



# Young people's experience of counselling in community-based settings

Evaluation of Service Questionnaire analysis

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# Introduction

In recent years there has been an increase in demand on both Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) services. Historically CAMHS were perceived as being able to manage high risk cases and having the ability to work with complex, severe and enduring mental health problems. Conversely school- and community-based counselling services were seen as providing early intervention and access to a service for those who do not meet diagnostic criteria or the criteria for acceptance to specialist CAMHS. In spite of this, evidence suggests that community-based counselling services for young people are seeing increasingly complex cases due to funding cuts in other areas. VCS services also play an important part in engaging hard to reach and marginalized groups.

Hence this report is part of a wider study to:

- determine the demographic profile of service users accessing VCS counselling services for children, young people and young adults, to establish the extent to which such services meet the needs of marginalised groups
- investigate the complexity factors and initial severity levels of psychological distress in clients accessing these services, and the amount of reliable and clinically significant change demonstrated between pre- and post-intervention

The main findings from the study are reported in: Counselling for young people and young adults in the voluntary and community sector: An overview of the demographic profile of clients and outcomes, Charlie Duncan, Barbara Rayment, James Kenrick and Mick Cooper (Psychology and Psychotherapy, 2018).

## Methodology

Nine Youth Information, Advice and Counselling Services (YIACS) were recruited to the study through Youth Access. One service dropped out of the study after 12 months, resulting in eight seeing the study through to completion. The services were located in a variety of locations across England, including: London, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol and Devon.

This was a naturalistic study which collected data from young people who accessed YIACS across England between June 2014 and June 2016. All young people

referred to the services were eligible to participate. Informed consent was obtained from young people or parents/carers for participation in the study, which captured data from:

- a form to capture demographics
- the Current View (designed to capture assessment information in a standardised manner)
- CORE 10 / YP CORE (screening tools and outcome measures)
- and the CHI ESQ

The Experience of Service Questionnaire (ESQ, formerly CHI ESQ) was developed by the then Commission for Health Improvement (now the Health Care Commission) as a means of measuring service satisfaction in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. It can be completed by a young person or their parent/carer and consists of 12 items (rated 'Certainly True', 'Partly True' and 'Not True') and three free-text sections looking at what the respondent liked about the service, what they felt needed improving, and any other comments.

A total of 2,155 young people were referred for counselling across the nine services during the data collection period, with paired outcome data available from 1,466 (68.0%) participants. A total of 1378 CHI ESQ questionnaires were submitted for analysis. This report is a thematic analysis drawn from the qualitative element (the three free-text sections) of the CHI ESQ only.

## ESQ 13 – What was really good about your care?

Just over two thirds of clients commented on this question. Young people reported that being truly listened to was a powerful experience. The listening environment created a safe space that enabled them to open up. For some it was the first time they had experienced being genuinely heard, respected and valued. They appreciated working at their own pace and being able to bring whatever they want to the sessions, which enabled a cathartic experience.

Feeling understood was key and where young people felt comfortable they were more able to open up. They attached value to feeling accepted and not judged and it was important to them that they were taken seriously and treated like adults.

The counsellor was an important part of good care, particularly their strategies, techniques and guidance. Young people also appreciated the counsellor's personal qualities. A good relationship with the counsellor is important to the success of the work.

Counselling was seen as helpful and provided an opportunity to explore problems and find solutions, and the possibility of insight and change. Young people reported: greater self-awareness; the ability to acknowledge feelings better; feeling more positive, confident and assertive; the ability to see things from a different perspective; and an increased ability to cope.

Young people's feedback highlights the importance of friendly and approachable staff and the benefit of feeling like staff were genuinely interested in them.

In the intervention, young people valued personalised, non-pressurised support that allowed them to feel in control and enabled a two-way relationship. It was important that it was impartial and confidential.

Young people commented on the quality and professionalism of the services they accessed, which made them feel reassured and safe. There were positive comments about the length and frequency of intervention and flexibility of the service.

## ESQ 14 – Was there anything you didn't like or anything that needs improving?

A little under half of clients made a response to this question. Of these nearly three quarters of them stated that there was nothing they didn't like or that needs improving.

The remaining responses focused mainly on the environment and facilities. There were calls for more space, a more comfortable environment, and better maintenance.

Accessibility was also mentioned, particularly the length of wait to access support, timing of sessions, and flexibility. For some the intervention would have been improved by longer or more frequent sessions, or longer term support. Some young people felt they would have liked more direction and guidance from their counsellor.

Young people felt there could be more information about the service available. A couple of incidents of poor communication were reported.

## ESQ 15 – Is there anything else you want to tell us about the service you received?

21% of clients answered this question. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 92% offering praise for the service, intervention or counsellor. Comments were highly complementary, with adjectives such as 'fantastic' and 'amazing' to describe YIACS. Positive comments mirrored many of those in ESQ13.

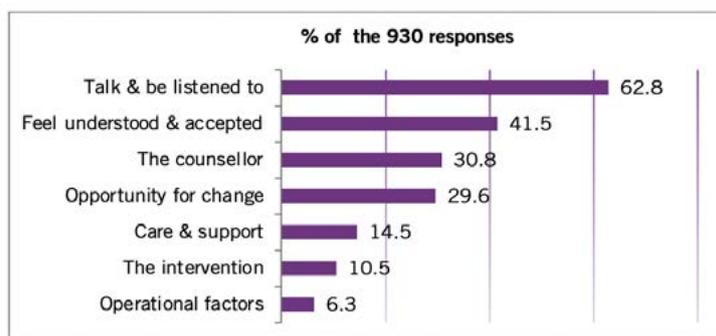
Young people were also grateful for the support they had received and said they would recommend the service to others.

2.8% of responses offered suggestions, such as increase awareness of services and greater service provision.

Only 1.7% gave less positive feedback, mostly around waiting times and number of sessions, often alongside a positive comment.

# ESQ 13: What was really good about your care?

930 qualitative responses (representative of 67.5% of the 1378 completed CHI ESQ questionnaires) were recorded for this question. There were some recurring themes in this material, which have been grouped into seven main areas:



## 1. To talk and be listened to

584 comments fell into this category (representing 62.8% of the 930 responses). As such it was by far the most important in terms of creating a good experience of counselling.

