



**WIRRAL  
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# **Children and Young People's Local Voice**

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**Wirral Children and Young  
People's Department and  
Wirral Intelligence Service**

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**June 2018**

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## Children and Young People's Local Voice

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### Background to JSNA – Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

#### **What is a JSNA?**

A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, better known as a JSNA, is intended to be a systematic review of the health and wellbeing needs of the local population, informing local priorities, policies and strategies that in turn inform local commissioning priorities that will improve health and wellbeing outcomes and reduce inequalities throughout the Borough.

#### **Who is involved?**

Information from Council, NHS and other partners is collected and collated to inform the JSNA and this reflects the important role that all organisations and sectors have (statutory, voluntary, community and faith) in improving the health and wellbeing of Wirral's residents.

#### **About this document**

This JSNA section looks to contain the most relevant information on the topic and provides an overview of those related key aspects

#### **How can you help?**

If you have ideas or any suggestions about these issues or topics then please email us at [wirralintelligenceservice@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:wirralintelligenceservice@wirral.gov.uk) or go to <https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/>

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## Content overview

<b>Abstract</b>	<p>This is a summary of those opportunities and instances that Wirral's Children and Young People's Department and key partners have sought the views of those accessing the services provided, involving them, and seeking to understand and incorporate their views into the wider decision-making process.</p> <p>There numerous examples of how this conversation has been created and a description of some of the processes with a view to including more as they are created and developed.</p> <p>This document provides some insight into those issues that children and young people find most important to them</p>
<b>Intended or potential audience</b> <b>Links with other topic areas</b>	<p><b>Internal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wirral Children's Board</li><li>• Wirral Children and Young People - Senior Leadership Team</li><li>• Wirral Children and Young People Children's Joint Commissioning Group</li><li>• Children and Young People Department workforce</li></ul> <p><b>External</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Future in Mind Steering Group</li><li>• Wirral Partnership</li><li>• Wider Children's workforce across Wirral</li></ul>

# Wirral JSNA: Children, Young People and Families: Local Voice

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## What do we know?

## Why is this important?

### Introduction

Children's participation is more than just asking them for their ideas and views. It's about listening to them, taking them seriously and turning their ideas and suggestions into reality. It is also about providing them with the ability to influence some of the things that affect them and at the same time helping adults understand children's issues through their lens. The literature suggests that the accounts and lived experiences of children and young people regarding their world and how they experience it can contribute significantly and meaningfully to new knowledge and in doing so can enhance services that are provided to children

Participation is important for children because it gives them an opportunity to have a say about issues and decisions that affect them. As a result services created for children will better reflect their needs. The involvement of children, as part of the community and users of services, can make sure agencies and organisations are relevant to them. Their participation ensures what is provided is what is needed, and children are more likely to support the outcome if they have been involved in developing it.

## Wirral approach

Wirral has a strong record of involving children and young people in developing service delivery and in local democratic and community processes. The overarching feature of the local approach to the involvement, engagement and participation of children and young people locally are The Five Charter Values outlined below:

### The Five Charter Values

#### **We will ensure that we have positive attitudes to children and young people.**

##### Priorities

- We promote positive attitudes which enhance our work and allow more equality
- Young people participate in our services

#### **We will ensure that we are accessible to children and young people**

##### Priorities

- Young people will be safe
- We are a welcoming organisation

#### **We will ensure that we have appropriate resources to support children and young people.**

##### Priorities

- Young people are part of our resource planning and have an influence on our budgets
- We are a responsible employer

#### **We will ensure that our information will support children and young people**

##### Priorities

- Our information is young people specific and available to them
- Our information is influenced by young people

## **We will ensure that we have the skills to enable children and young people's participation and to support them to develop skills to participate.**

### Priorities

- We provide opportunities for young people to develop their skills
- We provide opportunities for our staff to develop their skills

These principles should be considered in all involvement, engagement and participation of children and young people and form a strong framework from which to develop strong communication relationships that in turn inform our current and future service provision and commissioning.

For further details please contact Lindsay Davidson at [lindsaydavidson@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:lindsaydavidson@wirral.gov.uk)

## **How we involve and engage children and young people across Wirral**

### **Wirral's Engagement and Participation framework**

#### ***A local approach to involve children and young people through an engagement and participation framework***

In order to continue to ensure that young people are able to engage and fully participate in decision making and that services and organisations routinely involve young people an Engagement and Participation Framework has been developed.

The Framework comprises of three main elements, namely:

- *Youth Engagement Strategic Champions* - A virtual team of key elected members and chief officers across the private and public sectors and the voluntary, community and faith sector.
- *Youth Engagement Reference Group* – a reference group of officers who are have been trained in engaging young people and who can be brought together quickly to respond to need, co-ordinate children and young people's participation and engagement activities.
- *Youth Voice Group* – an overarching young people's group, with close links to ongoing work with Children Looked After (CLA), including the Children in Care Council.

#### **Link to full framework**

[Wirral Young People's Engagement and Participation Framework 2014](#)

### **Why a framework?**

It is important to ensure that children and young people's voices are heard as:

- Young people have a right to positively contribute as decision makers and services and organisations have a responsibility to ensure they are given the opportunity
- We have an aspiration to make a positive difference to the lives and experiences of Wirral's young people through enabling them to be true partners in democratic processes
- To build young people's capacity for involvement in the future and ensure they are recognised (and recognise themselves) as valued members of the wider community
- To enable young people to have a range of enjoyable, accessible and relevant opportunities for their positive engagement in service design and delivery and Wirral's community and democratic processes
- To positively promote young people and their achievements to counteract negative societal stereotypes and misconceptions regarding young people

- To enable harder to reach young people to have a voice in service provision and their local community and democratic processes

There are a number of regular events / projects that take place in Wirral which capture children and young people's voices, these are detailed below.

