

You've Got a Right

Young People's Takeover Challenge Event Feedback

On Friday 20th November 2015 Healthwatch Worcestershire was taken over by young people. The Children's Commissioner's Takeover Challenge encourages organisations from across England to let children and young people take over for the day, to share their views with those who run the organisations and to learn more about them.

A group of 10 students from Kidderminster College and South Worcestershire College spent the day finding out more about health and social care services in Worcestershire and the importance of giving feedback. They took part in group discussions giving their ideas on health priorities, health messages, sexual health services, emotional well-being and how services can be made more young person friendly.

The young people told us they think schools should be placing more importance on teaching health messages and that they need to do this from a younger age. They felt that young people need to be a target group in their own right for reducing harm from alcohol in the new Health and Well-being Strategy due to the social expectations around drinking.

The young people had an opportunity to present their feedback and ask questions to local commissioners and providers, including: Dr Anthony Kelly, Chair of South Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group; Rani Virk, Lead Nurse for Quality and Patient Experience at the Worcestershire Acute Hospital Trust and Debbie Herbert, Commissioning Manager for Early Help in Children's Services at Worcestershire County Council.

The questions they raised included: how can services make sure doctors and other professionals communicate in a way that young people can understand? How can GP appointment systems allow young people to make appointments without having to call when they are on their way to college? How can young people access help and support for mental health issues, especially those without parental support to access services?

The feedback gained has been used to feed into our response to the Draft Health and Well-being Strategy 2016 to 2019 and to give feedback to the engagement being carried out around sexual health services. We will also be using feedback around emotional well-being and mental health to feed into our input on the CAMHS Partnership Board.

Feedback on Public Health Messages / Health and Well-being Strategy

What do you think are the main health related issues for young people?

1. Alcohol
2. Drugs
3. Obesity
4. Teenage pregnancy
5. Smoking
6. STIs
7. Asthma

- Following a discussion about rating the above priorities, the young people added mental health to the list and agreed it had a high importance.

Alcohol

The young people felt that alcohol should be the priority in terms of raising awareness of health messages amongst other young people.

- They felt that other messages such as the importance of keeping fit and eating healthily were more widely promoted already
- Drinking alcohol is generally seen as something that is socially acceptable and that young people see / experience at home / in everyday life / in the media
- Drinking is something that is seen as cool and young people experience peer pressure to drink
- They did not feel that young people are aware enough of the dangers of alcohol
- They did not feel that enough information is given to young people about the impact of alcohol and units and strengths
- They do not think that young people are always aware of what they are drinking
- They felt that binge drinking was a specific issue for young people
- They also felt that young people may use alcohol as a way of coping with problems

When we looked at the priorities for the Health and Well-being Board Strategy, the young people felt that alcohol was the biggest priority. They also felt that the strategy needed to make young people a target group in their own right.

Where do young people get information about health issues?

Young people felt that although there was information available to them at college, there had been very limited information given to them at school. They thought that schools were too worried about talking about things and they were too young - e.g. alcohol and drugs, but that by waiting until they are at college they are leaving it too late.

Ways of getting health messages across?

- Make it compulsory that all young people are taught about main health messages in school
- Public health could work more closely with schools to make sure they are getting messages across
- Felt that having people come in to talk in school who have personal experience / young people, who can talk from their own perspective. They felt this would be more effective than being told by teachers who teach them other subjects as well. Partly because young people may not relate as well to them and also as the teachers may not be comfortable talking about these issues.
- They felt it was important to make information fun and interesting, but that it is also a good idea to scare young people a bit!
- They felt that as it was important to give messages at different ages and to make the messages age appropriate. For example - it is good that the biology of sex education is taught in primary school. But the young people felt that this had not been revisited in High School to include more about relationships etc.
- They felt it was important that there is less shame attached to public health issues and more understanding about what leads to it.
- They felt that social media could be used to target young people through adverts - e.g. Facebook can target members by age and geographic location
- They also felt that television and radio could be used to promote health messages.

Feedback on Sexual Health Services

Where do young people want to go for sexual health services?

Contraception - some said they preferred drop in. Others felt they would rather go to the GP surgery, as if you visit a specific sexual health clinic or drop in at college it may be obvious the reason you are there.

They felt that they would want to access emergency contraception at a pharmacy.

How can we get the message out?

- Young people felt that there is not enough information about relationships, that it is more about the physical act of sex.
- It is important that young people are given realistic information and messages.
- Although young people use social media, they would not want to use Apps or join a Facebook page relating to sexual health, as others can see that this. They may be more likely to look at something on Twitter, as this is slightly more anonymous.
- They said they would rather conversations about sex are had / taught just within same sex groups. They also preferred to see same sex medical professionals.
- There needs to be more information taught in schools about STIs and how to treat them. Information tends to focus on contraception and avoiding them.
- Young people will use websites such as NHS website for information - so this could be encouraged.
- Word of mouth is a valuable tool.

What do you want from a sexual health service?

- Confidentiality
- Quick results
- Less waiting time for appointments - with the opportunity for drop in if required
- Option to have sexual health services at GP practices - as part of normal life and health
- Information about what happens next - after getting tests results, such as STIs and pregnancy

Feedback on Emotional Well-being and Mental Health

What causes young people stress and anxiety?

- Relationships
- Home life
- Exams
- Bullies
- School / college work
- Pressure to look and act a certain way
- Future worries
- Social media - expectations to conform, misinterpretation, things happen and spread quickly, less chance to reflect and consider before you react, bullies may find it easier to be nasty on line as not face to face and others can see and join in more easily.

What stops young people discussing their worries and anxiety?

- Parents - worry about letting them down and not meeting their expectations
- Friends - worry that they might judge you
- College tutors - ok to talk to about worries relating to college work, but might think it is not relevant to them if it relates to something else
- Counsellors at college - due to name people may feel they do not qualify to see a Counsellor or that there is stigma attached to seeing them. May also be a teacher at the college who you know and also teaches you.

Generally young people may worry about telling anyone because of what people might think and that this may mean they talk to someone on line as it is easier to be honest and less worry about judgment when it is anonymous.

What would help young people talk more about worries and anxiety?

- Raising awareness that it is something that lots of people experience
- Being able to talk to someone that you don't know and that is more anonymous
- Something that is less formal
- A way of speaking to someone online which is anonymous, but via college, so less risk and can be given right advice / information.

Other Feedback

- Make sure that young people know their rights about health care and giving feedback
- This should be taught in schools
- Young people may need a better understanding of confidentiality, as this can be subjective

Additional Questions for the Panel

- How can GPs make young people feel more confident about actually attending the doctors and speaking to them?
- If smoking in cars with people under the age of 18 has been made illegal, why is it still accepted to smoke whilst pregnant?
- How do you recognise a child has a mental health problem?
- Why do hospitals get the assessment / diagnosis wrong?
- What should a patient do if they don't understand what the doctor / nurse etc is saying?
- Why do doctors use complicated language?
- Why are there not enough staff in hospitals?
- Why do you have to wait so long for an appointment at the hospital?
- Is there a criteria to assess language skills and how easy they are to understand for doctors and other health professionals?
- How can doctors make it easier for young people to make appointments, when you have to phone at a time when you have to be travelling to college?