

It's Ok not to feel OK



West Cork Youth Mental Health Day Thursday 9th March 2017

The West Cork Youth mental health day was held at the Parkway hotel Dunmanway and was attended by over 160 students from West Cork schools.

The day was opened and chaired by Martin Mulchrone West Cork Mental Health Services with a variety of presentations and workshops throughout the day to promote and raise awareness of positive mental health.

The following presentations started the morning off:

“Helping young people get through tough times” reachout.com

‘Having a Voice’ the Children’s and young people’s services committee” Tracey Holt

“A Fit Nourished Mind” Roger & Anna Adams

Workshops

- **Meditation “*Locate the breath, slow down and hold the moment*”**
- **Chakra *dance through the chakra system to awaken the mind body and soul***
- **Tracey Holt “Have your Say! “*Making a children and young people’s plan for Cork*”**
- **Boxing, *find a healthy stress outlet via exercise***
- **Psychology” *Carrying the weight of the world, a discussion about stress and anxiety*“**
- **Mental Health” *It’s time to start talking*” Jigsaw**
- **Drumming, *use rhythm to promote healing and self-expression***

Closing remarks by Mairin O’Donovan Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

Children and Young People's Service Committee (CYPSC) Cork Presentation and Input:

Tracey Holt coordinator of the CYPSC gave a brief overview of the committee's purpose and priority action area, which is the **Social and Emotional Wellbeing** of children and young people. Social and emotional wellbeing affects all areas of our lives. A key element of good emotional wellbeing is having a Voice and being heard. Children and young people have a right to have their voices heard. (The UN convention on the Rights of the Child and Ireland's 'National Strategy on children and young people's participation in decision making' (DCYA 2015)

However we have a history of not listening to young people and many of us have examples of not being listened to or heard, whether that be at home, at school or in our communities, hopefully we also have examples of when we have been heard and we know how each makes us feel.

Some children and young people may have fewer opportunities to participate and be heard and may encounter more obstacles when attempting to participate, this can include young people who are disabled, bullied, homeless, from the LGBTI community, young people in hospital, from the traveller community, refugees and asylum seekers and young people living with mental health issues.

Being able to participate in decisions that affect us has many benefits and affects how we feel about ourselves, being Heard and able to participate can build our SELF CONFIDENCE, help us feel VALUED, be important for our IDENTITY and GOOD MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING.

The Children and Young People's Services Committee are developing a Children and Young People's Plan for Cork and County, and if it is to be any plan at all needs to hear the VOICE of Children and Young People. We would like to hear what's Important to You? What makes you Happy? What Barriers there are to you having your voice heard? And anything else you would like to tell us that is important to your social and emotional wellbeing.

In today's workshop the young people were able to do this through answering 3 questions (see below), or by attending a workshop facilitated by Tracey.

The young People were informed that they could complete 1-3 questions anonymously. If a young person chose to answer a question/s they were given a raffle ticket with the chance to win a prize.

They were informed that the information received today from the questions or workshop would be collated and taken back to the Children and Young People's Services Committee (and subcommittee) and also put up on the website. (cypsc.ie) if any of the schools wanted feedback or follow up then this could be requested, Tracey would also feedback to the youth mental health steering group.

Pictured below at the CYPSC stand are Tracey Holt CYPSC Coordinator, Steve Cameron Coordinator West Cork Young Carers Project and Helen Ford youth worker with young people completing the questions.



Question 1: What are the 3 most important issues for young people that adults need to listen to?
Total of 17 Respondents

ANSWERS	FREQUENCY
School Pressure/ Exam Pressure	7
Peer Pressure (pressures of impressing each other)	6
Sex (education)	4
Drinking and Drugs	4
Bullying	4
Mental Health/stress/counselling	4
Relationships/Friends (problems)	3
Social Media (more info)	3
Sexuality (sexual orientation/gender identity)	3
Future (life goals/career)	2
Body Image	2
Trouble at Home	1
Trying to Fit In	1
Hating yourself (No self-Appreciation)	1
Suicide	1
They don't know themselves yet	1
Parents Trust	1
Socialising/work	1
Privacy	1
Money	1

