



Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust
East London NHS Foundation Trust
North East London NHS Foundation Trust
The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust
Whittington Health NHS Trust

Proposals for a new interim model of care for inpatient child and adolescent mental health services in North Central and North East London

Stakeholder briefing

The North Central and East London Provider Collaborative (NCEL PC) is made up of a number of NHS trusts and an independent service provider which organise and provide child and adolescent inpatient and community mental health services for children and young people across the area.

Currently, the collaborative commissions specialist inpatient services on behalf of NHS England's specialised commissioning team. However, NHS England is planning to delegate this commissioning responsibility to North Central London Integrated Care Board from April 2025, subject to formal governance.

The lead organisation for the collaborative is East London NHS Foundation Trust.

Together, we are proposing to make some interim changes to the service we provide for those children and young people who need inpatient mental health services.

In December 2023, we had to temporarily close one of our four inpatient mental health facilities, Simmons House Adolescent Unit, following safety concerns. Previously, NCEL PC had commissioned 10 beds at Simmons House, from Whittington Health NHS Trust, for children and young people from 13 to 18 years old.

At the time, we made some immediate and temporary changes to the services we provide so that children and young people could continue accessing the care and treatment they need.

These changes included using more beds in the other three general adolescent units in our area. At the same time, a newly established intensive home treatment team, provided by Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust, was extended to cover the whole of the North Central London footprint including Camden and Islington. The development of home treatment teams means young people are only admitted as inpatients when absolutely necessary.

We are pleased that since December 2023, no child or young person has had to be transferred out of the area to get the care and treatment they need, unless appropriate for the individual patient (for example, to be cared for closer to where they live, or for admission to a specialist eating disorder unit).

Why we need to change our approach now

While it is good news that we have not had to transfer any young patients out of our geographical area for care, we do need to adapt and improve upon the temporary arrangements that we have had in place from December 2023 until now.

This is because, as you would expect, our other three inpatient units are seeing and treating more children and young people than they did when Simmons House was open and some of



them are having to travel further to receive the care they need. This means the current temporary arrangements we have in place are not sustainable.

As a result, we need to establish a short-to-medium-term interim arrangement, for approximately the next 18 months, while we develop a long-term solution for how we organise these important services. We are absolutely committed to working with clinical leaders, staff, service users and their families and carers, children and young people, our partners in health and care, and with other stakeholders across North Central and North East London to develop our thinking and planning on this over the next period.

We need to make sure that our services are resilient and can cope with additional demand without having an adverse impact on patient care. And we need to make sure that we can keep providing as much care as possible close to where the children and young people who need services live.

Simmons House needs a significant building upgrade to continue to function as a children and young people's inpatient mental health unit. As a result, reopening the unit is not currently viable.

Together, these reasons mean we now need to put further interim arrangements in place to make sure we are continuing to provide children and young people with the best possible care until more permanent arrangements can be made.

From 18th October to 29th November 2024, we will be running a period of engagement to understand what people think of these interim proposals, and how they may be impacted by them.

What is happening nationally and across our area?

NHS England has articulated a clear vision for the future commissioning and delivery of specialised mental health services for children and young people.

Importantly, this focuses on the development of enhanced specialist services in the community, such as enhanced home treatment teams and eating disorder day services. By providing more specialist care in communities, these services would reduce the need for children and adolescents to be admitted to an inpatient bed unless it was absolutely necessary.

The services would also help to make sure that, where a child or young person does need to be admitted to an inpatient bed, they only stay in hospital while it is clinically appropriate for them to be there.

Providing more specialist care in communities and at home means that we can discharge children and young people more quickly from our inpatient units, because we can care for them more effectively and more appropriately out of hospital. This, in turn, reduces how long people spend as inpatients in these units (their 'length of stay'), and means that we do not need to commission as many inpatient beds as we have previously.

Over the last three years, working with service users, NCEL Provider Collaborative has already started to develop 'alternative to admission' services in our local communities. These include services such as hospital at home teams for eating disorders, enhanced home treatment teams and day services. As a consequence, we have seen a reduction in the need for inpatient admissions, a reduction in children and young people having to be transferred out of our area to get the care they need, and a reduced average length of stay in our inpatient beds.



The need and demand for our services in North Central London

Simmons House is located in north central London, so we have specifically focused on understanding the need and demand for our services in that part of our geography.

The number of under 18s across North Central London is expected to decrease by 11% (around 33,000) between 2023 and 2033¹.

In recent years, most children and young people from North Central London who need inpatient mental health services have accessed them from The Beacon Centre, which is located in Barnet and is provided by Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust. The full breakdown of inpatient admissions can be seen below.

Inpatient admissions among children and young people from North Central London

General adolescent inpatient unit	% of total children and young people admissions from North Central London in 2022/23
The Beacon Centre (Barnet)	50%
Simmons House (Highgate)	24%
Coborn Centre for Adolescent Mental Health (Newham)	17%
Brookside Child and Adolescent Inpatient Unit (Ilford)	9%

General adolescent inpatient unit	% of total children and young people admissions from North Central London in 2023/24
The Beacon Centre (Barnet)	52%
Coborn Centre for Adolescent Mental Health (Newham)	23%
Brookside Child and Adolescent Inpatient Unit (Ilford)	16%
Simmons House (Highgate)	9% (noting that Simmons House was closed for the last quarter of 2023/24)

It is interesting to note that the London Borough of Enfield has had a consistently low level of admissions over the last two years as well as the lowest number of delays discharging children and young people from inpatient care when they are ready to return home.

Anecdotally, clinicians report that the adolescent outreach team working in Enfield is particularly effective and may well be impacting on the reduced need for inpatient admissions. We will explore this and similar models of working more fully.

There are adolescent outreach teams and home treatment teams working across all boroughs in North Central London.

