

# **Children and Young Peoples Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Survey Report**

*August 2021*



## **Introduction**

In February 2021, the young people's Tough Times Reference Group created and launched a survey to gather the views and opinions of their peers, aged 9-25, about mental health and emotional wellbeing.

It is important to note that this survey has been led by young people who understand mental health and emotional wellbeing, as they have all been affected by mental health at some stage in their lives. The group agreed on the wording and sequence in which each question was asked in the survey, the distribution process, and the writing of this report.

This report, which includes key findings, will be shared with the providers of mental health and emotional wellbeing services, and presented to the Open Minds Partnership. The findings will accompany the results from other local surveys such as the electronic Health Needs Assessment (eHNA) which year 5, 6, 7 and 10 students complete in school. Collectively all the survey results will help shape service improvement for the children and young people accessing mental health and emotional wellbeing support in Calderdale.

This survey included general questions on emotions, who children and young people talk to for support and where they can find further help; as well as more specific questions focusing on using local services and how effective they are in the support they offer. It also had a section about how Covid-19 has had an impact on children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing.

## Methodology

This survey was distributed electronically to every Primary, Secondary School and Calderdale College, as well as youth organisations with a written email asking for staff support with the distribution. It was open for 8 weeks, starting on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021. The Tough Times Reference Group also encouraged their own schools, 6th forms, and colleges as well as friends and family to take part in the survey.

It was agreed by the group to use the online survey platform 'You Can Say'.

To achieve maximal clarity in the questions and a high level of responses, young people received some support in collaboration with mental health professionals. The young people worded each question and put them in an order they felt flowed.

For the purpose of collating the answers a decision was made to ask closed questions only, where participants could answer by placing a tick in the tick-box that was most relevant to them.

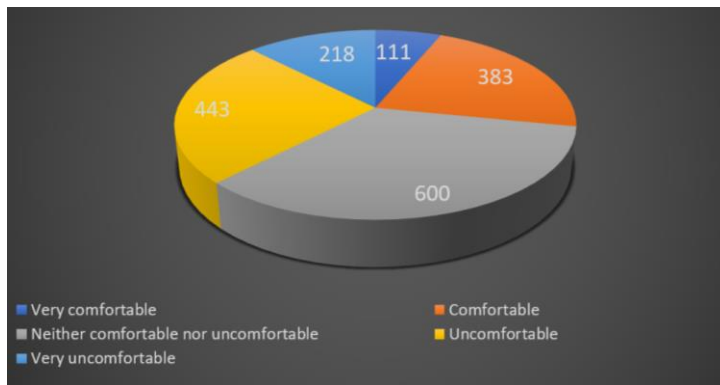
### The questions that were asked:

1. How comfortable do you feel talking about your mental health and emotional wellbeing?
2. Who do you feel comfortable talking to about your mental health and emotional wellbeing?
3. Has lockdown affected your mental health and emotional wellbeing?
4. How has lockdown affected your mental health and emotional wellbeing?
5. Do you think there are enough services in Calderdale to support children and young people with their mental health and emotional wellbeing?
6. Have you had support from any services in the last 12 months?
7. If yes, which service did you feel was/is the most helpful?
  - o Was it easy to access?
  - o Did/do the staff treat you well?
  - o Would you recommend this service to another person?
  - o What could have been better about the service you received?
8. Have you used Calderdale's emotional health and wellbeing website, Open Minds?
9. Choose your preferred way you would want to find out about services that help children and young people with their mental health and emotional wellbeing?

## Results

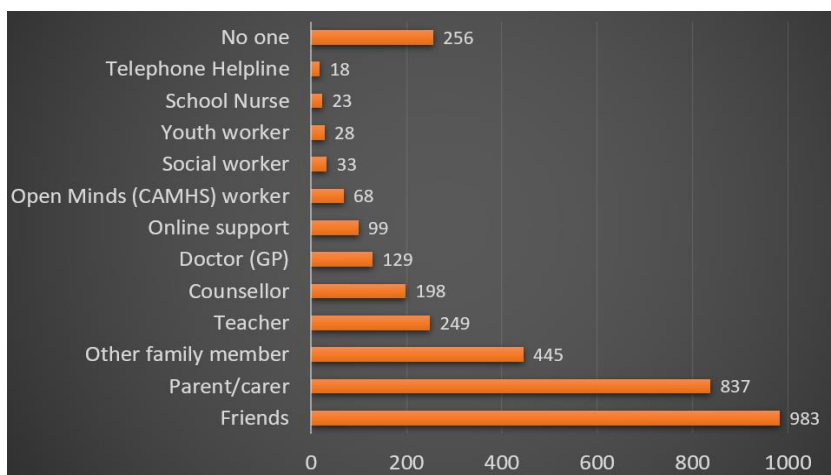
The survey received the views and opinions of 1,755 children and young people, with most participants aged 10-16 years. 92% of participants attended secondary school with the remaining 8% either attending a different form of education, employment or were unemployed. When asked how they describe their ethnicity, 77% said White or White British, 16% said BAME (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic), 3% identified as 'other'. When asked where they lived, the majority answered in Halifax Town Centre with 22% followed by 8% of participants living in Brighouse, Elland and Todmorden, the remaining 54% lived across the whole of Calderdale. 10% of participants identified themselves as having a special educational need and/or a disability with 8% saying they would prefer not to say. Out of the 10% who identified themselves as having a special educational need and/or a disability 30% of participants said they had struggled accessing services to support their mental health.

