Healthwatch Herefordshire
Children & Young People's Mental Health
November 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

In May 2018, the public voted Young People's Mental Health as one of the top three priorities for Healthwatch Herefordshire to focus on. We consulted with 3898 young people through a variety of engagement methods in order to reach as many people as possible, this included surveys, focus groups and attending large events at which young people attended.

A variety of topics have been discussed with young people including support and services available in the school setting and young people's experiences when accessing services for a mental health issue.

Through the variety of engagements to reach young people, there has been a number of common themes emerging from their feedback :

- Schools are already doing a lot of different initiatives to support young people's mental health, but would like to do more, highlighting a need for a platform to share good practice, tips and resources
- Young people with a mental health issues may not be taking advantage of what outside agencies and organisations can do to support them, showing more communication and promotion needed between them and schools.
- The issue of bullying was consistently highlighted as a cause of many mental health concerns that needs to be addressed in order to improve mental health & wellbeing.
- The environment where young people receive treatment, care and support has an impact on their wellbeing and therefore individual needs should be considered.
- Engagement has highlighted some of the popular digital technology and apps that young people use to support their mental health, which can be shared with others to help more people.
- This project has given an insight into the ages when young people start to experience mental health issues, what or who encouraged them take the first step to get help and where they went for help.

A number of recommendations have been made based on the observations listed above (page 16).

Introduction

In May 2018, the public voted Young People's Mental Health as one of the top three priorities for Healthwatch Herefordshire to focus on. Following consultation with a variety of local partners, a number of topic areas were highlighted as gaps in local knowledge of what young people thought of support & services when it came to their mental health.

The topic areas included :

- Support & services available within the school setting
- Length of treatment plans and how young people feel about this across different agencies delivering services
- The most helpful non statutory services
- The use of technology to support young people's mental health
- At what point do young people start experiencing poor mental health
- What encourages young people to take the first step and seek help for their mental health

In order to reach as many young people as possible, it was decided to use surveys as the main method of engagement with young people.

Two surveys were designed; one to solely look at support and services available to all young people in the school setting; and one to focus on the remaining topic areas highlighted above, this survey would also be aimed at young people who have experienced or who are experiencing poor mental health, including those that are already using local services.

During the project, we also had the opportunity to take part in events which giving us contact with a large number of young people.

Between March and June 2019 Healthwatch Herefordshire were commissioned to engage with the public on the NHS long term plan and one of the priorities within this plan was young people's mental health. Therefore, this project consists of various forms of engagement which we have brought together highlighting common themes.

Engagement

Online / Paper Surveys

Following conversations with partner organisations who work with children & young people, we asked them what the gaps in knowledge were around young people's mental health, this gave us a basis for setting topic areas and questions to ask young people about.

We complied two surveys, the first one asked young people about the support they received in the school setting around mental health, we asked them what they currently thought was available, whether they thought it was good and what they

thought could be improved. The second survey focused on young people who were already either experiencing poor mental health and/or were accessing services. We asked them about topics such as getting help and was it long enough; how helpful they found support from community organisations; what technology has helped them with their mental health; when their symptoms started; and what encouraged them to take the first step to get help.

NHS Long Term Plan Engagement

During March – June 2019, Healthwatch Herefordshire engaged with the public on the NHS Long Term Plan, there were 8 topic areas to focus on and one of these was Children & Young People's Mental Health, this allowed us to information from our young people about the services and support they receive.

Within this engagement, young people were asked about their thoughts on what the NHS needs to consider when it comes to offering community mental health crisis services; providing mental health support teams in schools and colleges; and how the structure of services can be improved to become more joined up across health, care, education and the voluntary sector.

As part of this work, Healthwatch organised a number of focus groups which included speaking to young people from organisations such as SHYPP (Supported Housing for Young People's project); Taletmatch; the CLD wellbeing ambassadors and Vennture.

Young People Large Events - Crucial Crew, Herefordshire School Games, Hereford & Worcester Scout Camp and Youth Council Conference

Crucial Crew is a school's safety day coordinated by the west Mercia police every year for all year six children in the county. There are ten workshops delivering various safety messages to the children and this event was particularly important for this project due to the transitional stage these young people are about to start when going up to high school.
In 2018, we did two exercises with 1770 pupils who were aged between 10 and 11 years. In the first exercise the young people explored where to go when you are ill to help them to understand the different options for different illness (Eg. Pharmacies, GPs, minor injury units, NHS 111 & A & E). In the second exercise, the young people did a survey on health & emotional wellbeing, answering questions on diet, exercise, sleep and oral health.
In 2019, we gathered feedback about moving to high school and discussed issues that young people could be concerned about as well as possible solutions to help to equip them for the transition. 1775 pupils aged between 10 and 11 years took part in the exercise.

