

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 23 November 2020

Report Title: Support to children and young people's emotional and mental health during Covid to date

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Kathryn Flavell Portfolio Holder - Children & Families

Senior Officer: Mark Palethorpe – Executive Director People

1. Report Summary

- 1.1 It seems obvious to state but recent national health study papers contain emerging evidence from previous studies carried out into pandemics and social isolation quarantine that point to increased demand for children and young people's mental health services.
- 1.2 Figures show that children and young people were five times more likely to require mental health services, following a pandemic and/ or social isolation or quarantine. Our provider of Child and Adolescent Mental Health services (CAMHS) and other Children's Services have planned for and reacted to the anticipated increase in overall demand for mental health support.
- 1.3 Emerging data collated in June 2020 shows an increase in children and younger people in almost every risk domain i.e. abuse, family relationships, sleeping difficulties, worries about returning to school or handling education virtually, increase in suicidal thoughts, loneliness, gender issues, health anxiety and eating issues.
- 1.4 This report summarises the approach taken across the Council and its partners to support children and young people's mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 1.5 It is just as important in a time of crisis that our actions to support children and young people are steered directly and indirectly by their feedback. Every attempt has been made to maintain links with children and young

people and their parents/ carers during the current pandemic in order to shape our emotional and mental health support appropriately.

- 1.6 A strong Council officer and partner presence has been maintained at the Parent Carer Forum steering group meetings and mental health concerns have been raised, listened to and acted upon. Our teams across Children's Services are constantly mindful throughout the pandemic of the priority to identify and support children and young people's mental health.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- Notes the content of this update report and scrutinises the support in place for children and young people.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 To keep all interested parties up to date on the steps being taken to support children and young people's emotional and mental health, and ensure we have a strong offer in place to support children and young people.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1 Not applicable.

5. Background

5.1 The following sections provide the main areas where the Council and its partners have strengthened and adapted their support in response to Covid-19 putting an added strain on children and young people's emotional and mental health:

Cheshire and Wirral Partnership (CWP) Specialist Community CAMHS

- The service is continuing to deliver face to face care from existing bases across Cheshire (including Elm House, Mill Street, Hawthorn Centre and Marsden House) via a base rota. All other team members are working effectively from home, delivering therapy, interventions and assessments via other methods including video consultation.
- All teams are utilising MS teams to deliver groups and therapy, video consultations and telephone consultations to young people on caseloads. Referrals are being processed as normal, with initial assessments being undertaken via telephone/ video consultation, unless a face to face appointment is clinically indicated.
- A 24/7 All Age Crisis line has been in place since 3 April 2020.
- Face to face risk assessments continue to be undertaken at acute trusts/ paediatric wards.

- Teams continue with their contribution to Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and are aware of the legislation change regarding EHCP reasonable endeavours.
- CWP are delivering an interim crisis place based offer over weekends including risk assessments at paediatric wards, home visits, telephone support calls.
- The trust is using Attend Anywhere and MS Teams software for teams to use for delivery of groups, including timid to tiger, coping cat, DBT etc.

CWP Learning Disability CAMHS

- The service is delivering face to face care from Elm House, Mill Street, Hawthorn Centre and Marsden House via a base rota. All other team members working effectively from home.
- All teams are utilising MS teams to deliver groups and therapy, video consultations and telephone consultations. Referrals are being processed as normal. Initial assessments being undertaken via telephone/ video consultation, unless a face to face appointment is clinically indicated.
- A 24/7 All Age Crisis line has been in place since 3 April 2020.
- The service continues to work with young people on team caseloads. This is being delivered via telephone consultations and/ or video consultations. Face to face appointments being offered and undertaken as clinically indicated.
- Teams continue with their contribution to EHCPs are aware of the legislation change regarding EHCP reasonable endeavors.

CWP Autism and ADHD team

- ADHD monitoring clinic: The service continues to work with young people on team caseloads. This is being delivered via telephone consultations and/ or video consultations. Face to face appointments being offered and undertaken as clinically indicated.
- ADHD and Autism assessments: The assessments and feedback sessions are being partially undertaken via telephone/ video consultation. Referrals being processed as normal and added to waiting list
- Face to face appointments being offered and undertaken as clinically indicated.
- ADOS assessments are not currently taking place. We are reviewing the partial assessments undertaken to determine those that require an ADOS to complete the assessment process as not all will. For those who do require an ADOS we are exploring how this part of the assessment can be undertaken safely.

