



Young People and Mental Health

Experiences of access and support in Northumberland

Introduction

Healthwatch Northumberland is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We are a listening organisation working across Northumberland, interested in what people like about services and what can be improved. We act on what people are saying, sharing their views with those who have the power to make change happen. We also help people find the information they need about services in their area and record this as 'signposting'.

Between 27th January 2021 to 31st March 2021 we ran an online survey to gauge the access and support received by young people (aged between 13 - 25 years) from mental health services in Northumberland.

We promoted the survey through our own social media channels and website as well as contacting all secondary and high schools in Northumberland. We also contacted all the local youth groups across the county and other relevant partners such as Northumberland CVA, the Aging Well Network and town and parish councils. The survey had 51 responses.

Demographics

1. Age

The majority of the respondents were aged 13 - 15 years old (55%) with the 16 -18 year olds being the second largest group (37%). Figure 1, below shows the age distribution.

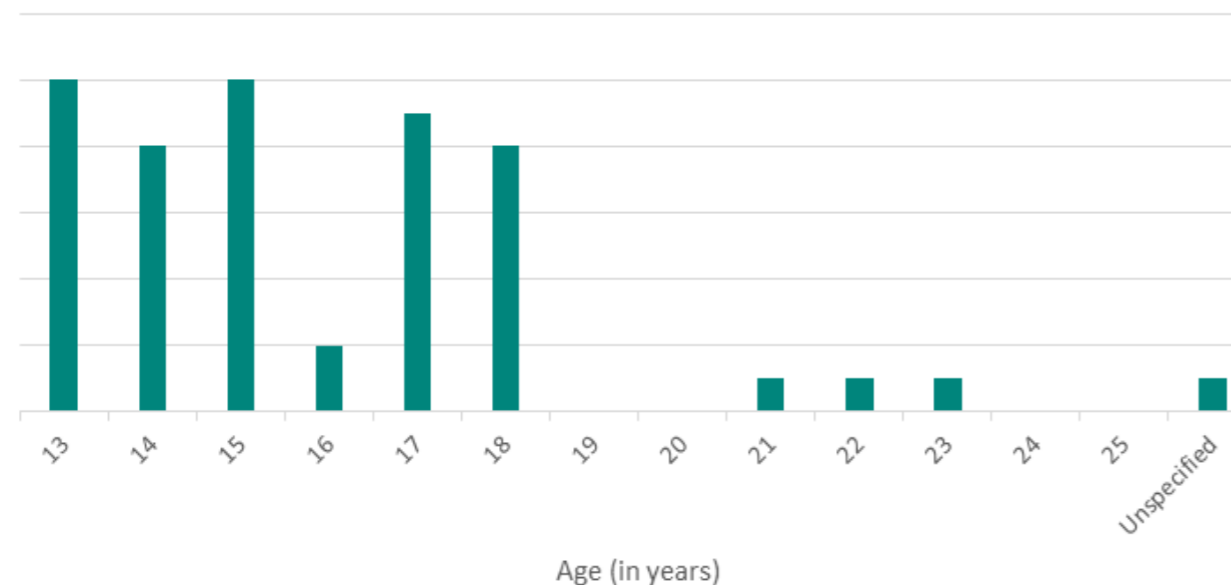


Figure 1. Age of respondents

2. Gender

The majority of the respondents classed themselves as female

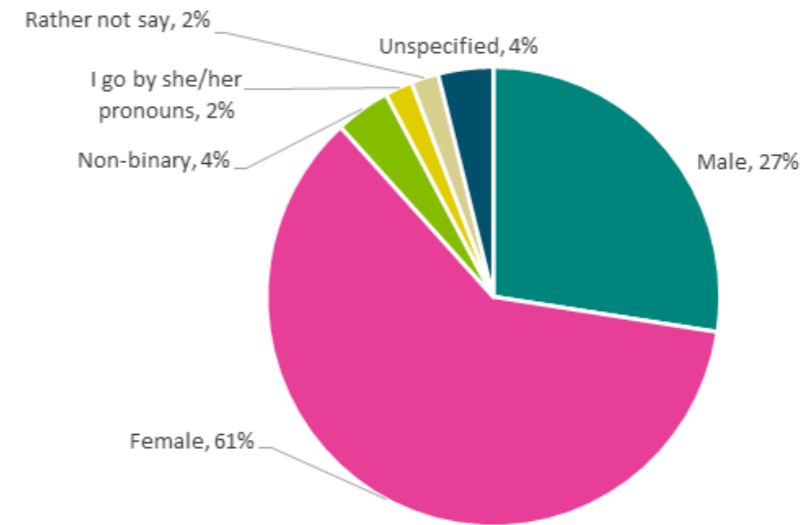


Figure 2. Gender breakdown

3. Ethnicity

Ethnicity was predominantly White British/English/Welsh/Scottish/Irish (45%) with the second largest group describing themselves as British (22%). 4% of respondents described themselves as Mixed which is higher than the county all ages percentage (0.5%). Likewise, 4% of this survey's respondents described themselves as Asian or Asian British which is higher than the county all ages percentage (0.7%).

However, this was an open text question and people self-identified which resulted in some ambiguous ethnicities being recorded. In future, we will use standardised lists to ensure better accuracy.

