the system, partners and stakeholders in consistent and shared approaches to engagement, language and employment. Colleagues across the ICS are now working to develop a bespoke promotion and training package alongside the framework to build a system consensus of approach. This was a collaborative piece of work led by Lived Experience colleagues from local authority and ICB and winner of a Healthwatch Kent and Medway Award 2024.



Locality grants for the voice of young adults

EK360, in partnership with KMICB have launched a small grants initiative for local organisations to collect feedback from children and young people on a selection of key identified issues. This allows for children and young people to be actively involved in gathering feedback, designing and planning an engagement event and learning to produce a report in a format of their choosing.

The grants have been awarded to multiple voluntary sector organisations that work with seldom heard communities, such as young people experiencing domestic abuse, carers and young people from African and Caribbean communities.

Kent Youth Research Network

In July 2023 KCC's i-Thrive and Participation Team were awarded funding from the National Institute of Health Research to develop a [Kent Youth Research Network](#), engaging young people in the development of research as well as being participants in research. Working in partnership with the University of Kent, 32 young people aged 11 to 17 years have now been trained in research methods. The young people have worked in small groups to be supported to develop their own research projects including research on the impacts of social media on mental health.

An Organisation and Practitioners Network has also been developed through this funding, providing an opportunity for schools and organisations working with young people to get involved with, undertake and share youth-led research.

Pie Factory – Open Arms – Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (13-21 years)

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people are a group that face significant health inequalities and KMICB is committed to addressing the needs of the groups that experience significant adversity.

The ICB commission Pie Factory Music to deliver 'Open Arms'. A weekly session for unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees aged 13-21 years. It is an open access session where the children and young people can attend a relaxed environment where there are a multitude of different activities they can partake in, all developed and designed by the children and young people themselves. The young adults (18+) who attend are also offered monthly advice sessions with the Refugee Council.

To celebrate the first year of Open Arms, they produced [this video](#) that celebrates the inspiring young people and what the project means to them and their team, and how much they have gained from coming together through compassion, positivity, resilience and community.

Young Adult's Mental Health videos

Young people fed back that they used social media platforms to get information about their mental health. We co-designed and co-produced a set of videos of young adults speaking about their mental health experiences. This will be shared across the NHS Kent and Medway social media platforms and will also be shared by other system partners.

You can view the videos in the links below:



[Amaka](#): Amaka explains how young adults (aged 16 to 25) in Kent and Medway can access mental health support. Amaka is deaf and this is a signed and captioned video.

[Tass](#): Tass, from Medway, has struggled with her mental health and particularly with anxiety. She describes her mental health journey and how she found help and support.

[Archie](#): Archie, from Thanet, struggled with questioning his identity and sexuality which made him feel isolated. Archie tells his story and explains how he accessed NHS mental health services for support.

[Jack](#): Jack, from Kent, explains how he struggles with his mental health when starting university. He explains how he found support.

c. The Activities

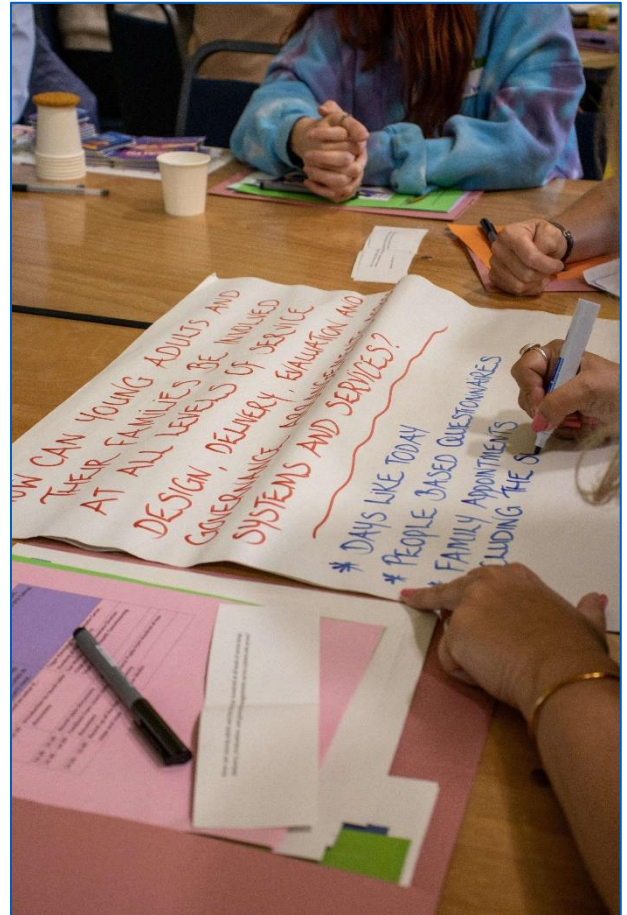
NHS Kent and Medway Young Adults' Mental Health and Wellbeing Conference 2023

