

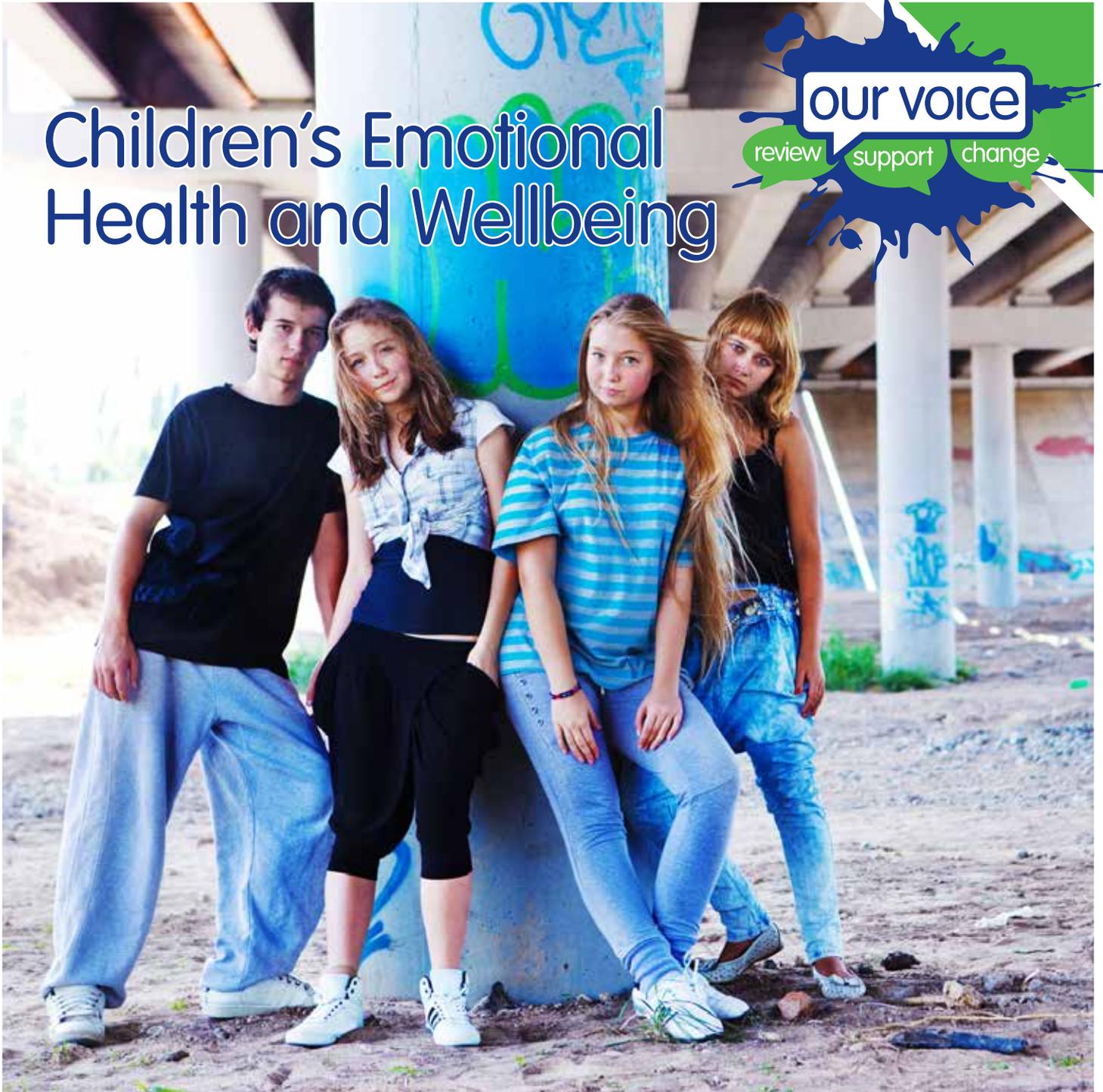
Children's Emotional Health and Wellbeing

our voice

review

support

change





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Why did we do the project?