## What is this telling us?

### Local Voice from Wirral Children and Young People

The following section describes the involvement, engagement, consultation and participation with children and young people from across Wirral. The section starts with those areas of work related to the Participation and Engagement of those in corporate care. It goes on to describe where other examples of active consultation have been undertaken and then used to inform service provision and future commissioning

#### Local Voice: The Participation and Engagement Service

The Participation and Engagement Service, that was (Previously known as the Inclusion Service) aims to:

- Ensure children looked after and young people have a voice in decisions made about them
- Represent children and young people's views locally, regionally and nationally
- Develop links for children looked after and young people to contribute towards the development of the Children and Young People's Department
- Ensure that services for them are relevant to their needs as a diverse group
- Develop projects locally, regionally and nationally
- Ensure children looked after and care leavers are consulted around service delivery, and are involved in the recruitment, selection and training of social care staff
- Support the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Council to effectively monitor service delivery in areas of social care that affect them
- Create opportunities for young people in care and leaving care to participate in positive activities, and promote their achievements

#### Key Areas of work for the Participation and Engagement Service

##### *Children in Care Council (CICC) / Care Leavers Council (CLC)*

The Participation and Engagement Service conduct monthly / fortnightly meetings and support in developing agendas. The CICC and CLC engage in various projects, consultations and activities and are supported in having a voice when contributing to the development of the CYPD and the improvement of service delivery.

The CICC/CLC offers children and young people the chance to get their voices heard, allowing them to take part in things they would never have had the chance to do before. It gives children skills that set them up for life as well as giving them the knowledge of all their rights and what they are entitled to.

Creating opportunities for working in partnership with internal and external professionals is achieved at CICC/CLC meetings and other methods such as:

- Focus groups
- Consultations
- Forums
- Programmes

Examples include:

- Restructure Feedback  
<http://www.therightsideofcare.com/news/2016/05/19/cicc-survey>
- The Health Passport  
<http://www.therightsideofcare.com/news/2016/12/13/health-passport>
- Priorities for 2017  
<http://www.therightsideofcare.com/news/2016/12/21/quick-survey-and-merry-christmas>
- Children's Commissioner, Help at Hand Advice Service  
<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/DocumentsHelp-at-Hand-Information-Pack-PPP-05.07.2017.pptx>
- Corporate Parenting Strategy  
<http://www.therightsideofcare.com/news/2016/05/05/we-need-your-views>
- The Care leavers Association and Three Circles Fostering survey  
<http://www.therightsideofcare.com/news/2016/10/17/lgbt-survey>
- The Princes Trust  
<http://www.therightsideofcare.com/news/2016/11/03/care-leavers-questionnaire>

Feedback is provided when possible:

- <http://www.therightsideofcare.com/news/2016/07/13/survey-results>
- <http://www.therightsideofcare.com/news/2016/07/13/website-feedback-competition-results>
- <http://www.therightsideofcare.com/news/2017/03/14/survey-results>

Children looked after and care leavers are informed about projects that have been identified locally, regionally and nationally and are encouraged to participate. Most recently Katie Hatton, one of our Care Leavers was involved in the Princes Trust 'Young Researchers' project.

### ***Recruitment and Selection***

Children looked after and care leavers are involved in the recruitment and selection of social care staff at all levels and are also called upon externally i.e. Step Up (Liverpool John Moores University) for recruitment purposes. A variety of models for recruitment and selection purposes i.e. group, 1-2-1 etc. are offered and externally, children and young people have been invited to feedback sessions and the decision making of further recruitment processes

### ***Activities and Achievements***

*Children Looked After Awards:*

The event is growing every year and celebrates the accomplishments of children looked after and care leavers on Wirral. Each achievement is special, and every young person nominated receives an award to celebrate theirs.

### *Listen to Me Awards:*

2017 hosts the fifth annual awards ceremony to celebrate adults in Wirral who listen to looked after children and care leavers and the event has grown rapidly since its conception – receiving a record 84 nominations from local children and young people this year, compared to 10 nominations in 2011.

### **Training**

*Ongoing training for young people includes Recruitment and Selection, Young Inspectors and Team Building.*

Children looked after and care leavers are involved in the training of social care staff and support the Fostering Team. They assist with various foster carers training i.e. Drop-ins, Connected Carers and Life Skills and a CLC member now also sits on the fostering panel.

The CICC/CLC hold annual conferences and work alongside social care professionals to make sure that young people's voices are heard. Organised by the Children in Care and Care Leavers Councils (with the support of the Participation and Engagement Service), professionals are invited to the event which aims to encourage positive relationships between social workers and young people, talking together about how to offer the best service to children looked after and care leavers on Wirral.

### **The Right Side of Care**

This is a dedicated website for children looked after on Wirral. RSOC information packs are also distributed to all children and young people when they become looked after

## **Other examples of active consultation: inform service provision and future commissioning**

### **Local Voice: Youth Parliament – November 2016**

The Youth Parliament is an annual event that has run for fourteen years. Originally the Youth Voice Conference and Youth Parliament were run as a combined event as part of local democracy week, however for the past four years the Parliament has become a separate event. The events take place a month apart and young people are encouraged to take forward issues raised from the Youth Voice Conference which is organised by the Youth Voice Group.

