



Mental Health

Young People's Perspective
July 2019

healthwatch
Barking and
Dagenham
Delivered by LifeLine Projects

About Healthwatch

Local Healthwatch was established in April 2013 as part of the legislation from the Social Care Act 2012. We are a statutory, independent organisation that acts as the consumer champion for local people in relation to health and social care services.

There is a Healthwatch representing every local authority area in England and it has a network supported by Healthwatch England, that provides guidance and shares good practice.

We are a link between the experiences local people tell us about when they use health and care services and the decision makers who commission and provide them.

By representing the voice of local people, through listening to their experiences, we are able to influence the way services are delivered by providing evidence of our findings to statutory bodies and requesting their response.

Healthwatch carries out visits at a variety of service providers to gather information and report back the findings to inform the public, providers and other stakeholders.

Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham provides advice and signposting to local services that people are looking for or need to access.

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3 What is Mental Health?

Mental health refers to our behavioural and emotional wellbeing - it is about how we think, feel, and behave. The term 'mental health' is sometimes used to mean an absence of a mental disorder.

Mental health affects daily life, relationships, and physical health. This also includes a person's ability to enjoy life - to attain a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve mental strength and resilience.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) describes mental health as;

“... a state of well-being in which an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”

The most common disorders associated with mental wellbeing are;

ANXIETY

Panic Attacks

Phobias

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders (OCD)

MOOD

Depression

Bipolar disorder

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

4 Introduction

Children and young people should be able to access the right support at the right time when they experience a mental health problem.

All too often, children and young people have a poor experience of care or they struggle to get timely and appropriate help that meets their needs.

The system that supports the mental health of children and young people is complex. Different organisations and services are involved in identifying children and young people's mental health needs, helping them to access care, and providing the care and treatment they need.

Many children and young people experience care that does not always meet the standard that we would want for ourselves or our own children.

Some children and young people fall through the gaps at a time when life is a period of physical, emotional, social and psychological development. It can have an enduring influence on their lifelong mental health.

Around half of all people who have a mental health problem at some point in their life will experience their first symptoms before they are 14 years old.

This makes it vitally important that children and young people have timely access to high-quality care that is personalised to meet their unique, individual needs as they go through life changes.

The understanding of mental wellbeing and mental health problems is changing over time. Children and young people today face new emotional demands due to factors such as social media.

Some experiences that are treated as mental health issues currently, may not have been thought about in the same way in the past.

Greater awareness means that services and the people who work in them are dealing with mental health problems that are constantly changing and demanding.

With this report, Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham want to raise the issues young people in the borough have told us about, through engaging with them and asking them about their experiences.

We aim to highlight and identify what the burning issues are through the summary of our findings and endeavour with this report, to contribute to the work that is being undertaken across Barking and Dagenham by statutory and voluntary sector organisations.

We would especially like to thank the individuals and local education establishments who contributed to this report and those who are working hard to raise the profile of mental health issues in the borough and provide support to young people in very challenging times.

5 Executive Summary

Engaging with local schools, colleges and University, Healthwatch spoke with 138 young people between the ages of 15 and 23.

The specific areas we focused on were the determinants causing anxiety and depression; the impact these have on the everyday lives of individuals and whether they felt affected in terms of isolation.

We conducted five focus groups and three engagement sessions where young people were asked to openly share their views and give their opinions to questions and statements that they could relate to themselves.

The biggest and most apparent issue was the lack of male students participating. Overall 60% of the students said that the most important people and influence on them was their families, mainly their parents. Guidance and a sense of safety and wellbeing was cited as the main source of support students felt they benefited from.

The other 40% was a mixture of activities, mainly listening to or playing music; spending time on the internet and social media and eating. Playing sports and going out socializing were further down the list of activities. The majority of respondents indicated that what they did helped them to relieve stress. Others however, indicated that it caused them anxiety.

When asked about accessing local services that supported mental wellbeing, over 50% did not know how they could do that. This indicates that it varies how well informed individuals are in the same peer groups.

Asked about whether they would talk to somebody about their mental wellbeing, 44% said they would with 56% not responding.

The most important factor for 22% of students was staying healthy in both their body and mind - 12% said the least important issue to them was how much time they spent on the internet and social media.

Having a trusted person, they could go to talk to about feelings and thoughts was important to 17% of students however, being able to trust people was a deterrent for many.

Being in their own space, in their own place and belief in faith was also important to students.

We asked students about mental health, what it meant to them and how it related to them individually; 32.5% said that anxiety, depression and stress were the main aspects that affected them.

