Review of online mental health support for children and young people

Contents

Background

Healthwatch Wiltshire is the independent champion for people who use health or social care services in Wiltshire. We listen to local people's experiences of healthcare services and use them to influence change and improvement in those services.

We set up Young Healthwatch Wiltshire for our young volunteers, aged 16-25, who want to make a difference to their community. They have an interest in the rights and wellbeing of young people in Wiltshire.

Feedback received during previous engagements with young people at schools, colleges, youth clubs and training programmes highlighted mental health support as a concern for young people. We were also told that being able to access information and make informed choices was important to them. As a result of this feedback our team of young volunteers thought that a review of websites offering wellbeing and mental health support in Wiltshire would be beneficial.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, a team of Young Healthwatch Wiltshire volunteers reviewed the Barnardo's On Your Mind and Wiltshire Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) mental health websites with the aim of identifying what information was useful and relevant, what was good about the websites, and what could be improved for young people.

- https://www.onyourmind.org.uk/
- https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/wiltshire/
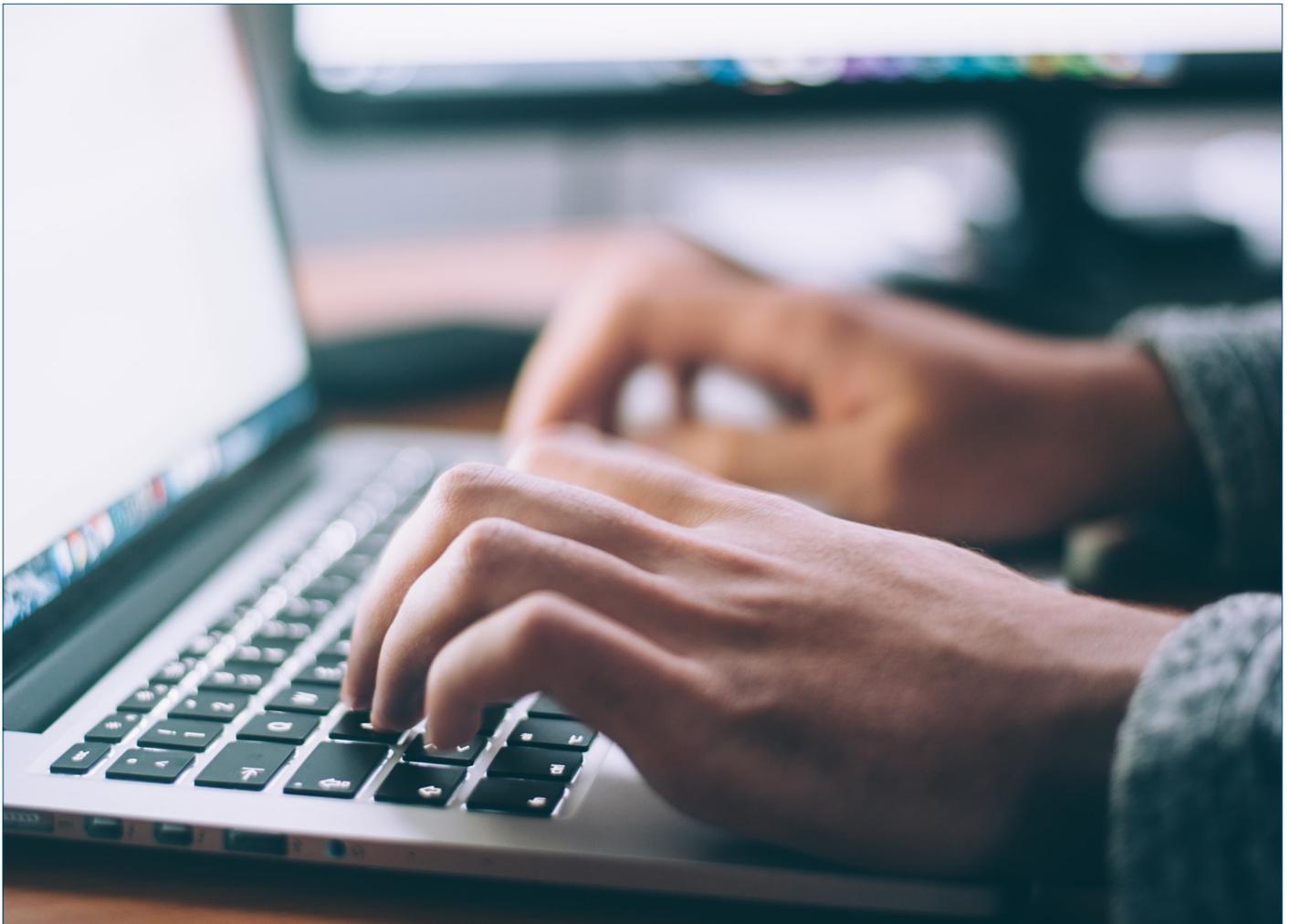
What we did