A conference that invited young adults, commissioners, heads of service and other stakeholders to speak about issues that are facing young adults and their mental health and wellbeing. The theme that underpinned the conference was 'It would be better if...'.

The conference was designed to ensure that the young adults' voices had the platform to be heard. The conference involved presentations from young adults and organisations that support them. Claire Murdoch, NHS England's National Mental Health Director, kindly recorded a speech for us, highlighting the wider NHS goals for children and young people and touched upon the positive work that is going on in Kent and Medway. Dame Eileen Sills (former) Chief Nursing Officer for the ICB also highlighted the work and commitment of the ICB to young adults.

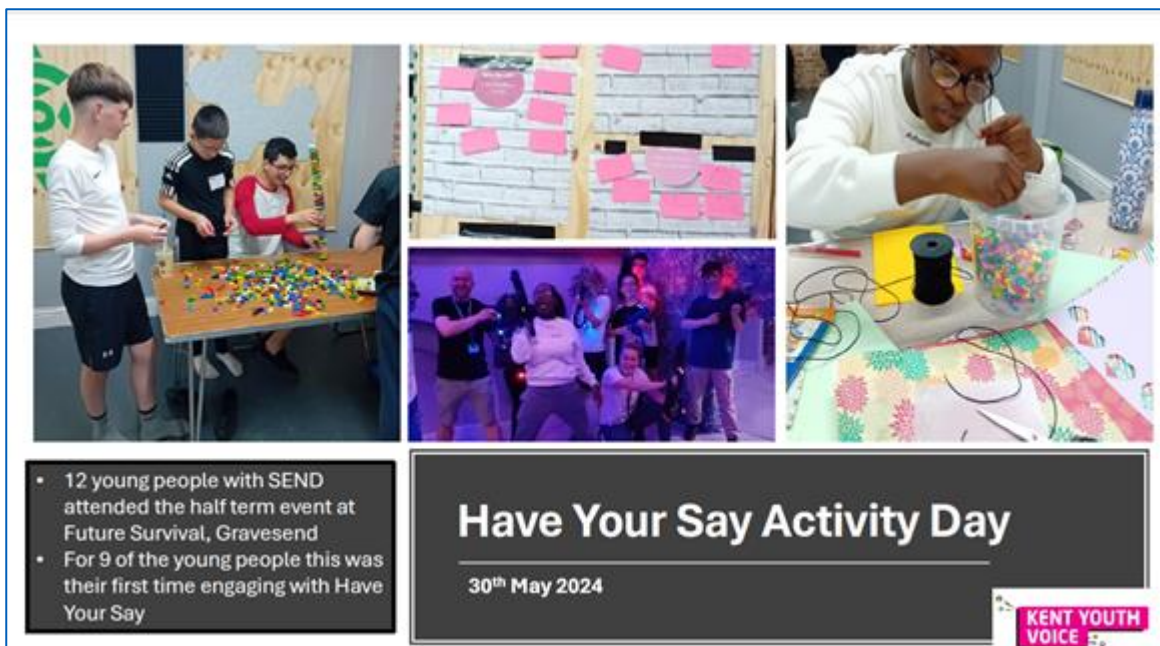
Roundtable discussions included young adults, commissioners and heads of service discussing improvements to outcomes and experience, allowing the young adults' voice to be directly heard by those who make service and delivery decisions.

The feedback collated informed the development of the service specifications for the CYPMHS procurement. The feedback also highlighted that the delegates and young adults wanted more events like the conference, where they had more opportunities to connect and talk. The event was the winner of a Healthwatch Kent and Medway Award.



