

Young Peoples Project

December 2019



healthwatch
Walsall

Introduction

Healthwatch Walsall recognises the importance of gathering the views and experiences of young people in relation to the quality and access of health and social care services and endeavours to incorporate this into the mainstream work of Healthwatch.

In 2018 at the Healthwatch AGM, HW Walsall held a question time panel with representatives from health and social care services with an audience of young people sourced from local schools and training providers. At this event, young people were given the opportunity to pose questions to the panel regarding the issues they faced. Some of these issues included access to primary care, transition to adulthood in particular mental health services, accessing additional support at places of education with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). The question time session was very successful and stimulated a significant amount of interest from those involved.

Following on from this Healthwatch Walsall was successful in its bid for Big Lottery funding in order to sustain and expand this work with many more young people across the Borough.

Methodology

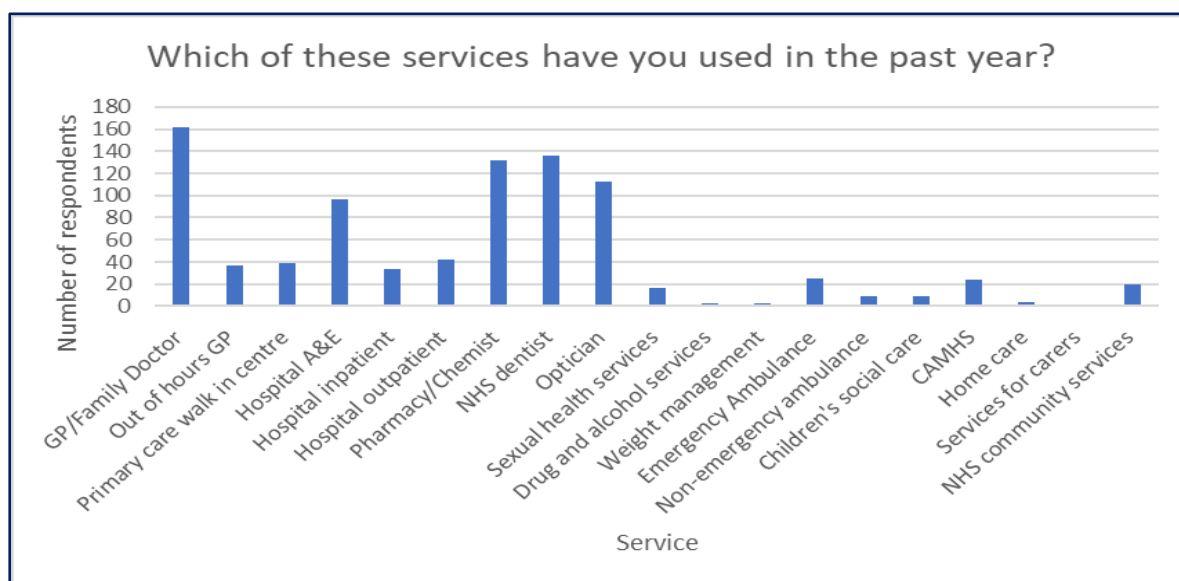
The engagement with young people was carried out through face to face engagement with training providers in Walsall and general outreach. A survey was hosted online and disseminated through a weblink and via social media. Networking with partners also took place.

The survey was completed by 189 respondents and was a made up of a mixture of multiple choice and open text questions. The open text questions gave the respondents an opportunity to expand on the answers that they had given.

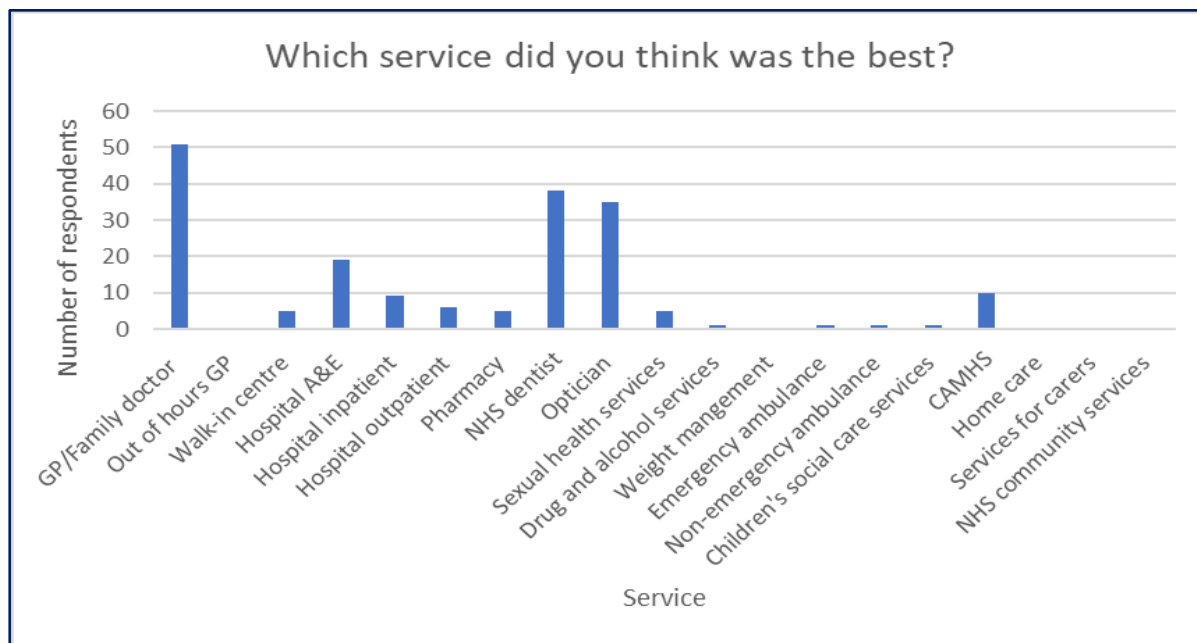
Findings

Respondents to the survey were asked what services they had used in the previous year. As they were asked to indicate all of the services that they had accessed the responses are shown as a count rather than as a percentage of respondents.

