



## RCPsych in Scotland – briefing to SPICe on Children’s Mental Health Week Survey of CAMHS Psychiatrists

10/02/2022

### Executive summary

- **Our young people have suffered** – the impact of the pandemic has been found to have fallen hard on our most vulnerable children and young people.
- **Exacerbating pre-existing issues** – As highlighted by organisations like [Audit Scotland](#) and by key measures like [CAMHS waiting times](#), the mental health care these young people need was already struggling to meet demand prior to the pandemic.
- **What our member’s say** – in a follow up survey of our Child & Adolescent (CAP) faculty members, an overwhelming proportion of respondents felt:
  1. The services in which they operate remain under resourced, despite a recognition of increased investment through the Mental Health Recovery & Renewal Fund
  2. That the pandemic has adversely impacted the wellbeing of those they provide care to.
  3. That demand for specialist mental health care has significantly increased among children and young people.
  4. That staffing our specialist services remains a critical challenge

### A continued commitment to the mental health care of our young people...

*While we welcome the efforts to invest into CAMHS through the Mental Health Recovery & Renewal Fund, this cannot be the end of this investment.*

*We need the right staff to be able to deliver this specialist care.*

*We need much greater co-ordination with other care settings, to ensure every young person who doesn't need clinical care can access appropriate care and support.*

***We would urge that the Scottish Government begin in this Budget, and its subsequent Spending Review, to outline how it will reach its target of 1% of the health budget to CAMHS by 2026.***

## Supporting our most vulnerable young people, now and post-pandemic

- **An active voice** – The College has [been an active part](#) of the conversation for how we can better provide support, care and treatment for those with poor mental wellbeing and mental ill health as we try to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. This playing a key role in the prioritisation of mental health services in the [Mental Health Transition & Recovery Plan](#), and [successfully advocating for all parties](#) to commit to 1% of the health budget to CAMHS by 2026 and to a National Transitions Strategy to Adulthood.
- **Wellbeing** – Pre-pandemic, Scotland's children and young people were already suffering poorer mental health year on year. In the government's [latest wellbeing survey](#) of young people prior to the pandemic, the percentage of young people responding with borderline or abnormal responses on their mental wellbeing was at 38%, the highest such rate on record. This doubled for children with long-term mental ill health, who are likeliest to need specialist care and support.
- **Pandemic's impact** – The pandemic has had a particular impact on young people. As detailed by [Young Scot's Lockdown Lowdown](#) work, the denial of their ability to normally access education, an inability to properly socialise, resulting uncertainties over their future are all facets that have come through. Young people were much likelier to identify their mental health as a negative (37%) versus their physical health (22%).
- **Impact on rates of mental ill health** – We are already seeing evidence this is manifesting itself in the form of mental ill health. A [NHS England study conducted during lockdown](#) estimated rates of probable mental ill health increased during the pandemic from one in nine children and young people to one in six. Based on figures from the [Centre for Mental Health](#), we can expect up to **145,000** young people in Scotland to require new or additional mental health support.<sup>1</sup>
- **Providing for our young people** – CAMHS stands as one of the [most extreme examples](#) of this. At one stage last year, 1 in every 100 young person was being referred to CAMHS. For what is highly specialist care for those with severe mental ill health, this was unprecedented. Nearly 2,000 young people also waited over a year for treatment.
- **Need for greater resources to meet greater need** – with the need for specialist support already increasing based on reports from our members in CAMHS, its funding settlement needs revisited urgently. This is especially considering CAMHS was, as of 2019-20. [only receiving 0.61% of health funding](#), representing a 0.15% increase in the previous 8 years. Based on [data](#) from Young Minds, this compares to **0.97%** of health funding in England.