This 'Our Voice' project was commissioned by the council's Joint Commissioning Manager. Its aim was to explore:

1. How young people access emotional health and wellbeing support.
2. What young people say they need to be emotionally healthy and well.
3. Young people's suggestions about interventions they would find most useful if they were to co-design a 'tier 2' Children's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service.

The Joint Commissioning Manager is responsible for commissioning services to meet the emotional health and wellbeing needs of children and young people in Kirklees. It is important the manager knows how well existing services are meeting those needs. It is equally important to hear directly from young people about how they feel their needs can be met. The outcomes of this project will help the Joint Commissioning Manager shape and inform future services.

A total of 91 young people helped create a picture of young people's views on accessing services. They described how they stay emotionally healthy and gave their suggestions for co-designing an early support service.



43 young women and 48 young men took part. These young people live in both North and South Kirklees and participated through a school, college or youth setting.

Young people who define themselves as LGBT, young people receiving interventions from the Criminal Justice System and young people currently receiving support from the Northorpe Hall ChEWS were all involved in the project.

Emotional Health and Wellbeing will be referred to as EH&WB throughout this report.

"So I know something isn't right. I know I need to speak to someone. I'm not really sure who"



The ways in which young people choose to access emotional health and wellbeing support is varied. Their reasons for choosing to access support in different ways, most frequently depended on the type of issue or the geographical area they live in.

Case studies were used to explore EH&WB, these focussed on:

- low mood
- self-harm
- exam anxiety
- feeling angry
- disordered eating
- bullying

The case studies included 'environmental' issues too, such as:

- being a young carer
- experiencing arguments in the home
- transition from school to college
- being socially isolated

Detailed information about these discussions is available on request.

There isn't one particular person young people seek support from. Here are some of the key messages young people shared.

If young people:

- live in the **Valleys** they are most likely to seek support from **home**. Family relationships were seen as key. Talking to a stranger wasn't a preferred option and at times could be viewed with suspicion
- **are LGBT**, the young people were most likely to seek support from friends
- are involved in the **criminal justice system**, they were more likely to 'go it alone'
- are experiencing **bullying or exam anxiety**, they were most likely to seek support from **school or parents/carers**
- come from **Central Huddersfield**, they would be more likely to try and **problem solve themselves**, using the web and lots of adult professionals
- come from **Denby Dale or Kirkburton**, they would be likely to speak to **family or school**.

This would suggest that a variety of approaches need to be used, for different client groups in different areas.

Young people told us these issues cause them concern in project planning groups and other IYCE projects. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2013) also identifies these issues as EH&WB concerns.

"Deciding to ask for help is hard. Who will find out? What might happen? Will it actually make any difference?"

We discussed young people's concerns about accessing a service and how these could be improved:

"There are so many different things when you google online. You don't really know what's local or helpful. The posters in school are everywhere. You don't know if you can ask for help yourself or if a teacher has to do it"

The concern: Knowing who to ask for help. Young people are not always aware of what is on offer. There are lots of services that provide lots of different help. Young people didn't always know where to look or who to speak to.

Young peoples solution: We want the people who are close to us to notice changes in our behaviour or mood. We want someone who cares, to ask us 'what's wrong?' Ask us to say which services we find most useful and promote fewer, better quality services, than lots that confuse us.

"I wouldn't speak to the GP. My family go to the same one. Chances are I'd see someone I know in the waiting room. Then the questions would start..."

The concern: Confidentiality. Some young people still don't believe what they share will be kept private. They

understand rules on confidentiality exist, but have seen the rules broken.

Young peoples solution: Be clear with us on the rules of confidentiality. Tell us from the beginning what can be kept private and what can't. Think about where you meet us, who will see us accessing help, how services or support is 'branded' and how you let us know about appointments.

"I went to appointments with a counsellor. All they did was ask me what I'd be doing that week and how I was feeling. They didn't work though what would help me and the appointment's lasted about 20 minutes. It was useless. What I wanted was someone to tell me how to make changes and set me challenges"

The concern: Understanding what the support is and what the outcomes are likely to be. Making sure you understand our problem, rather than offering what's available.