The highest number of respondents said that they had accessed their General Practitioner within the last year. The second highest number had used an NHS Dentist, followed by the pharmacy and optician. 96 respondents had used A&E during the previous 12 months.



The respondents were asked which service they thought was the best of those that they had accessed. 27% said that they felt that their GP was the best of the services that they had accessed. This might be expected as the highest number of young people had accessed this service in comparison to the other services. The next highest rated services were NHS Dentists and Opticians. However, despite a relatively high number of young people having accessed pharmacy services only 3% said that they thought that this service was the best that they had accessed.



The respondents were asked to give the reasons why they thought the particular service was the best. The answers they gave have been themed to show common types of response.

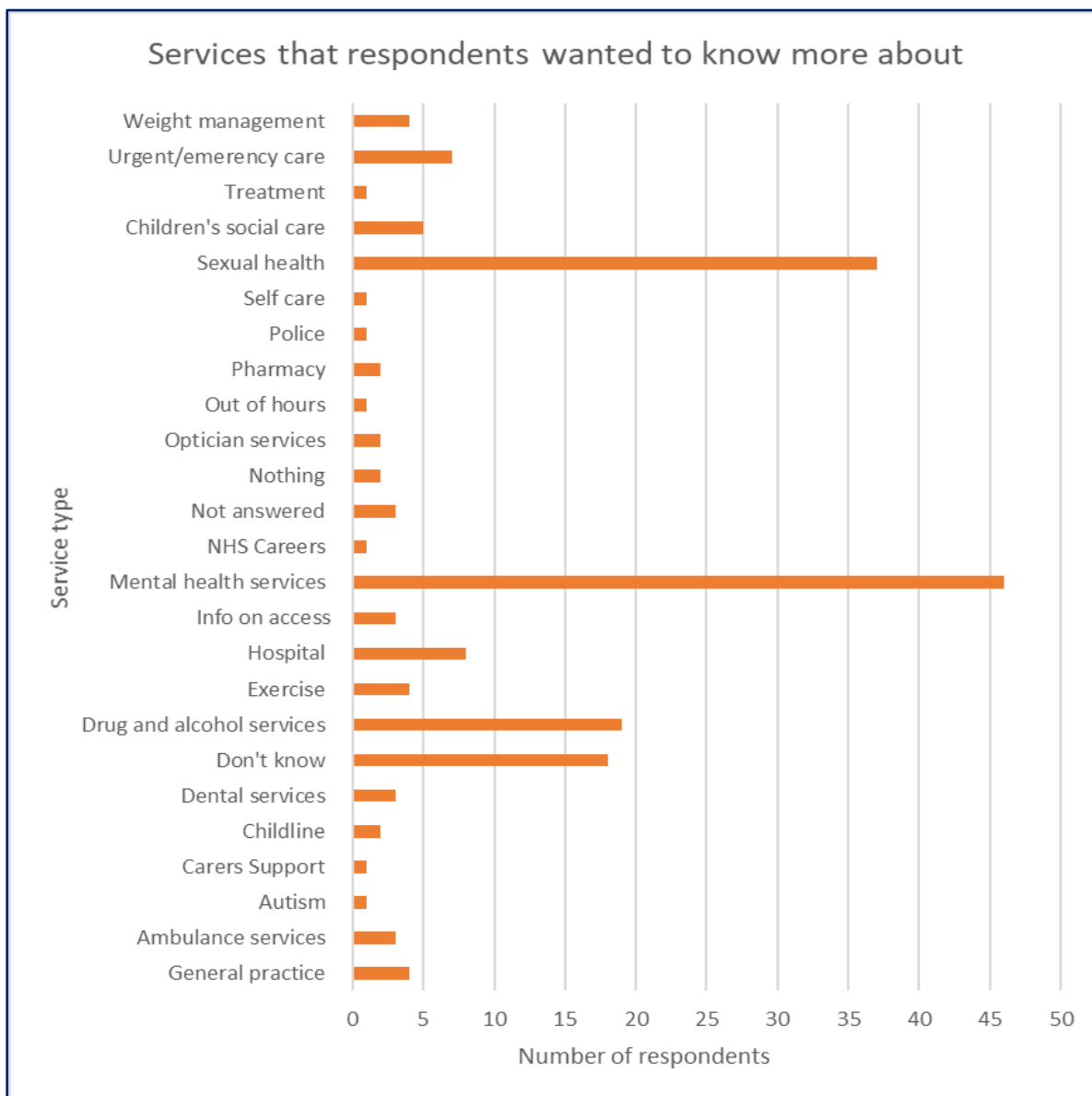
Across the responses relating to different services, a key theme was that the staff that the respondent came into contact with, whether they were health practitioners or support staff, were kind to them and made them feel comfortable. One respondent said that **'everyone who I spoke to was polite and able to help'** whilst another said they were **'very nice and made you feel comfortable.'** One respondent commented that the service had treated them **'as an individual, not a child'** and this had meant a lot to them.

For others being made to feel better or have their issue sorted out was the reason that they chose a particular service. One respondent commented that they had chosen the service that they did **'because it helps you get better'** whilst another said that **'they got me sorted out and made me better.'**

Being able to access the service quickly was seen as a positive trait for a service with comments being made about their identified service being able to **'see you straight away'** and it being **'quick and easy.'**

When commenting on Dentists, respondents generally spoke about having braces and how this was a positive thing for them. One commented that the dentist was **'helping to fix my atrocious teeth'** whilst another said that their dentist had **'helped me feel confident with my smile and made my teeth how I wanted them.'** This reflects a similar sentiment to that of other services being able to make the respondent better after they have been unwell.