The following comments were also made:

1. *Adults should listen to children when they have any problem no matter how big or small it may seem. Children should not feel their problem is trivial. Parents are not expected to have immediate answer, but someone who listens.*
2. *That exams are stressful and it's ok to get stressed about them*
3. *Social media can be a good distraction*
4. *Not all teenagers drink and take drugs*
5. *Stop making us study so much for one exam*
6. *Adults need to listen to problems and not dismiss them as being dramatic*
7. *Adults need to listen to young people when they talk about issues such as social media. Adults may not understand these problems, but a lot of pressure is exerted from social media*
8. *Peer Pressure is also an issue. Adults need to remember what it was like to be young, but also need to try to understand how different it is now compared to before*
9. *Pressures of body image is also an issue which many young people suffer from*
10. *I think there should be more opportunities for young people to understand the concept of mental health and its importance. This can be achieved by classes – SPHE, workshops, talks and events like today*

Question 2: What supports do you think should be available to young people for their positive wellbeing?

15 respondents

ANSWERS	FREQUENCY
Free Counselling/Therapy	5
People available in schools to talk to	4
Incorporate mental health classes into the curriculum	3
Support around sex, drugs and Drink	3
Getting involved in plenty of activities such as sport and in school	1
Apps	1

Other Comments

1. *Good fee counselling. The worry that counselling is costing their parents too much discourages people to seek help*
2. *Supports that need to be available for young people is for each school around the country to have a teacher/counsellor available for them to talk to as sometimes this facility is not available*
3. *I think support groups where teenagers can bring forward their ideas and more groups and talks in school*
4. *If they come together and talk in groups about these issue instead of somebody telling them*
5. *Apps should be available and maybe a class in school*
6. *Organisations in the locality to express themselves and that promote the arts for positive mental health*
7. *Set up a centre where they can go in anonymously. Have a supportive person speak to them in there*
8. *Have somewhere people can talk to a trusting adult confidentially*

Question 3: What do you think would encourage young people to participate and speak up about issues that affect your lives?

13 Respondents

ANSWERS	FREQUENCY
Having opportunities to talk about issues	7
Awards/Money	5
Having a young person listen	1

Other Comments

1. *Start speaking about it from a young age to make it a normal thing to talk about*
2. *If more people talked about it*
3. *A special group on social media designed especially to talk about these things, or maybe once a week to have a group chat in school*
4. *The ability to speak about it*
5. *Initiate a conversation in schools and youth clubs, speak one on one*
6. *If the listener were young and could relate to the speakers problems*
7. *Opportunities and events e.g. Debates, competitions*
8. *If adults did an award for participating and speaking about it*
9. *More talk groups for teens to be able to be open about their issues and bring forward ideas on how to help their peers*

Workshop Plan

Aim: To Inform the Young people of Children and Young People's Committee and the development of a plan for C &YP

