



Young People's Mental Health  
Feedback on local mental health services  
March 2026

**healthwatch**  
South Tyneside

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Healthwatch South Tyneside Engagement Officer Bev Cook (right) with the SURT team.

# About Healthwatch South Tyneside

Healthwatch South Tyneside is your dedicated consumer champion.

We work with users of local NHS and social care services to hear about your experiences, identify any issues or problems and help generate improvements.

We also assist commissioners and providers of healthcare services by conducting patient surveys, visiting healthcare venues, and attending meetings with user groups and feeding back our findings in regular reports.

Healthwatch South Tyneside:

- Has the power to enter and view services.
- Influences how services are set up and commissioned by having a seat on the local health and wellbeing board.
- Produces reports which influence the way services are designed and delivered.
- Provides information, advice, and support about local services.
- Passes information and recommendations to Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission.



# Background and methodology

Young people's mental health was selected as a key priority in our Operational Plan in response to feedback we had picked up via signposting contacts and our work out in the community.

We collated a list of 32 voluntary sector organisations and statutory services, which we contacted via email in December 2025 and asked to share our details with the young people they supported. They are listed on page 5.

Thirty of the organisations responded positively, saying they were either very happy to support or would forward the details onto colleagues – whichever was more relevant.

Of the other two, one group was not able to support at this time and the other was an anonymous service so not relevant.

Healthwatch made arrangements to visit five of the organisations, while two groups took up the offer of paper copies of the survey being dropped off to circulate. One was produced in an accessible version on request.

We attached both the paper copy and online survey link for those who offered to share on their social media platforms, newsletters, bulletins and within their groups.

Healthwatch also took out a sponsored post on Facebook and Instagram, which generated more than 300 click-throughs to the online survey link.

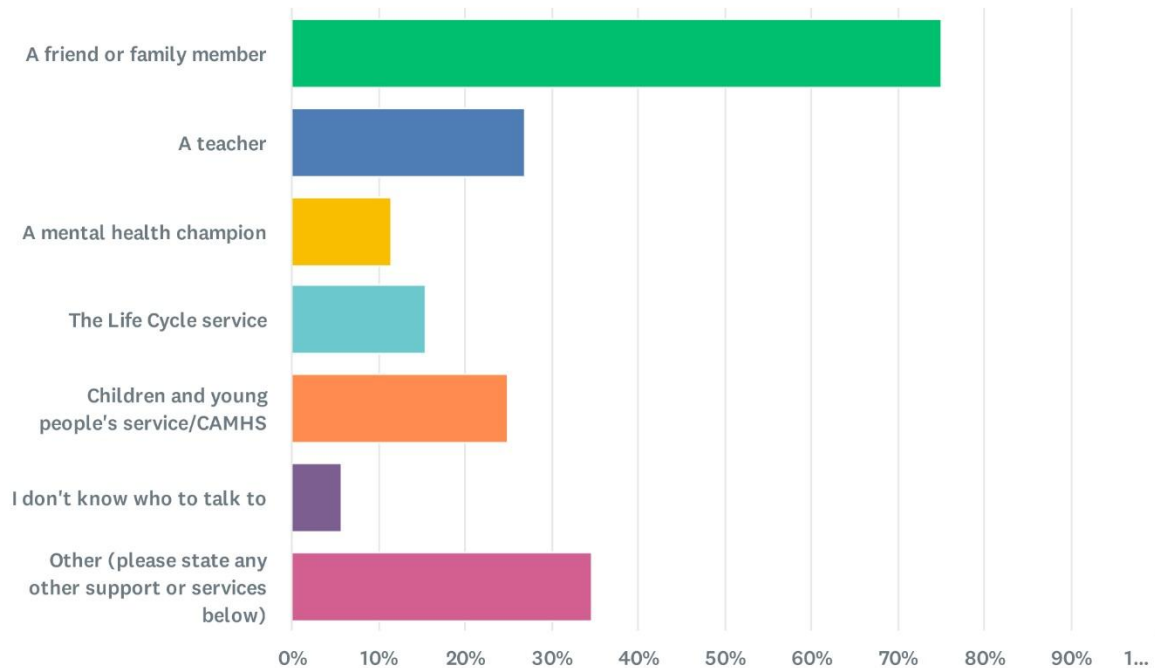
The survey asked questions including who young people sought support from if they were struggling with their mental health, how they rated their experience of local mental health services and how services could be improved, including those offered in schools.