**Question 1: How comfortable do you feel about talking about your emotions/mental health?**



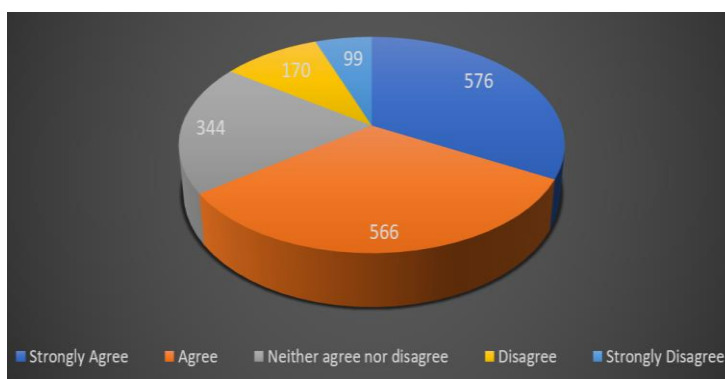
38% of the participants said they felt uncomfortable or very uncomfortable talking about their emotions/mental health. 34% were neither comfortable or uncomfortable, with the remaining 28% comfortable or very comfortable.

**Question 2: Who do you feel comfortable talking to about your emotions/mental health? (Choose your top three)**



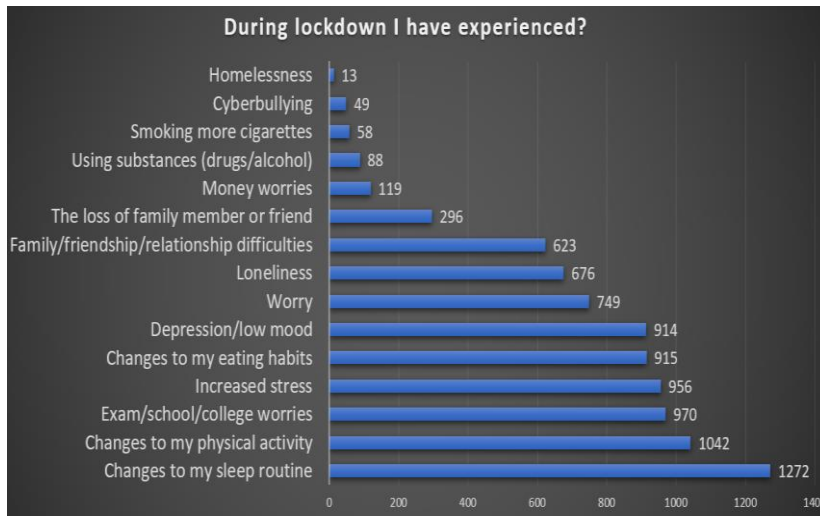
When adding the answers parent/carer and other family member together the majority (1,282) participants said they felt most comfortable talking to either their parents/carers or other family members about their emotions/mental health. 983 participants opted to reach out to friends, with 256 opting for no-one.

**Question 3: Has lockdown affected your mental health and emotional wellbeing?**



Of the children and young people surveyed, 65% agreed or strongly agreed that lockdown has affected their mental health. A further 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, with the remaining 20% feeling neutral.

