

# ***Making Sense of Mental Health - Bromley***

*Children and Young People's Mental Health Matters in the London Borough of Bromley*





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# Introduction

## What is Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham?

Healthwatch Bromley is one of 152 local Healthwatch organisations that were established throughout England in 2013, under the provisions of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The dual role of local Healthwatch is to champion the rights of users of health and social care services and to hold the system to account for how well it engages with the public.

The remit of Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham as an independent health and social care watchdog is to be the voice of local people and ensure that health and social care services are safe, effective and designed to meet the needs of patients, social care users and carers.

Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham (HWB&L) gives children, young people and adults in Bromley a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are purchased, provided and reviewed within the borough.

## Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham's core functions are:

- Gathering the views and experiences of service users, carers, and the wider community,
- Making people's views known,
- Involving locals in the commissioning process for health and social care services, and process for their continual scrutiny,
- Referring providers of concern to Healthwatch England, or the CQC, to investigate,
- Providing information about which services are available to access and signposting,
- Collecting views and experiences and communicating them to Healthwatch England,
- Working with the Health and Wellbeing board in Bromley on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Joint Health and Wellbeing strategy (which will influence the commissioning process).



## Strategic Drivers

Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham's role is to support the voices and views of the local community and to ensure their opinions are taken into account when services are commissioned. Healthwatch Bromley & Lewisham (HWBL) went out into the community and spoke to people of all ages and backgrounds to ask them what they believed should be the priorities for Children and Young people for HWBL to investigate in 2015-16. It was evident from feedback received that young people's mental health awareness and understanding was first and foremost in many people's minds.

Mental health has recently been in the spotlight in the media and has had several national campaigns. In the last few years, charities such as Time to Change have led campaigns like 'Time to Talk', aimed to get the nation talking about mental health. Much of the focus has been on reducing the stigma that seems to be present around mental health and emotional wellbeing.

HWBL were also keen to bring the term 'mental wellbeing' to the forefront and to make young people aware that the words "mental health" should not be negative and that everyone has mental health.

It has been reported that 850,000 children in the UK aged 5-16 have mental health problems, with the issues that surround it appearing to be on the rise. One example is that there has been a big increase in the number of young people being admitted to hospital because of self-harm. Over the last ten years this figure has increased by 68%.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the number of young people aged 15-16 with depression nearly doubled between the 1980s and the 2000s.<sup>2</sup>

In Bromley, children and young people (0-19 years) make up 24.2% per cent of the population. Between 2010 and 2013 Bromley had one of the highest rates of emergency presentations to A&E due to self-harm in London, of which it is estimated that a third of patients presenting were already known to CAMHS. Admissions for self-harm are higher than the London rate (233.4 per 1000 compared to 228 per 1000 based on 2013/14 data)<sup>3</sup> and one in ten children in Bromley have been reported as needing support or treatment for mental health conditions.

On a positive note, compared to the England averages, children and young people's wellbeing in Bromley is better. Bromley also has a lower rate of hospital admissions for self-harm than the national average.

In light of this, HWBL set out to speak to as many young people in the borough as possible in a bid to identify the gaps in mental health knowledge and raise awareness. This engagement was undertaken to gain a wider understanding and appreciation of the young people of Bromley's attitude toward mental health and in the hope that it would raise awareness around the services that are available.

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<sup>1</sup> *YoungMinds (2011) 100,000 children and young people could be hospitalised due to self-harm by 2020 warns YoungMinds. London: YoungMinds.*

<sup>2</sup> *Nuffield Foundation (2013) Social trends and mental health: introducing the main findings. London: Nuffield Foundation.*

