

Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel

DATE	17/11/2022
REPORT OF	Michelle Thompson – Assistant Director – Families, Mental Health and Disabilities
SUBJECT	Children’s Mental Health Following COVID
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The below report contributes to the following strategic aims within the Council Plan:

- To deliver high quality statutory, targeted, and universal services for children and young people in our borough
- To focus on an early help approach with our community and voluntary partners to ensure we can offer a wide range of support at the earliest opportunity
- To ensure all children and young people in our community have access to high quality, safe and effective health services when they need it, so they enjoy good health and wellbeing throughout their life
- To ensure our children and young people attain the right skills and learning which enables them to contribute as future citizens, to the continued economic and social development of North East Lincolnshire
- To develop partnership strategies and commissioning arrangements that maximise the safety of all members of the community who may experience physical, emotional, economic, or social harm because of the actions of others

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected children’s mental health and emotional wellbeing and these effects are highlighted within the report below. Commissioned services within North East Lincolnshire have experienced an increase in demand for mental health and emotional wellbeing support and are reporting that children presenting to service have more complex needs. Services and officers have responded to the impact of the pandemic and are implementing programmes to support children, young people, and families.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

The scrutiny panel are being asked to consider the below report and note the update on children’s mental health and emotional wellbeing and the response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1** The impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing is yet to be fully understood, however the initial impact is being seen across the system such as the increase in the need and acuity for mental health.
- 1.2** Studies and surveys have been commissioned nationally to look into the impact of COVID-19. NHS Digital undertook a survey (see number 12) in March 2021 to compare the mental health of children and young people from 2017, which demonstrated that the rates of probable mental health disorders has increased from one-in-nine to one-in-six in 6 to 16 year olds and in 17 to 19 year olds from one in ten to one-in-six.
- 1.3** This data is reflective of the local Adolescent Lifestyle Survey (2021) results, which over 7,000 secondary school aged young people undertook. The results highlighted that young people have reported worse emotional wellbeing than in 2019 and responses to negative mental wellbeing have increased over this period.
- 1.4** There has been research, consultation and engagement with children and young people nationally and across the Humber and North Yorkshire (HNY) Integrated Care System (ICS) to better understand the impact of the pandemic on children's mental health both during lockdowns and as we continue emerge from the pandemic as part of learning to live with COVID and the so called "new normal".

1.5 Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Services

Data and intelligence from commissioned services within North East Lincolnshire and the ways in which Providers have responded to the impact of COVID-19 are detailed below.

Young Minds Matter

At the beginning of the pandemic, Young Minds Matter experienced suppressed demand, which was likely a consequence of the restrictions in place and the uncertainty from children and families regarding whether to attend appointments.

However the graph below highlights that referrals have steadily risen, as with the national picture. There has been a demand for services on a range of issues, including anxiety, low mood and eating disorders along with the increased acuity and complexity of children and young people's presentations. It is evident that children and young people who have previously not been in contact with services are presenting in crisis and with acute needs.

