

Devon Youth Council Network

Youth Voice - Mental Health.

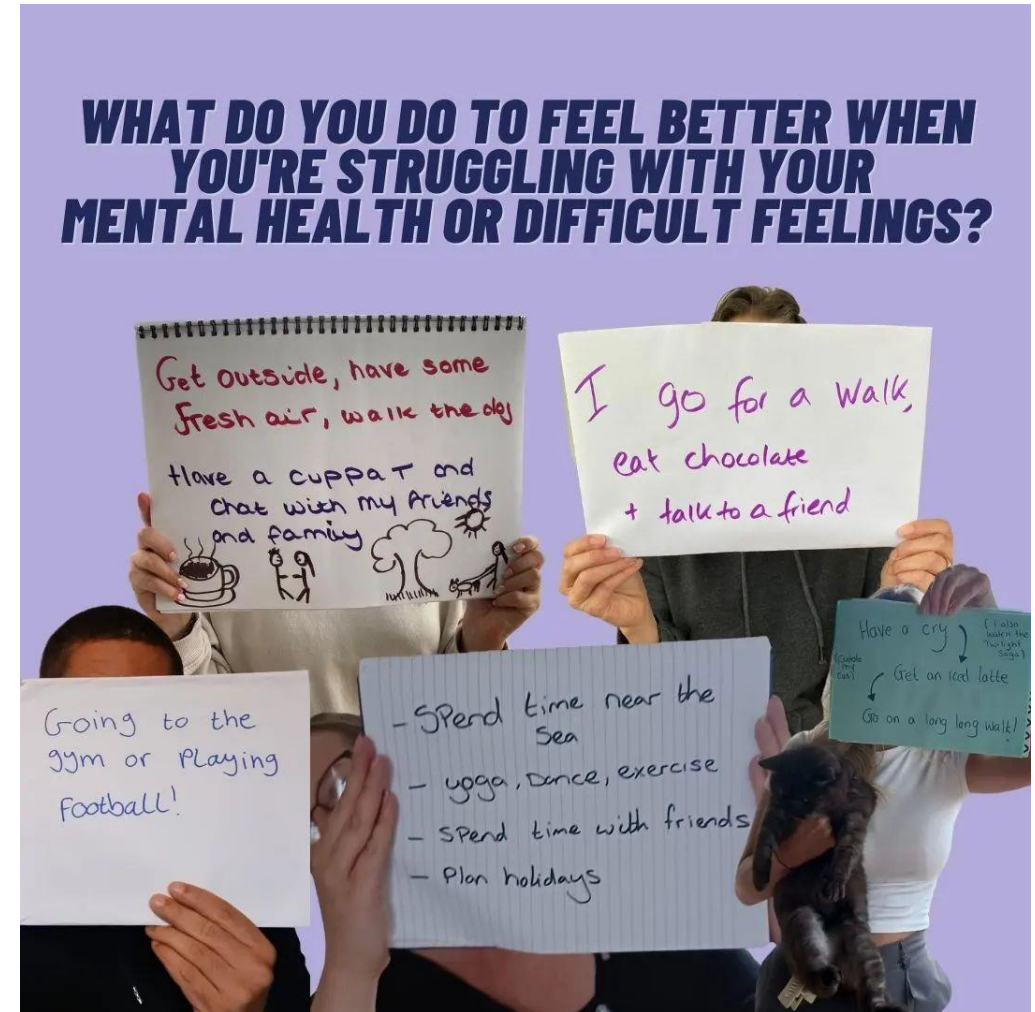
Updates for Health and Wellbeing Board

Jan 2024



Previously...

- In 2022, as members of the Devon Youth Council network, we did some peer research on emotional health, wellbeing and mental health support services in Devon.
- We then presented the key findings at a Youth Voice event which was followed up with an action plan. The action plan had two main areas of focus:
Education (the experience of school, curriculum, staff training, support in school)
Support Services (response by specific mental health services including the waiting times)
- We shared the action plan at the Health and Wellbeing Board in March 2023 with a promise to return in 9 months to see how things are going...



Education – Commitments and updates 2023-4

- **Mental Health in School Teams (MHST)** are going well and are being expanded to include all of the schools in West Devon. Funding for these comes from central Government and more needs to be done to secure funding so that **all** schools in Devon can benefit from this early intervention. The evaluation of the impact of MHST with schools and young people will take place between Jan-Mar 2024
- **Training is available for 'senior mental health leads'** in every school (DfE assured) but lots of schools are yet to take it up. There is also a lot of **direct work from the School Nursing** teams advising schools around **modifications and adjustments** to support young people in school who may be struggling. As well as this, there is an offer from 'Normal Magic' on working in a more **strengths-based approach** with young people. (Public Health)
- From January 2024, there will **be multi-agency meetings with schools, including the Ed Psych service, in order to embed relational policy and practice**, starting with 100 schools. This is about changing the culture and being more preventative so that we have more mentally healthy schools in Devon. Changing the culture will also try to tackle the current problem of 'safe spaces' in school being linked with 'punishment' (eg you are punished for your behaviour rather than the recognition that you need support and a quiet space to be) (Public Health)
- **Devon Directory of mental health support services, called Thrive** has now been launched by 'parental minds' so that practitioners, teachers and parents/carers know where to find help and support in their area other than just referring to CAMHS. The next step is to identify gaps between what's available and the needs. **Young Devon** are creating videos which link to the new Thrive directory so that young people know what to expect from the different services on offer.

