



# Amplified x South West Mental Health Team Clinical Network Engagement

## The Future of Mental Health Services and Participation for Young People

### Introduction

In December 2020 the YoungMinds Amplified Team worked with the South West Clinical Network to conduct engagement activity with young people and parents and carers from across the network area.

The purpose was to establish what young people and parents and carers felt about the future of young people's mental health support and participation following changes to service delivery in response to Covid 19.

YoungMinds staff facilitated 3 insight workshops, engaging 11 young people, 4 parents/carers and 4 support workers.

Discussion at the workshops was based around the following questions:

- What do you think are the pros and cons of face-to-face support and engagement and digital/remote support and engagement?
- Did you have any specific worries about digital/remote support when it was offered?
- Were there any changes to your mental health support this year that you feel should/should not be continued in the longer term?
- What might prevent young people accessing and engaging with support for their mental health in the 'new' world?
- What might prevent young people from taking part in opportunities to shape and assess mental health services in the 'new world'?
- What would make accessing mental health support and participation opportunities easier for young people in the 'new world'?"
- What ONE THING would you like adults to remember when designing mental health services for the future?

This report outlines the key insights gathered from the workshops; themed and presented as a series of 'I statements'.

## Key Insights and 'I Statements'

An overarching message from the young people and parents and carers in the workshops was that they are very aware of resourcing in young people's mental health services and the impact this has on waiting lists and service thresholds.

Parents and carers also highlighted the need for greater awareness of complex conditions and how change impacts young people with additional needs.

### Support should be tailored to the individual

***"I need decisions to be made with me and support and participation opportunities to be flexible and tailored to me as an individual".***

Participants agreed that professionals planning future mental health support and participation should ensure there is shared decision making with young people and individually tailored support. For example, the young people suggested that when providing face-to-face support in the future it would be helpful to maintain some of the measures currently in place due to Covid 19 e.g. professionals collecting young people from outside instead of using a waiting room. This helps reassure young people they won't bump into people they know and reduces anxiety.

Offering peer support and opportunities to engage with those who have had similar experiences would be helpful and could provide additional support when individuals are on waiting lists or in transition. In addition, providing options for both face-to-face and remote support could provide welcome flexibility around appointment times and travel.

### Communication is key

***"I need communication about support and participation to be available, clear and timely and I need to be given time to process and understand information".***

Parents/carers and young people in the workshops expressed that it is important for information about support, in particular about changes, should be clear and timely. Young people to have time to process information (about support and also in sessions) and that professionals should double check young people's understanding.

It was also highlighted that when young people are in a remote support situation it can feel like the responsibility is on them to reach out for help. This can be hard if a young person is struggling or doesn't know about support available or how to access it. Services need to take the lead in promoting support and participation and keeping in contact with young people. The amount of contact should be agreed with each young person so they don't feel forgotten or overwhelmed.



Support and participation opportunities should be promoted in places people will see them, for example at bus stops, and through schools which are key to support.

***“I need professionals to understand that I find it harder to read non-verbal communication over the phone and online and this can make it difficult for me to share my feelings or feel comfort from others”.***

Participants agreed that face-to-face support makes it easier to build a relationship and read non-verbal communication, but there are also benefits to remote support as well as challenges. For example, it can be difficult for young people and professionals to assess non-verbal cues making it hard for young people to express their thoughts and feelings and for professionals to show empathy and provide comfort, but remote/digital support can give young people more time to think about what they want to share.

***“I need to be given the freedom to communicate in the way that makes me feel comfortable”.***

Further highlighting the need for support and participation to be tailored to each individual, young people need to be allowed to communicate in a way that suits them. Offering a mix of communication options, including being able to turn off the camera on calls would be helpful.

## **All transitions are challenging**

***“I need professionals to recognise that transitioning between different types of support can be difficult for me and give me time and help when change is happening”.***

Young people advised all change and transitions can be challenging. Going back to face-to-face support won't always be easy for young people, even if they didn't feel comfortable with remote support at first. The change back can bring up feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. This is particularly the case for young people with neurodiversity.

Being discharged from a service remotely can also feel difficult and doesn't provide the young person with an opportunity to have closure and say thank you and goodbye.

## **Accessing support and participation at home is different for everyone**

***“I need professionals to understand that bringing mental health support and/or participation into the home can be positive for some young people and challenging for others.”***

Participants shared that privacy at home can be a concern for some people as can the lack of access to digital tools e.g. hardware and internet access. Also for some home is a safe and comfortable place to receive support but others would prefer to keep the two worlds separate. Timing support calls so that young people can go for a walk or find a space outside of home could be helpful for some.