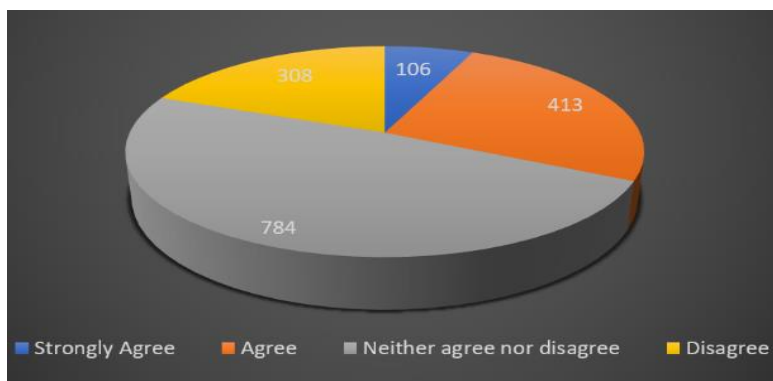
**Question 4 How has lockdown affected your mental health and emotional wellbeing? (tick as many as you feel are applicable)**



More than half of the participants said that they had experienced the following during lockdown:

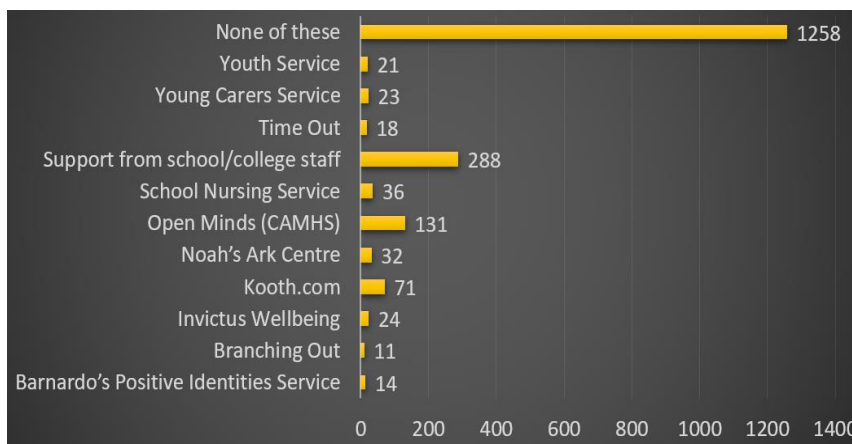
- Changed sleep routine
- Changes to their physical activity
- Exam/school/college worries
- Increased stress
- Changes to their eating habits
- Feeling depressed/low mood

**Question 5: Do you think there are enough services in Calderdale to support children and young people with their emotions/ mental health?**



30% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that there are enough services to support children and young people with their emotions/mental health. 45% neither agreed or disagreed, with 25% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

**Question 6: Have you had support from any Calderdale services in the last 12 months?**

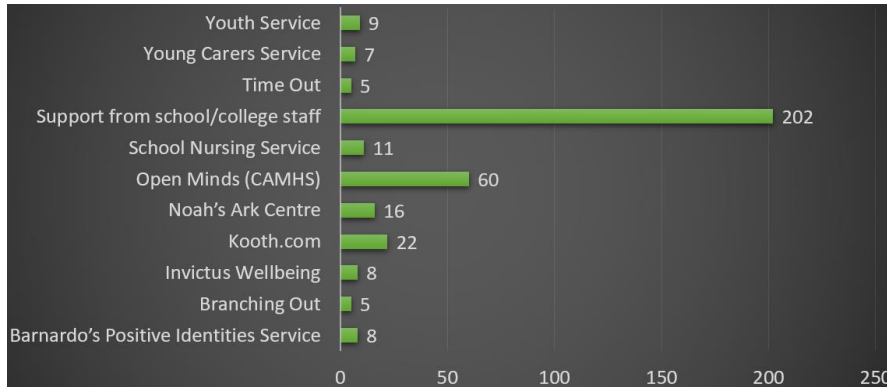


72% of participants said they had not used a service to help them with their emotions and mental health within the last 12 months. Therefore, they didn't complete questions 7-11 as the survey took them straight to question 12. The remaining 28% said they had received support from one or more

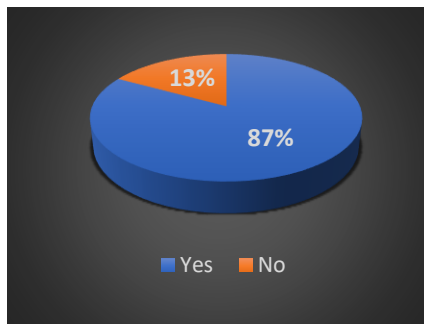
of Calderdale's services, with 16% receiving this from school/college staff.

\* The following questions 7 – 11 were only answered by people who had used a local service to help them with their emotions and mental health within the last 12 months. In total this was 353 children and young people.