Voices of children with Special Educational Needs and Disability



The inclusion of children and young people's voice is at the heart of both Kent and Medway's SEND Partnership Board responsibilities. It is reflected in both SEND strategies and is integral to 'Child Friendly Medway', corporate parenting and health and wellbeing strategies. 'SEND is everyone's business' as children and young people need good education, health and care services that require different mechanisms to hear their voice in order to coproduce and feedback, to plan and develop services in which children and young people with SEND attend. Children and young people also attend strategic boards, recruitment processes and are part of Youth Parliament or councils.



Medway Mental Health Week Event – My Voice Matters

This event was part of children's mental health week and celebrated the child and young people's voice. Students across primary and secondary schools were invited, where they worked collaboratively by engaging in different activities on the day.

Medway Council, in partnership with Medway Youth service, organised a vibrant celebration for celebration for Place 2 Be's Children's Mental Health Awareness (2024). Under the theme 'My Voice Matters', the event aimed to raise awareness about mental health and wellbeing and promote self-expression among children and young people in the community. The day included a number of workshops promoting wellbeing and requesting feedback to support service development. Between workshops, pupils were able to engage with various service providers in the marketplace stalls and engaging in a bingo activity to help familiarise individuals with the different services available and consider how these services may support particular scenarios. Some of the stalls had interactive elements, for example Child Friendly Medway invited children and young people to participate in a voting process to select their preferred logo for a citizen award. In addition, the Lived Experience Lead gathered feedback regarding the new mental health approach. During the day, one school also utilised the event to help develop their peer mentors, who actively took notes on how to support others within their school community

<p>PRIMARY SCHOOL RESPONSES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing with my friends • Singing & Dancing • Dance to music and sing • My friends help me and are kind. • Dancing • Playing football with family • My friends & my family • Football. Music, basketball, F1 • Cuddling with my grandad • Playing with my pets • Hugging my teddy bears • Crying and listening to music • Pugs • Playing games • Food and music • Listening to music • Football • Music  <p>A circular wheelchart divided into four quadrants. The top-left quadrant is green and contains the text 'QUESTION: WHAT SUPPORTS YOUR WELLBEING?'. The top-right quadrant is blue and contains the text 'WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER?'. The bottom-left quadrant is orange and contains the text 'I THRIVE BY...'. The bottom-right quadrant is purple. The wheel is surrounded by a yellow border.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My friends • Playing with Freddie • Calming music, watching something, playing with Lego • My pets, hugs, family • Cuddles • Music, family • Music, pets, videos • Dancing • Listening to music • Singing because I can make up a happy or funny song. • I like to play out with my friends. • What makes me happy is playing VR and listening to music • Dancing and friends • Drawing • Talking to my friends or playing football 	<p>SECONDARY SCHOOL RESPONSES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to music • Watching your favourite show alone • Music • Running helps me escape from reality. • I talk to my mum. • Put my air pods in, cry, talk to my mum. • Sleep, music, eating KitKats. • Listening to music and crying • Food, buy hair, my phone. • Listening to music whilst playing a relaxing game on my Nintendo switch • Basketball • Listening to music while laying on my bed • Talking to friends and family • Listening to music, doing braids, watching TikTok  <p>A circular wheelchart divided into four quadrants. The top-left quadrant is green and contains the text 'QUESTION: WHAT SUPPORTS YOUR WELLBEING?'. The top-right quadrant is blue and contains the text 'WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER?'. The bottom-left quadrant is orange and contains the text 'I THRIVE BY...'. The bottom-right quadrant is purple. The wheel is surrounded by a yellow border.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending time alone thinking. • Music, sleeping, watching shows. • English lessons • My phone • Painting/ drawing and dancing • Singing and dancing in my room • Dog walking, talking to my mum. • Seeing my friends • Drum and bass music • Music and games • Playing video games • Games
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Children and young people's voices were captured through their responses on what makes them thrive and from their artwork quotes. We encouraged schools to involve their students in a collaborative effort, expressing themselves through art and creative ventures under the theme "My Voice Matters". Children and young people were encouraged to share their unique creative pieces, which ranged from posters, poems and photographed artwork. The aim was to empower children and young people and capture their voices by providing them with a platform to express themselves. With so many fantastic pieces we will be using them to support our next mental health event and support implementation of i-Thrive through the thrive champion's network. A number of the pieces and the thrive postcards, highlighted things which help children thrive which will support our current Self-Harm project and recommissioning of children and young people's mental health and wellbeing services.