The Youth Parliament is a permanent item on the annual cycle of meetings and is a called full council meeting chaired by the Mayor and minutes of the meeting are posted on the council website. In 2016 for the first time, members of the Youth Voice met with the Mayor prior to the conference to decide on the final motions and agree on the format of the Youth Parliament. 48 young people attended the Young Parliament from 6 schools, 2 youth service groups and 1 group from the National Citizenship Service. 41 elected members attended.

The aims of the annual Youth Parliament are:

- To provide opportunities for young people to develop debating skills
- To provide young people with the opportunity to debate with Councillors and peers about issues important to them
- To help young people understand local democratic processes

## **Headlines from discussion**

The main issues identified for young people were access to counselling service, transitional support for mental health issues post 18 years, access to support for young people with disabilities and service for transgender young people

## **Approach**

The Parliament took place at Wallasey Town Hall and every Secondary school, partner organisations and Youth Service groups was invited to attend and sent a briefing pack for with instructions and advice on the debating process and how to put a motion forward for debate. As in previous years, elected members were invited to join young people for refreshments before the event to introduce themselves and help to break down barriers towards an open debate.

Some schools and youth groups attended the Parliament without putting a motion forward and other groups submitted a motion for debate as part of the recruitment process. This year, the Youth Voice Group put forward two motions which were formulated from issues raised at the Youth Voice Conference on mental health. Upton High School and the newly formed Youth SEND Voice Group for young people with disabilities also submitted motions.

The method of showing short films on the themes being discussed was also new to the Youth Parliament in 2016. This had been a method used as part of the format for the debate held at the Youth Voice Conference and feedback received from participants was extremely positive.

Therefore, at the Youth Parliament, a film about mental health was shown at the beginning of the debate to build a common understanding around the issue. Another film was shown to begin the transgender debate called 'My Gender Transition from female to male' to help raise awareness around the issue.

## **Key areas discussed**

### **Motions debated**

The six motions proposed by schools/groups and debated were:

1. Should Class A drug use be de-criminalised?
2. Should trigger warnings be used in universities?
3. There is a need for a mental health counselling service outside of schools hours and in areas where young people can access safely, confidentially and conveniently.
4. There is a need for a transitional support service for young people affected by mental health as when they reach 19yrs the referral process is flawed and young people can be lost to services.
5. Young people with disabilities need access to the same support as other young people. This should be provided without any prejudice, judgement or assumption that their mental health is poor because of their disability.
6. The process of providing hormone replacement therapy for transgender young people should be earlier.

The debates were timed to last for 20 minutes and the council committee officers counted the votes and minutes were taken. The process for the debate is that the proposer and opposer of the motions speak for up to four minutes and the seconder has two minutes to formally second the motion.

## *What young people told us*

The following are key points raised by young people within each debate:

1. Should trigger warnings be used in universities?
  - It's impossible to cover all potential triggers.
  - If students are genuinely disturbed by materials used they will speak with their teachers.

The proposal was put and carried 21: 9

2. Counselling services for young people need to be provided outside of schools hours and in areas where young people can access safely, confidentially and conveniently.
  - It's easier to see someone outside of school and keep on top of work in school time.
  - Waiting for CAMHS can be far too long.
  - Anxiety levels in school can make it hard to access any support.
  - Concerns were raised about confidentiality in school in relation to accessing counselling and support.

The proposal was put and carried 34:2

3. The process of providing hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for Transgender people should be earlier.
  - Isn't it better to educate children not to bully people who are different rather than resort to such radical treatment?
  - Your body is going to change as you grow up, so why not grow into the body that you want to be in?
  - The word is choice; it's a word that is part of wider debate. It is about recognising the rights of all people.
  - Identity is a feeling, it's not a choice. It's a feeling you should be able to make decisions on your own life.

The proposal was put and carried 29:5

4. Transitional support services need to be provided for young people affected by mental health. When reaching the age of 19yrs the referral process into adult mental health services is flawed and young people can be lost to services and put at greater risk.
  - There needs to be a support service from CAMHS into AMHS as you have built trust with the CAMHS workers.
  - As young person you have to repeat all that information again and again which can raise the issues again, so if there was a transitional service it would help with this
  - There needs to be an individually based service - if the person is not ready for AMHS then they are not ready. This is an issue, all we need to do is talk to young people as really is their choice

The proposal was put and carried 36:0

5. Young people with disabilities need access to the same mental health support services as other young people. This should be provided without prejudice, judgement or assumption that their mental health is poor because of their disability.
  - We need to treat mental health services differently to physical illness.
  - The Equality Act 2010 says everyone should be treated the same, disabled or not.
  - Some disabilities are hidden, so this is an issue, people who have visible disabilities do get targeted which affects their mental health

- How people treat my family affects my mental health when people are throwing looks and bullying. How far does equality go, I need the right to have a mental health service. We should be looking at all our people are treated. Making us fit into boxes and categories, it won't work as no one fits in a box or a category, we are not the same.

The proposal was put and carried 36: 0

#### 6. Should Class A drugs be decriminalised?

- It's better to address the root cause of why people are taking drugs.
- We would advocate clean drugs and be offering counselling. In decriminalising it, we would get rid of the social crime around drug use.
- If NHS could monitor the process of drug taking then we could work to reduce people's intake.
- We're talking mental health and drug addiction is a form of mental health. Helping them through this issue is what we need to do and give them support in regards to this.
- Norway decriminalised drugs and has the lowest drug overdose and drug crime rate in Europe

The proposal was put and lost 12:27

#### **Links to full report**

[Youth Parliament 2016 report](#)

### **Local Voice: Youth Voice Conference – October 2016**

The Youth Voice Conference is an annual Wirral event which has been held for some 14 years, it is planned, delivered and evaluated by young people from the Youth Voice Group in partnership with relevant other youth groups and partners across the borough.

