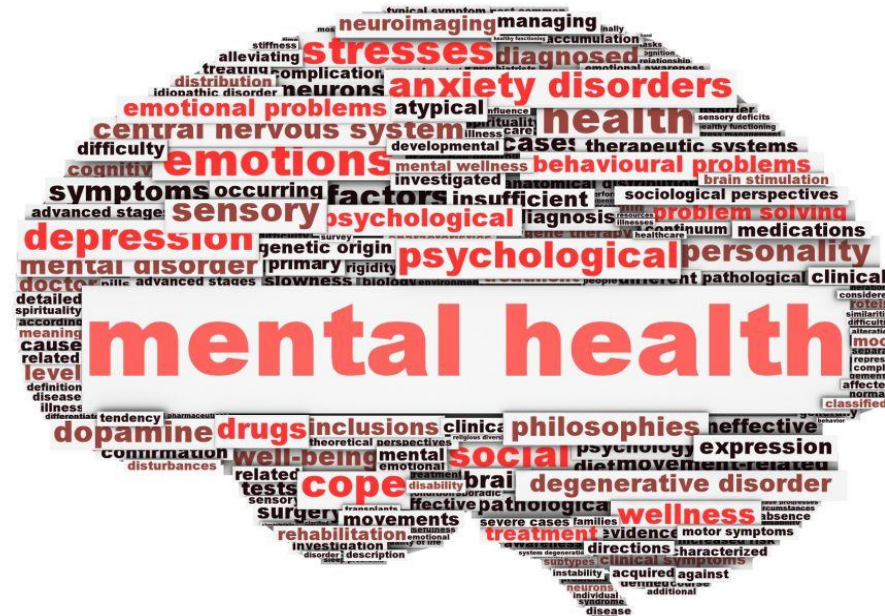


**young
healthwatch**
South Tyneside



#MANAGE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Young People tell us about their mental health and their experiences of services

About Us

Healthwatch South Tyneside is here to help local people get the best out of their local health and social care services by bringing their voice to those who plan and deliver services within South Tyneside.

Young Healthwatch South Tyneside is a group of 16-26-year-old volunteers that work with Healthwatch South Tyneside to make sure Children and Young People's views on health and social care is listened to.



Summary

As a group we wanted learn about the types of things that affect young people. To help us do this we held monthly drop in sessions at South Tyneside College and over three months we spoke to 250 students about different topics to see what the common themes were. The three most common were:

- Mental health
- Sexual health
- Drugs and alcohol

We meet as a group monthly to discuss our findings and from the information we collated over 65% of students told us their mental health and wellbeing was the most important to them with common things such as stress and anxiety being present daily. They told us that they often did not know who to talk to or where to go.

Young Healthwatch South Tyneside decided it was important to raise awareness of mental health services available to children and young people in South Tyneside and to also review people's experiences of any services they may have used and how services could be improved.

Key findings

- Young people felt there was not enough information about services available and they didn't know where to find it, or that there is too much clinical jargon and this puts some young people off.
- Males are still less likely to talk about their emotional health and wellbeing than females due to the stigma.
- The respondents said services that are currently being offered in South Tyneside are not widely advertised and highlighted, and that they were not aware that some services were available to support them.

- It was felt that service delivery and experiences are sometimes inconsistent for young people; in particular they thought that services were not always child friendly and that therapists often spoke to their parents about their care rather than them.
- The young people found the referral process too complex for them and their parents and carers, feeling that they are passed from one service or therapist to another.
- For young people and parents accessing services, next steps and care were not always fully explained.
- Respondents said waiting times are still too long; young people, parents and carers felt they are not being offered alternatives whilst waiting.
- Overall, once young people received support from children and young people's mental health services, they felt happy with the support they received and this has helped them deal with the mental health issues they were experiencing.
- Young people felt there needs to be more talks in schools about how they can help themselves (i.e. workshops or talks from mental health services about where to get help).
- More activities/clubs should be made available to encourage positive mental health and wellbeing.

Key recommendations/messages

- Commissioners and providers need to ensure there is adequate information about services and future plans to ensure more young people and parents and carers are aware of what is available.
- There needs to be clearer wait time expectations at the start of the referral process via telephone, patient letters, website information.
- An information card of health services that are able to support young people should be developed.
- There needs to be more child friendly website information.

- A next steps map that shows children and families what to expect when accessing Children and Young People's services and lifecycle service should be produced.
- Workshops should be made available in the community to help young people cope with different mental health issues.
- An App that allows young people to access support should be developed.
- Additional training should be given to staff to ensure the service is more child friendly.

