

Calderdale Council

Children and Young People's Scrutiny Board

Wards Affected: All

Date 24th January 2024

Interim Report and Recommendations: Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health of Children and Young People in Calderdale

Report of Councillor Diana Tremayne on behalf of the Review Group

1. Introduction:

We are pleased to present our interim report and recommendations on emotional wellbeing and mental health of young people and children across Calderdale. We are very grateful to all those that we have spoken to, especially the children and young people whose views were incredibly insightful.

This is a positive report. Those working directly with children and young people are dedicated to supporting their health and wellbeing, often in very challenging circumstances. There is a real focus on maximising life chances for children and young people across the borough. We recognise the challenges faced by those working in this sector. Our recommendations aim to further strengthen our local offer of support to children and young people.

We anticipate completing our final report with full recommendations by March 2024. We will carry on speaking to those who support young people, and to young people themselves. We believe that this will enable us to have a holistic view of the concerns and needs of young people.

2. Executive Summary

We have identified three key themes from the review so far – Connectivity, Access and Empowerment. We believe that it is important that there are strong relationships between all those who support children and young people, provider, including, for

example schools, and Council services. Further, it is important that practitioners working with children and young people across the Council, Health and voluntary and community sector can feel part of an inclusive Calderdale-wide network which supports them and facilitates exchange of good practice, ideas and information. This is particularly relevant for community-based partners who may be providing low-level support and early intervention and be the main access point to essential services.

3. Rationale and Recommendations:

We have heard, particularly in schools, how the member of staff responsible for welfare often wishes they had a support network which could be used as source of ideas or simply a friendly voice at the end of a phone.

We are aware that there is ongoing work into developing a Single Point of Contact (SPoC) and welcome this. The SPoC should simplify the process of referral. We have heard from parents, carers, schools, and other providers that referrals into specialist services are often complicated and difficult to understand. We believe that a simpler and more user-friendly system would benefit children and young people across Calderdale.

The SPoC would enable schools, parent/carers and young people to access support from partners supporting children and families across Public Health, Mental Health and potentially Children's Social Care. To have maximum impact, the SPoC should act as a first point of contact for *all* support for children and young people and the professionals who support them

In order to achieve an effective SPoC it is necessary to strengthen the relationships between all those who support children and young people. Creating these strong relationships will enhance effective collaboration which is necessary to the success of the SPoC.

These stronger relationships could be built by colocation of professionals – perhaps through the emerging Family Hubs networks; by informal conversations and supportive visits to education settings and youth provisions; and by facilitating visits from youth providers, schools and community groups to key services such as MAST and Northpoint.

We further recognise that 'listening' to concerns, particularly in schools assists in building strong relationships. We consider that visits and regular engagement from Senior Council officers, Extended Leadership Team, Cabinet Member, Ward Councillors and CYP Scrutiny Members would both enable this and enhance the Council's wider understanding of issues on the ground.

Young people made clear the importance of a trusted adult in their lives, whether this be a teacher, teaching assistant or youth worker. Some young people and their families may be reluctant to have formal involvement from services or be unaware of how to access those services. Trusted adults act as a bridge in such circumstances providing reassurance to the young person and the family and liaising with the

service provider. Trusted adults also provide low-level support and intervention to young people and their families, often without formal recognition or support. We recognise the high value of trusted adults to our children and young people, and the value of this support in reducing demand for specialist support.

Our children and young people are centred in their communities and often access youth provision and schools within those communities. It is in those communities where they feel they are valued. It is important therefore to effectively utilise those community locations to support our young people, particularly those who cannot travel to access support or are afraid of leaving their safe space. Support should be available to young people in their own communities, wherever possible, or virtually if they prefer. We believe as a benefit to this approach, services would become more visible and therefore more trusted within each community.

Recommendation 1: Connectivity

We recommend that connections between partners are created and strengthened to increase awareness and understanding of the role of each. This may be achieved, for example, by colocation; by facilitating visits to partner organisations and providers such as MAST, Northpoint, schools and youth provision; and by holding regular and informal conversations with those partners and providers.

Recommendation 2: Connectivity

We recommend the development of a mechanism by which a holistic approach can be taken to identifying unmet need, and by which support can be provided from a range of partners working together, without the need for separate referrals into multiple services.

Recommendation 3: Empowerment

We recommend the creation and facilitation of face-to-face and virtual mentoring and networking opportunities for practitioners in education and youth provision who support young people 1:1 - a forum where they can share experiences and learning with their peers and receive advice from a professional as appropriate.

Recommendation 4: Empowerment

We recommend that there is greater recognition and support for trusted adults in key roles in local communities. Where appropriate, we believe that these trusted adults should be empowered to support the young people and families they work with and should remain actively involved in supporting and being a consistent and trusted presence even when specialist agencies become involved.

Recommendation 5: Access

We recommend that where appropriate, services visit children and young people in familiar community-based settings, or virtually if preferred. The potential of Family Hub networks should be maximised in this regard.

Recommendation 6: Access

We recommend that the development of the planned single point of contact (SPoC) should be accelerated, ensuring commitment to this from across the Council and local NHS partners.

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