Western Health and Social Care Trust

Our ref: FOI26/4675

29th September 2026

Children and Young People Attending A&E in Mental Health Crisis

This is a request for information in respect of children and young people attending Emergency Departments/A&E in Northern Ireland for mental health-related concerns.

The request is prompted by recent analysis in England, based on information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, which found that the number of 6–17-year-olds attending A&E for a mental health concern increased from 55,525 in 2019 to 75,491 in 2025 – a 36% increase. Around 8% of attendances in 2025 involved waits of more than 12 hours.

I would like to obtain comparable information for Northern Ireland.

The Western Health & Social Care Trust can confirm that the requested information is held by the Trust. See a response below.

Trust response

1. A&E attendances for mental health concerns

Please provide the total number of attendances at Emergency Departments/A&E by children and young people aged 6–17 years where the reason for attendance was recorded as relating to a mental health concern, for each financial year from 2019/20 to 2025/26.

Please see below table showing the total number of attendances at Emergency Departments/A&E by children and young people aged 6–17 years where the reason for attendance was recorded as relating to a mental health concern, for each financial year from 2019/20 to 2025/26.

Total Attendances – Mental Health

Arrival Year	Number of Attendances - All
2019/2020	180
2020/2021	195
2021/2022	224
2022/2023	189
2023/2024	164
2024/2025	175
2025/2026	187
Total	***1314***

2. Age breakdown

Where available, please provide the annual figures broken down by age groups, including:

*** 6–9 years**
*** 10–13 years**
*** 14–17 years**

Please see below table showing annual figures broken down by age.

Age breakdown – Mental Health

Year	Age 6-9	Age 10-13	Age 14-17	*Total*
2019/2020	3	19	158	***180***
2020/2021	3	24	168	***195***
2021/2022	2	35	187	***224***
2022/2023	3	29	157	***189***
2023/2024	2	30	132	***164***
2024/2025	6	35	134	***175***
2025/2026	6	36	145	***187***
Total	***20***	***176***	***950***	***1314***

If the data is held using different age categories, please provide the closest equivalent breakdown.

3. Reason for attendance

Where recorded, please provide an annual breakdown of these attendances by the primary mental health-related reason/reason for presentation, including where applicable:

*** self-harm;**
*** suicidal thoughts/behaviour;**
*** eating disorders;**
*** emotional or psychological crisis;**
*** anxiety;**
*** depression;**
*** psychosis;**
*** behavioural or emotional disturbance;**
*** other mental health-related presentations.**

If these categories are not available, please provide the categories that are used in the relevant dataset.

Please see below table showing the annual breakdown of these attendances based on Mental Health condition or referral to Psychiatry.

	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024	2024/ 2025	2025/ 2026	Total
Adjustment disorder		1	2		1	1		***5***
Antidepressant overdose		3					1	***4***
Anxiety disorder	28	27	36	42	31	32	13	***209***
Anxiety state	6							***6***
Benzodiazepine overdose			1					***1***
Bipolar affective disorder				1		2		***3***
Deliberate Self Harm	32						27	***59***
Deliberate Self Poisoning	20						2	***22***
Dependence on sedatives or hypnotics						1		***1***
Depressive disorder	65	143	161	119	105	99	66	***758***
Direct admit to a specialty						2		***2***
Dissociative (conversion) disorder		1				1		***2***
Drug-induced seizure		1						***1***
Drugs of abuse	1							***1***
Eating disorder	3	8	9	16	11	16	4	***67***
Factitious disorder		2						***2***
Laceration	1							***1***
NSAID (Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) overdose			1					***1***
Other	2							***2***
Panic attack	5						1	***6***
Paracetamol overdose	1	2	2	1	3	1	1	***11***
Personality disorder	4	4	2	4	3	6		***23***
Poisoning (NOT plant / venom / gas / vapour)	1		1			4	1	***7***
Psychiatry/Other	7							***7***
Psychotic disorder	4	1	9	5	10	7	1	***37***
Schizophrenia		2		1				***3***
Suicidal							70	***70***
Social problem						2		***2***
Wound: laceration / incised / bite: abdomen						1		***1***
Total	**180**	**195**	**224**	**189**	**164**	**175**	**187**	***1314***

