

healthwatch

Walsall

**Teens & Toddlers
and Thrive
Courses
Feedback Report**

March 2024



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Introduction

Healthwatch Walsall is the independent voice of the public in health and social care issues in Walsall. Healthwatch Walsall collect feedback from the public in Walsall about their experiences of using health and social care services and use that feedback to work with service providers and commissioners to find ways to improve services.

Teenage pregnancy was chosen as one of our priority projects for 2023–2024. We met with Local Authority staff and from this meeting it was clear most of the work we would be undertaking would be around communication, which is something we had already covered in our [Young Persons Communication Around Health and Social Care Services Report](#). We then met with Walsall Teenage Pregnancy Lead; from this we were invited to engage with young people who are currently attending 2 programmes that are running in Walsall, Teens & Toddlers and Thrive (see further information on page 6)

What we did

We gained insight by attending the following groups; **Teens & Toddlers** course and **Thrive** girls group. To begin with we attended as a 'meet and greet' to acquaint ourselves with the young people, introducing our role and explaining the nature of our work. We kept in touch with the course participants by meeting them midway through the programme.

Once the course had finished, we engaged with the participants, conducting a focus group initiating questions to prompt the participants to share their thoughts on the courses they had attended.

We adopted a selective approach during the focus groups, with just two targeted questions. Recognising the age group involved, our aim was to create a comfortable environment for participants during the course evaluation. Having observed the participants' openness during the initial meet and greet, we were confident the participants would share their thoughts on the courses.

Who took part?

We attended 3 groups on 3 occasions and each group had 8 girls in attendance. Their age ranged from 14 – 16.

Our Findings

The key findings indicate overwhelming positive sentiment towards the courses, with a wish from both students and course facilitators for more lessons and longer sessions.

The young people participating in the courses thoroughly enjoyed every aspect, expressing a preference for it over school due to a sense of respect, where questions and answers are valued without judgement. They appreciate being treated as mature individuals.

The young people told us they felt more confident in the presence of their peers and course facilitators within the group, highlighting a supportive atmosphere. One young person shared how the group assisted a classmate with dyslexia during a moment of concern about spelling, showcasing a collaborative and encouraging environment.

The following pages present our findings, including comments received.

What has made you feel happy about this course?

Key findings

The responses highlight a multitude of positive aspects about the courses. Young people expressed happiness gained from diverse elements such as trying new foods, engaging in new learning experiences, forming connections with the other students, playing games and experiencing a supportive and respectful environment. The courses were credited with boosting confidence and providing a unique, judgement free learning atmosphere where participants feel treated as equals and valued for their opinions.

Highlight

Experience gained in skills and motivation to support their team, experiencing personal growth by overcoming initial differences with each other, to develop positive learning and working relationships.

Group comments and feedback

“I have been able to do things out of my comfort zone since I have been coming here.”

“It is a safe place to share your feelings.”

“We are there for each other here and motivate each other.”

“I never had an opportunity to express myself before.”

“I didn’t think I would get on with some of the girls but when we got to know each other we realised we can have a laugh together.”

“I love everything about it!”

“We obviously love the teachers here.”

“Yeah, the teachers are the best here, they’re so nice to us.”

“Everyone here is just nice to each other, we don’t get shouted at, we have rules, and we all stick to them so it’s nice for everyone.”

“We get spoken to with respect here, not just treated like a stupid kid in school.”

“Wish the teachers were nice to us like these are.”

Do you feel your attitude towards your future and life choices have changed since attending the group?

Key findings

The key findings from the responses suggest that attending the group has positively impacted concentration and learning in school, with the participants saying they felt 'motivated from seeing the children's happiness when undertaking toddler time'. We found most of the course participants said that the assigned toddler interactions in the nursery helped to give them a newfound sense of responsibility, influencing a higher interest in school, potential career changes and increased motivation for success in education and life.

Highlight

The participants said the courses provided a 'calming atmosphere' which enhanced concentration, performance and attitude, together with reduced anxiety and anger.

The atmosphere was said to strengthen friendships and increase confidence.

The course participants had a more direct approach to learning and aspirations.

Group comments and feedback

"I used to think I would never pass my GCSE's, I think I will do ok though."

"I remember when I wanted to do a different job because I thought I wouldn't be able to work in a nursery, but now I know I could do that."

"I really want to be a teacher, I never said it before, but I do."

"I don't get anxiety like before, it's different here, you don't get angry."

"I definitely know where to go for advice now [sexual health advice] and I feel confident to go and get it as well, I wouldn't have before coming here."

