

What children are telling me about their mental health

– overcoming barriers to healthy, happy childhoods

Dame Rachel de Souza – The Children’s Commissioner

Key challenges

1) Children not getting help early enough

- My Family Review highlighted that having a supportive family is the foundation for children's happiness, healthy relationships and success later in life.
- However, families face challenges and pressures which reduce this protective effect, and impact negatively on children and young people's mental health.

'A loving family is worth more than money and will give you guidance support and love and guidance' – Boy, 11

Key challenges

2) Inability to meet the demand for children's mental health services

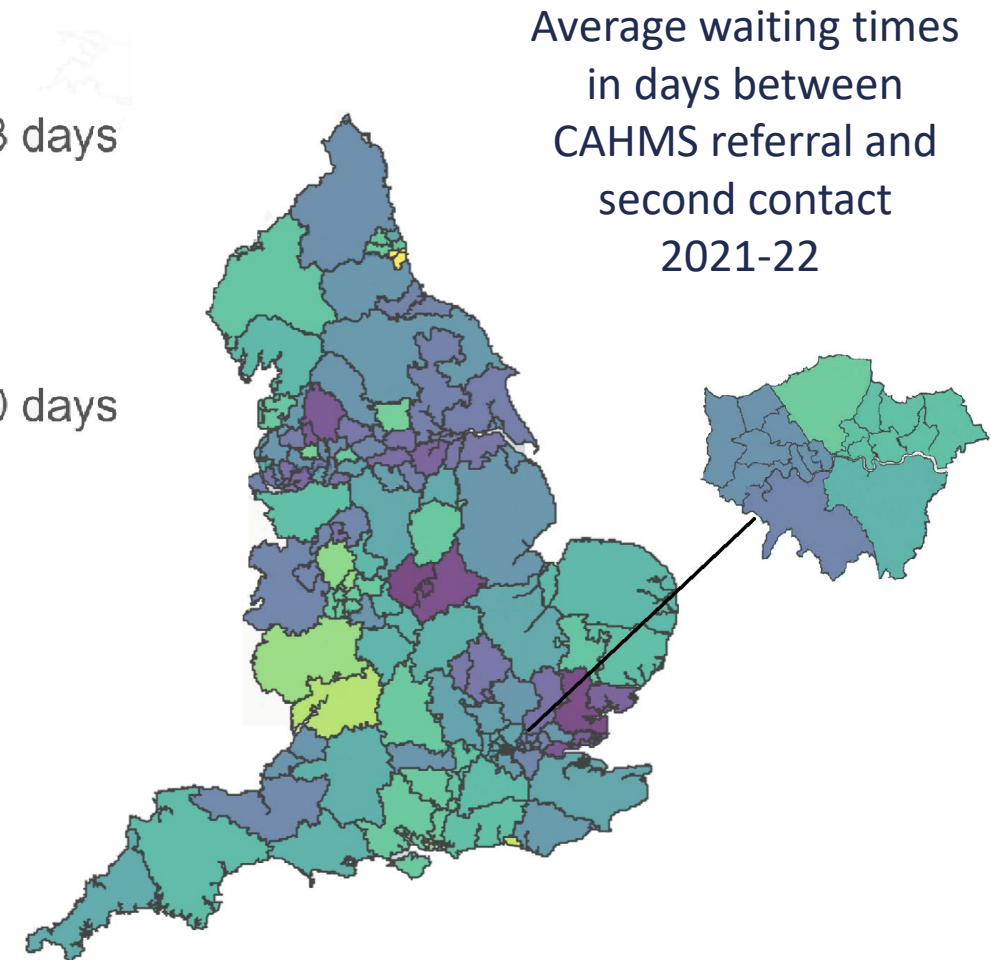
- There is a growing gap between children's need and the availability of support, and waiting times vary hugely from area to area – meaning children face a postcode lottery of support.
- The percentage of children who had their referrals closed before treatment has increased for the first time in years, and the average waiting time between a child being referred to CYPMHS and starting treatment increased from 32 days in 2020-21 to 40 days in 2021-22.

