

Children and Family Health Devon News

February 2026

Welcome to CFHD News, CFHD's monthly newsletter.

Whether you're a parent, caregiver, or healthcare professional, we aim to provide you with the latest information from Children and Family Health Devon (CFHD), with each issue including expert advice, career opportunities and our latest news.

To find out more about CFHD, visit our website or [CLICK HERE](#)

Highlights

Significant reduction in waiting times for children's mental health assessments

Your voice in action

Devon's young people leading the way on children's mental health

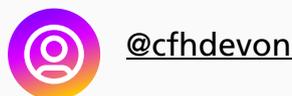
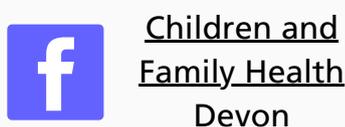
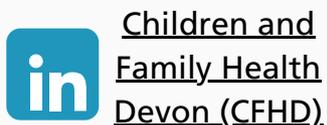
Lumi Nova

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Significant reduction in waiting times for children's mental health assessments

Children and young people in Devon are now being seen much quicker for mental health assessments thanks to a redesign of services.

Children and Family Health Devon's (CFHD) Mood, Emotions and Relationships (MERs) Pathway says the major improvement in waiting times for children and young people has come after an intensive programme of service redesign and increased staffing levels.

In 2024, 500 children were waiting longer than 18 weeks for their first assessment, including 80 who had been waiting more than a year. As of January 2026, only 28 children had been waiting longer than 18 weeks for an assessment, with the current average waiting time for an assessment now at eight weeks. This is making a real difference to young people who need support.

Over the past year, teams within CFHD have worked together to improve how they carry out assessments. They have strengthened senior clinical leadership, brought different professionals together to work more closely, recruited new staff, increased working hours and introduced dedicated assessment weeks. CFHD has also made changes to simplify processes and work more efficiently.

Claire Bird, Head of Mental Health Pathways for CFHD, said:

"We know how difficult it is for children and families to wait when they are asking for help, particularly at a time when they are already feeling vulnerable. Reducing our initial assessment waiting times has been a key priority, and I am incredibly proud of the dedication, flexibility and commitment shown by our teams. This improvement represents real progress for young people across our communities.

While we are pleased with the strides we have made, we are not complacent. We know there is still more to do—particularly in reducing waits for specialist interventions—and we remain committed to delivering timely, compassionate and high-quality care."

The service is keen to ensure that the voices of young people and families are central to future progress. Feedback is being sought from those who use the service to better understand what reduced waiting times mean to them and how improvements have been experienced. These perspectives will inform the ongoing development and reinforce why this work is so important.

The service remains committed to continuous improvement—ensuring that children and young people receive the right support, at the right time, in the right way.





Your voice in action

Your voice in action: Initial assessment explainer video

You said: Children and young people can feel nervous about attending their initial assessment at CFHD, and many told us that having a short, clear explainer video would help ease anxiety and make the process feel more familiar.

We did: We created an explainer video filmed at one of our sites, with a friendly voice-over guiding viewers through what to expect during their initial assessment. We then shared the draft with parents, carers and young people to make sure it was helpful, reassuring and easy to follow. After refining it based on their feedback, we added the video to our website and social media channels to support children and young people as they prepare for their first appointment.

To watch the video in full, [CLICK HERE](#)

Devon's young people leading the way on children's mental health

Young people from across Devon are being recognised this Children's Mental Health Week (9-15 February) for their vital role in shaping mental health support for children and young people locally.

Children and Family Health Devon (CFHD) works with a group of Young Advisors — young people who use their lived experience to directly influence NHS children's services across Devon and Torbay. The group plays an active role in improving services, from shaping communications and resources to interviewing staff and advising on what support works best for young people.

Zero, a CFHD Young Advisor said: *"I've personally struggled with my mental health throughout a large portion of my life, and now that I am in recovery and to a point where I can proudly say in a stable headspace, I now find myself as a young advisor able to advocate for young people struggling just like I once was. Advocating for mental health is such a key passion of mine, and working along side CFHD completely allows me to do so, I'm not just hoping for change now, I am actively able to help make a difference."*

One of the most powerful outcomes of this work is the Letter for Tomorrow — a deeply moving message of hope written by young people, for young people who may be struggling with suicidal thoughts.