<sup>3</sup> *Bromley CCG CYP Mental Health Transformation Plan*

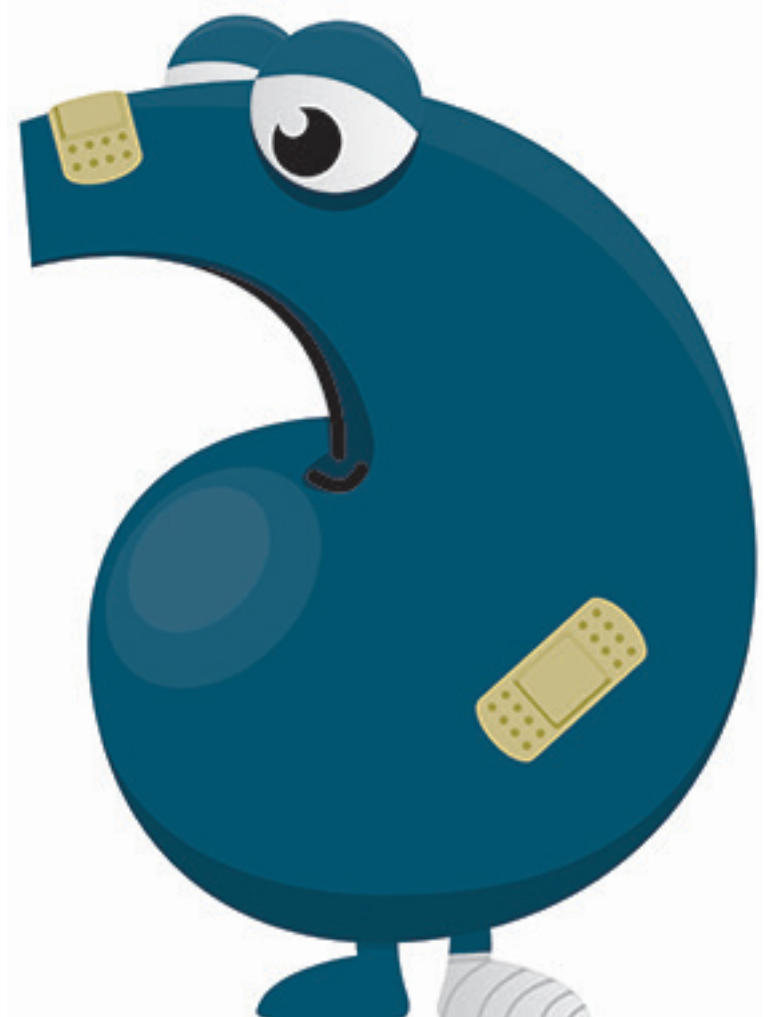


To do this we focused on:

- Raising awareness around mental health and wellbeing. Understanding what the phrase “mental health” actually means to young people.
- Promoting the “5 ways to wellbeing” framework
- Identifying the percentage of young people who feel that they have experienced poor mental health and in which areas.
- Getting feedback on services in the borough.

This report presents the findings that emerged through our engagement. The recommendations that are provided, were led by the young people themselves and are included to support decision making and commissioning of services for them.

This report will be shared with the Bromley Health and Wellbeing Board, the schools and organisations that participated, the Bromley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), the Care Quality Commission (CQC), NHS England and Healthwatch England, The London Borough of Bromley’s Children and Young People Senior Commissioning Manager and the Voluntary and Community Sector.







# Methodology

This report documents the findings of the activities which took place from October 2015 to January 2016. Every secondary school in Bromley was invited to take part in the programme which comprised of a drama style workshop. During the four months allocated to this project, 15 workshops were held across two schools (Newstead Wood School and The Priory School), one charity organisation (Bromley Young Carers) and one Youth Club (JusB). In total, 350 young people aged 10-17 took part. This report aims to identify areas of success in the current system and suggest areas where services could improve. It also aims to recognise what young people understand about mental health.

The workshops were an hour long and different in size. Most were full classes of students, with Bromley Young Carers and JusB consisting of smaller groups.

Each workshop began with an informal chat about mental health. Questions such as “What comes into your head when you hear the words ‘mental health?’” were posed and the young people were encouraged to share their thoughts and views. Responses ranged from expressions such as “mad” “disabled” and “bipolar”. Most words were used in a negative manner.

When asked the question “Who has mental health?” roughly half of all the young people correctly answered “everybody.” The remaining either said that they didn’t know or used responses similar to the first question including “mad people.” Some of the children appeared surprised when it was stated that everyone has mental health. However they gained a better understanding when we explored the matter more deeply with over 95% of the students that took part indicating that they had a better understanding about mental health after the workshop.

It was explained that just like everybody has physical health, they also all have mental health.

It was discussed that people can experience poor mental health just the same as people can experience poor physical health conditions. To give a better understanding, comparisons were made with physical health illnesses, such as the flu. The facilitator explained that anybody can catch the flu and that it didn’t matter what sex, race, etc. you are. This was then compared with mental health conditions and that the same rules apply - it can happen to anybody.

The discussion then moved on to the Five Ways to Wellbeing. The young people were asked, whether we are able to take steps to try and keep our mental health well. There was roughly a 50/50 split in the responses of yes and no. This led on to a discussion about the Five Ways; Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give. Throughout this discussion, the young people were encouraged to talk about what these things might entail.

The participants were then asked to form small groups and devise a short performance about something mental health related. Example of themes chosen by young people for these performances were suicide, depression, peer pressure and bullying. After each performance, the characters and their situations were discussed with the students coming up with different ways that the characters could be helped or supported.