Between December 2025 and the end of February 2026 we received 53 survey responses, all via Survey Monkey.

Group contacted	Those visited by Healthwatch staff
ABU	
Apna Ghar	
Autism Able	
Auxillia Youth	
Bright Futures	
CAMHS/Talking Therapies/Lifecycle	
Choice Wellbeing	
CREST	
CYPS	
Depaul	
Escape Intervention	✓
Family Hubs x 4	
Healthy Minds Team (school-based)	
ICB	
Inspire	
Investing in Children	
KAYAKS	
KEY	
KOOTH	
MATRIX	
Mental Health Services	
SENDIASS	✓
South Tyneside College	
South Tyneside Young Carers - TEN	
South Tyneside Youth Council	✓
SURT	✓
Tyneside MIND	
Waythrough	
Williby Roc's	
Young Health Ambassadors	✓
Youth Services (STC)	
YVC	

# Survey responses

Q1. Tell us who you talk to if you have a problem or you are struggling with your emotional health and well-being? (Tick more than one option if it applies)



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
<span style="color: green;">●</span> A friend or family member	75.00%	39
<span style="color: blue;">●</span> A teacher	26.92%	14
<span style="color: yellow;">●</span> A mental health champion	11.54%	6
<span style="color: teal;">●</span> The Life Cycle service	15.38%	8
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> Children and young people's service/CAMHS	25.00%	13
<span style="color: purple;">●</span> I don't know who to talk to	5.77%	3
<span style="color: pink;">●</span> Other (please state any other support or services below)	34.62%	18

There were 23 responses to the 'other' option, which included 'girlfriend', 'counsellor', CYPS, GP and SURT. Comments left included:

*"I don't typically talk about that, but if I do I'll talk to my partner or write it in a journal."*

*"I stopped talking to people and it's because I feel like when I open up to people they just judge me."*

Q2. If you have any comments about your experience from the answers given from question 1 please add them in the space provided below.

There were 22 comments left, including the following:

*"Lifecycle have been good with me getting an ADHD diagnosis. They were very nice but it takes ages."*

*"Leah at the LGBT+ service has been a great help. I don't think that CAHMS are great."*

*"I had a bad experience with CAHMS. CYPS was better."*

*"Waiting list too long for the Children and Young Peoples Service. Answered the same questionnaires multiple times. The counsellor changed lots and I was spoken to like a child."*

*"SURT are easy to speak to and give good advice and help."*

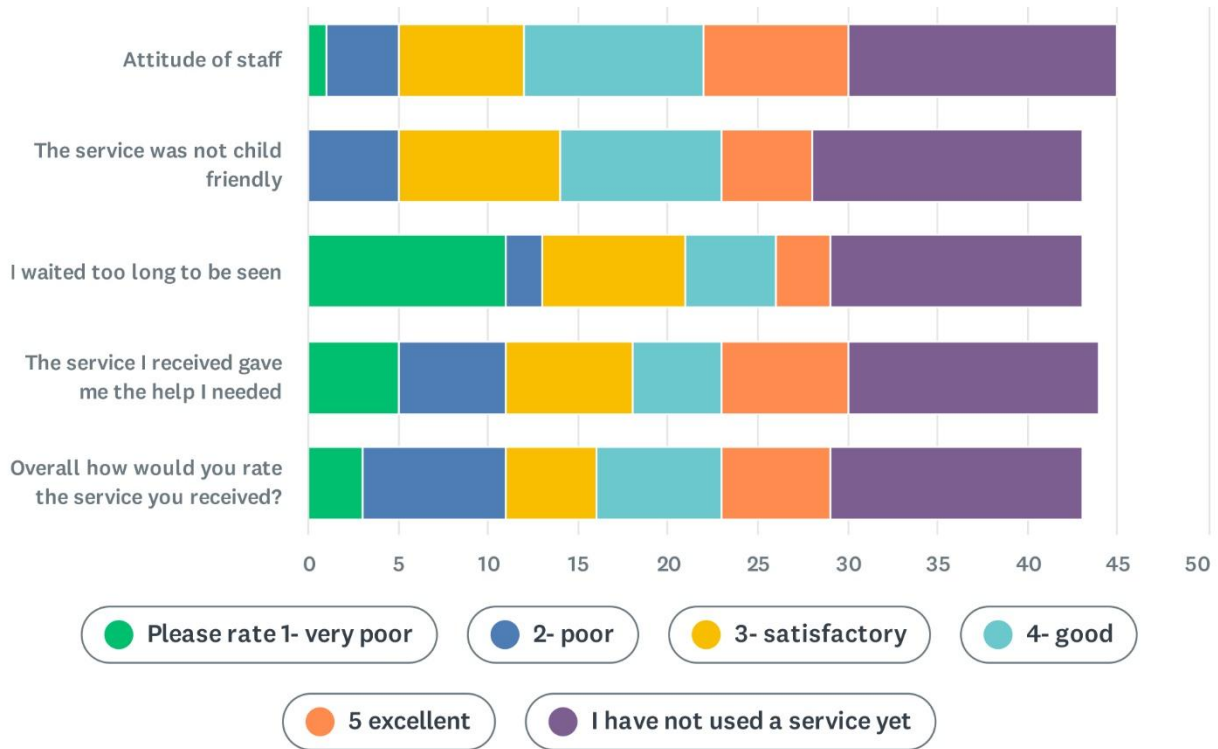
*"My experience with CYPS wasn't good. I kept getting switched workers and struggled to get through a lot. SURT is absolutely amazing."*