Young peoples solution: Offer us a 'Support Menu' which explains the interventions on offer, how long they last, what we will be doing, expected outcomes and who the worker is likely to be.

"I started my counselling sessions, but couldn't get to Mirfield. When my support worker spoke to the counsellor, they agreed to come to meet me. That's been really helpful"

The concern: Arranging support in a place which is accessible and at times which are convenient.

Young Peoples solution: Meet us in public places or locations we can travel to. Public transport is expensive and if we want to access support independently, we rely on it. Most of us struggle travelling more than 2 bus journeys, and find journey times of more than 30 minutes difficult.

"Phone apps are good, because you can download them free on Wi-Fi and then refer back to them. Free text services and being able to email questions are all ways of getting help, without having to see someone face to face or go anywhere special"

The concern: We have smart phones, yet services seem slow in taking up modern technology.

Young Peoples solution: Phone apps, free helplines and text services are all quick ways to seek advice and support. They allow us to stay anonymous too. Young people felt they needed to be involved in their development, to ensure they are meeting their needs and are appealing.

"When I moved from one service to another, I had to wait 6 months for my appointments. At the time I was really low, I just needed to go somewhere to cry. Maybe have someone tell me I was tough enough to get through and then leave feeling like a person again. 20 minutes of support and a cuppa would have kept me going..."

The concern: 'Drop-in' services are really helpful when we feel very wobbly. Sometimes a problem seems very big. When you're able to talk it out, even for 10 minutes, you can then cope much better. This is really helpful when you're on waiting lists for support.

Young peoples solution: Spread some of the resource so that a drop-in service with short appointments is available for immediate issues. It doesn't have to be too clinical. Just a place where someone will sit and listen, help you set some goals and work things out, until your routine appointments start. It could just be one or two evenings a week, in a well-known central place.



In summary, young people suggested a **local phone/ tablet app**, with **recommended services** would be useful. They believe young people should be involved in its design and in making decisions on the content.

Young people thought the idea of making a **very basic guide to different interventions** and their expected outcomes would be useful in choosing effective and targeted support. This could help young people's independent online research too. Identifying trusted 'methods' and providing safe search terms.

As **confidentiality** in services is an **ongoing concern** and one of the biggest barriers, myth busting and promoting clear and consistent messages about 'who needs to know what' still seems very important.



"Exploring the things that make a happy life..."

We asked a group of 14 young women, aged 16-18 from North Kirklees to tell us, their 'top 10 list of what makes a happy life'; here is what they said...

1. having a supportive family
2. having enough money/opportunities to go on holidays and travel
3. access to good food (be it comforting like chips or mum's lasagne or access to a healthy diet!)
4. having confidence and feeling good about myself, both in how I feel and how I look
5. socialising with friends and having opportunities to meet others
6. playing sports and being active
7. testing myself, being brave enough to push myself and achieving my goals
8. having a hobby or interest (from a favourite football team, to listening to music)
9. being surrounded by laughter and positivity
10. affording the time to relax and look after myself (which is tough in pressure filled teenage years!).

The 5 young men aged 14-19 from across Kirklees who took part said:

1. family
2. friends
3. having enough money
4. achieving the education you'd like
5. having a nice place to live
6. being able to get a job
7. being able to play on my games console/watch TV or DVDs
8. playing sport
9. socialising
10. overcoming life's challenges and reaching my goals.

Young People also completed a **life journey exercise** which asked them about the **challenges they face**. All of the issues young people raised involved times of change.

EH&WB support currently has a focus on 'resilience', which some young people find hard to understand. Focussing on how we **adapt to change** could help resolve this, keeping young people emotionally happy and healthy.

Co-design: What kind of early support services would young people build?

After discussing how existing services can support young people, we asked them, what interventions they would be most likely to use.