Finally the participants filled out an anonymous questionnaire which comprised of four main questions and several sub questions. Additional questions were included in order to gauge the demographics of the students. The findings of this are presented towards the end of the report as an appendix to the main body of data.

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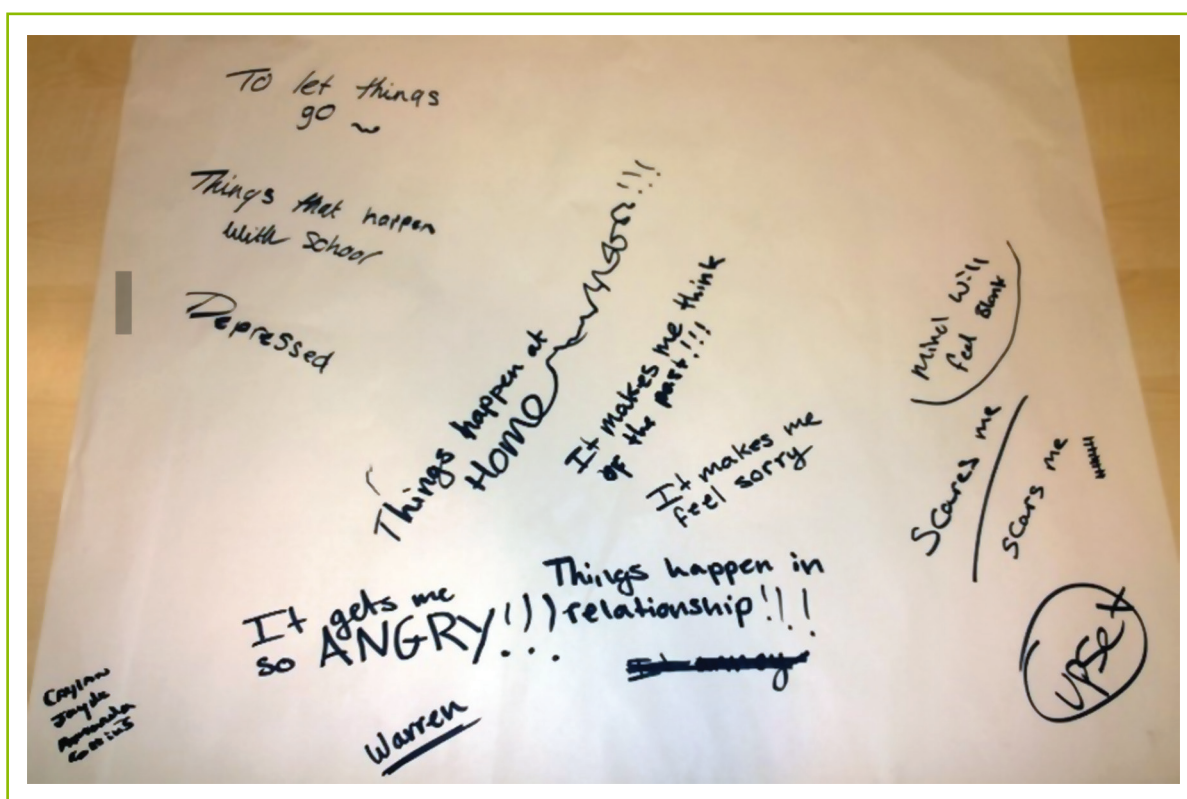
<sup>4</sup> *Appendix 1*

## Findings

350 responses were gathered during the course of the workshops.

The data collected suggests mixed feelings regarding if the young people surveyed believe they have suffered with poor mental health. A high volume stated that they have suffered with stress at some point in their lives. It was also very evident that prior to the workshop taking place that many of the young people who took part were unaware of what mental health means, with over half stating they would not associate with someone who suffers with poor mental health and that such people were “crazy” or “nutters”. According to feedback given, 95% of the children that took part in the workshops were also unaware that they could help keep their mental health well and none of them had heard of the Five Ways to Wellbeing.

Although only a small number of the young people involved in the workshops have used counselling services, either formal or informal, the data collected also suggests that the young service user’s views of counselling services within the London Borough of Bromley’s are mixed. Getting support at school appears to be the most popular option with more than one student, via written feedback, making the suggestion that school counsellors should be more readily available for them to speak to.