The Herefordshire school games is a big sporting event where children aged 7 – 13 years come together from across the county to compete in a variety of sports.

The Scout ShireJam is a big event where all scout members from the county are invited to attend where they do various activities during the weekend.

Hereford City Youth Council is made up of young people who are interested in developing campaigns and projects about issues that are important to them, and ensuring that every young person can have a say in decisions that affect them. Each year they organise a youth conference and this year Healthwatch attended to engage with young people on mental health.

These existing events were an excellent opportunity to engage with a large number of young people as well as teachers and professionals working with them.

School Focus Groups

During the course of this project, we organised to go into a school and college to directly speak to young people. We also attended a number of 'freshers' fair' events to directly speak to young people at colleges. Some of this feedback has been captured within the online surveys and where further in depth discussions have taken place, we have highlighted these comments within the report.

Schools Mental Health Forum

During the course of this project, there were a number of challenges with engaging with schools and colleges directly.

It was decided that an effective way to engage with a large amount of schools and education professionals in the county would be to invite them to a School Mental Health Forum, where teachers and school staff could come together with health professionals and experts in young people's mental health to discuss the topic, share good practice and collect resources and tips on how to improve young people's mental health.

The first school's forum was held in May 2019 with 75 people in attendance. There were a mix of school staff, health professionals, community organisations and students from a local high school at the forum we engaged about current mental health provision, what they feel works well in their school, and what they think could be improved. We asked them what they thought about support within the school setting and their responses have been captured in the survey responses below.

Findings

Survey One – 187 Participants

**What support is available at your school/college?**

Types of support	Number of responses
Support from teachers, tutor support, pastoral support	45
School Nurses	22
Wellbeing support / centre / ALS	24
Private Counselling / YouTime Counselling	18
Educational Psychologist	2
School Counsellor	2
CAMHS Referral	6
Strong Young Minds	7
CLD (Tier 2 IAPT provision for CYP age 10 +)	10
Phoenix	1
PSHE lessons	3
Thrive	4
ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) trained staff	7
Butterflies	5
Circle Time / Circle of friends	5
Mindfulness	6
Colouring	1
Worry Box	2
Peer Mediation	1
Mental Health Wellbeing days	1
Positive self esteem Interventions	1
Art therapy	2
Peer Support Buddies	5
Lego Therapy	1
Theraplay	3
Talk Time	1
Lunch club	2
Sunshine Groups	1
Swimming	1
Buddy Bench / buddy bus stop / Anti Bullying ambassadors	2
Peer mentoring / Listening Link	2
Individual support	1
Family & Student Support	4
Values-based approach	1
Trialing an app	1
Learning hub – Intervention room	1
Mental Health First Aider	2
LinC	2

"Proctective Behaviors" / "Holding the child in Mind"	1

17 people responded that they didn't know what support was on offer in their school / college

There was a comment that the support at their school was inconsistent. There was a comment that the waiting time to see a counsellor is too long

Does it work well?
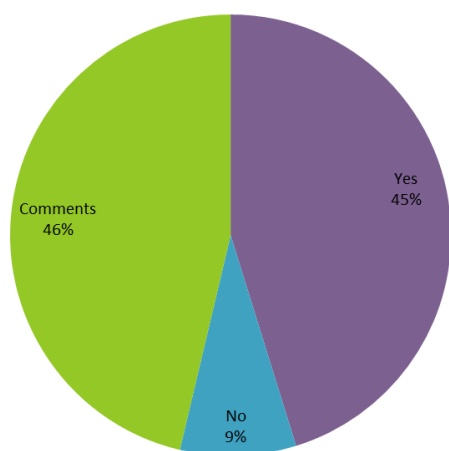
A large amount of responses wrote in comments saying…..

What support would you like to see happen? (Top 10 responses)

What would you like to see	Number of responses
More training / support / support for practitioners / Resources / Raising awareness / Support to recognise signs / Regular Mental Health support workshops / share good practice	19
Improvement in signposting with outside agencies / better communication / promotion of community organisations that can support YPs Mental Health	24
More Support for Young people	15
Talk More	11
Help with bullying	6
More lessons in schools (not just PSHE) / Better education embedded in the curriculum	5
Improved environment of where you go to talk / have quiet time	4
Consistent Counselling	3

Peer support / mentors / champions / helping each other / small group with YP with similar issues	5
More focus on prevention	2