The most common causes of anxiety and stress were bullying when younger, social media and the pressures from peers to fit in. Other more prominent issues included drug taking and also not going out and socializing, becoming isolated and a loner.

The following links are for the Government and NHS England future Vision for Children and Young People's Mental health and Barking and Dagenham CCG refresh of their CAMHS transformation plan

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414024/Childrens_Mental_Health.pdf

<http://www.barkingdagenhamccg.nhs.uk/Our-work/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-transformation-plan.htm>

6 What Young People told Us?

Healthwatch carried out a set of 5 focus groups to gather responses to specific questions and statements that it was felt young people could feel comfortable and open to engaging about.

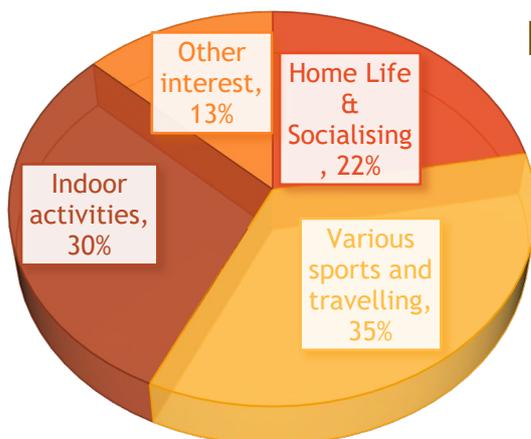
Lifeline School

We visited a local school and spoke with 23 pupils between the ages of 15-16. A young person from another local school volunteered his time and joined the focus group to open up the dialogue and inspire the conversation.

The group was asked to think about five questions and to give their views on each;

What type of thing do you enjoy doing that makes you happy?

Being amongst friends and family (home life, socializing) - 22%
Some form of outdoor physical activity (various sports and travelling)- 35%
Indoor activities (time spent on internet, play station, listening to music and eating) - 30% while the rest 13% had differing interests

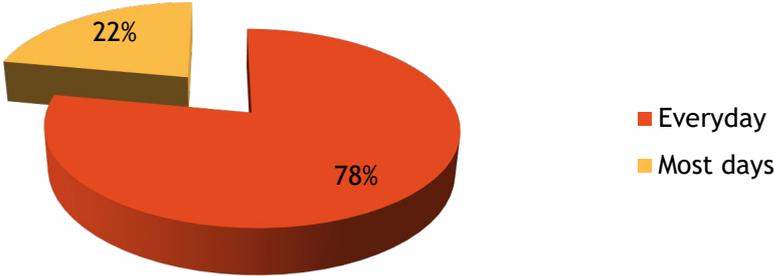


RESPONSES

How often in a day do you do this thing?

Most of them indicated that they did the things they like every day or at least once a day - 78%
Others said that they do it most days or don't do anything at all - 22%

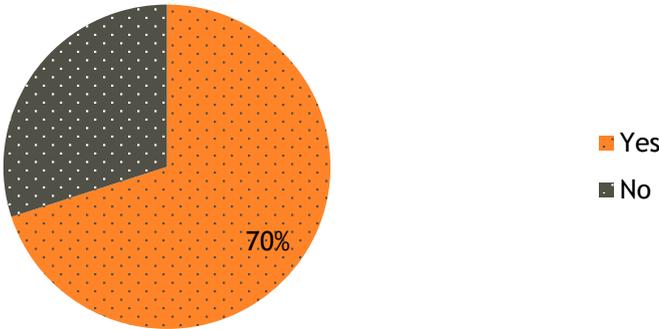
Response



Do you see yourself as a happy person?

The majority told Healthwatch that this was the view of themselves and how they felt - 70% Some of them were unsure or indicated that they did not feel happy in their life - 30%

Happy person



Some of those that said they didn't feel happy in their life told Healthwatch;

"I'd like to say that I have a lot of problems despite health"

"That's because there could be difficult moments"

"If I am upset I am going to show it or tell it directly"

