

Briefing: February 2021

## Working together to improve patient care

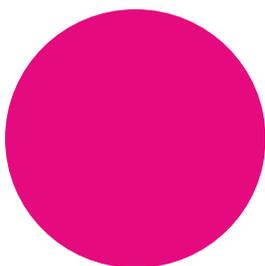
### How PCNs are working in partnership to support people's mental health

Mental health disorders are one of the common causes of morbidity in England.<sup>1</sup> Nine out of ten adults with mental health problems are supported in primary care<sup>2</sup> and around 40 per cent of GP appointments involve mental health.<sup>3</sup> People with serious mental illness have a higher risk of serious physical health needs and are more likely to die younger.<sup>4</sup> Primary care plays a key role in supporting patients' mental health and wellbeing, so it has become a priority for many primary care networks (PCNs).

This briefing was developed jointly by the NHS Confederation's Mental Health Network and PCN Network and links to examples of three models of partnership working that are currently underway in primary care to support mental health at place level.

The models can help PCNs, mental health trusts and commissioners consider how to make use of the funding available from April 2021 to provide mental health practitioners in primary care, as part of the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS).

The examples come from Herefordshire and Worcestershire STP; The Bridge PCN in Milton Keynes; and the Leeds Student Medical Practice/The Light Surgery PCN.



## Key points

- A seamless referral system between primary and secondary care is important for patients who have mental health needs.
- Early interventions for young people can be very cost effective and improve access and outcomes in mental health, wellbeing, and physical health.
- Working in partnership across the community, and pooling knowledge, resources and assets is important for improving access to services, providing cost effective interventions, and improving outcomes.
- Joining up primary care and mental health services is essential. Primary care can help people who have milder mental health issues access support and reduce referral to secondary mental health services.
- Joint working between PCNs and mental health trusts can help to bring in specialist mental health support, with minimal or no cost to the PCN. This can help patients who have underlying mental health issues, but who would not reach the threshold to be referred to secondary mental health care.
- Ongoing evaluation and data collection, pre- and post-programme, to demonstrate effectiveness is essential.
- Population health management approaches and understanding local need is essential.

## Context

The NHS Long Term Plan (LTP) sets out a clear commitment to improve community mental health services and has set a vision for how a new place-based community mental health model, which includes PCNs, can be implemented. NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSEI) has ringfenced dedicated funding for 12 pilot sites to test different approaches to implement this framework.<sup>5</sup>

One in six children and young people have a probable mental disorder, but only about a third are accessing specialist mental health services.<sup>6</sup> There is a commitment in the LTP to increase this number, with the aim over the coming decade to ensure that all children and young people can access specialist care. Often young people report feeling more comfortable accessing non-statutory services, such as those provided by third sector organisations. In order to effectively engage with children and young people, the NHS needs to work with other local partners such as local authorities, schools and colleges and the voluntary sector.

The example models that are linked from this briefing can help PCNs, mental health trusts and commissioners to consider how to make use of the funding available from April 2021, which will provide mental health practitioners in primary care as part of the ARRS. This will be a joint funding model, where every PCN will be entitled to a fully embedded whole-time equivalent mental health practitioner employed and provided by the local community mental health services provider. Fifty per cent of the funding will come from the PCN and 50 per cent from the provider. Further information is available in a letter from NHSEI, and in the draft NHS standard contract for 2021/22.

## Example models

- [Herefordshire and Worcestershire STP mental health pilot](#)

This example highlights the STP's new model for community mental health support in a rural setting.

- [Mental health support for young people and working-age adults, The Bridge PCN, Milton Keynes](#)

This example shows how the PCN has worked with different partners within a locality and used their community assets to support the mental health of children, young people and working-age adults.

- [Improving timely access to mental health support in a PCN, Leeds Student Medical Practice/The Light Surgery PCN partnership working with Northpoint Wellbeing third sector mental health advisers](#)

This example demonstrates the pilot of a new approach to improving timely access and an inclusive approach to mental health support in partnership with a local voluntary sector organisation specialising in mental health.

The Mental Health Network and the PCN Network would like to share more examples of good practice. If you have successful work to share, please email [Mentalhealthnetwork@nhsconfed.org](mailto:Mentalhealthnetwork@nhsconfed.org) or [PCNnetwork@nhsconfed.org](mailto:PCNnetwork@nhsconfed.org)

## References

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### About the PCN Network

The PCN Network has been established by the NHS Confederation to support primary care networks and ensure they are effectively represented within the health and care system. Read more at [www.nhsconfed.org/PCN-Network](http://www.nhsconfed.org/PCN-Network)

### About the Mental Health Network

The Mental Health Network is the voice of mental health and learning disability service providers for the NHS in England. It represents providers from the not-for-profit, commercial and statutory sectors – including more than 90 per cent of NHS trusts and foundation trusts providing secondary mental health services. It works with government, NHS bodies, parliamentarians, opinion formers and the media to promote the views and interests of our members and to influence policy on their behalf. Find out more at [www.nhsconfed.org/MHN](http://www.nhsconfed.org/MHN)

### About the NHS Confederation

The NHS Confederation is the membership body that brings together and speaks on behalf of organisations that plan, commission and provide NHS services in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. We represent hospitals, community and mental health providers, ambulance trusts, primary care networks, clinical commissioning groups and integrated care systems. To find out more, visit [www.nhsconfed.org](http://www.nhsconfed.org)

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