

ADCS conference – 7 July 2023

Yvette Stanley

National Director, Regulation and Social Care

Children's mental health



Children's mental health: findings from Joint Targeted Area Inspections (2020)



The December 2020 JTAI report 'Feeling heard: partner agencies working together to make a difference for children with mental ill health', based on six area inspections, found that:

- Agencies committed to working together, strategically and operationally
- Conscious restructuring of CAMHS
- Single points of access and co-location
- Wider workforce knowledge and support regarding mental health
- Efforts to speed up assessment and access to support
- A continuum of offer – well-being to acute
- Areas for improvement: some agencies/individuals focussed on behaviours, late/crisis identification of need.

Insights on children's mental health across remits – the challenges

- In lockdown, some children's mental health had deteriorated
- Other children were anxious about the return to school
- Delays in assessment had worsened and access to relevant services not fully restored and/or not in person
- Numbers of children waiting for welfare secure had grown from 25 per day to 50
- Between 2017/18 and 2020/21 there was a **462%** increase in DoL orders applications (Cafcass)
- Children with the most complex needs are often the least well served in already overstretched systems. For example, homes that can take children with acute mental health needs are in shortest supply
- Children living in homes that accommodate children with mental health problems travel furthest away from their LA on average to their home (44 miles). Commissioners have Hobsons Choice - not the best choice.

Covid Recovery - insights on children's mental health across remits

- School leaders reported that catch-up funding was being used to pay for additional support for pupil wellbeing, for example through funding:
 - Family support workers; buying resources related to help improve pupils' mental health; expanding welfare teams; and paying for bereavement support
- Some LAs commissioned multi-agency teams, which included clinical psychologists, to provide co-ordinated services, and to mitigate the delays in assessment or service access
- Mental health workers working alongside professionals and carers to provide advice and support
- Ensuring multi-disciplinary professionals - social workers, virtual school staff, teachers, PAs - are well attuned to children's needs and have the knowledge and skills to support, and ability to access, appropriate services
- LAs try to provide for these children in other ways, such as creating solo placements in existing homes. NB This then reduces the number of beds available for other children. We also see new regional partnerships (including health) working to commission bespoke placements for children.

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