Background information

In 2015 South Tyneside and its stakeholders introduced a new Transformation Plan from 2015 – 2020 which aimed to improve the way it delivered Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing in South Tyneside. As part of this plan South Tyneside are aiming to address the importance of better coordinated, collaborative working between services and the importance of early intervention, making access to talking therapies easier and quicker for families.

It was decided that accessing services should no longer be linked to specialized and centralized services, but services should be part of normal healthcare and widely available within the community that young people live in and services should be linked with schools, community services and children's services.

The CCG and other stakeholders recognised that the way young people's mental health services were delivered needed to be a priority and commissioned a new Children and Young People's Service and the Lifecycle Service. The service provides a tiered level of support depending on the child or young person's need, and is designed to provide a single service to all children and young people aged 0-18 years living in South Tyneside and Sunderland who present with mental health difficulties. This includes children and young people who may have learning difficulties and those living in a range of difficult and challenging circumstances.

The service is able to provide:

- Assessment, diagnosis and intervention on a range of mental health issues.
- Intensive response and home-based treatment for those children and young people whose mental health is causing significant concern.
- An intensive Eating Disorder Service to support children and young people on the eating disorder pathway who are at risk of an inpatient admission.
- A comprehensive transition support package to those young people who are approaching their 18th birthday and may need continuing support as adults.
- 24-hour access to support via a single point of access.
- Training, consultation, support and advice to frontline staff working in targeted services for children.

Other measures to improve mental health services for children and young people

As part of the “Transformation Plan” for children and young people’s mental health services following the changes to children and young people’s service and Lifecycle, the importance of early intervention and the right support and access to support in different ways when providing services to young people that support their mental health and wellbeing has been recognized by key partners such as NTW, CCG and public health, Children and Young People’s Services, key partnership agencies and the voluntary sector.

Whilst carrying out this piece of work, Young Healthwatch has worked with the CCG, the Lifecycle service and public health to build a picture of what current services are available and future plans for services.

South Tyneside Council want to ensure children and young people have support available to them if they are experiencing problems that may impact on their mental health and wellbeing and help prevent the need for therapeutic services where possible. Over the past 18 months South Tyneside Council and Public Health have worked with schools to improve mental health support for children and young people. A mental health pledge and champions network has been introduced. with 165 mental health champions across all schools in South Tyneside. The champions are identified as the 'go to' person in their setting for young people, staff and parents/carers. The champions meet once a term to share best practice and work together on a range of different issues. All champions wear a yellow lanyard to identify themselves to staff and young people. The champions have all signed a 'Champions Pledge' which was written by young people about what skills, qualities and attributes a champion should have. Other work includes:

- Mental health and behavior training has been delivered to more than 40 school staff to look at the structural ways that schools can promote and protect good mental health.
- Other work includes projects on mental health self-care to encourage schools to use social prescribing principles as early intervention.
- A mental health anti-stigma campaign 'It's okay not to be okay' has been launched in schools to reduce some of the stigma around mental health.
- Seven secondary schools and the college's Public Health department have trained peer supporters to offer low level mental health support formally and informally to their peers.

It is hoped that focusing on "early intervention" will help reduce the need for therapeutic services for young people in the future and by having alternative support available it will also reduce the wait times for children and young people who need treatment. To help tackle this issue the CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group), South Tyneside Council, NTW and other key partners including Young Healthwatch hold a Children and Young People's alliance group to address improvements needed.

It is evident that South Tyneside is committed to delivering improved mental health provision for children and young people and Young Healthwatch wanted to ensure young people could share their views about the services they received and how services can be improved in the future.

Who we involved?

From the beginning, Young Healthwatch felt it was important that we involved key services and partnership agencies in the work we were doing to ensure the questions we asked were meaningful and could inform the way services improved in the future. We worked with South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group, NTW, NHS, Public Health young health ambassadors, local colleges and schools, partner agencies and the voluntary sector.

Why we did it

In 2017 South Tyneside Children and Young People's Service introduced the "Lifecycle" service designed to be the one point of contact service for children and young people who needed low or high level treatment for mental health, as well as some fantastic work that is currently going on in schools and across South Tyneside Council at present.

You might ask why did we want do this work.... well, that answer is simple because things can **ALWAYS** be improved but this can only be done if we continue to talk to the young people in South Tyneside about what they want.

Young Healthwatch – What we DID



Our Question Time panel

As a group we met to decide how we wanted to gather our information from other young people. We decided that we would like to split the work into two parts and do something really different to give young people a chance to have their voices heard.

