

Item No. 13.	Classification: Open	Date: 31 January 2017	Meeting Name: Health and Wellbeing Board
Report title:		Healthwatch Southwark Engagement Update – Mental Health / Sexual Health	
Wards or groups affected:		Southwark wide	
From:		Aarti Gandesha, Healthwatch Southwark Manager	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The board is asked to note Healthwatch Southwark’s engagement with young people on mental health and sexual health.
2. The board is asked to consider the recommendations in Young Voices on Mental Health report (Appendix 1) and Young Voices on Sexual Health report (Appendix 2), and how these can be taken forward.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. HWS (Healthwatch Southwark) was created in April 2013, as part of the 2012 Health & Social Care Act reforms and is part of a local Healthwatch network that is supported by a national Healthwatch England body.
4. HWS’s aim is to effectively represent the voice and needs of the local community and to encourage the wider Southwark population - including seldom heard voices - to speak out about their experiences of health and social care. By engaging with members of the public, Healthwatch Southwark learns about key issues and difficulties that local people encounter when using healthcare services.
5. Since 2013, HWS have had 4 priority areas – two of which are mental health and sexual health. The focus within these two priority areas has been to understand the experiences of young people when accessing mental health and sexual health information, education, support, services and advice.
6. Between June and August 2016, HWS engaged with young people on mental health and sexual health by running workshops, distributing paper surveys and publicizing online surveys. In total, HWS spoke to 114 young people about mental health and 105 young people about sexual health.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

7. We asked the young people themselves what advice they would give to commissioners and providers when they consider how best to support young people around mental health and sexual health, in terms of education in schools, health professionals, preventing people from being embarrassed to seek help, and services in general.

Young Voices on Mental Health

8. **Teach young people about mental health, in a creative and engaging way.** Several people suggested having medical professionals or external organisations come to schools, partly so that young people are more aware of sources of support. People wanted to see a range of information formats, from posters to films and social media. Information should include:
 - positive definitions of ‘mental health’ as well as discussion of illness
 - awareness-raising about less extreme treatment-worthy mental health problems
 - types of treatment on offer - a range of illnesses and symptoms
 - signposting to reliable websites, organisations and support that are applicable locally.
9. **Teach teachers about mental health.** Young people felt that teachers aren’t equipped to support them. We also suggest awareness-raising for parents to help them support their children and to dispel myths.
10. **Reduce stigma; normalise talking about mental health.** Young people felt that the NHS, campaigners, media and schools should help reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness.
11. **Promote mental health support services including GPs.** Services need to raise awareness about what they can offer, and give examples of when they have been effective. The NHS needs to promote the fact that GPs can be seen about mental health.
12. **Support young people at school.** Schools could be well-positioned to offer support for those who are struggling, particularly at stressful times such as exams.
13. **Improve access to talking therapies.** Young people said that more talking therapies/psychology should be offered, not just medications.
14. **Encourage peer and mentor support.** Some also wanted younger mental health advocates, particularly those with experience of illness, to educate them.
15. **Give clear information about confidentiality, and offer anonymous support.** Professionals should be clear with the young person about what referrals are being made, keep them informed, and ask their permission. Some suggested that anonymous services are needed in order for some people to seek information and support.
16. **Listen to young people.** It is important that young people feel understood and empowered. GPs need to be non-judgemental.
17. **Make services friendly for young people.** Health professionals need to know how to talk to young people. Some participants also said it was important that service environments do not feel too clinical.

Young Voices on Sexual Health

18. **Bring experts into schools to deliver sex education.** Young people felt this was more comfortable and that the speakers would be better informed and prepared to deal with the topic. They could also raise awareness of the services they provide. However, better training for teachers is also needed.
19. **Be creative and engaging with sex education.** Ideas included asking young people about their pre-existing knowledge, discussions rather than traditional lessons, and multimedia approaches.
20. **More sustained/refreshed education is needed.** There were mixed opinions about when sex education should start in schools. However, what young people did agree on was that sex education should be built up gradually according to the age/maturity of the students. Some also wanted refreshers as they got older.
21. **What about the social aspects of sex?** Young people want education in schools to cover emotional aspects of sex as well as looking at the experiences of people of different genders and sexualities. More education on healthy relationships, consent and abuse is needed. Social media plays a large role in young people's lives and should also be discussed.
22. **Deal with stigma and taboos.** Several people agreed that general social attitudes need to change in order for people to talk about sexual health, and to encourage people to seek out services. This should be encouraged by schools and the media as well as when professionals interact with young people.
23. **Promote sexual health services.** Sexual health services should publicise themselves better, including in the community and schools and on social media, and encourage people to get tested.
24. **Offer anonymous help.** Many people wanted an anonymous sexual health service, or at least anonymous information sources they could trust.
25. **Make services friendly for young people.** Empathy and a non-judgmental attitude towards young people were seen as key – staff should recognise that the people attending services are the people who are trying to be responsible. They must also give information clearly and allow young people to ask questions.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Young Voices on Mental Health Report (circulated separately)
Appendix 2	Young Voices on Sexual Health Report (circulated separately)

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	N/a	
Report Author	Aarti Gandesha, Healthwatch Southwark Manager	
Version	Final	
Dated	4 January 2017	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	18 January 2017	