Report produced by: Vikki Versey (YPHA) *June – August 2015*
Research gathered by: Vikki Versey (YPHA)

What does a good mental health offer look like for children and young people in Suffolk?

1) Summary of project:

This report will discuss the views, opinions and knowledge of young people to gain an insight on what they believe is their way to remain happy, and how easily they believe health and social care services (specifically mental health) are accessible.

I have broken down this report into a series of sections, with the views of the young people at the centre, and then what this can enable us to do to change mental health and wellbeing services.

The First sections include:

- *"Do you think mental health education should be taught in schools?"*
- *"Do you/ did you feel comfortable talking to your teachers about your problems?"*
- *"If your friend was having problems, would you speak to anyone about it?"*
- *"If you were upset, would you know where to go?"*
- *"Do you understand what mental health is?"*
- *"Do you know what CAMHs is?"*

After each closed question, I have asked the young people taking part to give a brief overview of why they believe their answer is justified, and to give a little detail and weight to their answer.

The Second sections include:

- *"Are you happy with what is being taught in PSHE?"*
- *"What do you think should be taught in PSHE?"*
- *"Preferable subjects"*
- *"Do you find school nurses accessible?"*
- *"What do you need from a school nurse/ what can they do differently?"*
- *"What is the most prominent need"*

After each closed question in this section I have done the same as the previous section and asked the young people why they believe their answer is valid.

The Third sections include:

- *"On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the worst, 10 being the best) how would you rate your mental health?"*
- *"On average, how much moderate exercise do you do daily?"*
- *"Do you believe there is a correlation between exercise and positive mental health?"*
- *"Do you believe that mental health problems amongst young people are increasing?"*

The Fourth sections include:

2) Aims and objectives:

The aim of this project was to engage with young people in a relaxed setting to identify what young people think about their own mental health and wellbeing, what services look like and feel like, and how best to keep themselves happy. From this, I hope to be able to identify key priorities and issues concerning young people to highlight what needs to be improved, and what is working well within statutory services.

3) Participant demographics:

For this project I have met or spoken with 241 young people in total. I met with 69 young people from voluntary and community sector organisations/ projects and youth forums/ focus groups. These include; Level 2 (Felixstowe), Club 4 Teenz (Ipswich), C2C (County wide), NSFT (Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust) Suffolk Youth Council (County wide), Eden's Project (Sudbury), and Glemsford Youth Club (Glemsford).

I have also spoken with 172 of my own peers.

In sections 1 & 2 I spoke with a mixture of 169 young people, both from youth groups/ forums and my own peers. In sections 3 I spoke with another 72 of my own peers.

I have spoken to the young people via social media, face to face, and engagement sessions

I have struggled with youth engagement over the summer months, so I spoke with my own peers from school and college (who are also my age (18/19)). This has helped to boost my confidence greatly, and I hope to utilise this confidence in my next engagement sessions.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS				241			
NO. OF BOYS				120			
NO. OF GIRLS				121			
AGES OF PARTICIPANTS:	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	5	10	10	18	21	23	107	47

BOY TO GIRL RATIO

- BOY 50%
- GIRL 50%

AGES OF PARTICIPANTS

- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19

2% 4% 4% 7% 9% 10% 44% 20%
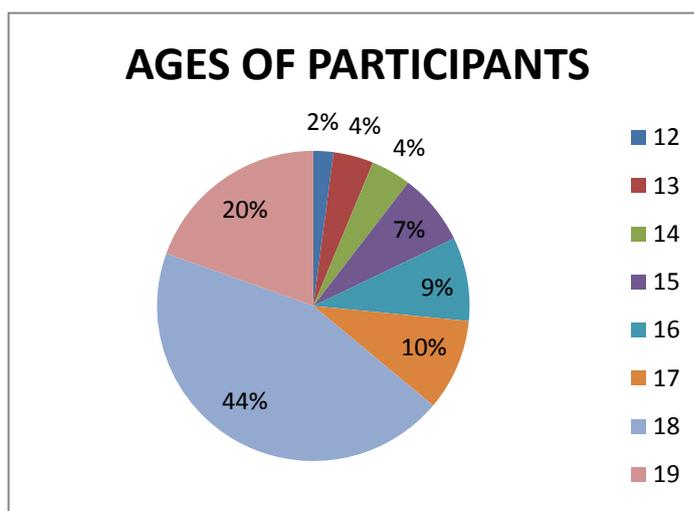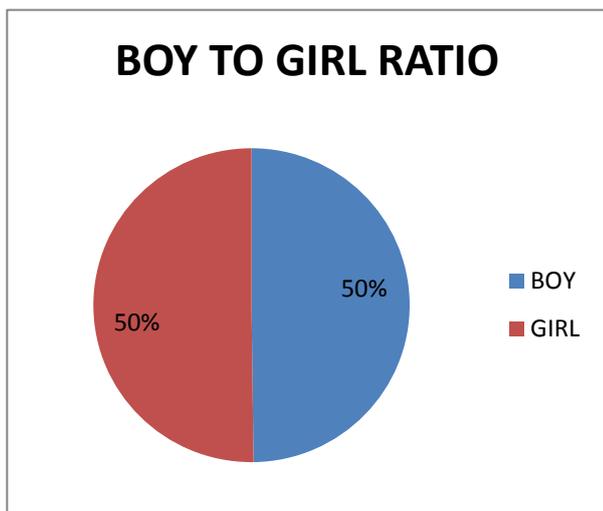
4) Summary of findings:

SECTION ONE: (in this section I spoke with 169 young people)

Do you think mental health education should be taught in schools?

YES	NO
165	4

Why?

- Mental health is a big issue and isn't currently dealt with correctly
- I don't fully understand it
- I want to know how to take actions in the case of a crisis
- I believe that students/children should be made aware of mental health issues early on so that they understand it, and so that those that are suffering with mental health issues understand that they are not alone and how to deal with it. However caution should be taken as it could be a negative, causing opposite effects.
- I think there is a lack of understanding that needs to be addressed
- Most definitely, it's just as important as sex education in my opinion
- Yes I do, so then children can be more sympathetic towards others going through it, as a self harmer I got bullied for being depressed as nobody understood and believed I was a freak. *(This particular person has been referred through the CAMHS pathway)*
- I think it should be a vital part of the curriculum, not enough people are aware of mental illnesses as they're never taught about it
- Yes, although it would be helpful if there was a person to talk to specifically about mental health instead of talking to teachers

- Yes I also think teachers should be more aware of self confidence issues with teens and be more compassionate towards problems that may reflect in their behaviour in a classroom environment

Do you feel comfortable about talking to your teachers about your problems?

YES	NO
11	158

Why?

- Teachers may not stick to confidentiality rules
- Teachers don't act like they care
- I may get in trouble if I 'slate' the school (e.g. school work is too much, a specific teacher is seen as 'bullying' them)
- Not particularly, there was only a select few that I felt I could talk to
- Unless they were a support helper, no I did not, school was my escape in a way, it was my way to get away from the mess that was my life for the day
- No, not particularly. I never felt comfortable enough around any of the teachers in high school to open up to
- No I didn't I feel they stigmatised me more
- No most of them were horrible especially the ones in a position of power

If your friend had mental health problems, would you speak to anyone about it?

YES	NO
36	133

Why?

YES:

- I want to help my friends to get better
- I don't like seeing my friends sad or nervous
- This is dependent upon the nature of the problem whether I felt that the friend was in any danger, to themselves or others if they were then I would say something. If they asked me not to say anything that they just wanted someone to talk to, and they didn't seem in immediate or soon pending distress then no. However if anything they disclosed I felt needed to be said to others then yes I definitely would.
- I would try and help them as best as I could, but if I felt that they could benefit from seeing someone then I would try and advise them to

NO:

- My friend may not want help
- I don't want them to think I'm 'grassing them up'
- I don't want my friend to dislike me because I've told their secrets
- I'd be very tempted to, it depends on the circumstance & whether or not I think they wanted to keep it 'confidential'/'private'.
- I would never just tell, I'd always make sure they were comfortable and ready to talk to someone else

If you were upset would you know where to go?

YES	NO
152	17

Where would you go?

YES:

- Doctor
- Teacher
- Family
- Friend
- Boyfriend/ girlfriend

NO:

- Doctors don't care about my problems
- I struggle to know where to go, so most of the time I stay by myself

Do you understand what mental health is?

YES	NO
135	34

Do you know what CAMHS is?

