

# SAVE LEWISHAM HOSPITAL CAMPAIGN

## BULLETIN 4

**REINSTATE THE £250000 TO LEWISHAM CAMHS - AN APPEAL TO MAYOR DAMIEN EGAN  
DON'T MAKE LEWISHAM CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE PAY THE PRICE OF GOVERNMENT CUTS!**

**Mayor Egan, we are addressing this to you in the hope that you will reconsider the decision to withhold the £ 250,000 from the CAMHS budget.**

Every single proposed cut to council services this year has so far been agreed. Yet in the case of the proposed cut to the CAMHS budget **the Children and Young Peoples Committee were so concerned that they voted unanimously 11-0 against the budget cut.** We ask you in such times to make an exception in this case and agree to use council reserves to protect this invaluable service and the mental health of Lewisham's most vulnerable children and young people.

We do this on the grounds that the budget reduction has been proposed on the basis of inaccurate information and **has not been fully risk assessed to take into account the impact of the latest lock-down on child and adolescent mental health.**

We reiterate that due to historic underfunding, unless children are deemed exceptionally high risk then it is estimated that there are over **200 children and young people waiting for over 6 months for first assessments and a further 300 waiting up to a further 18 months for specialist assessments or treatment in CAMHS.**

**Alarming, the Centre for Mental Health reported nationally that 1.5million children under 18 will either need new or additional mental health support as a result of the pandemic with one third being new cases. As an indication of what is to come, Channel 4 news reported this month that the local Maudsley CAMHS has seen a 42% rise in the number of referrals.**

### **THIS IS NO TIME TO WITHHOLD FUNDING!**

We implore you to listen to the voice of one of the many very concerned parents who have contacted us both to tell us about the impact of long wait times and in praise of our local child mental health services:

*"I was horrified to hear that Lewisham Council is considering make cuts in the CAMHS grant. CAMHS is such a valuable resource and at a time when our children are facing and experiencing extraordinary pressures, this is so short sighted. My daughter had to wait a year to get seen by CAMHS which at the time it felt intolerable but when she was seen the difference it made to her mental health was fantastic. She's now at university and the help and tools she received from CAMHS has stood in good stead and has been used in more than one occasion during the various lockdowns and daily restrictions on her life. I am happy to lend my name to the campaign to protect the CAMHS service."*

### **What is Lewisham CAMHS?**

Lewisham Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) 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 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. **They are some of Lewisham's most vulnerable young people!**

Sometimes these conditions are extremely debilitating, significantly impacting on children's ability to

engage with education, peers and family life; at times these are potentially life threatening. 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.

### **What are the specific risk factors for Child Mental Health problems in Lewisham?**

Lewisham is one of the most deprived authorities in England and **has higher than average numbers of children with mental health difficulties**. Lewisham demographics have a high number of risk factors which we know impact on child mental health are:

- **Children under 16 living in low income families (27% compared to national 20%),** worsened by years of austerity.
- **Looked after children.** Lewisham's rate of Looked After Children per 10,000 population was 69.6 at the end of 2017, one of the higher rates in London. (Lewisham CYP Outcomes for Looked After Children(LAC) and Care Leavers, 14 March 2018)
- **Incidents of domestic violence.** Nearly 7000 women were referred in Lewisham between 2015-19 to Athena, a service run by Refuge, FOI reported in Newsshopper, 27 February 2020
- **Parents with mental health and/or substance abuse issues**
- **Young people involved in crime.**
- **A Public Health Report stated Lewisham children have a higher rate of 'toxic stress'**

We also know that Lewisham has a rapidly growing child population with consequent increasing demand for services.

Lewisham Council's annual parenting report published just last month expressed concern about the **increased numbers of calls to the CAMHS crisis line** and the concern about young people's anxiety and resilience during this time.

- A local parent and researcher's work has identified how in general adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) such as those identified above **have been amplified** during Covid 19 due to social isolation, job loss, school closures and other pressures exacerbated by the pandemic. Also, the pandemic has impacted on the availability of strategies normally used to mitigate the impact of these experiences (Khatwa M et al 2020, awaiting publication).
- Anne Longfield Children's commissioner for England's 4<sup>th</sup> annual report in January 2021 found that clinically significant mental health problems among children had risen by 50% compared to 3 years earlier and a staggering 1/6 children now have a probable mental health condition. **She argued that the damage to children's mental health caused by the Covid crisis could last for years without large scale investment in children's mental health services.**
- A Young Minds survey in autumn 2020 found that 69% of respondents with previous mental health issues described their mental health as poor.
- A Barnados report clearly identified that Covid 19 had a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable and marginalised children in our society and that they were having to reach crisis point before they accessed support.

### **What impact has Covid 19 and lockdowns had on Child Mental Health?**

Adding to what we have already documented (Bulletins 1-3) there is further evidence of the impact that this pandemic is having on child mental health.

### **How long do children and young people have to wait for an initial assessment and for therapy?**

On the basis of the accounts the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign has heard from distressed parents who have contacted the campaign, despite the best efforts of the CAMHS service, wait times for initial assessment have come down but are not as optimistic as have been portrayed in order to justify this cut to CAMHS. There are also the concerns that many children are not yet being referred to CAMHS as they are not in school or able to easily access GP appointments.

**We reiterate - unless children are deemed exceptionally high risk then it is estimated that there are over 200 children and young people waiting for over 6 months for first assessments and a further 300 waiting up to a further 18 months for specialist assessments or treatment.**

Long waits have catastrophic consequences on the lives of children and their families. Family relationships suffer, difficulties come more severe and young people cannot keep up with peers or school work or they withdraw from education altogether.

### **Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services - Who Pays?**

The service has historically been jointly funded by NHS Lewisham CCG and Lewisham Council.

We acknowledge that the council makes a contribution to early intervention services for children deemed in need as per their legal responsibilities under the Children Act. This includes for example, the Kooth on line support service. **Over the years many of these early intervention services have closed or reduced due to funding cuts.**

### **In addition, the local authority has always funded CAMHS Horizon Generic Team.**

Historically this was by funding therapeutic social work posts embedded in CAMHS and more recently by direct grant. It appears that in trying to justify this budget cut, councillors are rewriting history and redefining the local authority role in relation to CAMHS funding. **This £250K was earmarked for Lewisham CAMHS in 2021-2022 and it is now being proposed that this is withheld.**

### **What are the consequences and long term costs of underfunded child mental health services?**

In addition to the dreadful cost to young lives there is a longer term economic cost. 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 to prevent children going on to be longer term adult mental health service users.

*It is **short-sighted** 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.*

The cost of a placement paid for by children's social care for children and young people whose families are unable to cope with complex social and mental health needs can amount to £200,000 a year.

## **WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

- **Speak or write to your local councillor and MPs if you agree that this cut should not be made.**
- **Sign our petition** <https://www.change.org/p/damien-egan-reverse-the-cuts-to-young-people-s-nhs-m?ental-health-services-in-lewisham>
- **See our website** <https://www.savelewishamhospital.com/camhs-childrens-cuts-2021/> and **Facebook page.** <https://www.facebook.com/savelewishamhospitalnhs/>
- **We ask the council and NHS to have a Lewisham-wide campaign advising children and young people and their families how to access mental health support.**
- **We call on Mayor Egan and councillors to campaign with London boroughs, the LGA, the Labour Party and health campaigners on the dangers to life, health and mental health from Government cuts to Local Authorities. The LGA has already called for urgent reinstatement of the £1.7billion for early intervention, taken from council budgets in 2010-11 and 2018-19**