

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No. 6/23

Date: 14/09/2023

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Purpose: To provide details of the updated action plan on self-harm

Updated self-harm action plan report July 2023. Member briefing on actions impacting on Children and Young People

Officer Contact Details: Colin Thompson – Public Health Consultant

Background

Putting in place effective and accessible support for people who may be at risk of, or who are self-harming, is key to reducing harm and in preventing avoidable suicides. Medway Public Health together with members of the self-harm working group developed an early identification and prevention of self-harm action plan focused on adolescents in 2020. This action plan was informed by evidence and insight gained from a detailed review of best practice and direct community engagement with young people, their families and the professionals working with people who self-harm. This dialogue was extremely helpful. It enabled a map of existing local community assets that can be used to support people who are experiencing low mood and distress to be collated.

The action plan has six strategic priorities to address self-harm in children and young people in Medway. These priorities can only be achieved through a multi- agency approach. They are:

- Improve communication and engagement on self-harm.
- Develop a community and culture in Medway that strengthens emotional resilience and where self-harm is no longer stigmatised
- Develop a consistent and comprehensive training offer for professionals and families
- Develop and distribute a common set of resources to support teachers, other professionals, and the families they work with

- Promote the safe use of technology to help young people manage their self-harm and aid their recovery
- Provide support to CYP who are in A&E awaiting treatment

What are we doing in Medway based on the priorities in the action plan?

- Improved communication and engagement

Schools are provided with a range of data and information on self-harm to support and inform their Personal, Social Health and Economic (PSHE) curriculum and health and wellbeing provision. Presentations have also been made to head teachers, governors, and other front line children's workforces. A joint working group has been established to develop a co-ordinated mental health campaign for children and young people.

Quarterly updates are sent out to professionals working with Children Young People and Families, via the Kent and Medway Mental Health leads network. Network colleagues are offered and attend awareness training days. Supportive resources are shared throughout the year.

The Council and NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board use social media to promote awareness of local and national support throughout the year. Communication activity is aligned to periods when the incidence of self-harm is more common such as National Mental Health Week, World Mental Health Day, academic examination periods and Christmas.

- Develop a community and culture in Medway that strengthens emotional resilience and where self-harm is no longer stigmatised

Medway Public Health Department have established a Mental Health Leads Network to share resources and information to improve children and young people's mental health. It currently has 68 members, with a good representation from all education settings. Members include headteachers, Special Education Needs Co-ordinators, school governors, PSHE leads, health and wellbeing lead and school counsellors and virtual schools. There is a specific Microsoft Team's channel to enable networking, training, and highlighting new resources.

Medway Public Health Department have established A 'train the trainer' model to increase the number of peer ambassadors within schools. This project trains young people to act as mental wellbeing ambassadors and advocates in their school. The project provides young people with knowledge about the issue. It helps them develop the skills needed for managing conversations about mental health & wellbeing, healthy relationships, and life online. In addition, it enables them to signpost peers to information and support available. The programme is currently running in four Medway secondary schools.

Medway Education and SEND Directorate have commissioned Knowledge Change Action (KCA) from September 2023 to December 2024 to roll out an extensive training offer in Trauma Informed Practice to all Medway schools. The aim of the programme is to increase staff capacity in:

- Understanding the processes and consequences of trauma / ACE's and collective Trauma,
- Understanding of the importance of the pupil-teacher relationship as foundational in helping pupil to address barriers to learning,
- Having access to relational approaches for addressing challenging or dysregulated behaviour, and
- Having effective ways to boost their own resilience and that of colleagues.

Through a whole system approach to becoming trauma-informed enables us to engage with what is driving behaviours, such as self-harm rather than being overwhelmed by the behaviour, and this enables us to support recovery.