Working with the Healthwatch Wiltshire team, the young volunteers designed a mystery shopping exercise and were involved in every aspect of the project. This included question development, engagement activity, collation of results and final reporting. Five young people took part in reviewing the websites and two in the writing of this report.

Meeting regularly online, the young volunteers came up with a checklist of criteria before carrying out detailed reviews of the selected websites in their own time. They considered how easy it was to navigate these websites, how accessible it was for all young people and what information was available about a variety of topics, keeping detailed records of what they found.

Research

Initially, the young volunteers did some research on what services were available to young people online, nationally as well as just in Wiltshire. This was done to gain a better understanding of the mental health challenges that young people might face. They wanted to discover and learn more about lesser-known mental health conditions in order to help all young people and keep the project as diverse as possible.

During the review of the websites, it was noted that there were many mental health conditions that were not talked about as much as others that Young Healthwatch Wiltshire wanted to include in the project. From this research a wide range of conditions were selected that the young people wanted to cover, as well as a wide range of ages to eliminate bias. A few of the conditions were common disorders such as anxiety and depression, as well as less common, or more complex, conditions like psychosis and schizophrenia.

The young volunteers also wanted to find out if information was available to support young people with some of the underlying causes of poor mental health such as divorce, bereavement, and domestic violence. As a result of this research, 30 scenarios were developed and later evaluated (see Appendix).

Information and accessibility

There were two elements of the websites that the young volunteers wanted to test: the information available in relation to the scenarios, and the site features themselves such as overall look, ease of navigation and accessibility.

They wanted to know if the information was relevant and useful, was it available in a range of formats and was it aimed at all young people, including those with sensory impairments, learning disabilities and those whose first language was not English. They also wanted to know if there were links to further sources of information and support and if it was clear what to do if urgent help was needed. As the mystery shop took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, the young people wanted to know if there was useful information about coronavirus on the websites.

When testing the website features, the aim was to see how easy the websites were to use and navigate, whether it was clear where information could be found and if it looked and felt like

a website for young people. The young volunteers also wanted to know if there was a chat facility where young people could access peer support and if there was a way to give feedback. A criteria checklist was put together and used to gather the findings.

Since the mystery shop reviews were completed in 2020, both On Your Mind and CAMHS have made some changes to their websites. While the majority of the young volunteers' findings and recommendations are still relevant to the websites as they are currently, we wanted to acknowledge that some of the elements the reviewers identified may have been developed and improved.