*"SURT - amazing with support for mental health. CYPS - mixed opinions. The worker has been inconsistent and pretty much absent. However, the psychiatrist who diagnosed my ASD made the process easier. They aren't the best with my anti-depressants. I have been told that I have to wait until my 18th birthday until I can have new meds so I am currently not taking any."*

*"Good experience. GP was supportive and offered appropriate help."*

Q3. If you have used a service listed in question 1 in South Tyneside, please tell us how you would rate your experience in the following areas.

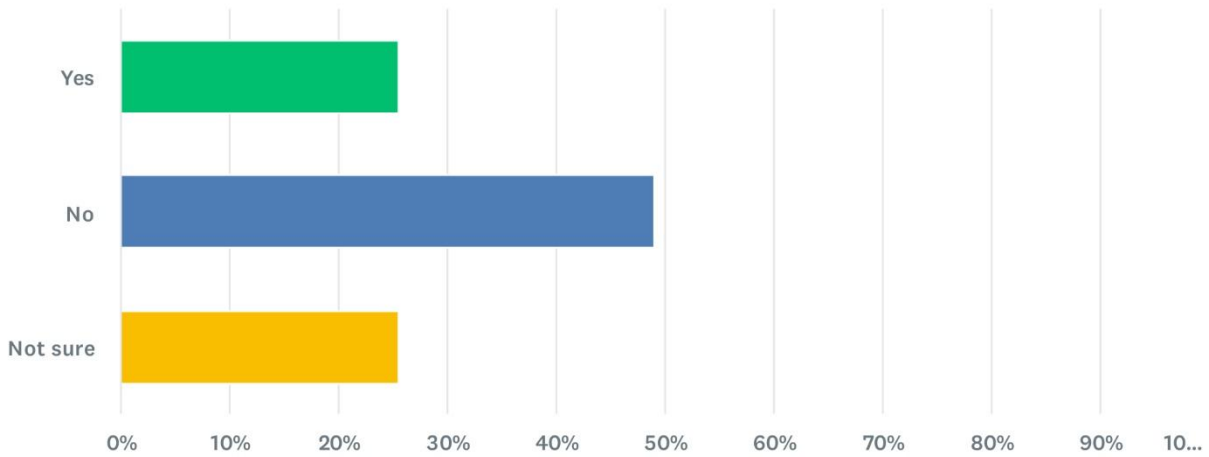
There were 46 responses to this question.



	Please rate 1- very poor	2- poor	3- satisfactory	4- good	5 excellent	I have not used a service yet	Total
<b>Attitude of staff</b>	2.22% 1	8.89% 4	15.56% 7	22.22% 10	17.78% 8	33.33% 15	45
<b>The service was not child friendly</b>	0% 0	11.90% 5	21.43% 9	21.43% 9	11.90% 5	35.71% 15	43
<b>I waited too long to be seen</b>	25.58% 11	4.65% 2	18.60% 8	11.63% 5	6.98% 3	32.56% 14	43
<b>The service I received gave me the help I needed</b>	11.36% 5	13.64% 6	15.91% 7	11.36% 5	15.91% 7	31.82% 14	44
<b>Overall how would you rate the service you received?</b>	6.98% 3	18.60% 8	11.63% 5	16.28% 7	13.95% 6	32.56% 14	43

#### Q4. Were you signposted to another service?

There were 47 responses to this question.