A wealth of feedback comments indicated that simply being truly listened to was a powerful experience. Some young people felt that it was the first time they had experienced being genuinely heard, respected and valued. The following selection of quotes provides a good illustration of how clients found this aspect of counselling important:

- "I felt for once that someone was actually listening to what I had to say."
- "I felt like for the first time I can remember I have been listened to."
- "I feel like it is one of the only places that I get heard."
- "I feel I have been listened to and that everything I say has been taken into consideration."
- "I felt my worries and troubles were listened to."
- "I felt listened to and respected."
- "I really feel that [counsellor] listened to me. She

*made me feel at ease and allowed me to be myself."*

The listening environment created a welcoming, safe space that enabled young people to open up and talk freely and honestly about their thoughts and feelings. A number of clients reported that they were able to bring things in this setting that they had felt unable to talk about elsewhere:

- "I felt the people listened to me properly and I feel confident talking to them."
- "The thing that was good about my care was that it was a safe place where I could have my thoughts listened to and have someone hear me."
- "Having a space to talk with someone who I felt I could trust and be open with."
- "I felt like I had a place I could go to share how I felt. To share feelings I didn't feel I could tell anyone else. I am grateful for an outside view of my problems and help in understanding them."
- "I've been able to talk openly even though this was hard at first and I've felt my counsellor will listen, they're not going to say, 'Just leave it'."

The comments highlight the value many attach to the counsellor allowing them to talk about whatever they choose in the sessions, without pressure to conform to an agenda, and the benefit of counselling being delivered at a pace that feels comfortable. This feeling of the space being theirs is an important influence on why young people trust their counsellor and engage with the counselling process:

- "I didn't feel pressured at all and it was relaxing and easy to talk."
- "Having someone to listen who doesn't have their own agenda."
- "I like that it's always 'my space' to talk / cry / vent and talk at 100mph if I have to."
- "Allowed to ramble and not forced to talk about one particular subject."
- "I felt listened to and my coping mechanisms were respected."

The opportunity to talk and be listened to in this manner was a cathartic experience for many. Young people reported that they were able to unload mentally and

emotionally, often using idioms such 'a weight has been lifted' or 'getting things off my chest':

- 💡 *"I'm glad I stuck at it - I feel like a huge weight has been lifted - Thank you!"*
- 💡 *"I can get everything I'm feeling off my chest without any judgement."*
- 💡 *"I felt that I was able to talk to my counsellor easily and it made me feel better being able to let it all out."*
- 💡 *"I was able to open up when at my first session I wasn't sure I would ever open up and talk about my issue the reason why I came."*
- 💡 *"It was relevant and allowed me to express myself. Sharing the mental load was key."*

## 2. To feel understood and accepted

Closely linked to the previous category, this category contains 386 comments (representing 41.5% of the 930 responses made) and comprises of four sub-categories:

- Feeling understood (108 comments; 11.6%)
- Feeling comfortable (102 comments; 11%)
- Feeling accepted and not judged (99 comments; 10.6%)
- Being taken seriously (77 comments; 8.3%)

### Feeling understood

Often combined with being listened to, being understood was a predominant theme running through the responses. Some were surprised they had experienced this level of understanding from their counsellor, especially if they believed their issues to be complex or they found it difficult to understand themselves:

- 💡 *"I feel as though I am understood, even though I feel I don't understand myself."*
- 💡 *"I was really understood and felt that [counsellor] understood my complex hard to describe issues."*
- 💡 *"I feel like each person I have seen have really listened to my issues and have been very empathetic towards them. They take great care in trying to understand my issues and take the time needed to think through them with me."*

### Feeling comfortable

Again, being listened to plays an important part in this sub-category; where clients felt comfortable and at ease it seems that they were more able to talk openly and felt

safe to engage in the counselling and access the support they required. Mostly feeling comfortable focused on the way young people felt in the sessions and with their counsellor:

- 💡 *"Always felt in comfortable environment when speaking to my counsellor."*
- 💡 *"I was able to be comfortable and completely honest."*
- 💡 *"I felt I was listened to and I cried every session but I felt comfortable and safe there."*
- 💡 *"The person listening to me - that she believes in me which shows concern towards my situation. I feel comfortable coming here and sharing my thoughts."*
- 💡 *"I felt as though I was comfortable enough to say what may have been on my mind or bothering me."*
- 💡 *"The fact I was listened to I felt I could say anything I needed to because of my environment."*
- 💡 *"It was really good. I was listened to, and felt comfortable – at rare times when I wasn't, I was reassured. Thank you."*
- 💡 *"I was comfortable with my therapist, that in turn made it easy to talk about the issues that bothered me."*

Occasionally feeling comfortable also encompassed the general environment of the service or interaction with other members of staff:

- 💡 *"Everyone in the place were very friendly and welcoming we felt really at ease."*
- 💡 *"The staff are very open and friendly and make me feel at ease when I come here."*
- 💡 *"Good atmosphere and feeling comfortable."*

### Feeling accepted and not judged

Many young people talked about the value they attached to feeling accepted, irrespective of what they talked about or what their issues were. The lack of labelling and the absence of judgement was refreshing and enabling for young people:

- 💡 *"They listened, they care, they don't judge. They don't think I am not normal. They understood."*
- 💡 *"The counsellor was non-judgemental and understanding, I was being able to talk freely about situations."*
- 💡 *"The understanding of my issues without judgement was great."*
- 💡 *"I didn't feel judged or uncomfortable at any part even when I became upset and needed a few moments."*

- ☞ *"I feel as though I am being listened to without anyone passing judgement and this makes me comfortable."*
- ☞ *"That I was listened to able to say how I felt with no judgment or disapproval. The staff are lovely and welcoming and treated me like a normal person."*
- ☞ *"I was listened to and told that my feelings were okay."*
- ☞ *"I didn't feel judged, I felt I could open up and that I was listened to, I felt the person was on my level and helped me understand my actions."*
- ☞ *"Feel very relaxed, a real care (genuine), and feel like I have the space to be able to feel normal and not judged."*
- ☞ *"That I was not judged for being me and having problems."*
- ☞ *"I was able to speak my mind without the worry of being judged."*
- ☞ *"It was easy to talk and there was no judgement, it felt like a safe place."*
- ☞ *"Non judgmental and provided a professional yet friendly approach."*