Cheshire CCG

- Visyon and Just Drop are two local charitable organisations that support the emotional wellbeing of Cheshire East children and young people and are currently commissioned by Cheshire East Council as part of the Emotionally Healthy Child Programme and also by Cheshire CCG. The Cheshire CCG commission has been increased by 35 sessions per week to support the anticipated surge in demand due to Covid-19. The additional sessions continue to include:
 - One to one therapy
 - Therapeutic group work
 - Family support work
 - Therapeutic play
 - Creative activities
 - Mentoring
 - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
 - Solution-focused brief therapy
 - Parent support groups.
- The new Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) working across Crewe schools started their work in September 2020 and provide the following:
 - Evidence based interventions for children, young people and parents using a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) informed approach
 - Psycho-education workshops for children, young people, parents and/ or staff
 - Training and support for staff
 - Working with mild – moderate mental health difficulties with recent onset
 - Additional support for school – “as well as” not “instead of”
 - Supporting schools with adapting a ‘whole school approach’ to mental health
 - Liaising with other services and help to signpost if not an appropriate MHST referral.
- Additional investment into KOOTH, please see below as linked to Cheshire East Council’s early help commissioning.

Cheshire East Council

- The Council’s Emotionally Healthy Children and Young People (EHCYP) programme commissions CWP alongside Visyon, Just Drop In, South Cheshire Clasp and KOOTH (online support). Most services are being delivered via telephone consultations and/ or video consultations. Face to

face appointments were resumed as soon as government guidance allowed and being offered and undertaken as clinically indicated. The EHCYP offer is working closely with schools and Early Years Settings to support teaching staff and children and young people during any transition back to school/ settings.

- KOOTH is an online early help counselling and support service for children and younger people aged 11-19 for emerging mental health problems. The service is currently provided via the Early Help and Prevention contract held by Cheshire East Council and also commissioned by Cheshire CCG. There has been an increase of approximately one third of children and young people seeking support via KOOTH during the Covid outbreak to date and the CCG has increased investment in order to meet the surge in demand and ensure that children and young people in Cheshire are able to access early help.
- Data for May 2020 indicates a 50% increase in users presenting with suicidal thoughts, a 171% increase in eating disorder issues and a 200% increase in autism spectrum condition issues. Log ins to KOOTH are up by one third and there has been a sharp increase in issues such as bereavement, abuse and sadness. KOOTH online staff are fully qualified to deal with all these issues and bring new content, forums and activities.
- Evidence shows that nationally and locally, numbers of children and young people accessing support has fallen. This is concerning and not an indication of need, rather due to the inability to access face to face services in light of Covid restrictions.
- In response to this, we have deployed our Youth Workers to undertake street-based patrols supported by local Police Community Support Officers to engage with young people who were struggling to stay at home and were out meeting their friends, not always following guidance on social distancing. The outreach work enabled us to signpost young people to all of the support services available to support their mental wellbeing. This is in addition to the consistent casework and one to one support for children through the Early Help Family Support service and Integrated Youth Support workers which has seen a surge in demand for young people, particularly those who are struggling with their own wellbeing. We captured the issues that have affected young people in order that we can retrain our workers with a new programme of mental health response support in the context of Covid and lockdown.
- NHS England and the Department of Health have given a clear steer that Commissioners should prioritise the development of online services in light of ensuring that we can still support younger people in a timely and safe way.
- At the start of the UK lockdown, Children and Families Services commenced a People Helping People (C&F PHP) rapid response for our most vulnerable children, families and young people, who are known to

services and may experience difficulties during the lockdown. The majority of requests for support came through our children and family's teams who know the circumstances of our families and young people and remained connected to them at this difficult time. We also liaised closely with the Communities PHP and Shielding programme to take some requests that have a focus on supporting our vulnerable families. During the 17 weeks of the C&F PHP operation from 06 April until 30 July 2020, 1,773 families and individuals received support. The vast majority required support with food parcels, but a number also required a wellbeing call. The team delivering the C&F PHP initiative received a number of positive comments from families that the calls and deliveries helped with emotional health and wellbeing.