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● Yes	25.53%	12
● No	48.94%	23
● Not sure	25.53%	12

There were 15 comments left, including:

*"I was signposted to the LGBT+ service at Humankind/Waythrough."*

*"I was referred to Waythrough (Humankind) LGBT+."*

*"My GP transferred me to the NHS Mental Health Service."*

*"From Lifecycle to CYPS."*

*"CAMHS to CYPS to PCN to CTT to First Contact Clinical. The only person who did their job was First Contact Clinical and she unfortunately left for another job."*

**Q5. Tell us how mental health services can be improved in South Tyneside.**

This question attracted 44 responses, with comments including:

*"I think more advertising to promote mental health services would be good."*

*"Staff sensitivity. Training to be improved. Waiting times for mental health service could be improved."*

*"Professionals need to listen more to young people who are struggling. I've had a few experiences where professionals have spoken over me. This made me feel 'kind of like I didn't matter'."*

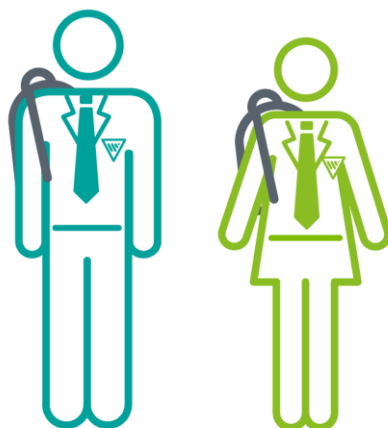
*"More support to be given in schools. Staff to have extra training in schools on how to better support/deal with children's behaviour with additional needs."*

*"A lot more training needs to be done. They need to work on their attitude towards mental health crisis and look at what are they saying; is it actually helpful or not?"*

*"I think there should be a lot more advertising of what support is out there."*

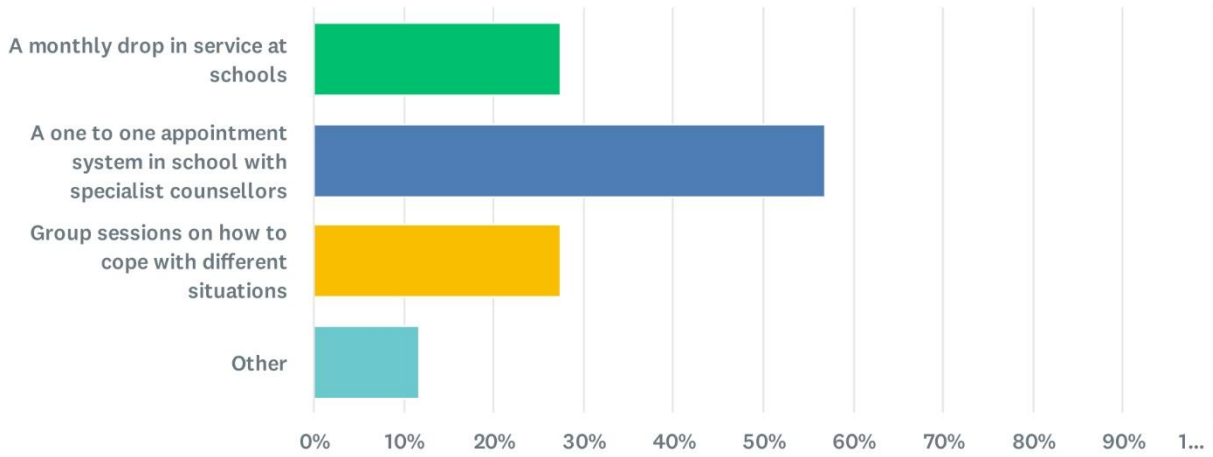
*"More empathy. Less scripted. More services. Less wait times."*

*"Have more ways of communicating e.g. text - not all do."*



**Q6. South Tyneside Council has introduced services in schools to support young people with their emotional well-being. What, from below, do you think would be best for you?**

There were 51 respondents to this question.



