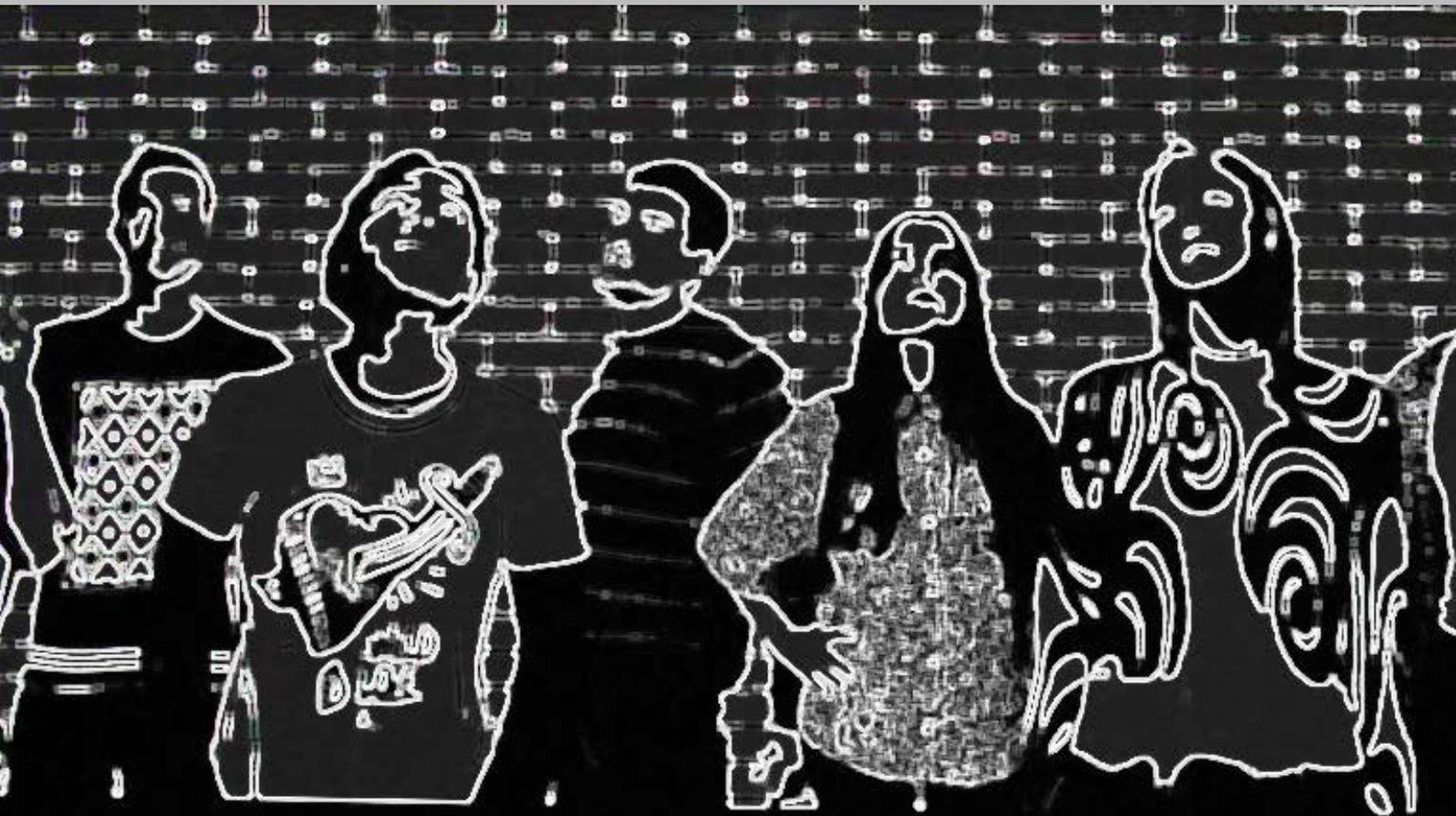


Sandy Youth Mental Wellbeing Project

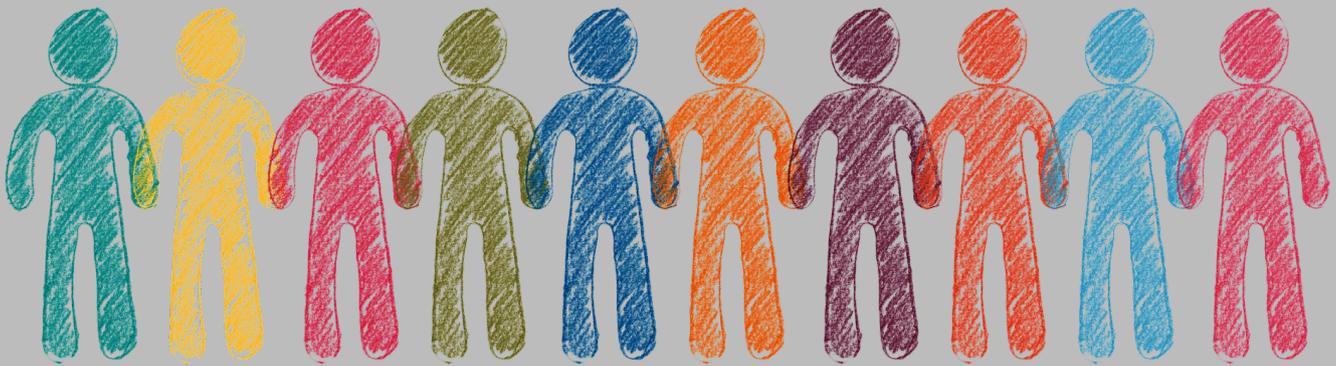


February 2018

Central
Bedfordshire

healthwatch
Central Bedfordshire

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1. Introduction

Nationally Healthwatch England (HWE) is asking the NHS to focus on evaluation and improvement in mental health services. Insight from local Healthwatch indicated that access to, and quality of mental health services, were top of the list, with 99 out of 152 (65%) local Healthwatch highlighting it as a major priority for their communities.