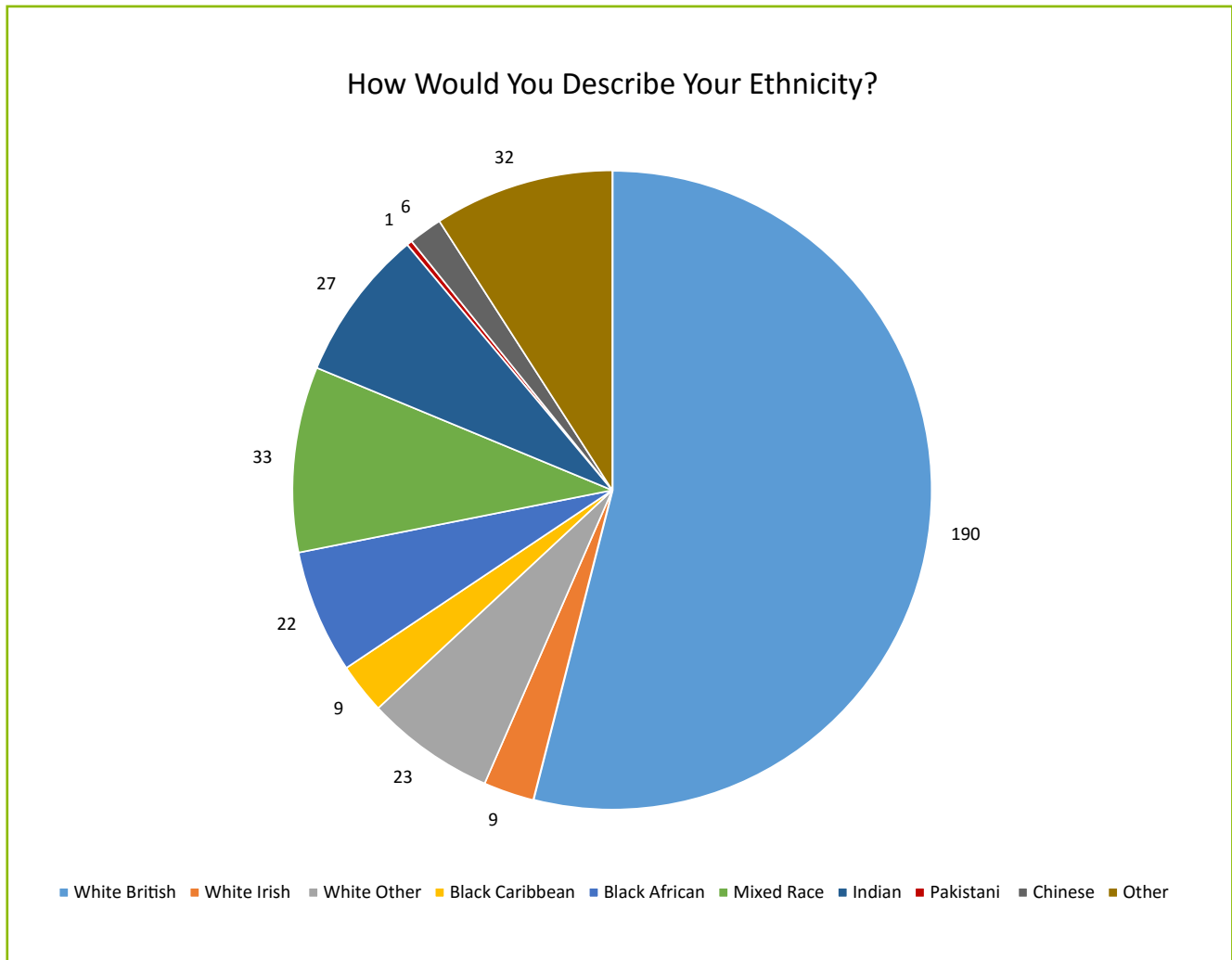




# Demographics

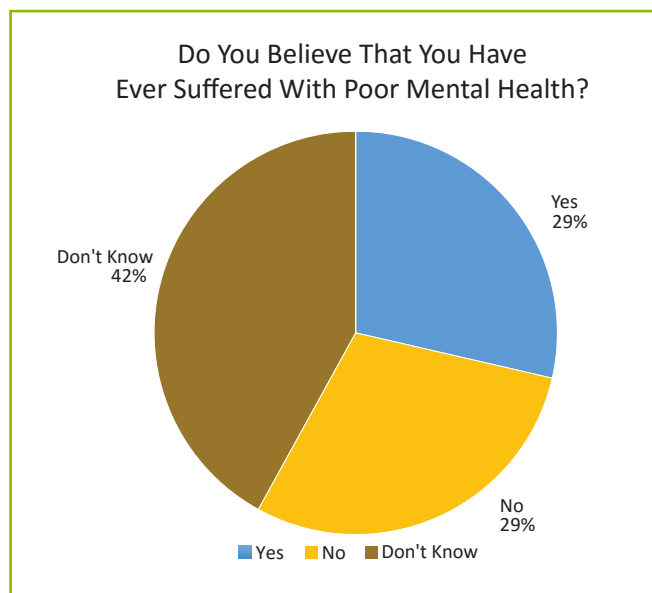
Of those who took part in the study, 71% were 12 years and 23% were aged 13. The remaining students were aged 11 and 14-17. This is mainly due to a targeted approach to year eight forms.

