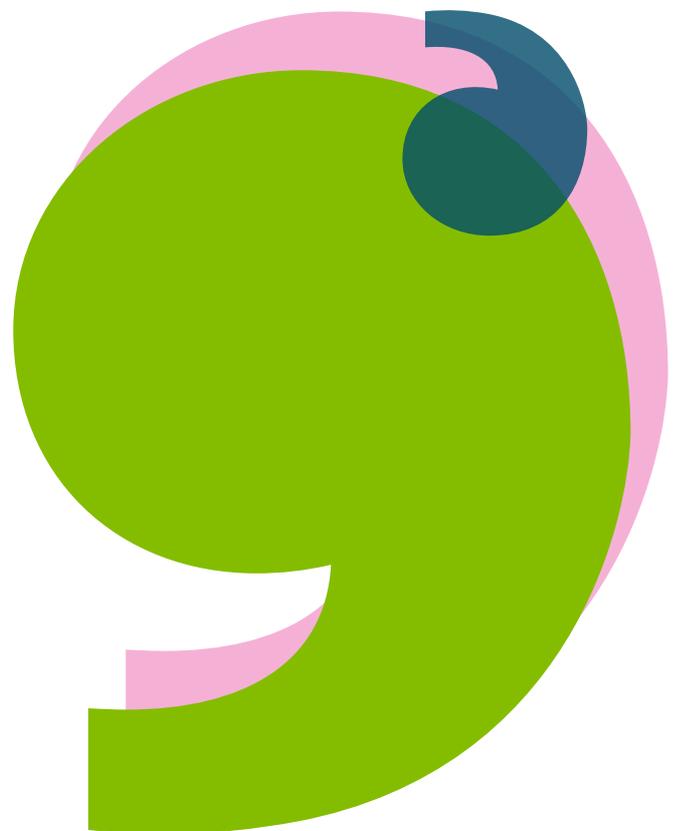


# Primary Care Plus:

Central North West London (CNWL)

Mental health service review

January 2018



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# 1 Acknowledgements

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Healthwatch Milton Keynes would like to thank the CNWL Primary Care Plus Team Lead, and the service users for their time and honesty. We would not have been able to review this service without such candour.

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# 2 The Current Picture

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According to Milton Keynes Council Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) data, mental ill health is the largest single cause of disability and the most common reason for claiming health-related benefits. Mental health problems are linked to a wide range of issues, including poor educational achievement, poor physical health, absence from work due to sickness and early death.

While the commissioners of mental health services have been making a concerted effort to improve the local offering, these services are still stretched and can have long wait times attached to them.

Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group and CNWL NHS Foundation Trust, who commission and provide mental health services in Milton Keynes recognised the need for improvement in the provision of early intervention services for local people who are experiencing mild to moderate mental ill health. To address this, they have developed a pilot programme called Primary Care Plus (PCP). This service began running in four GP surgeries across Milton Keynes with referrals being made to the service by a patient's doctor, with treatment provided at the patient's own surgery. The aim is to increase access and reduce stigma.

The service works to support GPs in caring for patients with mental health problems by focusing on the individual's current needs and improving their knowledge and skills. PCP has been working with secondary mental health services to support stable patients with severe and enduring mental health problems return to Primary Care when they no longer require specialist support.

At present, PCP is formed of a Team Leader, two Band 6 Mental Health Nurses, a Consultant Psychiatrist and an Administrator. In addition, the Consultant Psychiatrist provides diagnostic and medication advice to GPs, and is frequently involved in patient's care while under PCP.



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## 3 Why Primary Care Plus?

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Healthwatch Milton Keynes sees the provision of good, accessible and responsive mental health services as a priority.

Healthwatch were encouraged by the innovative and integrated design of the service, and wanted to have conversations with consenting service users to evaluate their experience in an independent review.

### 3.1 Methodology

The PCP Team Leader gained consent for Healthwatch Milton Keynes to speak to 10 people (approximately 10% of current and discharged service users). We asked everyone we spoke to the same questions:

- How did you feel about your GP referring you to the PCP service?
- How did you find the timeliness/ attitude/ support offered in the initial contact?
- Was the support offered helpful?
- Was the programme long enough?
- Do you feel that you have been given tools to help you after you are discharged from the service?
- Do you think the service works?
- If you could change one thing about the service, what would it be?

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## 4 What we found

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The service user feedback for this programme has been overwhelmingly positive and demonstrates the impact on wellbeing of people getting the right treatment at the right time for them. The following key points were highlighted during our conversations with service users:

- Service users highly value the programme
- Support offered is tailored to the individual
- Service users felt that the practitioners understood them and their issues



- The timeliness of the initial contact is a key factor for the positive feedback
- Increasing PCP working days at each surgery would improve access for service users
- Referrals made by the service, and the support offered while waiting for further treatment, ensure that service user needs are met
- 100% of the people we spoke to said that the service was effective.

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## 5 What we were told

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When asked about how they felt about being referred to PCP by their GP, every response was very positive with one service user saying telling us:

*“I was over the moon, really happy with the different direction the GP was taking”*

One person described themselves being relieved, with another saying they had felt desperate, and was very pleased to be referred to the service.

One service user had been referred through the psychiatrist at a hospital clinic at the very early stages of the programme’s roll out. This person expressed surprise that the programme was so new and felt that it should be a mandatory service in all GP surgeries, especially considering the prevalence of mental ill health in Milton Keynes. The service user was very impressed at the level of support they received with phone calls being made at random to check on progress. The patient felt they were being given the tools to achieve their goals.

We were told that the service was very quick and responsive to the needs of those attending and that the staff were all very supportive, professional and, most importantly, made the service user feel that their issues were understood and could be dealt with. One person commented that the service made them realise that, while there is no one fix-all, the little changes made a big difference to how they were able to respond to problems.

It was reported to us that the service staff approached peoples’ issues responsibly and thoughtfully. There was a focus on addressing issues by providing techniques that could be applied in everyday life, and to other issues that may arise.

When asked what, if any, changes the service users would make to the system to make it more effective or accessible, the majority said that they found PCP to be brilliant, and that they wouldn’t change a thing.

The two service users who would make changes suggested more staff to increase the number of available appointment days. One person was being seen every two weeks, and said they would have preferred to come in weekly as, especially early in the process, it would provide more intensive support when they needed it.

One person told us that they felt very comfortable talking to the PCP team lead from the moment they met. They felt that between the GP, the psychiatrist and the PCP, they were getting all the help they could want. What they most appreciated was the consistency of information they were being given by all involved. They were referred to a further counselling programme, as the PCP programme was unable to address all of their mental health issues, but they felt that the service was great at what they did.

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## 6 Recommendations

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Mental Health is a priority for the Health and Social Care system in Milton Keynes. It is encouraging to see a new service being developed for Milton Keynes residents experiencing mild to moderate mental ill health.

The Primary Care Plus pilot has had a positive impact on the service users we spoke to, and it has the potential to provide essential early mental health and wellbeing support to Milton Keynes residents who may need it.

We recommend that the commissioners of the programme consider further investment in Primary Care Plus to increase the accessibility of the service by expanding its availability in terms of available appointment days and times. During discussions with commissioners and providers we were told that they hoped to run the service in all Milton Keynes GP surgeries, and we strongly support this aim.

If the pilot continues with the same standard of delivery, we feel it has the potential to address the health inequalities people talk to us about, in terms of accessing mental health services.