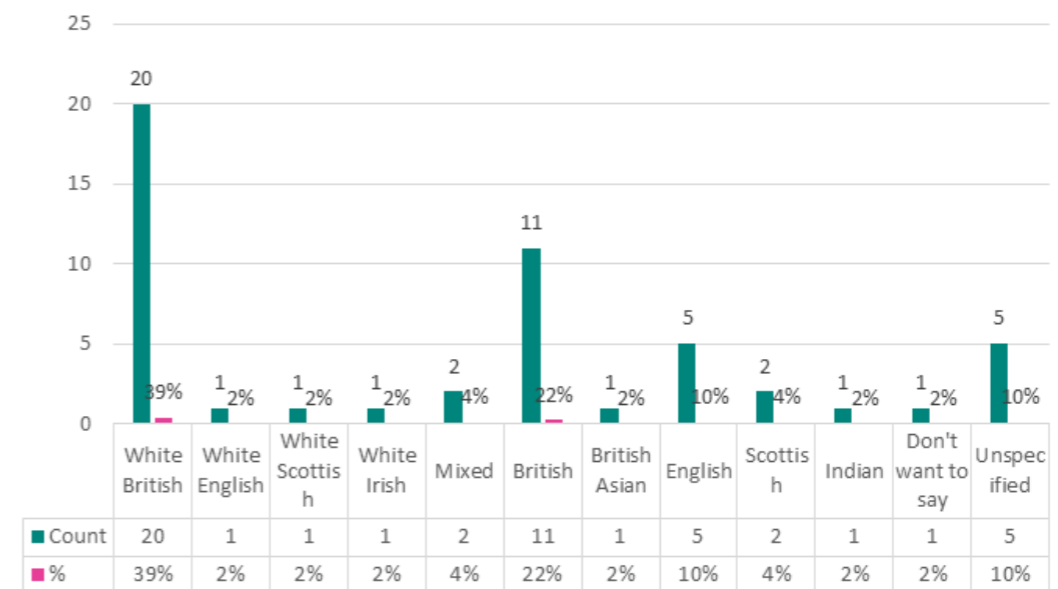


Figure 3. Ethnicity of respondents

4. Long-term health condition/disability

Unsurprisingly, as the respondents are all young people, the health of the cohort is very good with 80% reporting no long-term ill-health or disability. This is on a par with the disability figures for all ages in the county as the Public Health statistics show that 79.3% of all ages in Northumberland do not have long-term health issues nor a disability.

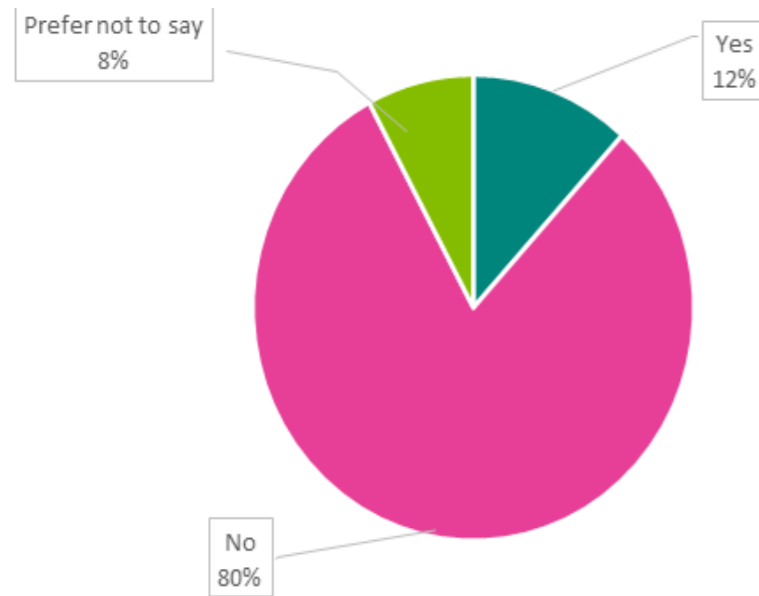


Figure 4. Responses to Q4, "Do you have a long-term health condition or disability?"

5. Location of respondents

We received feedback from across the county but the majority of the respondents were from North Northumberland (68%).