Across Medway we have been embedding the thrive framework to improve services for children and young people's mental health locally as well as across our education settings. Thrive is a system approach framework for mental health and emotional wellbeing which uses a needs-based approach to supporting children and young people to help ensure there is a 'no wrong door' approach when people ask for help. The support available spans across the categories of needs, which are Thriving (support to maintain wellbeing through prevention and promotion, Getting Advice (for those who need support in navigating through advice and signposting), Getting Help (for those who need focused goal based input), Getting More Help (for those who more extensive and specialist goals based support) and Getting Risk Support (for those who need support to manage associated risks).

As part of this approach, we are encouraging people to use common language to ensure that children and young people are supported in ensuring their needs are met, as opposed to a previous model which focused on a tiered approach. In addition, we are promoting that children and young people are supported to be part of the decision-making process and their voices as well as their families are heard so that they can be fully supported in voicing their needs and what will work best for them. We are moving to a proactive prevention and promotion approach, ensuring that those children and young people from vulnerable groups are provided with opportunities to be supported, providing the community with tools to support their own mental health and emotional wellbeing needs with a strong focus on providing appropriate support from a preventative perspective so children and young people do not need more intensive support at a later point.

In addition, this approach has a focus on outcomes and ensuring that children and young people are given the best possible start in life and are able to access care and treatment that is appropriate to their needs in a timely manner. Therefore,

across Medway we have worked hard over the last year or so to map out all current services for children's mental health and emotional wellbeing and review them against the I-thrive framework and categories. This has enabled us to identify the gaps we have in services and ensure we implement new services based on this data and feedback.

We have also created an I-thrive directory tool, which is an interactive tool on Power BI that all professionals can use in Medway to filter the needs of the child or young person, and see what appropriate services are available, referral pathways, contact details and support on referral criteria.

- **Develop a consistent and comprehensive training offer for professionals and families**

There has been a range of training that has been offered to professionals and families this year.

The Alumina programme is aimed at supporting professionals to set up recovery programmes and coping strategies for Children and Young People. It is well established in Strood Academy, Brompton Academy and Victory Academy. The Rivermead partnership launched courses in January 2022 and Walderslade girls launched a course in February 2022, with support from Early Help/ Family Solutions. Colleagues from Emerge, the youth service, family solutions, NELFT and Snapdragons have been using the Alumina approach during 1 to 1 work. Find out more about the [Alumina programme](#). The number of professionals that have been trained in how to deliver the Alumina programme between April 2022 and March 2023 was 43 with 219 sessions delivered to young people.

The Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) training is a two-day course for those who live with or support young people aged 8-18. This training provides people with the skills and confidence to spot the signs of mental health issues in a young person, offer first aid and guide them towards the support they need. This type of intervention has been proven to help speed up a young person's recovery and stop a mental health issue from getting worse. Since April 2022, 60 professionals have been trained in Medway in YMHFA with 13 attending a refresher course.

Brief self-harm awareness training is aimed at anyone seeking to improve their understanding and awareness of suicide and self-harm. It is useful for teachers, mental health workers, crisis helpline volunteers, support workers, individuals in a safeguarding role, parents, or guardians. Since April 2022, six courses have been delivered with 63 professionals receiving training. Parents are also able to access an online workshop to support them with their understanding of self-harm. All courses are funded by Medway PH for any professional working with Medway children and young people.

- **Develop and distribute a common set of resources to support teachers, other professionals, and the families they work with –**

Schools are provided with Mental Health resources to enable them to deliver effective inputs through the PSHE curriculum. Resources are a mixture of bespoke Medway developed plans and standard lesson plans from the national PSHE Association. Local plans for this year are to develop a CYP co-created Medway resource for young people and parents to support them with information, conversations, and guidance around self-harm.

- **Promote the safe use of technology to help young people manage their self-harm and aid their recovery**

A resource has been created highlighting NHS approved apps. This resource has been shared with young people via schools, youth services, other events and directly to young people who have accessed support groups such as Alumina. The resource is shared with all professionals that attend any children and young people mental health related training.