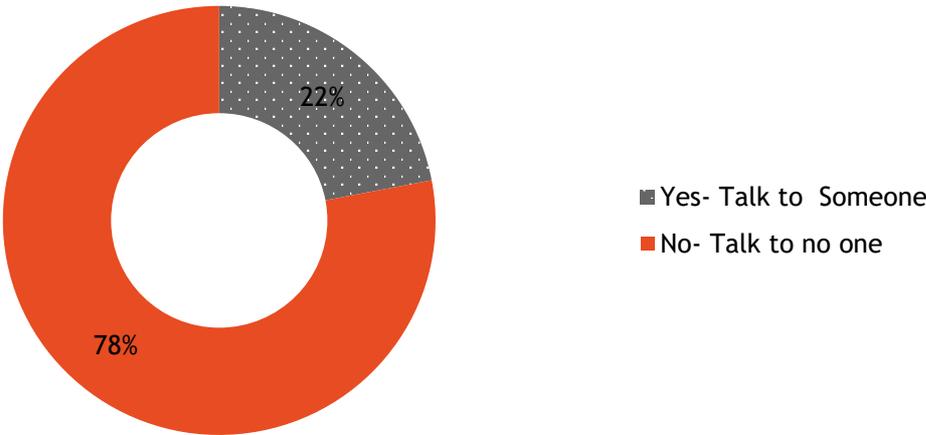
"Because nothing really makes me happy apart from eating"

"I always think negative"

If upset or down how many times out of 10 do you tell someone you are?

Out of the 23 pupils, 22% indicated that they would tell somebody; the other 78% were less inclined to talk to anyone when upset or feeling down.

Talk to someone

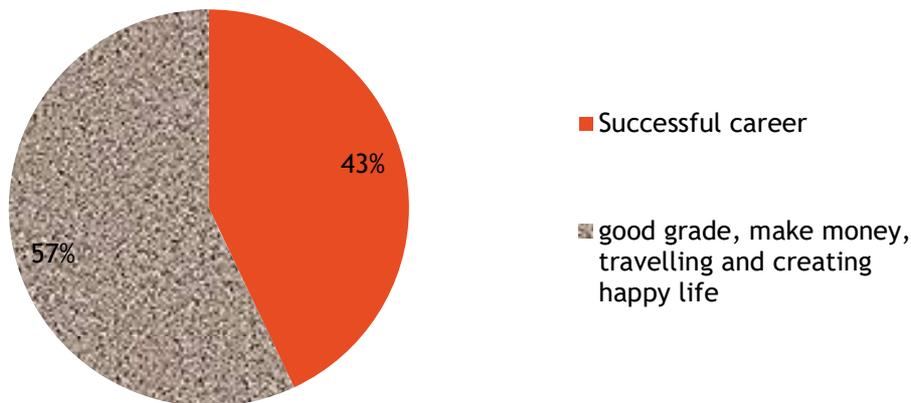


What is your goal in life? Ambitions?

Being successful in their career was the most common response to this - 43%

Achieving good grades, making money, travelling and creating a happy family and home life for themselves - 57%

Goals



On reflection...

All the pupils indicated that they understood the focus of the discussion related to their Mental Health.

This is what they had to say about mental health;

- *“Don’t take all the pain inside but share it with a trusted person, it could be a relief and the problem may be less big”.*
- *“That being happy is good and healthy, what makes you feel good”.*
- *“You are not being weak when complaining, but I still am against It I can’t show all my feelings”.*

- *“To bear in mind that people have things going on in their heads”.*
- *“If we want to talk to someone we should”.*
- *“That your health is important”.*
- *“Look after yourself”.*

When asked, all the boys in the group indicated that they would not speak with somebody if they were upset or down.

One comment was “showing your emotions is a sign of weakness something you don’t want to show in front of your mates”.

It was also suggested by some of the girls in the group too that this would be seen as weak.

The young people who were more open and prepared to talk about their upset and down times came across as more self-assured and driven about what they wanted to achieve.

Those less likely to want to talk with somebody about those times indicated they had less of an idea of the direction they wanted to go in life.

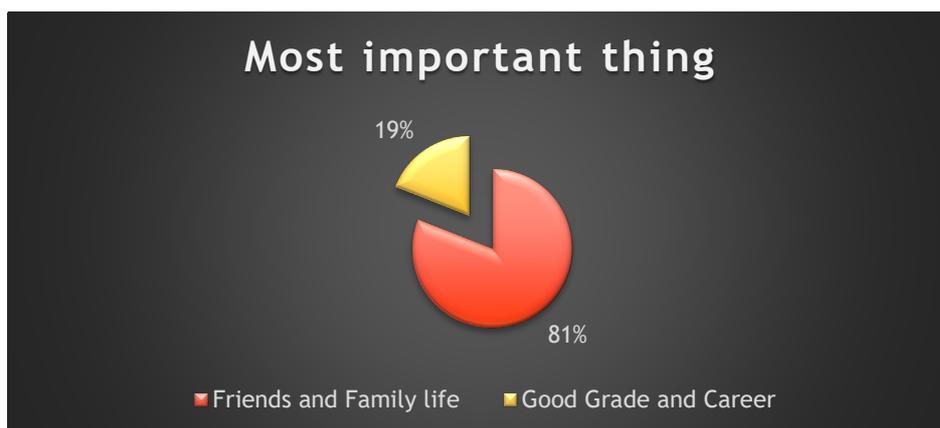
World Mental Health Day - Barking and Dagenham College