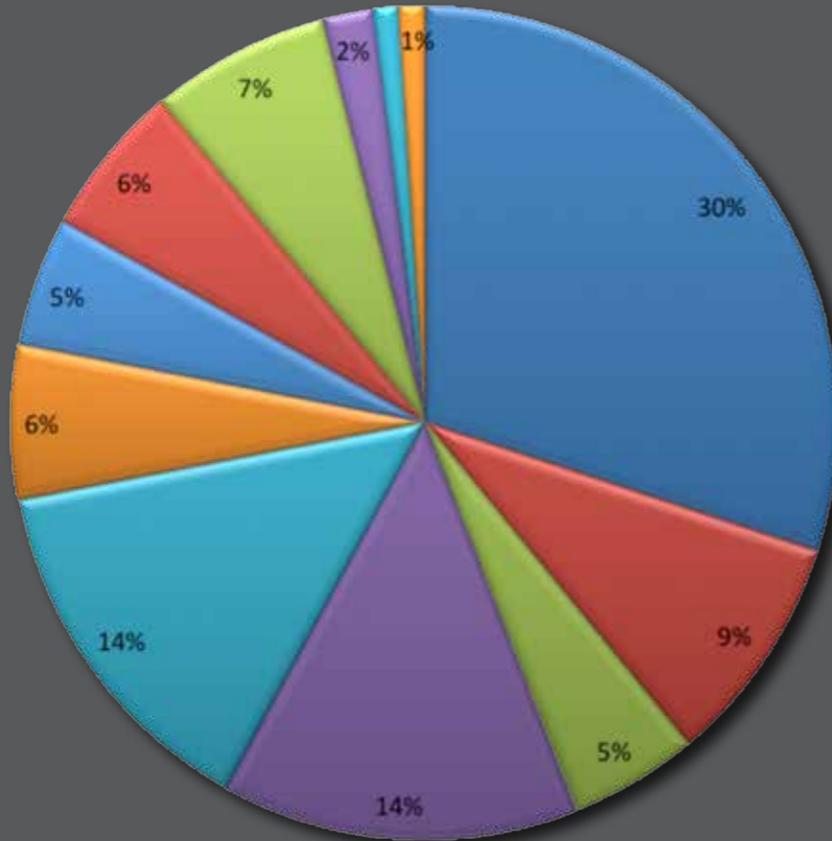
This is what they said:

Social activities

"When you're struggling with things, you need a break from it. You need to be able to do other things while you work it all out. If you can do activities with other young people you make friends, talk and get support from them."

Young people identified social activities as the main way to support their EH&WB. They felt 'doing and activity' allowed them to focus on a fun task, but also created an opportunity to talk about problems and difficulties. Social networks and peer support structures could also be developed through social activities and doing something fun created positive feelings and a 'nice distraction'.

A common theme to emerge was young people's inability to 'prioritise social experiences'. They worried about 'having fun over studying'. Others talked about the necessity to spend free time looking for work or completing chores. Many young people did not feel they could give themselves permission to have fun or relax.



Counselling and family and friends support

"Sometimes you need to be able to reflect on your past. Sometimes you need to look at how you can move on in the future. Counselling can help with this"

Counselling and family support followed as second choices. Counselling was seen as a good option, as young people thought they would have the opportunity to 'talk through issues' with a professional. There did seem to be confusion over what counselling would achieve. Most young people seemed to want information and guidance in the form of mentoring or coaching. Those who had experienced counselling had mixed views.

Young people thought the surroundings, relationship with the counsellor, clear expectations and confidentiality were all key things to consider in counselling services offered. They also thought a variety of non-traditional approaches would be useful, such as arts based approaches, animal therapies and sports/recreational sessions.

"I wouldn't want to speak to someone I don't know. I have a really good relationship with my mum. The only thing is I know she wouldn't have a clue what to do if I told her about the problems I have. She would be upset, stress and panic. I'd like her to be part of the process; we'd need to work on it together"

Some young people viewed outside professionals with suspicion, or felt their confidentiality would be at greater risk, than if they were supported by family or close friends.

Family support referred to 'skilling up' the family to help each other become 'counsellors in the home'. Young people want their families to be able to reflect on their behaviour and communicate effectively, to learn how they impact on each other. They want open relationships where they feel able to discuss problems, knowing parents would have the knowledge and resources to help support them. Family relationships are so important to some young people, they felt their EH&WB and family were inseparable.

