



## Foundations for Our Future: Our commitment to improving the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people

17 May 2021

Dear colleague,

Firstly we'd like to thank you for your continued support and patience during the past year, while we have responded to the needs of our population during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and the NHS has rolled out the COVID-19 vaccination programme to hundreds of thousands of people.

During this time, our commitment to Foundations for Our Future - the review of emotional health and wellbeing services and support for children and young people across Sussex - has not wavered. While some aspects of the programme were paused for a period of time as we described to you in our last letter, the NHS and local authorities across Sussex\* continue to work together to improve the experience and lives of all local children and young people who need support.

Throughout the pandemic we have collectively reacted and responded to growing pressures in this important area, and indeed the increased demands on services as a consequence, by expanding and accelerating programmes of support for children and young people. This population group, we know, have been particularly adversely impacted by COVID-19, which further emphasises the importance of the work of Foundations for Our Future, to address this area which continues to be of concern to us all.

Some of the improvements that have continued at pace, despite the pressures of the pandemic during the past 12 months, include:

- The development of 24/7 crisis services and a helpline giving information to support to children, young people and families during COVID-19.
- A 24/7 telephone line to support colleagues within A&E departments to manage the increased demand on health needs during the first surge of COVID-19. Experienced Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) clinicians were part of the team able to support risk and care planning to enable young people who may have attended A&E to be kept safe at home.
- The introduction of urgent duty and paediatric liaison teams within A&E and to support intensive home treatment.
- Successful recruitment to the Home Treatment Team, which is already showing good outcomes and significant quality improvements.
- Training for Mental Healthline staff to enable appropriate response to calls from children and young people.

- A mental health campaign aimed at children and young people which was launched in June 2020 focusing on providing COVID-19 related information, resources, toolkits and a directory of services, with specific Back to School information regarding the return to school following lockdown.

### **Next steps for Foundations for Our Future**

Foundations for Our Future has now been received by all statutory sector partners' boards, where each organisation endorsed all 20 recommendations. This endorsement signals the continued commitment to improving the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people in Sussex and to supporting our workforce in this field, and confirms this as a priority for all partners.

A partnership Oversight Board has been set up to ensure the recommendations are fully implemented and to identify areas where improvements can continue to be made as quickly as possible. The board is chaired by [Sam Allen, Chief Executive of Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#), and [Stuart Gallimore, Director of Children's Services at East Sussex County Council](#).

I have been appointed as Programme Director to lead the work across Sussex and has already begun mapping out the core priority milestones for the work, some of which are already in train as per the review recommendations, as outlined above.

For those who don't know me, I am an experienced NHS leader with a strong track record in delivering large, complex change projects to improve patient experience. A registered nurse with a background in child psychology, I have managed services for children and young people with physical and mental health problems. I also have a number of years' experience working at board level as Chief Operating Officer.

I am passionate about ensuring that children, young people and families are involved in service change and design, and am a firm believer in harnessing partnership working, innovation and creative thinking to challenge traditional ways of working and improve patient outcomes.

### **Implementation of the recommendations**

Implementation of the Foundations for Our Future recommendations will lead to tangible changes and improvements to service provision for children and young people, and their families.

We are working to make sure there are clear, easy to access pathways of care, starting with prevention and early support through to support for children and young people with a higher level of need.

The team has already begun by mapping out all services across Sussex to identify areas for improvement, focusing on identifying and establishing and then promoting a multi-agency Single Point of Advice hub for access and support, which can triage children and young people appropriately and offer the advice or support that best meets their needs. We are also already working to establish and build our Mental Health Support Teams in Sussex schools, making sure teachers and other staff are supported and equipped to provide much needed emotional wellbeing support.

As you will know, the pandemic has led to an increased demand for specialist mental health services. For example, Child Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have seen a 40 percent increase in the number of young people needing support compared to previous years. This is having an adverse effect on waiting times for initial assessments and treatment and has been identified as a top priority within the Sussex Health and Care Partnership Restoration and Recovery Plan and Mental Health Collaborative, with additional investment in local services already secured. We understand how difficult it is for children, young people and their families to wait for services when there is a need for treatment and care and we are doing everything we can to respond to this urgent demand. We will continue to keep you up to date about this work, which is closely linked to our plans for Foundations for Our Future.

### **Your engagement**

We are committed to continuing to work alongside children, young people and families, as well as local voluntary and community sector organisations, to maximise opportunities for active engagement, collaboration and co-design as we push forward with the recommendations of the review. A working group of key engagement leads from local voluntary and community and statutory sector organisations, who work with young people and their families, are meeting at the beginning of June to develop the structures to support this, alongside the development of a dedicated partnership Communications and Involvement Strategy. We will keep you updated on progress.

In the coming months we will also be hosting feedback and information sessions with all our key stakeholders, and publishing a film and visual summary of the report co-produced in an accessible way with the children and young people who are central to it. We will share more information about this as soon as is possible. Your ongoing involvement in this work is critical to its success and I'd like to thank you again for your ongoing contributions and support for this important work.

If you have any questions about the review or our next steps, please get in touch. You can email the review team via [Yasmin.Cotton@sussexpartnership.nhs.uk](mailto:Yasmin.Cotton@sussexpartnership.nhs.uk)

Yours faithfully



**Simone Button**

**Programme Director, Foundations for our Future**

### **Working in partnership**

\* The independent review was commissioned by:

- [Brighton and Hove City Council](#)
- [East Sussex County Council](#)
- [NHS Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group](#)
- [NHS East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group](#)
- [NHS West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group](#)
- [Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- [West Sussex County Council](#)