Kooth is an online counselling support service which provides one to one and group support as well as peer support. Kooth is a universal service offer for ages 10-25. In addition to the digital offer, Kooth also deliver workshops in schools (for example in Q1 they delivered a Young Men and MH workshop at Mid-Kent College and three Year 6 transition workshops). 422 young people logged into the Kooth website 3654 times in Q1 with 74% being return logins. The vast majority of young people using Kooth heard about it from school.

The top three presenting issues people access Kooth for counselling are in table 1 below. This shows that whilst this is a universal service offer, Kooth are providing support around significant mental health needs. Feedback following a counselling session shows that a significant proportion of young people feel supported by the service with 87.6% saying they felt heard, understood, and respected a lot, 90.6% felt the person helping was a good fit for them and 90.6% would recommend the service to a friend. A case study from the service is included in Appendix A.

Table 1: The top three presenting issues for counselling via Kooth

Female	Male	Gender Fluid	Agender
Anxiety/stress	Self-Harm	Suicidal thoughts	Self-Harm
Self-Harm	Anxiety/stress	Self-Harm	Eating difficulties
Suicidal thoughts	Self-Worth	Friendships	Sleep difficulties

- **Provide support to children and young people who are in A&E awaiting treatment.**

The Emerge programme is a service that provides hospital-based emotional support and advocacy for children and young people aged 10-25 years who present to hospital because of self-harm, suicidal ideation, eating disorders or emotional crisis.

The service originated in Surrey and was launched in Medway in April 2020 having been commissioned by Medway Public Health using funding from Kent & Medway Suicide prevention fund (NHS resources). Data from February 2022 to the end of January 2023 found there had been 247 referrals to the service. From those, 125 people accepted received the support which made an impact in reducing self-harm in those followed up. In terms of community follow up support, 35 children and young people have taken this up.

In addition, NHS England have provided the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board (ICB with non-recurring funds to provide a new service which will launch once recruitment has been arranged at Medway Foundation Trust. This service is called the 'Wellbeing Pilot' which is for children and young people aged 0-18 years who attend the emergency department with mental health or emotional wellbeing issues with minimal to no physical health needs. Children and young people will be triaged by the emergency department's staff and signposted to the allocated mental health practitioner as part of the pilot. A range of interventions will be offered including listening and validating the child or young person's needs and ensuring smooth communication with parents and carers, de-escalating, and offering reassurance, making relevant referrals, as well as providing appropriate signposting and support. Exclusion criteria is in place for any child or young person who is a frequent attender to the emergency department or known to have complex and ongoing needs and known to the wider system such as designated key worker service. Following the support provided, a wellbeing call will be offered after 48 hours and up to 72 hours after the attendance to review how the strategies offered have been implemented and what impact these have and, on the child, or young person.

Data

A&E attendances for self-harm

Table 2: Directly standardised rate of A&E attendances as a result of self-harm per 100,000 population by year and sex, Medway, 2016/17 to 2021/22, aged 10-24 years

Year	Persons Rate	Male Rate	Female Rate
2016/17	258.1 (216.5 - 305.3)	156.2 (112.5 - 211.1)	368.9 (298.1 - 451.5)
2017/18	514.4 (454.1 - 580.5)	468.7 (389.5 - 559.2)	564.5 (474.8 - 666.2)
2018/19	460.3 (402.8 - 523.7)	380.8 (308.7 - 464.6)	546.5 (457.8 - 647.3)
2019/20	328.2 (279.7 - 382.8)	206.2 (154.3 - 269.8)	459.1 (377.2 - 553.5)
2020/21	767.5 (691.3 - 849.8)	439.3 (361.2 - 529.3)	1120.3 (988.3 - 1265.1)
2021/22	403.0 (348.6 - 463.4)	222.0 (168.0 - 287.7)	597.5 (502.7 - 705.0)

Source: Hospital Episode Statistics, NHS Digital

Small counts (1-7) suppressed (*) and rates calculated using a value of 3.

