

Kent Transformation Plan

for Children, Young People and Young Adults' Mental Health and Wellbeing

“ *Live as long as you may,
the first twenty years are
the longest half of your life.* ”

Robert Southey, Poet Laureate 1774 to 1843.



We all know that the experiences we have as a child or young adult will influence us as we get older.

If we grow up in a stable, secure and loving environment where we are treated with respect, we will develop and be able to cope with the difficulties that life can present.

Sadly, too many children in Kent are brought up in situations where they are vulnerable and lack the support and guidance that they need. The hardships of poverty can expose children to a variety of pressures that can hinder development and growth.

And, tragically, some children and young people face the dangers of violence and sexual exploitation.

These factors can have a devastating effect on the lives of young people – and also affect their lives as adults. Poor mental health often develops in childhood but can stay with a person for the rest of their life.

The tragedy is that so much distress can be avoided, and that young people can go on to lead fulfilled lives if they're just given the chance to do so.

This document, entitled, 'The Kent Transformation Plan for Children, Young People and Young Adults' Mental Health and Wellbeing' details the work of the NHS and Kent County Council (KCC) in making an ambitious, positive reality happen. A reality where talent, self-confidence and imagination flourish and aspiration is encouraged.

The last 18 months have seen professionals from health and social care, and young people, come together to look at how young lives can be protected and nurtured.

This document contains the collective aspirations and plans that we have for the young people who live in Kent. It details the challenges that we face and what – together – we're doing to make things better.

However, nothing will emerge without a great deal of hard work and commitment from all those interested in helping the children and young people of Kent. As you'll see from reading the Transformation Plan, the NHS and local authorities plan to invest in organisations such as schools to ensure that children receive the guidance and protection that they need.

Investment will also be required for early intervention and other programmes – such as developing parenting skills.

We know that whatever plans exist, they have to be measurable and meaningful. That's why, through reading this document, you'll see reference to targets and timescales.

Kent may be a county in a part of the world that is often seen as 'affluent', but the reality can often be very different. The county contains pockets of deprivation that you would usually expect to see in inner-city areas.

All many children and young people want and need is a 'level playing field' and a secure foundation so they can develop and grow. By working together, organisations and groups of people in Kent, such as the NHS and KCC, have the potential to make the lives of young people healthy and happy so they go on to be healthy and happy adults too.

We hope this document inspires you to look towards a positive future for the young people of Kent.