Survey Two – 50 Participants

Have you experienced any of the following symptoms / issues?
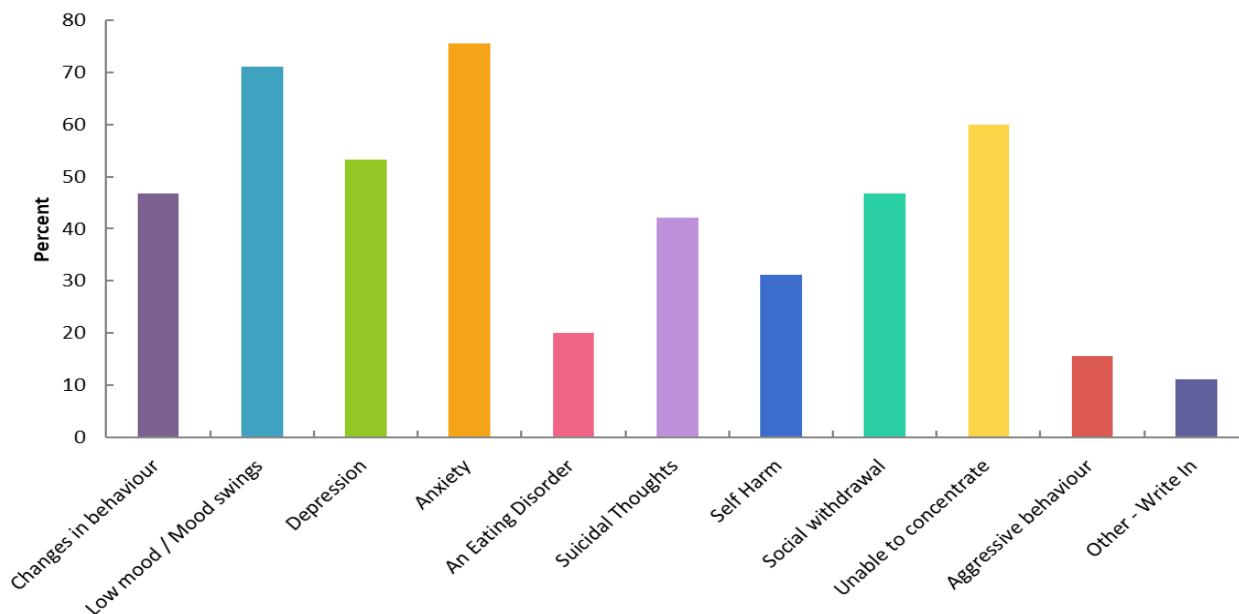
Did you receive help, how long did it last?

Length of treatment	Responses
0 – 7 weeks	7
7 weeks – 3 months	6
3 months – 6 months	4
6 months – 1 year	1
1 year +	2
Ongoing	2
No help received / N/A	12

Was it long enough?
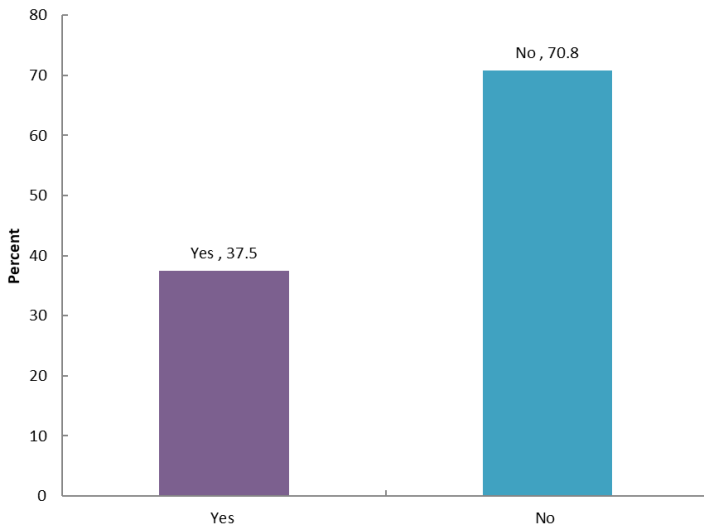
Have you used any community organisations, clubs or informal groups which have helped with your mental health?
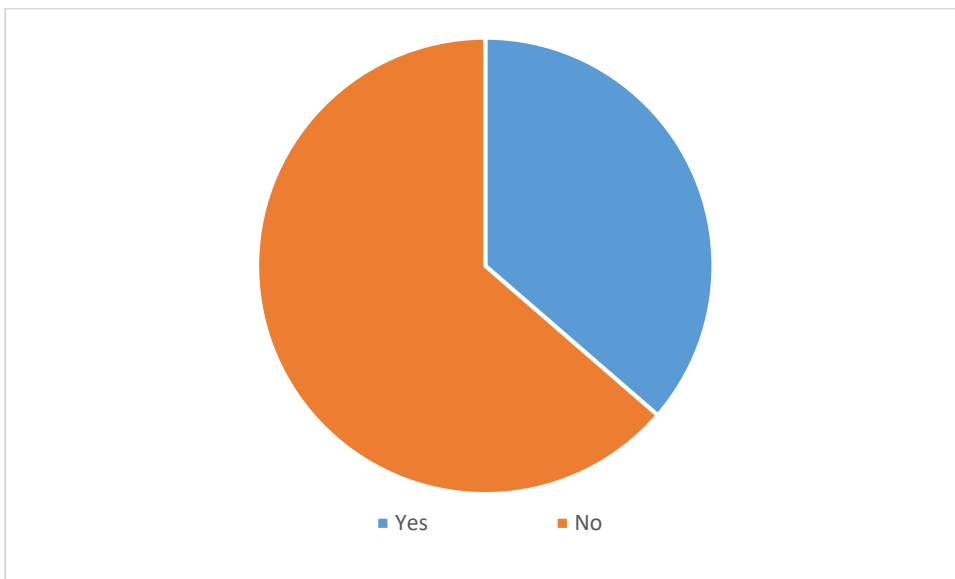
Which did you find most useful?

