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## Children, Young People and Mental Health

Access to Universal Services and Support

Insight Report

June 2018

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## Introduction

This report shares the insights from Healthwatch Northumberland's on-going work to understand the different mental health services available for young people and the barriers they may face in using them.

Using the combined evidence from young people themselves and professionals in the statutory and voluntary sectors our aim is to highlight good practice and promote positive solutions to the commissioners and providers.

## Background

The people who responded to the Healthwatch Northumberland Annual Survey of 2017 raised "access to mental health services" as an issue of concern to them. The Healthwatch Northumberland Board consequently set a priority in their 2017/18 Operational Plan as

*To help young people access mental health services and support by understanding pathways to services, barriers young people may face and through promoting positive solutions to the commissioners and providers*

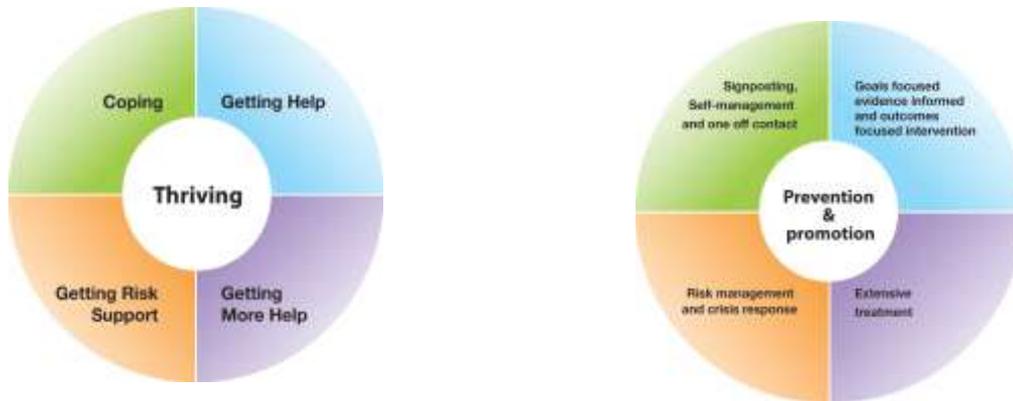
This built on the engagement work Healthwatch Northumberland (HWN) had undertaken which informed the Young People's Health Services report (Healthwatch Northumberland, 2015). This report represented the findings of a general health survey which asked young people to share their views, both positive and negative, about the health services, support and information available to them. One of the reports main findings was that young people were not always sure how to access mental health services although they were aware of their existence.

Given the broad nature of this issue we decided to investigate where our focus should lie. We started by collating information regarding existing pathways into Children and Young People's Mental Health services and were supported in this by the Primary Mental Health Manager for young people in Northumberland.

She explained that the approach to the management of mental health services for children and young people had been changed from a four tiered system which was service led to a new needs led approach based upon the "THRIVE" model. The THRIVE model has been developed by the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust and the Anna Freud Centre. It has created four groupings for young people with mental health issues and their families, as part of the wider group of young people who are supported to thrive by a variety of prevention and promotion initiatives in the community. The vision for Northumberland and this approach is set out in Northumberland County Council & NHS Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group, "Emotional Health and Wellbeing of Children in Northumberland" "Local Transformation Plan 2015-2020

<http://www.northumberlandccg.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Northumberland-transformation-plan.-20151016.pdf>

## THRIVE model



Through our investigations we discovered that although the referral pathway into both targeted and specialist mental health support was clearly set down, the access route into universal services was less clear. As the first point of access for young people without a diagnosed psychological condition is through universal services, this appeared to be significant.

Universal access points for young people are identified as those services which are available to everyone. These include schools and primary care centres and those associated professionals such as schools nurses, teachers, pastoral staff, youth workers and general practitioners who act as the main gateway into universal mental health support for children and young people.

We were also told that referrals for targeted or specialist support needed to evidence that universal, preventative services had been explored first and found to be unable to meet a young person's needs. This reinforced the importance of appropriate information, services and response at this early stage and so we decided to focus upon how young people access this support.

### **What we did**

#### **Discussions with organisations providing mental health services**

We met with organisations providing specialist mental health and generalist services in the statutory, voluntary and community sectors (VCS) to get an overview of the current availability and nature of 'universal' service information.

We are aware that Northumberland County Council (NCC) has for example developed their website content and uploaded various tools and emotional health resources for young people in January 2018. These tools were developed in partnership with Northumbria Healthcare and young people. They are to be located on the NCC social care section of the website. It does however appear quite difficult to locate these resources via common search engines and we would recommend

consideration be given to ways this might be improved.

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Campaigns/childrens-social-care.aspx>

We were told of a plan to develop and roll out a training course to all professionals who have contact with children and young people in Northumberland. The intention was to raise awareness of emotional wellbeing, positive mental health, resilience strategies and other preventative approaches amongst professionals working universally with children and young people.

We were also told of an online resource pack developed by North Tyneside Council for schools and young people as part of their Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Strategy which was to be rolled out across Northumberland to complement this training.

<http://mynorthtyneside.gov.uk/category/994/emotionally-healthy-schools-resourcepack>

### **Review of GP website content**

To further understand what information and universal support with mental health and emotional wellbeing was available to children young people and their families in Northumberland we researched and reviewed the content of GP surgery websites.

We considered what information was presented about emotional health and wellbeing services and how to access these and we reviewed the availability of self-care information and tools.

We discovered that of the 46 GP practices we looked at only 12 had specific website information dedicated to mental health and young people. Where information was made available to the public the content varied considerably.

In the early months of 2018, HWN visited practice managers across Northumberland. During these meetings we discussed practice website content in relation to young people and the availability of on line support for them and their carers regarding emotional health and wellbeing. Practice managers were generally keen to receive guidance in order to develop and improve their website content. Some were very keen for this to be shaped in partnership with young people.

There would appear to be an opportunity to focus on improving the quality and relevance of practice websites working in partnership with young people and other organisations which have expertise in this area.

### **Feedback from young people**

HWN was invited to join the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Group and the Children and Young People's Participation Group. As a consequence HWN assisted Northumberland Adolescent Service and the Health Improvement Specialist for Northumbria Healthcare in the planning and facilitation of a day long event for young people known to these agencies. The focus was upon emotional health and wellbeing.

Eleven young people who are or have been in looked after care placements took part. The group were young to mid-teens and some had existing acquaintance/friendships.

The day was divided into five workshops of which, HWN facilitated one.

The rationale for the HWN workshop was to find out how young people would access mental health services when or if they needed them. We asked two main questions and discussion was generated around these questions to gain a richer insight into the young people’s thinking.

**Question 1** If you were experiencing any of the following, who would you go to for help? *Anxiety, depression, thoughts of self-harm, stress, low mood, anger*

Young people were asked to put stickers next to the people they would turn to most. Each had ten stickers and could weight their stickers by using all stickers on one category or spreading them across a number of categories.

## Responses

Who would you contact?	#	Comments
<b>Teacher School Staff including support staff</b>	11	Bullying assault abuse Teachers not speaking enough about it (mental health) avoiding it. I don't like because they tell you off. Teachers are no one to me. Talk to specific teacher/support worker.
<b>Youth Worker</b>	4	
<b>Relative</b>	3	Plus one spot for siblings as extra category Because you can trust your sisters.
<b>Doctor Nurse Healthcare Worker</b>	8	Not truthful. Time keeping. Too professional –lack of availability. Time to want to get appointment. Meds help. No relationship with LAC nurse.
<b>Friend</b>	19	Trust Caring relationships Truthful about others. Because you can trust them to be there for you no matter what
<b>No one</b>	27	Because sum ( <i>sic</i> ) times you struggle to tell people
<b>Parent/Carer</b>	17	Because sometimes you need to tell your parents
<b>An adult</b>	4	
<b>Tutor in college</b>	1	
<b>Social Worker</b>	2	They do help but

## Findings

Worryingly, the most stickers were attached to the category “no one” with one comment stating that it’s hard to talk to other people. Trust was a big factor in talking to friends and how some friends may end up telling others information shared in

confidence which lost trust. Others spoke of a strong bond with friends stating they could “trust them to be there for you no matter what”

Interestingly the majority of places young people would seek help were not in the professional realm but in local non-professional relationships.

The second question focused upon online activity and how young people would access services and information virtually. We asked young people to respond to the following questions;

**Question 2** *If you were experiencing any of the following, what words would you google to find the information you need? Anxiety, depression, thoughts of self-harm, stress, low mood, anger*

**If you are looking for information about mental health and wellbeing, what key words would you use online?**

The responses were

*“I’m feeling....”*

*“I think I’ve got...”*

*Mental health information helpline in Northumberland*

*“How to stop.....”*

*Self-esteem facts and opinions*

*Northumberland facts about how you can stop you feeling depressed and other feelings*

*How to calm down*

*How to distract yourself*

*How to de stress*

*What is thoughts of self-harm*

*What is anger*

*Why do people have low mood*

*What is stress*

*What is anxiety?*

*What is depression*

*How can I cope with depression?*

*How can I help someone with a problem?*

*How to harm yourself help?*

The responses from young people demonstrated there to be a good mix of information finding statements and self-help “how to” searches showing the practical nature of some young people in looking for solutions themselves.

The level of engagement and interest demonstrated by young people in this area could highlight a need for future work around “how to” guides to help young people to self-care around their particular struggles.

The young people in this workshop were from a specific group and their comments were honest yet quiet. There was no time to explore how things could be improved, to change the “no one” answers into “someone” answers.

## **Next steps**

This initial phase of our research and engagement has highlighted useful information and provided direction for further work.

As a first step we will share this report with the colleagues who shared their time and experience with us for their views and comments. We would like to know whether this work continues to be relevant at this point or whether this approach duplicates the efforts of others to support service design and development in this area. We have become aware that others are engaging with young people around their mental health and wellbeing through survey work and engagement activity across the county and we want to ensure we are working collaboratively and adding value.

The workshop with young people was designed to be the start of a series and we want to work with a number of young people's groups to ensure a wider representation of Northumberland's young people's views including those regarded as "seldom heard" such as young carers.

We are planning work with the Barnabas Safe and Sound organisation in Morpeth during autumn 2018 and would hope to expand this to other youth organisations and schools. We would also seek appropriate input from NCC's Children's Services.

During our recent visits to GP practices across the county, practice managers have suggested they would welcome guidance regarding the content of their websites. They want this to be relevant and appropriate for young people and it would appear there may be an opportunity here for a universal service to improve the quality of information available through their websites to both young people and their families. We will talk to the Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) about this.

## **Possible future focus for Healthwatch Northumberland**

We are aware that this work focuses on only one part of young people's journeys – the very first 'in door' to mental health services. We would hope the next stage would also give some insight into the experiences young people and their families have on the next stage.