BeYou - Porchlight

BeYou is an ICB commissioned service that provides safe spaces and advice to young people and their families in Kent and Medway who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary or are questioning their sexual orientation/gender. The service connects young people and their families, who are from the LGBTQ community to socialise, have fun and support each other.

Young people are enabled to set the agenda for the sessions they attend and mould appropriately to suit their needs. One example is of a group that wanted to do more cooking and the service has supported the young people to engage with a regular volunteer who attends for cooking sessions. Careful attention is given to the noise levels and sensory needs for the neurodiverse clients. This was the feedback from one of the attendees.

"I thought it was absolutely amazing. There was just enough there to do without it being overwhelming. The noise level was just right. The people was wonderful. It wasn't too busy so we all had plenty of personal space."

Given that within the LGBTQ+, voices are often erased, or they do not feel heard or feel invisible. It is a fundamental part of the BeYou service that they feel listened to and shape their own support.

NELFT – Sleep Project

NELFT worked closely with a researcher at University College London, and a talented group of autistic young people to create a leaflet and animation about what helps teenagers to get a good night's sleep. Most sleep advice is for the general population, and it does not always work for autistic children and young people, so they wanted to create something that specifically focusses on autistic young people. This project is particularly special because it is brought to life by a song and music video created by some members of the group.

The resource and music video were launched at a special event at the young people's school and has been used across a number of health, care services in Kent and Medway. Alongside the resources for children and young people, a set of lesson plans were developed and have been promoted across all schools to support teachers and SENCOs in working with autistic children and young people.

You can read the original research paper here: [Sleep Project research paper](#). You can view and download the leaflet here: [Sleep Project leaflet](#). The co-produced animation about what helps autistic young people to get a good night's sleep can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/y6dviuVRkbA>

Kent and Medway Safer Asthma Campaign



KMICBs 'safer asthma' campaign aims to encourage more children and young people with asthma or suspected asthma to come forward for lifesaving checks. The awareness campaign targeting children, young people, parents, general practice and other key stakeholders will help meet the following objectives:

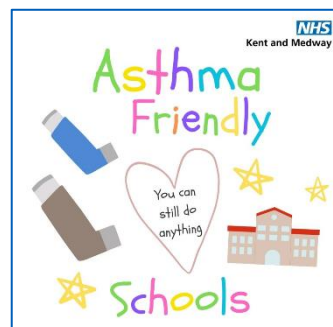
- Increase the prevalence rate of children and young peoples' asthma to the expected levels of 11.4% in the 12 to 24 age group in Kent and Medway through improved diagnosis and data reporting.
- Increase the number of annual asthma reviews for every child with asthma or suspected asthma, and for children six weeks after a flare-up.
- Increase uptake of Personal Asthma Action plans (PAAPs).

The campaign content has been driven by early engagement with children, parents and carers. An online survey for parents and carers and focus groups was held in schools with children who have asthma (3 x primary schools, 1 secondary). The results were combined to influence the content of the Kent and Medway safer asthma public campaign, which will be launched in line with the national #AskAboutAsthma campaign running from the 9th to the 15th of September 2024.

Parents and carers of children with asthma have also provided feedback on the design of campaign materials, particularly with regards to how best the ICB can convey the potentially life-threatening nature of asthma and the importance of good asthma control, without causing unnecessary panic for parents and carers.

KMICB have commissioned the creation of a [short video](#) featuring two young competitive swimmers from Medway, to convey the message to other young people that having asthma has not stopped them from achieving their goals. The video highlights that children with well controlled asthma can take part in any sport or physical activity that they want to and that it should not be a barrier to young people achieving their goals and ambitions. The video will be shared on social media, via partner channels and on the ICBs website as part of Safer Asthma campaign.

Alongside the public campaign, improving care and managing risk for children with asthma in schools is also a high priority, with the Kent and Medway Asthma Friendly Schools (AFS) programme launching formally in September 24. A competition was run in partnership with a local primary school in July 2024, giving pupils the opportunity to design the Kent and Medway AFS programme



badge. The winning design will be used as the logo for the Kent and Medway AFS programme as it is rolled out and included on certification awarded to schools upon completion of the programme.