### Being taken seriously

Feedback from young people highlights the importance of being taken seriously and treated like an adult. They frequently appreciated that their concerns – regardless of how big, small, serious or otherwise – were listened to and validated, rather than pushed aside or belittled:

- ☞ *"The person I spoke to was understanding, sympathetic and helpful. She did not undermine me or make me feel the issues I raised were unimportant."*
- ☞ *"I always feel like I am being heard and that my problems no matter how insignificant they seem, are taken seriously and discussed with me."*
- ☞ *"[Counsellor] was always very understanding and listened to my issues and questions. It really felt that I was being taken seriously and what I was feeling wasn't silly, which was one of my fears."*
- ☞ *"The fact I could talk about things that happened and not be told to let it go or for it to be compared to something worse."*
- ☞ *"I was listened to and taken seriously no matter what my concerns."*
- ☞ *"I felt listened to, and as if my problem weren't seen as trivial."*
- ☞ *"My issues were taken seriously and I was treated like an adult. For me first time I was able to talk about*

*my personal problems openly without being judged and by someone that cared / listened. I feel if as if I have got my confidence back."*

- ☞ *"Non-judgemental, took me and my problems seriously without thinking I'm overreacting to situations."*

## 3. The counsellor

This category accounts for 286 comments (representing 30.8% of the 930 responses) and comprises of four sub-categories:

- Counsellor's strategies and guidance (157 comments; 16.9%)
- The counsellor (65 comments; 7%)
- Counsellor's personal qualities (32 comments; 3.4%)
- Relationship with counsellor (32 comments; 3.4%)

### Counsellor's strategies and guidance

Although feedback comments in ESQ14 indicate that a few young people felt they had not received enough feedback, direction or challenge from their counsellor, a large number of young people in the ESQ13 responses highlight the value of the counsellor's strategies and guidance (which many described as advice, although this is not conventionally a part of the counselling relationship):

- ☞ *"Very sensitive, knowledgeable counsellor who understood and directed me through the process. This has been my most positive experience of counselling, and I am grateful for the opportunity."*
- ☞ *"I felt comfortable discussing my feelings and I didn't feel like I was being judged. I was also offered techniques and ideas to increase mindfulness and reduce anxiety which have proved very useful in my exams and situations where I have felt stressed."*
- ☞ *"Being given many tools to understand and deal with yourself, encouragement I received from the practitioner."*
- ☞ *"I was given ways to reverse negative thoughts and being able to get worries out my head."*
- ☞ *"I was understood, listened out, and then given advice which has helped me cope with situations better as a whole."*
- ☞ *"That I got really good advice which has helped me be who I am and more confident."*
- ☞ *"She listened to me and challenged me about what I was saying and that helped because I'm really bad at wording things."*

Young people also appreciated the techniques suggested

by their counsellor and the experiential elements of the work – such as art, games, journalling, goal setting, worksheets etc. – which seemed to enhance outcomes and made it easier for clients to engage in the process:

- 💡 "I felt listened to and the techniques etc. were beneficial. I also liked that you can express in different ways e.g. painting."
- 💡 "I was listened to and often given targets to aim for each week which helped me feel proactive."
- 💡 "I have enjoyed working creatively and using art materials to express my feelings."
- 💡 "I like doing the assessment at the beginning and talking about it, and also doing other things besides just talking, e.g. doing a journal etc."
- 💡 "Worksheets to take home helped. And the ability of [counsellor] to help me see or think of situations in a different light."
- 💡 "Not having to just sit there and talk but play games."
- 💡 "I liked doing arts and crafts and they help me through my problems."

### The counsellor

65 young people (representing 7% of the 930 responses) quoted 'The Counsellor' as a response to this question; they obviously felt their counsellor was a good part of their care but did not give detail or explanation for their reasons for thinking this.

### Counsellor's personal qualities

This said, some young people did elaborate on what they appreciated about their counsellor's personal qualities, e.g. friendliness, kindness, openness and warmth, which helped them feel comfortable and allowed a good rapport to be built:

- 💡 "She is open and warm."
- 💡 "She is kind and very polite and funny."
- 💡 "Kind, considerate and compassionate."
- 💡 "That [counsellor] was so warm and approachable and made me feel at ease instantly."
- 💡 "I was very nervous and was calmed down quite quickly with a friendly face and smile."

### Relationship with counsellor

Perhaps obviously, the relationship young people have with their counsellor is hugely important to success of the work. Where young people felt they had a good rap-

port they reported feeling comfortable and at ease, which enabled them to place their trust in the professional and engage emotionally in the work:

- 💡 "My counsellor and I have a good relationship and I feel it helps me."
- 💡 "I got to build a relationship with the counsellor and get at my emotions."
- 💡 "I easily built a relationship with my counsellor, I've achieved so much. Before, I was escaping life in the session but now I carry the strategies and feeling of the sessions into my everyday life; before there was a separation now it's a continuation."
- 💡 "Developed a good rapport – good level of trust."
- 💡 "She has help me a lot through the years and I trust her."
- 💡 "I felt understood and great rapport."

## 4. Opportunity for change

This category accounts for 275 comments (representing 29.6% of the 930 responses) and is comprised of three sub-categories:

- Providing an opportunity for insight / change (134 comments; 14.4%)
- Helpful (91 comments; 9.8%)
- Problem solving (50 comments; 5.4%)

### Providing an opportunity for insight / change

Feedback from young people was that the counselling intervention had affected a positive change in them. Many developed a greater sense of self-awareness and were able to understand and acknowledge their feelings better. They talked about being able to see things from a different perspective and for some the work had led to a change in life direction:

- 💡 "I was able to figure out more why I am feeling the way I am."
- 💡 "It allowed me to gain an awareness that might not have happened otherwise."
- 💡 "The questions asked really helped me to understand more than I did and have given me a different perspective on the situation."
- 💡 "Seeing improvements in myself throughout the 12 sessions and being able to view things differently. I've looked forward to all of my sessions and found each one helpful in a different way depending on events of the last week."