Healthwatch carried out an interactive presentation for 80 students with the aim to encourage them to talk about mental wellbeing and what it means to them as individuals. A key element to this engagement session was that all the students were female - not a single male took part in the discussion.

The students were asked to give their thoughts and responses to;

What is the most important thing to you?

Family, friends and home life was the most important for 81% of the students. Of the other 19%, working hard at how to succeed at college to get good qualifications and getting a good job were most important.



Why is this the most important thing?

Family & friends...

“They mean the world to me”

“I can’t live without them”

“I love my family and they are always there to support me”

“They mean the world to me”

“Family are my backbone without them I am nothing”

What is your favourite thing to do and why?

“Spending time with my boyfriend because he makes me very happy”

“Sport, because it helps me release my stress and worries”

“Going to church to sing and worship God”

“Socialising with friends we make lots of memories”

“Sleep, because it put me in a good mood and helps me to relax and forget about me problems”

“Listening to music and go on YouTube”

“Going out with my friends and sleep because it helps me forget everything”

“Art, painting and decorating helps me to de-stress”

**There was a variety of favourite activities identified - one emerging point was how a number of the students mentioned that their activity helps them to relieve stress and pressure. **

Would you know the name of a local mental health charity and what services they provide?

“NHS - Advice and support”

“Mental health Foundation, support people with their mental health”

“Charity is for people with no parents or support which helps them to become someone better”

“Mind, but I don't know what they do”

“Mind, Rethink Mental Illness - offer Therapy and counseling”

“Mind - they help people with mental health”

“Bipolar & Schizophrenia”

Half of the participants - 50% didn't know of or name any organisations that support people with their Mental ill health needs and more than half - 72% didn't comment on whether they would recommend accessing mental health services to other people.

Of those that did know, 66% indicated that they either had or would seek help from a service with the main reason due to personal experiences.



Focus Group 1st Session with College Students

This was an interactive session to explore in more detail about their experiences, ideas and opinions concerning mental health and wellbeing.

| Which Statements can you relate to most about Depression. | Responses |
|---|------------------|
| 1. My mind feels very low and I don't want to do much | 7 |
| 2. Living my lifestyle in a different way so that it makes me feel good | 3 |
| 3. Taking medication is important to help balance the mind | 3 |
| 4. Physical pain and discomfort gets me down | 2 |
| 5. The way other people treat me affects my mood | 7 |

The two biggest issues the students connected to feeling depressed was being negative and low in their minds and the way other people treated them in a negative way affecting their moods.

These are comments fed back by the students - most of them mentioned depression.

Depression

“Depression is Sadness, sad thoughts & hurt feelings”

“Discuss with your close friend or with your parents - try to avoid that thing with whom you are depressed”

“Depression is opposite to Happiness”

“Depression, a Mental Disorder”

“See a doctor or discuss with an older person - avoid the people causing the depression”

“It makes me think about my mental health - it makes me think when the doctor said I am borderline Bipolar”

“Depression & Anxiety - stupid, lonely, unappreciated & angry thoughts... nothing nice”

“Depression, feeling ashamed & blank minded - pushing people away too ashamed to let them see your weak side”

Anxiety

“Being bullied was connected to childhood trauma”

“Emotions - your own feelings
- sad or angry thoughts.
Mental health is what you may need support with and don't go it alone”

“Bad experiences growing up with stress & trying to seek help”

“wanting to separate myself from other people - feeling fearful & overthinking”

“Self-harming is a way people deal with low self-worth & emotions”

“Constantly worrying, feeling upset & angry, panic attacks & feeling alone”

Healthwatch asked the students to think about and give their view on **solutions they would suggest** to supporting young people with their mental wellbeing - this is what they told us;

Medication is a solution - anti-depressants - but not a great one.

Views about TV shows such as 'Thirteen Reasons Why' are controversial. It was good that they raise awareness and offer support however, others felt that some of it should be censored to specific ages i.e. over 18's because of the influence it can have on younger viewers.