These are the top 3 responses from those that said they used community organisations. Those that have used community organisations have found them very useful in managing their mental health.

- CLD / SYM (Strong Young Minds) / Wellbeing Ambassador
- Playing Rugby & meeting Friends
- Drama Club

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What apps or technology do you use to support your mental health?

Apps to help Young People with Mental Health

Number of People

App	Number of People
Headspace	5
Music / Spotify	4
Woebot	2
CALM	2
MIND	1
One for depression & anxiety	1
Daily Yoga	1
Moodpath	1
Meditation	1
SAM (Self-help for Anxiety...	1
NHS Website	1
You tube	1
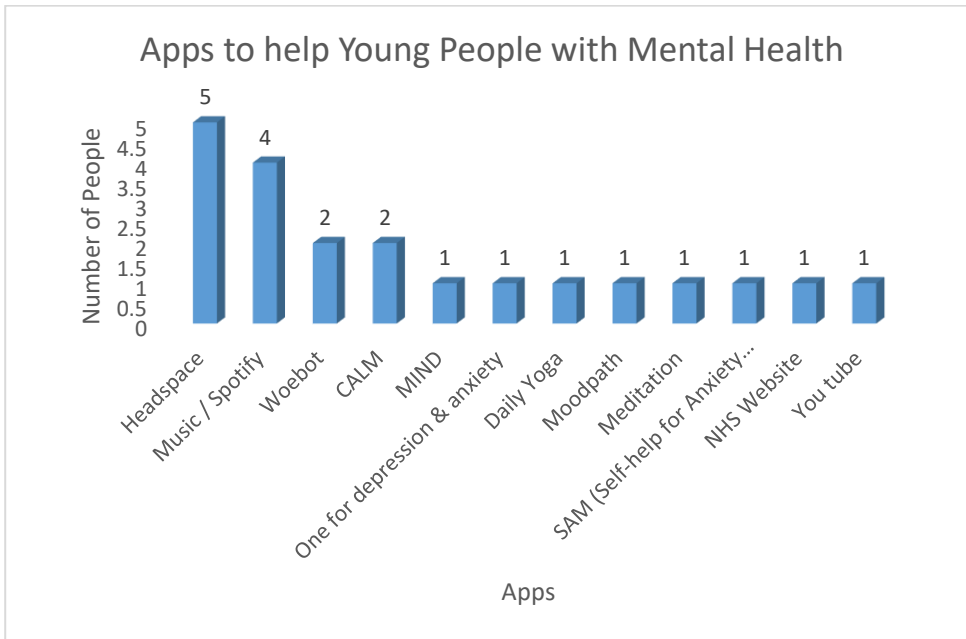
Apps

17 people commented that they either answered N/A to the question or said there wasn't any apps that they use to support their mental health.

When did the first mental health symptoms start?

When did it start?

Age

Age	Number of People
17	1
16	2
15	7
14	0
13	3
12	2
11	7
10	1
9	2
8	1
7	2
From Brith (Genetic) / Early Years	2

Number of People

10

When did you seek help?

When did you seek help?