- 💡 *"I have felt a massive difference in me from the first week to the last week and I received really good help and advice."*
- 💡 *"It's been helpful in the sense that I feel that by the end of the sessions I will have a sense of direction as to how I can cope with aspects of my life and understand the way I behave in the way I do."*
- 💡 *"It helped me view different aspects of things which meant I could understand things better."*
- 💡 *"I have better understanding of my behaviours and thoughts."*
- 💡 *"I've had time to notice my thinking patterns and have found ways to look at the bigger picture. It's been so helpful to have someone who is unbiased and have space to explore things."*
- 💡 *"It's been helpful to have space to explore why I do certain things, things make much more sense now."*
- 💡 *"I learnt a lot about what I need to do in my life to be a better person."*
- 💡 *"I was quite anti coming here but very glad I did as I feel it has genuinely turned my life around."*

They reported feeling more positive, confident and assertive as a result of the intervention and felt they were more able to talk with others about their feelings:

- 💡 *"Being able to look at options, finding ways to be open minded and I speak to others now. Coming here has been the first step to opening up others."*
- 💡 *"I feel like I know myself better. More confident in speaking with new people."*
- 💡 *"I believe the care here was outstanding and I feel like I have come a very long way and feel so much better coming here."*
- 💡 *"It helped me become more confident to try new things and talk to new people."*
- 💡 *"Helped me get more confident around talking about my feelings."*

The improvements in confidence and ability to speak about their feelings was also picked up by parents and reported in their responses:

- 💡 *"It's brought his confidence out he is more willing to talk about his problems."*
- 💡 *"It has enabled the kids to express themselves better."*
- 💡 *"[Client's] whole attitude and behaviour has remarkably changed, I am so pleased with the progress we have both made."*

An increased ability to cope in general was another positive outcome of counselling and many young people identified a decrease in the negative symptoms, e.g. anxiety,

that had led to them seeking support at the outset:

- 💡 *"My anxiety has improved and I don't panic as much."*
- 💡 *"It helped me. I went from a 5 to a 10 on my goal chart in just a few weeks."*
- 💡 *"I have learnt coping mechanisms and exercises to help with my over thinking."*
- 💡 *"I feel like I have been able to understand situations more and feel better and get a better idea of how to cope."*
- 💡 *"Really helped me think more positively and become a happier person."*
- 💡 *"I feel that [counsellor] has helped become more confident in talking to people about how I feel."*
- 💡 *"I feel 100% better."*
- 💡 *"It helped me to find ways of dealing with worrying and to think more positively."*
- 💡 *"I easily built a relationship with my counsellor, I've achieved so much. Before, I was escaping life in the session but now I carry the strategies and feeling of the sessions into my everyday life; before there was a separation now it's a continuation."*
- 💡 *"Counsellor help me with my depression, anxiety and anger. I feel a lot better within myself now."*
- 💡 *"That it helped solve me feeling down and my anxiety attacks."*
- 💡 *"It helps me, giving me ideas on how to deal with my anger, like walk away from trouble."*
- 💡 *"Having time to learn some coping strategies and noticing my thinking patterns has helped. I'm now able to think about things without jumping to conclusions and can do things without always worrying and over thinking."*

## Helpful

Often young people talked in a general sense about the counselling intervention being helpful or about being helped by the counsellor, which clearly had a positive impact on the counselling outcome:

- 💡 *"It benefited me in every way and helped me get through hard times in life."*
- 💡 *"I managed to talk about every topic that I came here for and got the best help."*
- 💡 *"I feel I am being listened to and it has helped me lots."*
- 💡 *"They listened and helped me which made me happy."*

- 🗣️ *"The person who saw me was helpful and understanding."*
- 🗣️ *"I felt that I was understood and listened to and I feel like a lot is being done to help me."*

### Problem solving

Although some young people were frustrated with the non-directional nature of counselling, many comments highlighted the importance of exploring problems and finding solutions or alternative ways of viewing them, which was highly valued by these young people:

- 🗣️ *"I was able to find solutions to my problems and issues not just talk about them which is something that has helped me with my progress and recovery."*
- 🗣️ *"They really did listen to my problems and helped me to solve them or see them in a different way."*
- 🗣️ *"That they are here to help me deal with my problems and confront the sources."*
- 🗣️ *"I felt listened to and my problems were all sorted."*
- 🗣️ *"I was listened to and my problems did have a solution."*
- 🗣️ *"I felt all of my problems I brought up were dealt with well and I was given ways to tackle the problems."*

## 5. Care and support

This category accounts for 135 comments (representing 14.5% of the 930 responses).

Young people's feedback highlights the importance of friendly and approachable service staff and counsellors in order to feel comfortable and at ease in the setting. From first contact with the service young people reported feeling welcomed and supported:

- 🗣️ *"Everyone was welcoming/nice."*
- 🗣️ *"Very friendly, helpful staff."*
- 🗣️ *"Everything. I have had a fantastic experience where I felt really well supported."*
- 🗣️ *"I got the right support and could trust someone with my care."*
- 🗣️ *"Everyone was supportive and caring and I felt really welcomed and the staff were lovely."*
- 🗣️ *"My personal worries were taken into consideration and I have been supported massively."*
- 🗣️ *"It offers a lot of support, very encouraging."*
- 🗣️ *"Everyone was supportive and caring and I felt really welcomed."*

Young people appreciated feeling valued by service staff and counsellors who they believed showed genuine care. Young people clearly benefitted from feeling like members of staff were interested in them, and wanted to support clients to achieve positive outcomes:

- 🗣️ *"I felt like the person who saw me really helped me and had my best interest as their focus."*
- 🗣️ *"Counsellor seems to genuinely care and listen."*
- 🗣️ *"I felt like the people who have seen me really do care and want to help me, this makes me feel safe."*
- 🗣️ *"The person helping me seemed genuinely interested and concerned about what I had to say."*
- 🗣️ *"They cared about us and they listened and they were nice. It was different to other people who are meant to care."*
- 🗣️ *"Having time to talk about past and explore things that I have never talked about before. It was so difficult to name how I felt but I felt fully supported at every step."*
- 🗣️ *"They really take an interest and try to help best they can."*
- 🗣️ *"[Counsellor] was really nice and made me feel cared for and I matter."*
- 🗣️ *"I felt looked after and as though people really cared."*
- 🗣️ *"It was nice to talk about my problems / feelings without feeling like a bother and it felt like my feelings mattered."*
- 🗣️ *"I was focused on, listened to critically, not treated as just another case, taken seriously and valued by my counsellor."*
- 🗣️ *"My counsellor always listened and asked about relevant questions and seemed genuinely involved."*
- 🗣️ *"It was very open and you could see that my counsellor genuinely cared about what I had to say."*

## 6. The intervention

This category accounts for 98 comments (representing 10.5% of the responses).

