



## **Our summary:**

# **Healthy Young Minds / Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Report**

## **Back story**

-  In Spring 2019, Healthwatch Trafford worked with three other local Healthwatch in Greater Manchester to find out about the local CAMHS service.
-  CAMHS means NHS-provided services in the United Kingdom for children and adolescents who are having difficulties with their emotional or behavioural wellbeing. CAMHS is called Healthy Young Minds in our area.
-  Parents of children and young people with mental health issues were surveyed and some attended discussion groups. Healthwatch also spoke to professionals to see what they think.
-  This is our summary of the report they published on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2019. We are Youthwatch Trafford, young volunteers age 13-18 who help Healthwatch Trafford.

## **Key findings**

**328 parents filled in the survey and 19 discussion groups were held.  
76 professionals filled in their survey**

Generally, more people were unhappy with their experience with their local child mental health services than those who were impressed.

One of the most common complaints from parents was that it took too long to get seen after a referral - with many (46%) being forced to wait longer than 12 weeks to be seen. 41% of the parents surveyed described the waiting times as poor or very poor. Some parents decided to pay for private services to intervene and assess their child to avoid the long waiting times because they deem their child's mental health as urgently needing help.

Unless there was a risk of a potential suicide, some parents suspected that professionals would not take their child's dilemma seriously. Furthermore, once the child had been diagnosed, many parents disagreed with the professional's judgement, arguing that it is not an accurate judgement/analysis of their child's problems.



## Key stats overall

- 🦜 29% of parents felt that the overall service that their child had received was 'very poor' - 17% thought that it was 'very good'.
- 🦜 24% of parents said that the services were 'very poor' when helping their child deal with their mental health problems compared to 15% who said it was 'very good'.
- 🦜 28% of parents stated that the services were 'very poor' when giving support to their child when it was needed whilst 18% stated that it was 'very good'.
- 🦜 29% of parents declared the service 'very poor' in helping their child feel better whereas 16% described it as 'very good'.

After speaking with professionals in the mental health field, the report found many believed that significantly more money must be invested into the mental health services if there are to be any signs of improvement. This is because they feel that referrals take too long and that the services are understaffed and underfunded - which is causing the negativity regarding the mental health services.

One of the main positive points that many parents picked up on was that the staff had listened to both the parents and the children - which allowed them to have a trusting relationship making their experience more personal and productive. However, regarding the whole service, parents often noted that the communication was particularly poor - for example, they would email the service about their concerns but would never receive a response.



## The picture in Trafford

**111 parents from Trafford filled in the survey and 13 attended the discussion groups.**

At the focus (discussion) groups held in Trafford, parents complained of waiting times and that the services set up to help parents with their child's mental health issues only ran during working hours, meaning that some people were unable to attend - essentially making the service futile. Another complaint was that when the rejection letters of the referrals were received, they were often very impersonal and cold meaning that they did not offer any help to the parents.



Moreover, numerous parents thought that the CAMHS tests were carried out when the children were too old. Perhaps it would be necessary to test children at a younger age as many feel that intervention needs to be earlier. For instance, intervention programmes can be set up in schools as multiple parents noted that their child's school had been very supportive with the referral. However, other parents deemed the support from schools inconsistent.

Once the child had been seen by a professional, there seemed to be a lack of follow up appointments and thus a lack of long-term support for those who need it.

## Our view

In summary, lots of parents feel that mental health support for their children requires serious improvement, particularly due to a lack of funding and therefore a lack of staff.

It also seems clear that earlier intervention programmes are required in schools so that mental health issues can be tackled quickly before they become more severe as the child gets older. This, combined with long-term support programmes, are vital to tackling mental health in Trafford.



## What next?

-  The full report has been shared with the provider of CAMHS and with all the professional bodies listed in the report.
-  You can find the full report produced by Healthwatch Bury, Healthwatch Oldham, Healthwatch Trafford and Healthwatch Rochdale here: [healthwatchtrafford.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/GM-CAMHS-report-FINAL-DRAFT.pdf](https://healthwatchtrafford.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/GM-CAMHS-report-FINAL-DRAFT.pdf)
-  You can share your own experiences of CAMHS with Healthwatch Trafford here: [healthwatchtrafford.co.uk/services/healthy-young-minds-trafford-child-and-adolescent-mental-health-camhs-sale-m33-7df](https://healthwatchtrafford.co.uk/services/healthy-young-minds-trafford-child-and-adolescent-mental-health-camhs-sale-m33-7df)
-  Our [youthwatchtrafford.co.uk](https://youthwatchtrafford.co.uk) website has lots of information about mental health so have a look if you or someone you know needs help!