



BRIEFING NOTE

To: Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

Title: Children and Young People's Mental Health in Milton Keynes

Date: June 2021

Report Sponsor: Vicky Head - Director Public Health

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1. Introduction and context setting

The mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and families is a high priority in Milton Keynes. The experiences of people through the Covid-19 pandemic have brought this into sharper focus. It remains a significant social challenge and issue experienced by those who live in our communities. Effects from the Covid Pandemic on children, young people are still an emerging picture.

Learning from the past year has shown us that the impact of Covid has disproportionately affected vulnerable families and increased inequalities for children and young people. We have seen a dramatic surge in mental health and wellbeing concerns especially for children with other conditions and vulnerabilities. There has been a particular spike in eating disorders and an increase in the numbers of children and young people who have needed intensive mental health care. The regional capacity for children's mental health beds has been consistently exceeded and local mental health teams have needed to divert resources to support children in different ways to militate against this.

We have however, seen the system work well together for our children and young people and have been successful in a number of bids for additional NHS funding that should have a real impact on our services offer over the coming months and years.

In terms of definition, it is important to highlight what we understand by mental health and wellbeing:

Mental health is used to describe a spectrum

Mental wellbeing /
positive mental health



Mental health
conditions/ illnesses
and disorder

What is mental wellbeing:

'a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community' (World Health Organisation, 2014).

Measuring wellbeing:

There are a number of tools that are used to measure mental wellbeing in children and young people, which measure how they perceive their own situation and experience

Resilience: ability to mobilise personal, relational, and socio-economic resources or 'capital' to deal with specific challenges and to thrive or flourish more generally

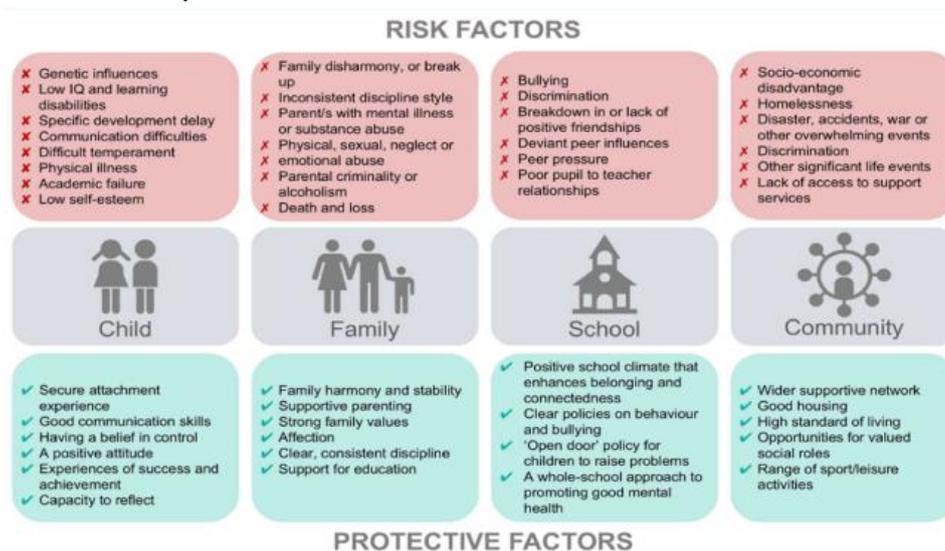
Mental health conditions:

- **Emotional**
 - Anxiety, depressive, mania, bipolar
- **Behavioural (conduct)**
 - Repetitive and persistent patterns of disruptive or violent behaviour
- **Hyperkinetic**
 - Inattention, impulsivity, hyperactivity
- **Less common**
 - Autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), eating disorders, tic disorders, and a number of others

Source: PHE, 2017
3

There is a recognition that a number of factors can impact on the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children, young people and families:

Risk and protective factors for mental health



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16

Source: PHE (2016)

Addressing mental health and wellbeing therefore requires a collaborative approach across a whole system. This includes work across health, education and social care to ensure children, young people and families receive appropriate intervention and support in a timely way. It requires meaningful engagement with all those who access

services and recognition that support must recognise that individual and communities have different starting points.

The key elements of a whole system approach to addressing mental health and wellbeing are outlined below:



The pandemic has inevitably increased pressures on children, young people and families. This has undoubtedly created new demands for mental health services that were often already oversubscribed. However, it is also brought about new investment and a recognition from partners of the need to collectively address this challenge.

2. Mental health services available for young people

There is currently a range of services and support available for children, young people and families in Milton Keynes. The services meet national requirements and needs that have been identified at a local level.