We think these steps forward sound good in theory but as representatives from the Devon Youth Council, we would still like to meet with school leaders as originally suggested to make sure that these things are being taken seriously.



Mental Health Support Services - updates 2023-24

- CAMHS/ Children and Family Health Devon (CFHD) are still working on **improving communication** while you wait **and reduce waiting times** by **making a more streamlined process** so that children and young people can have their initial assessment meeting quicker and can access the right support quicker without being 'passed around. This is a long-term project so we don't think people are noticing much difference yet.
- Young Devon and CAMHS mental health are **improving accessibility, training on neurodivergence and exploring a range of approaches** (eg not just talking therapy). We don't know how much has changed as a result.
- **The Health for Teens website:** www.healthforteens.co.uk is still being developed and there is a **wellbeing toolkit** on the Young Devon website. These things need more promotion as we don't know if young people have heard of them.
- More **in-depth training for foster carers** on specific mental health issues: This has been asked for and is now being rolled out by CAMHS in 2024.
- Commitment from DCC to **improve Life story work** for young people in care and nurture more love and care in the system.: **Corporate Parenting approach is improving but there still needs to be more work on Life Story.** Our Stand up Speak up council will keep championing this in 2024 so we see results.
- In the original report, there was an offer from DCC Chief Executive to explore a **whole Devon approach to providing trauma-informed and mental health training** for all staff working with Children or Youth People in Devon There is now a project being planned for 2024 to make sure that all practitioners within DCC Children's Services are trained in trauma and mental health. We do not know yet if there will be money to roll this out wider. (Glenn Lobb)



Mental Health Support Services - updates 2023-24

- We did some peer research on transitions between children and adults mental health services and presented our findings at two more Youth Voice event in June 2023 and November 2023. We really want to see some improvements in the mental health offer to 16-25 year olds.
- Since that event, the priority from the commissioner for mental health is to **develop a One Devon vision of how 16-25's will be supported**, including the interaction between physical and mental health and with a specific focus on vulnerable groups. A multi-agency working group has been launched to see what is possible. (Louise Arrow)
- Where possible, work is happening to ensure that **relational support is implemented at pace across the system in 2024**, this includes youth workers in hospitals who can support both in hospital and after discharge. (Louise Arrow)
- **All ICB plans now have a column entitled 'voice of young people'** so that ICB priority actions are in response to youth voice and keep young people's views at the centre. (Louise Arrow)
- The ICB have **started analysis of crisis interventions** - where young people are presenting to A+E and other places, to ensure the offer available meets the needs. (Louise Arrow)
- DCC Children's Services are going to employ two mental health professionals to **support with emotional health and wellbeing of Care Leavers** across Devon and help Personal Advisors for Care Leavers navigate and understand Adult Mental Health Services.



What do we think is good and further thoughts..

- We are pleased that there is much more multi-agency partnership work happening so we hope this might improve communication between services and make sure everyone is on the same page! We get so many mixed messages when we try to access mental health services: being passed around, fobbed off, 'falling between services' and repeating our story - so we are hopeful some of this will stop if agencies are communicating better.
- We are pleased that there is finally a focus on the 16-25 age range. So many things are changing for us at this time and if we don't get the right support or if transitions between children's and adults services don't work well, it can affect our whole lives. We are hoping this will eventually result in a much better offer of mental health support for young adults
- We are pleased that there is more preventative and culture change work happening with schools and that a directory has been made of all the support offers available in Devon. School can be the start of where things go wrong for us, so it is important we are supported in the best possible way at that age and not shamed and punished for feeling unwell. If the right support is provided then, it might prevent mental health crisis occurring for us in the future
- We are pleased that foster carers and PA's will be getting more support to understand mental health issues in 2024 – will that be rolled out to staff in the supported housing projects too? Ideally all staff who support young people in care need more in-depth training on mental health.
- We still think that there needs to be more support on offer while we are waiting for services, especially when the waiting list is very long. There are still waits of over 18 months for trauma therapy in AMHS. Our lives are put on hold for a long time while we wait! We would love to see shorter waiting times.
- We have seen such a lot of changes in workers and know that there isn't enough funding out there to put in all the help needed but we feel strongly that our care should not be compromised to the current levels – too many of us are suffering for such a long time..