Part 1 - The Young Healthwatch group put together questions based on what young people told us at the drop-in sessions and through discussions of their own experiences of mental health to help us identify key areas

including: who young people spoke to if they had a problem; their experiences of services; and what type of improvements would help young people and children manage their own mental health. As a group we felt not knowing how to cope with things and the way you feel was key in preventing you needing to use a service. To reinforce this message the group came up with the name **#Manage your mental health** for the campaign.

Part 2 – From the drop-in sessions we completed at South Tyneside College young people told us they were not sure about what services were available in South Tyneside or their experience of trying to get help was not always positive. The Young Healthwatch group decided to give young people in South Tyneside an opportunity to have their questions answered by decision makers of mental health services for children and young people and to do this as part of Mental Health Awareness Week.

How we did it....

The Young Healthwatch group designed a questionnaire and ran the campaign **#Manage your mental health** from March until May 2019. The Young Healthwatch team launched both an online survey using Survey Monkey and a paper version and shared this across South Tyneside's statutory and voluntary sectors including:

- Children and Young People's Mental Health Alliance, Sexual Health, Young Carers, The matrix, Youth Parliament, Outreach Youth Teams, all schools in South Tyneside and many more.....

Young Healthwatch also wanted to ensure they spoke to groups across South Tyneside as well as the questionnaires. We carried out three group discussions to capture young people's experiences of mental health, services and how things can be improved. We carried out group discussions with:

- Ocean Road Detached Youth Group, Apna Gar, Youth Parliament

What some young people told us in the group sessions about services:

"I was passed from one service to another so I gave up" M14

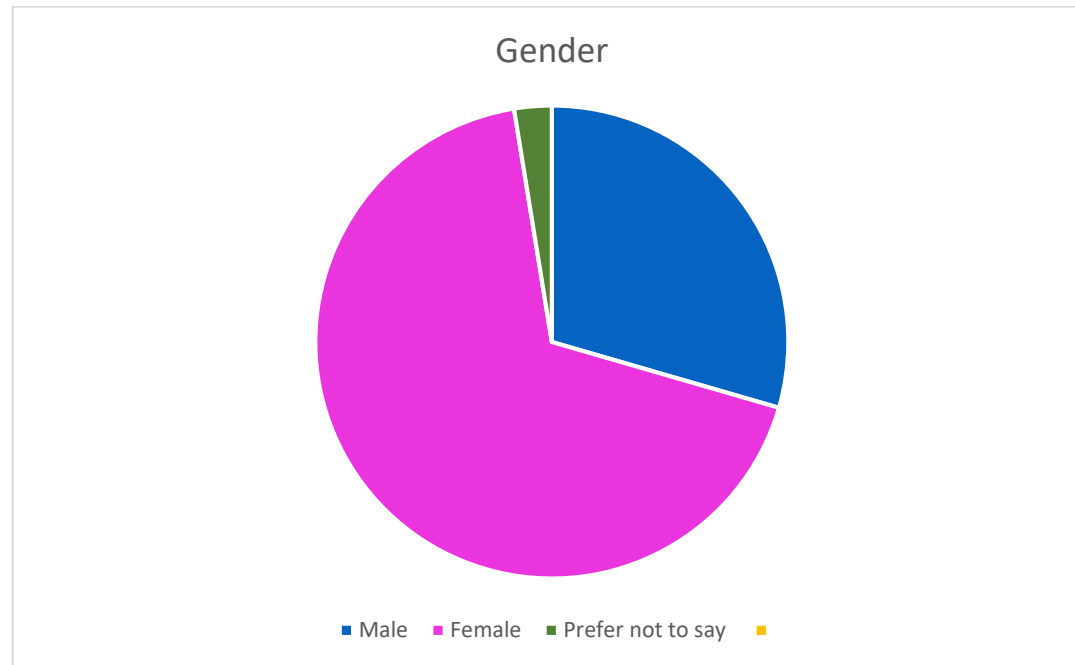
"We don't ask for help in our community; we talk to our parents and don't ask for help 12