A) Kooth

Kooth is an online digital service that provides access to mental wellbeing support and counselling provision for children and young people aged 10-20. It supports communities in Milton Keynes as well as Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton. It is jointly funded by the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Public Health.

Milton Keynes continues to see higher take up of Kooth when compared to areas such as Bedford and Central Bedfordshire. There were 1083 unique users from each area in the last 3 months of 2020, with 81% returning more than once to use the service. The most common presenting issues with Kooth are anxiety, stress, self-harm and suicidal thoughts.

Kooth was commissioned until December 2020 but this has now been extended until 31st December 2021 in response to Covid-19. There is an evaluation of its impact underway.

B) Emotional wellbeing services in 0-19 services

Every school in Milton Keynes has a named school nurse who helps young people to stay healthy and safe while at secondary school, sixth form or college. Each school nurse can offer confidential advice on anything to do with physical and mental health. The service is provided by the Central and North West London Foundation Trust (CNWL).

ChatHealth is a confidential help and advice service for children and young people in Milton Keynes aged 11-19. The nursing led service provides advice and support on a range of issues such as bullying, emotional health and wellbeing and sexual health. It is available weekdays via text message.

C) Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Milton Keynes (MK) are also provided by Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL). They are commissioned by the local NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The services include:

- Core community CAMHS provision – specialist assessment and treatment for children and young people experiencing mental health difficulties. This could include different types of therapy, medication and group work
- Liaison and intensive support and treatment (LIST) for children presenting in crisis
- CAMHS eating disorder services

This does not include specialised inpatient CAMHS services which are commissioned on a regionwide basis by NHS England. There are currently no inpatient CAMHS services in Milton Keynes and those requiring these services access them in units outside of the city (e.g. Northampton). However, this is set to change in the near future.

In addition, CNWL also manage the Mental Health Support Teams for Schools (MHST) in Milton Keynes. Each MHST works with a pupil population size of 8,000 children and young people providing early intervention and supporting development of a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing. There is currently one MHST in Milton Keynes, with a further two planned over the next 2 years.

D) Integrated working

Improving the integrated approach to supporting children, young people and families with complex needs was identified as a priority in the Milton Keynes system in 2018.

A project was initiated to focus on the key groups of children are more likely to present with complex needs relating to challenging behavior and/or mental health and

wellbeing concerns. Including those where their situation is compounded by family breakdown, housing issues or poverty. It was also identified that a number of children struggle with more than one condition; for these children the possibility of a crisis situation occurring is more likely.

A new post was created to focus on integrating care Children and Young People Integration and Transformation Commissioner. This post has been jointly funded, employed by the CCG but aligned closely with CSC and education to act as a 'bridge' between the different cultures and processes. Providing training and supervision to social workers and health colleagues has been key. Leading and chairing professional's meetings and establishing good multiagency forums where cases can be discussed early before they escalate to crisis.

The project focused on improving outcomes for children and young people with complex needs and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), where it was noted there are numerous teams and support packages involved with the care and support of these children, which is often un-coordinated and lacking in the identification of a lead professional for individual cases. This has resulted in increasing pressure on community-based crisis support, leading to a rise in the number of children requiring a residential placement and/or potentially a hospital admission.

The result of the fragmented, un-coordinated care for these children is that they often spiral downwards towards the ultimate position where they end up in care; either in a very expensive placement or in hospital. The development of the post has resulted in financial savings through establishing joint commissioning processes which avoid cost differentials, result in more efficient and targeted use of resources, a reduction of preventable admissions to inpatient services by investments in intensive, crisis & forensic community support.

The project has been successful in establishing more integrated assessment, decision making, brokerage and quality assurance for packages of care. Most importantly though, there has been a positive impact in the lives of children and families that have benefited from this approach.

E) New NHS commissioned VCS services

Three new initiatives have been commissioned from the voluntary community sector (VCS) in MK to enhance the mental health and emotional wellbeing offer:

- Creating a VCS children and young people's mental health network; commissioned from Community Action MK for a 2-year period
- 'Stepping Stones' project, commissioned from Service Six and Volunteering Matters for a 2-year period. This project will provide recovery and strength-based approach and support as well as longer term mentoring for children and young people that have been in hospital with mental health problems
- A collaboration between the Sexual Assault and Referral Service and Safe! MK to deliver specialist support for children and young people aged 5 – 18 who have experienced Sexual Assault and Abuse and/or impacted by Domestic Violence.

These 3 newly commissioned services have been commissioned in response to feedback from people in Milton Keynes about areas of provision that needed strengthening. Each of the new schemes will be evaluated to inform future investment and service development decisions.

