

1. Demand and Demographics:

- **Prevalence of Crises:** What are the common types of crises leading to placement needs (e.g., mental health emergencies, family breakdown, risk of exploitation, self-harm, suicidal ideation)?
- **Referral Pathways:** Who are the primary referrers (e.g., CAMHS, social services, A&E, police, schools)? What are the existing referral processes?
- **Volume of Referrals:** How many children and young people are currently being referred for crisis placements? Is this number increasing or decreasing?
- **Age Ranges:** What are the typical age ranges of children and young people requiring crisis placements? Are there specific age groups underserved?
- **Geographic Distribution:** Where are the highest concentrations of need? Are there regional disparities in service provision or access?
- **Demographic Factors:** Are there particular demographic groups (e.g., ethnicity, gender identity, SEND status, looked-after children) who are disproportionately represented in crisis placements or who have unique needs?
- **Length of Stay:** What is the average and maximum length of stay in existing crisis placements? Are there issues with children "getting stuck" in crisis provision?

2. Existing Provision and Capacity:

- **Types of Current Placements:** What kind of crisis placements are currently available (e.g., residential crisis units, intensive home support, therapeutic foster care, inpatient units, secure units)?
- **Capacity:** What is the total bed capacity or service capacity of existing crisis placements in the relevant geographical area? Is there sufficient capacity to meet demand?
- **Occupancy Rates:** What are the typical occupancy rates for existing crisis placements? Are there periods of high demand that lead to insufficient beds?
- **Staffing Ratios and Expertise:** What are the staffing levels and the qualifications/specialisms of staff in existing placements? Are there shortages in specific areas (e.g., mental health professionals, therapeutic staff)?
- **Funding Models:** How are existing crisis placements funded (e.g., local authority, NHS, charitable)? What are the costs associated with different types of provision?
- **Quality and Outcomes:** What are the reported outcomes for children and young people in existing crisis placements? Are there quality frameworks or inspection reports (e.g., Ofsted, CQC) available?
- **Availability of Step-Down/Step-Up:** How well do crisis placements integrate with other services (e.g., is there clear step-down provision, or are children discharged to unsupported environments)?

3. Gaps and Unmet Needs:

- **Service Gaps:** Are there specific types of crisis placements or interventions that are missing (e.g., provision for complex trauma, highly specialized mental health crisis beds, culturally specific services, services for neurodiverse young people)?

- **Accessibility Barriers:** What are the barriers to accessing existing crisis placements (e.g., waiting lists, strict admission criteria, geographical distance, transport issues, lack of out-of-hours support)?
- **Views of Stakeholders:**
 - **Children and Young People:** What are their experiences of crisis and placements? What do they feel would have helped them?
 - **Parents/Carers:** What are their challenges in seeking and navigating crisis support? What support do *they* need?
 - **Referrers/Professionals:** What are the biggest challenges they face in securing appropriate crisis placements? What are their "wish lists" for new provision?
 - **Commissioners:** What are their strategic priorities and perceived gaps in the local area?
- **Out-of-Area Placements:** How many children and young people are currently placed out of their home borough/region due to lack of local provision? What are the reasons and costs associated with this?

4. Best Practice and Innovation:

- **Innovative Models:** What are examples of successful or innovative crisis placement models elsewhere in the country or internationally?
- **Evidence-Based Interventions:** What therapeutic or support interventions are considered best practice for children and young people in crisis?
- **Integrated Care:** How are successful crisis services integrated within broader children's services (e.g., health, social care, education)?
- **Preventative Measures:** What preventative services are in place to try and avert crises leading to placement needs? Are there opportunities to strengthen these?

5. Regulatory and Policy Environment:

- **Relevant Legislation and Guidance:** What national and local policies, legislation, and guidance govern crisis placements for children and young people (e.g., Children Act, Mental Health Act, SEND Code of Practice, specific NHS/Local Authority guidance)?
- **Commissioning Intentions:** What are the future commissioning plans or strategies of local authorities and integrated care boards (ICBs)/Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) related to children's crisis services?

By gathering information across these areas, you can build a comprehensive picture of the need for crisis placements and identify where a new or enhanced service could have the most impact. Methods for gathering this information include reviewing existing reports, conducting surveys, holding focus groups, and interviewing key stakeholders.