Our modelling assumptions

¹ Source: North London Partners in health and care, 2023)



Historically, children and young people admitted to Simmons House for inpatient care have stayed in the unit for much longer than they have in the other three inpatient units across North Central and North East London. How long someone spends in hospital is called the ‘length of stay’.

If we apply the same length of stay that we see in our other units to the number of patients admitted to Simmons House during 2023, we would require an average of 4.3 additional beds at any one time to meet the demand for our services.

Increased prevalence

We have also seen a significant increase in North Central London in admissions of children and young people with a diagnosis of autism to general adolescent units like The Beacon Centre and others.

NHS England’s Transforming Care Programme and more recently the Learning Disability and Autism programme indicate that those with a diagnosis of learning disability and/or autism should only be admitted to inpatient settings when clinically necessary and all appropriate community-based support has been explored. This is reflected in the views of our service users, who have told us that inpatient environments can be challenging for them.

Although it does not form part of this work, we also saw a significant increase in admissions to our specialist eating disorder units during 2023/24, consistent with the national picture. While this is not related to the temporary closure of Simmons House (which is a general adolescent unit), we are also hoping to address increased need for these services.

We have developed an equality impact assessment to understand the impact of our proposed interim arrangements on those who use our services and will use this to inform the engagement period we are running until 28 November 2024 during which we are inviting feedback on our interim proposals.

How we developed our interim proposals

The Medical Director for the NCEL Provider Collaborative led a team of senior clinical leaders to develop an approach for an interim model of care, reflecting the current closure of Simmons House. The clinical leaders were nominated from across all our Provider Collaborative partners in North Central London. These include Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust, Whittington Health NHS Trust, and The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust.

In designing a series of clinical options, the team considered:

- the health needs of children and young people across North Central London
- demographic changes among children and young people in the area
- patterns of demand for children and adolescents’ mental health services, including analysing data since the temporary closure of Simmons House
- how the services we design would be experienced by local children and young people, their parents and carers
- how we maintain a focus on treating and caring for young people close to home in their local communities

The team’s modelling shows that we require an average of 4.3 additional beds, compared to the



temporary service we have now, at any one time to meet the current demand for our services. '0.3' of a bed refers to a bed – or the equivalent resource to a bed – used a third of the time.

Our proposed interim service model – inpatient care

Our other general adolescent unit in North Central London, The Beacon Centre in Edgware, has additional space that we can make use of. Like Simmons House, it also has an onsite school, meaning children and young people can access educational support during their stay.

We are proposing to commission three additional inpatient beds for children and young people at The Beacon Centre, to help us meet their needs.

Our proposed interim service model – care close to home

Importantly, we will also make sure that, wherever possible and clinically appropriate, children and young people will receive the care they need at home.

We are proposing to increase capacity of the North Central London home treatment teams by enhancing the care they are able to provide for young people with learning disabilities or autism.

We are also planning to extend and invest in the existing North Central London adolescent assessment and outreach teams, who work intensively with young people in the community who require mental health support and help them to avoid needing inpatient care where possible. As part of our proposals, this service would be available into the evenings (until 8pm) and at weekends for the first time and would also have specialist support available for parents and carers.

Our interim proposals place a strong emphasis on enhancing alternative care, which aims to prevent children and young people being admitted to an inpatient unit unless clinically necessary.

The proposals aim to ensure that there are more specialist roles to support those with learning disability and autism in our home treatment teams and enhanced adolescent and assessment outreach teams. This would mean that the needs of these young people can be met with specialist, tailored approaches, outside of inpatient settings.

The enhancements we are making to these out-of-hospital services are equivalent to the 1.3 beds, on average, that we need, in addition to the three inpatient beds described above, to meet the demand for our services (4.3 beds in total).

We can also commission an extra inpatient bed – in addition to these three – if we need to, for example in times of very high demand. This would be purchased on an 'as needed' basis from an independent service provider and, if this is needed, we will make every effort to ensure this is as close to the child or young person's home as possible.

This is fewer than the 10 inpatient beds we had commissioned at Simmons House. However, it is best practice to ensure that patients are only admitted to an inpatient unit when they need intensive clinical care and, when they are admitted, that they do not spend longer than absolutely necessary in hospital. We believe in caring for children and young people at home where possible.



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Importantly, these are interim proposals which we would like to implement for around the next 18 months, while we continue to consider how best to organise services for the long term.

As part of a wider piece of work outside of these proposals, we are also working to improve the way we care for young people with eating disorders at The Beacon Centre, linking with Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust's eating disorder 'Hospital at Home' team.

What happens next?

We are keen to hear what people think of these interim proposals for children and young people's mental healthcare: to commission three more beds at The Beacon Centre for inpatient care, and develop our community support and home-based care. We want to hear from those who use our services and those in our communities, including children and young people, their families and carers, alongside our staff, partners and stakeholders.

We want to understand how the proposals would impact people and are starting a six-week period of engagement on 18th October, which will continue until 29th November 2024.

We will then consider people's thoughts and feedback, discuss any adjustments or adaptations to the interim proposals, and are looking to implement them from early 2025 onwards.

We believe an interim solution is necessary to make the best use of the resources currently available to us, while continuing to care for children and young people in the safest possible environment and as close to home as possible. This is ahead of making more permanent arrangements about how we best provide these services in due course.

We are absolutely committed to working with children and young people, our staff, communities and stakeholders, to develop our thinking and planning over the next period.

For more information, visit: <https://www.elft.nhs.uk/ncel>

Please let us have your feedback by 29 November 2024. You can email us at elft.ncelengagement@nhs.net, or write to us at The Communications Team, NCEL Provider Collaborative, Robert Dolan House, Trust Headquarters, 9 Alie Street, London E1 8DE