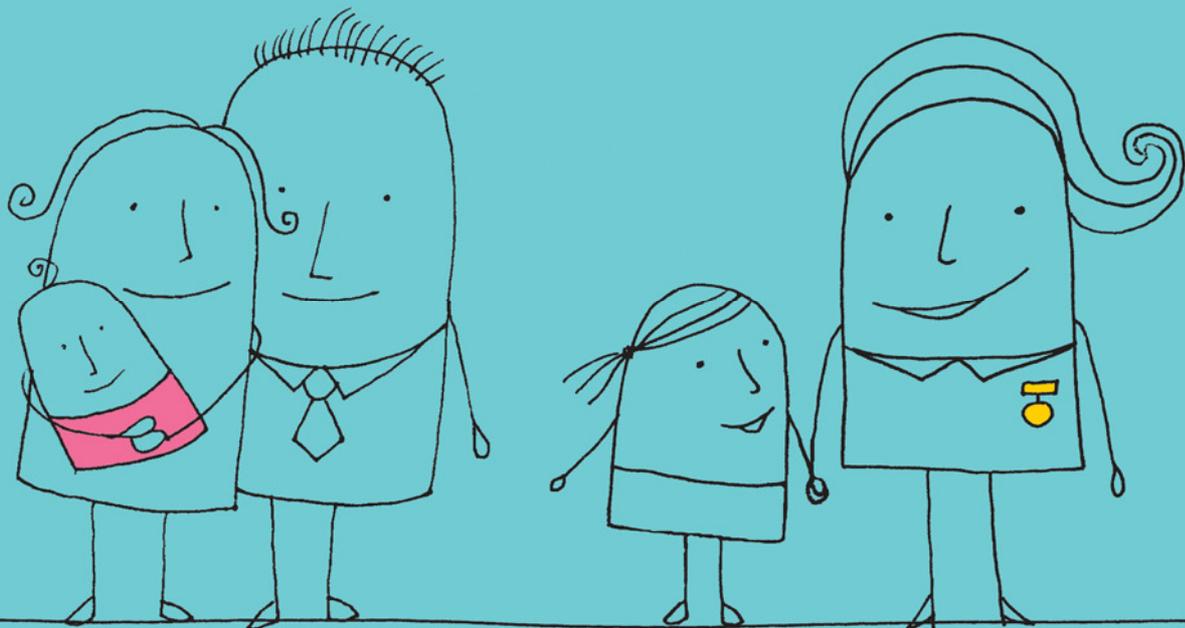


Patient and Client Council

Year 11 pupils at Ulidia Integrated College talk about mental and emotional wellbeing

14th June 2010



About the Patient and Client Council

The Patient and Client Council is an independent regional organisation which provides a **powerful independent voice** for patients, clients, carers and communities on health and social care issues.

Research report: 'The mental and emotional health of 16 year olds in Northern Ireland'

In 2009 the Patient and Client Council worked in partnership with Access Research Knowledge (ARK), to ask 16 year olds in Northern Ireland a range of questions about their mental and emotional health using the Young Life and Times (YLT) survey¹.

The findings of the 2009 YLT survey were so interesting that the Patient and Client Council decided to undertake more in-depth research about the mental and emotional health of young people in Northern Ireland. This report is called:

'The mental and emotional health of 16 year olds in Northern Ireland. Evidence from the young life and times survey'

The report was launched with the help of Year 11 pupils in Ulidia Integrated College on Monday 14th June 2010.

Presentation of findings

Members of staff from the Patient and Client Council and Dr Dirk Schubotz, ARK got together with Year 11 pupils at Ulidia Integrated College to give them an overview of the report, and explain the key findings.

Participation workshop with Year 11 pupils

Year 11 pupils then took part in a participation workshop to share their views about mental and emotional wellbeing.

¹ <http://www.ark.ac.uk/ylt/>

We asked them to think about four questions:

- (1) What can we do to improve the mental health of young People?
- (2) Do you think there is enough information for young people about mental health services?
- (3) What should young people friendly mental health services be like?
- (4) What input should young people have in shaping the design of mental health services?

About this report

This report summarises the feedback from Year 11 pupils at the participation workshop.

Question 1:

What can we do to improve the Mental Health of young People?

The responses to this question can be summarised around six themes which are listed below:

(1) Homework

Young people said they were concerned about the level of homework they had and indicated that they would welcome more assistance with it.

Being given more leeway with timescales to complete homework was suggested.

Young people also felt that teachers could explain better what they want from homework to reduce stress.

Examinations raised two issues – people felt that there should be no homework during exams and that there should be less emphasis on the importance of exams.

(2) Talk

Young people discussed the kind of support they felt they needed and came up with a range of ideas.

There was much discussion around the need for counselling services geared specifically to young people with an emphasis on privacy; two people suggested confidential clinics for young people. They also identified the need for more counsellors.

