

# WELLBEING IN SCHOOLS REPORT



Hartlepool Youth Services



# TABLE OF CONTENTS



**PG. 2**

INTRODUCTION BY HARTLEPOOL'S  
MEMBER OF YOUTH PARLIAMENT

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**PG. 3-6**

OUR RESEARCH

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**PG. 7-9**

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS TO SCHOOLS

# INTRODUCTION BY HARTLEPOOL'S MEMBER OF YOUTH PARLIAMENT

I was elected as member of youth Parliament for Hartlepool, and my role is to positively represent the views and concerns of the young people in my Local Authority. The main priority in my manifesto was young people's health and wellbeing with a particular focus on schools. It is an issue that I am passionate about and want to work with young people in Hartlepool to improve.

In 2021 the Make you Mark ballot was held all over the country. The largest consultation that asks young people in the UK what issues they feel are the most important to them. The top issue both nationally and also locally in Hartlepool was health and wellbeing.

I and other young people held focus groups with young people in our local authorities to identify what health and wellbeing meant to them

and the issues that they faced. The results have been compiled in "Understanding our Communities report 2022".

I wanted to reach a wider range of young people in Hartlepool and ask their thoughts about wellbeing and their experience at school. With the results from this survey I have worked together with a group of young people from the ages of 14-17 to explore the results.

We have identified recurring issues and come up with possible solutions for schools that we feel are realistic, cost effective and will help to positively support the wellbeing of students. We have followed this up with further focus groups to ensure that our recommendations have been approved

and are supported by a wide range of Hartlepool's young people.

From talking to students from various schools in the town I have heard about initiatives and ideas being put into place. We know that schools recognise there are issues and are willing to listen- we want to help them. This report is not an attack on schools. It is about young peoples' voices and concerns being heard. We want to work with schools to hopefully create a more positive environment for students to learn in and for students to have confidence that their emotional wellbeing is important and that they have support when they need it.

We understand and appreciate the need for a schools main focus to be on the importance of exams and the need for them to have high expectations of its students. We feel the same way, but we also feel that high grades can also be achieved by creating a healthier learning environment where young people's emotional wellbeing is nurtured and supported.

If you would like to discuss these issues further, please do not hesitate to contact me, I can be contacted on...



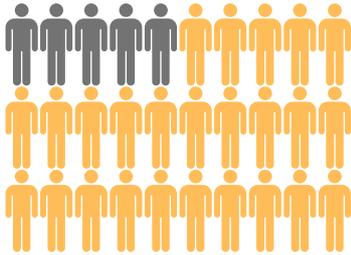
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# WHAT'S THE BIG PICTURE?



**In the last 3 years, the likelihood of young people having mental health problems has increased by 50%**

(The Children's Society, 2021)

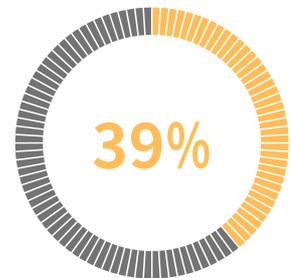


**5 children in a classroom of 30 are likely to have a mental health problem.**

(The Children's Society, 2021)

**39% of 6 – 16 year olds had experienced deterioration of their mental health since 2017.**

(The Children's Society, 2021)



As reported by the latest **Digital NHS** statistics, **1.54 million** people were in contact with mental health services at the end of January 2022.

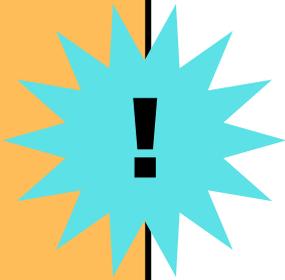
Moreover, a record number of more than **400,000** children per month are being treated for mental health problems, which shows an unprecedented wellbeing crisis in children and young adults.

**Olly Parks**  
(Head of External Affairs, Young Minds)

**“What we’ve seen across our frontline services in UK schools is rising numbers of young people struggling with anxiety, self-harm, eating difficulties and suicidal thoughts.”**

**“There is an unprecedented crisis in young people’s mental health, further evidenced by these record numbers of young people needing help from the NHS.”**

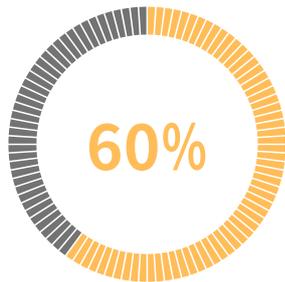
**Catherine Roche**  
(Chief Executive, Place2Be)



# MAKE YOUR MARK REPORT 2022

## ACROSS THE UK

**85% of our focus groups discussed how issues stemming from school and exams impact upon their health and wellbeing**



**60% of focus groups said GCSE students neglect their mental health during exam season**

**Almost all of the groups which raised the issue stated that exam pressure was not discussed enough in their schools and colleges.**

## NORTH EAST

**50% of groups said a solution to deteriorating mental health was to give young people more accessible spaces, free activities and opportunities to get active and do well. They said it was a good way to prevent bad mental health and to get people talking.**



**Almost all groups called for there to be more mental health professional in schools, Young people in the north east said the top 5 health and wellbeing issues in their area were:**

- Lack of mental health services
- Poverty
- Drugs alcohol vaping
- Discrimination
- No spaces/resources for young people

# HARTLEPOOL

**When asked what would improve mental health and wellbeing services in school;**

**"Honestly, for them to really care about it more. For them to acknowledge how big of an issue it is and not disregard it in favour of school work because without happy students, their grades will slip."**