(Horizontal bar chart — x-axis: Number of People (0–7); y-axis: Age)
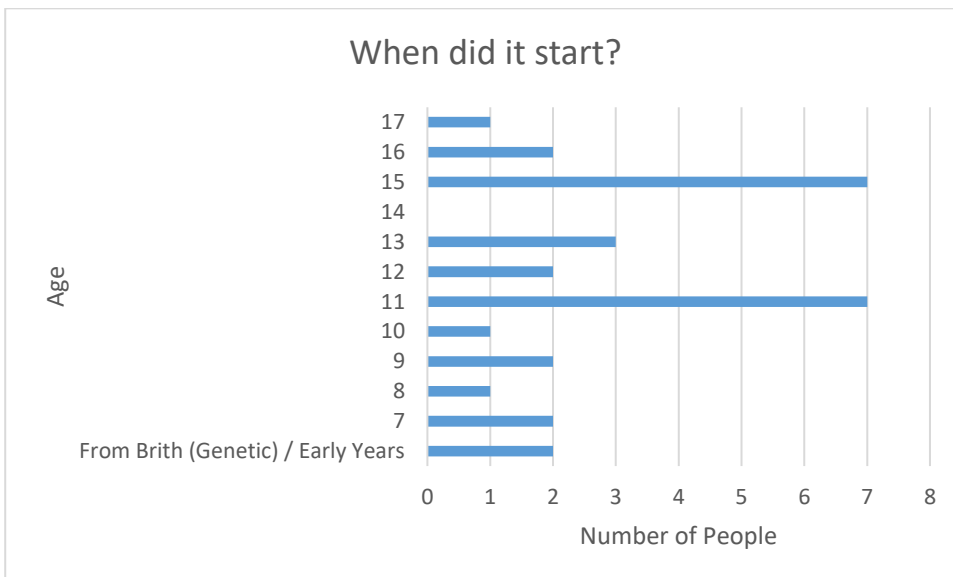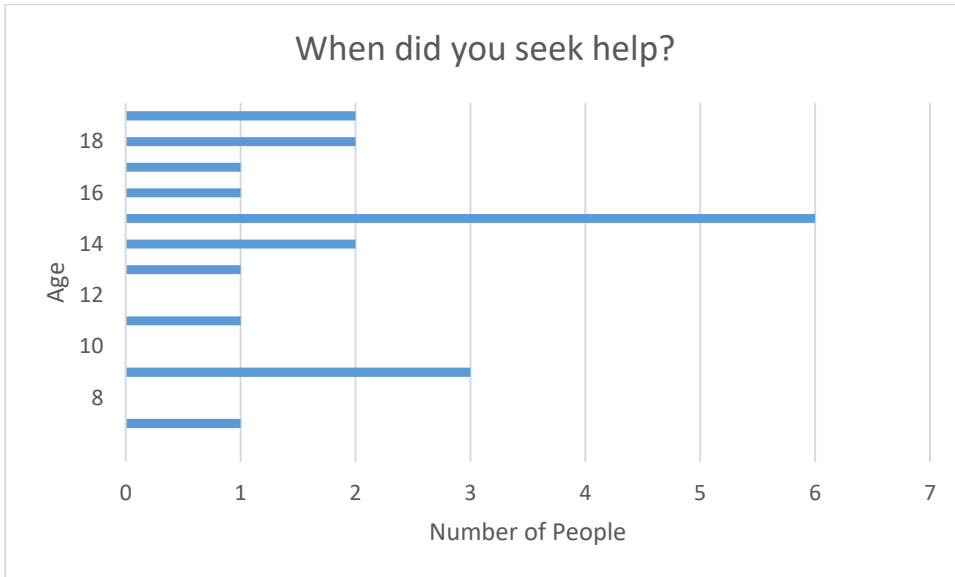
What would encourage you to take the first step in getting help?

The top 3 responses to this question were :

1.)   Family
2.)   Friends
3.)   Teachers

Who did you go to?

parents friends nurse paediatrician
family close doctor councillor
school head
mum
friend aunty gp 2gether
cams appointment
year adult counsellor
people college doctors
online nurses

NHS Long Term Plan Findings

Mental Health Care For Children & Young People

11 focus groups engaging with 174 people

59 people responded online

79% Of people agreed with the approach considered for these services.

1. Improve waiting times for all levels of support.
2. Increase service access times to 24/7 and promote what is available.
3. Work in schools and colleges to reduce stigma and build resilience.
4. Make use of peer support models.
5. Tackle bullying as a major cause of poor mental health.
6. Increase whole family support and improve the environment for the young person.
7. Individually designed services. Person centered approach.
8. Improve the transition from children's to adult's mental health services and increase the service to 25 years old.
9. Increase the accessibility of counselling and talking therapies.
10. Consider improving support for particular groups such as: LGBTQ+, those under 18, those likely to self-harm or attempt suicide, those with Autism and anxiety.
11. Use digital technology with caution. Use for information sharing, connecting patients with specialists, out of hours support and information and self help apps.