4. Waiting times in A&E

For each year and each Health and Social Care Trust, please provide the number and percentage of children and young people aged 6–17 attending A&E for a mental health concern who:

*** waited less than 4 hours;**
*** waited 4–12 hours;**
*** waited more than 12 hours;**
*** waited more than 24 hours.**

Where available, please provide the average and/or median waiting time for these attendances.

Please see below table showing ED waiting times.

Waiting Times in ED - From Arrival to Left Department Time - Mental Health

Year	Less than 4 hours	4 - 12 Hours	12 - 24 Hours	Greater than 24 Hours	Total
2019/2020	74	83	20	3	***180***
2020/2021	99	72	20	4	***195***
2021/2022	62	113	45	4	***224***
2022/2023	51	100	25	13	***189***
2023/2024	44	81	28	11	***164***
2024/2025	50	92	26	7	***175***
2025/2026	66	94	23	4	***187***
Total	***446***	***635***	***187***	***46***	***1314***

5. Disposition following attendance

Where this information is recorded, please provide an annual breakdown of what happened following the A&E attendance, including the number of children and young people who:

*** were discharged home;**
*** were referred to community mental health services;**
*** were referred to CAMHS;**
*** were admitted to a mental health inpatient unit;**
*** were admitted to a general hospital ward;**
*** were transferred to another service;**
*** left before being assessed or treated;**

Please see the table below which provides a breakdown of discharge destination following the A&E attendance.

Discharge Destination / Disposition

	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	2022/ 23	2023/ 24	2024/ 25	2025/ 26	*Total*
Admitted Altnagelvin	39	44	23	23	9	29	41	***208***
Admitted South West Acute Hospital	9	16	20	15	25	22	16	***123***
A&E Clinic	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	***10***
CPN (Clinical Psychiatric Nurse) / Psychiatric Liaison	25	29	36	28	20	28	6	***172***
Did not wait	3	6	4	8	2	1	8	***32***
Epic Cutover							1	***1***
Fracture Clinic						1		***1***
GP	6	4	3	3	1	1		***18***
Gransha Hospital		1	4	1			1	***7***
Home	77	70	116	99	88	83	110	***643***
Intermediate Care Team	1					1		***2***
Notes Unavailable		1	1		1	1		***4***
Other	12	19	11	7	13	5	2	***69***
Out of hours GP	1							***1***
Police Custody	1					1		***2***
Self- Discharge against advice		1			2			***3***
Social Worker			1		1			***2***
SWAH (South West Acute Hospital) ED	1	1	2					***4***
Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital			1	1				***2***
Ward Review	1		1		1			***3***
Not Recorded	3	1		2			1	***7***
Total	***180***	***195***	***224***	***189***	***164***	***175***	***187***	***1314***

6. Comparable overall A&E figures

For context, please also provide the total number of A&E attendances by children and young people aged 6–17 for each year from 2019/20 to 2025/26, broken down by Trust, so that the increase in mental health-related attendances can be compared with the overall change in A&E attendances.

Please see below table showing the total number of A&E attendances by children and young people aged 6–17 for each year from 2019/20 to 2025/26 with mental health related issues and the count of all A&E attendances for each year from 2019/20 to 2025/26.

Total Attendances

Arrival Year	Attendances - All	Attendances - Mental Health	% Mental Health
2019/2020	15960	180	**1.13**
2020/2021	9809	195	**1.99**
2021/2022	15402	224	**1.45**
2022/2023	16139	189	**1.17**
2023/2024	16332	164	**1.00**
2024/2025	18987	175	**0.92**
2025/2026	18349	206	**1.12**
Total	***110978***	***1333***	***1.20***