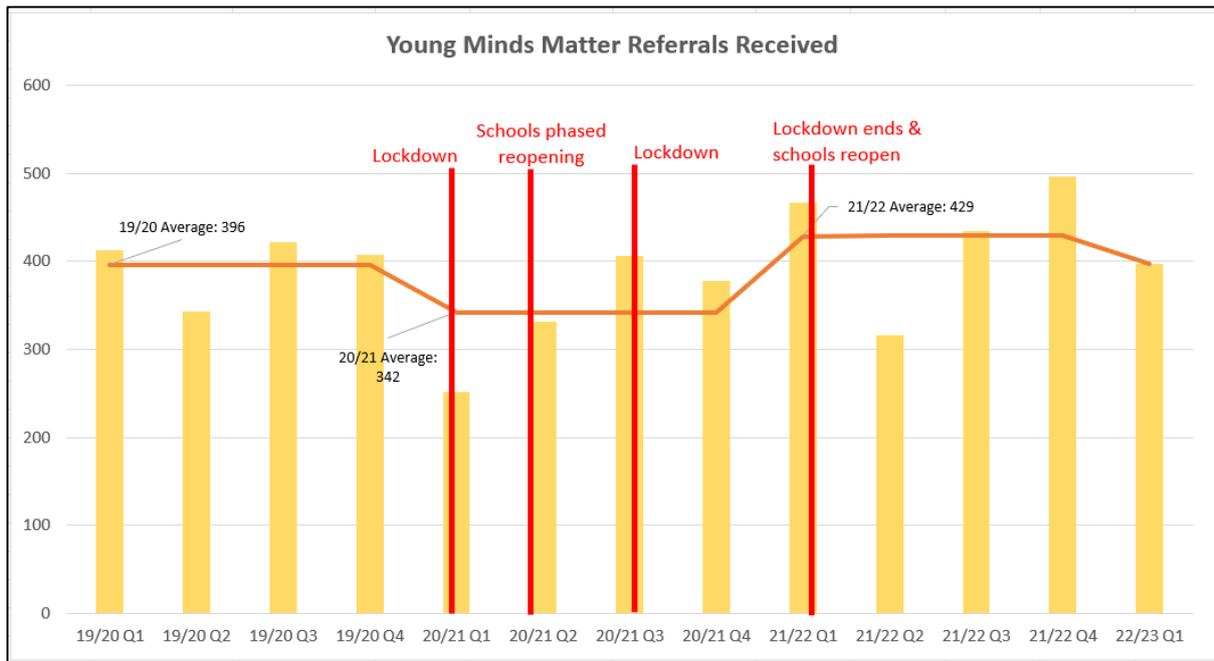


Table 1: Number of referrals to Young Minds Matter

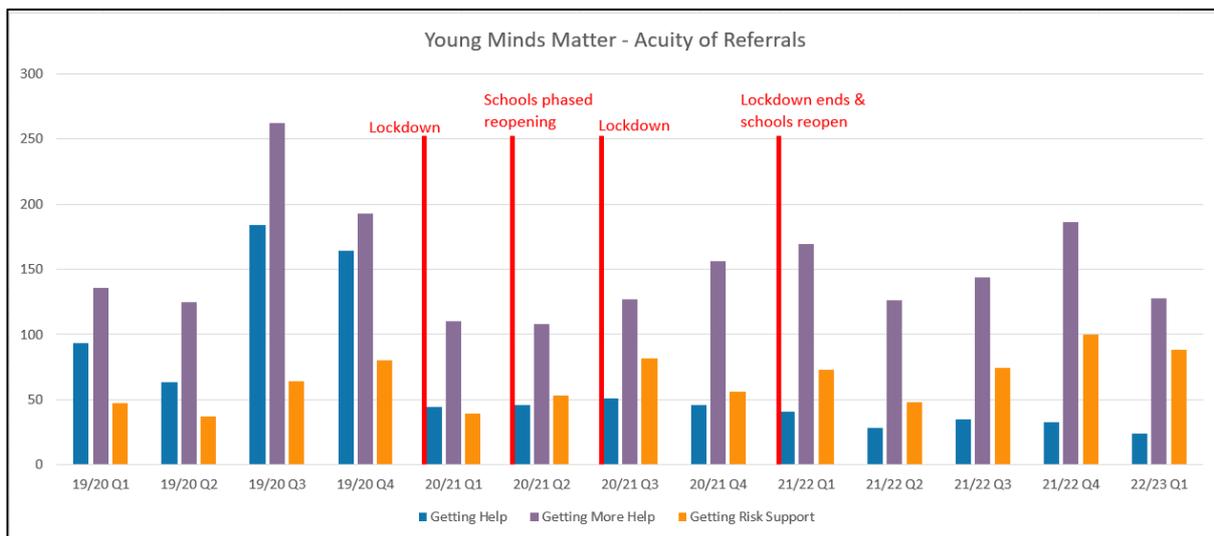


Table 2: Number of referrals to Young Minds Matter, broken down by level of acuity

Due to the increase in acuity and complexity of children and young people, the service is responding to the referrals which are children presenting in the 'getting more help' and 'getting risk support'. Therefore this is increasing the waiting times for children in the 'getting help' quadrant of the THRIVE model. Young Minds Matter has responded to this via the following methods:

- **Waiting list initiatives** – Children and young people have regular check-ins with a practitioner whilst they are on the waiting list to ensure that they do not need to be stepped up to more urgent support
- **Emotional First Aid (EFA) Group** – Whilst children and young people are waiting for their intervention, they are invited to join the EFA group to provide support
- **Joint working** – Joint working with Compass GO has commenced to ensure children are accessing the right service via joint intake sessions

- **Duty line** – The duty line has been opened out to parents/carers to seek support and advice for their child, parents/carers are the most common caller to the duty line

Compass GO...