Feedback about their experience and views of the counselling support highlight the value many young people attach to the delivery of non-pressurised support that is presented at a pace that suits the client. This enables clients to feel they are in control of a self-directed process:

- 🗣️ *"I felt that I was in control of the agenda and what I wanted to bring and talk about each session was up to me."*

- ☞ *"When it got to points where I didn't really feel like talking I wasn't pushed to talk."*
- ☞ *"Having a space to talk to someone and take my time and go at my own pace."*
- ☞ *"I could take things at my own pace. I was not uncomfortable."*

In addition, young people valued the personalised nature of the support:

- ☞ *"The sessions I've had have been tailored to suit my particular needs. A lot of attention was given to what did/didn't work for me, which was really helpful."*
- ☞ *"I felt the sessions were centred around my needs."*
- ☞ *"It was individualised for my needs. It was sympathetic of my struggles."*
- ☞ *"The care I received my tailored to my needs and I thoroughly enjoyed each session."*

These factors foster the formation of a two-way relationship that gives young people space and time to explore their thoughts and feelings but also enough guidance from the counsellor to keep them on track and moving forward:

- ☞ *"[Counsellor] listened to my problems and tried to find the best ways for me to try and approach them that I would be comfortable with."*
- ☞ *"[Counsellor] was very easy to talk to she would listen be honest with me and tell me what I needed rather than what I wanted to hear and kept me motivated in things I need to do and work on."*
- ☞ *"Having space to reflect on situations and feelings and give confidence to the voice that knows what is best for me."*
- ☞ *"I was able to come each week and voice my thoughts to someone who knew how to guide me but also could be someone else to listen to me and piece together my thoughts."*
- ☞ *"Being listened to and being questioned i.e. 'Why do I feel this?' makes me question myself."*
- ☞ *"It helped when the therapist helped guide me through the support as I am very good at avoiding my feelings."*
- ☞ *"[Counsellor] has a relaxed calming nature and seems to really listen to what I say. She always helps to expand my views and offers realistic well thought through solutions."*
- ☞ *"Through [counsellor's] support I have felt able to untangle all my emotions and tackle them one by one- sensitive advice at all times."*
- ☞ *"My counsellor spoke back to me instead of just sit-*

*ting and listening all the time."*

- ☞ *"I was able to come each week and voice my thoughts to someone who knew how to guide me but also could be someone else to listen to me and piece together my thoughts."*
- ☞ *"[Counsellor] listened to me and showed me all the positives with my problems and helped me resolve them myself."*

An important part of the intervention for a number of young people was that it was impartial and confidential. Talking to someone outside of their family or peer group and knowing that boundaries exist in terms of how the information is shared made clients feel safer to open up, trust the counsellor, and bring what they needed to without fear of recrimination:

- ☞ *"I was able to share my feelings in confidence for the first time and I felt great relief from that."*
- ☞ *"Being able to talk without parents being there."*
- ☞ *"That I was able to say what was on my mind and how I felt about life and people who I know and I was able to talk to someone outside of my family."*
- ☞ *"I felt like I have someone to talk other than my family and friends."*
- ☞ *"Being able to vent in front of someone you are comfortable around, yet somewhat impartial to."*
- ☞ *"I was able to say what I felt in a safe space that I could trust and know that they wouldn't share it with others."*
- ☞ *"I felt that I could say whatever I wanted to without being judged. Also I can trust my counsellor to not share my information with anybody."*

As well as the beneficial elements of the intervention mentioned above, a number of young people also commented on the enjoyment they got from the work:

- ☞ *"I enjoyed everything. It was fun."*
- ☞ *"Really enjoy sessions."*
- ☞ *"It's been good and fun I enjoyed working with [counsellor]."*
- ☞ *"Enjoyed the care because they make you feel comfortable, listen to you, take you seriously."*

## 7. Operational factors

This category accounts for 59 comments (representing 6.3% of the 930 responses).

Young people commented on the quality and professionalism of the services they accessed, which made them feel reassured and safe. They were confident that the

service had the expertise to help them or would have the knowledge and links to refer elsewhere if necessary:

- 💡 "The level of professionalism, warmth and attention to my needs. I felt listened to and supported throughout. I think this has helped me to overcome my difficulties."
- 💡 "They know what they doing and know how to refer me elsewhere if needs be."
- 💡 "Talking to someone who I feel is actually able to help me."
- 💡 "The people there are the best to help me."

While there were criticisms elsewhere of waiting times and length and frequency of intervention, there were some young people who commented positively about these areas in this question:

- 💡 "Seen quickly. Offered aftercare."
- 💡 "I think that the length of time the service was available to me was very helpful and I didn't realise how important that was when I started. It really helped me to be able to comfortably tackle some of the

issues I had."

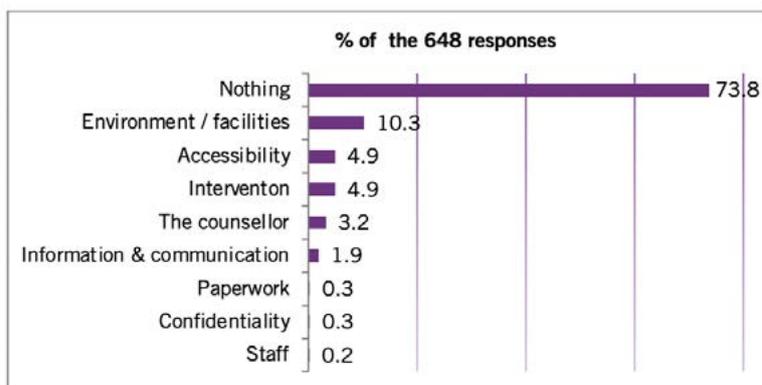
- 💡 "How quick and effective the treatment I received was delivered."
- 💡 "The weekly sessions encouraged a sense of discipline and order and helped me prepare better."