YES	NO
53	116

Other comments from young people: (About the CAMHs Service)

- The staff are very kind and caring people
- The staff are helpful
- Everyone seems welcoming
- I want rooms to be more colourful and bright
- I want the staff to be good looking

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- I want a chilled out environment
- I want to feel safe and comfortable
- The environment smells too clinical and is way too clean
- I would like marshmallows
- I would like to sit down with those high up and those most marginalised by the current mental health system to attempt to implement changes, as well as a stratified survey asking people from all walks of life how they would like the system to be altered. By working with those affected and those making changes very closely a more effective understanding and development program specific to each case and each person may be easier to implement
- I think mental health representatives should also host meetings not just in colleges and schools but in the workplace as well everyone goes on about health and safety like work places just have physical threats to health and more thought should go into dangers to mental health as well.
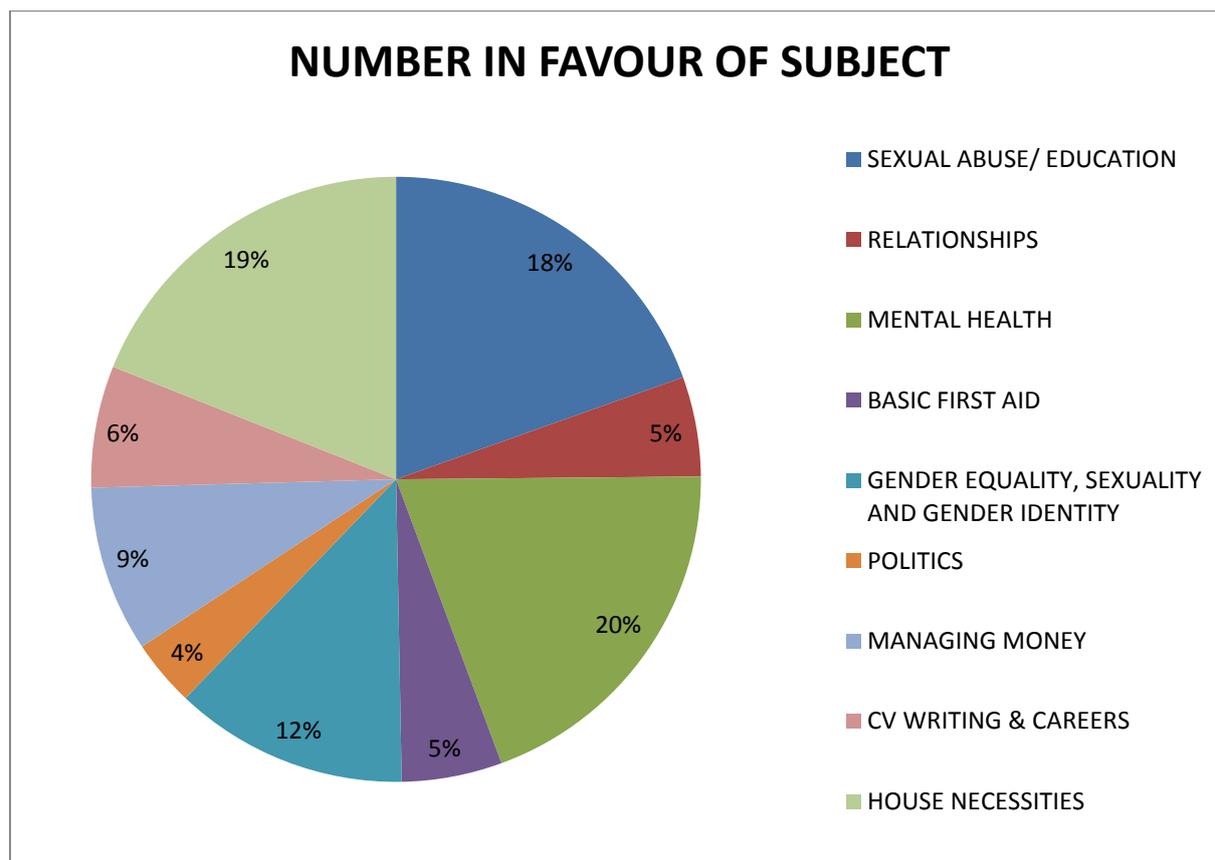
SECTION TWO: (in this section I spoke with 169 young people)

Are you happy with what is being taught is PSHE?

YES	NO
54	115

What do you think should be taught in PSHE?

