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# **Mental health services for young people**

**Volunteer report – May 2026**

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## Introduction

This report explores young people's experiences of mental health services in Surrey and highlights improvements which can be made.

## Approach

This small, qualitative study involved face to face interviews with 11 young people, all but one of whom were students. All had accessed some form of mental health support, via school, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and/or private counselling.

## Our findings

### Theme 1 – mental health services for young people

Eight young people who had reached out for mental health support from the NHS expressed dissatisfaction. There was a feeling that the support was unreliable and not of a high quality. Some stated that services for young people are not taking mental health, the patient, or their condition seriously, leaving people with a feeling that they are being dismissed.

“They want to find a solution as easily as possible and take the easy way out.”

“...they told me that I needed to wait for my problems to get worse in order to receive help.”

People also talked about the lack of individualised help, with support feeling very generalised rather than meeting individual needs.

Conversely, many expressed positive views about counselling and therapy sought privately – two of the young people who spoke to us who had more serious conditions said that private counselling better met their individual needs.

“Some services are great, like private counselling.”

Many also felt supported by their school/college when it came to their mental health.

### Theme 2 – accessibility of services for young people

Seven people talked about long waiting times and appointment scheduling difficulties making NHS services hard to access. Some felt that they would have to wait a long time for appointments that felt rushed and ultimately not that helpful, prompting some to turn to private counselling. However, people also talked to us about issues with over-subscribed private counselling.

Additionally, young people stated that the stigma surrounding mental health largely limited their awareness of local services. Some said that their school lacked awareness of local services so they were not encouraged to reach out to them.

### **Theme 3 – EHCPs**

Some of the young people we spoke to talked about Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and the impact which difficulties getting them, and them being kept updated, can have.

People talked about their EHCPs not being kept up to date due to the long wait times and unreliability of local authority processes. This prevented them from accessing educational concessions and additional support in school and college, or in them or receiving support or educational concessions that they no longer needed.

“My EHCP was old and outdated and the things I needed on it weren’t there as it was a hassle to make an appointment...to add to it, even though I had been trying for months.”

“My case worker didn’t show up to the meeting [to address my EHCP] which I had waited over a month for, making it difficult to get in to college as my EHCP was outdated, containing details that I didn’t struggle with anymore which the college couldn’t cater for.”

### **Conclusion**

The perceived poor quality, unreliability and long waiting times for mental health services discourages some young people from accessing them. This leaves many turning to private services, or – for those for whom the cost burden is too great – no services at all.

## Introduction to Healthwatch Surrey

Healthwatch Surrey champions the voice of local people to shape, improve and get the best from NHS, health and social care services. As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure decision makers listen to the experiences of local people.

We passionately believe that listening and responding to local people's experiences is vital to create health and social care services that meet the needs of people in Surrey. We seek out people's experiences of health and care services, particularly from people whose voices are seldom heard, who might be at risk of health inequalities and whose needs are not met by current services. We share our findings publicly and with service providers and commissioners to influence and challenge current provision and future plans.

We also provide reliable and trustworthy information and signposting about local health and social care services to help people get the support they need.

## Contact us

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We are proud to have signed up to the End Poverty Pledge – [End Poverty Surrey – Good Company](#)



We are committed to the quality of our information.  
Every three years we perform an audit so that we can be certain of this.

## Luminus

The Healthwatch Surrey service is run by Luminus Insight CIC, known as Luminus.

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