The homepages of the On Your Mind (above) and Wiltshire CAMHS websites
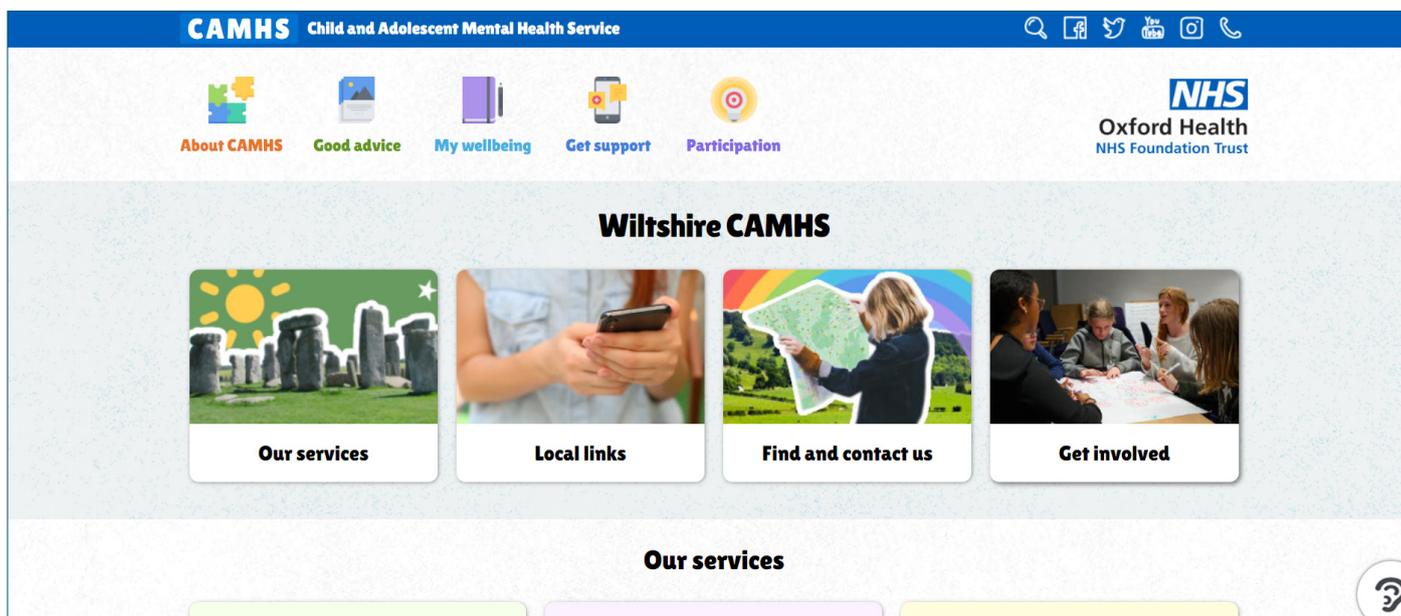
What we found

Advice and information

The most common theme with both websites was that although the pages were a good starting point, they often did not go into enough detail. The amount of help that the websites provided differed for each scenario and therefore the experience of using the websites would depend on what young people were accessing the websites for.

> The information I was looking for was easy to find, although there wasn't much on this subject. The information was useful by explaining the condition [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)]. *On Your Mind*

> Difficult — there were no specific results on this topic [(PTSD)]. The information I found wasn't very helpful at all. *CAMHS*

Resources

The young volunteers found helpful resources, but they were not being used throughout both the CAMHS and On Your Mind websites. This meant that the overall experience of using the pages felt inconsistent.

Examples of helpful resources include a short film about trans young people, a video from Young Minds which features young people themselves, a page on transitioning from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health services specifically within eating disorder treatment, and personal stories from young people, both written and in video format. The young volunteers found these useful and all agreed that these should be extended to cover all scenarios.

> Link to really helpful pages on sexuality from Childline and a page about preferred pronouns... collection of links specifically related to coming out which would be very helpful for this scenario links to Childline, Brook, Young Minds, Stonewall and The Proud Trust. *On Your Mind*

> There were no videos or info on this subject [seeing things], although there are videos [about other conditions] on the website. There were no podcasts or any factsheets that I could find. *On Your Mind*

> There was only one result that came up on the search [seeing things], which only had written information with no other forms of accessing information. *CAMHS*

> Link to LGBT Bucks website which is an amazing resource with pages on lots of issues relevant to LGBT people including coming out, safety and crime and social life which would all be helpful for LGBT young people. *CAMHS*

Contact details for other services

The inclusion of contact details for other services was good, with resources such as helplines and more extensive information available. Sites such as Samaritans, Childline, The Mix and Young Minds were mentioned often in the website reviews. This was especially useful for scenarios where the information on the websites did not have enough detail.