## Appendix – Full Workshop Notes

Workshop 1: Wednesday 2 December (5 to 6 pm)	
Participants: 6 young people and 2 support workers	
Question	Responses
<b>Pros and Cons of face to face support</b>	<p><b>Pros</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's harder for your information to be leaked.</li> <li>• It can be easier to build relationship and read body language and feels more comfortable for some people, in a shared space.</li> <li>• Easier for the therapists to pick up on clients' emotions and moods.</li> <li>• Genuine connections with people.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access can be difficult, especially in a remote county like Somerset, can feel scary going to a new place.</li> <li>• It can be a risk in the current climate.</li> <li>• May feel uncomfortable leaving the house in the early stages due to anxiety</li> <li>• People may not know where to go</li> </ul>
<b>Pros and Cons of digital support</b>	<p><b>Pros</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can prepare what you want to say in advance</li> <li>• Flexible</li> <li>• No travel</li> <li>• Accessible</li> <li>• Sometimes get a window into the world of a YP that we wouldn't have usually if in a school or clinical setting</li> <li>• More confidential, better connection, safer feeling environment</li> <li>• Counsellors can see more people</li> </ul> <p><b>Cons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It can feel impersonal</li> <li>• Technical difficulties</li> <li>• May not get privacy from the people you live with</li> <li>• Some people may not have the resources they need</li> <li>• Some people find it hard to talk over the phone/online</li> </ul>
<b>Any specific worries about digital support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scary - had very clear routine for a while of visiting the same support worker on the same day at the same time. I didn't get on with the telephone support at first. Used to hang up. CAMHS then arranged for me to have face-to-face sessions and then</li> </ul>

<p><b>when it was offered?</b></p>	<p>continued with one week face-to-face and one week telephone. Good to have the options. Has also provided helpful way of preparing to transition out of CAMHS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daunting at first but settled into it.</li> <li>• Digital support can be good because you can prepare for sessions ahead of time. In person, it can be intimidating to talk about difficult topics.</li> <li>• It can be hard for professionals to console someone during digital support.</li> <li>• YP can worry about sharing/disclosing thoughts about self-harm and suicide to professionals digitally because they may worry that it will worry the professionals what they might do following the call/zoom/digital support session. The session ends/turns off and they don't know what you might do next.</li> <li>• Can turn the camera off and say you are fine but you aren't really.</li> <li>• Initially worried about Zoom bombing but think this is sorted now.</li> <li>• Families overhearing can be difficult. Lack of privacy. You might want to say things that you don't want your family to hear.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Any changes to your MH support this year that you feel should/should not be continued in the longer term? Not just digital.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discharged from CAMHS during lockdown and don't feel there has been any closure. Would be nice to say thank you in person.</li> <li>• Really good to have flexibility of face-to-face and digital. It can make support more accessible, provide more independence and help transition from services.</li> <li>• There needs to be regular contact even if it is only digital support provided. It feels as though with digital support the onus is on young people to reach out if they need help. If you are in service and face-to-face then people are more likely to reach out to you/notice you need support.</li> <li>• <i>The group were very aware of CAMHS funding and levels of staffing. Question asked: Considering this, what could be put in place to help? Peer support both face to face and digitally would help. Get those who have left CAMHS to support those in and leaving.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>What might prevent young people accessing and engaging with support for their mental health in the 'new world'?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People not seeing the changes in behaviour in a young person due to lack of face to face contact so support is not brought up or discussed</li> <li>• Worries about safety if people are vulnerable</li> <li>• Worries about length of waiting lists</li> <li>• Not knowing how to reach out in new circumstances</li> <li>• Feeling that other people need more help than you do</li> <li>• Difficult to join a group after you are recovering from mental health issues – worried it might bring it all back.</li> </ul>