The 2016 conference focused on mental health and aimed to provide young people with the opportunity to, explore current issues affecting the lives of young people namely of mental health; improve their understanding of issues around mental health and question council officers, Councillors and officers from partner organisations on policy matters and to influence service provision related to the young people's mental health.

#### **Headlines**

The main issues for young people included greater provision of counselling services and more funding for mental health services; training and awareness raising for professionals regarding mental health and training for pupils to enable peer support; mental health awareness raising sessions to be undertaken in schools and youth units, and this to include gender and sexuality; school curriculum causing stress for pupils and teachers.

#### **Approach**

The conference took place at Wallasey Town Hall in October 2016 with every secondary school in Wirral being invited to bring groups of young people to the event. Young people from youth provision facilitated by local partners, agencies, local training providers and Youth Support Service projects were also invited to attend. Invitations and conference information packs for teachers, youth workers and young people were distributed extensively to schools, statutory and voluntary organisations. 82 young people attended the event from 10 secondary schools and 2 youth groups.

## **Key areas discussed**

Young people attending the conference all took part in a workshop called 'What is mental health?' Young people also had a choice of attending other workshops, dealing with loss & change; myths and stigmas and changing attitudes.

There was a market stall element to the event provided during the lunch and break times with information stalls from organisations such as Barnardos, Brook, and Health Services in Schools, CAHMS, The Open Door and CYD. The main part of the event was a debate in the Council Chamber. Five themes were debated using motions from schools, New Horizons and the Youth Voice Group as the stimulus. Strategic managers were seated around the table in the centre of the chamber and young people were seated in the areas usually occupied by Councillors. Each debate was introduced by using a short film about the theme, with the aim of helping build a common understanding on the issue

## **What Young People told us**

- Counselling services to be provided in every school and youth club/hub.
- Professionals need to have more understanding and knowledge of mental health and the issues that surround it.
- Teachers and Youth Workers should be trained to deal with panic attacks and other mental health issues.
- Training needed for pupils to help and support other pupils if they do not want to go to a teacher for support.
- Mental health should be discussed more in schools and youth units so that more awareness can be raised about this subject and to help 'normalise' the subject.
- More awareness required around gender and sexuality in relation to mental health is needed.
- Better advertising in schools so pupils know who to go to for help and support.
- More funding needed for mental health support and facilities in schools and clubs.
- Professionals need to visit schools and clubs to find out what works best to help those with mental health difficulties and to inform better service delivery.
- What support can the police give?
- How can young people feel safer on the streets when struggling with mental health?
- The curriculum is putting too much pressure on children and teachers alike and causing stress – what can be done about this?
- A conference/event looking at engagement forums existing from across Wirral is needed to bring young people and professionals together to share good practice and build better links and engagement.

## **Quotes from event**

What we learnt

- *'What help is available for people young people suffering with mental health and more of an insight into how common mental health is*
- *'I learnt that there is more to loss than death'*
- *'learnt about stress and how mental health is portrayed in the media'*
- *'That mental health is extremely common and it is nothing to be ashamed of'*
- *'How to deal with change'*
- *'The stigmas and stereotypes of mental health'*
- *'You are not alone'*

What have you gained from taking part in today?

- *'Confidence, a voice and taking part'*
- *'A better idea of where to go if I want to talk to someone'*
- *'I have developed speaking/debating my point and taking part in the great debate'*
- *'I have a greater understanding about mental health'*
- *'I have gained ways to raise awareness of mental illness to share when I get back to school'*
- *'Mindfulness'*

### **Follow-up**

Recommendations from the Youth Voice Conference have been taken to the Future in Minds Steering Group to ensure that key partner consideration and response.

### **What next**

The Youth Voice Group is planning the 2017 Youth Voice Conference which will take place in October 2017. The theme for this event will be centred on educational issues.

### **Links to full report**

[Youth Voice Conference Report \(November 2016\)](#)

## **Local Voice: SEND Youth Voice Group – October 2016**

Creative Youth Development (CYD) was commissioned by Community Action for Wirral to set up the SEND Youth Voice Group with the aim of influencing the design and delivery of the Local Offer website and the commissioning of services, support and advice available for children in Wirral if they have special educational needs or a disability. The group was commissioned for six months

### **Approach**

CYD facilitates the Youth Voice Group which acts as an overarching mechanism for young people's engagement and offers young people an opportunity to build skills in debating, citizenship, political education, peer education training and conference planning. CYD also offers a range of inclusive and specific projects for young people with disabilities based at Pilgrim Street Arts Centre. It was therefore agreed to organise a launch event at Pilgrim Street facilitated by the Youth Voice Group and Peer Educators from CYD involved in this area of work.

A member of the Youth Voice Group who is visually impaired agreed to chair the launch meeting which was well attended by young people with disabilities, their families and professionals. Based on decisions made at the launch, the SEND Youth Voice Group now meets on a monthly basis at Pilgrim Street. The young people and children use performing arts as a tool to way to understand issues that they want to raise. The adults have a separate meeting and chaired by the young person from the Youth Voice Group who is tasked to ensure that the young people and children's needs are kept paramount in their discussions.

### **Key areas discussed**

- Access to services
- Support from partners
- Unhelpful services
- Nobody listening

### ***What the young people told us***

The group have fed back that local offer website needs to have a daily timetable of activities for children and young people with disabilities. They felt it was crucial that organisations delivering their services meet current safeguarding protocols and have relevant training in place for working with children and young people with disabilities. They felt this was not always in place.

The group facilitated the launch of the Local Offer in October 2016 and created a film about their needs and opinions which was shown at the event. The group has also taken part in and given their opinions in a commissioning process with the Commissioning and Contracts Officer for prospective providers of Short Breaks activities.