SUBJECT	NUMBER IN FAVOUR	% OF NUMBER
SEXUAL ABUSE/ SEX EDUCATION (INCL STDS)	33	20%
HEALTH RELATIONSHIPS (WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS AND PARTNER)	9	5%
MENTAL HELATH AND HOW TO COPE WITH IT	33	20%
BASIC FIRST AID	9	5%
GENDER EQUALITY, LEARNING ABOUT YOUR SEXUALITY AND GENDER	21	12%
POLITICS, WORLD NEWS AND GOVERNMENTS	6	4%
MANAGING MONEY	15	9%
CV WRITING AND CAREERS	11	7%
HOUSEHOLD SKILLS (PAYING BILLS, HOW TO COOK AND CLEAN)	32	18%

NUMBER IN FAVOUR OF SUBJECT

Legend:
- SEXUAL ABUSE/ EDUCATION
- RELATIONSHIPS
- MENTAL HEALTH
- BASIC FIRST AID
- GENDER EQUALITY, SEXUALITY AND GENDER IDENTITY
- POLITICS
- MANAGING MONEY
- CV WRITING & CAREERS
- HOUSE NECESSITIES

Pie chart values: 18%, 5%, 20%, 5%, 12%, 4%, 9%, 6%, 19%

COMMENTS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE:

- How to avoid becoming vulnerable outside of school... educate the truth more about sexual abuse and its long term affects
- Have someone on call outside of school hours
- educate the children to be more open about their feelings and not to be scared to speak up for themselves
- Sex and relationships, how to handle money
- Might of helped if in that lessons teachers taught you how to write a cv, apply for jobs, about being taxed and things like that
- Teach basic first aid
- Mental Illnesses need to be covered in schools; too many children and young adults are completely unaware of what most mental illnesses are. Most children don't even know what a panic attack is.
- I think more needs to be said about particular illnesses especially things like anxiety since people still think you can just 'snap out of it' etc. and it's obviously wrong, as well as the distinctions between types of depression. Also, I think from a much, much younger age people should be taught about all different types of relationship, including homosexual relationships
- Mental health awareness, things about gender/sexuality/sex, more about drugs/peer pressure