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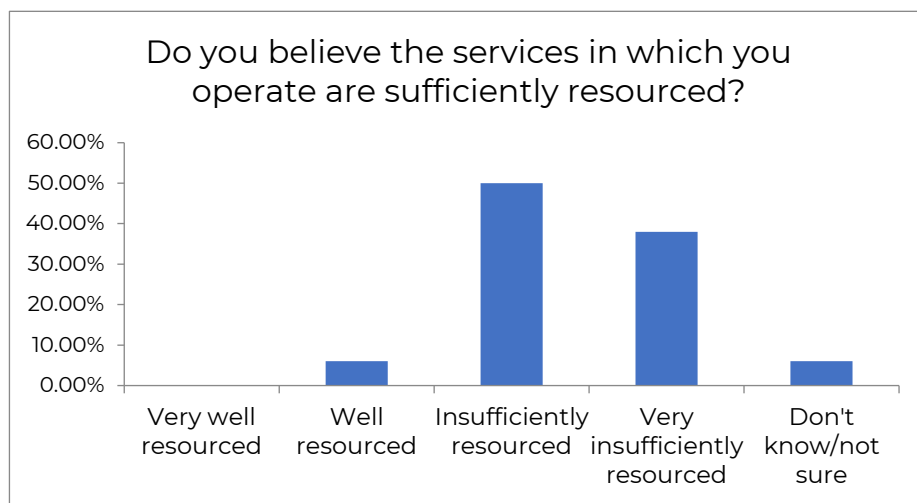
<sup>1</sup> This is based on using the Scottish population as a proportion of the English population (9.7%)

## Our Member's Survey

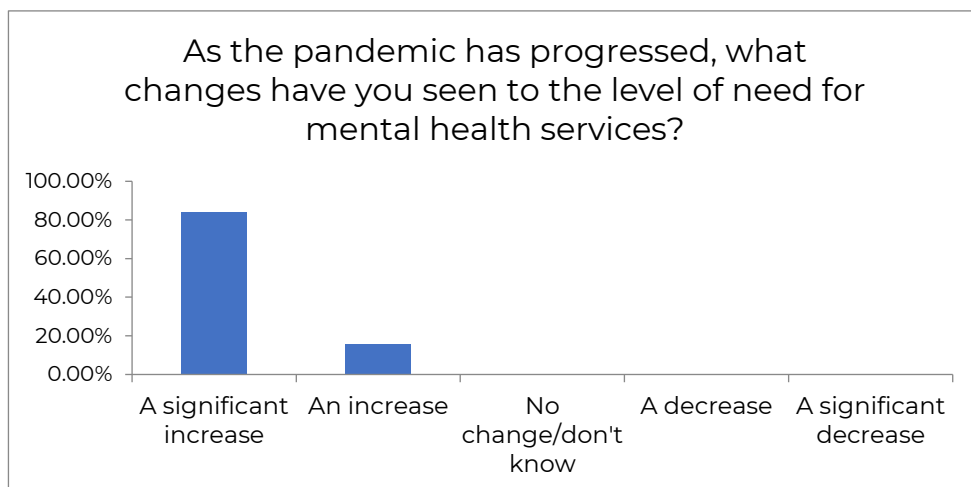
Ahead of [Children's Mental Health Week](#), we issued a follow up survey<sup>2</sup> to our Child & Adolescent Faculty members to get a perspective on the pandemic and its impact on the care they provide to our most vulnerable children and young people. We replicated the questions asked last year to enable a comparison:

### Key results:

- 1. Resourcing** – Reflecting welcome investment through the Mental Health Recovery & Renewal Fund, **32%** said they had seen the resourcing situation either improve or significantly improve, versus **5%** last year. Nonetheless, **88%** of members who responded said the services in which they operated were still insufficiently resourced.

