

Leeds Local Medical Committee Limited

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To: Dr Jason Broch, Leeds North CCG
Dr Andy Harris, Leeds South and East CCG
Dr Gordon Sinclair, Leeds West CCG

Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services,
Leeds City Council

Dear Colleagues

Re: Emotional and mental health services for children in Leeds

At the recent July LMC/CCG/Area Team liaison meeting, Dr Jane Mischenko, CCG commissioner lead, and Joseph Krasinski, local authority project lead for TaMHS, gave an update on the state of mental health services for children in the city.

Dr Mischenko acknowledged that the current services are not working and explained that the commissioners and providers recognise this and are planning a complete redesign of the Leeds service model. Whilst the LMC is pleased to hear of this commitment, our committee members remain concerned at the perceived lack of urgency in progressing this matter. Dr Mischenko was unable to give us any timescales as to when this redesign would take effect and the LMC has been raising our concerns with the CCGs regularly since 2012.

There is a huge and unacceptable variation in the level and standard of service offered by the TaMHS scheme through the different school clusters. There is no provision for children attending school out of the city or for children attending private schools. As it is very difficult to get referrals accepted by CAMHS, due to the criteria set, together with often significant delays in accessing treatment, our committee members feel there is also a large gap in provision of mental health services for children in the city.

At the LMC committee meeting held earlier this week we debated this issue again, particularly in light of the recent publication of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Tier 4 Report. Committee members drew attention to their experience of a growing number of children who are self-harming and the fact that early and appropriate care is essential. It is widely accepted that lack of effective treatment and intervention in the early stages of distress may mean that young people can suffer serious consequences and remain ill into adulthood.

The LMC was alarmed to hear of the proposed budget reduction of £0.5m spend on CAMHS from April 2015 and the likely impact in terms of loss of experienced children's psychiatrists and mental health workers. We believe that a redesigned scheme should include an integrated service with a single point of access and that the provision available for children should be comparable to the investment put in to adult mental health services.

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Committee members felt that the previous 0-16 years service had worked much better than the current schemes.

I hope you will find these comments helpful. The LMC appreciates fully the competing demands on CCG and LA budgets but we believe this issue needs to be a higher priority. The consequences of not supporting these vulnerable young people could be huge in terms not only of their own future health but also the potential social and economic costs for our city and beyond.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

DR RAJ SATHIYASEELAN
Medical Secretary