Respondents were asked what services they thought young people would like to know more about. The open text answers have been categorised and are illustrated in the chart below.

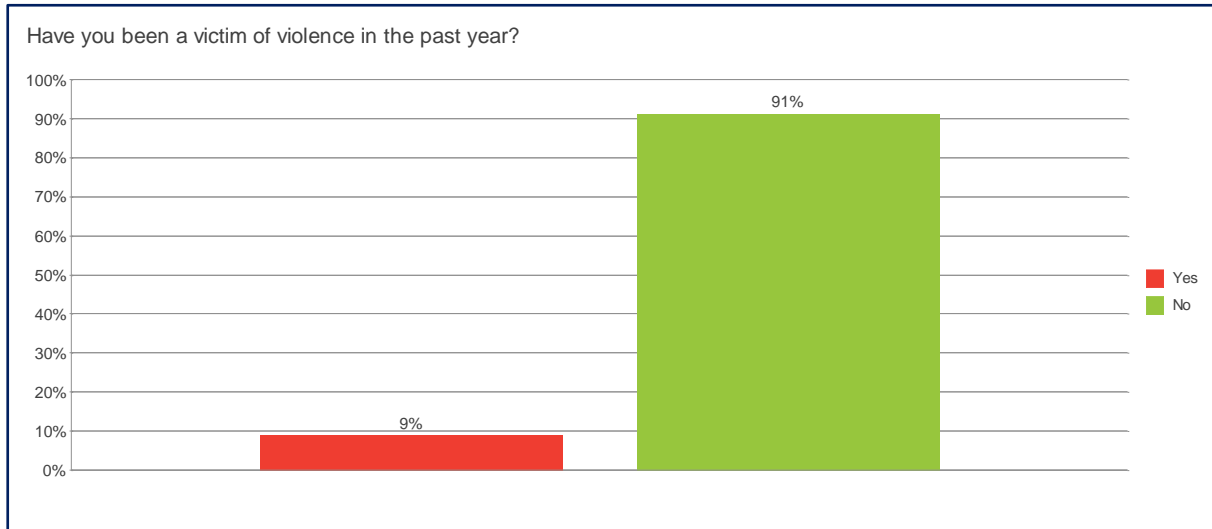


Having information on **mental health services** was suggested the most times; followed by having information on access to **sexual health services**. Information on **drug and alcohol services** was the third highest suggestion.

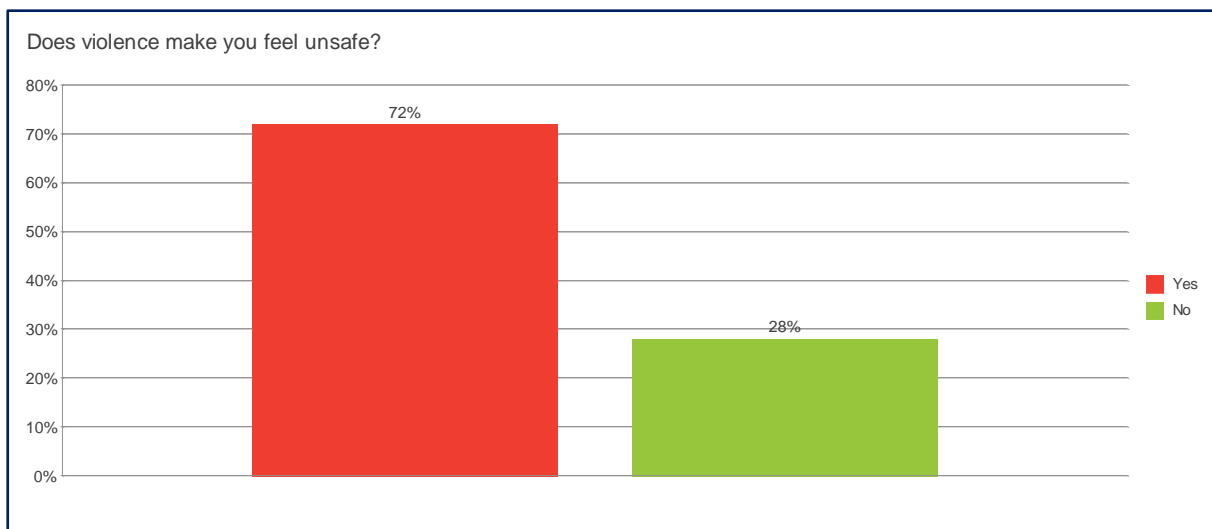
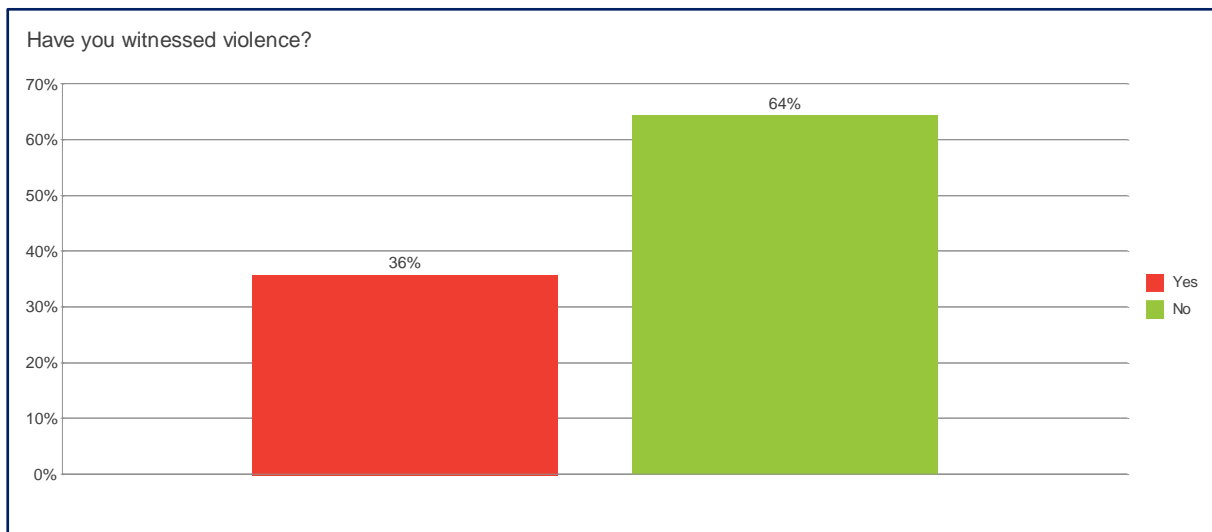


Violence

Respondents were asked if they had been the victim of violence in the last year. 91% of the respondents said that they had not been the victim of violence in the previous 12 months.



