



## **YoungMinds calls for all STPs to prioritise children's mental health**

The charity YoungMinds has written to Simon Stevens, Chief Executive of NHS England, to call for a greater focus on children and young people's mental health within the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) plans.

Across England, local health commissioners and local councils came together in 2016 to form STPs (Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships), to develop plans for how they would improve health and social care services within their area.

But YoungMinds is concerned that the lack of priority given to children's mental health in the STP plans could put national and local initiatives to improve services at risk. The charity is now calling for all areas to use the current planning cycle to demonstrate how they will make children's mental health a priority.

The letter follows analysis by YoungMinds of the STP plans, examining whether they included proposals for how that area would meet specific national targets or priorities to improve children's mental health services. The charity has published its findings today, rating each plan according to the visibility of these priorities.

Worryingly, three-quarters of plans (77%) were rated as having "poor visibility" or "partial visibility" on their commitment and strategy to increase access to children and young people's mental health services in line with Government targets.

The research also showed:

- 89% of STP plans gave "poor visibility" or "partial visibility" to developing the children's mental health workforce in line with national targets.
- 64% of STP plans gave "poor visibility" or "partial visibility" for their plans to establish effective mental health crisis care for young people
- 86% of STP plans gave "poor visibility" or "partial visibility" for their plans for the participation of children and young people and their families

In many of these areas, it is clear that there are strong commitments to improve services in the Local Transformation Plans (LTPs). However, YoungMinds warns that if these commitments are not given any priority within STP plans, which cover larger geographical regions, then the delivery of effective local interventions could be undermined. [1]

Matt Blow, Policy Manager for YoungMinds, said:

“STP plans should set out the priorities for health and social care in each area, so it is disappointing that so many of them do not include sufficient commitments to improving children’s mental health services. In reality, we know from our own experience that there is really good work happening on the ground in some of those areas, but if this isn’t reflected in the plans, then that work could be undermined.

“We know how difficult it can be for families to get the help that they need when they are struggling with their mental health – our helpline hears every day from parents whose children are facing long waits for treatment. The Government has set national targets to improve services, and it is crucial that there is a joined-up approach so that these targets are prioritised by commissioners across the country.”

To find out where your STP area is, and see how your local plan is rated, have a look at our map here: [youngminds.org.uk/xxx](http://youngminds.org.uk/xxx)

## LETTER TO SIMON STEVENS

Dear Simon,

We are pleased that the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health (FYFVMH) reaffirmed the commitment to improving children and young people’s mental health, and that the new planning guidance establishes a greater emphasis on STPs to demonstrate that the ambitious targets for improving children’s mental health services remain a priority.

That said, I am writing to you about the lack of visibility of children and young people’s mental health priorities within the STP plans.

We have recently carried out an analysis to examine and compare the extent to which the local transformation of children and young people’s mental health services is embedded within the published STP plans. Our analysis, which is due to be published this Friday, demonstrates significant variation across the country and a lack of visibility. In many areas, the good practice that we know is happening on the ground to transform services is not visible at STP footprint. This is concerning, given the increased emphasis, decision-making and strategy that is now taking place at STP level.

Consequently, we are concerned that the assurance of the STP plans, which have a much larger geographical and financial footprint, could undermine the assurance of Local Transformation Plans (LTPs) for children and young people’s mental health, particularly where these two plans are not aligned.

As we move to think about the future beyond the 5YFVMH we would welcome a renewed commitment to children and young people’s mental health, and we were delighted by your recent comments to this effect at the NHS Confederation Conference. In the short term, we believe that there needs to be more support for

STPs and local areas to align their work, and increase the visibility on progress towards the targets set out in the 5YFVMH.

I look forward to meeting you next week to discuss the next steps for mental health, beyond the 5YFVMH.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Marc Bush,  
Director of Policy and Evidence  
YoungMinds

## NOTES

### [1] Why have we carried out this analysis?

In 2015, local areas in England were tasked with developing a [Local Transformation Plan](#) (LTP) to demonstrate how local agencies would work together to improve the emotional health and well-being of children and young people in their area and to support those with mental health problems, according to the principles set out in [Future In Mind](#). In total, 123 LTPs were published and these are expected to be reviewed and refreshed at least once a year.

There is an expectation that local transformation priorities relating to children and young people's mental health are reflected within the [Sustainability and Transformation Partnership \(STP\) plans](#). The [planning guidance](#) dictates that STPs need to deliver the commitments from the [Five Year Forward View for Mental Health](#), and demonstrate how the priorities from the NHS Mandate will be met, including the transformation of children and young people's mental health services.

At YoungMinds, we have been concerned that the assurance of the STP plans, which have a much larger geographical and financial footprint, could undermine the assurance of LTPs at a local level, particularly where these two plans are not aligned. Therefore, we have carried out this analysis to examine and compare the extent to which the local transformation of children and young people's mental health services is embedded within the 44 individual published STP plans.

This was a desk-based exercise, examining the published STP plans, and not an investigation into how effectively services are being transformed at a local level. The analysis was carried out between November 2017 and January 2018. See attached document for our methodology.

### [2] What have we measured?

We have measured each STP against 12 different themes relating to children and young people’s mental health. These different themes relate to specific service targets or standards that local areas are expected to introduce. These targets are recorded in the [Implementation Plan](#) for the Five Year Forward for Mental Health, or within the Future in Mind report.

We have also created an overall measurement for each STP, which is an aggregate of how well it performed against all the other targets.

The analysis was carried out between November 2017 and January 2018.

### [3] What were the results?

	Poor visibility	Partial visibility	Strong visibility
Overall	23%	41%	30%
Increased access to children's mental health services	23%	55%	23%
Using local needs assessment data	20%	23%	57%
Developing MH Workforce	14%	75%	11%
CYP IAPT	25%	48%	27%
Eating disorders	16%	39%	45%
Psychosis	11%	66%	23%
Tier 4	11%	50%	39%
Mental Health liaison	9%	70%	20%
Effective crisis care	23%	41%	36%
Vulnerable groups	25%	32%	43%
Participation of CYP + families	18%	68%	14%
Involving partner organisations	20%	32%	48%

### (4) What are we calling for?

Since completing our analysis, NHS England has published updated planning guidance for 2018-19, which includes explicit requirements for STPs to meet specific national targets on children’s mental health, and to align with local LTPs.

We are calling for all areas to use the current planning cycle to demonstrate how they will make children's mental health a priority and ensure that national targets are met.

## **ABOUT YOUNGMINDS**

Now in our 25<sup>th</sup> year, we are the leading charity fighting for young people's mental health. We're leading the fight for a future where all young minds are supported through life, whatever the challenges. We're here to make sure they get the best possible mental health support and have the resilience to overcome life's difficulties.

For further information please visit [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

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For free advice and support for parents, call our helpline on 0808 802 5544