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
<span style="color: green;">●</span> A monthly drop in service at schools	27.45%	14
<span style="color: blue;">●</span> A one to one appointment system in school with specialist counsellors	56.86%	29
<span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Group sessions on how to cope with different situations	27.45%	14
<span style="color: teal;">●</span> Other	11.76%	6

**Additional comments included:**

*“A group chat where it’s 100% confidential and they take proper actions and do not say ‘I know how you feel’.”*

*“Lessons about mental health for students.”*

*“Therapists in school time that can offer support to children in need.”*

*“I think 1-2-1 is good but then group sessions talking about boundaries etc are good – at least once a month.”*

Q7. If you had a chance to ask a question to the people who can help change mental health services for young people in South Tyneside, what would it be?

There were 38 responses to this question. Comments included:

*"I would like you to listen to me, as a young person. I think could give a good insight into helping you make services better."*

*"Try to make it quicker. Less time waiting."*

*"Is hiring people who have had similar experiences or situations better than hiring normal people?"*

*"Why is there no empathy in the service?"*

*"Why do you not take any notice of what young people think or say? You think you know best."*

*"Why does everything take so long? We need help when it's in front of us - not in a year or two."*

*"I would ask how they plan on dealing with shy people who suffer quietly."*

*"Have you ever lost someone to mental health and how would you feel if you did?"*

*"Why does it take so long to get diagnosed? Listen to parents and children. HELP US."*

*"Why do you feel (the need) to have this negative energy as if you're literally talking down to us, when all we needed was someone to listen."*

Q8. If you have any other comments you would like to add please comment below.

There were 15 comments left in response to this question. They included:

*“Overall good experience with mental health services. However, really long wait times from six months to two years.”*

*“My experience with online (mental) health services is that they have been good but are not promoted enough.”*

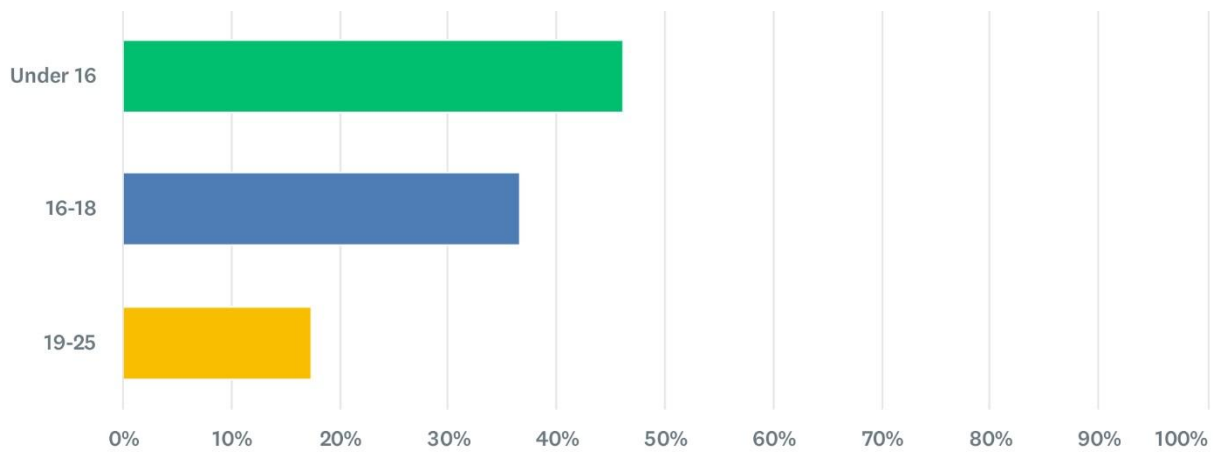
*“If you make a crisis call you are put on hold. You can wait for up to two hours. Private counsellors are good. Lifecycle Adult services are consistent and much better, including when in crisis. I feel that they don't take young people seriously. CYPS tell you in the wrong way. It is scripted. I was told to have a cuppa. It is non-stop repetitiveness. I think that the therapists don't want to create attachments and that's why they speak scripted. We need consistent and effective intervention.”*

*“There's just not help out there. I've been struggling since I was 13. I'm now 21 and the systems are only getting worse, branches are either closing or they have huge waiting periods or people are getting misdiagnosed and the wrong help and treatment is available.”*