However, 36% of respondents who answered the question said that they had witnessed violence. There was not time period included in this question.



72% of respondents said that violence made them feel unsafe within their communities.

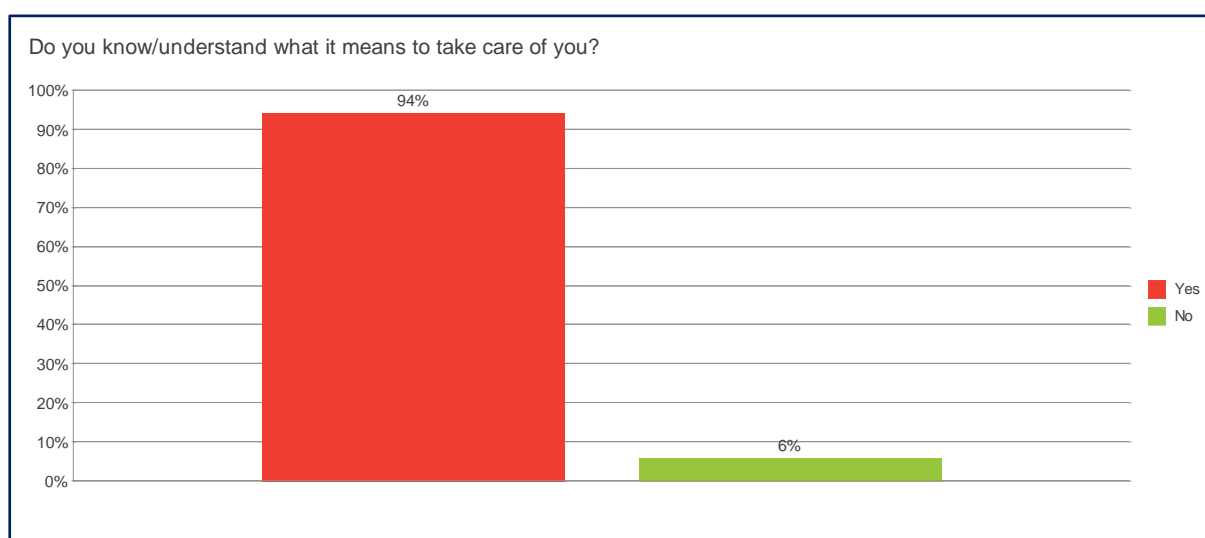
Neglect

Respondents to the survey were asked what neglect meant to them. There were a range of themes within the answers that they gave.

Children not being looked after by their parents or guardians was pinpointed as a meaning, and in some cases, this was expanded out more widely to include vulnerable people and in one case animals as well.

Not having the essentials to live healthily and well such as lacking food, clothing and shelter was suggested by some of the respondents as the meaning of neglect.

However, some of the respondents considered neglect more in terms of being ostracised within a group whether that be a family group or friendship group.



When asked if they understood what it meant to take care of them, 94% said that they did, and the remainder said that they did not.

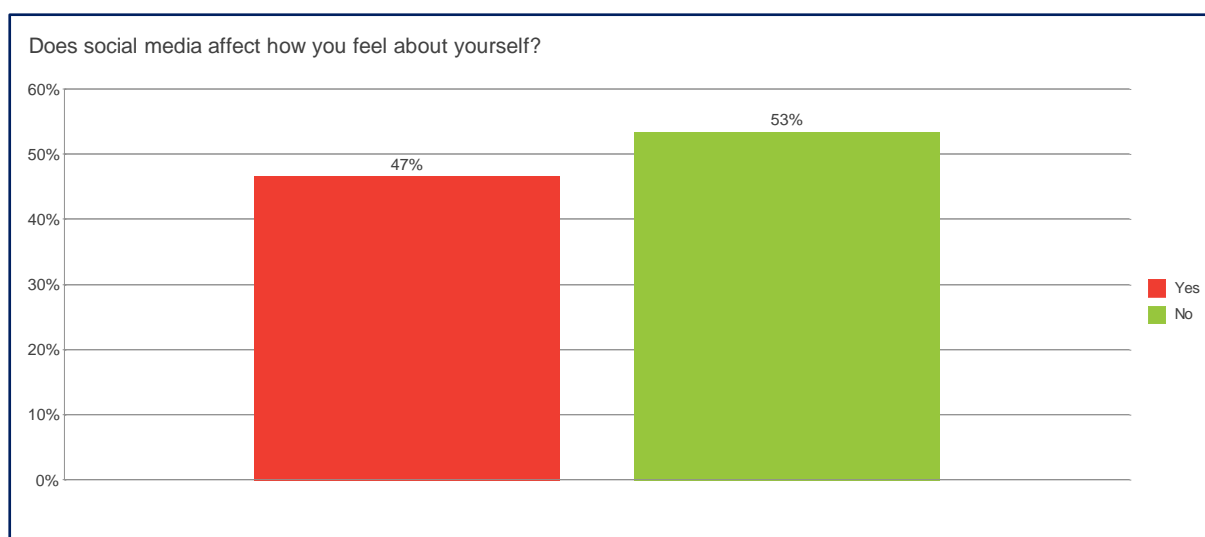
They were also asked if they knew who to speak to if they were concerned about neglect. Respondents gave a range of suggestions on who they might speak to including their parents or family members, or their friends. Professionals that they might speak to included teachers or other staff at schools or colleges, people working in the NHS such as doctors or mental health specialists as well as social workers or the police. Charities such as the NSPCC and more especially Childline were suggested as someone that they could speak to.