Compass GO was commissioned in January 2020 to support children and young people providing an early intervention and prevention offer on a range of mild-to-moderate mental health and emotional wellbeing concerns within educational settings. Compass GO adapted quickly and was flexible to the ever-changing environment with the pandemic, restrictions, and subsequent closing of educational settings. Compass GO has achieved full borough coverage across all educational settings (including, alternative settings/special schools) and provide a range of early intervention and prevention support for children and young people.

As the service has continued to embed and educational settings have signed up to the programme, the demand for support has risen steadily.

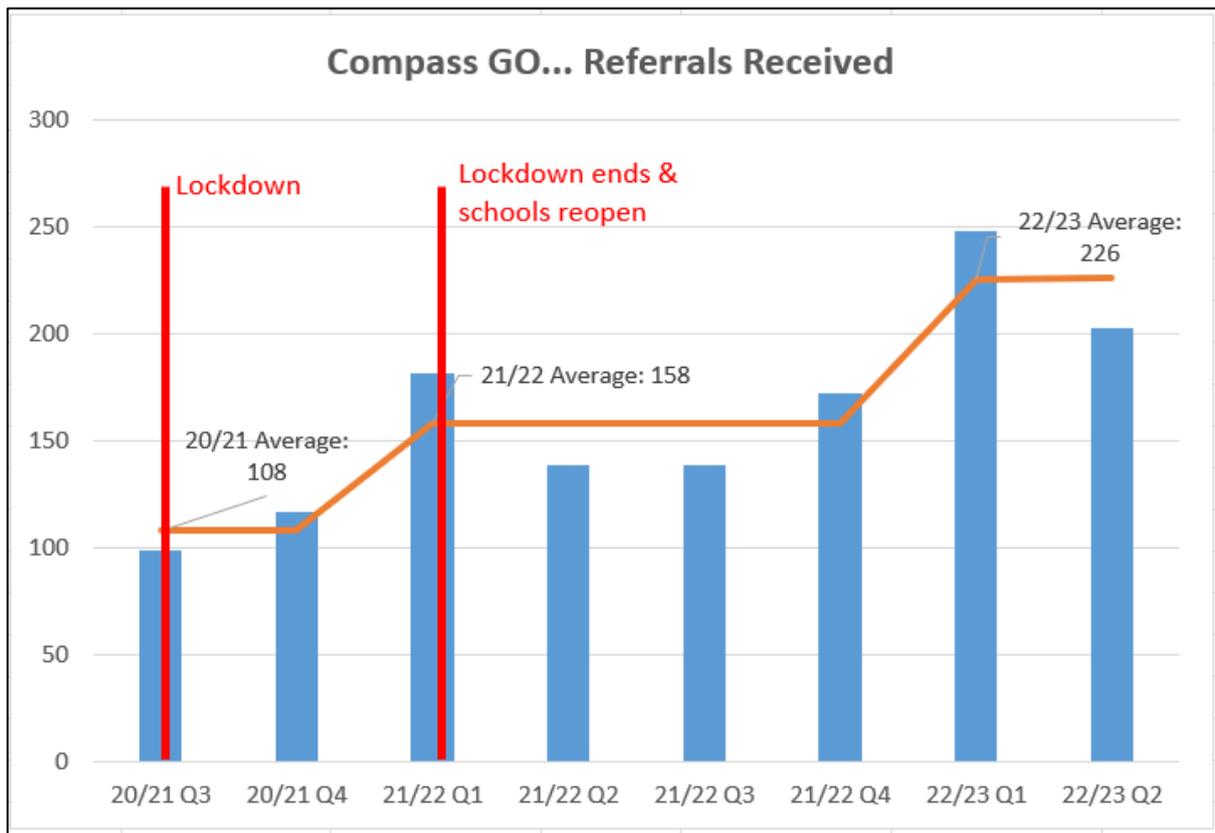


Table 3: Number of referrals to Compass GO...
 Due to the date in which the service commenced, there is no comparative date prior to COVID.