Legend



13 days

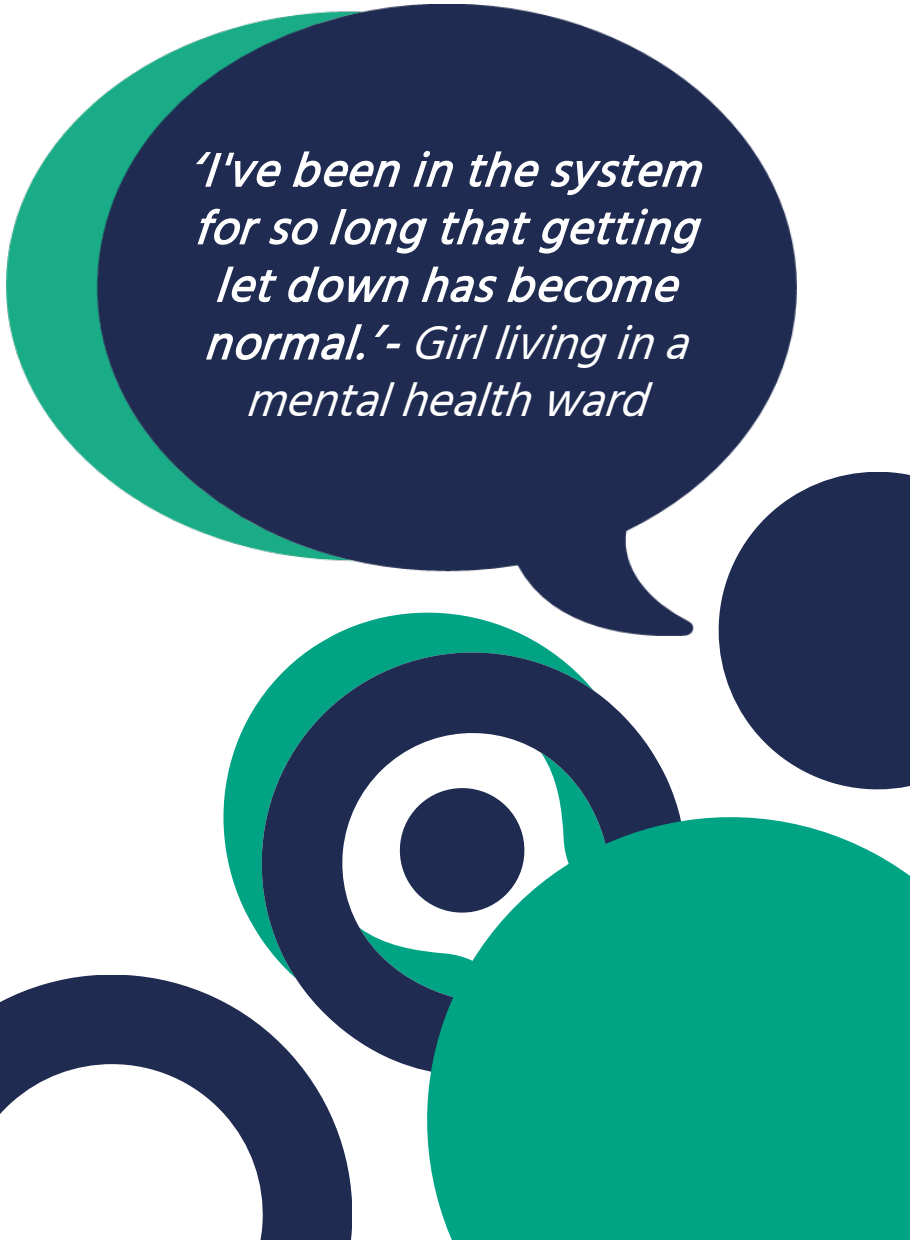
80 days



Key challenges

3) Children's needs are becoming more severe and complex – and the right support isn't there

- Left unsupported, children's mental health needs are increasing and becoming more complex.
- I am particularly concerned about children who fall through the gaps of different statutory services - and end up deprived of their liberty in inappropriate placements, such as caravans and hotels.



'I've been in the system for so long that getting let down has become normal.' - Girl living in a mental health ward

Key solutions

Early help for children and families

Family Hubs in every neighbourhood

Joined up support for children where they want to receive it

Roll-out of Mental Health Support Teams

ICBs to prioritise children's mental health

Better mental health support for children in care

Tailored support until 25

Safe, loving, familial care for children living away from home

What next?

Championing children's solutions

Children are the experts of their own mental health. Over the next year, I will be travelling up and down the country to listen to and act on children and young people's ideas about what they want and need for healthy, happy lives.

'Sometimes we feel that because people won't listen to us that we do not matter.'
– Girl, 12

'Adults don't listen to children because they think we're going to say crazy things... if they listened the world will be better.'
– Boy, 9

'I feel like we should be heard more... be able to properly (yes properly) say our views.'
– Girl, 12

Thank you