Mental Health

Respondents were asked what mental wellbeing meant to them. The responses were reviewed and arranged into themes. Having good mental health was one theme from the feedback with respondents seeing it as being mentally stable. Being happy was also seen as being part of mental wellbeing.

Alternatively, respondents considered mental wellbeing being mental ill health with complaints such as anxiety and depression being mentioned. For some respondents, mental wellbeing was described as being treatment for mental health issues.

Respondents were asked if social media affected how they felt about themselves. 47% of respondents said that it did have an impact on how they felt about themselves.



Those that said that social media impacted on how they felt about themselves were asked how they were impacted. There were a small number of respondents who were able to give some positive thoughts about their social media use in terms of being able to interact with their friends.

However, generally those that answered the question gave negative feedback about the way that social media made them feel about themselves.

A key theme was that respondents compared themselves to the people that they saw on social media, particularly social media influencers. Some commented on how they compared the way that they looked to celebrities on social media and despite knowing that the images were edited before being posted, feeling that they did not measure up to the same standards. One respondent said that **'when you see photos of models it makes you feel bad about yourself and be more self-conscious.'**

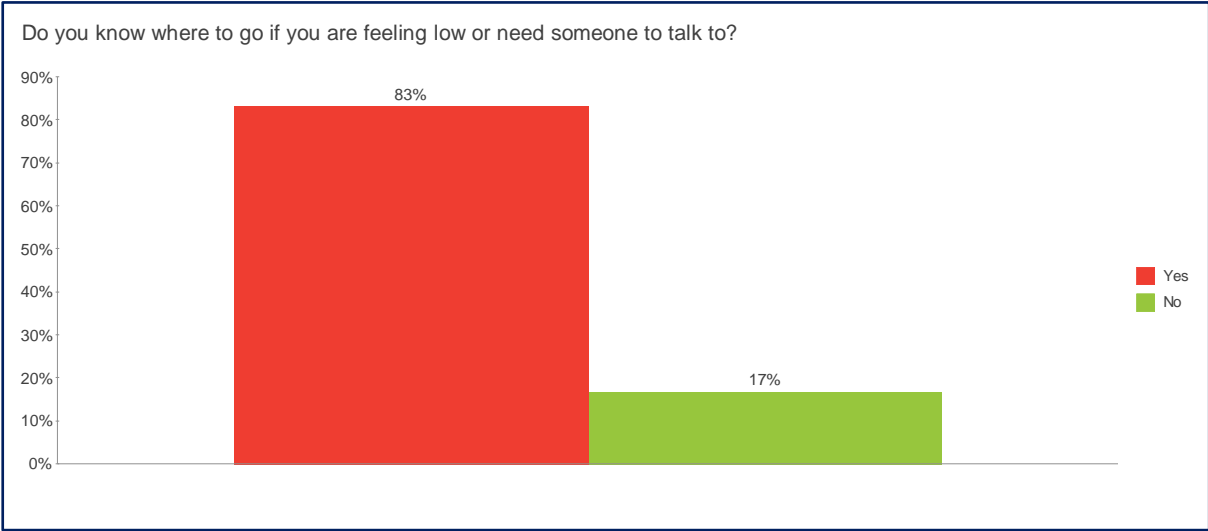
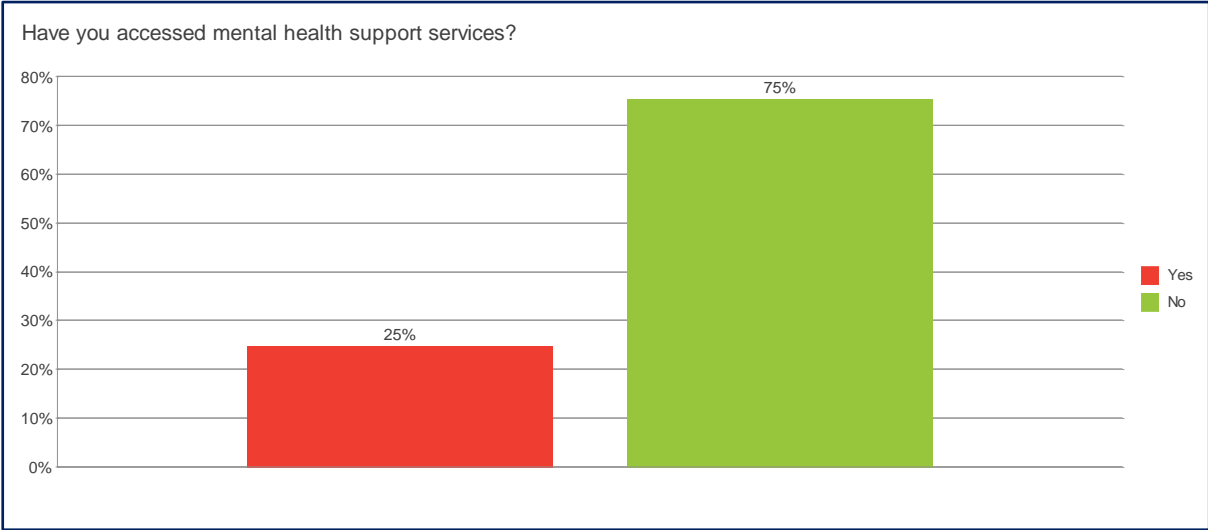
Others commented on feeling envious of the 'perfect life' that people shared on social media or of the material things that they had. One respondent commented on **'people portraying 'perfect' lives and looking 'perfect' in photos, having clear skin, beautiful body and designer clothes.'**