**Question 7: Which service did you feel was/is the most helpful?**



57% indicated that support from school/college staff was the most helpful, followed by Open Minds (CAMHS) at 17%, then Kooth at 6%.

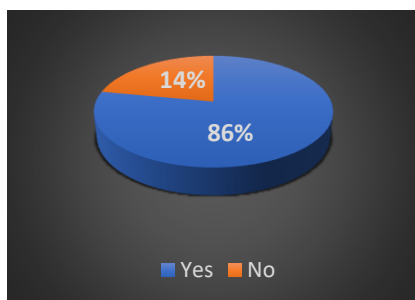
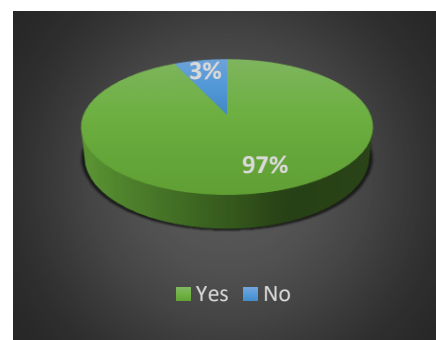


**Question 8: Was the service you used easy to access?**

Overall, 87% of participants using a mental health and emotional wellbeing support service said the support that they received was easy to access, leaving 13% saying it wasn't.

**Question 9: Did the staff treat you well?**

97% of participants using services felt positively about how they were treated by the member of staff.

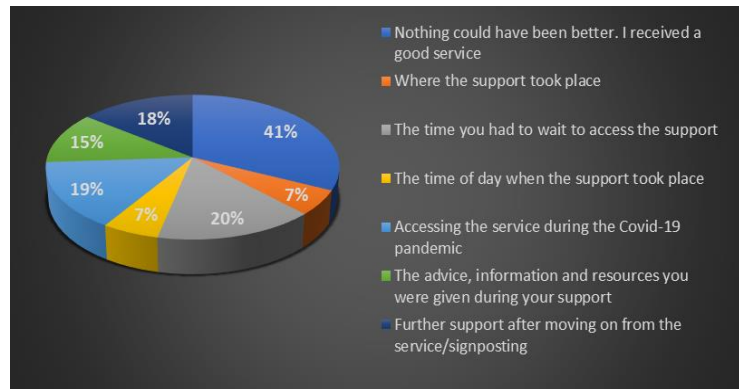


**Question 10: Would you recommend this service to another person?**

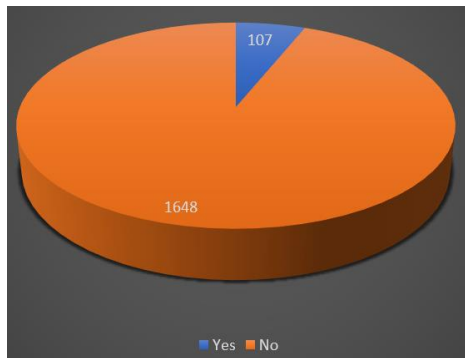
86% of participants using a mental health and emotional wellbeing support service said they would recommend the support they received to another person.

### Question 11: What could have been better about the service you received?

41% of participants said nothing could have been better. 20% said the time they had to wait to access the support could have been better. Another 19% said being able to access the support they needed during the Covid-19 pandemic could have been better.



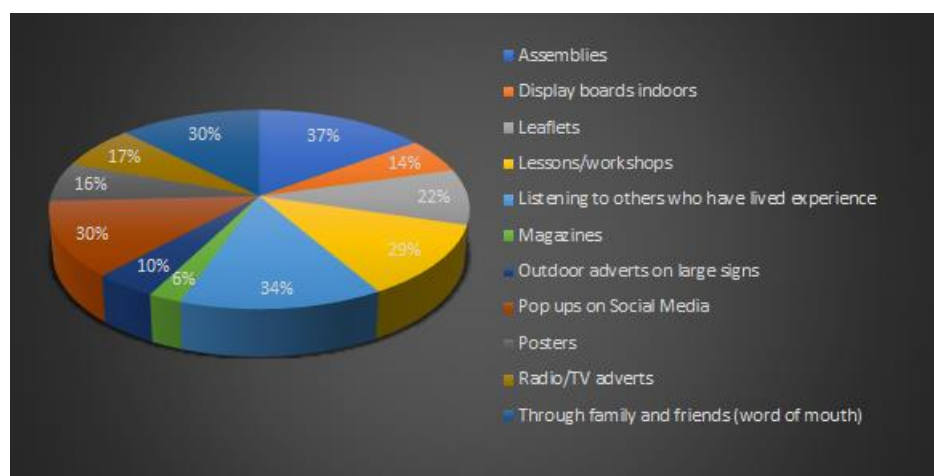
### Question 12: Have you used Calderdale’s emotional health and wellbeing website, Open Minds?