Integrated children and young people's Models of Care – “Children's Care Collaborative”

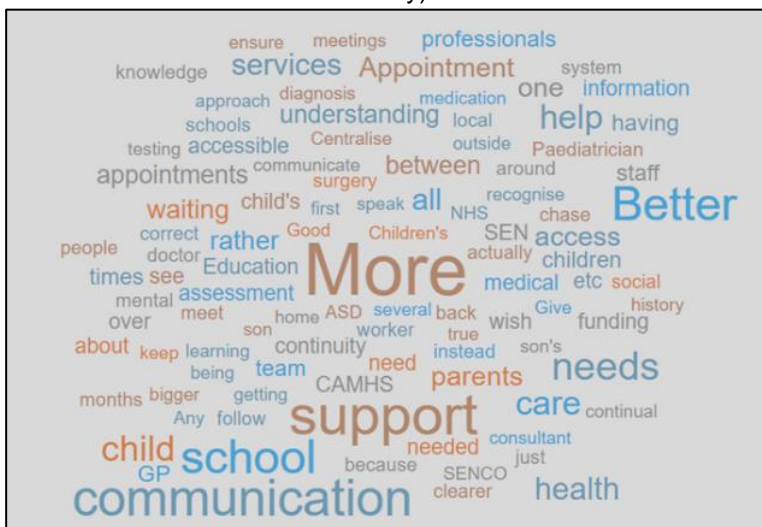
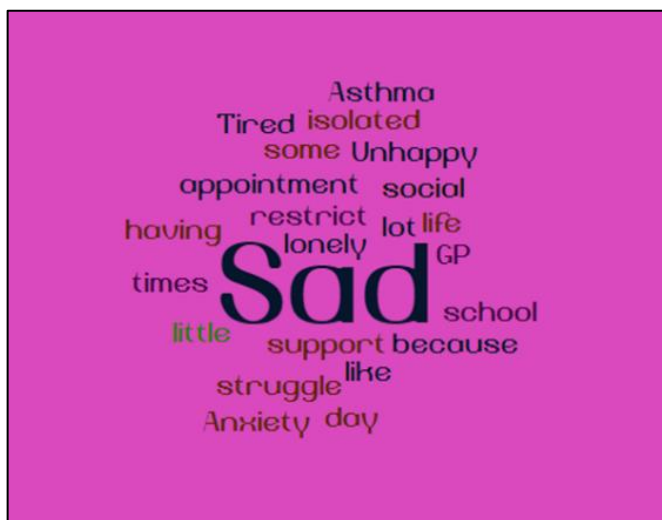
KMICB are one of 10 NHS England national pilot sites selected to develop and test approaches to integrated models of care as part of the Children and Young People's Transformation Programme. The design of the model currently being piloted was informed by online surveys and engagement workshops held with children and young people with long-term health conditions and their families.

The surveys aimed to understand families' current experience of care and what families would like an effective service to look like. For the children and young people's survey in particular, the majority were aged between 11-16 and 85% of the respondents identified themselves as having a disability.

Survey outcomes examples:

In three words, how does your care make you feel? (CYP Survey)

If you had 3 wishes, what 3 things would you change about the local system to make the care for your child or young person more joined-up? (Parent carer survey)



The findings from the survey together with the outcomes from workshops were used to develop a logic model for how the Children's Care Collaborative can improve family experience and outcomes for children.

As a result of the stakeholder engagement carried out, the Kent and Medway Integrated Model of care takes the form of GP-led Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meetings currently being held in eight Primary Care Networks (PCNs) in East Kent and two PCNs in Medway and Swale localities.

To complete the feedback loop, the University of Kent is undertaking an independent evaluation of the pilot seeking feedback from children and families who have received care via the Children's Care Collaborative MDT process. This qualitative study aims to capture the views and experiences of patients and individuals seen through the MDTs to assess the effectiveness of the integrated model of care. The final evaluation report will be completed by December 2024.

2. Themes, Analysis and Impact

We have multiple reporting methods to capture and analyse children and young peoples' voices. Our data collection mainly takes a qualitative approach, as it is the best way to capture the true experiences of children and young people. However, we still do use quantitative approaches and feel that both approaches can be used in tandem to create the best picture that encapsulates the children, young people, parents and carers experiences and voice.

Example of analysis of children and young peoples' voices

Have Your Say Survey: Children and young peoples' future mental health model. In total 981 written responses were received, plus 1 poem, 1 drawing, 5 podcasts, and 10 short films. In addition to this, a large range of face-to-face engagement sessions and workshops took place, including Virtual School Kent Participation Team, who provide youth voice and engagement opportunities for children in care and those with a social worker. We also engaged with colleagues in the Youth Offending Team who supported 3 young people involved with their services in engage in the consultation, including a young person who was in Foster Care.