54% of the young people that were surveyed identified as being from a White British background. 9% described themselves as being Mixed Race, a further 9% chose other. The chart below gives a full breakdown of the diversity of the participants.





# Overview

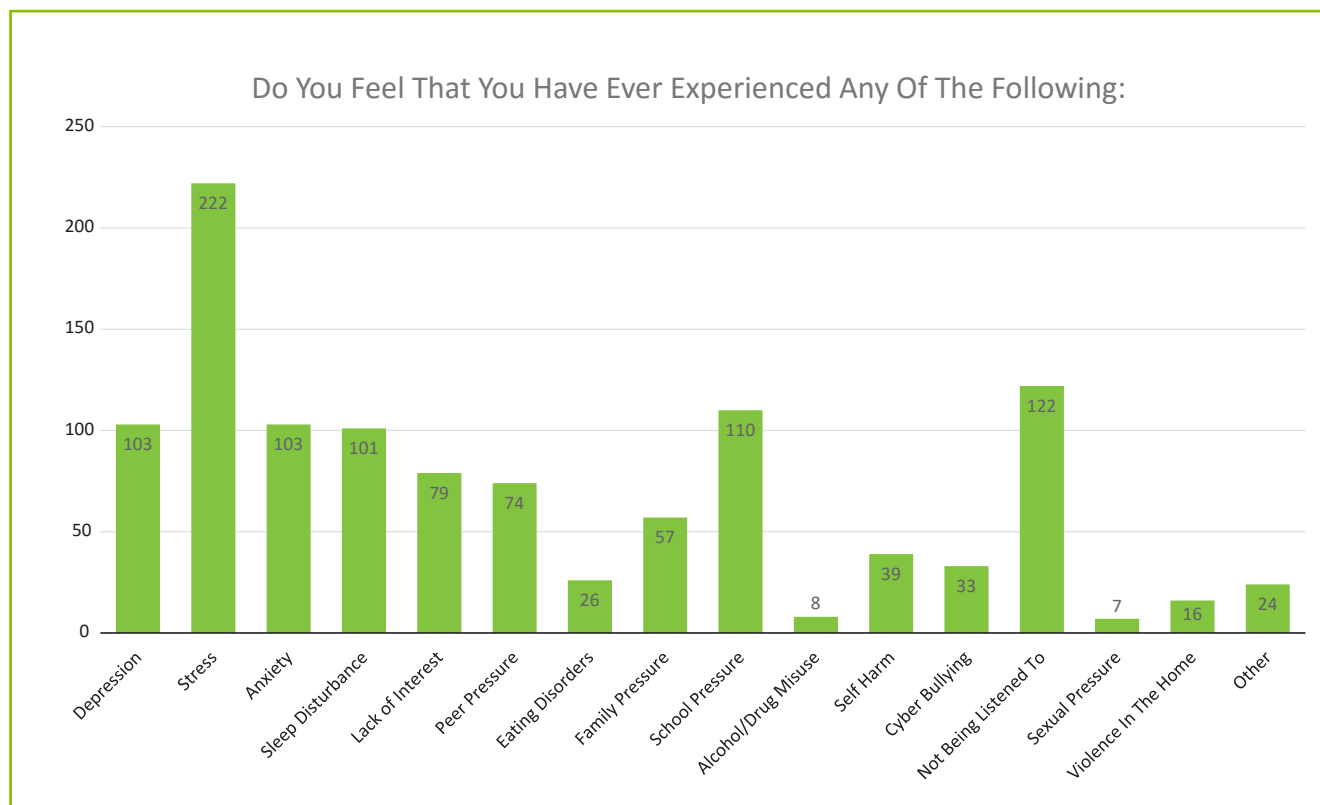


The survey asked if the young person believe they have ever suffered with poor mental health. 29% said they did, with a further 29% stating they did not and 42% being unsure.

