

Wide Variation in Child Mental Health Spend in England

Black and Mays highlight the need for “coherent planning” in the context of the sustainability and transformation plans (STPs) to deliver “place based” health and care services.¹ Reducing inequalities in child mental health is a public health priority.² Despite pledges for increased funding, mental health services are struggling to meet the demand of rising number of under-18 cases.³ This is particularly problematic in more disadvantaged areas since social deprivation is strongly associated with child mental health outcomes.⁴

Recent analysis by Royal College of Psychiatrists outlines concerns about the variation in spend on child and adolescent mental health services.⁵ Figure 1 uses publicly accessible data to illustrate the extent of variation in forecasted CCG spend.⁶

Spend per head is only weakly associated with higher levels of deprivation, and there remains stark unexplained variation in the levels of mental health spend, raising questions about a potential ‘postcode lottery’ in service availability. There is an urgent need to provide effective, readily available mental health services for children and young people. STPs must not increase inequalities in child mental health.

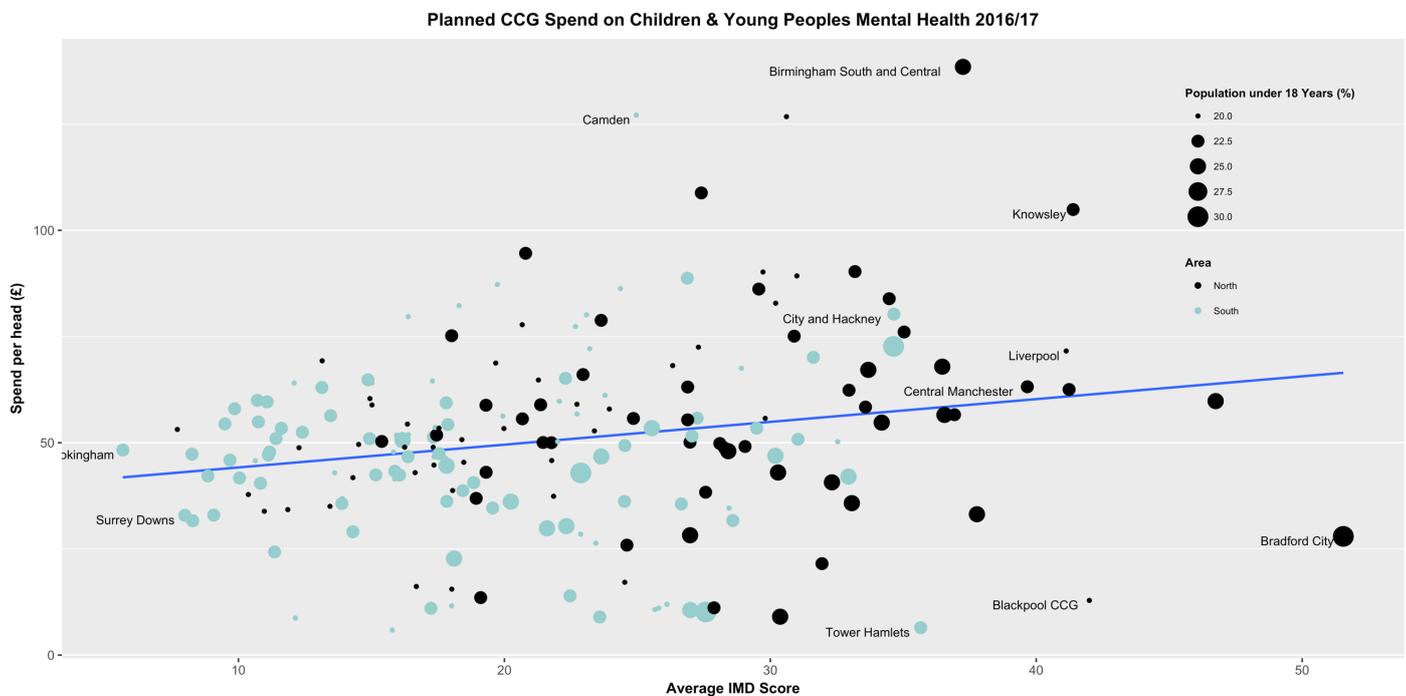


Figure 1: Planned spend on children and young peoples mental health 2016/17

¹ Black N. and Mays. N. Sustainability and transformation plans: a troubled start. *BMJ* 2016; 355: i6064 (15 November)

² Marmot, M. G., Allen J., Goldblatt, P., Boyce, T., McNeish, D., Grady, M. & Geddes, I. Fair society, healthy lives: Strategic review of health inequalities in England post-2010. The Marmot Review: London UK. 2010.

³ Campbell. D. Psychiatrists attack ‘scandal’ of child mental health spending. *Guardian* 2016.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/nov/17/psychiatrists-attack-scandal-of-child-mental-health-spending>

⁴ Reiss, F. Socioeconomic inequalities and mental health problems in children and adolescents: a systematic review. 2013. *Soc. Sci. Med.* 90, 24-31.

⁵ Royal College of Psychiatrists. Mental Health Five Year Forward View Dashboard: Analysis from the Royal College of Psychiatrists. November 2016.

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/Mental%20Health%20Five%20Year%20Forward%20View%20Dashboard%20-%20analysis%20from%20RCPsych.pdf>

⁶ Public Health England. National General Practice Profiles. 2016. <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/general-practice>.