The full analysis report can be found [here](#), with a short summary below of themes:

- **Consistency and clear information:** respondents emphasised the need for consistent information about mental health services and clear pathways for accessing support. Support should be available without the necessity of a referral, making it more accessible.
- **GP accessibility and dedicated lines:** suggestions were made to improve access to GPs for mental health concerns, including the establishment of dedicated phone lines.
- **Parity with physical health services:** advocacy for mental health support on par with physical health services, drawing attention to the lack of immediate assistance for mental health issues compared to physical injuries.
- **Emotional resilience in schools:** calls for increased emotional resilience programs in schools, not just for students but also for parents. Recognition of the importance of emotional support alongside academic education.
- **NHS funding and waiting lists:** concerns were raised about the underfunding of the NHS, resulting in long waiting lists. Calls for more funding to reduce waiting times and ensure timely access to services.
- **Preventative support and early intervention:** a strong emphasis on providing support before crisis points, allowing young people to access services they

- need before reaching severe mental health states. Advocacy for a conversation-first approach rather than a referral-first system.
- **Person-centred and responsive support:** calls for a person-centred approach, emphasising non-judgmental and responsive support tailored to individual needs. Encouragement for innovation and open-mindedness in service delivery.
 - **Increased mental health services:** calls for more mental health services provided by experts, including quicker diagnosis services. Requests for more face to-face counselling services to meet the demand.
 - **Communication and community engagement:** emphasis on improving communication within the system, including addressing myths, responding to negative feedback, and changing mindsets. Advocacy for community services to be better staffed and resourced.
 - **School involvement and support:** suggestions for direct support from mental health services in schools, networking groups, and interventions. Calls for more clinicians in schools and improved access to emotional well-being support.
 - **Shorter waiting lists and immediate access:** consistent demand for shorter waiting lists and immediate access to mental health services. Advocacy for a more proactive approach, including self-referral and school referral options.
 - **Increased funding and resources:** calls for more funding and resources in health and social care, including specialised GP services. Advocacy for the smart allocation of funds to balance short-term and therapeutic interventions.
 - **Collaboration and coordination:** encouragement for collaboration between different services, schools, and GPs for better coordination. Calls for streamlined processes to reduce the back-and-forth between services.
 - **Holistic approach and early intervention:** calls for a more holistic approach, involving coordinated efforts between professionals, schools, and families. Emphasis on early intervention and support for children with mental health issues.

How voice has improved experience and outcomes: *some examples*

Young adults experience changes location of safe haven:

Following engagement that our Lived Experience Lead carried out with young adults and organisations that work with them, some concerns around the potential location of one of the safe havens were raised. The feedback was taken directly to the safe haven commissioners, who reviewed the feedback which resulted in a new location being identified.

The young people who raised their concerns have been told how their feedback was used and the impact it had in moving the site of the service.

Young person's feedback sparks change in NELFT services:

A young person from Kent Youth Voice wrote a letter in March 2023 which prompted significant reflection and plans for improvements to NELFT's CYPMH service. The young

person was able to describe their poor experience of care within the service, focusing on their experience and that of other young people with eating disorders and complex needs. The Participation Workers in KCC that facilitate the Kent Youth Voice group escalated the young persons' experience to the new Patient Experience, Complaints and Compliments Lead in NELFT. As a result, NELFT have committed to setting up experts by experience groups for young people to help improve service delivery. This young persons' courageous sharing of their story is paving the way for a more responsive and supportive mental health system.

Children with SEND have their say on the SEND Outcomes Framework

In May 2024, a 'Have your Say' activity day explored how important the outcomes framework was for them.

Young People told us...