HWE are using the ‘#speak up’ campaign to encourage people to talk to their local Healthwatch about their experiences of mental health care, in order to understand what support people want and need to help manage their condition.



Many people have already told their local Healthwatch that they want to see a change to the care and support available to children and young people and also that more needs to be done to ensure that people with mental health conditions are diagnosed in a timely and consistent manner, given support sooner, and are treated before they reach crisis.

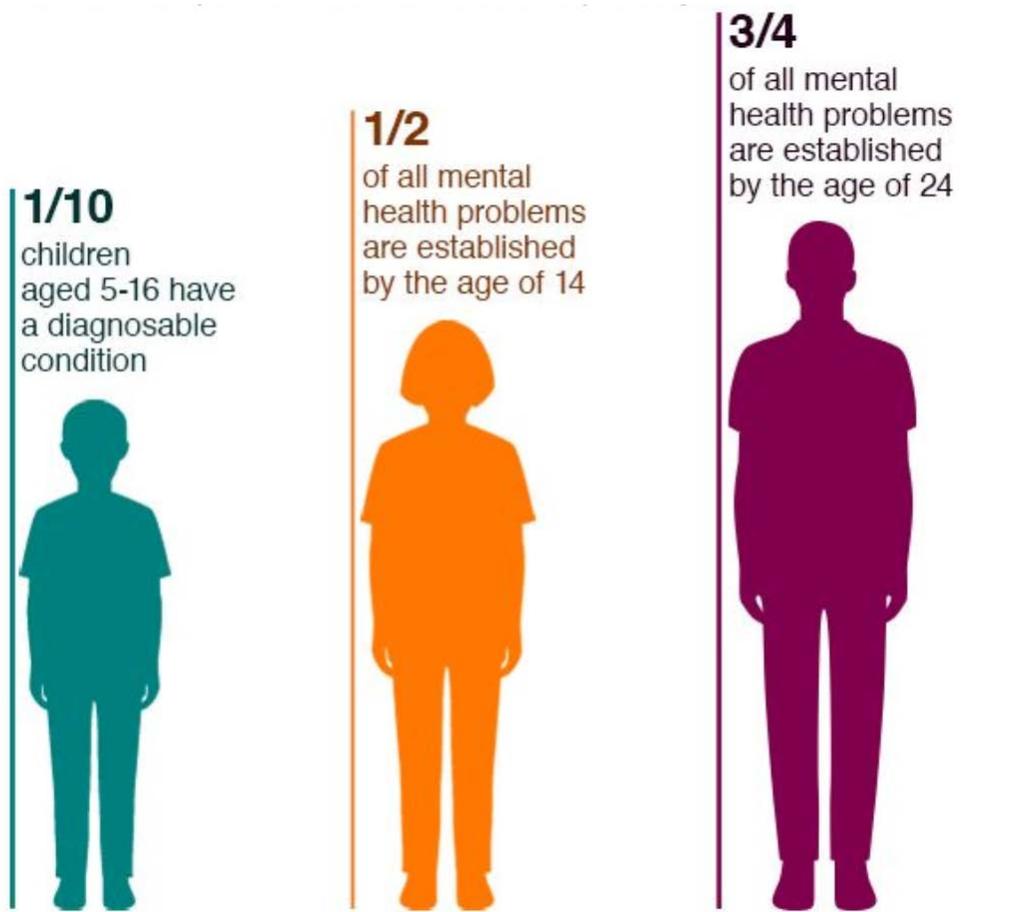
In order to understand the prevalence of mental health issues amongst younger people, national statistics suggest that 10% of young people will experience a problem in this area (Mental Health Foundation¹). In Central Bedfordshire this equates to over 3,500 children across the age range of 5 to 15 with a diagnosed issue (JSNA Central Bedfordshire²). However, this number does not reflect those children who have yet to experience a mental health issue, or have not sought a diagnosis, which could have a significant impact on these numbers.

Mental health problems can often be masked and can affect anyone at any point in their lives. Research also suggests that children and young people with mental health problems are more likely to experience disruption to their education and are at higher risk of health adverse behaviours such as smoking and alcohol misuse and increased likelihood of involvement in anti-social and offending behaviour.

The recently published Department of Health Green Paper - Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision³, strongly advocates for early intervention and fast access to good quality care. This is echoed in the recommendations highlighted in the Bedfordshire Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Local Transformation Plan 2017-2020.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) works with people of all ages to understand the experiences, needs and issues people experience across all health and social care services. It has long been recognised that good mental health is key to maintaining children's wellbeing and their ability to thrive and with the national focus on Mental Health, HWCB have prioritised work in this area to inform and further strengthen the evidence from a local perspective.

Youth Action, in partnership with Groundwork at Sandy Youth Club, worked with a group of young people to develop a project to help their community. At the outset there was a clear interest in mental health. The project evolved to include an element of interviewing peers and the results form the basis of this report.



Source: The five year forward view for mental health, Mental Health Taskforce, 2016



¹Mental Health Foundation www.mentalhealth.org.uk (as at Feb 2018)

²Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Central Bedfordshire Council www.jsn.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk (as at Feb 2018)

³Green Paper, Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health, Department of Health

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/transforming-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-provision-a-green-paper (as at Feb 2018)

3. Methodology

The core team of young volunteers developed a set of key questions with support from Youth Action and Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. The aim of the questionnaire was to gather feedback from young people about their knowledge and understanding of mental health, their experiences, either their own, those around them or those close to them, such as friends or family members.