The website most frequently mentioned throughout the website reviews, and in Zoom meetings to review the findings, was Young Minds. This was such a recurrent finding that the young volunteers agreed it would be better to simply access Young Minds directly and that is what they would currently recommend to young people.

I found the most helpful information [child abuse/neglect] through the link to Young Minds. *On Your Mind*

Some basic information was helpful as a basis and links through to Beat and The Mix were helpful. The page dedicated to Body Dysmorphia Disorder (BDD) on The Mix was the best and was the only thing I could find specifically detailing BDD as its own issue rather than attaching it to other eating disorders. *On Your Mind*

Formats

A positive theme throughout was that the information available on both websites was good quality and helpful, especially for the better-known conditions such as anxiety and self-harm. There was a range of information from descriptions and definitions, coping techniques and advice, and where to get help.

The reviewers often mentioned different formats that were helpful rather than just relying on large passages of text, which could be off-putting. Formats included blogs, videos, articles, activities and worksheets.

Videos, especially those talking to young people directly (such as the videos from Young Minds), were a particularly good inclusion that the young volunteers agreed would appeal greatly to young people. It was also agreed that it would be helpful to include quotes from young ambassadors and young service users on the websites.

The information I found [anxiety] was very useful and went into depth about various coping techniques and advice. *On Your Mind*

There was lots of helpful information on the website, with over 50 search results for coping mechanisms and symptoms [anxiety]. *CAMHS*

Accessing urgent support

Another positive theme with both websites was the clarity on how to access urgent support. This information was easy to find and clear wherever you were on the websites, not just on the homepage. There was also a range of emergency support available in the event of a mental health crisis including 999 and 111, helplines, GPs, CAMHS locations, and other organisations (Papyrus, Childline, Samaritans and Young Minds).

> There are constant links which go back to the urgent help/crisis page. It then becomes a reminder that help is always available. *On Your Mind*

> Clear on the homepage — easy to access information under the 'Need help NOW!!' button with options for emergencies and for accessing help quickly but not in emergency situations. *CAMHS*

Information gaps

There were some gaps in information. For some scenarios it seemed that the websites were only skimming the surface and that more difficult elements of mental health weren't explored properly, or simply weren't addressed at all. For example, there was lots of information on anxiety and depression, but less on schizophrenia, psychosis and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

There were clear inconsistencies between the websites where, for a significant number of scenarios, there was no information at all on one or both of the sites. Some examples include bereavement, divorce, and domestic abuse. The young volunteers agreed that early support for young people's emotional well-being was important to help prevent escalation to a mental health diagnosis and were surprised that there was very little information on these subjects.

> Divorce/relationship breakdown is quite a common event for young people and it should really be covered on this website. *On Your Mind and CAMHS*

> In my opinion this is a very important subject that needs to be on this website. Addiction is most likely to strike at a young age. *CAMHS*

> There appeared to be no information about schizophrenia which I found very unusual. This diagnosis can be very hard to deal with and should have more information on it. *CAMHS*

> From conducting the mystery shop on this website, I would like to see more information on the lesser known/common disorders such as this one [mania/hypomania]. *On Your Mind and CAMHS*

> Living in care, trauma and relationships sections of the website have elements which are relevant but not specific [child abuse/neglect]. Trauma section more focused on abuse which has already happened, eg treating PTSD rather than where to go to for help. *On Your Mind*

There was also a problem with grouping disorders together (such as Eating Disorders, PTSD, and Bipolar Disorder).