For some of the respondents there was a pressure to conform to certain standards of appearance and behaviour. One commented that social media told them **'how you should look. What you can and can't do.'**

Some spoke of other people being judgemental on social media and making comments about the things that they posted. There were some comments around online bullying with one respondent saying **'if someone says something about you then you are going to think it's true.'**

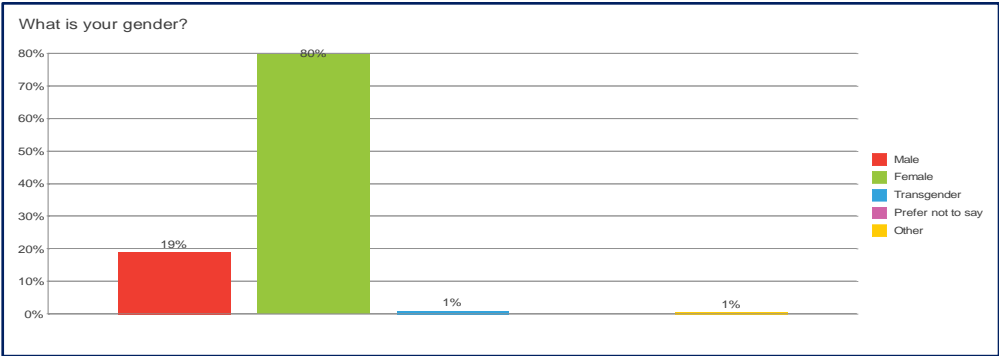
Whilst there were a higher number of respondents who said that social media did not have an impact on them than did, almost half did say it had an impact resulting in negativity of feeling about themselves, particularly in relation to their appearance and their lifestyles.

When asked if they had accessed mental health support services, 25% of the respondents said that they had. There was a mixture of services that they had accessed including CAMHS, counselling and school pastoral support.

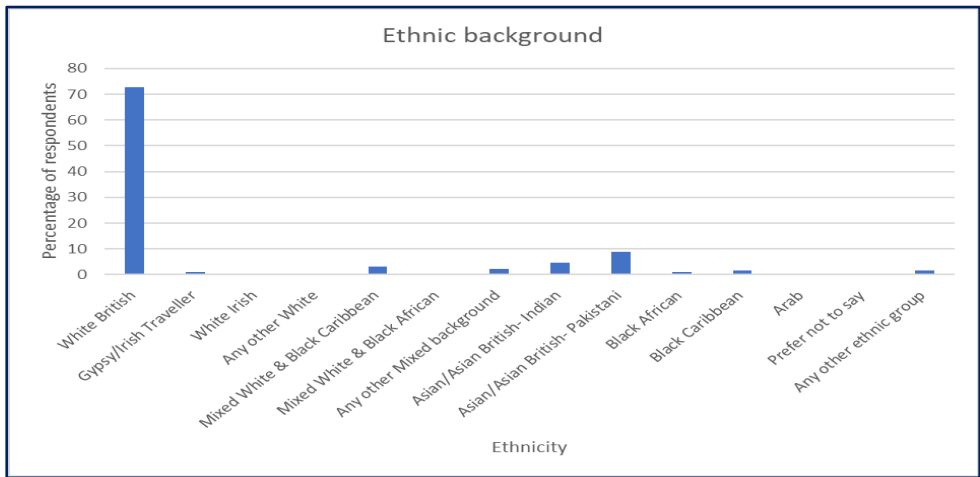


Respondents were also asked if they knew where to go if they were feeling low or needed someone to talk to. A range of places to go to came out of the answers. These included parents and other family members, friends, education providers, general practitioners and specialist mental health providers as well as charity provision such as Childline.

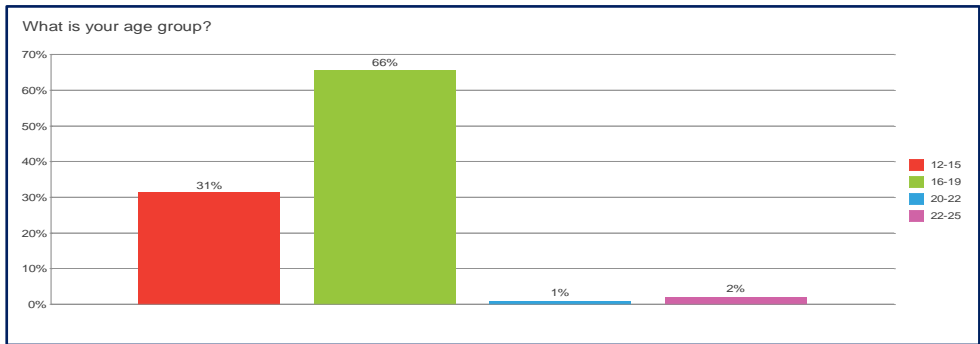
Demographics



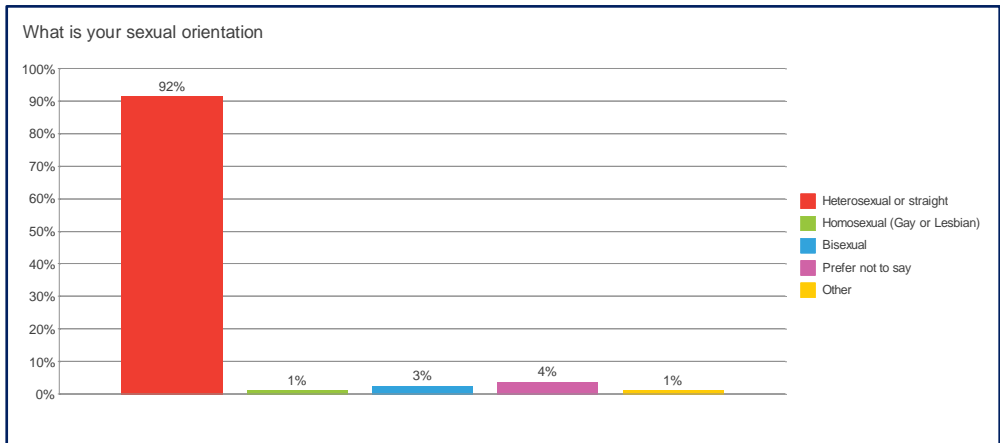
80% of the respondents to the survey identified as female and 1% as transgender, the remaining respondents identified as male.