I created a chat group with some friends on social media which has now grown to 20 people. They all find it beneficial to them.

A young man said he goes to the gym as a solution to relieving his stress.

Some students spoke about how they liked going to a particular youth club and how they organised a protest march to keep it open, but it ended up being closed down anyway. The people who decided this didn't listen to young people.

Escalating concerns by telling their tutors about their mental health issues.

Counselling is a good form of support, but needs to be more discrete.

It was not good to suppress emotions - use Twitter instead to vent with friends.

There should be more awareness - teachers should help children understand and become more aware of the environment and surroundings they are in and the risks involved.

Have a disciplined routine that sets your standard and targets for what your daily life should start at.

Other solutions raised in general discussion included youth clubs, gyms, seeing counsellors, talking to someone - a friend that you can really trust, different forms of art, yoga, support groups on social media.

How addictive social media is, how much time is spent in virtual reality as opposed to dealing with the realities of real life and being equipped mentally to be resilient.

One individual agreed to speak in more detail about their experience of anxiety & depression.

Focus Group 2nd Session - Barking and Dagenham College

Focus Group Presentation

Anxiety

There were 10 students from Barking and Dagenham College; there were 5 male participants, 4 female participants and 1 participant who did not want to disclose their gender.

Part 1 asked the students to write down their first thoughts when they heard the term “Anxiety” and to talk about it with their peers.

From the feedback a lot of students first thoughts about anxiety were - scared, lonely, fearful, no self-confidence, lacking interest, low mood, unsociable, sad, panic attacks, worrying, frustrated, angry, overthinking, lack of energy and apathy.

Part 2 involved students moving to pick a different seat and read out the feedback of another student. The following discussion was about how young people seek help for anxiety from others.

One of the student stated that he “would seek help from parents or family members.”

Another student stated that “there are helplines available to get support, but the disadvantage is that they are only available only at certain times - 9:00am -17:00pm.”

Students pointed out that the college have counsellors where they could seek help or have the choice to go online for support from therapists.

The next discussion was how young people could help themselves to overcome anxiety. A student said that they could “stimulate their minds more by doing things they like to do.”

“Having a routine to follow each day stops me from wasting time and overthinking to much” one student remarked.

Another student commented that “routine can cause anxiety too, especially if it is different from their regular routine.”

The next discussion centered on what causes young people to be anxious. Nearly all students agreed that social media is one of the main sources of anxiety.

Comments suggested that social media is like a drug and highly addictive.

An example was raised about, the system on Instagram, where young people are constantly checking how many likes they have in order to seek validation and acceptance from others to value their self-worth.

Students said that young people are victims of cyber bullying and hate crimes. A young person may have lot of friends on social media but could be totally isolated in reality.

Some students said that young people compare themselves to other peers or celebrities on social media who seem to have it all. They then criticize themselves and have low self-esteem for not being perfect like the others which causes them to have anxiety.

Few students said that they would definitely not be able to open up and share how they really feel because they cannot trust the social media.

Outcomes

| | Feeling Anxiety | The Benefit of Services | Positive/Negative changes |
|----------------|---|---|--|
| Males | Nervous, constantly worrying | Exercise, therapies and knowing where to go to get help | Technology and accessing websites - people being mollycoddled too much |
| Females | Irritable, fearful and feeling nervous under pressure | Having access to various therapies is a great help | Healthcare provision & services awareness is ok - social media viewed negatively |

| | Cultural Impact | How can anxiety be portrayed? | Physical effects |
|----------------|--|---|--|
| Males | Local communities | Training & education | Headaches & pressure |
| Females | Religious views & Community affects them | Peer groups, better education & use of social media to portray anxiety in positive ways | Fatigue, nausea, shortness of breath & disturbed sleep |

| | Behaviours | Intellectually |
|----------------|--|--|
| Males | Poor performance & difficulty sleeping - worries | Losing focus, problems concentrating & be able to make decisions |
| Females | Struggling to rest and sleep, strain on study and performance - relationships under stress | Not being able to concentrate & focus on what they are doing |

When you are getting anxiety, how do you feel...?