- I think they needed to teach more on mental health and maybe sexual education... Cos a lot of teenagers say they're not aware.
- I think we should be taught more about tax and buying/renting housing
- It will be better used to learn practical life skills such as tax, utility bills. And about equality with different conditions.
- I'd liked to have been taught stuff like, understanding how money works the adult world, and general social rights and wrongs, at least.
- The dangers of drugs, careers, a bit on politics
- Tips/lessons on managing your own household for the future
- The important stuff was wildly missed out or covered very briefly with little sensitivity or professionalism. It was offered for one session fortnightly at an age where it really mattered (during years 10 and 11) and seemed to approach a sociological aspect of social education instead of offering wisdom on things like sex education, mental health, etc. etc.
- I think that I would have been happier if a more rounded and just as important subject such as mental health and positivity was taught, and the effects of stress and what can be done to help.
- I think a better in site into other sorts of relationships other than heterosexual relationships would be beneficial to younger children to help combat the stigma and judgemental behaviour towards bisexual or homosexual relationships
- I'd love there to be more inclusive sexual education and discussions on gender and sexuality, discussions/awareness about mental health, and lessons on more basic "life skills" like understanding government/ ways into employment/ how taxes work and all that boring stuff
- If I had to choose then I'd probably bring bullying and mental health more into the picture. I know it can be a sensitive subject but it shouldn't be ignored like it isn't happening to thousands of people around us.
- I would like to see more taught about social situations when going on a date\being asked out or if a car stops a youngster in the street. More about contraception, periods, sex, smoking & drugs.
- Some proper sex Ed would have been useful, the dangers of things like smoking, drinking, drugs etc. rather than what I was taught in primary school, help with employment and mental health awareness.
- I felt like PSHE was a bit of a waste of time and some important issues were not discussed which could've been a lot more beneficial
- I would have like there to have been a bit of a discussion about mental health/ disabilities as that was something that didn't occur during our lessons, for the whole 5 years I was at high school.
- Everything right down to the basic of how we need to learn to cherish and look after our body's, like fair enough there's the pill and paracetamol but we had no idea they were chemicals and can do harm as well as good
- If I could choose what was taught, I would've wanted them to highlight mental illness and rape a lot more. These were both things that I've had first hand experience with, and the school I was at didn't treat it as a serious matter. Mental illnesses weren't real because you couldn't see them, and panic attacks were just children seeking attention- nobody ever took it seriously as nobody understood that mental illnesses effect different people in different
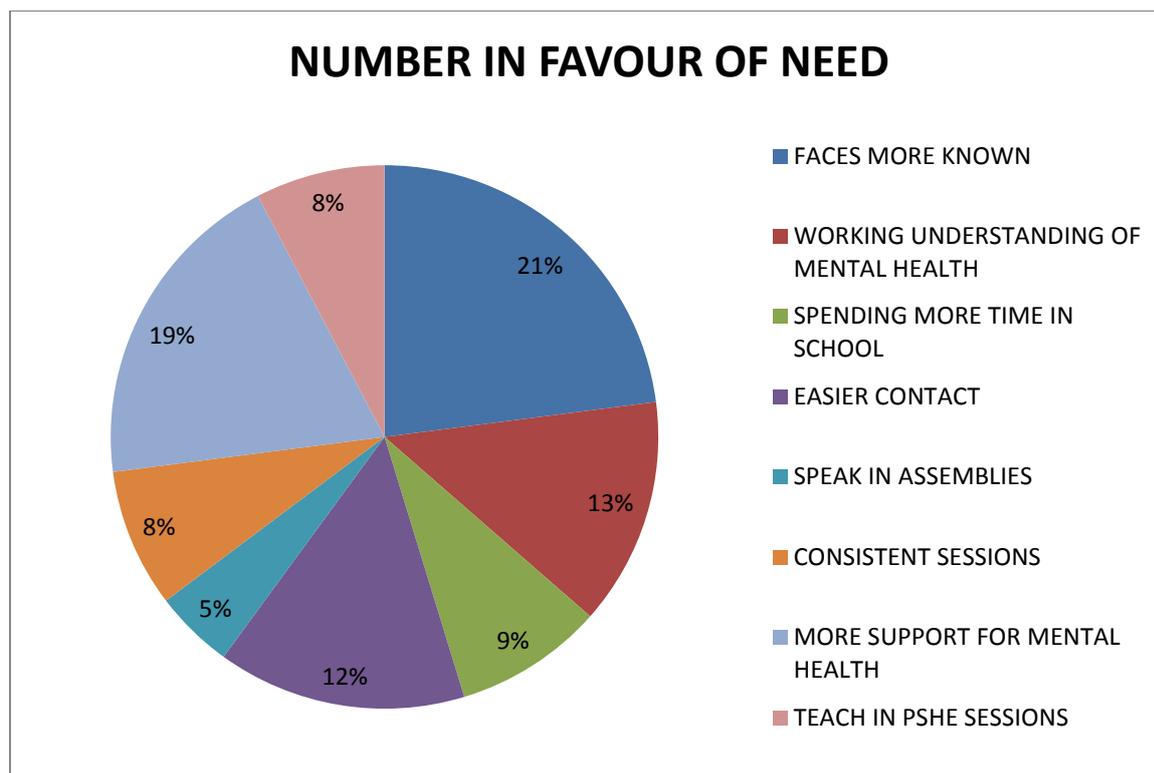
ways, there isn't just one set of 'symptoms'. As for rape, it was sadly a common thing, but I
one of the few that spoke out about it and was told I was 'egging him on' and was laughed at
- nobody ever highlighted the fact that all these things can happen to males too, which is
sad, and it should be highlighted in PSHE from a young age in my opinion. The lack of gender
equality in the teachings is upsetting. (This person has been referred through the CAMHs
Service).

Do you find school nurses accessible?

YES	NO
56	113

What do you need from a school nurse/ what do you think they can do differently?

NEED	NUMBER IN FAVOUR	% OF NUMBER
FACES MORE KNOWN/ INTRODUCTION	39	23%
WORKING UNDERSTANDING OF MENTAL HEALTH	23	13%
SPENDING MORE TIME IN SCHOOL	15	9%
EASIER TO CONTACT	25	15%
PRESENTING IN ASSEMBLIES	8	5%
CONSISTENT SESSIONS (NOT JUST DROP INS)	14	8%
MORE SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH	33	20%
TEACH IN PSHE	13	7%

NUMBER IN FAVOUR OF NEED

Legend:
- FACES MORE KNOWN
- WORKING UNDERSTANDING OF MENTAL HEALTH
- SPENDING MORE TIME IN SCHOOL
- EASIER CONTACT
- SPEAK IN ASSEMBLIES
- CONSISTENT SESSIONS
- MORE SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH
- TEACH IN PSHE SESSIONS

YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS:

- Simply make their faces more known. I couldn't tell you the name of mine or what she looked like
- If I were still at school and had any mental health issues that I wanted or needed to talk about, I'd want them to have a working understanding of such issues, so they could at least give me some advice, and contact someone else who could help me
- More support with mental health, more so depression and bullying
- I felt like I couldn't speak to the school nurse because of the lack of time she spent in the school with the students, so I couldn't build enough trust to feel comfortable opening up
- they should be educated in how to deal with mental health disorders as well as physical
- I'm not actually sure what services our school nurse provided
- I feel update training should've provided however from what I required they need no change
- In my school at least the people that worked with the "sick room" were office staff that had little to no understanding of what to do when someone was ill or injured so it would have been good if they could assess an injury and know whether serious action, like hospital, should be taken.
- Advice on contraception- they could be more widely advertised and more promoted within schools
- They could be made easier to contact when needed
- They need to be made more approachable, I found it quite awkward going to talk to women all the time, if a man was available to talk to it may be more useful for boys especially

- More involvement in students wellbeing, as part of the school instead of a part time visiting type role, and a more personal involvement that can be in private to reduce stress upon those who need help. May not be possible, but in a perfect world.
- I had counselling due to being estranged from my parents, I didn't find it very useful, as my councillor seemed very theory based, and did not 'connect' with my problems very well. Was more like him reading a script?
- From my experience, I think school nurses should be there for ore than just cuts and bruises that happen on the play ground, they should be more available to talk about personal problems so that school age children feel like they have someone to talk to
- They should introduce themselves... Teach in PSHE so pupils know them and welcome pupils to see them
- More often / consistent sessions for concerned students opposed to unreliable drop in sessions.
- I would have liked to have known who they are and what times they are in more clearly and then I would use them for advice on health, whether it is sexual, mental, physical etc...
- I would to have liked to have seen them there more times a week to make them accessible for people who need them
- They treated us like children, we may of been kids but we're human just like them and it was almost as if we were more of a hassle to them then we were worth

SECTION THREE: (in this section I spoke with 72 young people)

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the lowest, 10 being the highest) how would you rate your mental health?

RATING	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
ANSWER	*0*	*2*	*7*	*4*	*13*	*9*	*12*	*8*	*9*	*8*

72 Young people gave their mental health an average rating of: 7.2

On average, how much moderate exercise do you do daily?

Less than 30mins	About 30mins	About 1 hour	More than 1 hour
20	21	19	12

Do you believe there is a correlation between positive mental health and exercise?

Yes	No
66	6

Do you believe mental health problems amongst young people are increasing?

Yes	No
61	11

Comments from young people:

- Going for a run helps to clear a mind
- I think that mental health requires more attention as its a part of the health service that isn't really looked at much
- I don't believe mental health problems are increasing, but I do believe people are more aware of them now.
- I don't believe mental health problems are increasing but I feel that there is more awareness/ people talking about it, so more people are realising that they may have this condition, and are getting help meaning that there seems to be more mental health conditions.
- Exercising isn't the answer to mental health, how ever it does relieve stress
- As someone who monitors their own mental health I know how important physical activity and exercise is to increase ones mood and mind-set. Besides the chemicals and hormone related research the social aspects of training are also a big part in increasing ones mood. Overall I believe those with mental problems should be introduced into exercise even if minor
- It can be that lack of physical activity (especially when one considers themselves to be fat) that could be a factor in depression, or at least cause one to be upset, especially if they try to start doing some physical activities but failing. Being physically active and therefore healthier, can usually lead to a better mental health, or at least a better self image/confidence (which I believe can be a factor of some forms of mental illness)
- The reason I think this is that is because they may not be increasing but just becoming more acknowledged, especially due to the awareness and wide range of medical help provided now. I do believe physical exercise can aid the recovery of mental illnesses, but it is not a cure, and people can not recover from depression even with the help of exercise
- Happiness isn't something everyone feels. It's chemical, and sometimes people just can't find happiness in things they like, I'm like that. Sometimes this feels like it will never end, but it does, it can just come back.
- Mental health is an issue that is highlighted more frequently in today's society than ever before, yet a lack of understanding of the effects it has on a person as well as the fact it affects both genders. Progress will be made if we discuss how to keep a positive mental attitude with children from a young age in schools
- More people need help when over coming mental health problems, in my opinion there is not enough support.
- **I wish people could see just how much how I feel presses on my shoulders and hides behind my grin, but, alas I am too scared of what lies within my cranium as well as others'.**