To respond to the increase in demand, Compass GO have been innovative and adapted the offer to meet the needs of children and young people, through a variety of support:

- **PODS** – Development of PODS to increase the number of children supported in a group intervention

- **SilverCloud** – A Computerised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (cCBT) module which children 14-19 years can access with the guided help of an Assistant Education Mental Health Practitioner
- **Podcasts** – Developed a series of podcasts for young people on a range of topics (e.g. self-esteem)
- **Blogs** – Development of blogs (e.g. 5 steps to wellbeing)
- **Wellbeing events** – Series of events in the community to promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing and promote the service

Kooth Online Counselling

Kooth online counselling provides support for children and young people aged between 11-25 years, in an anonymous and confidential way. Kooth experienced an increase in registrations during the lockdowns as the service remained in operation and was accessible to children and young people via their own homes. To ensure that the demand of children and young people was met, additional hours were commissioned with Kooth to increase the monthly usage allowance on a fixed term basis.

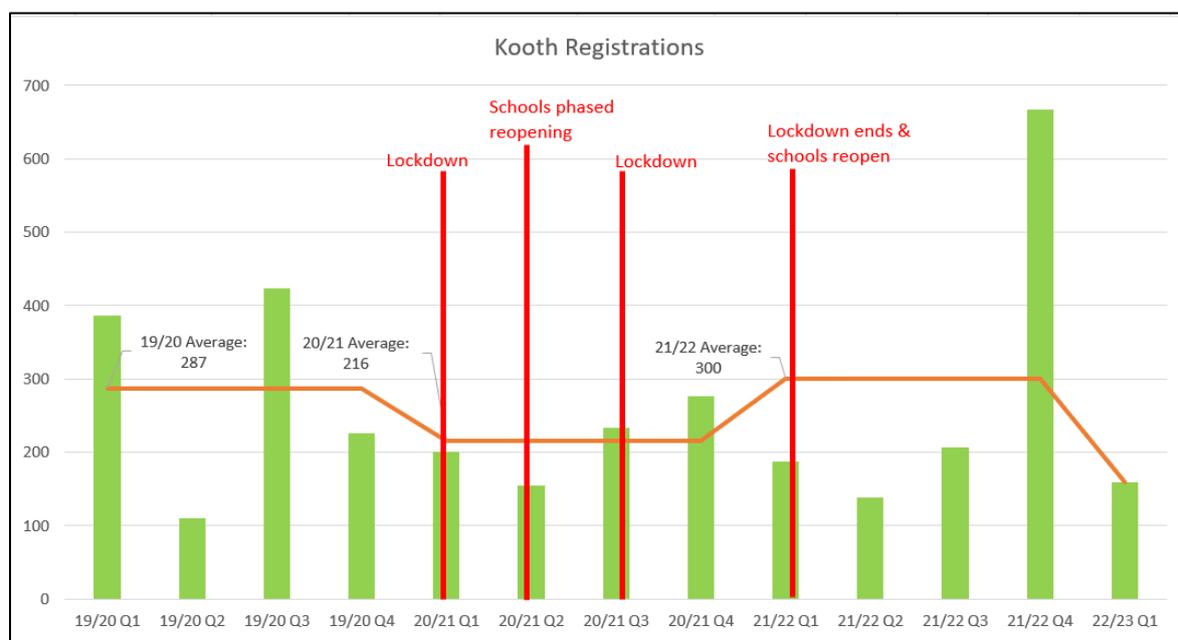


Table 4: Number of new registrations to Kooth online counselling

1.6 Key Developments

Funding has been allocated from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) to support with the recovery from COVID-19 and the impact that the pandemic has had on children's mental health and emotional wellbeing. The two key areas of focus are the resilience programme and emotionally based barriers to school attendance.

Resilience Programme

The resilience programme has been developed in response to the recent Adolescent Lifestyle Survey (ALS) completed in October 2021 and an area of focus of mental

health and emotional wellbeing being identified. The development of the resilience programme will include the following:

- Whole school assemblies on a range of issues
- Building resilience in children and young people
- Targeting specific issues identified within the adolescent lifestyle survey tailored to the needs of the individual secondary schools (phase 1)
- Roll out of resilience programme to primary schools (phase 2)
- Supporting children and young people prior to accessing mental health services to develop a range of tools/skills to manage emotions (e.g. anxiety etc.)
- Work closely with a range of other professionals for collaborative working
- Feedback to key professionals on intelligence gathered for future commissioning needs
- Develop workshops and assemblies on a range of topics (e.g. self-esteem, resilience, aspirations)