**"People need to be aware that there is mental health services."**

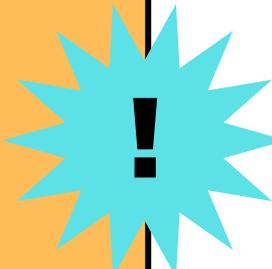
**"A designated person to speak to in confidence. An area where you can go and chat to other students. Other student recognising when someone needs help and offering help and support. Having youth support students available to speak to."**

**"Honestly, for them to really care about it more. For them to acknowledge how big of an issue it is and not disregard it in favour of school work because without happy students, their grades will slip."**

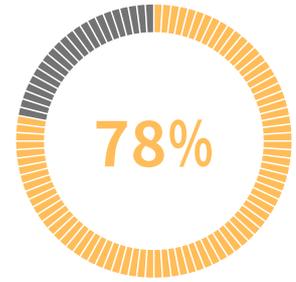
**"Make it more available and known to students"**

**"I want schools to just make an overall improvement and acknowledge that mental health is an issue. Not brushing it under the carpet focusing on attendance and grades!"**





**78% of young people we surveyed in Hartlepool said that school has had a negative effect on their mental health**



**Top 5 reasons given;**

1. **Not feeling supported**
2. **Stress**
3. **High expectations / pressure**
4. **Exam stress**
5. **Little to no mental health support**



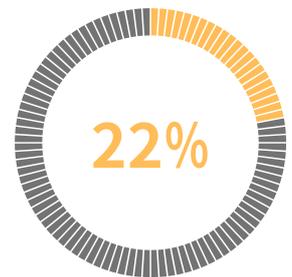
**59% of students said they were not aware of what mental health services their school or college offered:**

**“It’s not made well known, and even then it’s only an app”**

**“Not really, I think it exists but never really seen it”**

**“Yes we get given talks about online mental health programs, however, as far as I am aware I don’t know of a designated adult to speak to about any mental health issues I could have”**

**22% of young people commented that high expectations, stress and exams had a negative effect on their mental health**



# OUR RECOMMENDATIONS TO SCHOOLS

From our research and from research undertaken by the previous MYP it is obvious that young people are very well educated with ways to cope with stress, schools have been a great source for this, however, young people are eager to for positive changes to be made to systems and cultures within schools.

**Mental Health and Wellbeing services and pathways in schools should be advertised to students clearly and accessibly.**

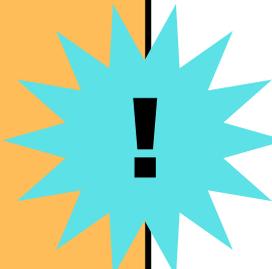
Vocabulary used must be simple so that all young people are able to understand who the service or worker is, what they do and how they can be accessed.

We have found that some terminology can be too formal and can be confusing, with young people not understand what roles mean e.g. safeguarding leads. It would be helpful to explain what issues or problems these roles can help you deal with. We found that many young people were also unsure if their school had School Nurses – and if they did- what was their role, and how and when could they see them?

Suggestions from young people were putting posters in prominent places as well as information about these services in your planner. Could there be a sticker created which explained the individual schools mental health services and placed inside planner?

It has also been suggested that the planners include simple breathing exercise or mindfulness techniques to remind students of how to ground themselves or clam down in case they feel stressed. We feel that many students do not speak out and sometimes young people are seen as coping because they are doing well. High grades do not equal healthy students.





**Advertise services that are available outside of school.**

Young people should be made aware of where they can go to for help both inside and outside of school. Young people should also be encouraged to participate in activities and hobbies.

Our feedback showed that young people felt better about their health and wellbeing when they are taking part and doing things they enjoy. Hobbies, sports, volunteering or being active in their local community can help improve their confidence and resilience and in turn make them happier in school. Advertise where these groups are and how they can take part.

**Identify a teacher wellbeing ambassadors who can pass on information and promote wellbeing groups.**

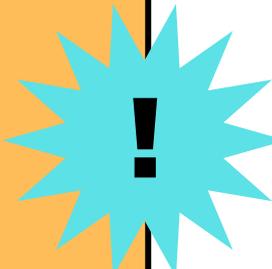
It would also signal that the teacher is someone that is approachable about issues relating to wellbeing. Using a “Worry box” system has been suggested as not all students are confident enough to speak up in person.

**Have enrichment activities which are focused on health and wellbeing and helping to cope with the stress of exams.**

It would be helpful to develop the coping skills of students who are feeling stressed or unhappy. These should be accessible for all year groups.

Young people with exams approaching are often excluded from enrichment that does not relate to exam subjects but these are the young people most in need of a way to relax and de-stress. We have had suggestions of listening to music, yoga, colouring in, mindfulness, as well as general wellbeing and stress reduction techniques.





**Some young people do not always need the formality of a one to one assessment, but rather a space where they feel they are safe, are relaxed and feel they can speak their mind and be listened to.**

We suggest that peer supported wellbeing groups would allow young people a space to feel as though they can explore their feelings, be less isolated and Teachers could recommend these groups to young people who approach them with issues relating to their wellbeing.

Students would be trained by youth workers with only young people that show an interest and dedication to the role - student becoming wellbeing “ambassadors” who would then support the groups. The young people involved must be committed to the role and not just doing it for a title.

Clubs would be held weekly and give young people a safe space to talk about any worries or issues whilst also taking part in general youth club activities.

**Stop the “days and hours until...”countdowns to exams- it only serves to make young people feel stressed and overwhelmed.**

We fully understand that it is a school's priority to encourage students to reach their full potential and gain good exam results but there is so much negative rhetoric around exams - Don't make us afraid to fail, but excited to succeed!

**Students want to feel as though their opinion matters and their voice is heard within school.**

More of a focus on youth/student voice groups. Take suggestions seriously and not just listen to the positive comments, be open to letting young people shape a better school environment.



## **CONTACT HARTLEPOOL YOUTH SERVICES:**

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