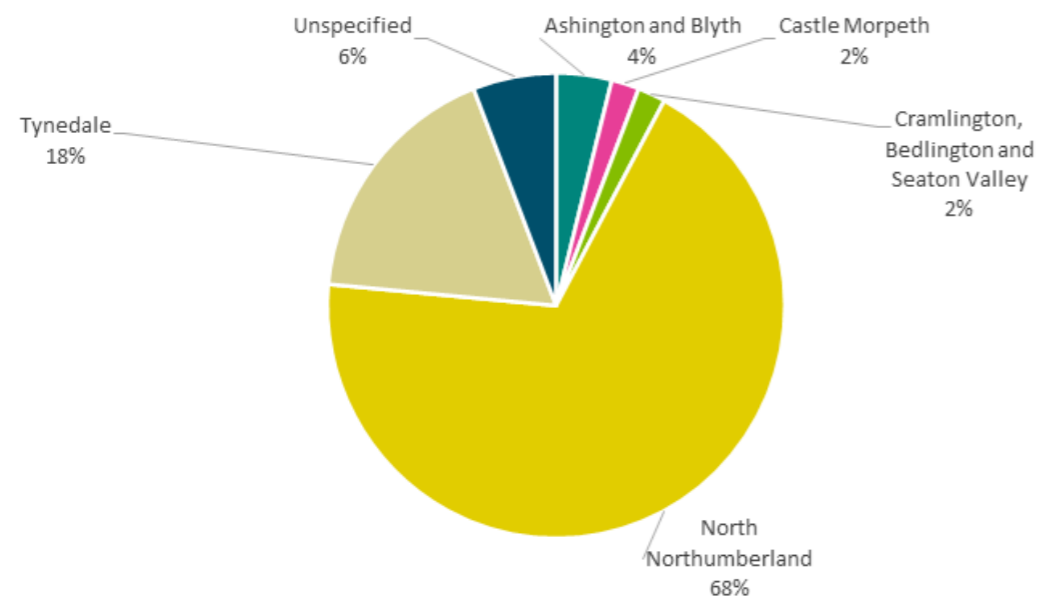


Figure 5. Local Area Council of residence

Experience of mental health issues and support services

Reassuringly, 75% of the young people replying to this survey said that if they had problems with their mental health or wellbeing they would know where to go for help or support.

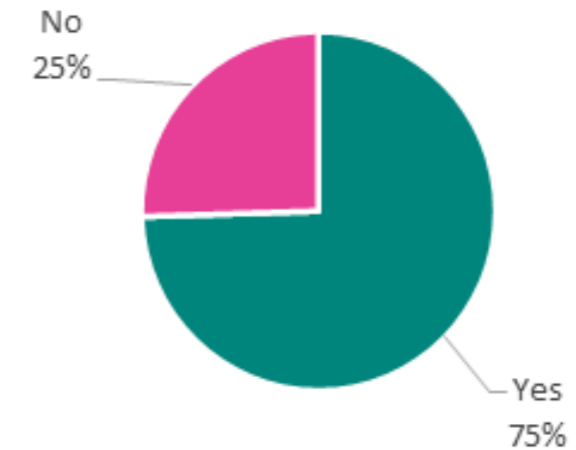


Figure 6. If you had problems with your mental health or wellbeing would you know where to go for help or support?

However, of those in figure 6 that said 'No, I would not know where to go for help or support' (13 respondents in total), 9 of them (69%) went onto say they had experienced mental health/wellbeing issues in last 12 months which is concerning. See figure 7 and section 11 below.

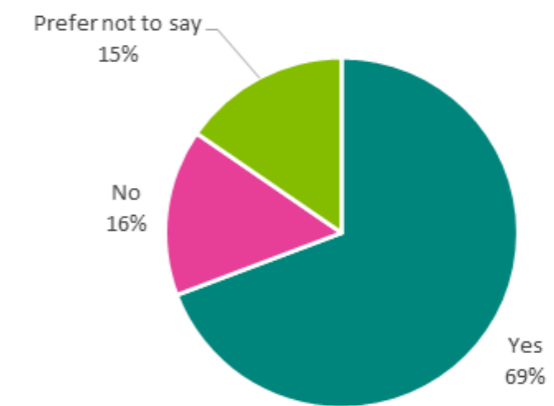


Figure 7. Answers given to Q7, "Have you had problems with your own mental health/wellbeing in the last 12 months?" by those that answered "No, they would not know where to go for help or support" in Fig. 6.

Looking at the answers given by all the respondents to the same question, again, the majority of them had had mental health or wellbeing issues in the previous 12 months with two thirds of them replying 'yes' (66.67%). This overall response is slightly less than that given by those respondents who would not know where to go for help or support (69%).

Sources of support

Family and friends are the largest source of support for young people who experienced problems with their mental health or wellbeing in the past 12 months with 59% of respondents citing this source of support. The next highest sources of support were School Support Services, GPs and other services all being cited in 6% of responses each. Neither CAMHS nor Kooth were mentioned as sources of support and have been left off figure 8, below.

