

Emotional Wellbeing the biggest concern for Young People in Surrey

- New report finds bullying common “starting point” of mental health issues
- Young people call for greater collaboration between Health and Education to address issues

A report released today from the local consumer champion for health and social care services has found that Emotional Wellbeing is the top health priority for young people.

In a survey of 220 young people in Surrey, more than 70% were concerned about potential health issues. The 4 most reported concerns all related to Emotional Wellbeing: depression, self-image, self-harming and exam pressures. Bullying was seen as a common origin of these problems.

There was concern amongst participants that young people do not know where to turn for help. One of the comments included: “There doesn’t seem to be the right help and advice for my age group. The alternatives are drugs, alcohol or online networking which is boring and addictive and depressing.”

Many respondents suggested that Education and Health services need closer collaboration to address these issues. Ideas included a Surrey wide ‘zero-tolerance’ of bullying, to use those who have overcome bullying as role models and to develop interactive programmes on mental health care similar to those on sexual health.

Mike Rich, CEO of Healthwatch Surrey said: “With increased focus on emotional wellbeing and the reduction of bullying, schools would be able to cut the potential risk of young people turning to NHS services such as A&E and mental health services, both now and in the future.”

Surrey Youth Focus undertook the survey in August on behalf of the consumer champion and also conducted two focus groups, in rural and urban areas of the county. Cate Newnes-Smith, CEO of Surrey Youth Focus said: “Surrey Youth Focus is always keen to hear and champion the views of young people, this report gives some clear messages about their views of health and social care services and we encourage these views to be listened to and acted upon.”

The results of the report also revealed that whilst a high proportion of young people are using health services, the vast majority were satisfied that the NHS in Surrey was meeting their needs well.

Mike Rich cautioned that this should not be cause for complacency. He added, “Healthwatch Surrey will take this report to the providers and decision makers in Surrey and encourage them to seriously reflect on the findings and consider how we can work across organisational boundaries to make improvements.”

“If the public have anything to say about health or social care, we would like to hear from them. We’re here to make sure that the people of Surrey have a voice and that they are listened to by decision makers.”

The report comes just two months after the consumer champion embarked on a Listening Tour of the county, during which the public voted ‘Mental Health inc’ Dementia’ as their top health priority.¹

People can meet Healthwatch at their local Citizens Advice Bureaux, by phoning 0303 303 0023 or online at www.healthwatchesurrey.co.uk, where a copy of today’s report is also available.

For more information, email lauren.terkuile@healthwatchesurrey.co.uk or call 07545 433465.