Young people also liked talks in school, but wanted more time to talk after presentations and ask questions.

Seven people felt that it would be helpful to be able to talk about what is going on at home to someone else, while others felt that it would be good to talk to friends and family to nurses or other professionals.

Young people also identified the need for more services such as ChildLine and felt that something could be set up in school to help pupils/friends deal with pressure.

Mentoring was also identified as important; one person suggested that a celebrity icon such as Wayne Rooney could show young people that it is ok to talk about problems. Young people also felt that it would be helpful if mentors/workers were of a similar age.

(3) Information

Information was also a big issue. Young people wanted more leaflets, more advertising of services available, more work done in schools and more campaigning around mental health awareness.

Mental health as a topic could be made more interesting and should be treated as a separate topic in school.

(4) Educate

Young people felt that families needed to listen, and be more open and willing to hear what the young person was saying. Teachers needed to be more understanding.

Educating family and friends was important.

(5) More activities

Young people wanted more opportunities to socialise and identified a range of activities which included sports (for boys), exercise/physical activities, sports clubs, social clubs and after schools clubs.

Shopping and getting a job were also included in this group.

(6) Building confidence

Encouraging young people to speak out and providing support to build confidence was regarded as important.

Question 2:

Do you think there is enough information about young people about mental health services?

Young people were not aware of available services. They felt that more could be done in school to ensure that young people know how to get help both in and outside school.

Opinion was split with one group feeling that there was enough information provided and another group feeling that in some ways there was enough information, particularly in school, but outside it was very difficult to get information.

Inside School

People suggested that more information sessions could be held in school and more books/leaflets handed out. It was recognised that teachers could help, but there was a fear that if they told the teacher, the teacher would then tell others, especially their family.

Outside school

Young people focused on the use of media in considering how to raise awareness of mental health issue.

TV, cinema and internet needed to be used more in order to get the message across (for example, portrayals in the soaps, trailers in the cinema, and more use of Facebook and Google networks. In general, more publicity is needed.

One person suggested a free texting network for kids.

More conventional methods were also thought to be important – posters on billboard and bus shelter and leaflets in various locations such as health centres and leisure centres.

BUT

People don't listen. Problem is that people don't reach out for help – no confidence. Need to be convinced that service is confidential.

Question 3: What should Young People- friendly Mental Health Services be like?

Young people emphasised confidentiality and being able to get help in a non-institutional setting such as a youth club where they could have tea/coffee, play snooker, use play stations or do other activities that teenagers would enjoy.

There needs to be a friendly, relaxed atmosphere and a comfortable place to be where young people would not feel they were being judged and would not feel embarrassed about talking about their problems.

Young people said that there should be more drop-in type services rather than formal interview style. If follow up appointments needed to be made then this could be arranged discreetly by the counsellor and the young person receiving the service through texting for example.

Most young people also felt that it might be easier to talk to someone near their own age and that they should see the same person every time.

Work could also be done with young people in the form of games to build confidence e.g. ice breakers and complex issues could be made more understandable through use of colour and pictures. Above all young people identified the need for support inside and outside of school.

On the negative side young people were very against formal institutions such as hospitals, stating that wherever services were

located they did not smell like a hospital. Inpatient facilities should be more like home rather than an institution.

Question 4:

What input should young people have in shaping the design of Mental health Services?

Young people were very clear that they should have input as to how mental health services aimed at their age group should be shaped.

One group emphasised that they should have an equal say along with adults in setting up these services and indeed be treated as equals.

Involvement of young people in service development needs to take place right at the beginning of the process.

Ensuring confidentiality was also identified as a big issue.

Discussion then centred on how services could be shaped. Use of media such as trailers before the main film in cinema was again mentioned as was the use of Google and Facebook.

Young people felt that they should be involved in the design of material aimed at their age group right from the beginning of the process – colourful leaflets were needed and input to website design in order to be attractive to young people and encourage them to access it. A newsletter for parents could be created as many parents are not aware of the issues for young people.

The groups also felt that there was a need for more opportunities for discussion such as the kind of workshop in which they were participating. Speaking to people of a similar age and to those who had had mental health issues and had recovered was also deemed to be important.

A number of groups felt that the use of questionnaires especially ones accessible by internet was a good way of getting people to respond and was more secure than other methods. The fact that it is perceived as more anonymous would encourage people to respond and tell the truth.

What comes to mind when you think about “Mental Health?”

At the end of the workshop young people were asked to complete a mind-map to show what they think about when they hear “mental health”...



Conclusions

Young people have definite views on how they would like mental health services to be.

They identified the need for support in and out of school and also for information.

They wanted a say (on an equal par with adults) as to how mental health services are developed.

Confidentiality was a major issue and dealing with stress, particularly of examinations is something which needs addressed give the number of times it was mentioned.



Year 11 pupils at Ulidia Integrated College discussing mental health at the participation workshop

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