Progress:

- Recruitment on-going
- Development of key performance indicators
- Results from ALS feeding into the development of workshops/ assemblies
- Tailored support to each secondary setting education setting

Next steps:

- Finalise recruitment and roles commence in post
- Promotion with secondary schools via forums (e.g. headteachers forum)
- Collect data and demonstrate impact (e.g. what difference has it made for children/young people)

Emotionally Based Barriers to School Attendance (EBBSA)

The impact of COVID-19 has affected children and young people's education and subsequently there has been an increase in the number of young people being elected home educated and children struggling to return to school or engage in learning effectively due to the indirect or direct effects of COVID-19. A project team has been established and aims to:

- Support children and young people to return to education and engage with learning
- Work alongside education welfare officers/educational psychology (and other professionals as appropriate) who will identify children requiring support
- Provide an assessment to better understand the child or young person's difficulties
- Advise on a clear pathway of support required, liaising with existing mental health and emotional wellbeing services
- Provide direct interventions for children to support their return to education
- Ensure wrap around support is provided e.g. team around the child

- Provide support to parents to help support their child to returning to education
- Development of a targeted approach to support educational settings to understand impact of EBBSA and how to support children when returning

Progress

- Recruitment of practitioners to support educational settings
- Webinars held to promote offer to education settings
- Training commissioned to support wider workforce
- ATTEND frameworks purchased to provide a model to support education settings
- Key performance indicators developed

Next steps

- Continued promotion with secondary schools to ensure sign up to the programme
- Data collection commences to demonstrate impact (e.g. impact on children/young people)

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

2.1 There are challenges within the system which North East Lincolnshire are also impacted by, which are mirrored by national and regional colleagues. These challenges have been summarised below:

- **Recruitment and retention** - Challenges in recruitment of staff with relevant skills and competencies: vacancies at all levels across the health care system as well as significant staff movement leaving significant gaps in services
- **Acuity and complexity** - Increase in acuity and complexity in both community and inpatient settings, which remains higher than previous years
- **NHS England funding** – One off/short-term pots of funding create further challenge in the system in the longer term (e.g. difficulty recruiting to fixed-term posts)
- **Presenting needs** – Changes in presenting needs for children and young people (e.g. EBBSA)
- **Humber North Yorkshire ICS versus NEL place** – Ensuring that the priorities of NEL remain key in service delivery and development, however also aligning to the wider HNY ICB priorities

2.2 There are many opportunities moving forward to continue to improve and develop local services to meet the needs of children, young people and families:

- **All age integrated care** – Development of an all age integrated care service for mental health and emotional wellbeing from 1st April 2023
- **CAMHs transformation** – A series of workstreams to review the CAMHs offer and improve services to meet the needs of children and young people, acknowledging the impact of COVID-19 and how this has affected young people
- **Digital review** – In conjunction with the HNY ICS undertake a digital review to better understand children and young people's needs for a digital/online offer
- **Closer working with the HNY ICS** – Joint working with the HNY ICS which will ensure best practice and learning is shared provide and joint commissioning opportunities
- **Workforce development** – Across the HNY ICS look at workforce solutions in conjunction with Health Education England

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

Due to the reputational impact of children's mental health and emotional wellbeing services there is regular working with the communications leads from both NEL and the HNY ICS. This ensures there is clear and consistent messaging for children, young people, families, and professionals so they are aware of the services available to support. As part of the information, advice and guidance workstream, there is an emphasis on proactive communications messaging across key stakeholders and children, young people and families (e.g. transformation of the CAMH service).

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The budget for children's mental health and emotional wellbeing is allocated to NELC via the children's trust agreement from the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care System, therefore there are no additional funding requests to be considered within this report

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

The report considers the effects of COVID-19 on children's and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing and this impact is discussed throughout the report. Research has highlighted that there has been a negative impact on children's mental health and emotional wellbeing, however this is yet to be fully understood. To mitigate the impact the work streams discussed above have been implemented to support with the COVID-19 recovery and on-going implications.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain changes to climate change and environmental implications.

7. MONITORING COMMENTS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

8. WARD IMPLICATIONS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2021 - wave 2 follow up to the 2017 survey](#) – NHS Digital



ALS 2021 Report.pdf



Kooth COVID 19
Infographic.pdf

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