

Dear partner,

It is with great regret that I write to inform you that the youth charity YES will be suspending its mental health counselling referral book until the 31st of January 2024.

This decision has not been easy, however YES as small charity has seen an increase of 55% in its demand for counselling services over the last 6 months with over 450 referrals from parents, GP's, CAMHS, Crisis team and self refers. This is simply not sustainable and as CEO I have taken the decision to stop new referrals and clear the back log of 150 young people needing assessment.

As you are aware our core counselling offer has no direct or contracted funding, and this financial cost is simply too great for the charity. YES board has agreed an over spend for the years 2022-23 and 2023 – 24, however this has now depleted our reserves. The charity continues to apply for funds but cannot continue at this level of demand.

YES continues to offer up to 80 counselling sessions per week to young people across North East Essex and will continue to deliver this throughout the referral suspension. YES continues to recruit new counsellors and develop new opportunities to engage young people.

YES will also continue to offer our mental health work in schools via our school navigators and school counsellors, our full offer around teenage pregnancy and our housing & homeless support. These services are funded by the Suffolk & North East Essex Integrated Care Board, Colchester Borough Homes and other partners, funders and we continue to deliver high quality services.

In a recent article by Young Minds 18% of NHS mental health services is taken up by young people, however they only receive 8% of overall budgeted funding. To charities like YES this is a key area of discussion and although the charity continues raise funding it cannot keep up with demand around the core counselling offer.

I will be speaking with various partners within the system to ensure that our decision is understood, and we hope to secure additional funding for the challenging year of 2024-2025.