"There needs to be more info about who can help before you get worse M 14

"More information for parents and teachers" F 15

"I waited ages to be seen but when I did get help it was great" M 16

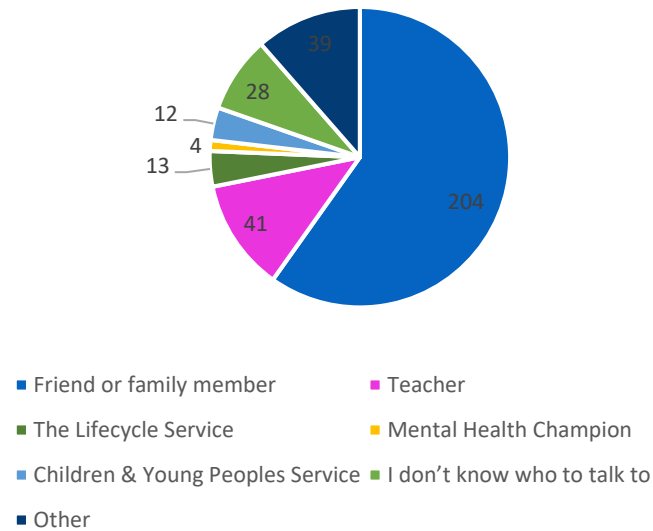
We had 274 responses between ages of eight – 18 from the questionnaire and we have illustrated the results below:



What the results tell us:

The number of responses from females is more than double than those from males, suggesting that males are less likely to want to talk about their feelings than females. This is a statistic that is recognized nationally as an issue with the increase in young male suicides.

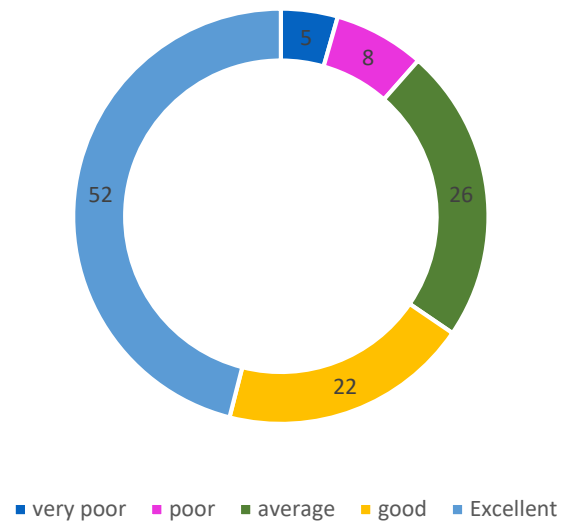
Who do you talk to?



What the results tell us;

- Young people are more likely to speak to friends and family if they have a problem.
- Not enough support/info for parents/carers and how to support their children.
- Young people are approaching their teachers – how equipped are teachers to deal with this?
- Young people are telling us they don't always know who to talk to if they have a problem.
- The low figure of the Lifecycle service reflects that young people may not need a counselling service or could suggest they are not aware of services or prefer to use alternatives.
- Young people told us the other services they use include: Childline; My counsellor; College Counsellor; Matrix; Escape; GP. It should be noted that these services received 5 stars across all areas we spoke to young people about.

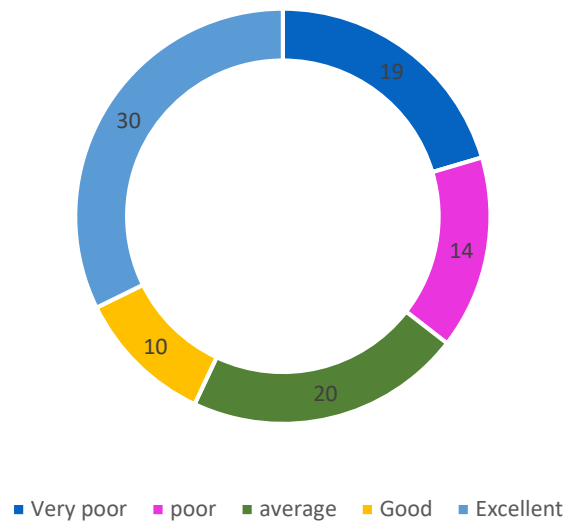
Attitude of staff



Overall the attitude to staff was rated average. The negative experiences young people had prominently related to:

- Put off by first contact as they were not sure what would happen.
- Feeling as though they did not always feel they were listened to.
- Things we not explained to them clearly.
- Feeling scared, confused, not sure what will happen next and how they felt overlooked.