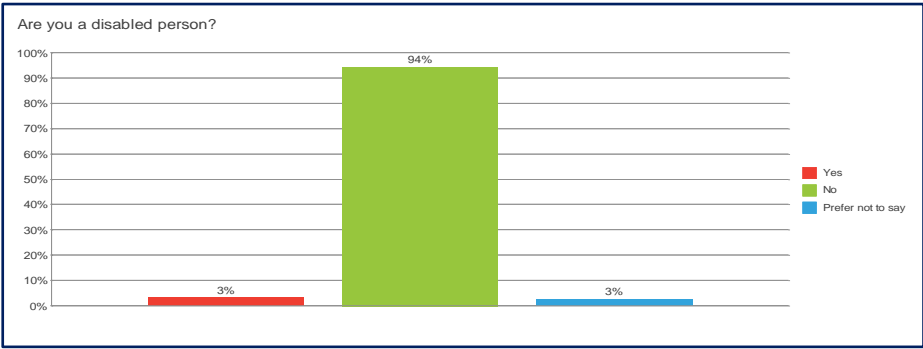
Just under 73% of the respondents identified as White British; the next largest group were those identifying as Pakistani, followed by those identifying as Indian. There were respondents who identified as White Irish; any other White background; Mixed White and African and Arab but these were less than 1% each.



Two thirds of the respondents were aged 16-19 years and 31% were aged 12-15 years. 3% of respondents were aged 20-25 years.

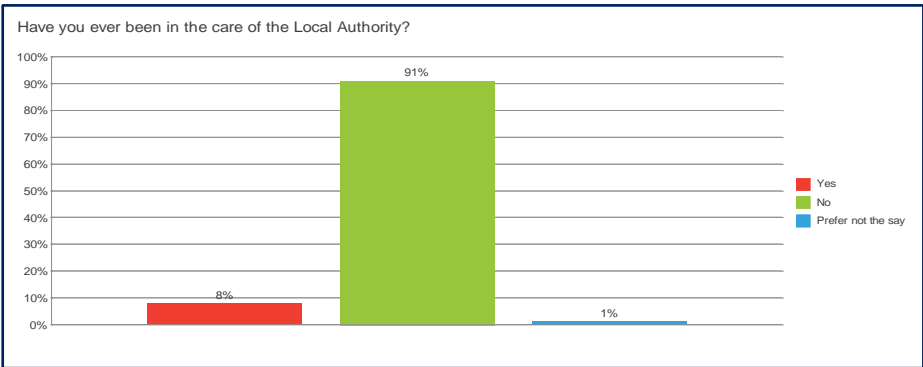


92% of the respondents said that there were heterosexual; 1% said that they were Gay or Lesbian and 3% that they were bisexual.

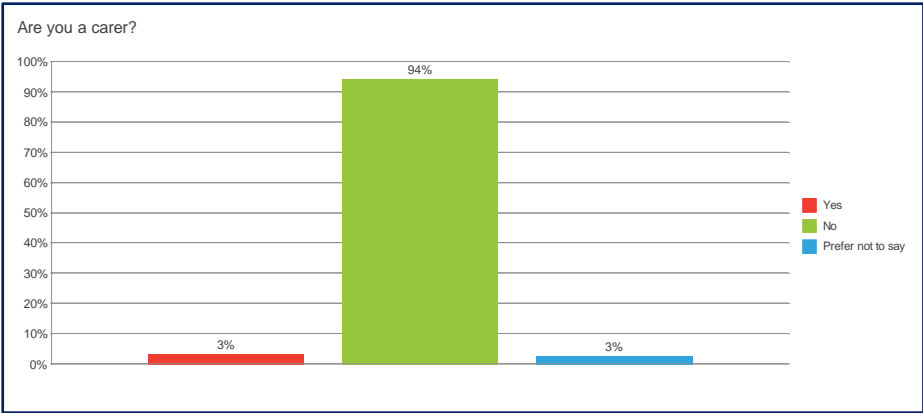


94% of the respondents said that they were not disabled. 3% said that they were a disabled person.

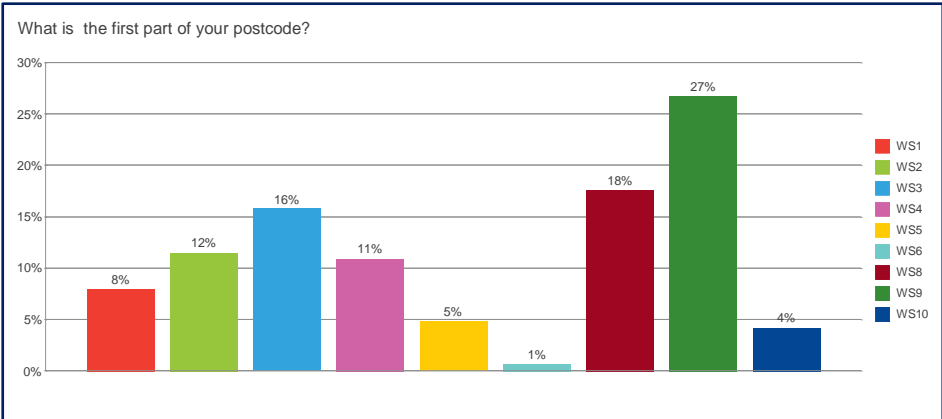
8% of the respondents to the survey said that that had been in the care of the local authority.