All counts rounded to the nearest 5.

- In the period 2021/22, the rate of attendances at hospital emergency departments for self-harm in persons aged 10-24 in Medway was 403/100,000 population which was similar to the national average.
- Self-harm was more common in females. Females aged 10 to 24 years were the group with the highest rate of A&E attendance.
- In Medway, the most common primary diagnosis is poisoning (including overdose), followed by laceration.
- Attendance rates for 2020/21 were significantly higher than previous years. The effects of the pandemic on mental wellbeing is a possible plausible explanation for the increase. For 21/22, rates returned to similar to previous years.

Admissions for self-harm

Table 3: Directly standardised rate of hospital admissions as a result of self-harm per 100,000 population by year and sex, Medway, 2016/17 to 2021/22, aged 10-24 years

Year	Persons Rate	Male Rate	Female Rate
2016/17	291.4 (247.0 - 341.4)	171.3 (125.4 - 228.5)	421.6 (345.5 - 509.5)
2017/18	442.0 (386.2 - 503.5)	221.1 (167.9 - 285.9)	676.5 (578.1 - 786.9)
2018/19	389.2 (336.6 - 447.6)	148.0 (104.7 - 203.2)	647.4 (550.4 - 756.7)
2019/20	365.4 (314.1 - 422.8)	145.1 (102.1 - 200.1)	602.2 (507.7 - 709.1)
2020/21	574.2 (508.5 - 646.2)	252.4 (193.8 - 323.1)	920.1 (800.6 - 1052.2)
2021/22	817.1 (738.5 – 901.9)	386.6 (312.6 – 472.7)	1263.1 (1124.0 – 1414.6)

Source: Hospital Episode Statistics, NHS Digital

Small counts (1-7) suppressed (*) and rates calculated using a value of 3.

All counts rounded to the nearest 5.

- Medway had a worse rate statistically compared to England for self-harm hospital admissions for persons aged 10-24 years old in 2021/22. It was also statistically higher compared to statistical neighbour local authorities.
- Females aged 10 to 24 years had a higher admission rate than males during the reporting period which is in line with the trend nationally.
- Hospital Admissions for self-harm have increased for both genders aged between 10-24 since 2016. This is a significant challenge for Medway.
- Work is ongoing to urgently assess how to further improve access to the wrap around services that are currently available to support them that are mentioned in this briefing.

Appendix A Case Study from Kooth

Meg presented to Kooth in October 2020. She disclosed self-harming thoughts and behaviours; suicidal ideation; eating difficulties and struggling with anxiety and panic and feelings of dissociation and had attempted to commit suicide in the past. Meg was already supported by external agencies including CAMHS.

Throughout her intervention at Kooth, risk status has mainly remained at medium risk. Risk increased following Meg's disclosure of an attempted suicide. However, in subsequent chat interventions this risk reduced as a result of Meg having additional support from family and Children's Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Following a Kooth assessment, Meg remained open to accessing the drop in chat interventions. This provided flexibility and choice for Meg concerning accessing ongoing support. Meg continued to be supported by CAMHS during this period. A key area of support that has been implemented with Meg during her chat interventions involve confidence and self-esteem building. Also, encouraging Meg to explore self-harm alternatives. Meg has been encouraged to increase her sense of social support by engaging with Kooth peer support. Another critical area of support for Meg during chat interventions has involved developing a robust safety plan, focusing on staying safe in the school environment and identifying external support she can access. Also, including strategies she can implement to prevent maladaptive thoughts and emotions escalating into crisis.

Meg has received ongoing support and intervention through the provision of chat interventions at Kooth. This support has been focused on effective goal setting and safety planning, taking a preventative approach to reduce escalation of risk (self-harm; suicidal ideation). Meg has been provided with a safe therapeutic space at Kooth, increasing her sense of safety, supporting her to develop self-help strategies and encouraging her to access further external support. Meg continues to be supported at Kooth through messaging and chat interventions.