Staff and volunteer youth workers supported the young volunteers to develop the skills and confidence needed to conduct peer interviews.

All the interviews were carried out at Sandy Youth Club. Respondents were asked a range of questions, from what they know or have experienced, to knowledge of available support and services. In addition, if they indicated that they had accessed mental health services in Central Bedfordshire they were asked to rate the service they had received.

The final responses were submitted to Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire to administrate and incorporate into this report.



Question 3: Do you or anyone else you know have any mental health issues?

As with question two, only one respondent stated they did not have a personal or close experience of someone with a mental health issue.

Six young people indicated they had suffered from a recent mental health issue, with nine of the respondents knowing someone, either a family member or friend that had.

As would be expected issues varied between individuals, however there were some commonalities; anxiety and depression being the most prevalent.

Findings from research at Kings College London's Institute of Psychiatry⁴ demonstrated that bullied children are three times more likely to self-harm. Four young people who mentioned they had experienced bullying also went on to self-harm - *"I self-harmed because I used to get picked on, so the only way out of that was to cut myself"*. It would appear that self-harm is used as a way of dealing with problems in life which can be a cycle of behaviour that is very difficult to overcome.

Interestingly some of the young people spoke about public figures that had mental health issues, some of which had gone on to commit suicide. This may suggest that famous people, or celebrities, talking openly about their struggles with mental health issues can have an impact on the behaviour and thoughts of children and young people.

"Yes, I have anxiety and depression but not to the point where I cut myself or anything."

⁴Kings College London, Institute of Psychiatry www.kcl.ac.uk/ioppn/news/records/2012/April/Bullied-children.aspx (as at Feb 2018)

Question 4: How do you cope?

The aim of this question was to understand if targeted self-care was used to cope with mental health issues and if not, what other mechanisms young people used to help them manage their condition.

The majority of young people indicated support from networks of friends at school and from family members, where people felt they could talk honestly and be helped to manage. A few of the respondents also used creative outlets, such as writing or music. Many young people mentioned the value of talking about their issues - *"I talk about it actually and it gets it off your chest"*.

When the mental health issue was with family members or friends some young people talked about self-censoring to deflect the behaviour - *"You have to be careful what you say."* This appeared to be a way of limiting the possible detrimental effect on their relationships.



"If I feel bad or worried about something I sometimes draw or play piano"

Question 5: What do you think about people with mental health issues?

Historical attitudes to mental health have changed, but there remain myths and negative attitudes toward those who suffer. Time to Change is still actively campaigning <http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/>⁵ through Mind and Rethink, nationally to raise awareness and reduce stigma.

All of the respondents demonstrated empathy for people with mental health issues - *"I think it's important to understand...ask if they are okay"*. This is unsurprising as the majority have personal experience of these problems. They were all very positive about seeing each person as an individual and not an illness.

⁵Time to Change <http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/>

Question 6: Do you know of any support for mental health i.e. at your school

Awareness of services is key to helping young people make informed decisions and choices when accessing services. Where young people may have needed support outside their close networks, they were asked if they knew what was available to them.

Three of the respondents mentioned the school nurse as providing support; others indicated they could speak to teaching and other members of staff at the school. Outside of school, young people identified care and support from GPs and counselling services.

It was clear that many young people had not used or accessed mental health services but interestingly, they were aware of support services such as CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and Chums, the mental health and emotional wellbeing service for children and young people in Bedfordshire.

National organisations such as MIND and the Samaritans were also mentioned as sources of possible support. This would indicate that the majority of children are learning this information from their friends or family members or make full use of websites and social media.

"In school there is a school nurse who you can go and talk to and there are a few learning support teachers who you can talk to so it doesn't affect your learning. CAMHS and CHUMS also."

Question 7: Have you or anyone else you know accessed help for mental health through your GP/surgery?

Three respondents had experience of visiting their GP concerning their mental health with a further four stating that friends or family had accessed their local GP Practice.

This echoes the national pathway, where people access their surgery as the first option for treatment of a range of health concerns. Common problems such as depression, can be and are usually diagnosed and treated, at GP level.

Question 8: What was the support like? Give examples.

Seven of the people interviewed were able to comment on what the support was like for them or the person they knew.

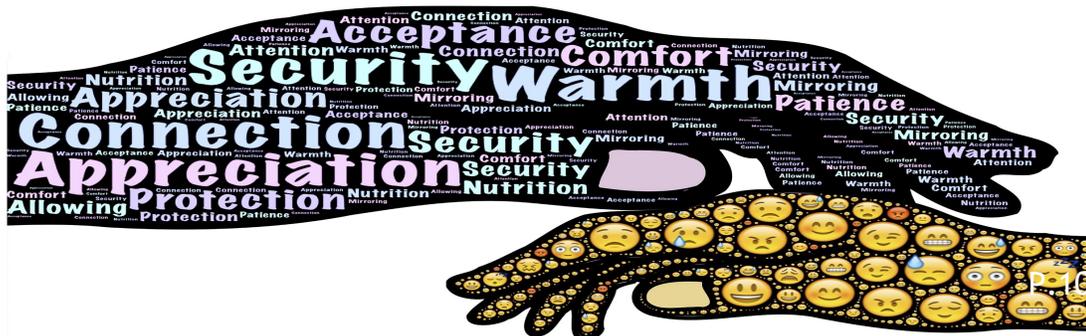
Three respondents were positive about the care their friend or family member had experienced - *"... turned into a better person but it took a while"*.