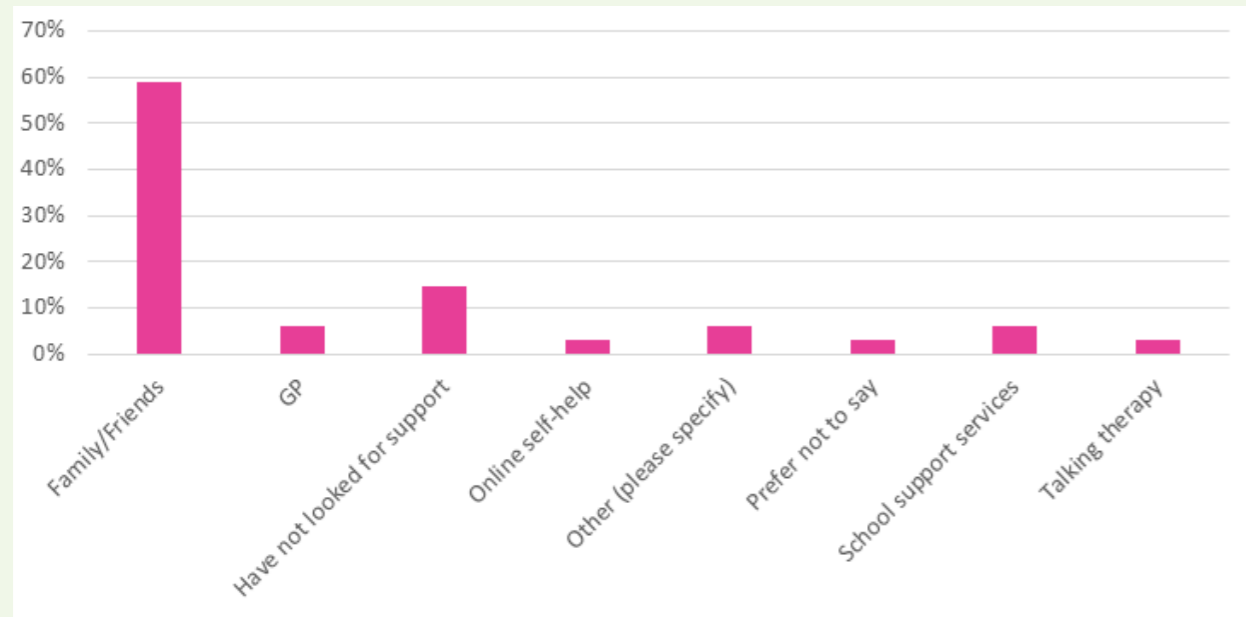


Figure 8. Sources of support for young people who experienced problems with their mental health or wellbeing in the past 12 months (Neither CAMHS nor Kooth were mentioned as sources of support.)

Worryingly, the second most frequent response to this question was actually “Have not looked for support”, gaining 15% of responses. 80% of these responses came from Berwick postcodes.

Satisfaction levels

The survey also explored the young people’s satisfaction with the NHS Care Services they had received. Q9 asked them “If you have found support from NHS health care services such as GP/talking therapies/ Kooth/ CAMHS or other psychological interventions how satisfied were you with the service you received overall?”

For those who had received NHS Care Services, and to whom this question was therefore applicable, the opinions were pretty evenly spread from Dissatisfied to Very Satisfied with a slight lean overall towards being more satisfied than dissatisfied. Figure 9, over, gives more detail.

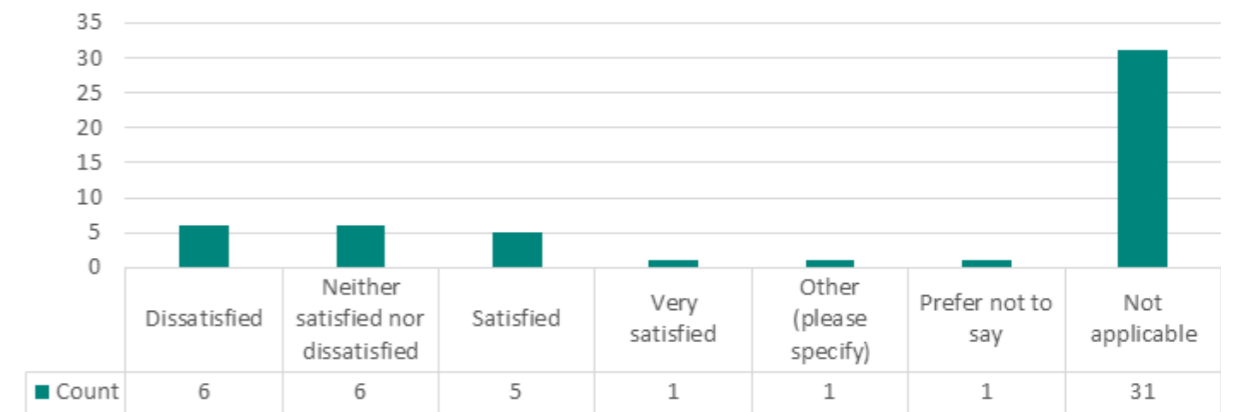


Figure 9. Overall satisfaction levels with NHS Care Services

Satisfaction levels with the ability to access services that the young people needed, e.g. getting an appointment, being referred to a service, being able to travel easily, ranged across the whole satisfaction scale but there were much higher levels of satisfaction than dissatisfaction. 54% of those to whom this question was applicable were Very Satisfied or Satisfied vs 23% Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied. Figure 10, below gives more detail.