3% of the respondents identified themselves as being carers.



Respondents were asked for the first part of their postcode. The highest percentage of responses came from respondents living in WS9. The lowest percentage of respondents resided in WS6.



Conclusions

The number of young people responding to the survey was relatively small and the survey gave a limited opportunity to fully engage with the young people who took part. Therefore, the findings of the project cannot be generalised across all young people in Walsall. However, there is scope for further engagement with male participants as well as those from wider ethnic backgrounds in order to develop understanding.

The respondents indicated that they had used a range of health and social care services in the previous year. Being treated less like a child by professionals was seen as important as was the kindness with which service staff treated them.

A small percentage of the respondents said that they had been the victims of violence in the previous 12 months and a little over a third said that they had witnessed violence, although this was not within a specified time period. Perhaps unsurprisingly, 72% of respondents said that violence made them feel unsafe.

There were a range of responses about what respondents understood by neglect with some seeing it as relating to how children were cared for by their parents or guardians. Some viewed it more widely in terms of how vulnerable people were being cared for. However, not all of the respondents saw neglect in these terms and in some cases viewed it as being related to being ignored or ostracised, perhaps within a friendship group.

Suggestions on who they should speak to if they were being neglected varied with suggestions ranging from parents to friends; teachers to the police. In view of the wide range of suggestions it was clear that there was no single pathway that young people would take. In that situation it is important to ensure that families, friends and professionals are equipped with information and guidance on steps they can take to support young people speaking to them about neglect.

When asked about mental wellbeing, again there were a range of answers given about what it was. However, most saw it as being mentally well and stable with happiness being mentioned on a number of occasions.

Almost half of the respondents said that they were affected by social media and those that said they were affected on the whole explained its impact in negative terms including pressure to conform to a certain way of looking or behaviour. Comparing themselves to people on social media was also pinpointed as a negative as they considered themselves lacking in comparison and this had a negative impact on their self-esteem.

Knowing where to go if they were feeling low brought similar responses to where they would go about neglect except, they included Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services and not the Police.

Recommendations

- Based on the feedback from the respondents to the survey, it is recommended that service providers work to raise awareness on services available to young people and how to access the services. The information and guidance should particularly focus on mental health and wellbeing, sexual health and drugs and alcohol services.
- Although there was a relatively low percentage of young people who said that they had been victims of violence, there was a higher percentage of respondents who said that they had witnessed violence. Therefore, it is recommended that organisations offering support, information and advice around experience of violence to include victims of violence should consider how they can raise awareness of their services amongst young people.
- Consider ways in which Healthwatch Walsall can work with agencies to ensure that young people and their families or carers understand the meaning of neglect and how they can receive support and guidance to prevent neglect.
- Young people responding to the survey indicated that if they needed someone to talk to about how they were feeling when they experienced low moods they would speak to friends and family members as well as education providers in the main. Therefore, a recommendation would be to look at how agencies can work together to ensure that young people, parents and education staff are equipped to deal with such situations and are aware of where they can go to access support.
- There were a number of comments around the negative impact of social media on how young people felt about themselves. Therefore, it is recommended that agencies working with young people provide information and support to young people in building awareness of avoiding the negative impacts of some social media platforms.
- It is recommended that Healthwatch Walsall treat the findings and engagement from this project as a foundation on which to undertake further work with young people in 2020/21.



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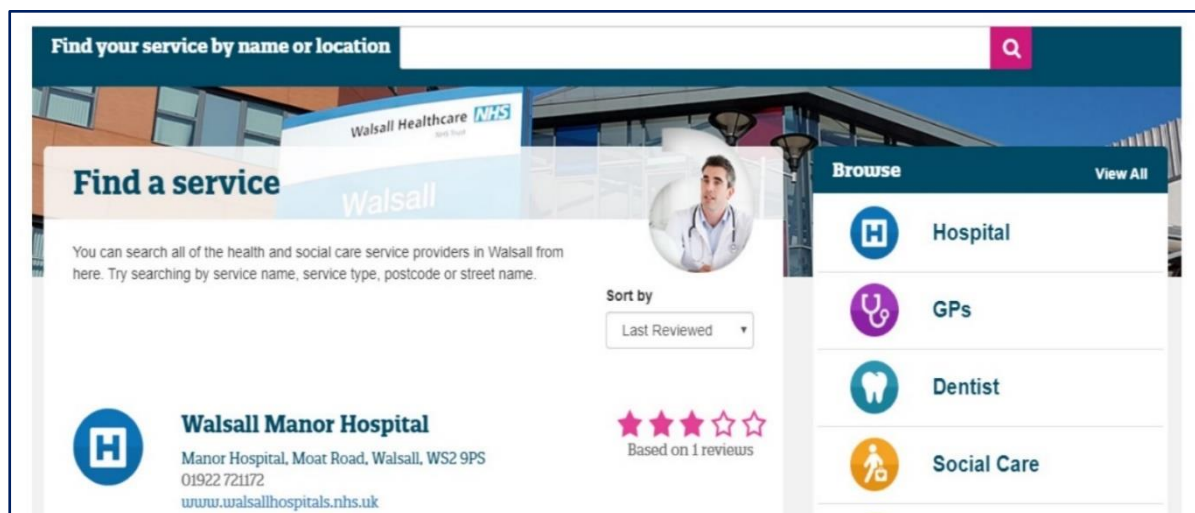
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If you have any NHS or Social Care service experiences that you wish to share, you can visit our online 24/7 Feedback Centre to leave a compliment, concern or complaint.

Link: <https://healthwatchwalsall.co.uk/services/>



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