With questions eight through to eleven there was a marked difference between those who were talking about other people receiving care and those who had themselves been involved with support staff and services, the latter having less satisfactory experiences.

Unfortunately, many young people were not able to share positive experiences. Comments such as *"they decided"* and *"they didn't believe me"* suggest that young people did not feel involved in decision making about their care and support. Two people in particular were quite clear that they did not feel the interventions made a difference to their lives - *"nothing changed for me"*.

Mental Health services in particular need to consider the child or young person with dignity, and respect them as experts in their own mental health. This will empower them to make choices and have some control over their own wellbeing and recovery.

"Kind of alright. They listened to what I had to say sort of but mostly skipped over what I said and went on to talk about something irrelevant to what I said. Other places they didn't really listen to me. They didn't really do anything. They seemed quick to say 'this' is the problem or 'that' is the problem."



Question 9: What help would you have liked? / What do you think mental health services could do better?

Unfortunately, some young people felt that nothing more could have been put in place to assist them in their recovery or which may have improved their condition.

It was clearly felt that counselling and therapies were more valuable to this cohort of young people than medication. At least one young person had been identified as needing counselling services; however, they indicated that this had never happened. The young person also said that *“The location of services meant I couldn’t access support”*. Clearly, Community based delivery of mental health services to children and young people should mean that access due to location is not an issue.

Where young people had accessed professional care and support they felt that time to build a trusting relationship would have had a positive impact on their journey to recovery.

Without exception, all the young people spoken to felt they needed to know more about the care, diagnosis and recovery options available to them. It is clear that access to the right information and advice in a format that is user-friendly to young people, is absolutely essential.

Question 10: What message would you like to give to other young people who struggle with their mental health?

All of the young people interviewed felt that talking to someone about mental health issues or concerns, whether it be a friend, family member or a professional, is the best advice to give to other young people. They were also very clear that it is better to speak out than keep quiet about how you are feeling - *“Speak out about it. Don’t bottle it up and be honest about how you feel”*.

“Speak out about it. Go to family, friends and relationships to talk about how you are suffering to see how they can help. Go to Doctors because they are trained in it and counsellors can be good. They are in different areas. Don’t bottle up and be honest about how you feel.”

time to change

let's end mental health discrimination

**BE IN YOUR
MATE'S CORNER**

1 in 10 young people will experience
a mental health problem this year.
If your mate's acting differently, step in.

#inyourcorner



Time to Change Resources

proud to support
time to change
let's end mental health discrimination

**Let's change the way
we all think and
act about mental health**

**How
are
you?**

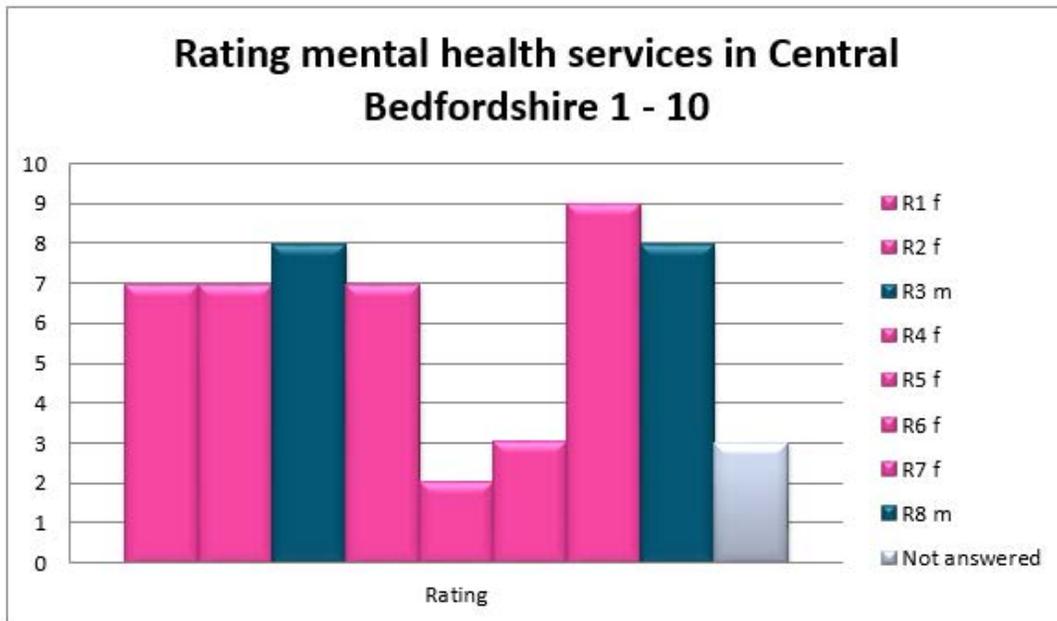
Too many people with mental health problems are
made to feel ashamed, isolated and worthless.

The national awareness campaigns working to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health have a strong focus on talking and sharing with each other, which is completely in synchronization with the view of the young people who took part in this project.

To find out more about Time To Change and to access a wide range of resources visit

<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/>

Question 11: Finally, how would you rate the mental health services in Bedfordshire as a whole on a scale of 1-10 and why?



(Key: respondent number and gender)

The group of young people were asked to rate mental health services, with one being poor and 10 being excellent. With an average score of six across the interviewees who answered, the ratings for Bedfordshire’s mental health services are considered by the group to be just above average.

There were examples of staff from different services providing good support - *“Doctor’s listened ... Social worker had made our family happier”*.

As with earlier questions young people who had themselves experienced mental health issues were less positive than those who were commenting on services that had helped friends or family. They felt that professionals sometimes had conflicting views and staff should be trained more to understand the needs of young people with mental health difficulties.