A number of young people also appreciated the flexibility the service afforded them in terms of appointment times, accessibility and continuity of support:

- 💡 "[Counsellor] was really accommodating in fitting us in that suited school hours."
- 💡 "Really useful having appointments at home, fits in well with work and school times."
- 💡 "Help is there when I need it."
- 💡 "It was very flexible and accessible. I felt like I got more than I could have ever hoped for."
- 💡 "It was really helpful to be able to take a break and to be able to come back as often as I needed and to speak to the same person again."

# ESQ 14: Was there anything you didn't like or anything that needs improving

648 qualitative responses (representative of 47% of the 1378 completed CHI ESQ questionnaires) were recorded for this question. The majority (478 comments; representing 73.8% of the responses to this question) of these stated that there was nothing that they didn't like or that needs improving. The remaining responses can be broken down into the following categories:



## 1. Environment / facilities

With 67 comments (representing 10.3% of the responses to this question) focused on improvements to the counselling environment or facilities, it was the area that is most important when considering improvements within community based settings. Of course it should be noted that this is not always easily achieved as it is dependent on the limitations of the premises and budget of the organisations. While clients appreciated this, there were calls for more space in the building and better maintenance of existing space and they felt the cost should be covered by statutory services. There were also a handful of concerns that the service lacked disabled access:

- 💡 "You guys need a bigger building so you have more rooms for counselling. I thought it was a great service."

- ☞ *"The building needs government or council funding as it is run down and not half as welcoming as the people here."*
- ☞ *"The waiting area was too cramped, I felt as though I lacked personal space."*
- ☞ *"The building; council should give this organisation more money! Highly recommend!"*
- ☞ *"I find the consulting rooms very comfortable however the waiting room I find uncomfortable because it is very tight and small."*

This said, it seems there are some changes that are easier to incorporate, such as creating a more welcoming and comfortable environment, particularly in the waiting area, by softening and brightening the space:

- ☞ *"Facilities could be more welcoming."*
- ☞ *"The chairs are really hard in the waiting area."*
- ☞ *"The waiting area is a bit dull and not very welcoming."*
- ☞ *"Not at all. Maybe cushions on the chairs in the waiting areas."*
- ☞ *"The waiting area is a bit scary."*
- ☞ *"The art room could have been more 'arty' and could have had pictures hanging up for inspiration."*
- ☞ *"Not particularly, I mean the waiting room could be more comfortable but that's about it."*
- ☞ *"Maybe the waiting area a few more chairs and not so squashed as people do feel self-conscious and vulnerable."*
- ☞ *"Waiting area was a little daunting."*
- ☞ *"The waiting area is too packed. Chairs are too close together, it is not private."*
- ☞ *"No, the service was perfect. However, the waiting room causes a lot of anxiety."*

A handful of young people felt the service could do more to ensure the environment is well maintained and cared for:

- ☞ *"The clock in this session is wrong and that ticked me off."*
- ☞ *"I didn't like that there weren't enough pictures on the walls and the one that was on the wall was always wonky."*
- ☞ *"Poor painting in room can be distracting."*

Some young people called for more amenities for use while waiting, such as reading material, access to the Internet via wi-fi, or refreshments:

- ☞ *"The waiting room only has four chairs, it would be*

*nice if there were more and maybe things like magazines, TV and newspapers etc."*

- ☞ *"Wifi in waiting room."*
- ☞ *"More cakes!!!"*
- ☞ *"Teas and coffees please."*
- ☞ *"Maybe some water facilities to be placed in the meeting rooms."*

## 2. Accessibility

32 comments (representing 4.9% of the responses to this question) concerned accessibility. While young people were generally understanding about the reasons for a wait to access support, some, especially those in greatest need, considered it too long:

- ☞ *"The waiting time was an issue for me as I felt like I needed support sooner rather than later however the service has been helpful and beneficial to me."*
- ☞ *"It took longer than expected to get an appointment which was frustrating but I feel that my experience has outweighed that now."*
- ☞ *"Long period of time between contacting [YIACS] and having an appointment."*
- ☞ *"Less waiting time - but I know it's due to funding!"*
- ☞ *"The waiting time did take a while but I feel that I started having sessions in good enough time around two month wait."*
- ☞ *"Had to wait six weeks before I was seen and in that time I was at my lowest."*

A few clients reported that the timing of sessions was not always convenient and meant they had to take time off school or work, or miss attending recreational clubs:

- ☞ *"From the point of counselling itself, no. The only issue for me has been timing, as I have had to adjust my work commitments around appointment times."*
- ☞ *"The only thing is I missed my clubs."*
- ☞ *"The session times during school was difficult."*
- ☞ *"Just time of appt. Sometimes difficult to get to from work."*

A few young people indicated that they would like to see changes that would make the service more easily accessible, such as more than one sessions per week available to individuals, more evening appointments, and access to alternative support when a regular counsellor is on leave or sick:

- ☞ *"The option of more than one session a week and a higher level of availability."*
- ☞ *"Sessions. If my counsellor is away or sick could*

*... speak to someone than not speaking to anyone for that week."*

- ☞ *"Variety or availability of alternative dates."*
- ☞ *"There was nothing I didn't like but maybe the possibility of having appointments slightly later into the evening occasionally."*

A handful of responses commented on difficulties in accessing the service due to location or signposting:

- ☞ *"The distance and possibly more weekend availability."*
- ☞ *"The signs on the building are not that clear and it is tricky to find."*
- ☞ *"The travelling distance."*

A couple of young people felt it a shame that the service could not support clients beyond the age of 25:

- ☞ *"Cut off age. If possible extend to older age."*
- ☞ *"Everything was perfect. It's just a shame that it has to stop at 25 years old."*

One response about the difficulty the client had in the referral process perhaps says more about levels of awareness of services, marketing and robustness of pathways:

- ☞ *"Referrals to the service - since I was referred to many counselling services by my GP before being able to find a suitable service. Harder, I guess it's not really [YIACS's] fault."*

### 3. Intervention

32 comments (representing 4.9% of the responses to this question) were made about the intervention. There were calls for...