Young people didn't feel able to suggest how families could be approached or invited into their EH&WB interventions. Some general discussion focussed on having training sessions for families, in the transition time between school key stages 2 and 3. Others thought GP's or other professionals might be able to introduce the approach, if a parent/carer was seeking help on behalf of their son or daughter.

"When Jayne told me she was self-harming I was proper upset. I listened to her and then asked how

we could help her stop. I checked on her and made sure we did fun things together. She did it for about 5 months and slowly it stopped. She always said she stopped because I helped her, you know that she gave up. I was a good friend and she didn't want me to be unhappy with her"

Some young people feel most able to share EH&WB concerns with their friends. However, many 'supportive friends' felt they needed training or skills to be able to help the person in difficulty and maintain their own EH&WB.

Some young people were critical of the current advice offered, which consistently encouraged friends supporting a young person with EH&WB difficulties, to advise them to speak to a trusted adult. They knew the person needing help simply wouldn't do that. Increasing young people's awareness of where they can independently seek help and developing problem solving skills and resilience was the most common solution offered by young people to resolve this.



Phones, text and technology

"If I'm angry, I put my headphones on and listen to music. It helps me relax and gives me time to work out my worries".

For some young people, having access to headphones and an MP3 player is enough for them to improve their emotional health and wellbeing. Although young people didn't think this was the only intervention they would need, when experiencing EH&WB difficulties, it was suggested as a very inexpensive support tool.

Increasing access to borrowed 'audio equipment' and encouraging music based projects and therapies are all ways young people felt music could be used to support and improve their EH&WB.

"Since we moved up to sixth form we don't do any compulsory sport. It's not offered as enrichment and the local sports centre is rented out or has swimming lessons when we have a free afternoon. We'd all be a lot happier if we just did some exercise!"

The young people who built an early support service, all recognised the importance of sport in maintaining positive EH&WB. A healthy life style and ability to stay physically fit was important to young people of any gender and age. The biggest barriers to participating in sport included:

- lack of time built into the curriculum in school or college to do a sport
- limited choices of sports often on offer
- cost of joining sports clubs or societies
- expense of using sports facilities
- lack of ad-hoc sports projects on offer locally. Young people wanted to try a variety of different sports to see if they enjoyed them and would want to pursue them. Online searches and enquiries showed how difficult it was to find a provider to come and deliver a one off session such as Boxercise
- fear of personal safety and lack of skills, experience or equipment, when 'independently' engaging in sport.

"Being able to pick up the phone and talk to someone is a good option. You don't have to sit face to face with them and that can be easier"



Although young people were commonly aware of national phone lines, they thought a local service was important. Some young people felt 'initial contact' on a phone, may then make accessing a service in person easier.

Some young people said their parents or carers checked their phones. They also thought finding a private space to make a call could be difficult. A common issue raised was the cost of 0800 numbers on a mobile phone. Most young people would not have credit to cover this. Fears about the calls showing on bills and conversations being recorded were also raised.

"I get free texts. Sometimes when I panic I just want to know things will be ok. Being able to text for instant advice is really useful"

Sometimes a text is an easy first step to seeking help. Young people thought being able to text message simple questions, might be an affordable and easy way to gain quick advice. They also said it would 'filter' information about all the services on offer; something which they found difficult. For instance, if they sent a question about anxiety, contact details of a recommended local service could be sent back. Alternatively links to trusted mental health websites could be returned.



Young people understand the difficulties services may face in regards to safeguarding and accuracy, when using text as a tool. However, they felt the positives could outweigh the negatives. They thought it was a good option to explore.