Young People's Events

Over the course of this project, the Healthwacth team have attended a number of events that have been attended by large numbers of young people, including 2 Crucial Crew events, the Herefordshire School Games and the Scout ShireJam. At these events, young people mainly completed the survey about support in schools for their mental health, however the crucial crew events and the Youth Council Conference gave us the opportunity to ask young people more about mental health issues.

Crucial Crew 2018
Young people participated in a survey about emotional wellbeing. The following results were recorded :

The largest cause of sadness or feeling worried or anxious was arguments, affecting 65% of children in question 4 and then exams 47.7% which is supported by national data. In the 'other' category, apart from 48 children who wrote 'Nothing', the top 5 other things were:

- Family Issues
- Family health problems
- Death of a family member or loved one

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- Bullying. (Being bullied or others being bullied)
- The children's own health problems.

85.3% of children turn to their family when they feel sad worried or anxious, by far the biggest number selected in question 5. There were a wide range of things children turned to, the top five things in the 'other' category children cited as things they do or turn to when they feel worried, sad or anxious were:

- ChildLine
- My pet(s)
- A trusted adult
- No one/nowhere
- Keep it to myself

A high number of children have sleepless nights or disrupted sleep due to being worried about something

Crucial Crew 2019
Young people participated in an engagement activity where they discussed some issues that may affect them in the transition of going from primary to high school. They discussed how they felt about potential issues that they may face as well as discussing some solutions that could help them. The comments recorded from this activity were as follows :

The feedback highlights the issues that most children felt were of highest concern; these are bullying; tests & exams; and homework.

It is also worth mentioning that the Healthwatch staff and volunteers who ran the sessions, commented that although some of the issues were only mentioned by some individuals, these young people rated the issue highly, for example, there were only a couple of young people commented about being the only one going to a different school or going through an appeals procedure, but for these individuals, this was a big concern for them. Therefore, it is worth considering each of these issues, individually where they may apply to young people.

A notable consistent response was that the children were cautious about looking online for help and information and there was a need for online safety awareness.

The top 5 solutions that young people highlighted in this exercise included; finding trusted adults that they can share their concerns with, whether they are the parents, the staff at school or just a safe adult; peer support and trying to think positive.

During the activity, we also highlighted to the children the resources from the Action for Happiness initiative, this linked very well to the solutions we had discussed and it was useful to give young people tips on how they can manage their own wellbeing, and support each other.

Annual Youth Conference

Healthwatch attended the 2018 event (organized through Hereford City Council), the young people in attendance at this event were asked to write down their thoughts and feelings about mental health support they receive at school as well as outside of school. The following comments were recorded :

"People (especially teenagers) joke about mental health"

"School nurse's only there once a week"

"People not willing to listen"

"People always seem to think you are over-reacting when it comes to mental health – we need to work to normalise the discussion about mental health and how badly it actually affects young people"

"When upset at school – not enough help"

"HOPE Support – very helpful"

"Counsellor at school – make this a legal requirement so more support is available in schools

"Sometimes counsellors feel like they hop around the subject, but sometimes you just want to just get it out and not beat about the bush"

"Being able to join the Y-team has been a positive experience for my mental health"

"Support at school – we need to have a better system to get support to young people for mental wellbeing"

"Delay in getting support is far too long"

"My high school has a school nurse, but you can never find her but is a nice person"

"Social media can be helpful but can also be bad"

"CLD – good laugh and helpful, had 10 weeks but could have done with longer"

"School brings in different professionals, but they are not around enough"

"Not enough support in primary schools"

"SYM are good"

"Proactive healthcare"

"Feedback from YP – primary schools have good support for wellbeing"

"Strong young minds are good – CLD are not good – you have to go through the whole process of school, CLD, ….. until you are admitted to CAMHS etc. I feel we need better mental health services in Hereford."

"Its become OK to talk about mental health – good and bad"

"GP only help once crisis happens"

Schools Focus Groups

As a result of bringing together professionals and young people from the schools, we were able to go into some schools/colleges to talk with young people about their experiences of mental health support and services.

6 individuals were spoken to in a group as well as two individual interviews at Barrs Court school.

The group session highlighted the positive measures that the school do to support young people's mental health. Young people commented that they felt well supported due to the following points :

- All staff members are approachable to talk to which makes them feel supported (Staff are supported for this by doing training on mental health & wellbeing (CACHE courses and online training);
- Young people learn about how arts and sports activities can help their mental health;
- The school do a number of awareness weeks about mental health and have a 'healthy mind' topic every term.