However, many of the young people who didn't believe that they had ever suffered with poor mental health, did admit to experiencing issues such as stress, "depression" and anxiety.

The figure below shows that 222 out of the 350 students surveyed admit to dealing with stress at some point in their lives with 103 believing that they have suffered with "depression". Furthermore, 122 young people young people feel that they are not being listened to by professionals, teachers and parents. 110 of those surveyed say they have experienced school pressure with another 103 admitting to suffering with anxiety. With 101 stating they have issues with sleep disturbance and another 79 suffering with lack of interest, this could be an indicator of other underlying mental health conditions.

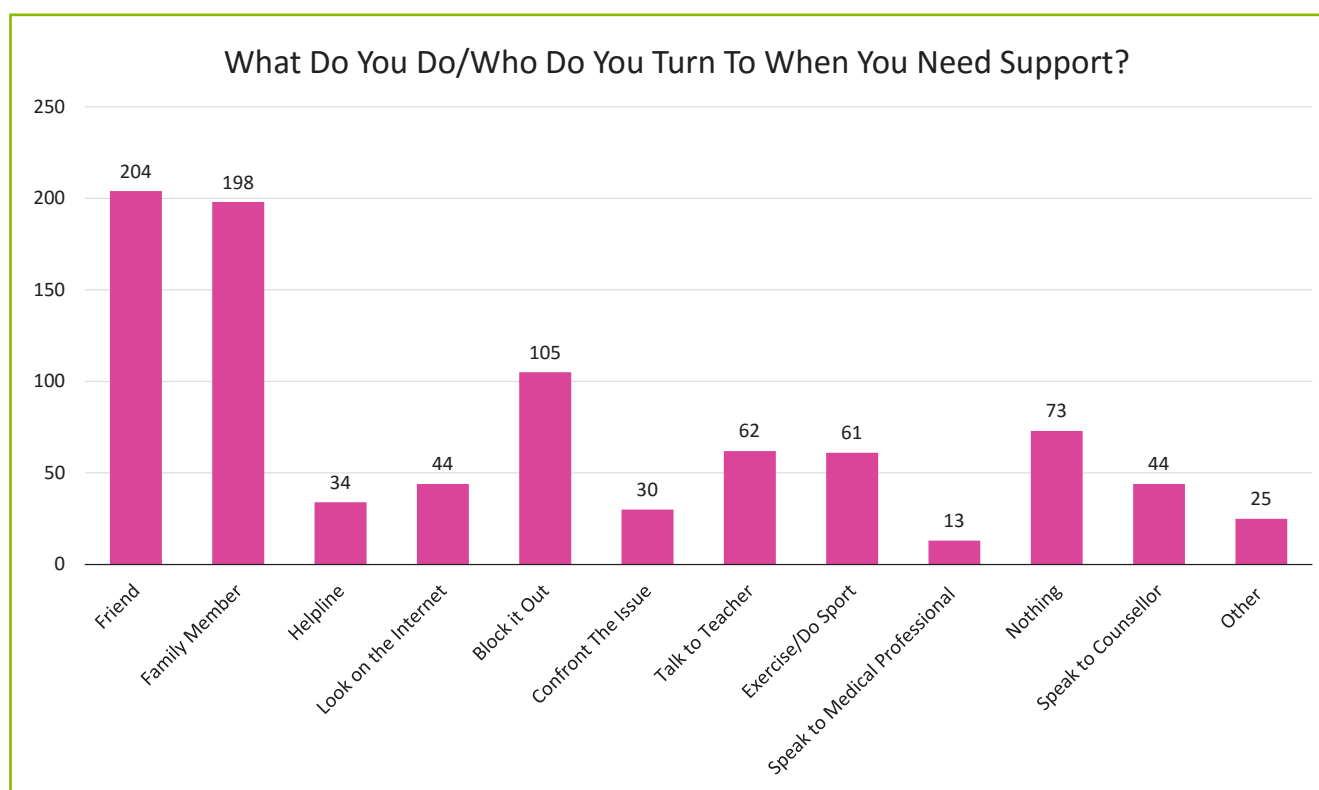
The "other" options included bullying, obsession, self-hate, grief, illness at home, family divorce, panic attacks and questioning sexuality.





