

# Support for Change

## Approaches and models for the development of provision for children and young people's mental health 2008

### Chapter 10 Conclusions



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### **Project Team:**

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## **10. Conclusions**

### **10.1 Overview**

The Support for Change project has drawn together information on the national policy context surrounding developments in children and young people's mental health in Scotland and on activity at local level to consider models and approaches for the provision of key services. The project has identified examples of how these services are being developed and configured, as described above. This final section draws together some brief concluding observations that emerge from this work.

### **10.2 Complexity and variability of provision**

The overview of policy that frames the development of services and resources at local level to meet mental health needs shows the considerable attention paid in recent years to children, including their health and mental health. It is possible to identify several core themes within this rich policy environment that have a direct bearing on activities to promote mental health, as follows:

- Early intervention and the promotion of positive outcomes
- Integrated approaches to assessment and the delivery of supports and services
- The promotion of child wellbeing and protection from harm

These themes provide opportunities to emphasise the central importance of child mental health and to promote the mainstreaming of responsibility for child mental health across service systems. The continuing concern with inequalities in health and health outcomes over the life course requires a strong focus on the experiences and opportunities available to children in Scotland from their earliest years.

The Support for Change survey of local structures for planning and development indicated that the locus of responsibility for children's mental health rests in different places and at different levels and that there are many different variants across the country. What appears to be critical is that there is commitment to and leadership for child mental health; the case studies indicated that vision and leadership had been key in stimulating local developments, fuelled by a drive to achieve improved mental health outcomes.

The case studies suggested the importance of having common standards and outcomes to work towards, with sufficient local flexibility to develop service models and approaches that fit with local geography and service patterns.

Workforce development also requires to be embedded in training and continuous professional development for those working in universal services to cover topics such as infant mental health, child development, parent/child relationships.

### **10.3 Gaps**

It had been hoped that the exploration of examples of development undertaken in Support for Change could be supplemented by an analysis of data on expenditure and on activity levels in different local contexts, using routinely collected data from ISD and other central sources. However there remain considerable limitations with the coverage of these data, although work is currently underway to improve these. For this reason the Support for Change project has relied mainly on the information provided by participating local areas.

Looking to the future, the facility to develop a detailed description of types and models of provision with information on costs, staffing capacity, pathways and outcomes would be a considerable advantage in learning about what works and in comparing the relative benefits of different approaches.

In the Support for Change project it proved difficult to identify specific information on emergency and out of hours arrangements for children and young people. There continue to be concerns about the availability of appropriate resources. This seems an area of provision that would warrant further investigation to explore needs in more detail and to identify how existing services and resources can be developed and extended.

Finally, in developing services and resources for children and young people it is important to differentiate more clearly the specific needs of children and young people in relation to their age and stage of development and also to their familial, social and cultural context.

