



## Foundations For Our Future: Core narrative

### Statement from leaders: Our commitment to improving the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people

*The number of children and young people needing emotional health and wellbeing support across Sussex grows every year and the NHS and local authorities and providers across Sussex are committed to working together to improve the experience and lives of all local children and young people who are vulnerable and need support. We have dedicated staff working in health, social care, education and the voluntary and community sector who work extremely hard together to try to ensure children, young people and their families get the help they need.*

*However, feedback we have received from those using local emotional health and mental health services, their families, carers and staff have highlighted that the current system is not working as well as it should. They are telling us that the needs of children, young people and their families and carers must be more at the centre of how we plan, pay for and deliver services. They are telling us that it is not always clear what support is available, from whom or how to access it.*

*This is something that all partners have collectively agreed needs to rapidly change as we know how difficult and distressing it is for children, young people and families affected by emotional health and wellbeing issues.*

*Our commitment to driving real improvement is the reason we commissioned an independently led review called Foundations for Our Future. This allowed us to hear from those that know best how we can provide the right care and support to local children and young people, what works well and what could be improved. This has given us a greater understanding around what needs to change and now means we are able to work together to take bold and ambitious action to make these changes happen.*

*The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has meant we have not been able start implementing some of the changes as soon as we would have wanted to. This is due to the urgent need for us to focus on helping to ensure our populations get the care they need at this time of national emergency. However, we are now in a position to receive the Report through our organisational and partnership governance routes, meaning we can begin implementation of the recommendations included in Foundations For Our Future.*

*The effects of the pandemic on children and young people are already emerging. They are directly experiencing social distancing, high levels of isolation, imposed absence from school and some support systems, and effects that the wider social and economic dislocation of COVID-19 will cause. A survey conducted by Young*

*Minds in the early weeks of lockdown in England found that many children and young people reported increased anxiety, problems with sleep, panic attacks or more frequent urges to self-harm among those who already self-harmed. The Children's Commissioner for England has suggested that the harm to children's future prospects is likely to be particularly felt by the poorest and youngest. There have also been reports of falling referrals to specialist mental health services during the lockdown. Health and care services are preparing for the likelihood that need for these services will increase in the coming months as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.*

*These are of course issues of great concern, but there have also been positives across the country and in Sussex specifically. Organisations have collaborated, innovated and made changes to their ways of working that in other circumstances might have taken months or years to bring about. There are reasons to be encouraged that these positives can be maintained and built upon as we move forward into restoration and reformation of services.*

*Our commitment to improving the lives of our children and young people remains steadfast and we do not want to wait any longer than is necessary to take action. For that reason, where we can accelerate actions and recommendations from the Report over the summer months, then we are committed to working together to do so.*

*The report and recommendations will be published in full once it has been formally received by each of the Governing Bodies/Boards of the organisations who jointly commissioned it.*

*This document outlines the background and reasons for the report, as well as a summary of the recommendations and next steps.*

*We would like to thank everyone who took part in the review. We have listened, we have learned and we now need to take action to make sure real improvements are made for our children and young people.*

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## Why we commissioned the review

'Foundations for the future' is an independently led review of emotional health and wellbeing support for children and young people in Sussex. It was jointly commissioned by the Sussex Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG), Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT), and the three local authorities – East Sussex County Council, Brighton and Hove City Council and West Sussex County Council.

We commissioned the review because we recognised that more needs to be done to improve the experience of our children and young people living with emotional health, wellbeing and mental health issues.

In particular, health and care partners have increasingly become aware that the current services and experience of children and young people needing emotional and wellbeing support is a specific area that needs to improve.

We recognise that the necessary improvements can only be done by collectively taking bold, concerted action together to improve the whole system of care. This includes services in schools, access to advice and information, as well as the support which is available from voluntary and community sector,, local authority and specialist NHS services.

Equally, we need to make sure we are doing everything possible to create the conditions where staff who work with children, young people and families feel supported to do the best possible job.