> From my perspective, it seems like the website is trying to group all eating disorders to be the same, when they are very different. More information and advice for specific disorders and for young people suffering them themselves would be very beneficial. *CAMHS*

> The information I found wasn't very helpful at all, this condition [PTSD] was grouped together with other disorders such as bipolar and depression. *CAMHS*

Audience

Another theme that applied to both CAMHS and On Your Mind websites was the lack of clarity in terms of which age group they were aimed at. Many of the scenarios would require different information depending on the age of the young person accessing the website and it was noted that some pages were aimed at a younger audience. However, the links provided would have been helpful in bridging these gaps.

There is a separation of age groups on the page dedicated to parents on On Your Mind which could possibly be helpful to include on a number of other pages. Furthermore, there was an issue with aiming the information at parents rather than young people themselves, again confusing who the websites are for.

> When I put child abuse into the search bar the results were about safeguarding children for professionals, parents and carers and not for children themselves. *CAMHS*

While at first glance the websites seemed to be directly aimed at young people struggling with their mental health in ways specific to that demographic, further reading revealed a considerable amount of the information provided by both websites is aimed at parents/carers rather than young people. While the information is helpful, it can seem discouraging to address parents/carers rather than young people in a space they have accessed in order to find help.

Both websites have clearly marked pages with resources for parents/carers where useful information could be put without taking away from the pages aimed at young people.

In online discussions with the young volunteers following the reviews, it was agreed that the central purpose of the websites seemed unclear, particularly On Your Mind. It was unclear whether the aim was to focus on overall wellness or mental illness. The intention seemed to change depending on which page of the website was accessed. This meant that the young volunteers had varying experiences, depending on the scenario, which caused frustration as it affected the overall perception of the websites.

Layout of the websites

The young volunteers wanted to make sure that the websites were easy to navigate and accessible for all young people, as well as reviewing the information contained in them. They wanted to review first impressions of the website, ease of navigation, different ways of engaging, accessibility of information, and how the website could be improved.

On Your Mind

The On Your Mind website used predominantly orange, green and purple colours. A lot of the young volunteers saw this as positive and friendly, although one of the volunteers with a vision impairment commented that the website was "very purple."

> It felt very formal... Some of the grey text on the white background, though easy on the eyes, was hard for me to make out.

> Very colourful — welcoming for teenagers and young children.

Navigating the On Your Mind website was also a positive feature with the sidebar headings showing where the information was, but there was no search bar that made finding specific information difficult.

> The navigation could be better as it took me a while to find what I was looking for.

> I liked the layout of the website, with key sections easily available down the side. This made finding quick information very easy.

> There needs to be a search bar so that you can locate specific information easier.

There were also a set of links at the bottom of the webpage, however, they were not labelled very well and it was not apparent that they were links to other websites. It was agreed that these needed to be clearly labelled and to have more of them for additional information that is not on the On Your Mind website.

> On Your Mind needs more about lesser-known conditions or at least links to relevant websites — this should be signposted a lot better than just assuming that people will know that the logos are actually links.

> It feels like this website is missing so much information that could be useful for people aged 14-18, such as information on mental illnesses and advice on how to deal with them, or at least links to websites that can help.

CAMHS

The first impression of the CAMHS website was positive overall. But one young volunteer felt that the website was "a little tedious — needs more colour and better graphics."

> It was very colourful, and the formatting made it look very friendly. However, the white text on the neon-coloured bars in the 'FAQ' section and 'I want to learn more about' was very hard for me to read.

> I felt the website was professional and organised.

All feedback we received about ease of navigation on the CAMHS website was positive.

> Search function at the top makes it easy to find specific information quickly.

> I found it very easy to navigate the website. All the key sections where readily available at the top, and the 'need help now' was in an easy to find place.

Covid-19

The young volunteers found that both websites had a lot of information about Covid-19 and that the information was both reassuring and helpful for young people and their parents/carers.