## Support

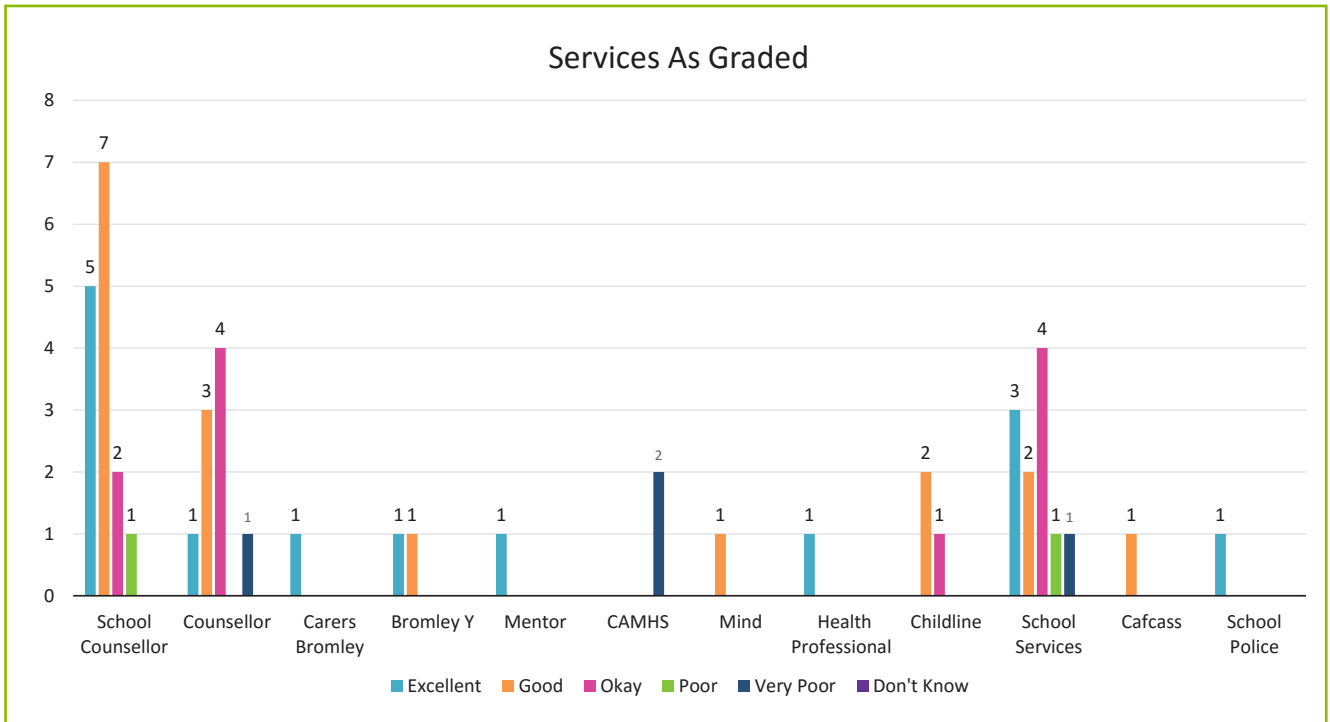
The survey asked who young people turn to or what do they do when they require support. The large majority of answers (402) suggested that they would speak to a friend and/or a family member. 73 i.e. 29% stated that they would do nothing.



The "Other" option produced answers such as:

- Watch anime
- Read
- Social media
- Write
- Talk to my mentor

When asked if they had ever used any counselling services, including teachers, helplines etc. 76% of the young people answered no, 9% were unsure if they had accessed such services and 15% said that they had. The participants that indicated that they had used a source of counselling were then asked to name (if possible) and grade the support they received. The results were as follows:



Our analysis shows that there is very mixed responses. A large majority have stated that they have used school counsellors and other school services -this included talking to teachers and other members of staff. One young person who rated a school service as “very poor” commented that she was unhappy as “they went and told my mum everything.” Yet another comment from a student who used a school service said that “They let me get everything out” and rated them as “excellent”. Another student said that she spoke to her teacher who “really helped me and got everything sorted out.”

Fifteen young people indicated that they have used a school councillor. Most of the ratings ranged from “excellent” to “good” with comments such as “They helped me build my confidence.” and “she listens and understands me”. One student who was recommended to use a school councillor by her social worker said that “She helps me, understands me and lets me talk about anything.” Only one young person rated school their school councillor as “very poor” and their reasoning was that “they didn’t solve it”

Outside of school counselling was also largely mixed, with comments ranging from “They gave advice and helped me” to one young person commenting that “I was forced to go, I didn’t want to say anything. They didn’t help anything.” A young person who rated outside counselling as “okay” said that she found it “generic.”

Two young people stated that they have used CAMHS for support. They both rated it as “very poor” with one young person commenting that “They put me on the spot and didn’t help at all.”