## About the review

The independently led review was initiated in spring 2019 and was an information gathering process which has resulted in 20 formal recommendations being made for consideration and implementation by commissioners, providers and the health and care system, working in partnership.

The review met with more than 1,500 children and young people, their parents, families and carers and professional groups. Engagement included users of, and the workforce within, local services, parents and carers accessing services on behalf of their children, and children and young people who have used services in the past or are using them currently.

The review focused on understanding the following in relation to children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing support:

- Accessing services and support for emotional health and wellbeing

- Experience of using locally commissioned services including what obstacles are perceived
- What works well and what could be improved
- Effectiveness of local services

## The recommendations

The Foundations for the Future report makes a number of recommendations for how services and support can be improved. A summary of some of the key areas are:

- A “radical redesign” of children and young peoples’ emotional health and wellbeing services, with a particular focus on creating a more effective journey of care for people; improving access and achieving better health and wellbeing outcomes.
- Simplifying access to and understanding/awareness of the variety of services, so that children, young people and their families can get help more easily and more quickly.
- Investing our money in those places that have the highest need for mental health and wellbeing support, as well as in services that can support children and young people at an earlier stage, before they become more unwell. Making sure that levels of investment in services and support reflect local need.
- Developing a way of monitoring the health outcomes of patients that gives us a fuller picture of where money is most effectively spent.
- Establishing more effective partnership working across Sussex between statutory and community and voluntary and community sector organisations, both in commissioning and in the provision of services.
- Hearing and responding to the voices of children and young people to make sure that health and care services in Sussex is co-designed by the people who use them.
- Ensuring that commissioning (the planning, buying and monitoring of health and care services) is delivered in a more joined-up way between health and care organisations in Sussex and, with the right abilities, skills and leadership, is able to drive ongoing improvement in the services for children and young people.
- Improving the accuracy and availability of health and care data so we can better plan and monitor the quality of services and care.
- Addressing the challenges of both time and resource that are faced every day by our workforce (staff), to better support them to be able to do their jobs and care for children and young people more effectively.

## Taking collective action

All partners fully accept the review's recommendations and we have all agreed the following principles and actions:

- To work together as a health and care system to implement the review's recommendations.
- We will work alongside those who took part in the review – and others – to help us take the recommendations forward.
- We will not allow individual organisational considerations or pressures get in the way of what we need to do in partnership to improve the experience of children and young people who need emotional health and wellbeing support.
- The implementation of the report's recommendations will be co-ordinated by an Oversight (delivery) Group comprising senior leaders from each of the partners, patient groups and people who have experience of using services.
- Progress on delivering the recommendations will be published on our websites and reviewed in public.
- We will create opportunities for progress to be scrutinised by members of the public and people who have used services.
- We will continue to actively seek the views of children, young people and families about their experience and views, and involve them in continual improvement of our services.

## Supporting our staff

The review identifies the dedication and hard work of people working in schools and services to support children and young peoples' emotional health and wellbeing. It also gives examples of good practice taking place in parts of Sussex which we can extend Sussex wide.

The report acknowledges the sometimes difficult work and circumstances that our teams are faced with and we will continue to support them to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people in these challenging times.

We will therefore commit to planning strategically for recruitment and retention of staff and delivering quality training and supporting knowledge sharing.

We will be looking at a workforce mix that best fits the needs of our communities we will build robust links between our organisations, and with voluntary and community sector and other agencies such as housing, education and leisure so they can be more aware of how to meet the needs of children and young people.

## Next steps

We are developing a full implementation plan that outlines all the actions we are taking across partners to make the changes that need to be made. We will publish

this plan alongside the full report of the review as soon as is practically possible within the Covid-19 situation.

A Programme Oversight Group has been established that is made up of representatives from all partners and is responsible for driving forward the changes that need to be made.

We have committed to ensuring the improvements and changes are made with the input, engagement and involvement of children and young people, families, carers, and the wider public, and we will be developing clear communications and involvement channels to enable this to happen.