"Googling stuff is an easy option. The only problem is Wikipedia is the first thing to come up"

It can be hard for young people to source reliable, web based information. So we could gain a snapshot of what young people do find online, we asked a group of 11 young people to look up 5 support sites. The sites found included:

NHS

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/improve-mental-wellbeing.aspx

Beat

www.b-eat.co.uk/

Childline

www.childline.org.uk/Explore/Mentalhealth/Pages/Mental-health-types.aspx

Northorpe Hall ChEWS

www.northorpehall.co.uk/children-families/chews/

'The Counselling Directory'

www.counselling-directory.org.uk/

'Catch a thought'

www.catchathought.co.uk/

'Kim's Counselling Corner'

www.kimscounselingcorner.com/

Breathing Space Scotland

www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk/bspace/CCC_FirstPage.jsp

Gov Direct (Forced Marriage)

www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage

NDCS (National Deaf Children's Society)

www.ndcs.org.uk/

Helppguide.org

www.helppguide.org/

Service sites like 'Total Children's Therapy'

www.totalchildrenstherapy.com/

Relaxation

"Being able to relax is really difficult. All you can think about is the next piece of coursework or revision. It's hard to justify time doing nothing"

Lots of young people couldn't differentiate between relaxation time and wasted time. Allowing young people time to reflect and encouraging the belief that 'down time' is as important, as 'being on the go' was another important finding.

Some young people seem to feel pressured in to concentrating on academic study, being ready for work or further /higher education, achieving financial security and a clear idea about their future; to the extent that it prevents them having fun and relaxing. Learning time management and the importance of a work/life balance seemed to be the main suggestions from young people to address this. Young people felt being able to cope with these pressures was all about life skill development.

Factoring these concepts into their curriculum and supporting social projects that encourage the use of life skills or promoting affordable hobbies and interests, were all suggested too. The lowest cost solution offered was to allow young people time to sleep in at weekends and pyjama time; suggesting supporting families to understand teen's emotional and physical development may be beneficial.



"If I couldn't sleep I'd go to the doctor for sleeping pills. Or you could get some stuff from the chemist."

One of the least mentioned suggestions was the use of medication for anxiety and sleeplessness. The use of marijuana for relaxation and sleeplessness also featured in a very small number of young people's service designs (less than 5) The use of medications and substances as a suggestion needs to be treated cautiously and explored further.

"Sometimes when I'm panicked, I just need someone to say its ok. Having someone there to talk to in a nice, private space could make a real difference"

Drop in sessions, were the final idea that made up young people's overall service designs. For a small amount of young people having a place to go for instant reassurance, advice or release was very appealing. This particularly appealed to young people who would not confide in their families when experiencing EH&WB difficulties.

*Looking to the future:
Making changes based on young people's
suggestions*

Things that cost a little bit, but would help lots:

Explore 'digital EH&WB approaches' in partnership with young people. Look further at how text, apps and web resources could be created to help support EH&WB. This would help young people take control of their own care and promote resilience by allowing them to problem solve.

Vary the EH&WB counselling and therapy approaches currently offered to include music, arts, sports and animal care alternatives. Traditional counselling only appealed to around 15% of the young people we spoke to. Those who selected it as part of their service designs talked about various approaches, which were activity based.

Significant changes

As **social support and activities** are **defined as the key support** in this feedback, for young people's EH&WB, consider exploring this further.

Ask young people to design the activities and services that support them. Let them work with the budget to create an offer that meets their needs and helps them stay happy and grow healthily.

Promote existing young people's activities, sports clubs and interest groups.

Involve young people who do and don't access universal services to gain a balanced view. Let them work with stakeholders from social activity and recreation service providers to get the best offer.

Use modern tech, like phone apps, website, social networks, streaming through school and college TV's and media in public places. Work with young people to create 'products' they find engaging and easy to use. That will tell them clearly and in a way they understand how to access the activities, cost and expectations.

Promotion alone is not the answer for young people. They have clearly identified issues why they don't access some social activities currently on offer. The reasons include:

- **Age ranges at universal activities**, 13-19 is seen as too big an age gap for many young people when it comes to groups activities. More felt comfortable with a younger (13-15) and older (16-19) split.
- **Behavioural expectations and safety** in social provisions had not always met their expectations. Young people had witnessed club and provision attendees being unwelcoming, 'cliques' and the use of drugs and alcohol, which has put them off returning. The young people needed to feel confidence in the staff, to deal with behavioural issues and boundary setting.
- **The quality of the activities on offer**, for most young people the offer isn't varied enough or doesn't feel worthwhile. Most young people wanted a level of structure, with opportunities to have new experiences and acquire new skills.

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