Within the individual interviews, the environment for treatment of services was discussed. One comment mentioned that one of the CAMHS' rooms was uncomfortable and too crammed and that it can sometimes be difficult to get to the service in Belmont if the traffic is bad. However, one young person commented that their most recent meeting had been at the school, they had liked the professional they saw, and it made a huge difference coming to the school as it took away anxieties about going to a different environment.

Both interviews, also brought up the issue of communication with the individual. As well as long waiting times, they have left some sessions feeling as though the treatment/therapy hadn't finished properly, feeling like they need another session. It was also mentioned that some individuals had been waiting for a letter to communicate next steps and then they hadn't heard anything, so the young people are left feeling like they are not sure what is happening.

After the schools forum, the Healthwatch team did a series of interviews with young people from a local high school. These interviews were to get their opinion on how schools can support young people's mental health; how mental health spending should be prioritise din the county and the benefits of including young people in the conversation about mental health. These interviews highlighted some issues that were important to young people as well as suggestions to help improve support for young people including :

- Talking more and being open about services on offer when young people are mentally well.

- The importance of the environment when you speak to professionals about mental health.
- The importance of finding trust and building a relationship with a safe adult you speak to.
- Positive feedback about 'Start of term check ups'
- The importance of organisations that directly work with young people on their mental health.
- More training for teachers on how to speak to young people and deal with them if they are mentally unwell in lessons, including listening to young people to understand their perspective. To be more open instead of not talking about an issue in fear of saying the wrong thing.
- More counsellors in order to reduce waiting times, highlighting how a condition can get worse during the waiting time.
  The You tube link for these interviews can be seen in Appendix B.

Conclusion

1.) One of the main focuses on this project was around support young people receive in the school setting for their mental health. The first observation from survey one was that there is a huge variety of different things schools are doing support their young people, which isn't consistent. There were a lot of comments about school support which said although the school were good at mental health support, they thought they could do better. The large range of ideas that different schools use means there is a need for sharing good practice and learning from other schools. Examples of good practice can be seen in 'Survey One' results in the findings section.

2.) Communication with outside agencies. This came out as one of the top responses when asked what they would like to see happen in their school. Comments suggested that schools weren't always clear on "what happens next" when they feel the need to refer a young person for help with their mental health. This observation also includes improving communication on what community organisations exist that young people can access to improve their mental health. Survey two also showed results on this topic, showing that there was a small number of people with mental health conditions accessing support from community organisations, but those who did had found them extremely helpful in supporting their mental health. With a larger percentage commenting that they don't access community organisations to support their mental health, it is thought that if there was more information communicated to young people to highlight what they may access this could really help to improve their mental health.

3.) A number of different engagements have highlighted the issue of bullying and how this contributes to a young person's mental health. Survey one results showed "help with bullying" as one of the top 5 responses to what people would like to see more of in schools. The NHS Long term Plan engagements also highlighted bullying

as a major cause of poor mental health that needed addressing. The issue of bullying was repeatedly mentioned during young people's events, with the 2019 crucial crew results showing it as one of the biggest concerns young people have when moving up to high school.

4.) Getting the environment right where treatments and therapies supporting young people takes place is vital. Variations of where support sessions could take place, consider person centred outreach approach in future treatment of young people.

5.) At the start of the project local partners informed Healthwatch that they would like to hear from young people about what technology and apps they feel has helped or could help them with their mental health. Survey two has shown a number of different apps and solutions that young people have mentioned, with the 'Headspace' app being mentioned the most, closely followed by apps such as Spotify which is about listening to music. The NHS long term plan engagement has highlighted that technology does need to be used with caution as not all is helpful, but these engagements also highlighted some of the positive outcomes using technology can bring to young people. A suggestion could be for some guidance from NHS commissioners about evidence-based tools that children & young people could use.

6.) Survey two shows results about when young people have started to experience mental health issues and when they have started to get help. The 'When did the first mental health symptoms start' graph shows two ages where there has been a higher response, these being ages 11 and 15 years old. The graph also shows the most responses at age 15.

7.) Survey two also shows that the top responses from the 'What would encourage you to take the first step and seek help?' was family, friends and teachers. This is positive, demonstrating that young people who took part in these engagements were speaking to people close to them about mental health issues. The question of 'Where did you go for help' showed that the GP/doctor was the most common, highlighting the need for GP surgeries to be equipped to deal with young people's mental health concerns.

