

Your Mind, Your Say:

Young people's views
of mental health services
in Dorset

6

Local health
and social care
shaped by you

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Introduction

Healthwatch Dorset is the county's independent health and social care champion. It exists to ensure that people are at the heart of care. A dedicated team of staff and volunteers listen to what people like about local health and social care services, and what could be improved. These views are then shared with the decision-making organisations, so together a real difference can be made. This report is an example of how views are shared.

Dorset CCG launched 'Your Mind, Your Say' in February 2020 to capture the views of young people, and their families, who use mental health services. To inform the development of mental health services for children and young people, they supported events, visited groups and ran an online survey [#YourMindYourSay](#) in February and March 2020. The purpose of this view-seeking exercise was to involve local people and communities in shaping future mental health services across Dorset.



To complement Dorset CCG findings, we visited youth groups and local organisations to gather feedback and seek the views of young people who don't always have a strong voice. This was an opportunity for young people to make a real difference to the way mental health services for young people are set up and delivered. Our engagement focused on young people who are excluded from school, young offenders, care leavers, young asylum seekers and young people who are experiencing homelessness. We carried out face-to-face engagement activities with young people at various organisations and youth groups across Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset. We spoke to a total of 23 young people, aged 14-20 years.

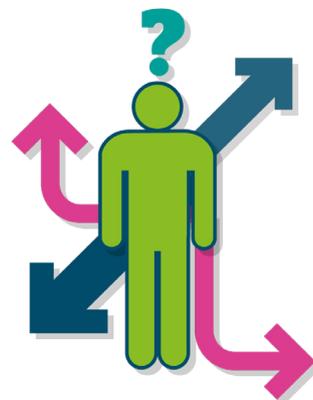


What we did

We contacted various local community organisations and youth groups and arranged visits so that we could speak directly with young people. We asked the same three questions used by Dorset CCG in their #YourMindYourSay campaign, to help us find out more about young people's experiences of using mental health services in Dorset. The questions also helped us to find out what they thought would make mental health services better.

The questions were:

1. **What do you think is good or helpful about current mental health services for children and young people in Dorset?**
2. **What do you think could be made better?**
3. **What would make the biggest difference to mental health services for children and young people?**



Who we spoke to

We carried out face to face engagement activities with young people at various organisations and youth groups across Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset. We spoke to a total of 23 young people, aged 14-20 years. We visited the following organisations and groups:

- **International Care Network**, who provide support to refugees and asylum seekers in the Bournemouth area. We spoke to three people at ICN. <https://www.icn.org.uk/>
- **Future Roots**, who re-engage young people with learning when they are at risk of exclusion, non-attendance or poor mental health. We spoke to seven people at Future Roots. <https://www.futureroots.net/>
- **Weymouth College**, which teaches a wide range of further education courses, ranging from apprenticeships to vocational courses. We spoke to three people at Weymouth College. <https://www.weymouth.ac.uk/>
- **St Mungo's**, who provide support to people sleeping rough in Bournemouth and Poole. We spoke to three people at St Mungo's. https://www.mungos.org/press_release/st-mungos-supporting-people-sleeping-rough-in-bournemouth-and-poole/
- **Life Changing Choices**, which is a non-contact Boxing Club, supporting young people of all ages, and run by a member of the settled traveller community in Poole. We spoke to one person at Life Changing Choices.
- **Dorset Mind Young Ambassadors**, who are advocates that help Dorset Mind (a local charity supporting local people with mental health challenges) to challenge, educate and promote the ethos of recovery. We spoke to six people at Dorset Mind. <http://dorsetmindyourhead.co.uk/about/ambassadors-champions/>

Key issues

The headline issues that the participants raised:

- Long waiting times to access mental health services
- Being unable to see the same support worker
- Being unable to access services when young people are desperate for them
- Sessions being held in a clinical environment that make young people feel uncomfortable
- Not feeling listened to
- Being unable to access an interpreter
- Not being able to access more sessions
- Support workers are not reading client notes before the start of a session, so you have to repeat yourself



What people told us

In response to the questions we asked, below is a summary of what people told us from the information we gathered.

What do you think is good or helpful about current mental health services for children and young people in Dorset?

Overall people felt that it is good that the services are available for young people to access. People also spoke of how caring some of the mental health support workers are and commented that some seem to really want to help.

“The people who I see are really caring. They let me talk about what I want.”

“It’s good that you can access services, but you have to wait too long, by which time you are at crisis point.”

What do you think could be made better?

“Seeing the same support worker, rather than different ones would make a big difference.”

There were various suggestions and ideas as to how services could be made better. Shorter waiting times, and the delivery of more sessions was mentioned time and time again, as was more support worker continuity.

The offer of an interpreter was also something that the young refugees raised, as the language barrier was a big issue for them.

“To have interpreter would really help. I have to use google translate a lot, which slows things down.”

“They don’t read over your notes, so you have to repeat yourself every time.”

Some of the young people said that support workers don’t always read over their notes, so they have to repeat themselves a lot.

Young people also felt that a nicer, and less clinical environment would also make the services better for young people.

“Having people come out to visit the young people would make such a difference, rather than us having to go to a place.”

Some of the young people who we spoke to felt that six sessions is not enough, and more sessions should be made available.

“The rigidness of only having six sessions is not very good. You’re put in a room at a certain time and told you’ve got 45 minutes to open up about everything and then you are expected to go back to school.”

What would make the biggest difference to mental health services for children and young people?

