

## Kent and Medway children and young people's mental health procurement: Briefing for Kent's Health and Overview and Scrutiny Committee

December 2023

### Situation

This paper provides a briefing to the Kent Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee about work under way by NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board to procure children and young people's mental health services for Kent and Medway.

The purpose of this paper is to inform committee members of the procurement, and provide early assurance of the approach being taken, engagement already carried out, and plans for further engagement with children and young people, families and carers, providers of services, and wider stakeholders.

### Background

#### The NHS Long Term Plan

The NHS Long Term Plan requires NHS Kent and Medway to deliver against identified priorities for children and young people's mental health. To support delivery, NHS Kent and Medway has a [Local Transformation Plan](#) in place. The plan has, historically, been annually refreshed, to address some of the key challenges we face, such as:

- increasing need for children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health services, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic
- increasing complexity and seriousness of mental health needs children and young people have
- challenges in recruitment and retention of specialist mental health professionals
- long waiting times for neurodevelopment assessments, which, in turn, impacts other mental health and wider health, care, and education services
- not all children, young people and young adults being able to access support and those who do might not show any reliable improvement<sup>1</sup>.

#### NHS Kent and Medway's annual spend on children and young people's mental health

NHS Kent and Medway has an annual budget of £37 million to deliver mental health services for children and young people in Kent and Medway. This money is used to commission

<sup>1</sup> Reliable improvement is when a young person has pre-intervention and post-intervention scores that improve over the course of treatment to an extent that is greater than chance.

services ranging from specialist NHS mental health services to local council and voluntary and community sector organisations. Mental health interventions and support are delivered across primary care, schools, community groups, digitally, and within specialist clinical settings.

Currently, these organisations support 35,800 children and young people in Kent each year. This is monitored through a dataset called the Mental Health Services Data Set.

## Assessment

### Developing a proposed new model of care

All NHS Kent and Medway contracts with current providers of children and young people’s mental health services are due to expire by 31 August 2025. NHS Kent and Medway wants to use the opportunity presented by the procurement process to commission modernised services, which will support implementation of our [Local Transformation Plan](#) and the shared outcomes in Kent and Medway’s Integrated Care Strategy Priorities (Appendix 1).

NHS Kent and Medway will award ten-year contracts which will provide stability and security for a future workforce. We are working with children, families, partners, and stakeholders, to develop services that focus on specialist mental health, therapeutic earlier support, and mental health support in schools.

Future services will focus on making sure children and young people get support as quickly as possible when they first experience mental health issues. This will help to prevent children and young people becoming more seriously unwell, and free up capacity in specialist mental health services to care for those who will benefit most from their expertise.

To support the development of the future offer, we have also established a clinical reference group (CRG), comprising children and young people’s mental health clinicians, to develop a new evidence-based model of care. The initial phase of the CRG’s work to develop a proposed new model of care will conclude in December 2023. The indicative timeline for the procurement can be found here (*please note: this timeline is subject to change*):

### Indicative timeline for children and young people’s mental health procurement



### Initial engagement with children, young people, and families

NHS Kent and Medway has actively embedded engagement and lived experience in children and young people’s mental health transformation work since 2017. We regularly engage with

groups of children, young people, and families under the leadership of our employed lived experience lead and two participation workers, hosted by Kent County Council. Our [Local Transformation Plan](#) outlines the comprehensive programme of engagement that they lead with children and young people.

In preparation for this procurement, we have already carried out a good range of engagement work which is being incorporated into future service model development; some examples are below:

- **Young People's Mental Health Conference:** In May 2023 we delivered a conference developed by and for young people and included commissioners, heads of services, voluntary and community providers, partners, and councils. Key themes from young people included: young people supporting other young people; young people being involved in decision-making and being listened to; needs-focused holistic support; honest and transparent communication around services, provision, and support limitations; clearer information about how and where to access support; voluntary, GPs, schools, parents and carers, NHS staff and others being trained in Mental Health First Aid; health, social care and voluntary services developed stronger and better integrated services and partnerships.
- **Online Survey:** This ran between July and October 2023 to hear how NHS Kent and Medway could improve available support for children and young people's mental health. The survey questions were promoted through a range of face-to-face summer activities with children, young people, and families and through online paid promotion. The survey reached 36,000 people with 981 individual responses.
- **Big Mental Health Conversation 2023:** In October, The Big Mental Health Conversation event took place and was attended by more than 250 young people from Kent and Medway's secondary schools. A report of the event is available here (Appendix 2).

Responses are being analysed and a comprehensive report will be written to identify key themes heard during our engagement with children and young people. The findings will inform the next stage of our programme of engagement.

### **Initial market engagement**

We already work collaboratively with current and potential providers of services. We know that current and potential providers of services from across the NHS, council and voluntary and community organisations are well placed to help us find solutions to meet the needs of our population.

We want to understand their views, hear their ideas and solutions to address the challenges we face, and understand whether there are any new providers or different ways to deliver services in the future.

As part of this, we held an initial market engagement event on 9 November 2023. Twenty-two providers attended, as well as colleagues from NHS Kent and Medway, Kent County Council and Medway Council. The event was an opportunity for providers to:

- understand the procurement process for future children and young people's mental health provision in Kent and Medway, and emerging outline plans
- provide reflections on this process and what would help to make the procurement process work as well as possible for different stakeholders
- share ideas for excellent children and young people's mental health services and provide feedback and reflections on emerging ideas from NHS Kent and Medway.

Feedback confirmed that providers welcomed the opportunity to hear about future commissioning intentions and being asked their views on early ideas (Appendix 3). Several providers confirmed they would like to attend follow-up sessions to further explore some of the discussions during the day. Further engagement opportunities are planned for early 2024.

### **Planned engagement on the proposed new model of care**

We have a strong track record of engaging with children and young people, their families and carers, as well as with mental health professionals and those who provide services.

We will deliver a comprehensive programme of engagement between January and March 2024 to seek views from a wide range of stakeholders on the proposed new model of care. Appendix 4 outlines the detailed plan of engagement, which includes key deliverables, stakeholders, and approaches.

Our planned engagement activity includes a focus on seldom asked groups, so we can learn how to make our services more accessible. The identification of specific groups has been collated from the findings of the equality impact assessment and local intelligence from currently commissioned services.

Engagement with children, young people, families, the workforce and partners, will focus on patients' journeys and experiences through any future proposed models. This process will enable us to evaluate the scale of change for children and young people in accessing services and receiving support in the future model.

## Recommendations

After engagement is completed in early 2024, we would like to return to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee with recommendations on whether the implementation of a future model and set of services constitutes substantial variation.

In the meantime, the services we provide to children and young people, and their families and carers, will continue to be proactively managed with continued oversight and scrutiny of the quality and responsiveness of all services.

We are committed to keeping Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee members informed and updated at every stage of this work and would welcome feedback on how best to engage with members over the next five months.

Committee members are asked to:

- **SUPPORT** the proposal to return to a future committee meeting with a report evaluating the level of variation of services in the future model, and recommendations on how we propose to respond to this.
- **NOTE** the ongoing commitment by NHS Kent and Medway to engagement of our population and partners in service design and delivery.
- **CONFIRM** how best to keep committee members informed of the progress of engagement and procurement of future services in addition to committee reports.

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