

Voice of Children and Young People to CYPSP - Emotional Mental Health & Wellbeing

Newry & Mourne Youth Council/ Forum

2x groups held 2 February 2021



Emotional Mental Health and Wellbeing

Two groups of young people were provided with consultation packs to facilitate discussions :-

- * 14 young people aged 15-18 years from N&M Youth Council
- * 11 young people aged 14-17 years from N&M Youth Forum

Is this a Good Priority?

- * Yes and it is more relevant now since the pandemic began.
- * Young people with poor mental health find it hard to socialise, focus on school, motivate themselves and it also impacts on their physical health-headaches, weight loss or gain, insomnia, drinking and taking drugs.



Do you think a Mental Health page for children and young people is a good idea and would you like to be involved?

- * Yes, some young people find it hard to pick up the phone and ring, it might be easier to have some youth friendly material that can help and guide them that they can search for;
- * Think language used on current materials is not appropriate and young people get very overwhelmed by it. Materials need to be less clinical and more personal/informal.
- * Use social media- with motivational tips, ideas, maybe video presentations to share personal stories – with option for being anonymous (eg voice over or not seeing face).
- * There are 3 of us now involved in developing the new page on the CYPSP website and we had a great first meeting on 28 April...



We want you to discuss emotional mental health and wellbeing with your friends

What we discussed:-

- * Uncertainty around the future due to the pandemic;
- * Will we see it through to the other side of the pandemic;
- * Screen time, losing out on physical contact;
- * Unemployment, 15,000 young people have lost their jobs since March 2020;
- * Lack of socialising for high risk young people who still will not have had physical contact with the outside world since March 2020;
- * Missing School and uncertainty with exams/results;
- * Will I get into University on predicted grades;
- * Boredom, young people are becoming more anxious from not doing anything and overthinking;
- * No socialising face to face and unable to attend extracurricular activities such as sports etc.;



What we discussed continued

- * Lack of information from the Government around COVID that is youth friendly, terminology is not appropriate for young people;
- * Missing out on life;
- * The uncertainty of school work, work keeps changing, topics that were scrapped are now coming back and topics that have been taught are now being scrapped;
- * Will I be able to attend University across the border come September;
- * Being in isolation from school and having missed work, can be difficult trying to catch up;
- * Lack of motivation, some days can't get out of bed;
- * Access to counselling services within schools has been non-existent since the beginning of the pandemic and nothing else has been put in place;
- * Feel things are improving a bit in being able to talk to others about how we feel but still stigma, fear of being accused of attention seeking or other people have more serious problems than yours and they don't want to talk about how you are feeling.



And now we are back at School!!

- * Teachers not taking mental health serious, saying that young people's stress & anxiety over exams isn't valid;
- * Teachers suggesting that this year is easier and that young people are in a better position than they ever were but then also saying if you fail that's on you, it's very frustrating & confusing;
- * The effects of the pandemic on mental health keeps getting downplayed and invalidated which is very cruel and doesn't help young people;
- * A lot of pressure is getting put on young people with teachers saying you are falling behind however the entire country is in the same situation and allowances need to be made;
- * Teachers constantly referring to previous year groups being so far ahead than we are now is causing a lot of stress and anxiety;
- * After returning to school with the constant assessment after assessment, school has taken over our whole lives. We have the same uncertainty as last year with results and after a whole year to put a plan in place to not have a repeat of last years mess it has become clear that no plan has been put in place and this is severely damaging young people's mental health.



We want you to tell us your ideas about how we can make things better for you?

- * Make **all counselling services more accessible** with time on waiting lists;
- * School counselling **services should not be restricted to one or two days** a week, young people's mental health does not stop for the other five days;
- * **School counsellors should talk to all young people** at least once as a lot won't go to them. Needs to be more discreet and private.
- * **Have peer support groups** – where you can get help from other young people
- * **Messages need to be put out by young people** in a way that is easy to understand.
- * **Skill up teachers** to be able to offer mental health advice to allow for more support for young people;
- * Outside school counselling services are good however the waiting times need reduced and sometimes it can be **easier for young people to access through school** than go outside, may not have transport to get to somewhere else, parents may not be able to support them to go anywhere else;
- * **More investment needed** to meet the demand especially after the pandemic as more and more young people are suffering from mental health issues more than ever;
- * Services need to be **local, regular and accessible**;



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- * **Simpler language** used for an online platform and it needs to be kept **current, relevant, attractive and have daily updates**;
- * Online platform needs to be **easily navigated**;
- * Online platform should allow for young people to **ask a question and get a reply** to an issue they might be having;
- * Should **use young people to promote services** as young people feel more comfortable whenever they know friends or people they know are involved i.e. **Ambassadors for the service**;
- * Should post **daily tips** on how to promote positive mental health;
- * Daily **COVID updates** that have an effect on young people should be posted in a more youth friendly format e.g. **exams, school, restrictions, social interaction outside**. The updates should not always include the **death toll as this is having a negative effect on mental health**, maybe once a month include the death toll;
- * Provide **workshops for young people via zoom** that can promote positive mental health; e.g. **yoga classes, stress relief workshop, Ti chi, sports, music etc.**;



Thank you for giving us this
opportunity to provide you with
our thoughts and
recommendations