Conclusion

This snapshot programme of work has enabled three the young people, who conducted the interviews with their peers, to develop the skills to listen, work in a team, communicate and collate information from their peers. Their work has also increased their understanding of the complexities of mental health and how this can affect young people today - *“You start to realise how people feel and what they go through on a day to day basis”*.

Being open, sharing experiences and being empathetic to their peers can have a positive impact, reduce stigma and make mental health a less taboo subject.

Although the reach of this project, in terms of participant numbers, was small, key themes were identified:

- ❖ The majority of young people had a diagnosed mental health issue or were affected by another person’s mental wellbeing, such as family or friends;
- ❖ Several young people placed a large emphasis on the importance of feeling listened to, which they clearly stated had not been evident or experienced with some health professionals;
- ❖ Self-harming was considered a ‘coping strategy’ by many young people;
- ❖ Young people put a great deal of value on talking - “Don’t bottle it up” as a way of coping with difficult situations, but not all accessed help outside of their family and friends.

Whilst there are clearly challenges for children and young people in managing their condition, positive steps can be taken. Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) is committed to helping improve children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing. Practically we will be delivering the following:

- ❖ Developing Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire webpages to provide a guide to mental health services, including links to support networks and key organisations;
- ❖ Taking an active role in supporting the Bedfordshire Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Local Transformation Plan;
- ❖ Continue to gather feedback and insight from young people about their mental health experiences to influence service design and delivery and help to improve the quality of care and treatment provided;
- ❖ Continue to work with key partner organisations and statutory organisations to drive change and improve service provision and support.

Together we can make a difference

Other Resources

If you have been affected by the issues raised in this report and would like to speak to someone you can make an appointment with your GP, or call the Samaritans Helpline on 116 123 for a confidential and anonymous discussion. You may also find the following resources helpful;



sorted.bedfordshire.org.uk - Counselling Services



chums.org.uk - Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing Service



youngminds.org.uk - Child Mental Health Charity

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the partnership of the following organisations;

Youth Action



Groundwork



Young Healthwatch



Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire



We would like to extend special thanks to the very committed and enthusiastic young volunteers who gave their time to interview their peers. The interviews that form this project provide a snapshot insight into young people's experience of mental health.

A huge thank you to the participants who shared sometimes difficult and emotional experiences, which helped inform this report.



Youth Action is a project, funded by Central Bedfordshire Council that supports 13 to 19 year olds (up to 25 with SEN) into volunteering and social action. Primarily they assist young people in finding lone volunteer placements. Shortly after Youth Action began, they introduced group social action projects into delivery.

This often involved attending a youth club (with the provider's support) and working with a group of young people to develop a social action project that would help their immediate or wider community.



Sandy Youth Club is funded by Central Bedfordshire Council to provide young people activities and opportunities in their community. **Groundwork** has a team of qualified youth workers who understand the unique challenges young people face.



Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire helps children and young people share their experiences about health and social care services, which includes everything from the school nurse or GP to local hospitals and support services.

Young Healthwatch helps people have a voice to enable them to be a part of shaping services now and in the future. Young Healthwatch supports children and young people to be involved in decisions about their care and treatment and keeps them informed about what is happening locally in health and social care.