*“LISTEN to the child/parent. We are not lying (as my mam was accused). We are struggling, help us.”*

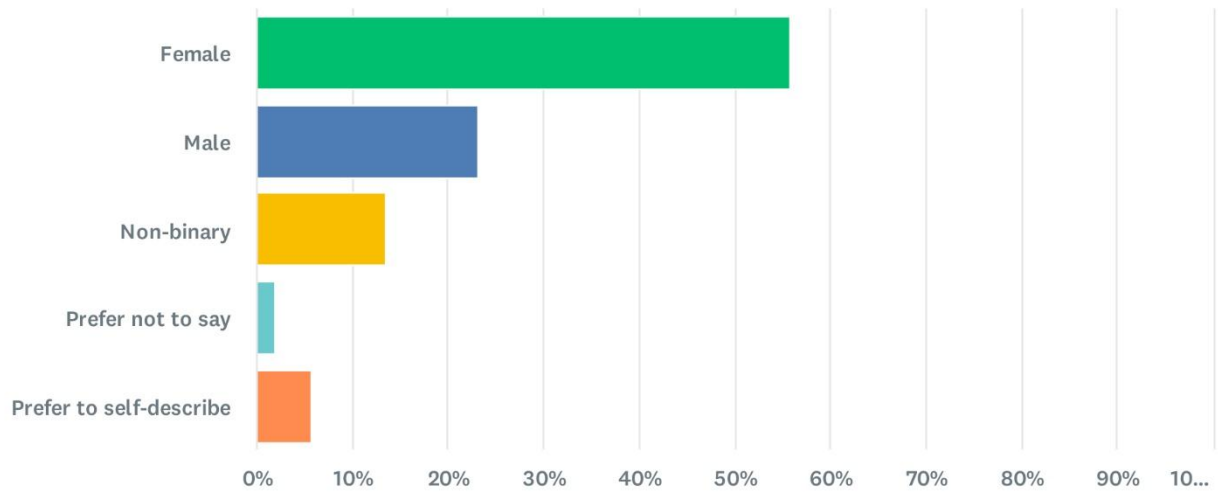
## Survey respondent profile

Q9. What is your age?

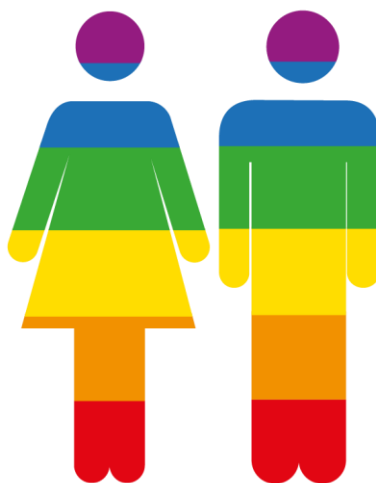


Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● Under 16	46.15%	24
● 16-18	36.54%	19
● 19-25	17.31%	9