> There was a section on the main page of the website for coronavirus advice, such as 'coronavirus advice for young people' which would suit this scenario. *On Your Mind*

> It was easy to find. It is aimed at children which is helpful. *CAMHS*

> There was Covid-19 information on the website that was very useful, for both young people and parents/carers. *On Your Mind*

> There was multiple reports, blogs and parent specific information about Covid-19 that was all helpful and easy to find. *CAMHS*

Chat facility

One thing that both websites had in common was the lack of a chat facility. It was stated that this would be very useful as a peer support tool for children and young people struggling with their mental health so they could talk to each other in a safe and non-judgemental setting.

> An anonymous chat or counselling site would be great. *CAMHS*

> A search engine, anonymous chat forum, more videos and more knowledge on conditions would benefit this website greatly. *On Your Mind*

Accessibility

The young volunteers also found that some young people may have difficulty accessing both websites. CAMHS had multiple language choices and a screen reader, but this was missing from On Your Mind, where there were no language options other than English.

> There was a built-in screen reader, and they had a page on why they had made particular design choices. *CAMHS*

> Information is only available in English — does not cater for people whose first language is not English. *On Your Mind*

> There are different language settings on the CAMHS website for those whose first language is not English. *CAMHS*

There was no Easy Read version of the information on either website, making it inaccessible to young people who struggle with literacy or have learning difficulties.

> I could not find easy read information on this website. *On Your Mind*

> I could not find specific easy read information. *CAMHS*

Feedback

There wasn't an option to give any on On Your Mind, which means that children and young people cannot suggest ways to improve the website or comment on any problems they faced while using it.

CAMHS did have the option to give feedback, but it would be useful to know who reads the feedback, what other people have left as feedback and what steps CAMHS have made to act on it.

Recommendations

When asked how the websites could be improved, our young volunteers made the following recommendations.

Barnardo's and CAMHS, who host the websites, should consider:

- Having clear and consistent information on all mental health illnesses and ensuring they include lesser-known conditions, such as schizophrenia and Binge Eating Disorder (BED). This would help to educate young people, reduce stigma and describe their thoughts and feelings. Having the cognitive, emotional and physical symptoms of conditions would help those who support loved ones or friends with a mental health illness.
- Providing information that is easily accessible and to focus equally on children, adolescents and young adults.
- Making it clear what age groups they are aiming at and to ensure all information is age appropriate. Where there are more complex young adult topics, clear links should be made available.
- Including more support for underlying causes of, or potential triggers for, poor mental health (bereavement, divorce, etc).
- Including more videos and young people's experiences and their voices/opinions, blogs, letters, written articles, activities and worksheets.
- Ensuring that links to other websites are clearly labelled, eg 'for more information go to…'
- Having more information on recovery, preferably on all disorders, and tips to help prevent a relapse. Peer support groups would be helpful here.
- Having a 'How to cope living with a mental illness' section, such as on the Mind website.
- Having a chat facility on both websites so that young people can communicate with each other in a safe environment (peer support).
- Having a search bar on the On Your Mind site for quick and easy search.
- Making sure the websites offer the opportunity for young people to give their honest feedback and that the sites explain what they are going to do with this information.
- Involving young people in the design and development of the websites.

Next steps

Young Healthwatch Wiltshire will share this report with those involved in providing the On Your Mind and Wiltshire CAMHS websites, so they can use these findings to consider what is working well and what could be improved. These organisations include Wiltshire Council, Barnardo's, Wiltshire CAMHS, Bath and North Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BSW CCG), NHS services and voluntary sector organisations.

Thank you

Thank you to all the young volunteers who took part in this project for their time and commitment and to the Healthwatch Wiltshire volunteers who supported them.

Responses

Liz James, Children's Services Manager, Barnardo's (On Your Mind)

It really is extremely helpful to get this feedback. Please do thank the young people for the thought and effort that has gone into the report.

Having taken on responsibility for the website from Wiltshire Council in April last year we are still in the process of updating it and therefore the feedback is very timely. The young people will hopefully find that some of the changes they have suggested have already been implemented.