Category	Rating	Quote
My Future I have a choice about my future	4.5/5	"I get support with choosing a career from mum and school"
My Independence There is a clear pathway supporting me to be as independent as I can	5/5	"I am happy"
My Voice I am listened to and understood	4/5	"My voice is usually heard, not always at school"
My Safety I feel safe at home and out and about	4/5	"I feel safe at home"
My Community I can do things I like in my local area	3/5	"Great park nearby where I live"
My Health I am as healthy as I can be	4.5/5	"It's ok, but sometimes feel a bit dodgy due to certain anti-social behaviour"
My Learning I am the best I can be at school, college or work	4.5/5	"My teachers are kind and fun"
My Quality of Life I am happy and enjoy life	4.5/5	"I'm happy at home and at school"
		"The best bit about my school is they understand me and there is always be a teacher to listen"
		"People listen, like today"
		"Not much to do in my area"
		"There are lots of sports activities at school and I go to footy club outside school"
		"Some teachers can't control students. Ruins it for others"
		"I don't like how teachers give detentions to the whole class and to my friends who are good."

SEND Youth Voice

Kent Youth County Council Disabilities Awareness group invited autistic young people to share their experiences and ideas in planning an Autistic Artist Event, which took place in December.

Educate my peers about autism

Act to protect me from bullying if it occurs

Don't compare us to other autistic people

Help me understand my autism better

Autistic Artistic Full showcase <https://youtu.be/FqNhztBqT-8?si=SXpH7FYQmUv1c4GL>

New Male Mental Health youth project launched in response to young peoples' voices:

Young people highlighted a significant issue: boys often don't talk about their mental health. NHS data confirms that boys are less likely to seek help from mental health services, and stigmas around boys and mental health still persist. In response, a new male mental health project has been launched, aiming to create a safe space for boys to discuss their mental health. This initiative will be led by participation workers and a passionate young male advocate who champions boys' mental health. This project is a direct result of listening to young people's concerns and aims to break down barriers, encouraging boys to reach out and seek the support they need.

iTHRIVE Young Persons Group Boosts young persons' mental health:

Participation workers conducted a case study with a young person involved in the iTHRIVE group, and their feedback highlights the significant improvement in their mental health. The young person expressed: "My mental health has got better because I know loads of people,". They also shared how they have personally grown: 'I don't just sit at home, bored on my phone. I am happier because I have lots of new friends. I have taken more responsibility of helping other people and becoming an adult.' Additionally, the young person mentioned utilising supportive services: 'I started using Kooth (an ICB commissioned digital counselling service) which has been really good. They let you play games and have helped my mental health.' This case study showcases the transformative impact of the iTHRIVE group on young peoples' mental and emotional wellbeing. Other iTHRIVE group members have shared similar comments and feedback on how their involvement in the project has benefited them.

Autistic artistic showcase of children and young peoples' experiences to professionals in a bid to change practice:

The Disability Awareness project group facilitated by the participation workers led an event, showcasing to professionals from across KCC, NHS and Kent schools the experiences of autistic young people in school. The group has been working this year to create resources to support the rollout of the Autism Education Trust training, providing the voice and perspective of autistic young people in Kent.

Young people sent in artwork, written stories and voice recordings sharing their experiences of when they felt supported in school, as well as when they were left feeling unsupported and their recommendations for schools and education providers in Kent. You can hear what young people told us [here](#).

Young adults' experience of transition used to create British Psychological Society approved training to workforce:

This training was developed from a set of robust engagement activities with young adults in 2022/23. Young adults described how, once they reached adulthood, professionals had a poor concept of their experience as children and how that might impact them after the age of 18. This was particularly the case for more vulnerable young adults, such as those who were care-experienced, and/or had complex health needs or trauma.

This course is the first of its kind in the UK to specifically address the developmental needs of 18–25-year-olds in mental health and wellbeing services, and the training has received British Psychological Society (BPS) approved as a CPD activity.

The training is free to the workforce in Kent and Medway that works with young adults and hundreds of professionals from adult mental health services, probation, the police, primary care, colleges and universities have received the training. Over 260 professionals registered for the course between January 2023 and June 2024, with 180 completing all components and receiving the full BPS-approved certificate.

Kent and Medway Community Mental Health Framework (CMHF):

The Community Mental Health Framework (a national improvement programme in line with the NHS Long Term Plan pledge to deliver transformed mental health services in the community), embedded lived experience and voice within Kent and Medway.

The new model of care, Mental Health Together, is now being implemented across Kent and Medway and includes Service User Network (SUN) groups which are peer support groups facilitated by a lived experience practitioner and clinician, with the ambition to deliver young adult specific SUN groups.