The service is not child friendly

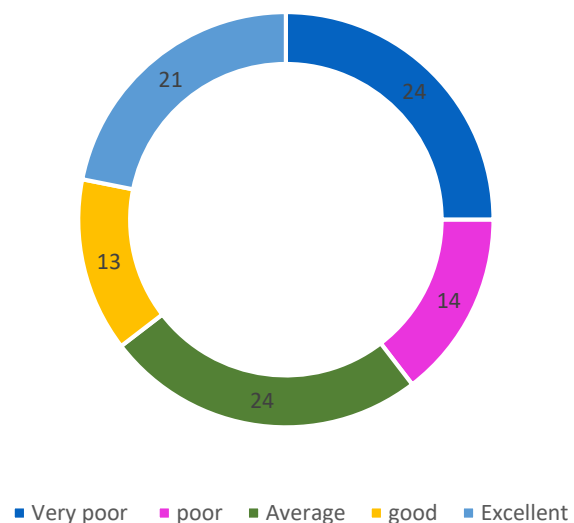


The experiences from young people using services (Lifecycle/CAHMS) varied, with young people stating the service they received was not always child friendly and overall rated the service **average**, demonstrating service experience for young people can be inconsistent in terms of how un-child friendly services are for young people and may prevent them from accessing or returning to a service in the future.

Some things young people felt were:

- I felt talked down to.
- They spoke to my parents/carers rather than me.
- They didn't explain things properly.
- Information was aimed at parents; there is too much jargon.

I waited too long to be seen

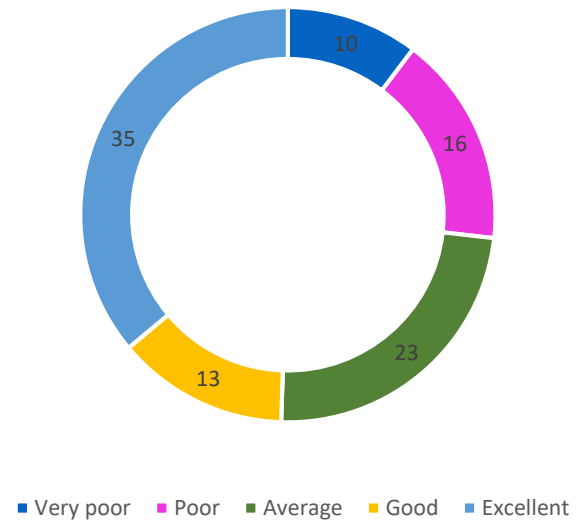


Wait times proves still to be a key issue, with 25% of the young people we spoke to stating wait times were poor and 21% of young people stating wait times were too long.

Some of the key findings were;

- The type of help I will get or what happens next is not explained.
- I was passed from one service to another waiting longer each time.
- The referral process, next steps not explained.
- No alternatives offered whilst waiting

The service I received gave me the help I needed

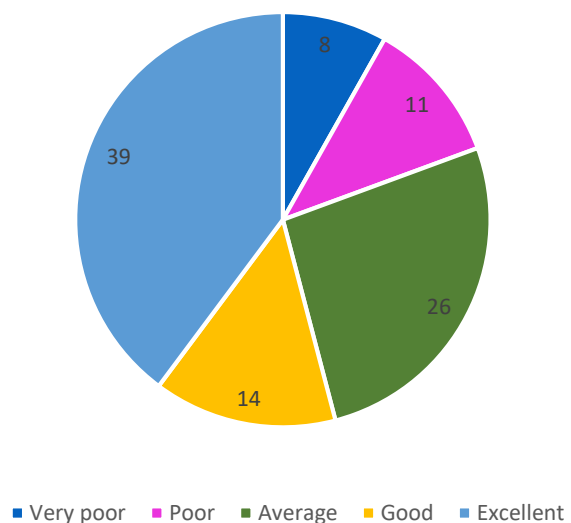


Overall the majority agreed that the service they received gave them the help they needed once they received it.

What young people told us could be improved:

- The service was not for them but they were not offered alternatives or ways they could help themselves.
- There is not enough information about services or who else can help them.
- More options available other than counselling

Overall how would you rate the service you received



Overall **39.8%** of young people rated the service they received as excellent responses. The negative responses we had were in relation to young people feeling:

- The referral process needs to be clearer and easier for young people, parents, teachers and other professionals.
- Not informed of next steps in their treatment making young people anxious
- Professionals speaking to their parents and carers rather than them.
- There is not enough information available about mental health support in South Tyneside.
- Too much jargon used on the lifecycle and health services websites.

