

Youth Board Meeting Report

Focus on Mental Health Support Services for Young People



Who Attended?

- 13 Young People from Sutton Schools.
- Representatives from 4 organisations (CAHMS, Kooth, Off The Record, Everyone Active)
- 5 from the Volunteer Centre Sutton Team.

About Sutton Youth Board meetings

Sutton Youth Board Meetings take place on a quarterly basis and are facilitated by Volunteer Centre Sutton and Sutton's group of Young Commissioners. All young people in Sutton are welcome and invited to attend Youth Board meetings. The aim of the sessions is to explore and address the identified priority challenges facing young people of mental health, safety and inequality brought about by the cost of living crisis.

March 2024 – Meeting format:

The format of the meeting was split into two sections:

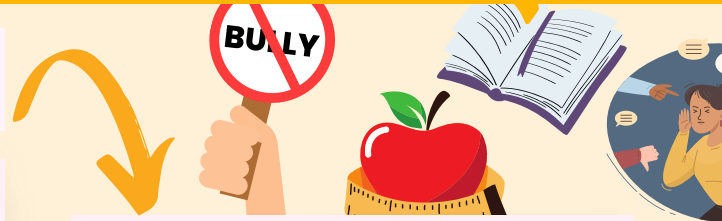
- 1 Feedback on the mental health challenges facing young people.
Each of the 4 organisations were given
- 2 7.5 minutes to introduce their service, explain how they support young people and how the service can be accessed.



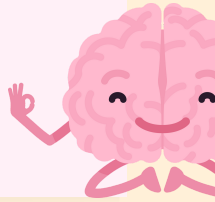
Meeting Overview

1 Setting the scene: Key mental health challenges facing young people

The Young Commissioners created a survey to find out what young people in Sutton think about mental health and the support available. The findings were shared by the young people at the beginning of the meeting. A summary of the key concerns affecting mental health experienced by young people is as follows:



- Home pressures
- Academic pressures
- Bullying and discrimination
- Eating disorders
- Peer pressure
- Toxic masculinity
- Social anxiety
- Feeling unsafe
- Cyber bullying



2 Feedback from young people on how to improve mental health support

01 Awareness of Organisations

Young people would like more support (and resources) from key organisations such as Kooth and Off the Record.

02 Promoting Support

Support that is available should more widely promoted e.g. advertising in key areas/media to target young people.

03 In School Services

More support should be provided in school. Where support does exist in the school, it should be clearer on how it can be accessed.

04 'Lower Level' Anxiety

Some students who suffer from 'lower level' mental health issues can feel excluded as there is no 'clinical' issue.

05 Current Ad Campaign

Lot of discussion around the current Dept of Education (mental health) advertising campaign. The message was 'get your child back into school and everything will be ok'. It was felt that it had the right intention but perhaps has not been delivered properly. Young people felt the issues were much more complex than that and school support is patchy or inconsistent.

06 Pastoral Support

Pastoral support and talk of "referrals" can feel overly formal and intimidating – when sometimes you just want a chat and offload. Can feel too "clinical" and people don't feel that they can say what they want to say – too stuck on procedure and the human aspect gets lost.

07 Teacher Support

Strain on teachers too and their time. Makes it difficult for students to be able to talk to teachers via informal conversations which might help problems not get bigger and nip things in the bud. Needs a "my door is always open" approach.

08 Anonymity

Anonymous chats are important as some young people don't want parents to know about issues. Young people want more info on organisations that offers this, and it should be promoted more widely. There is a lack of trust in schools concerns about what is confidential with safeguarding processes.

09 Online Safety

Young people would like better discussion about social media and internet safety as that affects mental health.



Introductions: Key Organisations Supporting Young People

The next section of the meeting featured presentations by 4 organisations who specialise in mental health support for young people. Each organisation had 7.5 minutes to present their service and how young people can access it. Each presentation was followed by a Q&A with the young people.

1

Organisation 1:

Lucy, CAHMS education and wellbeing service



- 90% of the Sutton population have some kind of diagnosable mental health condition at some point in their life.
- CAHMS specialise in early intervention – i.e. the bit before the more serious end of the scale.
- Their aim is to provide support more quickly and early in schools before things become more serious.
- CAHMS practitioners have presence in almost all schools to provide support and tackle things like low mood or anxiety.
- Children need to apply/self refer to gain support.
- CAHMS also have a preventative approach e.g. rolling out training “every conversation matters” – helping teachers to learn how to have these conversations and to be able to manage and give a helpful response and validate your feelings.
- CAHMS want to make it as simple as possible to seek support and are considering introducing a QR code to self refer etc.

Q: If I'm a student in school, where can I find a wellbeing practitioner – would I have to tell my tutor? Parents? Is it confidential?