<p><b>What would make accessing mental health support and participation opportunities easier for young people in the 'new world'?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extra awareness of possible fears of being face to face.</li> <li>• Promotion of mental health awareness.</li> <li>• Allowance for people to change format [of support] at the last minute.</li> <li>• Offering face to face and the opportunity for digital support.</li> <li>• Better training around mental health, suicide and self-harm in schools for teachers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What is the one thing that you would like the people designing mental health services for the future to remember?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good to have both face to face and digital because this caters to people's different needs and preferences.</li> <li>• Even if you are attending face-to-face sessions now, people have to wait outside and there is no one in the waiting room. This is good because it helps keep the fact that you are using the service confidential. Less likely to bump into people you know.</li> <li>• [It's] difficult to join in a group after you are recovering from mental health issues. [You can be] worried it will bring it all back.</li> <li>• [There should be] shorter waiting lists, lower threshold to be able to access support.</li> <li>• Offer face to face and the opportunity to be involved digitally as well.</li> <li>• Some people may not have access to digital.</li> <li>• Shorten waiting list times and offer more 1 to 1.</li> <li>• It [mental health services] needs way more funding in order to make support accessible to everyone who needs it.</li> <li>• [There should be] consultation with worker about which format is best for the relationship and communication on a case-by-case basis.</li> <li>• Everyone should be able to access support no matter how bad their problems are so funding needs to be improved a lot more so that everyone can access support.</li> <li>• They [YP] might not get involved to better the service because they feel it won't benefit them as it normally takes ages for ideas to materialise.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other comments</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid has brought about a sense of community. Strangers, including young people, are more likely to speak to each other [at the bus stop] now.</li> <li>• Some people have thrived during lockdown. It removed the pressure if you have social anxiety.</li> <li>• Raising awareness of mental health and tackling stigma is still really important. It feels like this might have been a bit disregarded during lockdown because there were 'bigger issues'.</li> </ul>

Workshop 2: Thursday 3 December (5 to 6 pm)	
Participants: 5 young people, 2 support workers and 1 parent	
Question	Responses
Pros and Cons of face to face support	<p><b>Pros</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More able to read body language, see people's facial expressions and hear their tone of voice.</li> </ul>
Pros and Cons of digital support	<p><b>Pros</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible anywhere.</li> <li>• If you don't have a positive relationship with your support worker, digital support can mean you don't have to interact with them as much, which can reduce conflict.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is harder to open up to workers due to family being around.</li> <li>• It can be a clash of two worlds – bringing mental health discussions into the 'safe space' of home.</li> <li>• Can struggle with information in the chat box if young people have dyslexia.</li> <li>• It's difficult to provide empathy/feel it when it's given.</li> </ul>
Any specific worries about digital support when it was offered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was 'weird' and out of comfort zone.</li> <li>• "My first reaction was 'NO!'.</li> <li>• "I hated it. [It's] not proper communication." Phone support can be lonely.</li> <li>• Paying for data is problematic. Digital exclusion.</li> <li>• If you live alone it can mean you have no face-to-face contact with anyone.</li> <li>• It was good at first as it meant less interaction but "it got old fast".</li> </ul>
Any changes to your MH support this year that you feel should/should not be continued in the longer term? Not just digital.	<p><b>Continue it:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Option to not go on video/have camera on.</li> <li>• [Young people and workers to] show understanding of each other and emotions – all in the same boat!</li> <li>• Prefer video chats. They are less awkward [than in person].</li> </ul> <p><b>Don't continue it:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop checking up on young people every day.</li> </ul>
What might prevent young people accessing and engaging with support for their	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young person not able to take their therapy dog with them to face-to-face appointments.</li> <li>• It's hard to change from face to face then to digital then back to face-to-face again. Particularly for those with neuro diverse conditions.</li> </ul>

<b>mental health in the 'new world'?</b>	
<b>What would make accessing mental health support and participation opportunities easier for young people in the 'new world'?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There needs to be a transition stage to help young people move between different types of support/during times of change.</li> <li>• Flexibility and choice in support.</li> <li>• Digital accessibility support (tackle digital exclusion).</li> <li>• Communication with young people about changes etc. needs to be clear and timely.</li> <li>• To have received sufficient training on complex needs.</li> <li>• Young people are all individuals with their own individual needs. They need to be respected for their different needs and individualities and this is what professionals need to take into account when planning care/ therapy for these young people to ensure they want to access and engage in the sessions and build a relationship with their practitioner</li> <li>• complex needs</li> <li>• Person centred approach - one size does not fit all</li> <li>• Professionals working together. In Plymouth, CAMHS, social care and the police do not talk with each other and the relationships aren't great. This does not help when young people are needing supporting from these professionals together and young people pick up on the tensions between these services</li> </ul>
<b>What is the one thing that you would like the people designing mental health services for the future to remember?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support is not one size fits all.</li> <li>• Recognise young people's individual needs.</li> <li>• Give young people choice.</li> <li>• Need to take into account that mental health is a broad topic. It's all very well giving mind, body and wellbeing tips but there needs to be more information about lesser-known mental health conditions such as personality disorders and schizophrenia.</li> <li>• Just because someone is smiling, it doesn't mean they are happy.</li> <li>• Greater awareness of complex needs.</li> <li>• Clear pathways amongst other things. Link support in with social aspects e.g. the police and housing.</li> <li>• Understanding how to ask, what to ask and who to signpost young people to for support.</li> <li>• Don't generalise or stigmatise based on a diagnosis. Treat everyone as individuals and reflect this in care plans.</li> <li>• "We don't want to be like this, just as much as you don't want to see us like this!"</li> </ul>
<b>Other comments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support worker said it has been very hard to recruit for participation opportunities during Covid19.</li> </ul>