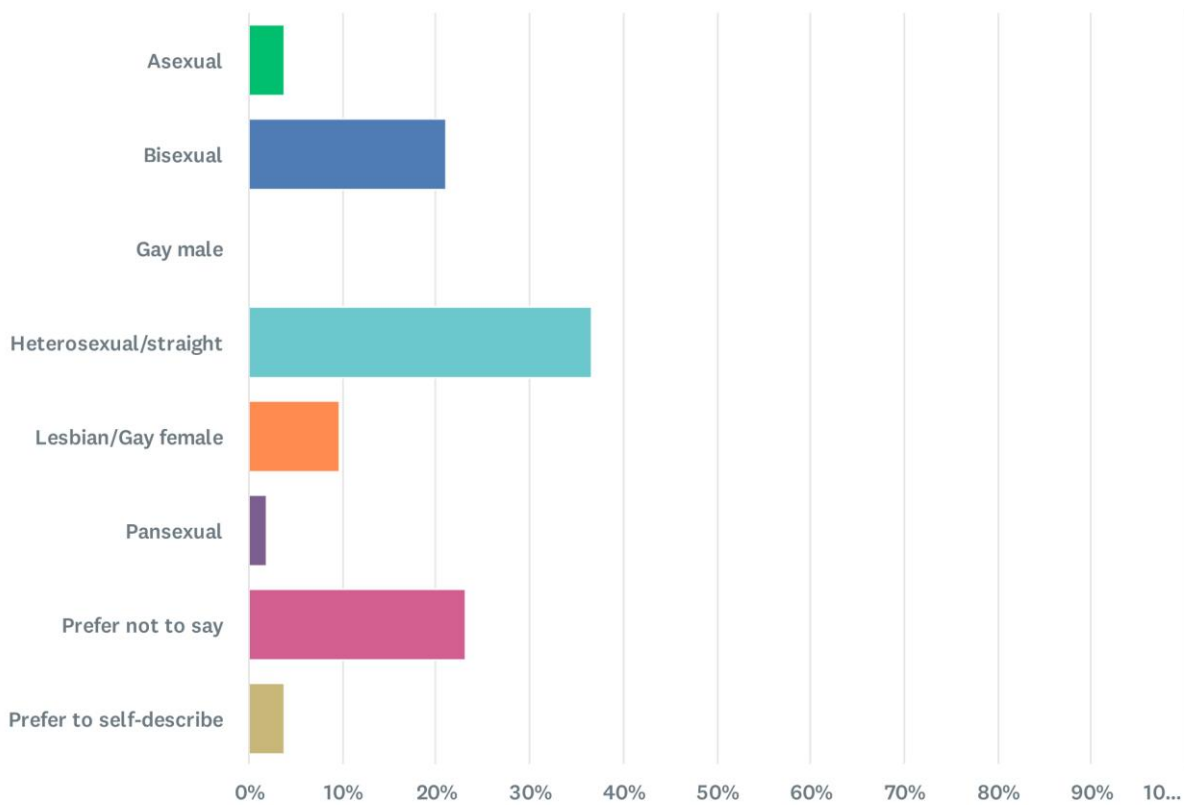
## Q10. What is your gender?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
<span style="color: green;">●</span> Female	55.77%	29
<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Male	23.08%	12
<span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Non-binary	13.46%	7
<span style="color: teal;">●</span> Prefer not to say	1.92%	1
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> Prefer to self-describe	5.77%	3























## Q11. Which sexual orientation do you identify with?

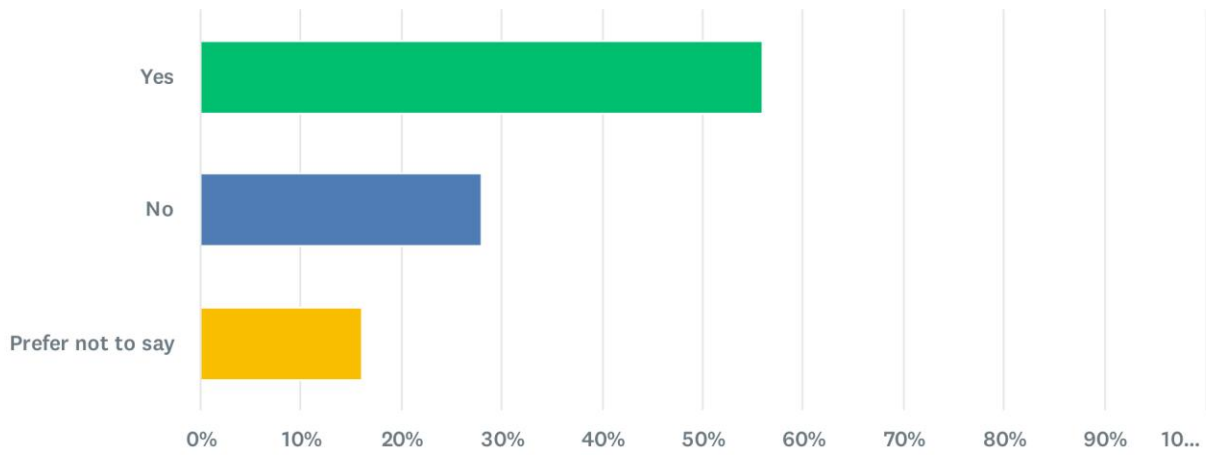


Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
<span style="color: green;">●</span> Asexual	3.85%	2
<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Bisexual	21.15%	11
<span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Gay male	0%	0
<span style="color: teal;">●</span> Heterosexual/straight	36.54%	19
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> Lesbian/Gay female	9.62%	5
<span style="color: purple;">●</span> Pansexual	1.92%	1
<span style="color: pink;">●</span> Prefer not to say	23.08%	12
<span style="color: olive;">●</span> Prefer to self-describe	3.85%	2

