YOUTH VOICE
OCT-NOV '23

Introduction

Supported by Young Harrow Foundation, during October and November six community groups have carried out research with young people to understand their needs and perceptions specifically around **Mental Health**.

It is important to note that all but one of the organisations working with the young people are not specialist mental health providers.

The group includes:
- My Yard (poverty)
- Harrow Carers (young carers)
- Wish Centre (mental health / self-harm)
- Centre for ADHD Autism Support (SEND)
- Ignite (exploitation / safety)
- Watford Cedars Hub (physical activity)

The work is to inform the work around the Children & Young People Strategy being being delivered by the Harrow Borough Based Partnership.

Who are the Young People

4 young people, ages 14-17
Ethnicity: Asian, White and Mixed Heritage
Locations by school: Whitmore / Rooks Heath / Park High

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18 young people, ages 14-23
Ethnicity: Black, Asian, White
Locations by school: Whitmore / Rooks Heath / Park High

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7 young people, ages 14-17
Ethnicity: White, Black, Mixed, Heritage
Locations by school: Nower Hill, Shaftesbury High, Sacred Heart
Language College, Vyners School

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6 young people ages 7-11
Ethnicity: White, Black, Asian
lLocation by school: Cedars Manor, Hatch End, St
Joan of Arc, St Gregories

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0 young people engaged

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3 young people ages 12-19
Ethnicity: unknown

The headlines

- School pressure and uncertainty about the future (e.g. finding work and careers) were the most common worries raised by young people.

- Most young people have family and friends they would turn to for support with mental health

- Trusted youth workers / friendly face are important to some groups of young people in terms of seeking support - particularly among young black boys

- Young people with SEND said their mental health is impacted by their condition

- Black/Asian or Mixed Heritage young people are more likely to not turn to a GP or hospital for their mental health compared to their white peers.

Worries

Of the 24 responses to the survey, with ages varying from 7-23, **'school'** and **'the future'** were the most common responses when it came to what themselves and their peers were worried or anxious about.

Safety Concerns

In a focus group with Ignite young black boys (aged 14-17) while most of them discussed worries about school, getting good grades, it is important to note that we saw specific worries from this group about their safety - specifically - **"getting jumped"** and they also spoke about the park being a "scary place".

Interview – Poverty Worries

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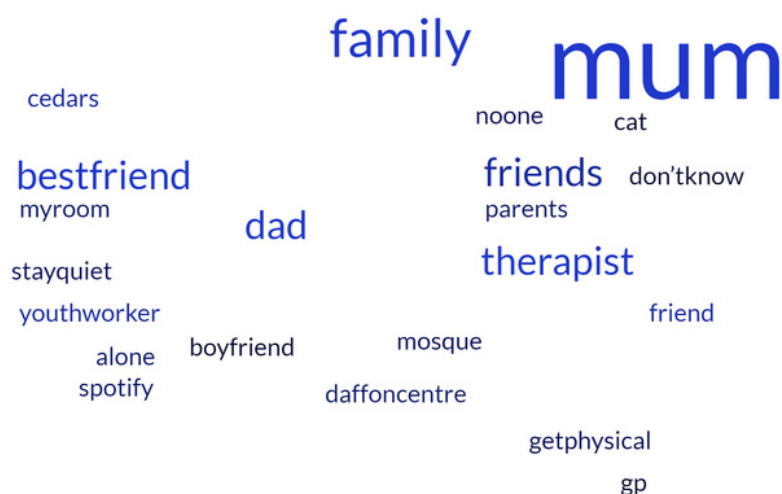**Interview with young person aged 19 years old from South Harrow (My Yard)**

I definitely think financial pressures are really bad at the moment. Sometimes my mum can't top up my little sister's school lunch money, because she has to send money back home as well and pay the rent and bills. In immigrant households there's extra pressure with sending money back to other families. My mum works for the NHS in Northwick Park hospital. She doesn't get any benefits, she's doing it all herself. Sometimes I get really sad because I feel so confined. My friends will ask me to come and spend time with them but I have no money for transport and no money for food, so often, I can't. I'm missing out on my youth, on making memories with friends. It sucks. There's a lot of temporary housing on the estate I live on. Because the young kids are so used to the conditions there, they don't know how bad it is. A lot of them are really neglected, not by their parents, but by the whole system. The whole innocence, imagination, and fun of being a kid, just isn't there in these children. A lot of them look so stressed out, like they are working 9-5 jobs! A lot of the kids on my estate don't do anything, they just hang around the park on the estate, because they can't afford to go anywhere. Sometimes I see the younger ones on the estate just hanging about with bad people and getting into crazy things. I understand it, it makes sense that would happen.

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Where you turn for support

Q. If you were feeling anxious or depressed / low mood, where would you go / who would you turn to to help you?

For the 24 young people that responded via the survey link - most said they would turn to their family or close friends if they needed support.

family mum
cedars noone cat
bestfriend friends don'tknow
myroom dad parents
stayquiet therapist
youthworker friend
alone boyfriend mosque
spotify daffoncentre
getphysical
gp

During two focus groups with Ignite young people (young black boys aged 11-17) all of them had strong opinions that they would **not** turn to a GP or school if they had worries. Their reasons for that included:

"**No one would go to teachers - we don't know who they are**"

"**They may pass stuff on**"

"**It's too formal**"

"**I don't have a relationship with them**"

"**They can't do anything anyway - they would just pass it on**"

"**They may put labels on you and you may end up feeling worse
You don't know what they are going to do**"

It was very clear among this cohort that they would turn to their trusted youth worker / youth organisation (Ignite). They explained that this was because they "know them" / "Ignite has helped me a lot" / "they are like me"

Where you turn for support

Q: Do you know what mental health support services there are in Harrow? Can you tell us more about what services you know about?

cahms
don'tknow
harrowhorizons
no gp
camhs
caas
wish
childline talkingtherapy
ignite
kooth schoolcouncillors

Lack of awareness

14 of the 24 respondents answered 'No' or 'Don't Know'. Others mentioned CAMHS and two mentioned Harrow Horizons.