94% of participants told us that they haven’t used Calderdale’s emotional health and wellbeing Open Minds website.

### Question 13: Choose your preferred way you would want to find out about services that help children and young people with their mental health and emotional wellbeing?

The 3 most popular answers given were: through assemblies (37%), listening to others who have lived experience (34%), listening to others who have lived experience (34%). 30% said through family and friends (word of mouth) and another 30% said social media.





## Conclusion

Compared to last year's annual survey, we were not able to reach as many children and young people this year (with 121 fewer participants). This is important to highlight as when the 2021 survey was conducted, Calderdale was in lockdown, with schools and youth provision shut, therefore we had to rely on school staff and youth workers to distribute the link virtually. Doing this without face-to-face guidance and a full explanation on why children and young people were being asked to participate in this survey has impacted the number of responses.

The survey results indicate that 38% of children and young people feel either uncomfortable, or very uncomfortable discussing their emotions and mental health. We believe this is something that everyone should work on together, striving for mental health and wellbeing being less of a taboo subject and something that everyone feels comfortable talking about, because it's everyone's business.

A real positive that has been highlighted in this report is that 97% of those who accessed a local service felt positively about how they were treated by staff. Another highlight is that 87% of participants felt that the access to local services was easy. Our recommendation to people providing services is that they must respond to the 13% who don't or didn't feel that services were easy to access.

This survey confirms the impact the role of schools and the college continues to have in supporting their students with mental health and wellbeing. As a group we feel it's vital that emotional health and wellbeing support services continue to work in partnership with school and college staff to equip them with the skills and resources needed. By emotional health and wellbeing services and education working together we feel this will help those participants who said they didn't feel comfortable talking about their emotions and mental health, to gain confidence in doing so.

It was highlighted that listening to people's lived experience is children and young people's preferred way to find out about how services can help. We recommend incorporating this through workshops and training, delivered for students in schools/colleges by mental health professionals with non-professionals who have lived experience of poor mental health.

This year's survey also demonstrates the need for more focused support to be given to parents/carers, as the results show that children and young people are most likely to go to them when they need help or someone to talk to. Our recommendation would be for mental health services to hold workshops/groups for parents/carers to attend and gain skills and knowledge on how best to support their children. We feel that the Open Minds Calderdale website has a lot of valuable information for parents/carers and needs a big push on its advertising.

Last year 22% of participants said they would prefer to find out about mental health services through social media. This year the 2 top answers were through assemblies and listening to others who have lived experience. Through family and friends (word of mouth) and social media was the joint third answer. We do however as a group still feel that Open Minds should have a social media presence. This would allow socially anxious people to reach out through an online platform and allow them to get the support they need. We were disappointed to read that 94% of participants hadn't used Calderdale's emotional health and wellbeing Open Minds website. This needs some serious promotion and advertising. Social media is just one easy way to do this.

It was difficult reading that 51 participants out of 172 participants who identified themselves as having a special educational need and or a disability highlighted that they said they had struggled accessing services to support their mental health due to their disability or condition. As a group of young people, we are going to discuss this with the young people's Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) Reference Group and ask them if they could work with us to look at the data in more depth and help us write a letter on accessibility and inclusivity to all mental health support services.

As a group of young people, we still passionately believe in doing this annual Survey. This brings insight to managers and staff as to whether service improvements have been made and if they are having a positive impact or not. We hope next year's survey will continue to grow and we manage to get more children and young people's voices on this important subject.

### **Next Steps**

- The young people's Tough Times Reference Group will work with organisations to create an action plan to help improve services for children and young people.
- This report will be shared with children and young people, schools, service providers in Calderdale, and the Open Minds Partnership and will be posted on the Open Minds Calderdale website.
- A letter will be sent out to the individual organisations with feedback comments received about their personal service. This will include both the good comments and any recommendations to help improve the future of the service.
- The Tough Times Reference Group will work with the young people's Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) Reference Group to discuss and share the findings on the questions relating to facing barriers in accessing services due to their special educational need and/or disability.

**Written by Calderdale's Tough Times Reference Group and proofread by Calderdale Young Commissioners.**