Emotionally

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Irritable | 1 |
| Nervous | 4 |
| Anxious | 2 |
| Constant worrying | 4 |
| Irrational fears | 1 |
| Other | 1 |

Intellectually

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Loosing focus | 5 |
| Difficulty in concentrating | 5 |
| Problems with decision making | 3 |
| Other | 0 |

Behaviourally

| | |
|--|---|
| Struggle to sleep | 5 |
| Less productive | 2 |
| Restlessness | 2 |
| Strain on study performance or relationships | 2 |
| Other | 0 |

Physically

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Fatigue | 1 |
| Headaches | 3 |
| Nauseous | 4 |
| Shortness of breath | 3 |
| Sweating | 4 |
| Muscle aches and pains | 1 |
| Other | 2 |

How could health services benefit you to support your anxiety?

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Exercise | 2 |
| Nutritional diets | 0 |
| Supplements | 0 |
| Medication | 0 |
| Therapies | 3 |
| Other/ Don't know | 1 |

Have you seen any positive or negative changes in society towards anxiety?

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Law | 0 |
| Technology | 1 |
| Social media | 1 |
| Education | 0 |
| Awareness | 2 |
| Health care providers | 5 |
| Other | 0 |

Does your culture have an impact on your anxiety?

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Religious views | 1 |
| Beliefs | 0 |
| Ethnic backgrounds | 0 |
| Community | 4 |
| Other | 0 |

How can anxiety be portrayed and promoted positively for young people?

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Training | 1 |
| Education | 4 |
| Social media | 5 |
| Peer groups | 3 |
| Other | 0 |

Gender

| Male | Female | Prefer not to say |
|------|--------|-------------------|
| 5 | 4 | 1 |

Age range

| | |
|--------------|---------------|
| Young Adults | 16 - 18 years |
|--------------|---------------|

Focus Group Coventry University Students

Getting a perspective from older students, Healthwatch carried out a focus group session asking them to think more deeply about mental health and to speak about their thoughts about it, what they thought were the causes either from experience or perception; and their ideas about solutions in services that could support young people.

We asked the students to look at a set of nine statements and asked each individual to choose the three that they could relate to the most.

| Which <u>3</u> Statements can you relate to most... | Responses |
|--|-----------|
| 1. I easily lose confidence & feel nervous in new situations | 4 |
| 2. Other people my age generally like me | 2 |
| 3. I have many fears & get easily scared | 3 |
| 4. I often volunteer to help others | 4 |
| 5. I get on better with older people than people my own age | 1 |
| 6. Other people get me down with their problems | 1 |
| 7. When someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill I try to help them | 6 |
| 8. I prefer my own company | 0 |
| 9. Don't care much for other people, I only look out for myself | 0 |

The statement that was selected the most was helping others when they were upset or hurt, with volunteering to help others being one of the two most popular second choices.

More than half the students also revealed how they lack confidence and get nervous in new situations with 43% of them indicating that they get easily scared and have many fears.

We asked the students what services young people needed?

This is what they told us;

- Having advisers/mentors to help young people keep mentally well
- Responsive local NHS services to assess and treat young people quickly
- Organised activities to help young people to realise their potential, reduce loneliness and improve self-esteem
- Someone they can ring anytime and speak with confidentially
- One to one chats with a trusted person to 'out' their own feelings of anxiety and pressure
- Education about mental health in schools for separate groups of boys and girls - break down the stigma and barriers to make it easier for boys and younger lads to be more open with how they feel.
- Access to dedicated telephone services like Childline, Young Minds, and a nightline where any young person can receive advice and support at any time or place
- Organisations that educate and give information about mental health either as classes or in secret groups for boys and girls separately
- One to one opportunities to chat about individuals, mental health to confront stigma and barriers
- Focus on mental health through media resources, TV programmes etc
- Counselling
- Medication

We asked where young people should get the support?

This is what they said;

- Through community networks of young people and family groups; organisations with people that understand and have lived experiences with mental health
- Confidential and readily available local helplines
- On the web in spaces designed for young people to discuss their vulnerabilities in a safe, open and confidential way
- An option to discuss it at their GP surgery; either with a nurse or other practitioner
- Faith groups, breaking down religious and cultural barriers surrounding mental health
- Role play to encourage listening, self-esteem and confidence using drama groups
- The NHS, schools, colleges and universities

How would you deliver these services?