- The project was widened to incorporate some commissioned services (My Cheshire Without Abuse, Young Carers, Substance Misuse Services) from the end of April, to provide direct support to some of the most vulnerable within the Borough. The activity packs provided by My Cheshire Without Abuse were referenced by families as a real positive for their wellbeing.
- The government's Wellbeing for Education Return seeks to better equip schools and colleges to promote children and young people's wellbeing, resilience, and recovery in response to Covid-19. As well as strengthening and building wellbeing and resilience, this aims to prevent the onset of mental health problems and ensure those with pre-existing or emerging difficulties access the right support. There are two elements to the project:
 - a new national training package providing guidance and resources for education staff on responding to the impact of Covid-19 on the wellbeing of their students and pupils.
 - funding to local authorities to help put local experts in place to work with partners to adapt this training, deliver it to nominated staff in education settings, and provide ongoing advice and support until March 2021.
- Cheshire East Council were already planning its support to schools and directly to children and young people in order to promote a safe, healthy and effective transition back to school. A partnership approach (Back to School TOGETHER) was taken, which included Cheshire East Council Education leads, Commissioners, Cheshire CCG, CWP, voluntary sector, and input from the Cheshire East Parent Carer Forum. In September we recruited a co-ordinator who will directly support and guide schools to recognise and respond to children's emotional wellbeing and mental health in regard to Covid. Officers have also created a comprehensive children's mental health service directory covering all partners. This directory is a working document that will be updated regularly to ensure it is relevant, it gives an oversight of the provision and referral pathway for each listed organisation.

- During the early part of the pandemic Cheshire East Council's Live Well site was refreshed and resources added in support of children's mental health.
- A short programme of targeted Summer Activities were delivered through the Early Prevention and Intervention teams in July and August 2020 in order to support our most vulnerable families with their emotional and mental health.
- The Youth Support Service has been undertaking detached sessions in various hot spot areas where young people have been gathering during the pandemic. One of the aims of the detached youth work is to information and advice to support young people's mental health.
- Teams across Children's Services and our Schools are all focused and vigilant on children's emotional and mental health as they undertake their day to day work.
- Our Children with Disabilities Short breaks commissioned services have been adapting their resources to support the emotional wellbeing of our families with children with a disability whilst the usual face to face groups / activities were unable to be delivered.
- Our 0–19+ service has been enhanced to put in place mental health specialist health visitors and school nurses. This change in service delivery is expected to be implemented before Christmas.

Other grant opportunities

- The Council's Covid-19 Community Response & Recovery Fund has ensured that a wide range of partners, and in particular organisations from the voluntary and community sector, have received small amounts of financial support to help children and families manage the strains on emotional and mental health. Appendix 1 attached provides a summary of the projects that have been funded to date during the pandemic.

5.2 The Council and its partners will continue to be agile in support of children's emotional and mental health as the course of the pandemic continues to unfold.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1 Legal Implications

6.1.1. No legal implications.

6.2 Finance Implications

6.2.1 No finance implications.

6.3 Policy Implications

6.3.1 There are no policy implications to this report.

6.4 Equality Implications

6.4.1. There are no equality implications to this report.

6.5 Human Resources Implications

6.5.1 There are no human resource implications to this report.

6.6 Risk Management Implications

6.6.1 There are no risk management implications

6.7 Rural Communities Implications

6.7.1 No rural communities' impacts are expected.

6.8 Implications for Children & Young People/ Cared for Children

6.8.1 It is clear that during a pandemic, such as Covid, the emotional and mental health of children and young people can start to deteriorate. The response of the Council and its key partners in adjusting and enhancing support to children and young people and their families during this unprecedented time is vital.

6.9 Public Health Implications

6.9.1 Supporting children's emotional and mental health during the pandemic is key to maintaining good public health outcomes.

6.10 Climate Change Implications

6.10.1 There are no direct implications for climate change.

7 Ward Members Affected

7.1 All wards

8 Consultation & Engagement

8.1 This is an update report for information.

9 Access to Information

9.1 Nothing at this point in the development.

10 Contact Information

10.1 Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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