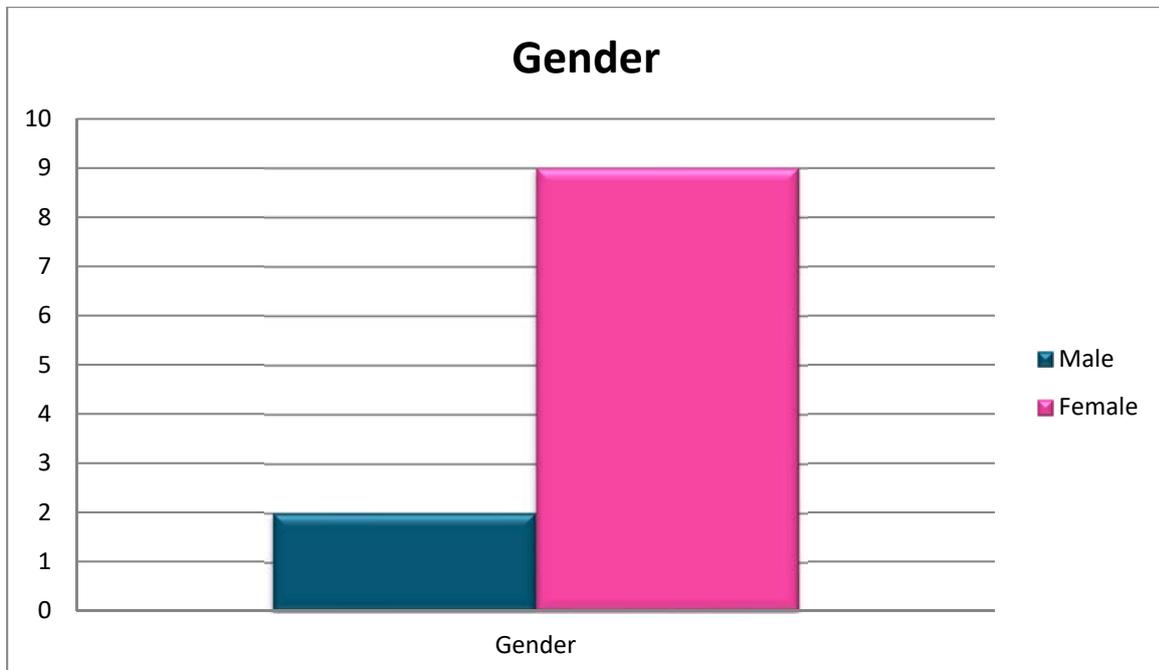
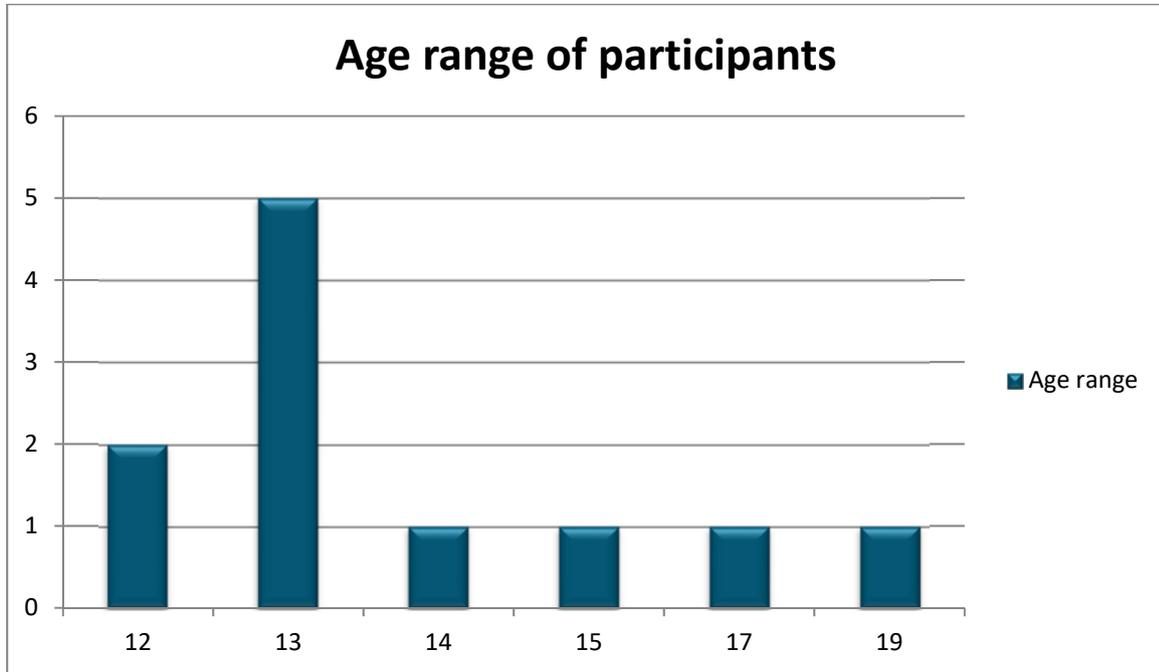
Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is part of a network of local Healthwatch which helps to ensure that the views and feedback from patients, carers and the public are an integral part of the design and delivery of local services.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is your local consumer champion promoting choice and influencing the provision of high quality health, social care and wellbeing services.

Appendix B

Demographics

Age range of participants



Summary Responses - transcribed by Youth Action

What is your understanding of mental health issues?

- Err....that their brain doesn't work properly
- People who struggle with mental health and don't necessarily have good mental health
- My sister has mental health. I kind of have to live with it. Its Asperger's so she thinks like an 8 year old. She takes things in then finds it offensive. She looks up to ... but it's hard to understand. She said she wants to have a sex change. She has ADHD and has to go to a hospital thing, like therapy. She's a girl but she feels trapped in a boy's body. She feels like she's a normal person but she's not
- Isn't it like when people struggle? They care about other people more than themselves and they have episodes. My mate started shaking and she couldn't speak or breathe
- I know what it is. When someone isn't quite right in the head
- Mental problems. Problems in your mind
- A troubled people. Depression
- Just like depression and stuff
- Different types of mental health such as depression, anxiety, bipolar, schizophrenia. Depression is when someone always feels down. Anxiety comes in different forms. Generally it's when you feel you're scared of everything. Scared of going out, scared of socialising. Makes you ill. Social anxiety when you feel scared to leave the house. Bipolar is when chemicals imbalance in your brain it's either high or low. Like manic and hyper episodes, hyper angry, smash things up. Feeling low is the other side
- They are mental in a bad way
- Schizophrenia, anxiety, feeling down, isolating, going inside yourself. Shutting down

What mental health issues do you know about?

- When you are angry and sad. Tired or suicidal
- Bipolar, anxiety, depression and schizophrenia. I know others but I don't know the name
- ADHD, Asperger's, Autism and anxiety. A lot of people have it at my school. My friend's cousin had depression. He committed suicide.
- Anxiety, depression and self-harm

- ADHD and ones where they get really tired. Some get sad and tired and they just want to fall asleep
- Schizophrenia, OCD, anxiety, depression, borderline PD and bipolar
- Depression, ADHD
- Anxiety is when you are nervous
- As above (respondent gave a full answer in the first question)
- Depression, anger, ADHD, hearing voices, self-harm, suicidal thoughts

Do you or anyone else you know have any mental health issues?