Here's some of the negative things young people told us about mental health services in South Tyneside

"No one told me what would happen next. I waited eight months and by then I didn't need the help any more" F14

"Things were not explained; I didn't go back to counselling" F 14

"I felt like my counsellor was too timid themselves to be able to help me" F16

"I waited ages to find out who could help me but once I knew who this was I didn't wait very long." F14

There needs to be more information for parents and carers about how long I will wait and how you can help them whilst waiting because no one seems to care." Parent of F aged 12

"They don't talk to me; they talk to my parents. I felt like I wasn't being listened to. F 13

Here are some of the positive things children and young people made about mental health services

"I waited ages to to find out who could help me but once I knew who this was, I didn't wait very long" F14

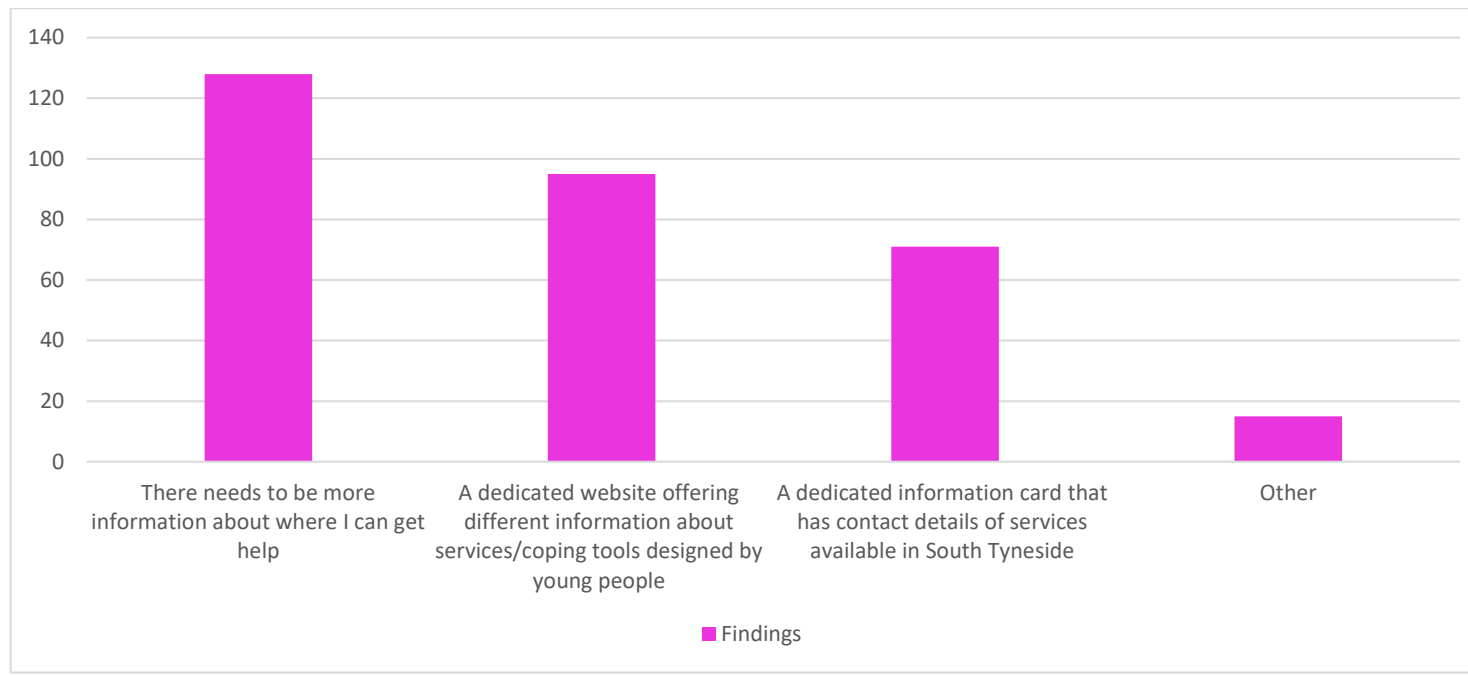
"It really helped me address my feelings. The service was excellent

"I would really recommend the counsellor I saw" F16

"Once I got to see the right person the help, I have received has been great so far." M16

"It really helped me to talk to someone. "F 17

How can mental health services be improved in South Tyneside?