- longer sessions
  - ☞ *"I wish the sessions were a full hour or longer."*
  - ☞ *"Not really. A bit more time because it takes me a while to start talking."*
  - ☞ *"One hour is too short - not enough time for me to say what I want to say."*
  - ☞ *"I just wish the sessions were longer."*
  - ☞ *"Longer sessions and more of them, more flexibility for the schedule."*
- more frequent sessions
  - ☞ *"Would be nice to have the same counsellor available on more days (but I know this is just not possible!) :) Maybe 1 hour sessions instead of 50 minutes? There is nothing I can think of. Everything is good."*
  - ☞ *"Only one day a week. Ideally more than once every seven days. Maybe split the times up between two*

*days.*

- longer term support
  - ☞ *"The only thing would be to ask me if I wanted long term session this would have been a benefit for me individually as I am sometimes shy to ask for things that are important to me!"*
  - ☞ *"I was only given 6 weeks at a time. I feel I need more help and didn't receive the full outcome I needed."*
  - ☞ *"I think that sessions need to be longer as I don't think 12-14 sessions is long enough for some people. I think it needs to be means tested if people need longer."*
  - ☞ *"Duration of Treatment - 12 weeks is too short."*

A few young people reported personal difficulties in engaging with counselling:

- ☞ *"Didn't like talk about it because it made me feel upset."*
- ☞ *"My anxiety but only a bit."*
- ☞ *"It's overwhelming having all the attentions focused on me."*

And a handful felt that they still had unresolved issues or could not see how the support would benefit them long term:

- ☞ *"I still need to improve on my eating."*
- ☞ *"Not sure how or when it is going to help with my Bruxism."*
- ☞ *"[Counsellor] is excellent at listening to me and the problems I am facing however I am unsure in the long term how I will cope."*

### 4. The counsellor

21 comments (representing 3.2% of the responses to this question) were made about the counsellor. Generally young people would have liked more guidance and direction from the counsellor:

- ☞ *"Would like more advice on how to cope with anxiety and different techniques for it."*
- ☞ *"I would have liked some advice or to see things in a different way."*
- ☞ *"I felt like we identified my problems but didn't do much to resolve them."*
- ☞ *"Perhaps if I could be shown methods of calming my anxiety down for at home or wherever."*
- ☞ *"Maybe to have a couple of techniques I can use to improve my behaviour/mood."*

- ☞ *"I would have liked to have done more activities other than talking e.g. forms/tests together but I am also aware I could always do this myself so this is not a criticism of the service."*
- ☞ *"I felt I could have gone quicker."*
- ☞ *"More feedback from [counsellor]."*
- ☞ *"To solve my problems in steps more."*

While it seems it was not enough to cause an issue in the work overall, a handful of young people reported difficulties in engaging with the counsellor in the therapeutic process; they felt uncomfortable with the lack of conversation and would have liked to experience more of a two-way relationship with their counsellor:

- ☞ *"No everything was fine. If anything just a little more conversation but that is only a minor point."*
- ☞ *"I found it a bit nerve wrecking. I didn't like the awkward silences. Made me feel on edge."*
- ☞ *"I felt slightly intimidated by the counsellor at times."*
- ☞ *"Sometimes more talking from the other end might be needed but that might just be me."*

A couple of responses indicated that young people felt aggrieved by their counsellor:

- ☞ *"I couldn't answer some questions and felt pressurised to give an answer."*
- ☞ *"You don't let me finish and you ask me stupid questions and you don't take anything seriously."*

It seems that largely this situation was resolved by allocating young people to different counsellors:

- ☞ *"The first person I saw I felt like he was judging me and would patronise me."*
- ☞ *"I didn't feel like I was getting anywhere with my first counsellor. We didn't click."*

One respondent had been disappointed that their counsellor was leaving:

- ☞ *"I will be upset to see [counsellor] go because she has been there from day one and I felt good to talk about my worries to her."*

## 5. Information and communication

12 comments (representing 1.9% of the responses to this question) fell in this area. These young people felt there should be more information about the services available and more relevant handouts to accompany the support offered:

- ☞ *"Perhaps give out [YIACS's] information more."*
- ☞ *"More information about facilities here."*

- ☞ *"Maybe more handouts."*
- ☞ *"Incredible Years material is very Americanised."*

A few wanted to see a wider offer of support outside of the counselling format and recommendations for accessing information and support elsewhere:

- ☞ *"More courses and help around housing for over 21s."*
- ☞ *"I feel like there could be better advice and services recommended."*
- ☞ *"Solid links to outside resources that can relate to peoples' cases."*

A couple of incidents of poor communication were reported:

- ☞ *"The level of communication between admin and practitioners because when I wanted to change counsellor, the old counsellor messaged me twice which made me feel sad."*
- ☞ *"When I never got the message that my appointment was cancelled, it would be better to get a text."*

## 6. Paperwork

Two clients (representing 0.3% of the responses to this question) found elements of the routine outcome measures paperwork difficult:

- ☞ *"Found it difficult to complete CORE 10."*
- ☞ *"That there is no other option on the genders below (Meaning the CHI only has male/female options for gender)."*

## 7. Confidentiality

Two clients (representing 0.3% of the responses to this question) mentioned confidentiality as an issue, although there is little that could be done to address this if confidentiality had to be broken because of safeguarding concerns or because parents needed to be informed due to a young person's age. This said, it emphasises the importance of confidentiality in the community based setting:

- ☞ *"Didn't like that [counsellor] had to break confidence (safeguarding concern)."*
- ☞ *"I would rather my parents not be contacted."*

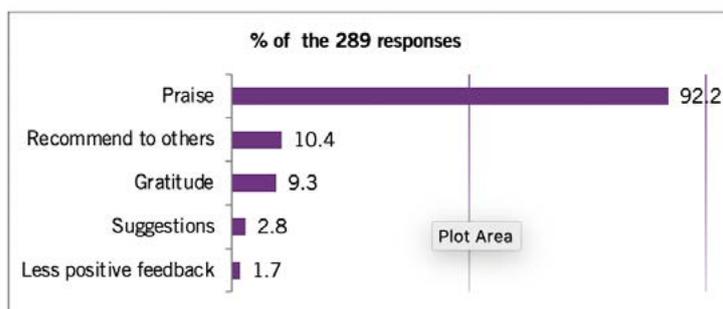
## 8. Staff

Only one complaint (representing 0.2% of the responses to this question) suggested that the young person had not had a good experience of frontline staff within the service:

