Community centered mental health provision for young people

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BACKGROUND

Poor mental health (MH) amongst young people (YP) aged 16-25 has been rising in England.[1]

Traditional MH services for YP often require clinical diagnoses, operate rigid age thresholds and rely on complex referral pathways. This exacerbates unmet need and low levels of engagement.

Our evaluation investigates the impact of a place-based MH intervention for YP aged 16-25.

EVALUATION AIMS

1. Assess intervention implementation (fidelity, dose & reach)
2. Understand mechanisms of impact
3. Explore the influence of context
4. Assess intervention value for money

INTERVENTION

A public health department collaborated with local community organisations towards improving the mental health of young people regionally. It had 4 workstreams:

1. **Wellbeing Navigators** providing 1-1 support in community settings, guiding YP through life & service transitions, connecting them with support.
2. Building on community assets by creating 4 **Community Collaboration hubs** – networks of local organisations providing MH support in the community, with one Wellbeing Navigator based at each hub.
3. **Building Resilience** in YP taking a **whole school approach**.
4. **Upskilling the workforce** through training professionals working with YP, delivered by the local government.

EVALUATION METHODS

Quantitative

Pre-post within-group repeated measures analysis of survey data on reported wellbeing.

Cost analysis using wellbeing outcomes as impact proxies.

Qualitative

Semi-structured interviews with local public health staff (n=3), and an intervention lead.

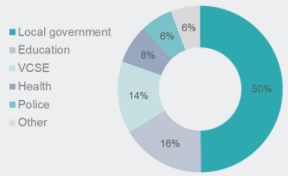
A focus group with intervention leads (n=3).

Photo production interviews with young people (n=10).

RESULTS

1. Implementation: varied levels of engagement

- A large number and wide range of professionals (n=707) were trained across 50 sessions.



- 54% (n=7) of targeted educational settings took part in the Building Resilience workstream, with 30% of those (n=4) completing the intervention

> ...regardless of what...the evidence base is telling us... being slightly more realistic about the capacity [of schools] and the place that our educational settings are in at the moment. ***Intervention lead***

- A diverse range of YP took up the support across community hubs and the navigator service. However, there remained concerns about reaching YP experiencing the most inequalities

2. Mechanisms of impact & Context

- Relationship-focused workstreams provided relief for YP through a focus on listening, sharing and peer-to-peer support fostering a sense of belonging
- Use of community spaces enabled self-expression

> We talk about first, second and third spaces, the first potentially being a home and then second is your school or education, and then your third being your chosen space... your third space is sometimes your most important one because it's the only one that's chosen... ***Intervention lead***

Contextual and mechanistic considerations for commissioning YP MH services.

3. Value for money

- Intervention benefits - relative to the costs incurred - compared favourably to NICE thresholds typically set between £20k – 30k.
- Cost per engaged participant in this intervention was £252 - £3,952
  - Cost per unit of improvement in DIALOG scores (satisfaction with life domains) ranged from £1,919 to £8,928
  - For Wellbeing Star scores (YP's perceived ability to live as well as they can), a 10% improvement cost between £488 and £919.

CONCLUSIONS

Community-based approaches such as Wellbeing Navigators and Community hubs offer scalable and cost-effective solutions to reaching YP underserved by traditional MH services.

This intervention enabled support across key transition points in YP's lives, through bringing together a wide range of sectors including education, health, social care and community organisations.

Sources for further information

Email: phirst@lsbu.ac.uk

To found out more about this evaluation:

To watch our animation on 5 considerations for commissioning services:

Reference: 1. NHS England, 2023 Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023 - wave 4 follow up to the 2017 survey
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