### ***What next***

The group is now planning an event which brings together service providers, practitioners, council officers and businesses to explore what can be done to improve the lives of children and young people with disabilities in Wirral. Representatives from the group are also involved in the Youth Reference Group working alongside the Ofsted Improvement Board to ensure that children and young people's views are heard and acted upon within the improvement action plan.

### ***Links to full report***

[SEND Youth Workshop held at Pilgrim Street Arts Centre](#) (October 2016)

## **Local Voice: Young People's Reference Group**

This group provides a formal structure for the Children and Young People's Department (CYPD) to engage with children and young people regarding the department's improvement journey following the 2016 Ofsted inspection

### ***Approach***

The role of the Young People's Reference Group is to act as a point of contact for the improvement board to enable children and young people to be consulted throughout the improvement journey and to ensure that their views, wishes and feeling are taken in to consideration. A mix and range of interested young people from other participation groups (such as the Children in Care Council, Youth Voice Group, Care Leaver's Council, The Hive, SEND Youth Voice, and schools are involved in the group.

### ***Key areas for young people***

The group has been meeting since November 2016 and has identified a number of priority areas and an associated action plan. To date they have:

- Developed a video on leadership and resilience within CYPD officer training.
- Designed a survey which was sent out to children and young people in schools etc. to ascertain their views about being a safe.
- Met with members of the Improvement Board, to update them on their progress and to talk about their major issues.
- Trained to become young inspectors so they can inspect elements of CYPD post Ofsted improvements.

### ***Links to full report***

[Young People's Reference Group Slide set](#)

## Local Voice: Youth Voice Conference - October 2017

The Youth Voice Conference is an annual Wirral event which has been held for some 15 years, it is planned, delivered and evaluated by young people from the Youth Voice Group in partnership with relevant partner organisations and services across the borough.

The 2017 conference focused on mental health in education and aimed to provide young people with the opportunity to explore this issue; improve their understanding around mental health and question council officers, Councillors and officers from partner organisations on policy matters and to influence service provision related to the young people's mental health in education.

### *Headlines*

The main issues for young people included more time in the curriculum to discuss things like mental health and well-being from a whole range of issues beyond depression and anxiety. Young people also expressed the need for less testing and consequently less exam stress. Young people also described how they felt a greater value is placed on academic achievement and there was also a need to celebrate success in other skills and talents outside of Maths and English. The need for the curriculum to be more relevant to a technological life of the future was also a key message.

### *Approach*

The conference took place at Wallasey Town Hall in October 2017 with every secondary school in Wirral being invited to bring groups of young people to the event. Young people from youth provision facilitated by local partners, agencies, local training providers and Youth Support Service projects were also invited to attend. Invitations and conference information packs for teachers, youth workers and young people were distributed extensively to schools, statutory and voluntary organisations.

106 young people attended from 11 schools 2 projects which represents an increase of 23% on the 2016 Youth Voice Conference attendance.

The Peer Educators from Creative Youth Development (CYD) and the Youth Voice Group played a key role in the design and delivery of the conference and decided on a format for the day based on feedback from previous conferences by young people, professionals and their own experience. As in previous years, the day was punctuated with performances by young people CYD exploring the theme as previously this method had received extremely positive feedback.

It is now the custom at each conference for service leads and commissioners to respond to points raised by delegates at the previous conference. This year a film was made by CYD with young people and service leads. The following 13 points were responded to by service leads first on paper and then by being interviewed by young people for the film which was shown to launch the event.

1. More time and resources should be dedicated to educating school students about mental illness and on advising teachers about how to approach students with mental health issues. Whilst some advice is offered about anxiety and stress, very little is offered concerning issues such as depression.

2. Professionals need to have more understanding and knowledge of mental health and the issues that surround it. And Teachers and Youth Workers should be trained to deal with panic attacks and other mental health issues.
3. Training needed for pupils to help and support other pupils if they do not want to go to a teacher for support.
4. More awareness around gender and sexuality in relation to mental health is needed.
5. School and the council should provide a wider range of clubs and activities (apart from sport) that would help young people and their well-being.
6. It should be compulsory that mental health is included in SRE lessons in school and they should be LGBT inclusive.
7. Counselling services to be provided in every school and youth club/hub.
8. Better advertising in schools so pupils know who to go to for help and support.
9. The curriculum is putting too much pressure on children and teachers alike and causing stress – what can be done about this?
10. How can young people feel safer on the streets when struggling with mental health?
11. Counselling Services for young people need to be provided outside of school hours where young people can access safely, confidentially and conveniently.
12. Transitional support services need to be provided for young people affected by mental health. When reaching the age of 19 years the referral process into adult mental health services is flawed and young people can be lost to services and be put at greater risk.
13. Young people with disabilities need access to the same mental health support services as other young people. This should be provided without prejudice, judgement or assumption that their mental health is poor because of their disability.

Following on from the success of last year, the entire afternoon was dedicated to a debate in the Conference Chamber and was based on pre-submitted motions from schools and youth groups.

### **Workshops**

The first workshop of the day was delivered by the members of the Youth Voice Group in partnership with CAHMS peer educators. This was an introduction to the peer led first aid kit that CAHMS are currently rolling out in schools. The second part of the morning was given over to three workshop options:

1. Competition. Looking at the positive and negative impacts of competition in education.
2. Environment. Creating the best learning environments for young people to flourish.
3. Self-help. Looking at practical tools and methods for positive mental well-being in school/education.

Attendees were split into groups of around ten participants in each group.