Challenges with Engagements

The main challenge during this project was being able to reach and engage with high numbers of young people. We were keen to hear from large range of young people, particularly those that may not usually get their voice heard. Schools are increasingly under pressure and as a result, it is hard to access children through schools. Consequently, we had to be flexible and engage with CYP in a variety of ways, this has resulted in a challenge collating all the information in different formats. However, it has been possible to pull out common themes that young people have fed back.

Recommendations

- Setting up a Youthwatch (a group led by young people) – in order to have regular engagement with young people to make sure their voice is heard on all areas of health & social care, not just mental health. It is an opportunity for service providers to see the experience from the young person's perspective.

- Continuing a Herefordshire Schools Mental Health Forum – the project highlighted that there was a lack of avenues where schools could come together to discuss the topic of mental health, share good practice and learn practical tips on how their staff can support young people's mental health.

- Improving the issue of bullying – Establish a countywide campaign to 'stamp out' bullying. Make sure schools and organisation have anti-bullying policies which are active. Investigate ways that good practice can be shared across the county to tackle the issue of bullying.

- The physical environment services are delivered in – consider how the environment where treatment or therapy sessions take place can help the individual (eg is it possible for the session to initially take place in a familiar surrounding or could young people be doing an activity whilst talking about mental health issues. Also, to discuss travel arrangements to sessions to make sure this isn't a barrier).

- Improved information, communication and promotion of outside agencies and community organisations with schools and how they can support positive mental health & wellbeing.

- Through a wide variety of engagement within this project, young people have consistently highlighted the benefits of initiatives such as Strong Young Minds, helping young people to cope with the mental health issues as well as raising awareness to all young people about how to look after their mental health. Consider the use of peer to peer support models in schools.

- Consider the effectiveness and evidence-based nature of whole school mental health models used across the county to develop some consistency and standard of offer for all children & young people.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch would like to thank all of the people who took part in the project and engagement sessions that this report is based on. We would also like to thank all of the organisations who helped to make that possible.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are representative of 3898 participants through online surveys, focus groups and young people events such as Crucial crew.

The participants have either been involved in engagement sessions, online/paper survey's or focus groups.

The views may not be representative of other Herefordshire service users but are authentic independently gathered views.

It is hoped that commissioners and providers of services and communities will consider the views, celebrate and share good practice and respond to patient concerns by finding ways to improve practice where necessary.

Please tell us if you have used these recommendations so we know how this work has made a difference.

Appendix A

Children & Young People's Issues

Issue	Rating (blue)	orange	grey	yellow	dark blue
Bullying	44	16	4	1	3
Tests and exams	18	13	13	8	5
Homework	16	7	7	5	3
Feeling intimidated by older pupils (scared of / nervous about n	11	13	8	1	4
Getting lost or being late - it is all so big	8	12	8	2	4
Making new friends	3	8	11	6	4
Pressure of work	12	9	3	5	
Tiredness	6	5	7	8	2
People expect me to do well	8	6	7	4	2
The way I look	7	3	12	1	1
Will they understand my disability or special needs	8	7	5	4	
Feeling it is very different / frightening or just too much all at once. Feeling overwhelmed	8	5	2	5	
Will it be stricter	4	6	4	4	
Understanding the lessons	2	3	5	6	2
Only one going to a different school	7	6	4		
School dinners	3	1	3	3	6
Travel / getting to school	1	3	2	3	7
School uniform	2	4	3	4	
Detention	3	1	3	3	1
The noise and crowds	1	2	1	3	
Isolation (being lonely)	2	2	1	1	
Understanding the rules				4	1
What I'm expected to behave like			2	3	
Different School		2	1		
Going through appeals		1	1		

Appendix B

YOUTH VOICE – How can schools support young people's mental health?

Local Strong Young Minds champions share their thoughts about how schools can support young people's mental health. They discuss topics such as start of term check-ups, what schools have done in the past to help and what schools could do in the future.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HY3v41KIMLs&feature=youtu.be

YOUTH VOICE – How should mental health spending be invested?

Strong Young Minds champions discuss how mental health spending should be prioritised. In this video, the champions talk about the importance of youth engagement, length of waiting lists and the idea of investing is safe spaces.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DbSQ-8I704&feature=youtu.be

YOUTH VOICE – The benefit of youth engagement –

Georgie Westway, a youth mental health ambassador and String Young Minds champion, talks about how and why we should involved young people in conversations about mental health. Georgie explains why it is important to her and how she has been supported as part of the Strong Young Minds project. She also discusses some ideas for others to bear in mind to make youth engagement and co-production a genuine part of service development, delivery and mental health education.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpZjeAZnWdc&feature=youtu.be