



Department  
of Health

From the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP  
Secretary of State for Health

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Robert Brookbank  
Chairman  
Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Kent County Council  
Sessions House  
County Hall  
Maidstone, Kent  
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29 APR 2014

*Dear Mr. Brookbank,*

Thank you for your letter of 16 April, about access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Kent. I am sorry you did not receive a response to your original letter of 5 February, and please accept my apologies if this was as a result of the Department.

I was sorry to read of the concerns expressed by you in relation to the provision of CAMHS in Kent.

Given the nature of the concerns raised by you, Departmental officials have made enquiries with the local NHS.

I am informed that clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) in Kent are aware that there have been delays in some areas for routine assessments and treatment using particular clinical interventions. This has been a consistent issue. With regard to Tier 4 services (specialist day and inpatient units), I understand that the contract for these services was retendered in 2012, with Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT) being awarded the contract for them. Since then, SPFT has been working to improve the service, with some success – cutting waiting times of up to 18 months (in September 2012) to an average of 8 weeks by January 2014.

However, I am told that this success in bringing down waiting times for initial assessments has led to a backlog of young people who require further treatment, which has in turn been exacerbated by difficulties in recruitment. NHS England's Surrey and Sussex Area Team has put in place an interim CAMHS case manager who has oversight of the pathway of care for all Tier 4 placements in the Kent and

Medway area, and works closely with the CAMHS case managers in other area teams to ensure that issues with local services can be addressed. I understand that this is already having a positive impact on the overall quality of care for young people.

With regard to waiting times for Tier 2 and 3 services (community-based services), I am informed by NHS England that Kent and Medway Area Team is aware of the concerns that have been raised by Kent County Council HOSC and by Mr Greg Clark MP. I further understand that the Area Team convened a CAMHS Partnership Summit in December, which brought together commissioners, providers, third-sector and other organisations to discuss their experiences. As you are aware, the outcomes of this summit were shared at a Kent County Council HOSC meeting on 31 January, at which the other concerns surrounding Tier 2 and 3 CAMHS were also discussed.

Finally, I understand that NHS England's Kent and Medway Area Team are encouraging Kent County Council HOSC to consider the whole pathway provision from Tier 1-4 to get a fuller picture of mental health services for children and young people, including Kent County Council-commissioned services for Tier 1, and specialist Tier 4 services commissioned by NHS England and provided by South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust.

I am told that SPFT and local CCGs are keen to hear the views of the council. Therefore, should you have any further concerns, I would encourage you to contact Mr Dave Holman at the following address:

Mr Dave Holman  
Head of Mental Health Programme Area and Sevenoaks Locality Commissioning  
Wharf House  
Medway Wharf Road  
Tonbridge TN9 1RE

Telephone: 01732 376091  
Email: [dave.holman@nhs.uk](mailto:dave.holman@nhs.uk)

I hope this reply is helpful.

*Yours sincerely*  
*Jeremy Hunt*

**JEREMY HUNT**