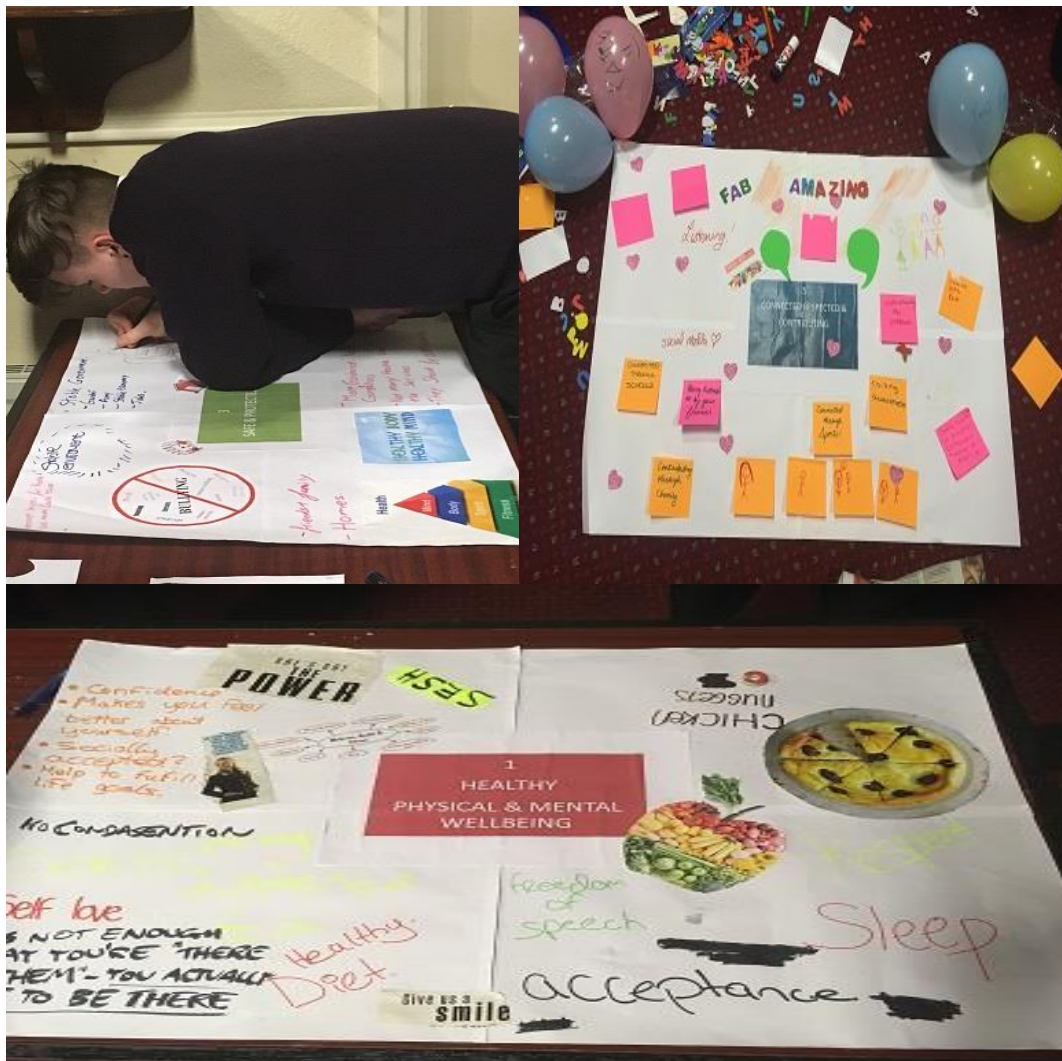
To inform the Young People of the National Outcomes and what they mean to the young people

To hear their ideas in relation to what is important for the plan under the National Outcomes

The Workshop asked the young people to look at 3 of the National Outcomes:

- **Healthy Physically and Mentally**
- **Safe and Protected and**
- **Connected and Respected**

And what these meant to them. They produced a collage for each of these outcomes see below



Agenda

1. **Introduction (working together Ground rules)**
2. **Getting to Know each other**
3. **Living in west Cork what's good? What's not so good?**
4. **Get Creative – National Outcomes Collage – what are they?**
What do they mean to you?

5. **Ending – What happens next? Where the information is going**

Ground Rules they Agreed (13 young people participated in the workshop)

Listening to each other

Respecting

No negativity

Living in West Cork

What's Good?	What's Not
Everything Good Community Tasty bites Chipper – everyone hangs there Wifi Friends	No services for young people – mental health Not a lot of opportunities – Jobs Training Stuck Transport

National Outcomes:

Healthy Physically and Mentally
Freedom of speech Acceptance Sleep Healthy Diet Self love 'It is not enough to say that you are there for them – you actually have to be there' No condescension Confidence Makes you feel better about yourself Socially accepted Help to fulfil life's goals If you never cry then you have all thses feelings stuffed up inside you
Connected and Respected

Being listened to by friends
Contributing through carity
Connected through sports
Raising awareness
Friends and family
Relationships
Connected with love
Social Media
Connected through schools
Diversity and inclusion

Safe and Protected

Health body healthy mind
More guidance – not enough counsellors
Not many people use the services – don't know what's out there
Should be Approachable (teachers/adults/counsellors)
Support around bullying
No enough services for people with mental health issues
Stable environment
Stable - government

- Gardaí
- Economy Jobs