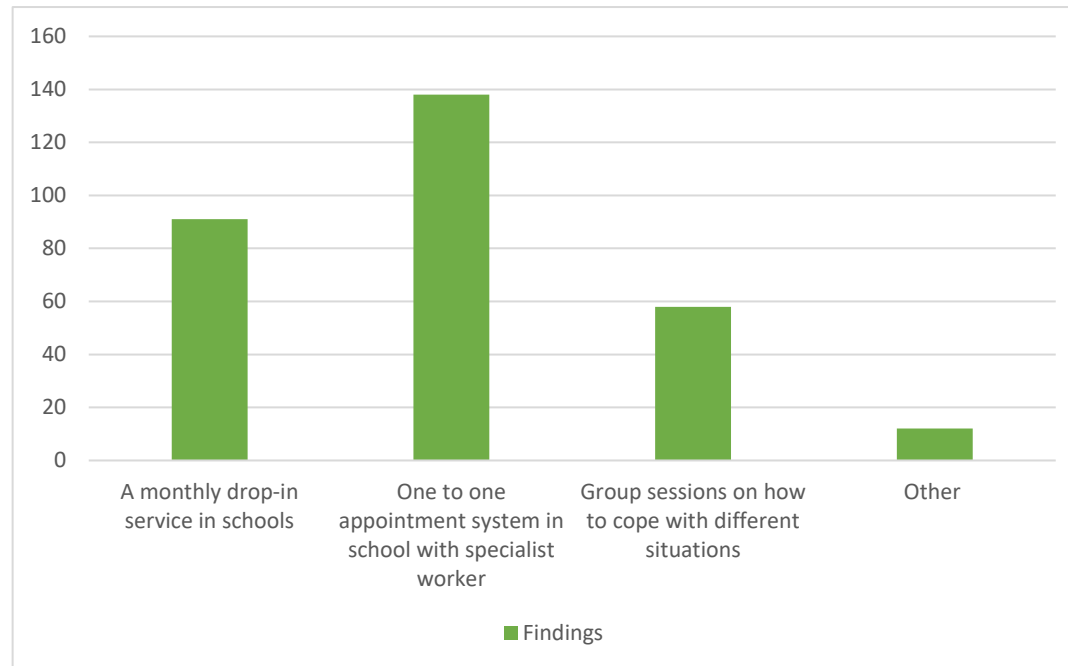


Nearly half of the young people told us there needs to be more information about where they can get help about mental health services. Young people also told us they would like a website that offered them information and coping tools to promote positive health and wellbeing as well as an information card that gives them useful contacts if they feel they need help.

Here are some of the other suggestions they made that might help services improve:

- A dedicated helpline.
- An App where you can get a call back for advice.
- A community drop-in service and more youth activities to promote positive activities.

South Tyneside is always trying to improve services for young people and their mental health. What would you like to be introduced in services?



Overall children and young people in South Tyneside told us they would like to see appointments systems in school with specialized workers to help them deal with their problems. Some young people felt they wouldn't always feel comfortable in doing this in school because everyone would know where they were going and would prefer services outside of school and in the community.

During our group sessions young people told us it would help if there were sessions or information on how to deal with different situations such as: stress; anxiety; and peer pressure in same sex groups as sometimes girls have different problems to boys and they find it difficult to open up if it's a mixed group.

Question Time event.

As part of the questionnaire we also wanted to know what were the key things young people wanted to know about mental health services. We had over 100 questions from young people and the most common themes were:

- How to deal with stress
- Accessibility of information
- Awareness in schools
- Wait times
- Types of services

Young Healthwatch thought it was important that young people were given an opportunity to ask these questions directly to some key decision makers and partner organization's that influence children and young people's services.

Young Healthwatch hosted a 'Question Time' style event in partnership with South Tyneside College, with an expert panel including the CCG, Lifecycle Service, NTW, Public Health, Matrix and college counsellor. The event was attended by 40 people including young people, parents and carers and other professionals from different organizations.

Here is a list of the questions young people wanted answers to. The event has been videoed by South Tyneside College and Healthwatch South Tyneside and Young Healthwatch will use this as an information tool that can be

shared to help support young people with questions they have about services that will also be shared partner organizations and schools to support ongoing work and improvements. It is hoped that following the event's success we will host a similar event next year to help inform service improvement.

The questions for the panel:

STRESS	How do you deal with stress from exams/school?
	How do I cope with stress in general?
ACCESSIBILITY	How are you trying to make the language more accessible for young people's mental health services?
	What is being done to make websites user friendly and easily accessible for young people?
AWARENESS/SCHOOLS	How can you better advertise current mental health services?
	Mental health should be talked about in school lessons so people can become more educated.
	Why is there not more information about different support and what to expect from different places that is easier for you to understand?
	When do you plan on training school staff in recognising when young people are struggling with their mental health and how will it be incorporated into lessons?
	How can you help parents understand more about their child's mental health?
	What different coping methods are there and how can I find out about them?
WAITING TIMES	Could the waiting process to access services be any shorter to prevent patients from deteriorating?
	I had an introductory therapy session and was said to have low mood and some trauma. The centre then told me I'd wait 2-3 months before counselling would begin, I have waited now five months and received no help or support.
	The first time I was referred to CAHMS, it wasn't very good at all, didn't help. When I went to the doctors, they dismissed my feelings until my mam rang CAHMS herself and got me an over the phone screening to see how desperately I needed help. I was top of the priority list and I had to wait three months even though I was deemed as needing help critically. I've just started my second time at the mental health services and so far, it's so much better than my last one; the man really listens and digs deep it's really helpful.