Those that mentioned Harrow Horizons and CAMHS were all from one organisation (Centre for ADHD & Autism). This could indicate there is work to improve partnerships and awareness of services among community organisations and their youth workers.

Among young people in the focus group (with Ignite) and in some of the surveys, Childline came up fairly frequently as a support resource..

Trust is important

It was very clear among this cohort that they would turn to their trusted youth worker / youth organisation (Ignite). They explained that this was because they "know them" / "Ignite has helped me a lot" / "they are like me

SEND & Mental Health

Q: If you are neurodivergent (so maybe you have a diagnosis of ADHD, Autism, OCD or something else). Does this play a part or make a difference to your mental health? Please tell us more about this

Observations

Those with SEND, feel their SEND and mental health are linked. In some cases it makes accessing support difficult, as well as creating difficulties in their day to day lives. We would recommend this topic warrants further exploration with young people with SEND through a focus group and special consideration given to how family hubs will embed SEND mental health support into their offer.

What young people said:

"I think it does because it is harder for me to maintain friendships."

"Yes, my autism and social anxiety are quite strongly intertwined- both in that autism makes social interaction harder to navigate and thus anxiety inducing, and that autism is probably the reason I developed social anxiety in the first place due to social ostracization in childhood."

"I don't know, when I get upset I get really upset."

"People make fun of me for it when i dont even say i have it."

"Yes. It affects the way you deal with with certain situation."

"Yes it does it makes me less likely to open up."

"Yes means I am anxious all the time esp social anxiety"

" i am waiting to have an autism assessment, I think that my mental health is affected by disregulation of my emotions where I get very stressed about small things changing or going wrong. When I get anxious I get a lot more sensitive to sensory input and it makes my anxiety even worse."

Barriers to getting support

Q: Are there things that would stop you getting help for your mental health, or that stop your friends from getting help?

Concerns about confidentiality

- "School councillors normally tell teachers or parents and I don't feel like they can be trusted."

- "They may pass stuff on."

- "The fact that some mental health support services tell your parents/teachers."

- "Stress or not wanting other people to know about it..

Lack of faith their problem will be sorted

- "They can't do anything anyway - they would just pass it on"

- "GPs just tell me things I already know and I don't feel like it's of any help
"They may put labels on you and you may end up feeling worse
You don't know what they are going to do."

Lack of trust / relationship with professional institutions (GPs and School)

- "No one would go to teachers - we don't know who they are."

- "It's too formal"

- "I don't have a relationship with them"

These points around lack of trust were particularly strong and prolific among the focus groups of young black boys. They especially felt that they would not go to a GP or formal setting if they were struggling.

GP/Hospital and Mental Health

Q: Would you ever visit the GP or hospital about your mental health? Please tell us more about any past experience you may have had, or what your thoughts are generally about visiting a GP or hospital for your mental health...

12 young people on the survey link said "no" / 7 answered "yes"

iwouldbescared

yes

no

wouldntbecomfortable

idon'tknow

parentswoulddecide.

Observations:

- Of the survey respondents - the majority who answered "N**o they wouldn't see a GP or hospital with a mental health problem"** were ethnic minority groups (2 Black / 3 Mixed Heritage / 2 Asian - compared to 5 white)

- Of those that answered "**Yes they would see a GP**" - the majority (5) were white compared to 1 Black and 1 Asian young person.

- The focus group with young black boys (with Ignite) also found that all of those young people would not seek support from a GP for their mental health.

GP/Hospital and Mental Health

Quotes from young people

I'm not really sure about how that would work, I've never seen a GP or hospital about mental health before. I wouldn't actively seek those out myself."

"I wouldn't because I feel like it's better to go to someone who knows you better"

"I have recently visited the GP because my parents were worried about me. I felt that I was told everything I already know. I didn't feel like I got much out of it and the doctor didn't help at all. I would be scared to go to the hospital for my mental health because I don't want to be put in a mental health ward as they scare me."

"Went to A&E in crisis in 2018. They were useless. Went to GP and that was great"

"Yes but had a bad experience last time with camhs."

"I would but wouldn't be comfortable in diving into specific events with a GP"

yh

What they want us to know

Quotes from young people

"Young need to know that they can trust someone before opening up to them."

"We are too young to have exams that determines the rest of our lives."

"You need to get info where we will / can read or share it."

"A lot of young people don't want to speak about it because no one believes you. Screen time is always blamed which yes it does have an impact but times have changed. There's a lot of "popular kid privilege" and people who don't have mental health issues use it as an excuse and do it for attention. The quieter people never get a look in.

"Young people are a lot more educated on mental health nowadays from media and social media. I think it would be good to be aware that young people understand mental health to some extent and so it's good to find different ways to talk to them about it. "

"We want to have a word in our futures and want us to be heard more,I sometimes feel sad but I don't get heard sometimes."

"A lot of children may be reluctant to go to adults about their issues so it's best to gain their trust beforehand."

"Maybe listen to them more, keeping them anonymous
It takes a while for young people to open up   Needs to be a trusted safe space."

For more information contact
ceri.morris@youngharrow.org