"I used to watch little cute babies on TikTok and think how cute they were, but now I know how hard it is to take care of a toddler!"

"I like school now; I don't know why I just feel like I get on with my work now."

"I feel empowered, I feel like I can choose what job I would like to do."

"I like writing, my dream job would be an author, I will do that."

"I will try and eat healthier food now."

Free flow Discussions

While evaluating the courses, we prompted open discussions with the participants, encouraging them to freely express their thoughts, ideas and opinions – whether positive or negative. This approach allowed us to gather valuable insights into their experience.

Key Findings

Key findings from the open discussions indicate a demand for the following; additional classes, extended class durations, a longer course, a desire for advanced courses, inclusion of schools attending the course and a broader eligibility criteria.

The first thing the participants told us during our meet and greet was “we need more time with our workbooks” we observed conversations between the young people where they expressed an interest in more work – they wanted to sit and plan an activity with their assigned toddler, this would include the group sitting and discussing ideas, cost, time management and safety.

The participants talked with each other about how they would be interested in doing an additional course at a higher level, as they felt they had learnt so much and felt they could achieve a higher standard of work and grade in this environment.

Thoughts and Ideas shared with us

Instead of offering recommendations to courses that are evidently successful, with participants enjoying it and data indicating improved school attendance, lower behaviour issues and students being less likely to be excluded following attending the courses, shared below are the thoughts and ideas collected during our engagement.

Course participants provided ideas and suggestions for potential improvements on how to enhance the courses. Below is what they shared:

- One extra hour for the course class time.
- Longer course time, currently it is 16 weeks (Teens and Toddlers), there is a strong interest in the course lasting for 20 weeks.
- An offer of a higher qualification offered to students by doing a secondary follow up course – potentially a Level 3 Interpersonal skills.
- Previous course attendees to come along and ‘volunteer/help out’ as a course ambassador.
- Current course attendees to be supported to become future volunteers/ambassadors.
- More toddler time for some course participants – to be decided by facilitator.
- More workbook time for some course participants – to be decided by course facilitator.
- A room within the nursery facility, currently the school groups have to travel to the nursery, it is 30 minutes there and an additional 30 minutes back. This time could be used more efficiently if they had a room in or near the nursery to work in. As Blakenall Family Hub run the Teens & Toddlers there.
- A slightly bigger group.
- More time to be spent on bigger topics within the students’ workbooks, so the class can go into more detail.
- Every school should take part in the course.
- A less stringent criteria for young people to access the course.

Conclusion

In conclusion, extending the course sessions would be beneficial for all participants. The supportive environment promoted effective communication, which boosted confidence in the young people. Toddler time instilled a sense of responsibility, which motivated the young people and seemed to give them a higher interest in their overall education.

Acknowledgments

Healthwatch Walsall would like to thank the Teenage Pregnancy Team for welcoming us into their groups to hold our focus groups. We would also like to thank all the participants for sharing their feedback with us.

Further Information

Teens and Toddlers

The Teens and Toddlers programme helps young people improve their well-being and school engagement in order to succeed at school and in life, through the experience of mentoring nursery children. Looking at reducing risky behaviour and the consequences of those actions. Exploring self-respect and understanding of peer pressure. The programme also looks at support networks and how to close the gap between knowledge and behaviour. There is a big focus on aspirations for the future.

Thrive Youth Development Programme.

Thrive is a 15-week early intervention youth development programme centred on principles of positive psychology. Young people on the programme are empowered to identify challenges, construct a plan to overcome them, recognise strengths, contribute to their local community and be responsible for their futures by:

Becoming mentors to nursery children, acting as role models and developing key interpersonal skills

Taking part in classroom sessions each week to discuss learnings from mentoring, talk about mental health and develop their own toolkit relating to positive mental health and wellbeing, aspirations and attainment. Achieving a NFCE Level 1 Award in Interpersonal Skills and identifying goals.



Want to join us?

**If you are interested in volunteering, get in touch
and find out what experience you can gain by
joining our team!**

Advice and Support

Are you a young person living in Walsall and would like advice and support around Health and Social Care?

We are here to listen to you; we want to hear your experiences of accessing and using services in Walsall. Do you think services could be improved? We want to know how you think services could be made better for young people. Are there services which are doing well, and you want to tell us about them?

Get in touch with our team who can listen to what you say.

If you need help or advice, we can also put you in touch with the right people who can support you.

Our contact details are on the back page. You can call, email or contact us online. We also accept any direct messages through social media.



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