- Planned NHS services
- GP services
- Family and friend support groups
- Spiritual support through faith organisations
- Gyms & Activities that involve free to get into exercise
- Creative activities like Painting, music, drawing & building for young people to make connections with others with similar needs
- Support services in schools, colleges and universities where it is readily available on site for when students need it
- Holistic activities based on alternative therapy like yoga meditation, massage of different types
- Groups and services run by males for males

Of the students Healthwatch spoke with, 44 of them completed an exercise asking them to rank statements; a summary of their responses is in the table below;

| | 1 (Most Important) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 (Least Important) | |
|--|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|----|
| Staying healthy in my mind, by keeping my body healthy. | 23 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 44 |
| Having the right person to go to, who will listen when I feel down or anxious. | 17 | 14 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 44 |
| Limiting the amount of time spent on computers and social media. | 1 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 12 | 44 |
| Feeling safe when I go out with my friends and family. | 9 | 9 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 44 |
| Open spaces and exercise places that relax my mind. | 7 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 8 | 44 |
| Looking out for others who might need someone to be there for them too. | 8 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 5 | 1 | 44 |
| My belief and faith through religion. | 15 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 44 |
| Local services provide access to professional support when I need it. | 7 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 44 |
| Having my own space, in my own place. | 15 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 5 | 44 |
| | 102 | 42 | 41 | 29 | 33 | 32 | 35 | 31 | 51 | |

7 Conclusions & Recommendations

It has been a challenge to get individual young people in the borough to talk about their mental health - whether good or bad. There is still some way to go in creating safe spaces where young people feel confident to talk about their personal experience and share their views about this subject.

It highlights how different approaches can make it easier and more accessible for young people to openly express their wellbeing needs and to find the right help at their time of need.

The most common issues that affected the mental health of the local young people that Healthwatch spoke to, were anxiety and depression.

The indicated causes varied hugely. However, social media was a clear contributing factor. It was highlighted by individuals identifying the negative impact, that using social media platforms for long periods of time can have on their wellbeing. For some, they confronted issues like bullying, feelings of low self-esteem and a sense of isolation and loneliness.

In contrast to that, young people have said that having a trusted person to go to when feeling anxious and needing to keep healthy in body & mind, was the most important things for them.

Healthwatch advocates the following recommendations:

1. Trusted Adults - capacity building

1.1. A member of the recently commissioned 'social infrastructure' contract, provided by Community Resources, is part of the interview panel for social prescribing link workers: to ensure a good knowledge of local services and an ability and desire to ensure that young people are linked with voluntary sector organisations that will empower and enable them to build resilience and find the support they need in addition to formal services.

1.2. Local mental health services proactively build trusted relationships with the voluntary sector and faith groups within the borough, with the view to building social capital with young people, combatting loneliness and social isolation. Particularly looking to invest in relationships with groups who offer:

- Mentoring for young people
- Informal youth clubs
- Well-being services (eg: art clubs, cooking clubs etc) that offer opportunities for conversations to happen that improve young people's mental health and well-being.

2. The development of community web-based, online resources that young people can access at any time for support.

This could be part of a young people's network that addresses mental health and wellbeing needs specifically and could include linked access through established education and community groups. pressure should be placed on local authority, health and social care and relevant voluntary organisations, to advertise these services through their social-media and online accounts

3. **The council should consider co-producing a ‘health warning’ campaign about social media, with students from local secondary schools, targeted at young people and including health warnings in a similar manner to cigarettes, gambling and alcohol.**
4. **Provision for peer-mentoring programmes to be delivered on a long-term basis. For example, ‘More than Mentors’ which takes an early-intervention approach to preventing future mental health needs in young people through peer mentoring, but is a short-term programme.**

During the various engagement activities, leaders emerged. Identifying and encouraging individual Peer Leaders with the confidence and maturity to value, support and guide others who lack some of those qualities, would assist individuals before their mental wellbeing needs worsen.

5. **During the course of our ‘secret shopper’ investigation into local mental health services, as part of this research, the following things were found:**
 - 5.1. The Early Intervention in Psychosis phone number was initially incorrect and has subsequently been updated on the website, however simple administrative errors could be the difference for a young person getting the help they need, or their condition worsening.
 - 5.2 We recommend ALL organisations review their contact details on a quarterly basis as a matter of course, but in addition, they require the appropriate team to update all online access points as frequently as necessary.

5.3 Unfriendly, or overly professional tone of voice on the phone. A young person, who has self-identified as needing help, will already have had to overcome some significant barriers of anxiety in order to make a phone call to ask for help. If they are greeted by a professional who is at worst unhelpful, or at best, zealous in their professional language, this can be off-putting.

5.4 Healthwatch recommends training for all staff who answer the phones. The focus of this training should include:

- How to ‘come alongside’ a young person
- Tone of voice
- How to help a young person to help themselves (eg: knowledge of local voluntary sector/faith-based programmes that the young person may be referred to; knowledge of online self-help resources) while they await their appointment.

6 The stigma of talking about mental health wellbeing is a problem for young and adolescent men.

Healthwatch found that a very small number were prepared to talk about mental health issues compared with young women. Those that did participate, did so with a positive response towards others in the way that they spoke about what they do and how others could benefit from following their example.

An emphasis on community prescribing to support local people presents the opportunity to identify and develop the right young people who could become ambassadors for mental health in the borough.

- 6.1 We recommend that there is a call to action for local schools, colleges, the university and youth centres to identify and develop a leadership network of youth ambassadors to be a voice for those who need support and a safe, trusted place to connect.

- 6.2 The ambassadors should be mentored and trained - to support them to evolve into positions of influence within the local health & care economy, to shape services that support young men's wellbeing needs.

8 Appendix 1 - Case Studies

Mr D - this 16-year-old takes an active role in local youth activities and is an informal carer for a family member with mental health needs.

Just my opinion on Mental Health!!



I would first like to say there is no such thing as perfect mental health. I have yet to see or heard of anyone that has one.

What is seen as bad mental health what is seen as good (in my opinion)



Good

Confidence
Self-esteem
Social connections
Active physically and mentally
Choice



Bad

Loneliness
Depression
Insecure
Lack of ambition
Anti-social

Organisation It took me longer to think of the good opposing to the bad this is because people are used to seeing and hearing about the bad compared to the good. It is very rare that you see the good being talked about.

This leads to people being scared of the bad therefore you tend to avoid something you're scared of which means they don't talk about it. As people fear the bad they like to think they have the good but in reality they don't. what people think and reality are opposing.

The main causes of this are the use of social media and television, the stigma attached to males talking about it, lack of education.

Thoughts to overcoming STIGMA

Organising a games place with ps4 etc. where you can get chilled out and where you can talk about how you feel.

Person I feel has a healthy mental health

From their life experiences at a young age and with their family they have built their confidence through this dance they do every week. They have learnt they have to be confident which is one of the good aspects of mental health.

Person I feel has a not so healthy mental health

This person is isolated and very introverted. I see them by themselves most the time. If he wasn't around you wouldn't notice he wasn't there.

Golden rules

Act as a family base - talk to each other

People need others so be there for others Can't always do things on your own

Ms E - A 16-year-old student with Autism had been diagnosed with Mental Health needs. There were also signs of anxiety and depression.

They had been in the care of the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) multiple times before their diagnosis and had panic attacks, four times since the age of 15.

With everything building up with life in general, the student was having anxiety and panic attacks. They started seeing shadows and fears of people trying to get them.

In classroom, they had a random panic attack that was noticed by their tutor straight away. They described their experience as feeling blank, struggling to breathe and not being able to hold on to things due to feeling physically weak.

They had always felt that something was different about them since the age of 12. They began to self-harm in order to be able to feel reality. They felt disconnected from the real world and everything felt like it was from their imagination.

They regularly spoke with a psychiatrist but was unable to express their feelings because the professional was a stranger. The student feels comfortable talking to someone they know.

Taking medication helps with their paranoia and sleep. It also stops them having negative conversation or thoughts in their mind.

In their spare time, they like creating fantasy stories, art work and drawing. It helps them cope with their mental wellbeing.

The student shared that it can be nasty for people with mental health to endure social stereotypes. There is stigma attached to it and people who don't understand and lack knowledge can view it as something like being possessed by an evil spirit.

They wanted to share their experience in the hope that it will help other young people to speak out about their mental wellbeing.

Miss F - In Year 10 I suffered from bad anxiety and panic attacks which lasted for 2 years - although they stopped I continued to experience feelings of insecurity and anxiousness.

To overcome this and as a form of escapism I discovered and trained a lot in dance - it helped me to overcome my anxiety.

Family arguments caused and led to me becoming withdrawn and increasingly isolated - shutting myself away in my room at home.

My friends deserted and turned on me. I felt I didn't belong anymore. Dance came to my rescue and it did a lot to help me cope with the circumstances I was in.

I became involved with a local faith group - at first it was difficult to really open up to let people in however, after a while I began to feel that I fitted in and took part in events the group had to offer. I was healing and feeling better for it.

I got a place in university however, in the first few months I began to feel anxious and insecure again. I hated it and started to isolate myself and didn't talk to anybody about it.

Eventually I decided University wasn't for them, I dropped out and decided to work instead which has given me a different focus on life with clearer goals to achieve.

The message from this young person to mental health professionals:
"DON'T LET THEM GO UNDER THE RADAR!!"