**Briefing paper January 2018** Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign

**Proposed Cuts to Lewisham Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)**

**Summary**

* This paper describes the impact of recent and proposed local authority cuts on Lewisham CAMHS
* It explains why children and young people in Lewisham are at particular risk of mental health problems
* Identifies rising population and demand
* It proposes the reasons why the local authority should reverse these proposals.

**Background**

LewishamCAMHS supports children and young people who are experiencing significant mental health difficulties such as depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicidality and includes those who have a diagnoses such as autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), ADHD, chronic health conditions, those with learning difficulties, looked after children and young people involved in the criminal justice system.

Multi-disciplinary teams include psychiatrists, psychologists, and therapists who work very closely with schools and families to meet the needs of children young people referred to the service.

The service is jointly funded by NHS Lewisham CCG and Lewisham Council.

**The Issue: Proposed Funding Cuts 2018-2020** *(see table below)*

**Summary of Lewisham CAMHS Budget**

CAMHS is jointly commissioned with combined funding of £4 million (£3m from the NHS (Lewisham CCG) and £1m from Social Care (LBL)

**Proposed LA cuts to CAMHS of £150k over two years**

Lewisham LA cut the CAMHS budget in 2017/18 by £94k – two important posts have gone. Now CAMHS faces a further £150k cut over 2018/19-2019/20.

**Anticipated cuts to NHS funding** of a further £150k over two years

For the NHS budget, Cost Improvement Programme (CIP) savings are historically between 2.5-5% of total budget *annually.* This equates to at least £75k per year from a £3m total NHS budget, unless the CAMHS budget is protected.

The total risk to the CAMHS budget from the combined cuts by the LA and NHS CIPs is at least £300k – 7.5% of current budget; and over the three years 2017/18 to 2019/20 it is £394k (9.8% of budget). Two posts have gone, six more are at risk.

**8 posts lost over 3 years means hundreds less young people seen each year.**

**Lewisham CAMHS: *sources of budget and impact of cuts***

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| **Overall budget**  | **NHS funding to SLAM**  | **Lewisham LA** | **Total budget** | **Permanent staff wte [[1]](#footnote-1)** |
| 2016/17 | £3m (est) | £1.1m | £4.1m (est) | 51.01 |
| 2017/18 | £3m | £1m £94k cut) | £4 million | 49.07 (excl. 8 temp staff for waiting list work) |

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| **Budget cuts & impact** | **NHS £ cuts from CIPS (min 2.5%)** | **Lewisham LA cuts** | **Total**  | **Impact on permanent staff wte** (core service – not short term funding) |
| 2016/17 |  |  |  | **51.01** |
| 2017/18 | Not available | £94k | £94k min | **49.07** (excl. 8 temp staff for waiting list work) |
| 2018/19 | £75k min | £150k | £300k min | **43** (cuts equate to losing at least 6 post)  |
| 2019/20 | £75k min |
| **Total cuts over 3 yrs** | At least £150k | At least £244k | At least £394k | **Total posts at risk = 8**(incl. 2 posts lost 2017/18) |

**Mental Health Problems in Children and Young People**

The most recent Office of National Statistics report identified that 1 in 10 young people aged 5-16 in the UK have a mental health difficulty. There are many factors, including family stress, poverty, parental mental ill health, academic pressures, bullying and poor housing. The difficulties can manifest as anxiety, depression, eating disorders, self-harm and phobias, all of which are extremely debilitating and sometimes fatal.

Lewisham is one of the most deprived authorities in England and has higher than average numbers of children with mental health difficulties. Risk factors impact on Lewisham resulting in high numbers of:

* Children under 16 living in low income families (27% compared to national 20%), worsened by 8 years of austerity.
* Looked after children
* Incidents of domestic violence
* Parents with mental health and/or substance abuse issues
* Young people involved in crime.
* Annual Public Health Report stated Lewisham children have a higher rate of ‘toxic stress’ (p12)

We also know that Lewisham has a rapidly growing child population.

In Lewisham other supportive community resources like Connexions, school pastoral care, youth service and school nurses have also been cut over the last years.

**Current Situation**

Previous cuts in funding have left Lewisham CAMHS in crisis with a shortage of staff and long waiting lists for assessment and treatment. Short term funding for specific developments (e.g. Future in Mind) have not alleviated staff shortages in frontline teams. Funding for waiting for assessment has not shortened waiting time for therapy.

The new *Choice and Partnership Approach* (CAPA), implemented in the front line generic Horizon team, is already in crisis. It is on the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust ‘At Risk Register due to inadequate staffing levels to meet the demand.

Referral rates are estimated to have increased by 25 per cent in the last quarter alone.

CAMHS staff are spending a significant amount of time taking phone calls from distraught parents and schools calling to find out when a child will be seen for assessment and how long they will have to wait for treatment.

***A parent recently asked a duty worker if her daughter had to actually try and kill herself before anyone would see her.***

This massively impacts on our local A&E, where increasing numbers of young people are presenting with serious, sometimes life-threatening problems. They are often waiting days for a hospital bed if an admission is needed. One clinician identified that, on her caseload alone, she has children in hospitals in Kent, Southend and Stafford in the last 6 months.

Long waiting lists are having catastrophic consequences on the lives of children and their families. Family relationships suffer, and young people cannot keep up with school work or they withdraw from education altogether.

***A young person recently told a staff member that she felt like no one cared as she had to wait so long to be seen.***

CAMHS staff work long hours and are highly stressed. Experienced staff are leaving or taking early retirement due to the impossible demands being made upon them.

**Proposal:** **We urge the council to reconsider these cuts.**

Although alternatives proposed by council, like Headspace and Kooth, are welcome and provide positive preventative services, they do not address the needs of the many young people with complex, high risk mental health needs being referred to CAMHS.

The majority of mental health issues in adulthood begin before a person reaches 18, so early and effective intervention is essential as well as cost effective. *It is shortsighted to underfund child mental health services. These children and young people will go on to incur far greater costs through potential hospitalisation, school exclusion and family breakdown.* **Please do not make these cuts to vital CAMHS services.**

1. Source: FOI submitted to SLAM – response dated 27th December 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)