



Why Time Matters

Children's and family mental health services are staffed by skilled, caring professionals — and stretched far beyond what they were built for. Understanding the honest picture explains why acting early matters so much.

First, what this is not: criticism of the NHS or its clinicians. The people are excellent. The problem is arithmetic — demand has grown many times faster than the workforce trying to meet it.

The honest numbers

Across the UK, hundreds of thousands of children and young people are waiting for a first contact with mental health services — and the list has grown year on year. More than a quarter wait longer than a school term; a significant share wait close to a year. Roughly four in ten referrals are closed before any support is received.

The threshold trap

Stretched services must prioritise the most severe cases — so families are often told their child “doesn't yet meet the threshold” and to come back if things get worse. Nobody designed it this way; it is simply what triage under pressure looks like. But it leaves early-stage difficulties — the very ones easiest to help — waiting longest.

What waiting actually costs

Difficulties rarely stand still. Avoidance grows, patterns settle into habits, confidence erodes, and family stress compounds around the problem. Support that arrives early is typically shorter, simpler and gentler than the same support arriving two years later.

Why Claire does what she does

After more than two decades as an NHS clinical psychologist, Claire has watched skilled colleagues do remarkable work inside impossible arithmetic. This practice is her answer to it: a deliberately small private caseload that adds capacity exactly where waiting hurts most — so that families who can act early, can.

Honesty built in

Every enquiry begins with a First Step Consultation — and its promise cuts both ways. If NHS or another service is genuinely the right route for you, Claire will say so and help you get there. Her aim is the right support, not the most clients.

If your child needs urgent help now: contact your GP, call NHS 111, or in an emergency call 999. The NHS remains the right route for crisis and for complex, ongoing need — nothing in this guide changes that.

Ready to talk it through? Begin with a First Step Consultation — 90 minutes with Dr Millward, and a written formulation that explains what is going on and exactly what she recommends. → drclairemillward.com

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