Workshop 3: Wednesday 9 December (5 to 6 pm)	
Participants: 3 parents	
Question	Responses
<p><b>Pros and Cons of Face to Face support</b></p>	<p><b>Pros</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You can read body language more easily. Human contact is important.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It takes courage to physically go to a support session if a young person is not in a good place emotionally.</li> <li>Young people don't always share everything for fear of being judged.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pros and Cons of Digital support</b></p>	<p><b>Pros</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people are likely to be at home which is a safe space for many.</li> <li>It is possible for professionals to offer more sessions because they do not have to consider venue booking and travel time.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being on video (Zoom etc.) can be awkward. Doing it frequently can make it easier but still challenging.</li> <li>Some families may only have one device in the home for everyone to use/digital exclusion.</li> <li>Privacy can be an issue if family are around in the home.</li> <li>Engaging online or on the phone can be difficult for those with hearing or speech impairments.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Any changes to your MH support this year that you feel should/should not be continued in the longer term? Not just digital.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The trust goes if you haven't interacted face to face with the person supporting you for a while. This makes future engagement more difficult.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What might prevent young people accessing and engaging with support for their</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is such a gap and long waits for young people to access face to face support and it is likely to take a long time for things to 'get back to normal'. This is not reassuring for young people or parents/carers wanting to access services.</li> </ul>

<b>mental health in the 'new world'?</b>	
<b>What would make accessing mental health support and participation opportunities easier for young people in the 'new world'?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socially distanced activities such as walks or being able to kick a football around.</li> <li>• Double check young people's understanding when providing support online. It can take some young people time to process information. This is easier in person because of the 'flow of interaction so there could be time built into online sessions to allow young people to process with the camera turned off.</li> <li>• More accessible, transparent information on websites that clearly shows which age groups the information is aimed at.</li> <li>• Put information in places people will actually read them e.g. at bus stops and on buses, the backs of doors in public toilets.</li> <li>• Schools are key in providing support.</li> <li>• Need to look at how parents deal with their own mental health and support their young people.</li> <li>• Local support forums for young people so that they can interact with others going through the same thing and share their stories.</li> <li>• More videos, blogs and chats.</li> <li>• Plan Zoom sessions/activities in the evening – not during the day when young people could actually be out doing things.</li> </ul>
<b>What is the one thing that you would like the people designing mental health services for the future to remember?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just because people won't engage doesn't mean they are ok.</li> <li>• Some people may have had tools, methods they relied on before that are now not accessible to them, and some people may have developed mental health difficulties during lockdown. Consideration needs to be given to whether people are well enough to actually seek support.</li> <li>• Young people and families may feel they are back to square one and the thought of starting the support process again could be very emotional.</li> <li>• Communication that some reaction/anxiety is actually 'normal' response in a situation like COVID.</li> <li>• All young people are not the same</li> <li>• Invest to save.</li> <li>• Include people's experiences about their difficulties, their journey and how they got support.</li> <li>• Build in early support</li> </ul>
<b>Other comments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is essential to make sure that young people who have differing communication needs are able to feed into consultations like this.</li> <li>• Professionals working with adults with learning disabilities do a good job and consistently ensuring that people's feedback,</li> </ul>

thoughts and feelings are shared [with decisions makers]. Those working with young people with learning disabilities need to improve on this.

- Young people with SEND or those who don't know they have additional needs can feel that support sessions won't be suitable for them and therefore don't participate.
- One parent has a child who was accessing face to face support prior to lockdown but refused to engage with telephone or online support during lockdown because neither were a good fit. This led to them being signed off when still needing support and they are now 'at the back of the queue again'.