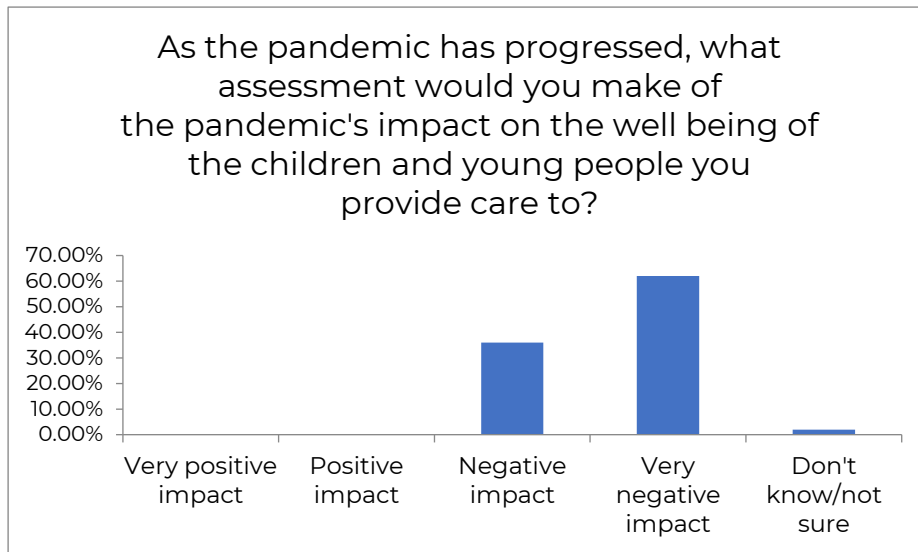


- 2. Demand** – Around **84%** of respondents had a significant increase in the level of need for mental health services during the pandemic, with no member stating they had seen anything other than an increase.

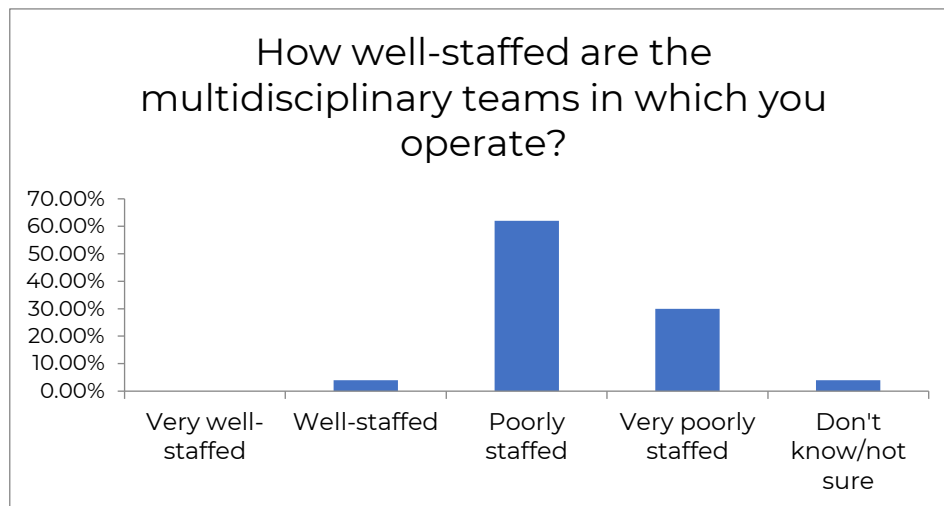


<sup>2</sup> Of the 133 CAMHS psychiatrists in Scotland, 51 (38%) responded anonymously. For further details on this survey, please get in touch.

**3. Impact on those we provide care for** – **62%** of respondents felt the pandemic had had a very negative impact on the wellbeing of the children and young people they provide care to. This was similar to last year's figure of **63%**.



**4. Staffing the critical challenge** – Our members reported that the staffing situation has gotten worse as the pandemic has progressed, with **92%** reporting services were poorly staffed (versus 64% last year).



## **5. What our members said?**

*“There's increased resource which is great but it'll take a good deal of time, maybe even years, for us to feel the benefit from this. Not only recruiting staff, but training them and rebuilding teams all the whilst a significant exodus of staff from CAMHS continues.”*

*“Much more demand than available resources - only able to see the most unwell / risky leaving a poor service for those below this threshold.”*

*“CAMHS services locally did the very best they could with the limited resources they had. What we had was organised well and allocated equitably. Sadly the many years of poor planning and investment have left us unable to hire suitably qualified and experienced people to fill empty and newly created posts.”*