## Q12. Please select your ethnicity.

 Arab	0%	0
 Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	1.96%	1
 Asian/Asian British: Chinese	1.96%	1
 Asian/Asian British: Indian	0%	0
 Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	0%	0
 Asian/Asian British: Any other Asian/Asian British Background	0%	0
 Black/Black British: African	3.92%	2
 Black/Black British: Caribbean	0%	0
 Black/Black British: Any other Black/Black British background	0%	0
 Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Asian and White	1.96%	1
 Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Black African and White	0%	0
 Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Black Caribbean and White	1.96%	1
 Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic group background	3.92%	2
 White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh	66.67%	34
 White: Irish	1.96%	1
 White: Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller	0%	0
 White: Roma	0%	0
 White: Any other White background	11.76%	6
 Prefer not to say	0%	0
 Other (please specify) <a href="#">Show responses</a>	3.92%	2

### Q13. Do you have a disability or long-term health condition?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● Yes	56.00%	28
● No	28.00%	14
● Prefer not to say	16.00%	8



# What we learned

Some common themes emerged in the survey responses we received, particularly linked to lead-in times for mental health support, the way young people felt they were spoken to by health professionals and a call for more promotion of available support.

Negative feedback on waiting times included:

*"Lifecycle have been good with me getting an ADHD diagnosis. They were very nice but it takes ages."*

*"Try to make it quicker. Less time waiting."*

*"Waiting list too long for the Children and Young People's Service. Answered the same questionnaires multiple times."*

*"My experience with CYPS wasn't good. I kept getting switched workers and struggled to get through a lot."*

*"Why does everything take so long? We need help when it's in front of us - not in a year or two."*

*"Overall good experience with mental health services. However, really long wait times from six months to two years."*

*"Why does it take so long to get diagnosed? Listen to parents and children. HELP US."*

Comments on the way young people felt they were spoken to included:

*"Professionals need to listen more to young people who are struggling. I've had a few experiences where professionals have spoken over me. This made me feel 'kind of like I didn't matter'."*

*"The counsellor changed lots and I was spoken to like a child."*

*"Why do you not take any notice of what young people think or say? You think you know best."*

*"I would like you to listen to me, as a young person. I think could give a good insight into helping you make services better."*

A number of comments were also made about promotion of mental health services for young people. They included:

*"I think more advertising to promote mental health services would be good."*

*"I think there should be a lot more advertising of what support is out there."*

*"My experience with online (mental) health services is that they have been good but are not promoted enough."*

*"Have more ways of communicating e.g. text - not all do."*

One positive which did emerge was feedback on Stopping Unsafe Relationships Together (SURT) which was singled out for praise by a number of respondents. Comments included:

*"SURT are easy to speak to and give good advice and help."*

*SURT is absolutely amazing."*

*"SURT - amazing with support to mental health."*

# Recommendations

Latest data\* shows the number of new under-18 referrals to secondary mental health services in South Tyneside is significantly higher than the national rate.

In South Tyneside this was 15,685 per 100,000 in 2022/23, compared to a national rate of 9,684 per 100,000 and regional rate of 12,763 per 100,000. The recent trend for this indicator is increasing.

In this context, and based on the common issues raised and feedback given, we would make the following recommendations for consideration by the commissioners and providers of mental health services for young people in South Tyneside.

- The waiting times for initial consultations and diagnosis need to be reduced significantly – we had reports of six months to two years
- Increased signposting to other appropriate services may help reduce waiting times
- More promotion of mental health services for young people is needed in places where they will see messages – eg schools, colleges, community venues, cinemas, fast food outlets, public transport – as well as targeted online campaigns
- There was significant demand for one-to-one sessions, which will require consideration
- While there were a number of negative comments about how young people felt mental health professionals treated/spoke to them, there were several laudatory comments about SURT. Perhaps there is some best practice to share as part of a training package for staff?

We'd like to thank all the organisations who supported us with this piece of research and to all the young people who took the time to complete the survey and share their feedback with us.

\* [Intelligence Update - January 2026, South Tyneside Council](#)





South Tyneside Young Health Ambassadors with Engagement Officer Bev Cook at Openzone at The Word.



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