A: It is a confidential space within schools unless there is a safeguarding concern. Students can discuss what they want to keep private.

Q: How much signposting is there within schools about being able to access a wellbeing practitioner?



A: Posters in schools are sent out by CAHMS – QR code to their Youtube channel. CAHMS also do exam stress workshops, building friendship workshops too to build awareness. Service currently covers about 14 secondary schools. More funding from next January will enable another team that will be able to cover all Sutton secondary schools.



Introductions: Key Organisations Supporting Young People

2

Organisation 2:

Cassim, Kooth, the online mental health support community



- Kooth offer online text-based counselling service
- No referrals necessary – young people simply get in touch
- Completely anonymous service
- Kooth website is a fantastic resource with loads of relevant articles on range of issues - 70% are written by young people

Q: How can you access the services of Kooth?



A: Go onto Kooth.com or scan the QR code.

All you must share is your geographical area and age. Text service means young people can express themselves more freely on text than in person. Choice between structured counselling (regular sessions e.g. 12-20 sessions) or just using Kooth like a 'buffet' – just dip in and access when you need it. Most students come in and have maybe 3 sessions just about a thing that's stressing them out and that's it. Counsellors can also signpost to all the amazing resources on the website – all written by experts – on issues like coming out, grief, LGBT identity, etc.



Q: Do you do schools outreach?



A: Yes, Kooth are very much looking to expand into many more schools and Kooth are currently visiting up to 4 schools per day to promote the services.

3

Organisation 3:

Spenser, Everyone Active, leisure facilities



- Loads of research proves that exercise releases feel good hormones that can improve our mood and increase our energy – exercise is key to feeling good!
- Spenser was a professional sportsman with huge pressures. But when he "retired" he wanted to give back and promote the benefits of exercise. He became Community Engagement Manager at Everyone Active



Introductions: Key Organisations Supporting Young People

- Spenser pointed out that being as active as possible means there are benefits throughout one's life,
- Young people should aim for 30 mins of exercise 5 days a week.
- Careers in leisure – lots of part-time and full-time jobs in leisure (and you get free use of the facilities).
- Lots of reduced cost opportunities to join gym memberships, swimming schools, athletic events, clubs (judo etc).

Q: Will leisure centres introduce more tech to attract young people into exercise e.g VR?

AA: Yes, very possibly. What else would young people want to see in leisure centres? How can we make it more interesting for young people? Combining real world exercise with VR, could be really exciting! And of course, exercise can be done anywhere.



Q: What age do you have to be to join the gym?

A: 11-15 junior sessions; then 16 up for anyone; also, youth club at the Phoenix Centre starting up again soon. Also running free of charge sessions for some sports to make sure that sport is accessible to all – Spenser is running a 12-week free football session.



4 Organisation 4:

Anya & Caroline, Off the Record, counselling

TALK TO US
OFF THE RECORD

- Confidential service (highly confidential rather than entirely confidential).
- Counselling via zoom, in person, or telephone. Also, activities such as Art Therapy.
- Young people can self-refer.
- They also provide a text based online counselling – weekly 50 min slot OR more of a long form journaling style.
- Webinars on topics like exam stress and they also run webinars for parents.
- 'First Contact' service. Connects practitioners or counsellors with young people. Young people get contacted within 24 hours of referral. Support includes 3 immediate sessions with different options - it's up to the young person how they want to proceed and what their preferences are – young person led.
- Anyone who is under 14 must have parental consent.

**Ages
11-25**

**Phone
drop-in
Mon-Sat,
3-6pm**

**Croydon,
Merton &
Sutton**



Summary

Meeting Output:

Creating a Mental Health Support signposting document

As a follow-up output from the Youth Board Meeting, the Young Commissioners (with support from Volunteer Centre Sutton) will create a signposting document. This document will list all the various organisations offering mental health support to young people in Sutton.



COMING SOON



It will include contact details and information on how the services can be accessed. This signposting document will be widely shared with schools and organisations working with young people as widely as possible. This document is to be completed by the Young Commissioners by the end of April 2024.

Meeting Summary

- The significance of addressing mental health among young people cannot be overstated.
- This report highlights some areas of confusion over available support services and access routes, compounded by varying levels of awareness among young individuals.
- Moreover, there is a clear desire for schools to take a more proactive role in sharing information about mental health services.
- Privacy concerns, particularly regarding confidentiality, remain significant barriers to seeking help. Nonetheless, tech advancements such as text counselling and online support meetings offer promising avenues for reaching and assisting young people.
- Moving forward, the creation of a comprehensive signposting document detailing available support services emerges as a practical solution to bridge the gap between young individuals and the resources essential for their mental well-being.