Current updates for statistics in Suffolk and England

Statistics from young minds:

- 1 in 10 children and young people aged 5 - 16 suffer from a diagnosable mental health disorder - that is around three children in every class.
- Between 1 in every 12 and 1 in 15 children and young people deliberately self-harm.
- 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%.
- More than half of all adults with mental health problems were diagnosed in childhood. Less than half were treated appropriately at the time.
- Nearly 80,000 children and young people suffer from severe depression.
- Over 8,000 children aged less than 10 years old suffer from severe depression.
- 72% of children in care have behavioural or emotional problems - these are some of the most vulnerable people in our society.
- 95% of imprisoned young offenders have a mental health disorder. Many of them are struggling with more than one disorder.
- The number of young people aged 15-16 with depression nearly doubled between the 1980s and the 2000s.
- The proportion of young people aged 15-16 with a conduct disorder more than doubled between 1974 and 1999

(www.youngminds.co.uk)

General statistics:

- Figures released on 19/2/2015 show that the suicide rate has risen steadily since 2007 whereas before then the rate had been falling. The rate of male suicides has shown the most marked increase. Suicide is the leading cause of death in men and women aged 20-34. In 2013 there were 252 more suicides than in 2012. However, we hardly need the Office of National Statistics to tell us that we have a serious problem. In Norfolk and Suffolk we have witnessed numerous tragedies over the last 2 years. Quite a number of these tragedies involved people already known to mental health services.
- In comparison with the 2007/08-2009/10 period, the rate of young people aged 10 to 24 years who are admitted to hospital as a result of self-harm is higher in the 2010/11- 2012/13 period. The admission rate in the 2010/11- 2012/13 period is similar to the England average. Nationally, levels of self-harm are higher among young women than young men. Young people aged 10 to 24 years admitted to hospital as a result of self-harm (rate per 100,000 population aged 10 to 24 years) :

(http://norfolksuffolkmentalhealthcrisis.org.uk/forums/topic/suicide-rate-rising-figures-released-by-office-of-national-statistics/)

Young people aged 10 to 24 years admitted to hospital as a result of self-harm (rate per 100,000 population aged 10 to 24 years)
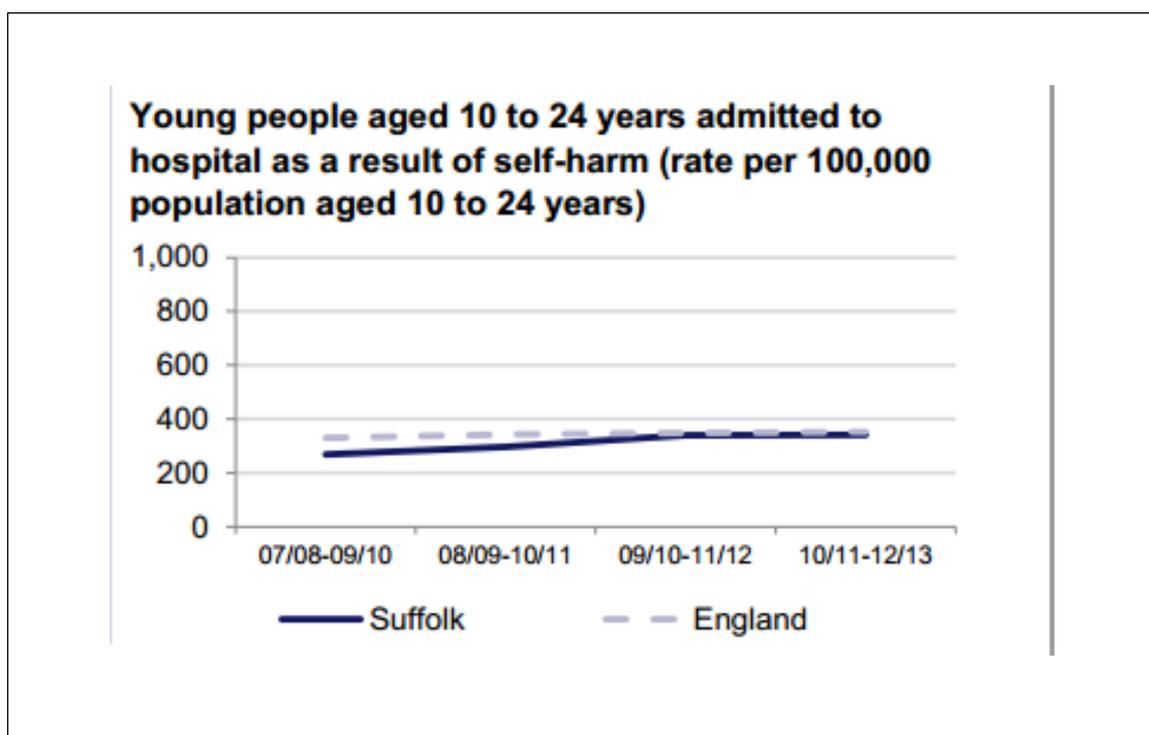
Conclusion of the report:

So what does this evidence mean?

We certainly know that media headlines state that mental health services for children and young people living with a mental health problem has greatly increased in demand. Media states that youth mental health education in school is crucial, and we can't carry on the way we are with the CAMHs service. So I asked young people to discuss what they felt needed amending, and what is currently right with mental health services for young people.

Young people believe that there is an essential need for mental health education to be taught in schools (in assemblies and in PSHE lessons). I believe that there needs to be more of an understanding between young people about mental health, and the services available. Early on education seems essential.

Young people do not feel comfortable to confide in teachers about their own emotional health and wellbeing. Why is this? How do we deal with this? Is it essential to educate teachers as well as the children?

Young people did not know when to, or if ever, to tell someone about their friends' emotional health and wellbeing problems. This presents a problem for young people, as they may be 'crying out for help' to their friend, but there seems to be a lack of safeguarding knowledge between young people. **May this be an opportunity to promote safeguarding to young people, and teach them how to appropriately safeguard? Peer mentoring?**

Young people state that they would know where to go if they were upset, but when explaining where they would go, there is no mention of services. Why is this? How can we effectively promote services? A range of promotion ideas would work.

Young people feel happy that they have an idea of what mental health means.

Young people have made it clear that they do not know what the CAMHs Service is, what it does, or how to get into it. **The CAMHs Services needs promotion**.

Young people are not happy with what is being taught in PSHE. They believe it is a 'doss' lesson, and they do not achieve/ learn much during these lessons. When asked, young people stated there were two main things that they want to learn most about during PSHE lessons: *SEXUAL ABUSE/ SEX EDUCATION (INCLUDING STDS)* and *MENTAL HELATH AND HOW TO COPE WITH IT.*

Young people did not believe that school nurses were accessible. Some young people were unaware that their school had a school nurse, and most young people did not know what the school nurse did, or who they were. When asked, young people stated that there were two main things that they wanted most from a school nurse: *FACES MORE KNOWN/ INTRODUCTION* and *MORE SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH.*

Young people gave their mental health an **average rating of 7.2**; young people stated that they do an average of 30 minutes of moderate physical activity per day, believing that there is a correlation between exercise and positive mental health. Young people feel that mental health problems amongst themselves are increasing.

WHAT NEXT?

So what am I going to do next with all of this awesome information?

- Working with commissioners and young people to engage in solution focused conversations, specifically focusing on PSHE (working with UKYP), young people influencing the redesigning of the CAMHs Service, promoting and developing mental health education for young people, and what role school nurses can play in boosting understanding of mental health
- How best to promote services in Suffolk
- How do young people want to find out about services
- Whether young people would be interested in learning about safeguarding and how we can promote peer education/ mentoring amongst young people
- How young people would want to engage with commissioners, give feedback and get involved with current projects
- Working closely with Healthwatch Suffolk to embed the solution focused conversations with young people into the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of the work of Healthwatch Suffolk
- In terms of further work with young people, in addition to the groups I already have contact with I'm planning to work with ESYPAG (East Suffolk Youth Priority Action Group) and the VCS organisations funded to support this work, Bury Youth Forum, the Suffolk MYPs, the NEET project in Haverhill (focusing on emotional wellbeing for young

people), volunteering matters, 4YP, and I've already made links with East Bergholt High school to meet with students from south Suffolk in the autumn.

If you need any more information then don't hesitate to contact myself via email: victoria.versey@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk