



# Your Healthcare Children's Speech and Language Therapy Referral, wait list and investment update

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# Context

- Due to start wait list reduction project when we last reported to PB (March 2020). Then.....
- Project paused due to pandemic.
- The service continued during last few months but had to change and adapt. We moved to virtual platforms (direct work, groups, recruitment) minimising f2f, schools closed so staff working from other locations/home, assisted in other parts of YH as needed (e.g. Cedars, Wellbeing, Infection control).
- We plan to keep what's worked well and develop the service based on what we've learned.
- Following the Therapies review the 3 year plan has been outlined and the first two years' funding confirmed.

# Referrals and Waiting Times

Date	No. Waiting	Waiting Time average (weeks)	Waiting Time Maximum (weeks)
<b>End October 2020</b>	<b>255 (-27)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>79</b>
End February 2020	282	17	70
2018/19		18	115
2017/18		17	135

- Referral Rate remained fairly steady during the pandemic with referral rate similar to the months pre pandemic. Usual annual fluctuations due to academic year (e.g. higher September, October, lower August).

# Reasons to be positive

- Despite pandemic and associated challenges we managed to reduce average wait time. Those waiting had risk assessments and appointments were prioritised for those who needed to be seen more urgently.
- This was achieved with similar referral rates to previous 12 months (i.e. no decline during pandemic as we had expected).
- All children had their reports completed on time for panels even though this was during lockdown.
- This was achieved despite vacancies and maternity leave gaps.



# Other developments during first few months of pandemic

- Virtual appointments were offered for those who did not need to be seen f2f. Many people reported that they preferred to be seen virtually and preferred the more flexible appointment times that could be offered.
- Face to face appointments continued to be offered where necessary and the best option for people.
- Webinar offered for parents of children (aged 2 .5 to 3 years) on the wait list to offer guidance and support while they waited. Pilot to be extended.
- Teaching and training sessions and packages developed to be delivered virtually to teams.
- Staff member wellbeing support was developed and remains a priority

# However...

- The increase in complexity of referrals still exceeds service capacity to act as quickly as we wish in all cases. Priority areas remain early years and EHCP completion. Also, keeping pace with statutory timelines.
- Staff working extended hours in very difficult circumstances.
- Service development is challenging when trying to keep pace with demands.
- More experienced and specialist roles difficult to recruit to.

# To April 2021 and beyond

- Following release of additional funding following therapies review (incorporating pre-existing vacancies) we have recruited additional team members to all our vacant available posts at bands 5, 6 and 7 to target wait times (especially in early years) and EHCPs.
- Aim is to halve max wait time by end March 2021 (39.5 weeks) with continued average wait time of 10 weeks.
- As 2021/2 additional funding is agreed we are also recruiting staff now to start April 2021. Again target will be reduction of wait time (proposed: no one to wait longer than 16 weeks). Other key targets to be agreed with our commissioners over the next 3-4 months.

Thank You

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