

Health Scrutiny Committee  
5 December 2022  
Public Forum - statements



**Statements have been received as listed below (full details are set out on the subsequent pages):**

1. Jen Smith – Child and adolescent mental health services



## **PUBLIC FORUM – STATEMENTS**

### **Statement 1 – Jen Smith**

Statement for Agenda Item 8

On the 20 May 2021, my then year 9 child was accepted onto the waiting list of East Central CAMHS. It was around this time they were so anxious, they were unable to attend school. This inability to attend due to extreme anxiety continued throughout the rest of the academic year. He had already missed year 7 and year 8 due to extreme anxiety.

Complete non-attendance then continued throughout the entirety of Year 10 - September 2021 – September 2022.

Despite contacting CAMHS several times when things became extremely difficult to manage – difficult to manage being a euphemism due to the nature of public forum papers - the wait continued.

At the beginning of September 2022, after another extremely difficult to manage incident, I contacted CAMHS and was particularly factual about the repercussions of this wait. We had the first appointment on 14 September.

That was it. We have not heard anything further since then. That was over 2 months ago. Fob. Off.

We are now some 18 months from the original referral with no support nor prospect of any.

My child is now in year 11 and is unable to ever return to secondary education due to his extremely high levels of anxiety. No GCSEs or anything like this despite being more than capable. There has been NO mental health support in this entire time.

This is not all CAMHS fault. Plenty of fault lies with Bristol City Council and the two academy schools who goaded my child's disability until he became too anxious to attend.

But over 18 months waiting for CAMHS is diabolical. There may be other things set up in the wait interim such as Off The Record, but for some children and young people this either does not work, is not accessible or the handful of 1-1 sessions they might get is no good.

My other child has been waiting now coming up a year or so. I predict another 18 month wait for them.

The research data behind those who are autistic and attempt or are successful at ending their lives is not good. Perhaps the fact a child has not died in Bristol is because of the extreme efforts families have to go to support their children and young people.

Too often I'm seeing 'the global pandemic' continuing to be used as an excuse for education and health failings which have been creaking on in Bristol for years. It's just offensive to minimise the long-term life experiences of families like this.

When children become adults and have mental health crises, well-wishers always hope they 'get the support they need'. Well in Bristol, CAMHS missed the support they needed as children and young

people and I have no faith there is any particularly ground breaking support waiting for them when they're older.

I have personally known neurodivergent adults who have jumped off the Suspension Bridge in Bristol. This is the kind of future that waits our failed SEND children and young people and a 40-minute update to councillors doesn't cut it in my book.

The update from us on CAMHS is that there is no CAMHS.