## Conclusions and Recommendations

Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham's engagement with these young people showed that the large majority of those that took part in the workshops were initially unaware of what mental health means and there was a lot of stigma surrounding mental health illness. The young people were asked after the session to write or speak about what they had learned. It was clear that, through the workshop they went away with a better understanding of what to do and where they might seek support if the need arises in the future. Young people said this themselves.



***"I found the workshop helpful and learnt things I found essential to understand."***

***"I think people should be aware of others and how they might feel. I think the workshop helped with that and gave us a better understanding of what mental health is."***

***"It made us aware what other people might be going through."***

***"I learnt different ways of mental health that I never knew before which was surprising."***

***"I think the workshop was very helpful for me understanding more about mental health."***

***"I enjoyed this workshop and it has made me feel like I'm more aware of the mental health issues and will be more aware to look out for it."***

***"Very good, now I understand the depressing side of the world wider and I feel that I can now look out for someone if they need help."***

***"I was able to understand more about mental health and I think it helped me a lot."***

***"I think that it has helped me understand what mental health really is."***

***"I learnt a lot. I will use this help in the future"***

***"It was informative and told us what we could do if we had disorientating mental health, as well as giving in a practical way possible situations."***

***"Today was important to me because it happens to people and we need to know about this stuff."***

***"More workshops like this are needed for awareness and support."***





On a large scale it appears that children need to be given information and an insight into mental health at a younger age than it appears that they are currently receiving it - especially as half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14.<sup>5</sup> This could help to combat the stigma surrounding it as if the young people were better educated about this subject from a younger age, they would have a better understanding about it. Also, a number of children made the suggestion that they would like counsellors more readily available in their schools.

It is interesting to notice that some students made comments about how difficult it is to speak to a stranger about their problems, whilst others said that it was hard to speak to teachers/counsellors that that they do know. It is evident that the young people need to be given a choice as to what kind of support they can engage with as they all have different preferences.

Finally, some children fed back that when they feel that are experiencing poor mental health, they take part in recreational activities - this could be another form of support/therapy.

## Recommendations from the young people:

- Children are educated at primary school age around what mental health is in order to stop stigma occurring.
- All young people should be taught the Five Ways of Wellbeing thus learning how to retain their good mental health and emotional resilience.
- Young people should have a choice on who they get support from - their preference for someone they know or do not know should be respected.
- School counsellors should be more readily available in schools.
- Young people should be aware of what services are available for them, both locally and nationally, so that they have a choice on which to use.
- The importance of youth clubs is recognised as many young people use recreational activities as support.

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<sup>5</sup> *National Comorbidity Survey Replication, NIMH, 2005 (<http://1.usa.gov/1hzshe2>)*



## Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham would like to thank the staff and students at Newstead Wood School, The Priory School, Bromley Young Carers and all the young people that took part in the workshops and surveys. We would also like to thank our volunteers that helped us with this project.



# Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Please fill out this survey by circling the answers where appropriate. This survey is anonymous.

**Do you believe that you have ever suffered with poor mental health?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

**Do you feel that you have experienced any of the following?**

- Depression
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Sleep Disturbance
- Lack of Interest
- Peer Pressure
- Eating Disorders
- Family Pressure
- School Pressure
- Alcohol/Drug Misuse
- Self-Harm
- Cyber Bullying
- Not Being Listened To
- Sexual Pressure

Violence In The Home

Other (Please state)

**When or if you feel that you need support with any of the above, where might you turn to and/or what may you do?**

- Friend
- Family Member
- Helpline
- Look on the internet
- Block It Out
- Confront The Issue
- Speak To A Teacher
- Exercise/Do Sport
- Medical Professional
- Do Nothing
- Counsellor
- Other (Please state)



**Have you ever used any counselling services? This can include talking to a health professional, a school counsellor, online and/or telephone counselling.**

Yes (please state which service)

No

Not Sure

**If applicable, how would you rate that service?**

Excellent

Good

Okay

Poor

Very Poor

Don't Know

Why did you choose that rating?

**Do you have any comments that you would like to make about this workshop?**

**I would describe my ethnic origin as:**

**WHITE**

White British  Irish

White other

**BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH**

Black Caribbean  Black African

**MIXED**

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

**ASIAN**

Indian  Pakistani

Bangladeshi  Chinese

OTHER  (Please state)

**Do you consider yourself to have a disability?**

Yes  No

**AGE:**

**GENDER:**

Female  Male

**Many Thanks for completing this survey! If you would like to be contacted to talk further about anything regarding this questionnaire, please state your name, mobile number and/or e-mail address below:**

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