To continue reading, [CLICK HERE](#)

Lumi Nova

LUMI NOVA
TALES OF COURAGE

Digital therapy enabling children to build confidence and manage their worries.

Get instant access:
luminova.app/devon

Recommended by
NICE
National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

Powered by
BfB
LABS

In partnership with
cfhd
Children & Family Health Devon

Lumi Nova: Tales of Courage is an engaging child-led, parent/guardian supported digital therapeutic that helps manage difficulties with fears, worries or anxiety for children aged 7-12 years with mild to moderate needs.

Lumi Nova supports children and young people to learn skills to self-manage their mental health in an engaging intergalactic adventure game (app) that can be used on most smartphones or tablets. The Science Behind Lumi Nova and How it Works: Lumi Nova is child-led and Mission driven. Parents/guardians will shortlist three Missions relevant to their child/young person to help build confidence. Through different feared scenarios shown as Missions in the app, it facilitates graded exposures (the active ingredient of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) with psychoeducation (helping children understand how thoughts, feelings and behaviours are linked).

Lumi Nova utilises Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to break the cycle where thoughts, feelings, and behaviour reinforce each other. Each Mission has goals with small challenges mirroring real-life fears and worries. These challenges progress from in-app activities (like drawing, viewing photos, or 360-degree videos) to short, real-life "exposure challenges" that apply what they practiced. Children and young people are then rewarded with gameplay based around an intergalactic adventure.

Each challenge within the Mission is aimed to empower children and young people to learn to self-manage fears, worries and anxiety such as:

- Phobias e.g. Spiders and insects, heights, dogs, the dark
- Social anxiety e.g. Making new friends, going to social events
- Separation anxiety e.g. Sleeping alone, being away from parents, going to school

This is your journey: Podcast

Did you know that we have our very own podcast, with a focus on our Specialist Learning Disability pathway?

Hosted by Jenna, Specialist Learning Disability Nurse in Mental Health, working within the pathway, this podcast aims to bring into conversations, topics that might be more difficult and sensitive.

We are planning series two of the podcast for release later this year so why not catch up on series one now?

You can listen along by visiting our website and searching 'podcast'. There you will find the recordings and support resources alongside each episode.

For more information and to listen to series one of 'This is your Journey, [CLICK HERE](#).



Our waiting times

We publish the waiting times for each pathway on our website every three months and are working hard to reduce the length of time families wait for our services.

The average wait time and the longest wait time are published per pathway to help people understand how long they may be waiting. We provide some information about why people wait different lengths of time depending on the urgency of their situation.

You can find our waiting times here: [Our waiting times - Children and Family Health Devon](#)

Our resources

Children and Family Health Devon (CFHD) provides integrated care and treatment across physical and mental health for children, young people and their families in Devon.

Our focus is on prevention and early help. Our [self help tools and resources library](#) is a self service approach to help you get the right help and support.



CFHD Careers

We offer a huge range of exciting and challenging opportunities for people who are passionate about making a difference.

You can view a list of our current vacancies below or visit NHS Jobs where CFHD vacancies and latest opportunities are advertised.

CFHD encourages creativity, is forward thinking and leaders are compassionate in the way they lead and support teams. CFHD understands the value of trust, partnership and collaboration at all levels of the organisation. Clinicians are proud of being part of such an innovative organisation.

CFHD staff are experienced, committed and dedicated, always placing children and family at the centre of what they do. Clinicians strive to improve their practice and welcome new ideas whilst always keeping NICE guidance at the centre of what we do.

For more information and a list of our current vacancies, please [**CLICK HERE**](#)



Need urgent help?

We know it can seem really difficult to seek help when you are worried, stressed or lonely but getting the help you need and deserve can make a big difference.

Visit the urgent help page on our website to find out what help and support is available to you.

Visit our website for information and support: [**CLICK HERE**](#)

<p>GOT A CARE PLAN OR DISCHARGE PLAN?</p>  <p>That will tell you who to contact</p>	<p>KOOTH Digital support</p>  <p>Online mental wellbeing community. Safe, anonymous support free to people under 18.</p> <p>kooth www.kooth.com</p>	<p>ARE YOU IN A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS?</p>  <p>Call 111 select mental health option</p>
<p>Deaf? Need urgent help? Contact us using InterpretersLive! (8am to 8pm) or NHS 111 (SignVideo) 24/7</p>		