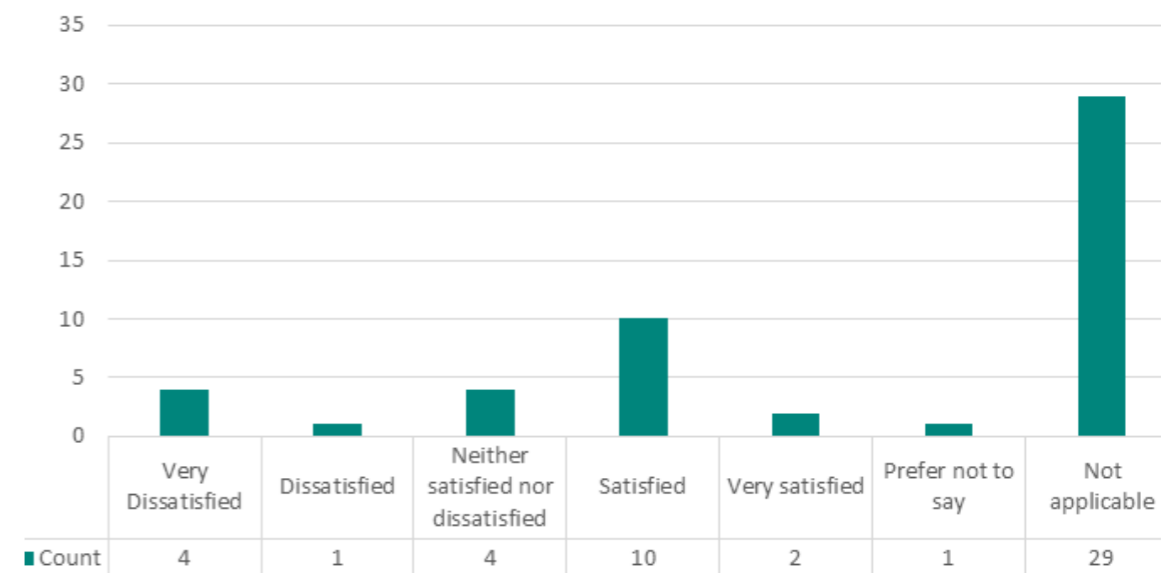


Figure 10. Satisfaction levels with access to services

Satisfaction levels with the quality of care received were high with 52% of respondents to whom this question was applicable were either Very Satisfied or Satisfied vs 13% who were Dissatisfied.

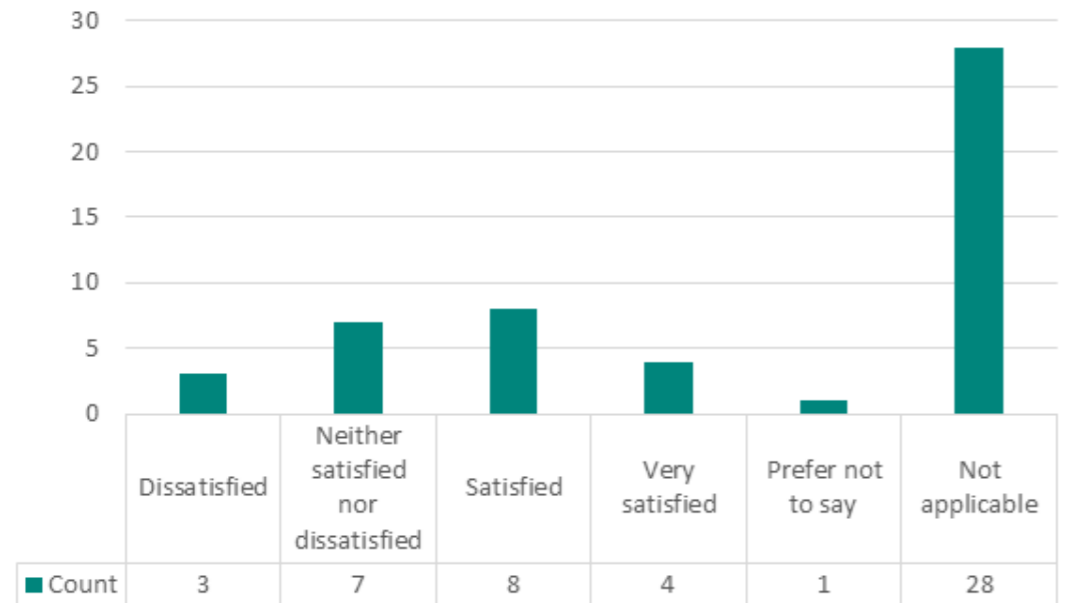


Figure 11. Satisfaction levels with quality of care received

Young carers

The survey also asked whether the young people had been a carer for someone who had experienced problems with their mental health or wellbeing in the last 12 months. The vast majority had not had caring responsibilities (88%), 2% (1 young person) didn't want to say and the remaining 10% (5 young people) had been carers.

This cohort of young carers were then asked which NHS Care Services they had had to use (if any) to arrange support for the person for whom they were caring. There were 7 responses in total with GPs being the most common services accessed. Figure 12 below shows the breakdown of responses.

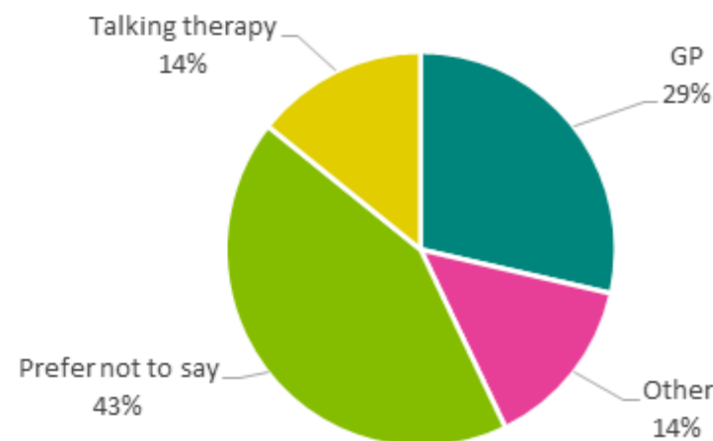


Figure 12. NHS Care Services accessed in the last 12 months by young carers to support the person for whom they were caring.

Perceptions of relative performance of services

The young people were also asked if they had accessed mental health support during the Covid-19 pandemic whether they had noticed any changes in the quality of care provided or in access to services.

For the majority of the survey respondents this wasn't applicable, but for those young people who had used NHS Care Services the predominant feeling was that they had declined in comparison to before the COVID pandemic started.