## **Performances**

Inclusion Dance (ID) from CYD devised an interactive performance piece which promoting a greater understand of mental health and the statistics linked to it. The piece was previewed and approved by CAHMS before the conference event.

## **Market stalls**

There was a market stall element to the event during the lunch and break times with information stalls from organisations such as Teenwirral, Brook, Action For Young Children, Open Door, Barnardos Young Carers and the Cheshire and Wirral Partnership mental health team.

## ***What was discussed and what young people told us:***

A part of the recruitment process, schools and youth groups were asked to submit motions for the debate which took place in the afternoon in the Council Chamber. The debate was chaired by two members of the Youth Voice Group and each school or youth group presented their motion and this was then opened up for discussion. This was also attended by Service Leads who were also invited to comment on the relevant issues. The following themes were discussed:

### **Compulsory mental health days in schools**

A proposal that a compulsory mental health day should be delivered by trained professionals in schools once a term was proposed by Birkenhead 6<sup>th</sup> Form. The discussion focussed on how education on mental health in schools is either inadequate or non-existent and if it exists at all, only focuses on depression and anxiety rather than other illnesses like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and OCD. The motion was carried.

### **Specialist support for young men**

Birkenhead 6<sup>th</sup> Form also proposed that schools should implement strategies that make it easier for male students to access counselling, for example, by having a male counsellor on-site. This debate looked at the fact that young men are more likely to commit suicide than young women. The motion was carried.

### **The school environment**

The Wirral Youth Voice Group asked how schools are going to ensure that their classrooms are suitable and cater for pupils needs This debate looked at recent studies show that classroom environment affects learning and progress by 25%. The motion was carried.

### **The effect of social media on young people's mental well-being**

Birkenhead Park School raised the question about how schools and colleges can educate young people on how to deal with the effect that social media can have on the mental health of young people. The motion was carried.

### **Mindfulness**

Birkenhead 6<sup>th</sup> Form College proposed that a mindfulness programme such as 'B-PART' should be rolled out to schools and colleges on the Wirral to teach young people strategies for dealing with stress and anxiety and to enable them to incorporate mindfulness into their everyday life. The motion was carried.

## **Long-term investment in young people's mental health**

Oldershaw Academy asked the house to consider whether it might seem that a degree of pressure is being placed on educational establishments in the past few years, to create more awareness and develop working groups surrounding the ever growing mental health issue within society. The house discussed whether this approach is a 'quick fix' situation or are there any long-term plans and investments being made for the future. The motion was carried.

## **Recognising early symptoms**

West Kirby Grammar tabled the motion that mental health education as well as 'mental health first aid' should be taught in schools at an early stage. They proposed that early symptoms of mental health should be taught to young adults so they can recognise it in others or even themselves. The young people discussed whether mental health shouldn't be an invisible problem and therefore if it is taught and discussed more it will become easier to notice and understand. The motion was carried.

## **Quotes from event:**

### **What did you learn in your workshops?**

*'Different methods - good or bad - to help us deal with mental health'*

*'Stereotypes and how we view people'*

*'The negative effects of competition – should be more supportive'*

*'What peer education is and what it does'*

*'What mental health is, different types and ways for people to manage it'*

*'What is success, our aspirations, strengths and weaknesses?'*

*'That being stereotyped makes you act up to the stereotype'*

*'To have more confidence in myself'*

*'I learnt what CAMHS is'*

*'It is important to listen to other people's views and just how much support is available to young people and support'*

*'How to deal with stress in a positive way and how to resolve certain scenarios'*

*'The importance of self-help strategies in place to constantly replace stresses'*

*'I learnt that I must speak to people when I'm stressed out and anxious'*

*'About the mental health first aid kit – as I had heard of it before and also ways that we can improve on the learning environment in schools'*

*'Environment has a bigger effect on work that I previously thought'*

*'More work needs to be done to raise awareness in schools about what services are on offer in regards to ill mental health'*

### **What have you learned from taking part today?**

*'A new view on mental health'*

*'Confidence, that there is always someone to go to'*

*'A better understanding of mental health'*

*'A better insight into mental health in young adults'*

*'To be able to speak out about how I feel'*

*'I really gained confidence in speaking in groups and in the debate'*

*'To see myself as a more positive person'*

*'More knowledge on information about mental health'*

*'A better understanding regarding what the council is doing to improve mental health in schools'*

*'Leadership skills'*

*'Having a say in our education and getting an idea of how the system works'*

*'I have learnt I have a voice and that we can speak up for what is right'*

*'How negatives can be turned to positives'*

*'Confidence to lead a workshop, hearing people's ideas and views on stereotypes'*

*'How to approach mental health and what to do if the problem arises'*

*'I have gained more ways to put my point across from hearing others views'*

*'Weaknesses can become strengths'*

*'Better understanding of what the council are doing in regards to mental health'*

### **Follow-up**

Recommendations from the Youth Voice Conference have been taken to the 'Future in Minds' Steering Group to ensure that key partner consideration and response.

### **What next**

The Youth Voice Group is currently planning the 2018 Youth Voice Conference which will take place in November 2018. The theme for this event will be centred on ***what it is like for young people living in Wirral***. The intention is to run 10 peer led consultative workshops with targeted groups such as LBGTQ, SEND, schools, young people in and leaving care and a range of other youth projects on this theme. From this process the Youth Voice Group will prioritise three themes to be explored at the Youth Conference and Youth Parliament. The results of the national 'Make Your Mark' ballot facilitated by the members of the Youth Parliament for Wirral, will also influence the content of these events.

