



Date of Meeting: 26 June 2019

Lead Member: Andrew Parry – Lead Member

Lead Officer: Sarah Parker – Executive Director People - Children

**Executive Summary:**

This report provides a summary of key findings and recommendations of the work of the Dorset Young Researchers that are relevant to the work of the health and wellbeing for consideration by the board. The topics of the research were health and happiness; life skills; social isolation, volunteering and aspirations; mental health and wellbeing and healthy relationships.

Over the last four years young people have consistently identified the emotional wellbeing and mental health as one of their biggest priorities, with concerns about the level of worry and in particular managing exam pressure, homework and preparing for the future. Young people identified the links between getting enough sleep and physical activity with maintaining good emotional health. They also identified a lack of confidence as an issue that might prevent them from being able to do the things they want to do. They recommended promoting positive ways to stay mentally well; friendly and approachable adults in schools; specialist mental health services in schools; support for parents/carers to support them and adequate resources for mental health support. They also recommended creating and sharing more opportunities for volunteering; sport and outdoor activities.

**Equalities Impact Assessment:** N/A

**Budget:** N/A

**Risk Assessment:**

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

**Other Implications:** N/A

**Recommendation:**

1. Members of the board consider the findings and recommendations of the Dorset Young Researchers and use these to inform the work of the board
2. Members of the board consider their role in responding to the recommendations identified in the report

**Reason for Recommendation:**

1. Responding to the health and wellbeing needs of children and young people is essential for delivering prevention at scale successfully
2. Listening to and involving young people in service design and delivery leads to better quality services and better outcomes for children and families

**Appendices:**

N/A

**Background Papers:**

None

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Dorset County Council Children’s Services has been commissioning participation work for a number of years, including the Dorset Young Researchers project. Young people are recruited from schools and colleges and trained in research skills. They are then supported to carry out and present research (qualitative and quantitative) that helps shape service development.
- 1.2. The Young Researchers project is a partnership project between Children’s Services and the voluntary and community sector. It was developed with Action for Children and is now delivered by Participation People and is a key strand of the council’s participation strategy.
- 1.3. This report provides an overview of the key findings and recommendations of this work for consideration by the board.
- 1.4. The full body of research can be found online at:  
<http://www.dorsetyoungresearchers.com/>

## 2. Headline Results and recommendations: Health and Happiness – 2015/16

Headline results	
	1, 675 young people aged 11 to 16 years took part
	8% stated that they had a mental health condition
	Young people were generally positive about themselves (72%) and felt that life was full of opportunities (88%)
	However, over 50% spent a lot of time worrying about things and 1/3 felt under constant pressure: worry and pressure increased as young people get older and confidence and positivity decreased
	40% of young people said they were not getting enough sleep. Those that were getting enough sleep were happier with life, didn’t feel under as much pressure, were less worried and had more energy
	Young people who were more active felt more positive about themselves; worry less; feel under less pressure and have more energy
	The biggest sources of stress for children and young people were: assessment & exams (90%); homework (81%) and planning for the future (79%)
	A quarter of young people stated that they find it very hard to ask for help and 16% said that they had little or no support – this decreased by age
	Young people are most likely to seek help and support from parents/carers (75%); their friends (73%) and teachers (37%)

<b>Recommendations</b>	
	Information and awareness raising about ways to promote positive mental health
	Friendly, approachable and supportive adults available at school to talk to
	Dealing with prejudice programmes run to raise awareness of homophobia, disability discrimination & racism
	Opportunities to build confidence through clubs, activities and projects
£	Adequate resources for young people's mental health services

### 3. Headline results and recommendations: Life Skills – 2016/17

<b>Headline results</b>	
	1,443 young people aged 13 to 19 years took part
	50% wanted more help dealing with stress 44% wanted more help and information in coping with mental health issues
	43% stated they wanted more help and information in getting better sleep
	Young people want specialist services in schools that focus on mental health (41%); problems at home (38%); dealing with stress (38%)
	Young people feel that the internet is a useful tool but does not replace the need to have supportive adults to talk to
	61 % of young people want to develop skills in basic first aid
<b>Recommendations</b>	
	Involve young people in designing and improving support to make sure solutions are relevant and useful
	Provide specialist services in schools
	Information and support available for parents/carers to help them support their young people
	Life skills should be taught in schools: particularly financial skills, first aid and politics
	Make more information and support available on emotional and mental health issues

#### 4. Headline results and recommendations: Social Isolation, volunteering and aspirations – 2017/18

Headline results	
	2,738 young people aged 11 to 18 years took part
	40% stated they didn't know how to access support for their mental health
	Over half of young people (55%) felt that a lack of confidence might prevent them from achieving their career goals
	1/3 of young people do not feel included in their local community
	96% of young people reported that social media helps them to be more connected with their friends
	62% believe that social media can increase the amount of bullying
	Young people rely heavily on their parents/carers to get where they need to go and are less likely to use public transport (particularly those living in rural areas)
	50% of young people have volunteered but this is more difficult for those aged under 15 years and those living in rural areas
Recommendations	
	Increase opportunities for young people to increase their confidence
	Increase volunteering opportunities and communicate them
	GPs, NHS, Sexual Health Services, CAMHs and other health services should do more to promote their services to young people
	Mental Health awareness campaign in partnership with young people (social media, poster, self help wheels, posters)
	Increase opportunities for sport and outdoor activities

#### 5. Headline results and recommendations: Mental Health, Emotional Wellness and Healthy Relationships – 2018/19

Headline results	
	5,333 young people aged 11 to 18 years took part
	Young people look after their mental health and wellbeing in a range of ways. The most popular were by hanging out with friends (64%); listening to music (64%); chilling out alone (55%) and through hobbies and activities (55%)

	Friends and family were identified as the biggest thing that shapes mental health or emotional wellness – good or bad (70%) and this is the place that where young people go to get emotional support when they are stressed
	Homework and exams are the biggest stress points for young people, followed by bereavement or long-term family illnesses
	There is a lack of places to go and people to see for emotional support and to help build resilience
	Personal Social Health Education isn't working for young people – although information on sexual health has improved there is still room for improvement on healthy relationships, consent, sexuality and use of technology
	60% of young people said they were happy on the day they were surveyed and 64% said they felt satisfied
	38% said they felt stressed on the day they completed the survey
	Young people are most likely to look for trust, honesty and a good friend in a romantic relationship. About 60% felt they could talk to one of their friends if they were in an unhealthy relationship
<b>Recommendations/Calls to action</b>	
	Increase access to community spaces for young people and involve them in planning design
	More information, advice and guidance on bereavement and long-term illness; provide clarity over the role of school nurses; better promotion of CHAT health and Kooth; healthy eating and food preparation (particularly for older young people)
	Co-produce PSHE resources with children and young people to make them relevant
A short video of these findings can be found online: <a href="https://vimeo.com/332296524">https://vimeo.com/332296524</a>	

## 6. Recommendation:

- 6.1. Members of the board are asked to consider the findings and recommendations of the Dorset Young Researchers and use these to inform the work of the board
- 6.2. Members of the board consider their role in responding to the recommendations identified in the research reports.