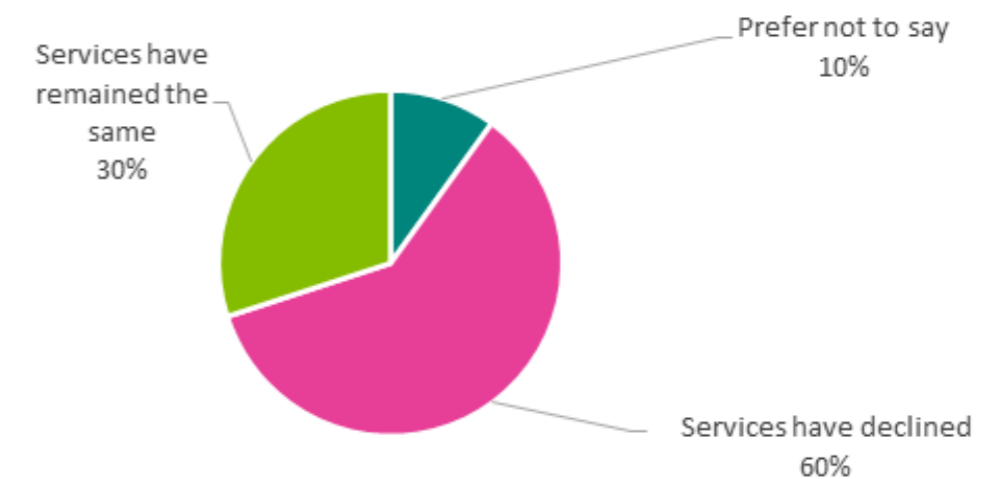


Figure 13. Perception of the performance of NHS Care Services over the course of the pandemic

The last question asked for any further comments to share on their experiences of mental health services in the last 12 months.

We received eight comments with a strong sentiment overall that the mental health support services didn't respond quick enough and weren't supportive enough when they did get involved:

- **'Not enough support for teenagers with mental health worries or anxiety's - no one to talk to.'**
- **Accessing quality mental health services with the NHS is a protracted process, and sessions offered / courses far too short to deal with long-standing difficulties. In short - nothing has improved in more than ten years of my own experience.'**
- **Not consistent too many different workers when in crisis I find it hard to talk to people I don't know and you never get the same worker going over it again just made me feel worse.'**
- **'It's been bad and I don't know how to get help.'**
- **'Nope it's just been kinda rubbish hehe.'**

- 'It's definitely gotten worse.'
- 'It's been very hard especially if you are still in school there is a lot of pressure to get work done at home and some schools are doing mocks which is even more pressure without the learning that is needed to complete the mocks. Because we have essentially had a whole year of homeschooling. Also, I don't think teachers realise how much stress, anxiety and depression students at home are going through and need to take that into consideration.'
- 'Some of the young people I know have mental health issues and what I have noticed is that you cannot get help from any of the "Mental Health services " as there is never anyone available and sometimes we need the help now.'

Respondents who had had problems with their own mental health/ wellbeing in the last 12 months and did not know where to go for help or support.

There were 9 young people who responded that they had had problems with their own mental health/wellbeing in the last 12 months and did not know where to go for help or support. All of the respondents in this category were from North Northumberland and the majority were under 19 years old, see figure 14.

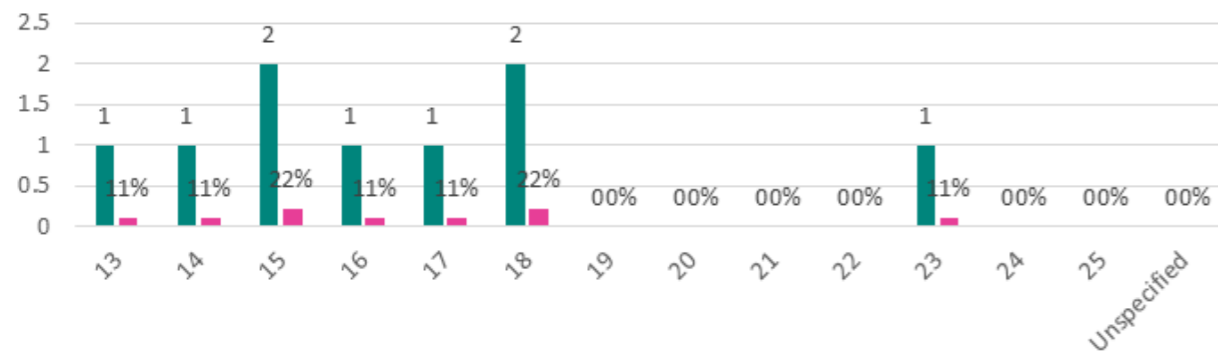


Figure 14. Age distribution of those respondents who do not know where or how to get help and have suffered mental health issues in past 12 months.

Over half of the respondents in this category were male.

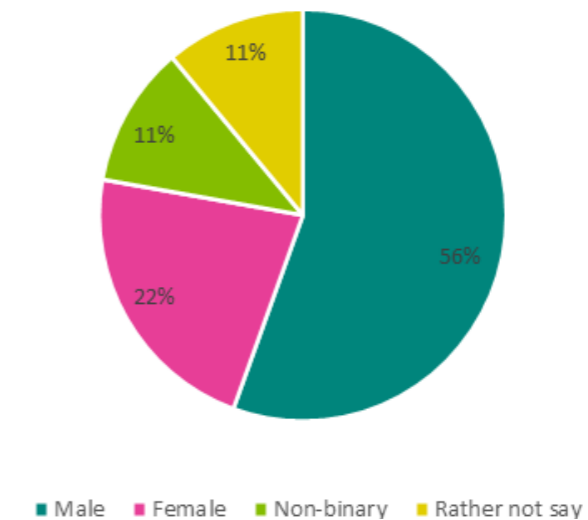


Figure 15. Gender distribution of those respondents who do not know where or how to get help and have suffered mental health issues in past 12 months.

Signposting to sources of mental health support

We were keen to ensure that young people accessing and completing our survey were aware of the sources of mental health support available in Northumberland so we included a link to our children and young people health and wellbeing services webpage within the survey.

On 10 March we also hosted an online event with Kooth Engagement Lead, Malcolm Connelly, who delivered a presentation about the service in Northumberland and a Q&A session after the presentation. 27 people, mainly professionals who worked directly with, or signposted young people in Northumberland, attended the event to find out further information. We received positive feedback with 13 people telling us after the event that they would be signposting, or already had signposted young people to the service, or that they would be sharing information with team members. In addition, we made sure that those attending the event were aware of our website resources for information on other sources of mental health support for young people and we also promoted Kooth digital resources and information for parents after the event on both our website and social media.

Specific feedback received from those attending the event was that the Kooth website would benefit from being more accessible for parents and grandparents to assess the suitability of the service before signposting children to it and we did promote some further information on our website for parents after the event in response to this. However, further work around this issue may be beneficial for Kooth and other services to consider given our survey results indicate that most young people rely on family and friends for support therefore parents knowing more about and having trust in the services available should encourage greater signposting.

Conclusions

Most young people have sought support from friends and family rather than mental health services. From the comments provided, there is a strong sentiment that the mental health support services for young people don't respond quick enough and aren't supportive enough when they do get involved. However, the overall data suggests that there is more of a balanced view and satisfaction levels are slightly more predominant than dissatisfaction levels. But, for those young people who had used NHS Care Services, the predominant feeling was that they had declined in performance in comparison to before the COVID pandemic started.

There also appears to be much less awareness in the mental health services for young people provided in the far north of Northumberland.

We recommend that more publicity in the North Northumberland area be undertaken.

We also recommend that further work be undertaken on the Kooth website to make it more accessible for parents and grandparents, so they are better able to assess the suitability of the service before signposting children to it. Given our survey results indicate that most young people rely on family and friends for support therefore parents knowing more about and having trust in the services available should encourage greater signposting.

In addition, this survey has shown that we need to reach a wider range of young people as Healthwatch Northumberland predominantly heard from young women.



Response to Healthwatch Northumberland Young People and Mental Health Summary Report 2021

NHS Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is responsible for the planning and buying of local NHS healthcare and health services for local people, including mental health services for children and young people.

The CCG welcomes the feedback from Healthwatch Northumberland as a result of their Young People and Mental Health Survey 2021 which made some recommendations to how services could be improved. All feedback helps us to continue to deliver high-quality care.

As a CCG we have discussed the findings of the report within our organisation and with provider organisations and partners across the system. We recognise that we need to work together with all stakeholders, and with Healthwatch Northumberland, to continue to maintain high standards of care to support children and young people with their mental health.

Access to services

We note the comments in the report that suggest services do not respond quick enough. Much work has been undertaken in recent years to improve speed of access and reduce children and young people being passed around the system. Approximately three years ago waiting times for Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (CYPS) were long and averaging 30 plus weeks.

The CCG was successful as one of only 12 areas nationally to receive the Trailblazer pilot funding to run a four week waiting time pilot scheme with the aim of reducing waiting times from point of referral to treatment to four weeks by December 2020. Northumberland CYPS and Primary

Mental Health Work (PMHW) teams received additional funding to increase staffing capacity to meet this target as part of the pilot.

As of August 2020, both services are on track to meet the four week wait trajectories, with the average wait to first appointments being between one and two weeks, and two weeks for the second appointment. A visit from the NHS England and NHS Improvement team at the end of 2019 acknowledged the new waiting times for Northumberland CYPS as some of the best in the country.

A key priority area for the next 12 months is the ongoing review and development of a multi-agency single point of access for children and young people's mental health referrals. Building on the excellent work in recent years the aim will be to provide an even more holistic single point of access for referrals which will include the wider system including social care as part of the initial triage process.

In addition, further funding has been sourced to provide additional resource to increase staffing at point of access to CYPS through the national Four Week Wait from referral to treatment pilot scheme increasing the workforce significantly.

Range of services

To support with the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and subsequent expected increase in referrals and to provide further parity across the county the CCG invested in Kooth last year. Kooth is a digital online support service for children and young people and is available for all children and young people who have access to the internet, between the ages of 11 to 25 years. The website provides, information, advice and guidance, one to one support sessions with trained therapists and group forum chats seven days a week.

Parents and carers can create a login for themselves and use the service to see how it works. Kooth is just one service we commission for children and young people in Northumberland. The full range of services for children and young people in Northumberland are detailed on the CCG's and 'Be You' website.

Parent/carer information

The CCG has been successful twice in applying for and receiving national Trailblazer pilot funding to deliver Children and Young Peoples Mental Health Support Teams in schools across targeted areas of Northumberland, albeit not in the north of the county where the majority of respondents live. Previously we have worked in Hexham and Blyth and are currently working with schools in Ashington and Bedlington.

The aim of these new teams, which we hope to be rolled out across Northumberland, is to provide support to teachers to enhance mental health provision within schools, to help young people develop healthy habits towards their own mental health and where necessary, offer support at an early stage as well as acting as a bridge to other services and to develop resources for parents and carers to support children and young people's wellbeing.

The 'Be You Project', part of the trailblazer funding are developing resources, such as videos for parents and carers, to help support parents and carers who are supporting children and young people with mental health needs as well as support, such as CBT, for their own mental wellbeing.

Awareness of children and young people's services

We note the recommendation to provide more publicity of children and young people's services, particularly in the North of the county. A new Northumberland Emotional Health and Wellbeing website 'Be You' was launched in October 2020.

The website and service provides children and young people, their parents/carers and professionals with information about local and national support services. Local service information will include thresholds and the process for referral into the service. In addition, advice and guidance is available to download and links to specific websites and resources are made available.

The CCG is currently working with young people, parents and carers to gain their views on the information, materials and publicity around children and young people's services. We also value the work that Healthwatch Northumberland has done and continues to do to help promote services for young people on their website, through social media and other channels, which the CCG also commits to doing.

The CCG is working with stakeholders through the Be You project, Population Health projects and CYPS Strategic Partnership Group, to gain insight into future provision of young people's Mental Health services, working directly with young people in schools, youth groups and other networks.

We would recommend that this report is shared with the CYPS Strategic Partnership Group. This is so that all stakeholders can work together, to gain and share feedback, insights, intelligence and take forward any recommendations or further research work.

Appendix 1 - Copy of Young People and Mental Health Survey

Healthwatch Northumberland

Young People and Mental Health

Time to Talk day takes place on 4 February each year, a day which encourages the nation to get talking about mental health. In addition, Children's Mental Health Week takes place 1 to 7 February and is an opportunity to shine a spotlight on children and young people's mental health. Healthwatch Northumberland is supporting both campaigns and would love to hear from you about your experiences of health and social care in relation to mental health services. Whether you currently use or have used these services directly or are a carer for someone who currently uses or has used these services we would love to hear your feedback.

We will store responses in accordance with our privacy statement so that we can use it to help improve the delivery of health and care services across the country and in the area in which you live. Responses are used to produce a report and recommendations which will be shared with service providers and commissioners. There will be no personal data to identify you. Please let us have your feedback by 31 March 2021.

We would like to hear from young people aged 13 - 25. Please note we cannot accept responses from anyone under the age of 13.

1. How old are you?

2. What is your gender?

3. What is your ethnic origin?

4. Would you consider yourself to have a long-term health condition or disability?

- Yes
 No
 Prefer not to say

5. Which part of Northumberland do you live in? Please state the first part of your post code e.g NE46

6. If you had problems with your mental health or wellbeing would you know where to go for help or support?

- Yes
 No
 Prefer not to say

Prefer not to say

8. If you have experienced problems with mental health or wellbeing in the last 12 months where have you found support?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Family/friends | <input type="radio"/> Talking therapy |
| <input type="radio"/> Online self-help | <input type="radio"/> Kooth |
| <input type="radio"/> Community/youth groups | <input type="radio"/> Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) |
| <input type="radio"/> School support services | <input type="radio"/> Have not looked for support |
| <input type="radio"/> GP | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) | |

9. If you have found support from NHS health care services such as GP/talking therapies/Kooth/CAMHS or other psychological interventions how satisfied were you with the service you received overall

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Very satisfied | <input type="radio"/> Very dissatisfied |
| <input type="radio"/> Satisfied | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | <input type="radio"/> Not applicable |
| <input type="radio"/> Dissatisfied | |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) | |

10. How satisfied were you that you were able to access services that you needed? E.g. getting an appointment, being referred to a service, being able to travel easily

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Very satisfied | <input type="radio"/> Very dissatisfied |
| <input type="radio"/> Satisfied | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | <input type="radio"/> Not applicable |
| <input type="radio"/> Dissatisfied | |

11. How satisfied were you with the quality of care you received? E.g felt like you had time to talk, were treated with respect, were happy with the care provided

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Very satisfied | <input type="radio"/> Very dissatisfied |
| <input type="radio"/> Satisfied | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | <input type="radio"/> Not applicable |
| <input type="radio"/> Dissatisfied | |

- No
- Prefer not to say

13. If you have found support on behalf of the person you are caring for which NHS services were used

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> GP | <input type="radio"/> CAMHS |
| <input type="radio"/> Talking therapy | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Kooth | <input type="radio"/> Not applicable |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) | |

14. If you have found support from any of the above services on behalf of someone you are caring for have you any comments to make on how easy it was to access services or the care/service that was received.

15. If you have accessed mental health support during the Covid-19 pandemic have you noticed any changes in the quality of care provided or in access to services?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Services have remained the same | <input type="radio"/> Not applicable |
| <input type="radio"/> Services have improved | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Services have declined | |

Any comments

16. Have you any further comments to share on your experiences of mental health services in the last 12 months

Thank you for completing this survey.

We would love to hear more about young people's experiences of all healthcare services, not just mental health services. If you would like to keep in touch and tell us your feedback you can do so at our [website](#), or at our [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) pages.

Visit our [Children and Young People's webpage](#) for details of support services for young people in Northumberland, or our [Mer Health webpage](#) for support services for adults.

Contact Us

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