### **[Links to full report](#)**

**[Youth Voice Conference Report \(October 2017\)](#)**

## **Local Voice: Youth Parliament – November 2017**

### **Headlines from discussion**

The main issues identified for young people were the improvement of services for young people through their involvement in decision making processes, the pressures put on the mental health of pupils and students through changes in the GCSE formats and the structure of the British educational system, the glass ceiling placed on young people with disabilities and the need for strategies like mindfulness and other self-help methods to be provided in schools to help deal with stress and anxiety.

### **Approach**

The Parliament took place at Wallasey Town Hall and every Secondary school, partner organisations and Youth Service groups were invited to attend and sent a briefing pack for with instructions and advice on the debating process and how to put a motion forward for debate. As in previous years, elected members were invited to join young people for refreshments before the event to introduce themselves and help to break down barriers towards an open debate.

50 young people attended the Young Parliament from 7 schools and 3 youth groups supported by the Youth Service. This was a slightly higher attendance than last year. 9 motions related were submitted and 6 were debated on the night.

A 7th motion was held in reserve if the time allowed but was not debated. 43 elected members attended. Some schools and youth groups attended the Parliament without putting a motion forward and other groups submitted a motion for debate as part of the recruitment process.

This year, the Youth Voice Group put forward one motion which was formulated from issues raised at the Youth Voice Conference which focused on mental health in education. Upton High School, Birkenhead Sixth Form College, West Kirby Grammar School, Woodchurch High School and the Youth SEND Voice Group for young people with disabilities also submitted motions.

### ***Key areas discussed***

Motions debated

The six motions proposed by schools/group and debated were:

**1. The aims and structure of the British educational system are bad for young people's mental health.** (Upton Hall School)

The proposal was carried 44:1 (1 abstention)

**2. We believe that having young people involved in decision making, being on committee boards which make decisions on young people's lives, is a much needed concept.** (Wirral Youth Voice Group)

The proposal was carried 48:0

**3. This House believes that a mindfulness programme such as 'Be-Part' (Positivity, Ambition, Resilience and Thoughtfulness) should be rolled out to all schools and colleges on the Wirral to teach young people strategies for dealing with stress and anxiety and to enable them to incorporate mindfulness into their everyday lives.** (Birkenhead Sixth Form College)

The proposal was carried 48:0

**4. The 'new' GCSEs are placing undue burden and stress on both pupils and teachers.** (Woodchurch High School)

The proposal was carried 42:5 (1 abstention)

**5. We are so annoyed at the glass ceiling that is in place for disabled young people. The stereotypes of disabled young people need to be changed and challenged.**

(Wirral SEND YOUTH VOICE group)

The proposal was carried 51:0 (1 abstention)

**6. Abortion Laws should be changed so that the mental health of the mother is prioritised.** (West Kirby Grammar School)

The proposal was carried 41:1 (8 abstention)

The debates were timed to last for 20 minutes and the council committee officers counted the votes and minutes were taken. The process for the debate is that the proposer and opposer of the motions speak for up to four minutes and the seconder has two minutes to formally second the motion.

### ***What young people told us***

The following are key points raised by young people within the debates:

- The British educational system places too much emphasis on academic achievement.
- Schools spend too long preparing children to pass tests rather than just teaching.
- The new GCSE format is confusing for both teachers and pupils and causes high levels of stress.
- When young people are involved in designing services they are more successful in meeting their needs and therefore more cost effective.
- Schools need to place more importance on building resilience and self- help in young people in order to improve achievement.
- The stereotypes of disabled young people need to be challenged. A disabled young person should be enabled to set their own achievement level and to be empowered rather than restricted by negative stereotypes of disability

### [Links to full report](#)

#### **Local Voice: Listen Up Group (Wirral CAMHS - Involvement Team) – December 2017**

Listen Up is the Wirral Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service [CAMHS] Involvement Team that consists of a group of young people (YP) who have accessed CAMHS services.

#### **Approach**

This is co-ordinated by CAMHS staff, part of the Cheshire & Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. Listen Up is open to YP aged 5 years to 25 years old. The belief is that YP are best placed to know about the issues that affect them and should be at the heart of developing their interventions and the services that deliver them.

The Listen Up Group aims to:

- Help improve CAMHS.
- Raise awareness of CAMHS for those who don't use the service.
- Make the service more accessible.
- Look into the way the service works so it is effective.
- Open up communication with other young people.
- Give better visibility of people involved in the services.
- Contribute to projects and specific pieces of work.
- Attend conferences with professionals to provide more impact through sharing their lived experience.
- Provide feedback from YP perspective, providing more data and evidence.

#### **Key areas discussed**

These are some personal outcomes that young people hoped to achieve from being involved in CAMHS:

- To help others.
- Learn skills and with these new skills learn how to help others.
- To share my story.
- I want to share that I've been there; I know what it feels like. There are strategies and it is important to know that there is support, someone to talk to, rather than having a leaflet and being treated as "an issue to be dealt with on a waiting list"
- I want GP's to know that young people don't need medication as a first port of call, that I want to talk to someone who will understand you, make you feel safe and treated as human being who is having trouble in that moment.
- Participate in something collaboratively.

- Be assertive and share my opinions and beliefs.
- Influence wider professional groups e.g. teachers.
- To be visible to professionals, share young people's opinions.
- To ensure services work to tackle problems while they are still young rather than missing it till 10 years later when the problems are bigger.
- To be involved in marketing, advertising young people's experience in being in CAMHS to reduce stigma.
- To give back; CAMHS did a lot for me and to help other in the same situation so young people don't get lost in the cracks.

The young people who are involved in the Listen Up Group are mostly young people who have accessed CAMHS services. There are also young people who want to get involved as they are interested in learning more about the work of CAMHS. CAMHS currently has a core group of four young people attending the group on a monthly basis with others who get involved as they can but are always looking for more.