In addition, there are also established voluntary and community sector organisations that provide a range of support for children, young people and families. This includes:

- MK Youth Information Services – Counselling, education and wellbeing provision
- MIND BLMK (16+)
- Relate Milton Keynes – Counselling & Therapy

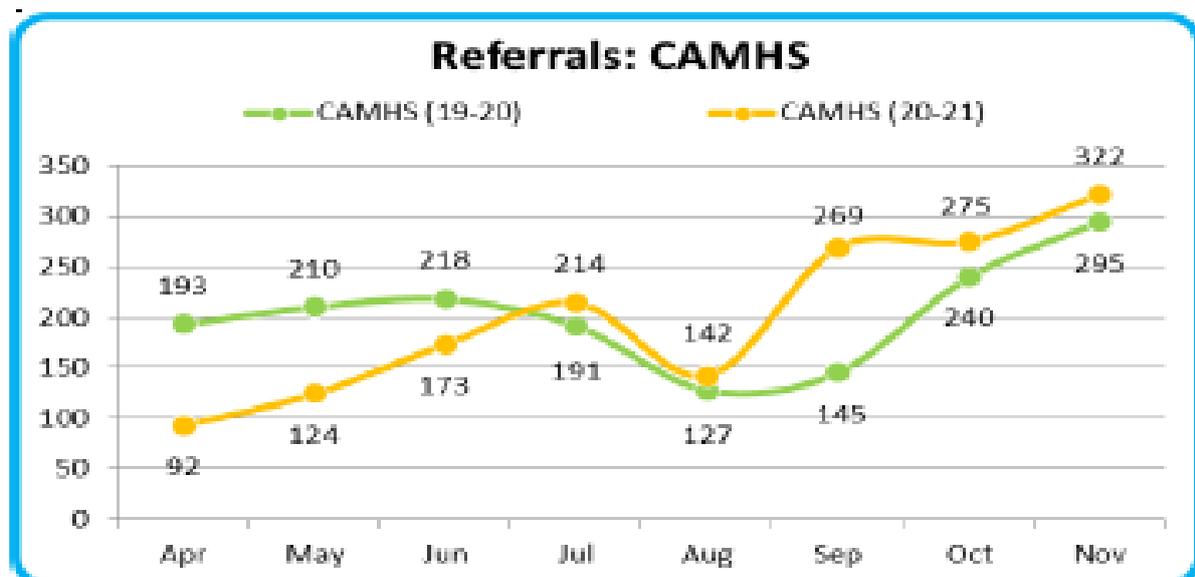
3. Changes in demand due to the pandemic

The extent of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children, young people and their families has yet to be fully realised. It may be some time before we fully understand how restrictions on many aspects of our lives has affected vulnerable families and the communities in which they reside. It also remains unclear how changes to service provision has affected health and wellbeing outcomes either positively or negatively, such as the shift to more targeted approaches and moves towards on-line support.

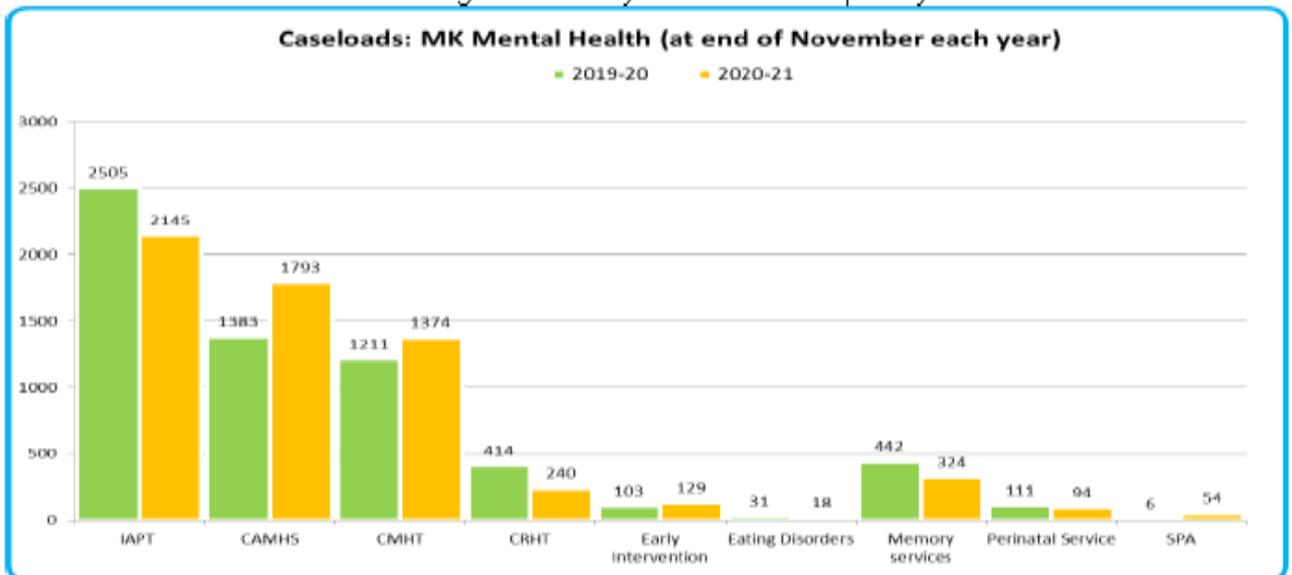
A number of key impacts on the health of children, young people and families have been identified:

- Increased referrals to perinatal mental health service
- A disproportionate impact on disadvantaged communities and groups
- Increase in demand for eating disorder services and in-patient care
- Reduced staffing levels due to Covid-19 and other sickness

In addition, there are local indications that demands on mental health services have changed through the pandemic:



Referrals to CAMH – Comparison between 19/20 and 20/21



CAMH Caseloads – Comparison between 19/20 and 20/21

For reference:

- IAPT – Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies
- CAMHS - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- CHMT – Community Mental Health Team

There has been a collaborative response to address the immediate impact of the pandemic. This includes the following:

- Young people who use services, staff and the voluntary and community sector worked together to develop local mental health pathways and to communicate support available (please see below)



- Additional hours were commissioned from KOOTH (digital emotional health and wellbeing support for children and young people) to meet anticipated increased demand
- The Mental Health in Schools Support Teams (MHSTs) opened their service to self-referrals and schools emailed parents and families to advise of their availability. Staff have maintained contact with vulnerable young people virtually throughout the pandemic
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services offered most appointments virtually but face to face appointments did take place (depending on risk assessment). CAMHS saw a significant drop in referrals during April (2/3 less than usual). Staff capacity did not reduce and so this has had a positive impact on the waiting list Cognitive Behavior Sessions and other interventions have been offered via zoom

4. Need for any further service offering

There remains a need for further development of mental health and emotional wellbeing services in Milton Keynes. As noted in the introduction, this requires a collaborative approach across a whole system, a focus on equity and ensuring the voice of children, young people and families continue to be reflected in planning, deliver and review of services. The key areas of focus include the following:

1) Improving access to mental health services, particularly those with high level needs

Partners across the BLMK health system have been ambitious in bidding for national funds this year and have been awarded £17,379,204 of additional funding over the next 3 years to establish a mental health in patient unit for children and young people in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes. This is part of a national programme to support stabilisation of the current crisis in CAMHS in-patient referrals and to ensure all systems have the minimum specialised services provision to meet the needs of their population.

Having mental health inpatient beds for BLMK will genuinely transform the way our system can respond to the needs of children and young people experiencing a mental health crisis. It will give our clinicians the facility to provide a full range of care and support integrated local working with children's social care teams. Most importantly it will mean that our children and families can be cared for near to their home, schools and community, boosting their journey to recovery.

Further local investment is going onto mental health services this year to develop crisis support that will focus on need rather than diagnosis. Fundamental to the success of these services is a joint approach across the children's system between health, care and education.

In addition to the inpatient unit BLMK have also been awarded of £700k over the next 3 years for eating disorders to enhance core services and day care provision. We have seen a significant increase in children and young people's eating disorders during the

Covid pandemic so this much needed resource is a welcome opportunity to grow our local offer.

2) Build capacity in services to promote emotional resilience and well-being, including the growth of school-based services

Oxwell Survey – The Oxwell Survey is an established evidence-based approach completed by students in schools. It provides each school and local area with an in depth understanding of the health and wellbeing of their students. This enables activities and interventions to be targeted at a local level in collaboration with both young people and local services.

The Oxwell Survey will take place for the first time in 2021.

New Mental Health Support Teams for Schools (MHST) - This year we have also been successful, as part of the national roll out of MHST, in securing an additional two teams for Milton Keynes. This is part of a wider rollout of seven teams that be deployed across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes over the next 3 years. They are specifically being focused in areas of greater need and where poor mental wellbeing is likely to have a larger impact on children being able to learn and achieve.

As noted above, this will be delivered in parallel to supporting the development of a whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing.

3) Milton Keynes Care Alliance

For the first time, children, young people children and young people's mental health has been identified as a priority by the MK Care Alliance. This will provide an opportunity for collaboration and integrated working across the whole system of services and support.