- Doctors thought I had anxiety but they then decided that wasn't the case but they are still not sure what the case is. A lot of people around me have depression like at school. I've helped a few people because I am observant. They just open up to me
- Sister, she has autism. My friends. The person in McFly had depression. The Linkin Park guy committed suicide
- Friend has panic attacks. I self-harmed because I used to get picked on. So the only way out of that was to cut myself. I had suicidal thoughts due to the bullying in the past
- I know someone with ... he had to re-take his GCSEs or he had ADHD or something so I'm not sure
- (Me) schizophrenia, anxiety, depression and bipolar. My Cousin has it as well (Bipolar). My friends
- Not that I know of. I had anxiety at one point. Bullied since year 8 so I had anxiety. I stood up for myself and it stopped. She tried again then I stood up again and it stopped. I self-harmed when stuff was going on with family and the bullying. I also helped my friends with it and we both haven't done it for four months
- Not myself. Friends have panic attacks ... in assembly and my friend had to go up for an award and ran out because she couldn't breathe properly. The boys took the micky, girls supported
- Yes, I have anxiety and depression but not to the point where I cut myself or anything. Also my Mum has bipolar. I have quite a few mates with bipolar and depression
- Brother has ADHD and Autism. Ex-friend used to self-harm cos she was getting bullied. Low self-esteem (my friend)
- Myself. Mum gets upset sometimes. I get depression and sometimes hurt myself

How do you cope?

- Sometimes it can be difficult hearing others problems then I take it on as my own then it makes my problems worse. I generally cope alright. Most of what I thought I had makes me sleep so I sleep through it a lot. I talk to others but not a lot. I sometimes write things down. If I feel bad or worried about something I sometimes draw or play piano
- Its's hard. She's got a big issue with swearing. She has to say stuff. My sister and Dad don't get on but Dad gets angry with my sister. My Mum sticks up for my sister. When she lies about something she goes quiet for about a week, then tells us the truth. You have to be careful what you say to her
- My family gives me support. My Mum helped me through it. She kept telling me everything was going to be alright and it's not worth joining my Grandad up in heaven
- Doesn't really affect me. Don't really care
- I try to support them as best as I can. I would ask them why they are feeling that way. If they are having those thoughts why they feel that way. Explain why they shouldn't feel that way
- Put on a brave face around school but when I got home I wrote everything down. A diary then it stopped and I threw it away. My friends were there for me they didn't really know. Forget things and hang out with friends
- Listen to music, go out for long walks. I talk about it so it doesn't get bottled up. A think with anxiety is you get really angry instead of talking to someone. Doing 'mind logs' to put things in perspective by creating plans. Socialise as much as I can. Work can be stressful so I focus on achieving on my youth work. (With Mum) before I knew about it I didn't know how to deal with it. She's now much calmer cos of medication and having a mental health nurse come in and tell you things. Like if she shuts herself in a room for more than an hour then go and check on her. Talking to her
- Ignore him or tell him to shut up (brother). He can be violent like kicking in doors
- Don't really do anything about it. I talk about it actually and it gets it off your chest

What do you think about people with mental health issues?

- I would think I would treat them the same as everyone else
- That they need to be strong-minded to cope with what they have and it's not their fault. People need to be more understanding of that
- I feel sorry for them. I wonder why God makes people like that. I think they should be treated like everyone else
- I think they need to get more help. Like it they want to kill themselves. My mate went into hospital ... psychiatric and they didn't help and she nearly

killed herself three times. She had bipolar and they kept giving her mixed messages about what she had

- They're a person. It doesn't really matter. I don't really care
- I think they are very brave because it can be very difficult at times
- I guess they need someone to talk to and get it all out. Everyone goes through it and they need people not to judge them
- It's hard for them
- I think it's important to understand if they are suffering with something that you do the research. There might be things you don't understand. Also speak to the people with mental health issues, ask if they are okay, support, guidance. Even going to the Doctors with you. Before I was 18 Doctors didn't believe I could have depression and anxiety as I was too young. I've heard others same the same thing
- That they need to go and get help or talk to someone about it
- It's probably not their fault. It's something they are born with or has happened to them. It can be scary

Do you know of any support for mental health i.e. at your school?

- Support person. Like a school nurse. I'd see my teachers or my friends or tell my parents
- In school there is a school nurse who you can go and talk to and there are a few learning support teachers who you can talk to so it doesn't affect your learning. CAMHS and CHUMS also
- School, friends, talk to people. I speak loads with my mate. I think people make out that they are friends with him. Student support. School nurse. There's not many places. I don't know about any more
- Samaritans, Doctors
- You can go to your Doctor and hospital. Sarah (Groundworks staff) can help you. There are also special schools that take special care of you like nurse people
- Yes. Our school nurse but she is for everything. There are groups like CAMHS and CHUMS. I took medicine for Schizophrenia, Bipolar and anxiety. I went to the doctors and then got medication. The medicine started affecting my heart. They worked and it was less of a struggle than it is today
- Not really
- My old school we had a nurse for stuff like that but not my new school. Sandy Upper doesn't have one. I think they should go outside of school if they need help
- MIND are a really good charity if you ever feel low. You can just text them. Working with my job side ... Childline, I've used them a few times when I was younger. Doctors recently ... counsellors are okay. I had counselling at

college, they treated you like you're a kid. Then you get angry but they don't want to treat you like an adult when I was 16

- No. Brother goes to this place in Bedford but sometimes he doesn't take his medication. When he's on medication he's quiet but if not he's mad
- We have teachers at school, we can talk to

Have you or anyone else you know accessed help for mental health through your GP/surgery?

- My GP sent me to the hospital. CAMHS and CHUMS too
- My sister has a tablet every morning for everything, to act like a normal child
- My mate did, from the hospital, finally in the end after three years. She's alright now but she's not coping to well cos her friend killed herself
- Yeah, my friend when there ... a Doctor I think
- Yes, I have. I went to CAMHS although they didn't do much. They assessed me and concluded that I was fine but Doctors said different. I think the main reason for this is because my Mum had to be with me and she discouraged me from telling the truth. I don't think that's fair
- No. Teacher helped. They gave them a card which allows them to leave
- As above and below (respondent gave full answers in the previous and following question)
- Brother did. Through GP

What was the support like? Give examples.

- Kind of alright. They listened to what I had to say sort of but mostly skipped over what I said and went on to talk about something irrelevant to what I said. In other places they didn't really listen to me. They didn't really do anything. They seemed quick to say 'this' is the problem or 'that' is the problem
- She was happy with the tablets at first. First it was an injection which she didn't like. The tablet meant she acted different and she takes it more often. Now she has to take it herself for the rest of her life. Doctors listened (to her about the injections) and they gave her another option
- My mate didn't get the help until she went to some ward and she turned into a better person but it took a while
- I don't know
- It didn't do anything for me. Nothing changed for me
- When I was younger they didn't believe I had it but I kept going back. Mood swings and suicidal thoughts. Anxious about going to school. I can't handle

relationships and it makes you feel ill and you don't want to leave the house. I went back at 18 cos of stuff I was going through with my Mum then they sent me to a mental health nurse. I've stopped because I didn't think she was all that good and they put me on Fluoxetine for a few months but the side effects got worse and I got more suicidal. Then I thought I was going downhill so I stopped taking them and then went back to the nurse and she told me to keep taking the meds. Then they wanted to send me to CAMHS ... I was too old so they suggested adult services like Spring House. So I thought I couldn't be bothered with it anymore. I've completely stopped the support and I just deal with it myself but if I get worse I'd refer back. Mostly I focus on my work which keeps me motivated

- I didn't go with him and he doesn't tell me anything other than he likes the person he goes to
- I had a social worker until I was 3 and then they decided I didn't need support any more

What help would you have liked? / What do you think mental health services could do better?

- For someone to ask me how I feel and someone I can say about my emotions rather than what is wrong with me physically. I wanted more time and space to talk about stuff. One time I was really angry and they said I need counselling then they didn't give me counselling. The location of the services meant I couldn't access support
- No. They have done everything
- Help her like ... don't ignore what's going on in people's lives. I understand where people are coming from when they think it's about attention seeking but mental health is not attention seeking. I would have liked more support as I'm going through it. Like a counsellor. Someone to talk to outside of my family because you can't always tell them everything
- Maybe like ... do it so he's not with other people. Do short sessions a bit at a time and keep him active so he isn't falling asleep and getting tired
- I would have been on my own (without Mum) talking to them and then I would have said what I wanted to say. I didn't get asked whether or not my Mum should be in there. She doesn't believe what I say and was looking at me like I shouldn't be saying certain things. Another visit not just a one off assessment. Maybe another session. An opportunity to build a relationship with a therapist rather than just a one off
- Someone who wouldn't judge you. Someone that would have an understanding of what it is like
- Lots didn't want to tell their parents but they should tell people. They are supportive. Otherwise everything gets bottled up and explodes

- Not so much medication cos I don't really believe in it unless it's more serious. Depends on the type of person so I don't think tablets will help me. I would like cognitive therapy because I believe it was helpful. There are unsolved issues that make me feel angry that I need to talk about
- Give him stronger tablets. Or something that will shut him up
- I would have liked to know why it (the adoption) happened and what happened with my Dad. More information

What message would you give to other young people who struggle with their mental health?

- To speak to people
- They need to stay strong and get help even if they are not getting help already. Talk, don't bottle it up
- Ring someone. Calm down. I'd have a word with people if they pick on my sister. She's different to everyone else and don't treat her bad
- Go see a doctor and get help
- Ask someone for help
- I would tell them to try and get help but if they talk to family and if not then friends. Talk to someone
- To find someone to talk to. Get it all out. Stand up for yourself
- Tell their parents
- Speak out about it. Go to family, friends and relationships to talk about how you are suffering to see how they can help. Go to Doctors because they are trained in it and counsellors can be good. They are in different areas. Don't bottle up and be honest about how you feel
- Go and get help or you'll get worse. Talking helps cos it helps me when I talk to my Mum or my Nan
- Make sure you talk to people and don't just keep it you yourself

Finally, how would you rate the mental health services in Bedfordshire as a whole on a scale of 1-10, and why?

- 7, they help a bit, but are a bit nerve-wracking
- 7, because for a short time there was a point where I was sort of cured and they didn't ask me how I felt. No two doctors could agree on what was wrong with me
- 8, because it helped my sister in a different way. She used to be bad and she's got better. It eased her. She's back on track. Doctor's listened and social workers. Social worker had made our family happier. Me and my sister communicate more. We used to fight
- About 7 coz they don't help people that REALLY need it. They help some but not properly they need to prioritise better

- I can't answer that
- Well, I did get an assessment I would say 2 out of 10. They only saw me because my school said I should be seen
- 3, because I think, especially with my Mum it took ten years to diagnose her with bipolar and it took four years to diagnose I had depression and anxiety. I think they need to be trained more. They need more training. Bedford especially, on how to tell if people have certain mental health issues. More training and more experience
- Probably 9 because some people I know it really helped
- 8 because they must have got me to the point where I don't need the help anymore

About Healthwatch

Healthwatch is the local consumer champion promoting choice and influencing the provision of high quality health, social care and wellbeing services.

Healthwatch has significant statutory powers to ensure the voice of the consumer is strengthened and heard by those who commission, deliver and regulate health and care services.

Local Healthwatch engages and consults with all sections of their local population so that a wide cross section of views are heard, understood and acted upon.

Everything Healthwatch say and do is informed by our connections to local people and our expertise is grounded in their experience.

Healthwatch England leads supports and guides the Healthwatch network which is made up of the national body and local Healthwatch across each of the 152 local authority areas in England.

Healthwatch is the only body looking solely at people's experience across all health and social care. As a statutory watchdog our role is to ensure that local health and social care services, and the local decision makers, put the experiences of people at the heart of their care.