### ***Ideas – Suggestions and Opportunities for service providers and commissioners***

The Listen Up Group are given pieces of work by the Primary Mental Health Team, CAMHS digital, Participation and Engagement projects, the access sub group and some of the suggestions for projects come from the young people themselves.

### **Re-design of the new CAMHS department at the Stein Centre**

In the last year the group has worked on the re-design of the new CAMHS department at the Stein Centre, now known as the Birch centre. This process involved young people working alongside the architect and designer in providing a valuable contribution to the layout of the clinical and waiting area in accordance with the age of the young people using the services.

The young people were given the opportunity to choose the design and décor for the interior and exterior of the building and their design ideas and vision were used by the architect to create the clinical space. The group were instrumental in the introduction of a parent/ family room being introduced to the department, from which the young people are now looking at ways of involving parents/carers in contributing to shaping services.

### **[Redesign of CAMHS Service - The Birch Centre – Slide pack](#)**

### **Review of Communication content**

The group have also reviewed the letters/ information leaflets that are sent out to parents/carers and young people, including transition letters and the Primary Mental Health Team leaflet. The language, layout, content and manner of the letters were discussed and amended to make them more user friendly and person centred.

### **Sharing understanding with Service Leads**

More recently two of the young people were invited to meet with the Chairman of CWP and the Associate Director of Nursing to talk about their roles in the Listen Up Group how they benefit from being involved and the work that they have achieved over the past year.

### **Future involvement**

- involving young people in improving the transition between CAMHS and adult services
- involving young people in staff training
- exploring how we can get parents/ carers more involved in co-production

## Local Voice: SEND Youth Voice Group – January 2018

### Approach

The SEND Youth Voice Group set up in 2016 is facilitated by members of the Youth Voice Group and meets once a month. In January 2018 the group worked with the Communications Officer for the Local Offer to facilitate a SEND Youth Voice Conference 2018 which was attended by service leads and relevant organisations such as Mencap, Open Door and the Hive.

The SEND group have also been fundamental in engagement and participation projects throughout the year including:

- The making of the 'Leadership and Resilience' film used in the 'Research in Practice' training for all managers across Children's Services.
- Being part of the consultation process for commissioning of Short Breaks.
- Involvement in Ofsted Youth Reference Group.
- Creation of a dance film called 'Glass Ceilings' used at the SEND Youth Voice Conference to raise awareness on how negative stereotypes of disability limit aspirations and achievement.

### What the young people told us:

The SEND Youth Voice Group have fed back their frustrations that their carers, parents and friends are often consulted in the first instance about their needs and decisions are made for them rather than with them. They also felt that their hopes, dreams and aspirations are limited by how parents, carers, services, organisations and employees stereotype them.

At the conference in January, the following training and support needs were identified and has formed the basis of the work focus for the group:

- Life skills
- Training on using public transport
- Job interview skills
- Confidence building in relation to being in public places
- Finding positive ways to express themselves in dealing with anger and frustration
- Support in dealing with loss and grief
- Support in building positive relationships and understanding Mate Crime
- Internet safety
- Understanding rights

### When asked what independence would like and feel like the participants at the SEND Youth Conference fed back the following:

*I would feel safe*

*I would have suitable housing*

*I would be listened to and heard*

*I would be able to travel independently*

*I would have knowledge of the support systems out in Wirral*

*I would be respected*

*I would be treated as an individual*

*I would have time to develop skills and learn how to be independent*

*I would be resilient*

*I would have choices as others do*

*I would have varied opportunities  
I would be confident and organised  
I would be able to trust myself and others  
I would have consistency in services  
I would have a variety of platforms of communication  
I would have a positive mental attitude  
I would reach my potential  
I would have paid work*

**When asked how what is needed regarding personal safety participants at the SEND youth Conference fed back the following:**

*Understanding risk taking behaviours  
Knowledge of opportunities in the area for our age range  
Outreach projects and having safe spaces  
Non-judgemental approach, yet confident to challenge me  
Travel passes  
Peer educators and Youth Workers support  
Being made aware of risks  
Person centred approach to my needs  
Knowing we can say 'no'  
Understanding Mate Crime  
Being able to understand boundaries  
Safety at home training  
Transport and pedestrian training  
Personal safety and self defence information  
Social media training  
Knowing how the police can help  
Guards on train need to be present being able to alert people to my needs.  
Asking if we actually feel safe, not just assuring and assuming  
More street lights  
Staff and adults being trained on how to communicate with us  
Easier ways to report hate crime for young people  
Easy access to help and emergency services  
Knowing when to give trust  
Recognising positive/negative risk  
Being supported at times when out in public  
Making own choices and confidence to do this  
Being able to use a mobile phone as a safety tool for contact  
General public to have awareness and to intervene if needed  
Raise confidence in the family unit regarding strategies to be safe  
Safety in nightclubs*

***What next***

The group is now planning an event which brings together service providers, practitioners, council officers and businesses to explore what can be done to improve the lives of children and young people with disabilities in Wirral.

Representatives from the group are also involved in the Youth Reference Group working alongside the Ofsted Improvement Board to ensure that children and young people's views are heard and acted on within the improvement action plan. The group will also play a vital part in the planning and facilitation of the Youth Voice Conference and Youth Parliament.

**[Link to full report](#)**

## Future Local Voice engagement, involvement and consultation

The 2018 annual Youth Parliament will take place in November 2018 at Wallasey Town Hall. Details of this, and other children and young people's local voice work, will be added to this document as a later version and published

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