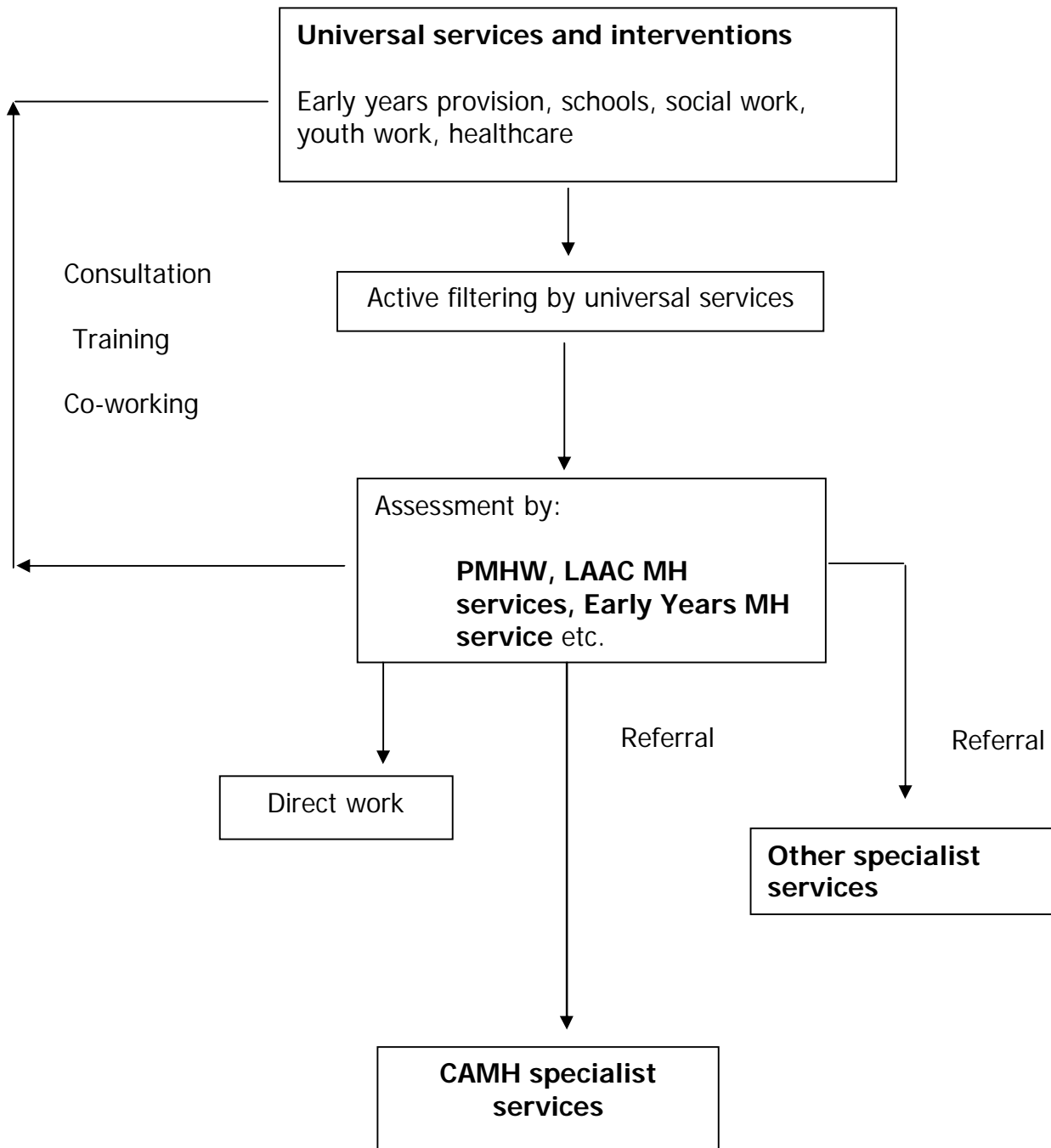
### **10.4 Capacity to address mental health needs of children and young people**

Across the areas of provision explored in the Support for Change project, was a common theme of building capacity at all levels and across sectors within complex service systems. This extends far beyond the development of discrete services. There was striking commonality in the core approaches identified in relation to early years, primary mental health work and services for looked after and accommodated children and young people as shown in Figure 10.1:

- A key role for universal services and interventions in supporting children and young people's mental health
- The identification of a specialist resource of mental health expertise configured to deliver advice, support, training, consultation and direct intervention to key sectors of universal services
- The effectiveness of this approach was premised on the development of clear pathways to assure access to specialist support for those children who required it and clear definitions of roles, boundaries and thresholds
- The provision of support, advice consultation and training carefully tailored to the sector and professional groups targeted

To be effective these types of systemic interventions need to be more than a series of short term projects, as part of a process of building capacity in universal services and ensuring the effective targeting of CAMH specialist expertise.

**Figure 10.1: Pathways to Care and Support for Children and Young People<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> Figure 8.1 has been informed by work in Glasgow on a model for the development of parenting services