

Innovative Mental Health Intervention

Children and Family Health Devon (CFHD)

Children and Family Health Devon (CFHD) provides integrated care and treatment across physical and mental health for children, young people and their families in Devon. CFHD have 11 pathways of care, one of which is Mental Health Support Team (MHST). The MHST in schools is a new NHS service commissioned to work with a number of schools across Devon and Torbay. It offers early intervention to help children and young people's mental health within an education and health partnership.

MHST work with children and young people (CYP), aged 5-18, and their families who are experiencing mild to moderate common mental health difficulties (anxiety, low mood and behavioural difficulties etc). MHST also offer a Whole School Approach (WSA) portfolio to help the whole school community to lead a more mentally healthy life through workshops, ambassador programmes, audit, consultations and more to CYP, parents and carers and education staff.

The MHST team consistently work above and beyond to ensure as many young people have access to the support they need, often having to source innovative routes to create long term initiatives. We have provided two examples of this work below- neither of which are part of the NHS England's outline for MHST services, however we are passionate about the impact we can have on both areas as well as maintaining all our targets for our commissioned work:

South West teacher training (SWTT) Through the work that the MHST team do, we became aware that education staff have very little or no training in looking after their own or their pupil's mental health. Having many ex-teachers within our team, we decided to do something about this to support future teachers within the South West. We delivered a training programme on 'An introduction to the importance of mental health in schools' this was delivered to 31 trainee secondary school teachers based in Exeter and Plymouth. We collected both quantitative and qualitative feedback at the end of the workshops and all participants scored the training as 4.4 out of 5 or above. Overall, attendees reported increased understanding of mental health conditions and signs as well as greater confidence in starting conversations and signposting. They reported finding the resources and strategies that were provided helpful and feeling much more confident in how they can support their own mental health and those of their students.

As a result of this training, the South West Teacher Training team have asked if we could deliver support to a national cohort of trainee teachers in England and we are looking at how we could roll this out (free) to offer preventative support to teachers. It is widely evidenced that many teachers are leaving the profession as a result of stress and burn out and so we are hoping to offer preventative support to change this narrative, as we all know how important teachers are to our children's futures.

Helping to address health inequalities in Devon:

In Devon, 1 in 8 children and young people (CYP) live in poverty- this includes some of the highest rates in the UK. Poverty is the number one driver of inequality between children in these areas and their counterparts in the rest of Devon. This leads to worse mental and physical health outcomes and educational attainment, and lower lifelong economic activity downstream. Hospital admissions in children and young people are considerably higher in Devon for mental health conditions, self-harm, and injuries compared to the rest of the UK. The gap is even wider for vulnerable groups such as disadvantaged and looked-after children in the region.¹

In response, MHST identified Lumi Nova, a digital therapy for anxiety in children and young people. Lumi Nova is both a NICE-recommended intervention and an MHRA-registered device that converges advanced technology, and evidence-based CBT enabling early intervention support or use as an adjunct to traditional therapy. A key objective is to improve engagement, access, and optimisation in hard-to-reach sub-groups to support, particularly CYP living in more rural and deprived areas using a NICE-approved innovation. The project's vision is to ensure equitable and earlier access to high-quality mental health to enable CYP to build lifelong resilience skills to self-manage their anxiety.

Lumi Nova provided an immediate intervention for CYP who don't or can't engage with traditional support. They might not meet NHS eligibility criteria, they could be on a waiting list, live in a rural location or stigma could be a barrier preventing them from seeking help. There is no waiting list to access Lumi Nova in Devon and children from any part of Devon, attending any school, can have immediate access, without a referral to CAMHS.