

Children and Young People’s Mental Health stakeholder invitation to discuss the approach to future services

February 2024

NHS Kent and Medway has a children and young people’s mental health Local Transformation Plan in place developed with our partners and children, young people, and their families. The plan has, historically, been annually refreshed, to address some of the key challenges we face, such as:

- an increasing need for children and young people’s emotional wellbeing and mental health services, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic (see figure 1 below). This would suggest around 59 000 children in Kent and Medway have a probable mental disorder.
- increasing complexity and seriousness of mental health needs
- workforce challenges in the recruitment and retention of specialist mental health professionals
- long waiting times for neurodevelopment assessments, which impact on other mental health and wider health, care, and education services
- not all children, young people and young adults are able to access support and those who do, might not show any reliable improvement.

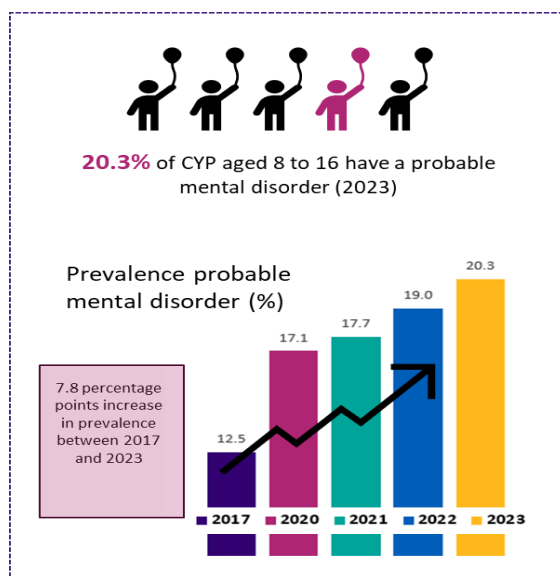


Figure one: probable mental health disorder based on national prevalence data

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 services ranging from specialist NHS mental health services to local council and voluntary and community sector organisations.

Other mental health interventions and support are funded and delivered across primary care, education settings, community groups, digitally, and within specialist clinical settings.

Currently, the NHS funded organisations support 44,000 children and young people in Kent and Medway each year.

Opportunity for the future, developing a new approach

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 contracts, which will support implementation of our Local Transformation Plan and the shared outcomes in Kent and Medway's Integrated Care Strategy priorities. NHS Kent and Medway will award ten-year+ contracts which will provide stability and security for a future workforce.

Co design, listening and collaborating with local people

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 education settings. Last year we reviewed all the evidence we had gathered over the previous 18 months, over 60 reports featuring the experience and views of thousands of children and young people and their families.

We also worked throughout the summer and autumn, at events, summer activities and groups and meetings to actively engage 487 children, young people and young adults, carers and staff, resulting in 981 written contributions, one poem, one drawing, five podcasts, and ten short films.

Using a variety of media, channels, and events, we contacted over 100,000 people and cascaded the information through various newsletters and networks.

The views and insights provided by this work and the feedback from our clinical reference group and providers has informed the new approach.

What will this mean?

To Thrive: To give children and young people the best start in life, **we need to make sure that all adults feel able and confident in supporting children and young people with their mental health.** By focusing on enhancing our workforce and the support offer to parents and other trusted adults, we will make sure that all those people providing support are capable, caring, knowledgeable adults. They will have access to mental health training, health experts and other professionals to support them to help and guide the child or young person.

Seeking advice: In our future model, everyone will have access to clear, trustworthy, and appropriate advice and information which can help support children and families.

Networked providers: will work together so that advice, information, and support is consistent, accessible and helps children and young people and their families to manage their mental health with help from family, friends, and educational settings.

Getting therapeutically informed and accredited help: in their education settings, community, online or through their GP practice.

Education settings: Mental Health Support Teams in education settings will continue to grow and more children and young people will be able to access one-to-one support and group work.

Community: different services, providers and projects that will be able to offer support. Some will focus specifically on a need, for example anxiety, or on a group of people that might have things in common, for example, Children in Care.

Through a wide range of different services, providers and projects that are connected, we will be able to offer a flexible help and support which includes: creative therapies, one-to-ones and group work delivered in education settings, communities or online. Help will be tailored to individuals under a robust clinical framework, according to need, experience and identity.

Specialist support: For children and young people whose issues are more significant and enduring and are impacting on their ability to function in education settings and at home, there will be an assessment undertaken by an expert group of practitioners who will coordinate the relevant care around the child and family. Most children and young people will feel better able to manage after receiving specialist interventions and will continue to receive support in their education setting or in their community as described above. The offer of flexible, personal routes will recognise individuals' changing needs.

Keeping children safe: managing risk and managing mental health is the ultimate priority. Some children's mental health does not improve, and their care needs to be managed with multi-disciplinary and multi-agency support. These children and young people belong in a holistic system where everyone takes responsibility to support them.

Invitation to share your views

We are currently sharing the proposed approach with stakeholders and partners and using the immediate feedback to help draft our service specifications.

We will be delivering two virtual meetings to share our ambition across Kent and Medway.

The dates are below:

Wednesday 13 March from 9am to 10am

Thursday 14 March from 5pm to 6 pm

To register for one of these virtual meetings, please email: cypmentalhealth.kent@nhs.net telling us which date you wish to attend as this will help us plan effectively.

To find out more and share your views please go to our Have your say platform: [Children and Young People; mental health and wellbeing.](#)

If you would like to share your views in a different way please contact:
kmicb.engage@nhs.net