

**Mental health support available within 4 weeks due to new recovery focused service**

Reading mental health service celebrates a successful first year with 100% of people offered appointments in under 4 weeks from referral. The service has supported over 570 local people in its first year, with the majority reporting a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

The Mental Health Integrated Community Service (MHICS) is a resilience and recovery focused service which support people with significant mental illness in the community and reduce the need for secondary care in inpatient units. Offering this specialist care in the community also aims to reduce repeat GP appointments.

GPs, mental health professionals, pharmacists, community connectors, psychiatrists and psychologists work collaboratively with the voluntary sector and local authority to provide specialist support and care.

Leanne Ballantyne, Clinical Transformation Lead, Berkshire Healthcare says: “The success of our first year has shown us the real need in the community for this type of service. MHICS addresses the factors that contribute to poor mental health such as housing and employment issues, isolation, and poor physical health alongside other clinical interventions. Many people experiencing these difficulties have been unable to access support until now. We have had some great feedback from patients and other services, and I look forward to rolling out MHICS to the rest of Berkshire.”

One local service user said, “It was very helpful, it made me see things clearer and feel more able to cope when things go wrong.”

At the anniversary event Polite Tshuma, MHICS Reading Service Manager, Berkshire Healthcare said: “Throughout all the challenges that come with setting up a new service, patient care remains at the centre. The team are dedicated and passionate about providing the best experience for the people using our service and I’m proud of all we’ve achieved so far and hopeful for the future.”

MHICS is the first stage of an extensive programme to transform community mental health services across Berkshire, in line with NHS England’s Community Mental Health Framework. Wokingham is the latest area to benefit from MHICS, with the service having previously launched in Reading, Bracknell, Slough, Windsor, Ascot, and Maidenhead.

Find out more information about the MHICS service on [Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust website.](#)

**ENDS**

## Notes to editors:

### About the Community Mental Health Transformation Programme (CMHTP)

In line with NHS England's Community Mental Health Framework, CMHTP aims to transform services for people with significant mental illnesses, providing holistic care for people across Berkshire.

[Visit the CMHTP information page](#)

### About Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust provides specialist mental health and community health services to a population of around 900,000 within Berkshire. We operate from more than 100 sites across the county but the vast majority of the people we care for are supported in their own homes. We have 216 mental health inpatient beds and 180 community hospital beds in five locations. Visit [www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk](http://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk)  
The Trust is rated by the CQC as Outstanding  
Follow Berkshire Healthcare on Twitter @BHFT, Facebook [www.facebook.com/berkshirehealthcare](http://www.facebook.com/berkshirehealthcare) and on Instagram @berkshealthnhs

### Contact

Georgia Butcher, Communications manager  
Georgia.butcher@berkshire.nhs.uk / 07976 268 996