- A search tool has been installed.
- We have identified translation software we hope to use and are waiting for agreement for this to be added.
- We are hoping to add a webchat facility in the near future.

Because our website is targeted at Early Mental Health interventions and maintaining "wellness" we would not expect to include information about complex mental health issues such as schizophrenia which we believe could be better accessed through CAMHS. We are however in the process of reviewing the information about low mood and suicidal thoughts.

We do acknowledge the impact of trauma and relationship difficulties, including issues such as domestic abuse and we are in the process of producing some additional information around this as well as continuing to link to other sites such as Young Minds and Childline which provide a wealth of helpful materials.

We are hoping to allocate some additional dedicated staff time to lead on the website development in the near future and would welcome further input from young people to assist us with this. Once again, thank you for the work on this report which will greatly assist us in the development of the website going forward.

Viki Laakkonen, Deputy Medical Director, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust

We are really grateful for the comprehensive and insightful feedback shared by the group of young people at Wiltshire Healthwatch as a part of their mystery shopper exercise. We will be incorporating the findings from their reports into our website development plan and overseeing the changes at our monthly CAMHS Website Editorial Board, which I chair.

This was an excellent time to provide this feedback as we are currently in the middle of a major overhaul of the website. The changes will benefit children and young people in BaNES, Swindon and Wiltshire, but also in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire where Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust also deliver CAMHS services, as the website is a shared across all these areas.

We look forward to inviting the young people to join the future coproduction and user-testing events alongside our Participation teams to look at the changes we have made in response to the report.

Appendix

List of mystery shop scenarios

1.	16yr old (f) bulimic — Why do I have this and how do I deal with my eating problems?
2.	11yr old (m) gay — Really confused and have no idea what I'm feeling and seeking help
3.	14yr old (f) depressed — please help me, I feel so worthless
4.	12yr old (m) seeing things that are not there — What is wrong with me? Am I going crazy?
5.	18 yr old (m) OCD — How do I get treatment?
6.	10 yr old (f) Parents getting divorced — struggling to cope
7.	13yr old (f) Anxiety — wants to know calming techniques and how to cope with anxiety
8.	19yr old(m) Stress — How to deal with stress at Uni
9.	11yr old (f) Bereavement/family loss — bottling up emotions and getting into trouble at school
10.	9/10 yr old(f) Autism — Why am I like this?
11.	17 yr old (m) Anger issues — Why am I always angry and how to deal with it
12.	23ry old () Gender identity crisis — having identity crisis and needs help
13.	12 yr old (f) Child abuse/neglect — feels alone and looking for help
14.	25 yr old (m) Addictions — support and help with drink/drug addictions
15.	15yr old (m) Self harm — need to find help and advice
16.	21yr old(f) Suicidal feelings — I need urgent help
17.	21 yr old (f) Personality disorder — I need help on how to deal with all my mixed emotions
18.	12 yr old(f) Psychosis — How do I stop myself from seeing things?
19.	14yr old (m) PTSD — How do I stop the flashbacks?
20.	13yr old (m) Bipolar — How do I deal with my highs and lows?
21.	19yr old (m) Schizophrenia — I need help to stop me feeling so paranoid all the time
22.	10yr old (f)Young carer — I just feel so alone and cannot cope. I need advice
23.	17 yr old (m/f) Transitioning from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health services?
24.	15 yr old (f) BED Binge Eating Disorder — I need to stop, where can I find help?
25.	20 yr old (f) BDD Body Dysmorphia Disorder — Why do I see myself this way?
26.	22 yr old (m) Mania/Hypomania — I am totally out of control and need to talk to someone
27.	14 yr old (f) Social Anxiety Disorder — I need help to face people again
28.	19 yr old (f) Anorexia Nervosa — I hate feeling trapped and weak and want support
29.	13 yr old (m) PTSD — I want help to stop me constantly feeling this way
30.	16 yr old (f) GAD General Anxiety Disorder — What sort of treatment of counselling is there for me?