SERVICES	What would public health do to help with mental health and how could a more holistic approach be used?
	There should be a structured website that refers you where/who to go to next, e.g. listening ear and talking therapies.
	What is available in the way of additional help lines for young people?
	More flexible and teenage friendly services and staff – peoples personal experiences putting them off seeking further mental health help and support. E.g. The receptionist I had was rude, she told me I couldn't refer myself and I needed a family member. When I did get referred, I waited ages for counselling and when I got seen I didn't like it because I didn't get along with the person I saw, I then didn't bother going back.
	Recognise that group sessions are not for everyone – another personal experience making young people shy away from seeking further help. E.g. – I went to a group setting for anxiety where they made me speak out in the group despite me telling them I didn't want to as I'm shy. After it, I felt no better but was just told that was that.
	Communication is the biggest problem in mental health as professionals have to rely on patients for information in regards to who is involved, for example – GP refers to lifecycle to assess, they then should refer to CPN with GP in the loop and then psychologist would liaise with GP and CPN as well as lifecycle as they all play important roles in mental health along with CAHMS. Communication is a HUGE problem within mental health. If those involved with each patient communicates then things can be put in place to prevent suicide, self-harm, dark places and helplessness and most of all feeling alone.
	When will we see changes happening?
	Is it possible to improve information provided to the public to increase knowledge of services?
	We like to be asked what we want from services and how we would like them delivered.

GENERIC	Have you found any correlations/associations with alcohol and mental health?
	Do you really realise the effect bad mental health is having on our generation?
	There should be more inclusivity for those without diagnosed conditions.
	I don't talk about my emotional well-being or my problems – how can we encourage young people to be open about their mental health?
	How common are mental health problems for 14-25-year olds?
	There should be help and information with puberty.
	How is it possible to approach the situation in a casual way?

Key messages and recommendations

Overall when young people told us that when they received treatment for their mental health and wellbeing, they were happy with the service they had received. Young people who required counselling for the issues they were facing told us the help they received helped them deal with the issues they were facing.

However, when reviewing young people's views on wait times, how they felt treated during their appointments, and gaps in services if a young person did not need treatment – our findings were inconsistent. This, of course, will depend on each individual's case or experience. The evidence captured in both our #manage your mental health questionnaire and 'Question Time' event has helped young people's views to be used to improve service experience and how information about services can be used to improve access to children and young people's mental health services in the future.

The key messages and areas of improvement for service experience for children and young people and improvements they would like to see made were:

- Commissioners and service providers to develop more child friendly website for services such as Lifecycle, NTW including a clearer referral process, what will happen and next steps. Produce a next steps risk scale so they it's clearer for young people to see who they need who they need to contact. (See appendix 1 as an idea) (not sure if this should be included)
- Children's mental health services to set clearer wait time expectations set out at the beginning of the process via telephone, patient letters, website information with consideration of a follow up "Check in" phone call to the young person or parent or carer to see if there are any changes that may change the treatment needed and offer families alternative support whilst awaiting their appointment.
- Children and Young People's Services and partners to set up regular planned visits to schools and conduct information sessions about services that are available as part of assemblies.

- Commissioners and service providers to look at additional training around ensuring each child receives a positive child friendly experience.
- Consider the development with other partners the delivery of self-help parent and child workshops to be run in schools and the wider community.
- More targeted support for young males to help address inequalities and ensure they have better access to information and support.
- Produce a health information card for young people about mental health services with other key partners and stakeholders.
- Commissioners, Children and Young People's services and partner agencies including the voluntary sector should aim to improve the way they communicate with each other and the services that are available within mental health services to help ensure young people and parents and carers are fully aware of services that are available to them to support them with their mental health.
- Young Healthwatch website to support commissioners and services with the way information about health and social care services is shared with young people.

Special thanks...

I would like to thank the Young Healthwatch volunteers for their hard work and dedication to this piece of work, Margaret Adams, South Tyneside College and key partners from South Tyneside Lifecycle service, CCG, NTW, Children and Young People's Service, Public Health, Youth Parliament, Schools across South Tyneside, Youth Outreach, Matrix Service and most importantly young people across South Tyneside that took the time to talk to us and tell us their views that will help improve services for them in the future.