3. Plans for the next year

From autumn 2024 and the following twelve months the people, projects and activities that make up the infrastructure which supports child and young peoples' voices will continue. With our partners, we will be delivering of additional and new schemes including:

- **NHS Kent and Medway Young Adults' Mental Health and Wellbeing Conference 2024:** Led by young adults, and with over 30% of the attendance from young people and young adults, the focus of the conference will be on how services can improve their communication with young people and young adults. Changes to long-term practice and service delivery will be monitored as a result of agreed actions from the day.
- **Mental Health Big Conversation 2024:** Detling Hill Showground will be the venue for the fourth annual conference for children and young people to come together for the Big Conversation.
- **Young people as evaluators in the procurement of contracts:** Young people within the voluntary sector and schools are being identified and will receive training to take part in the evaluation of tenders for therapeutic services.
- **Lived Experience Engagement and Employment Framework training:** Embedding the Framework across the system through training for professionals.
- **Locality grants for the voice of young adults:** Delivery of the projects will take place in the next 12 months, where young adults will plan and deliver sessions to collect feedback on several subjects identified by young adults. These will be developed into reports for the ICS to use in future planning and delivery.
- **Medway Child Friendly City:**

Medway Council and partner agencies have an ambition for Medway to become a child friendly city, where all children and young people have a meaningful say in, and benefit from, the local decisions, services and spaces that shape their lives. A consultation is currently taking place as part of ensuring children and young people voices are part of developing.

- **Children and young people's Palliative and End of Life Care**

The Kent and Medway Managed Clinical Network (MCN) for Children and Young People, is the enabler for joint working and shared resources across providers in Kent and Medway who deliver Palliative and End of Life Care. The MCN has a responsibility to coordinate clinical leadership and support the strategic development of children's (Under the age of 18) palliative and end of life care across the Kent and Medway area, improving: child and family experience, clinical outcomes, and equity of service provision.

The MCN have a Standard Operating Procedure that provides guidance as to how the Kent and Medway MCN will action feedback that has been obtained via established patient engagement processes that each of the providers have in place. This feedback will be used to improve the child and family experience, clinical outcomes and equity of service provision. The MCN will invite parent(s) / carer(s) into the MCN to support and enhance discussions relating to service improvement, depending on focus areas agreed by the Network.

The Standard Operating Procedure will be reviewed annually to ensure it is fit for purpose and continues to support the MCN utilise the parent / family / child(s) voice effectively and efficiently.

The MCN will share feedback and learning with the NHS England (NHSE) Southeast Regional Patient Participation Group (PPG) and will utilise all opportunities to engage with and learn from the SE Regional PPG.

- **Children and Young People Epilepsy**

To support the Kent and Medway Children and Young People's Epilepsy Network, a local working group of clinical and strategic leads involved in the care of children and young people with epilepsy, a mother and daughter have recently agreed to be involved in future service development for epilepsy care. As a family who have recently been through the children and young people's epilepsy programme in West Kent, they are ideally placed to share their experiences and enhance future developments concerning:

- Implementation of a mental health screening tool and mental health referral pathway for children and young people identified in epilepsy clinics as requiring support for their mental health and wellbeing.
- Review transition pathway for children and young people moving from paediatric to adult epilepsy services.

- Development and continuous review of children and young people care plans, ensuring the children and young people and their family needs are reflected.

The long-term aim is to work with all appropriate stakeholders to identify additional Children and young people and their families that may like the opportunity to regularly input into the local programme.

- **Spotlight: Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools Programme (PINS)**

Across Kent and Medway, local authorities have been and are continuing to work with schools and parent carer forums to develop creative and innovative ways to support the education and health needs of neurodiverse children in schools, in line with the national Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) Programme.

As part of the programme, all (estimated) 299,840 (22/23 data) children and young people in schools in Kent and Medway will have the opportunity to contribute to this feedback, to offer unique insight to all aspects of the neurodiverse experiences that children and young people face in the school environment.

The Department of Education (DofE) have provided engagement materials, however with the caveat that schools have autonomy over how the child's voice is captured, as they are best placed to understand the needs of their students and how they might best respond to different activities/methods of data collection.

There are six domains that further subdivide into more focussed questions, which can be captured in a qualitative or quantitative matter, with the decision as to which type, ultimately made by the schools.

Kent County Council and Medway Council are assisting and supporting schools to capture and provide the child and young person's voice, in order to provide a comprehensive and inclusive insight of the children and young people in schools in Kent and Medway.