“It’s frustrating when your psychiatrists, doctors and mental health workers are constantly changing. I went through three care co-ordinators in six months and it really slows down progress because I feel like I am repeating myself over and over again and opening up my trauma.”

Overall people told us that funding would make the biggest difference to mental health services. They said that this would then allow for more support workers, which would decrease the waiting times. People also said that having more support worker continuity would make the services more effective. The young people said that it is very difficult to talk openly when you have different support workers each time.



Additional feedback

Future Roots have asked if Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) could have a base at Rylands Farm to work directly with the young people, who they feel never get spoken to. The site has a cabin all set up for this and they have asked several times if CAMHS could use this as a facility. They feel that mental health services for young people would work so much better if the services went into the young person's environment where they feel safe. A clinical environment just doesn't work for them, and the services need to be brought to the young people. The young people themselves have also asked for the services to come to the farm, which could be set up as a hub. They said that CAMHS only offer limited sessions, but the young people take time to open up and then just as they start to open up, they get dropped because the sessions run out. Instead the young people talk to the animals on the farm, which provides them with some therapy, but much more could be done for the young people if CAMHS used the farm as a resource.



"I've been coming to Future Roots for the last 5 years. I started one day a week and now I do four days a week. Future Roots has saved my life, I was in a very bad place before I came here."

Feedback provided by Future Roots

"Because the young people's mental health services aren't working, it is now impacting on the schools, and the schools just aren't equipped to deal with mental health and don't have enough training in that area. They just don't seem to know how to handle the kids."

Local support worker

Conclusion

This project has highlighted possible areas of development for Children and Young Peoples Mental Health services. Healthwatch Dorset has made a number of recommendations:

Full recommendations

The most common concern that people raised with us was the amount of time that young people have to wait in order to be able to access services. People would like to see much shorter waiting times. Perhaps some 'get to know you' telephone sessions might be beneficial prior to the young people starting the one-to-one sessions. This may help to alleviate the amount of time that young people have to wait.

We spoke to several young people who said that the setting in which they have their sessions is too clinical and makes them feel uncomfortable. The young people said that they would prefer it if the sessions were held in an environment where they are comfortable and feel safe in.

A lot of the young people who we spoke to said that the support workers that they see are constantly changing, and there is a lack of continuity between staff, which then slows down the care that they receive. Young people would like to see the same support worker, who they are familiar with.

Young people were frustrated that they are only given a limited number of sessions. They felt that it takes time to feel comfortable talking to a support worker, and by the time they do feel comfortable they only have one or two sessions left. The young people would like to have an offer to extend the amount of sessions

Next steps

Our project results include recommendations for how young people's mental health services are delivered and some changes that we would like to see being made. We will now share our findings and work with Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group to help create better mental health services for young people.



Stakeholder's response

This report has been shared with Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group, who said:

“In Dorset we want children and young people to have the best health and care services to support their mental health and well-being. The experiences and views of local people are essential to help us understand what would make these services better. We have visited and spoken to 100's of people and the views they have given us have been massively helpful. We are very grateful to Healthwatch Dorset for helping us to reach out even further. They have spoken to some young carers, young offenders, looked after children, young people who are homeless and young people excluded from school. A big thank you to their Engagement Officer Lucy for having these important conversations.” **Frances Aviss, Senior Public Engagement Lead, Dorset CCG**

“It was great to receive the report and recommendations from HealthWatch Dorset and we are grateful to those who shared their views. The views, thoughts and suggestions are very much in line with those provided through our online survey and group discussions.

“We will make sure that these recommendations are given due consideration by the Children and Young People's Mental Health Steering Group. Importantly all views collected will be used to inform future service plans, which we will design with young people, their families and other stakeholders.”

Elaine Hurl, Principal Programme Lead for Mental Health, Dorset CCG

NHS

Dorset
Clinical Commissioning Group

Thank you

Healthwatch Dorset wants specifically to thank: The International Care Network, Future Roots, Weymouth College, St Mungo's, Life Changing Choices, and Dorset Mind. Without their support the public engagement numbers on this project would have been considerably lower. We also want to say a thank you to anyone who participated in this project. The young people spoke openly and there were some sensitive topics for the young people to talk about, we are truly grateful. This gave us a good insight into what works well and what can be improved with local mental health services for children and young people.



Appendix: Limitations

There were a few issues that made the engagement work more of a challenge.

When I visited the International Care Network, there was a language barrier with some of the refugees who wanted to give their feedback. I had to refer to Google Translate and use a lot of hand gestures to emphasise what I was saying.

Arranging visits in such a short timescale can be very challenging, as people are often under pressure with their own work, so you don't always hear back from them.

The engagement work was meant to be completed at the end of March, but unfortunately due to the emerging Coronavirus pandemic two of my visits had to be cancelled. We would have liked to have spoken to more people.

Carrying out the face to face engagement work was a very interesting, and informative experience. I met a lot of people who were very willing to talk openly about their personal experiences. I learnt a lot about the difficulties that young people face in the community. Every single person who I spoke to wanted to provide their feedback and were all very supportive of this project. Some of the conversations that I had with young people were quite raw, and emotional. Many of the young people felt understandably frustrated. I found that Future Roots worked very well with regards to carrying out the interviews. The young people who I spoke to there were very relaxed in an environment that they clearly feel safe in.

Lucy Cribb, Healthwatch Dorset Engagement Officer

Why not get involved?



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enquiries@healthwatchdorset.co.uk



0300 111 0102



The Bridge, Chaseside, Bournemouth, BH7 7BX



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