- ☞ *"Your reception/front of house people are RUDE."*

# ESQ 15: Is there anything else you want to tell us about the service you received?

289 qualitative responses (representative of 21% of the 1378 completed CHI ESQ questionnaires) were recorded for this question. When offered the chance to make spontaneous comment, clients were overwhelmingly positive; only eight of the responses offered suggestions and only five gave less positive feedback. The responses have been grouped into five main categories:



## 1. Praise

An impressive 267 comments (representing 92.2% of the 289 responses to this question) contained words of praise. These have been broken down into three sub-categories:

- Praise for service (124 comments; 43%)
- Praise for intervention (102 comments; 35%)
- Praise for counsellor (41 comments; 14.2%)

### Praise for service

124 comments (representing 43% of the responses to this question) were an opportunity for service users to sing the praises of the YIACS they accessed. Clients were highly complementary, using adjectives such as 'fantastic', 'great', 'amazing' and 'excellent' to describe the YIACS:

- 💡 *"I think this service is great!"*
- 💡 *"Keep doing what you are doing, it's great."*
- 💡 *"It's fantastic, it's helped me so much and I would like to take every opportunity to be involved in the service in any way I can."*
- 💡 *"I'm glad there is a service of this quality for young*

*people."*

- 💡 *"The service here is very good and I don't know what I would have done without it."*
- 💡 *"It's great 10/10 (0: x"*
- 💡 *"Overall the service is excellent."*
- 💡 *"I feel everything is of splendid service."*
- 💡 *"It is the best place, it will help others."*
- 💡 *"It is a very good service not to have to pay for even, full stop."*
- 💡 *"I feel the service is exemplary here. Always met with a smile at the door ensured that I'm comfortable and I leave reassured that somebody cares to listen."*
- 💡 *"I'm really happy that I came here and it has helped me so so so much!"*

And in line with ESQ13 there were a number of comments about the high quality of care and support, and personal enjoyment of the experience:

- 💡 *"It was lovely that members of staff I had previously worked with always seemed happy to see me and really appeared to care about my progress."*
- 💡 *"Very caring, kind and supportive."*
- 💡 *"Everyone at the office is very friendly and welcoming. First contact was difficult for me but I felt reassured by all members of staff that I encountered."*
- 💡 *"It has been so helpful and I will miss not coming to the sessions as it is hard to find a confidential safe space like the ones I have been provided with. I am hoping to continue using the service and attending a group."*
- 💡 *"It has been thoroughly enjoyable."*
- 💡 *"I have really enjoyed this experience and wasn't expecting it to be as comfortable and as helpful as it has been."*

### Praise for intervention

102 young people praised the intervention (representing 35% of the 930 responses):

- ☞ *"This journey is long and hard and ongoing and won't end here but this in isolation has been the most valuable support I have had in my life."*
- ☞ *"It was amazing."*
- ☞ *"It has been marvellous and has helped me."*

Many of the positive feedback comments made by young people here mirror those of ESQ13:

- To talk and be listened to
  - ☞ *"I have used several services in the past but this is the best service I have ever engaged with. I felt thoroughly listened to and supported by my worker and got everything I wanted from my sessions."*
  - ☞ *"It has been helpful to explore my thoughts and have a space to talk about my feelings and how to manage them."*
  - ☞ *"I felt like a bit of weight was lifted off my shoulders after the meeting."*
  - ☞ *"Allowed me to explore my depression, my childhood and think about my future in a way I hadn't done before. Having someone to talk to has been really helpful."*
  - ☞ *"It was excellent, I feel a lot lighter when I leave."*
  - ☞ *"Helpful to have time and space to talk about things I have never explored before. It allowed me to share how I feel and understand myself in a way I haven't done with anyone before."*
- To feel understood and accepted
  - ☞ *"I felt the support I received has been invaluable and I appreciate being able to speak to someone who is able to understand my worries and mental health issues. When I didn't have anyone else to speak to and help me this was invaluable support."*
  - ☞ *"Feel like I am heard and I am able to be free and discuss my issues. I am made to feel normal and made to feel like nothing I say is bad or frowned upon."*
  - ☞ *"We were made to feel very welcomed and we felt supported and not judged."*
  - ☞ *"I really liked it and though I was treated with respect by everyone and my opinions were taken into consideration."*
  - ☞ *"It was eye opening and made me very comfortable about talking openly through and about these issues."*
- Opportunity for change
  - ☞ *"The service was very accommodating to my needs and helped me to engage in therapy and support me in opening up and being honest with myself, which I have avoided for a long time."*

- ☞ *"The support I am receiving is helping me to overcome my anxiety and it feels really good to talk to someone in a comfortable environment."*
- ☞ *"I think it has really helped me view situations in a more positive light and has helped me understand negative ways of thinking and how to negate from them."*
- ☞ *"It has been wonderful and potentially life changing."*
- ☞ *"Been helpful in more ways than one. I have been happier, more open and honest with people, more myself than when I first came."*
- ☞ *"It's really helped me. I feel I have moved forward with my life."*
- ☞ *"Making a timeline and working creatively helped me to explore experiences in a safe way and helped me understand how these traumatic experiences have impacted on my depression."*
- ☞ *"It was really helpful and has made me feel a lot better about everything."*
- ☞ *"Very helpful and I think coming here will have a great impact on my life."*
- ☞ *"The service that I received was really helpful and it has changed me for a better person."*
- The intervention
  - ☞ *"I felt that every session was tailored to me individually and that my needs were addressed. I was treated as an individual and not a statistic or one of many."*
  - ☞ *"Fantastic support."*
  - ☞ *"Very professional and confidential."*
  - ☞ *"I really enjoy it."*
  - ☞ *"It was really helpful and has made me feel a lot better about everything."*

### Praise for counsellor

As in ESQ13 again, it appears the counsellor facilitated a holding and transformative space that was beneficial to the young people and this question provided the opportunity for them to show their appreciation in 41 comments (representing 14.2% of the 930 responses):

- ☞ *"At the beginning of my sessions I felt hopeless and that there was no way of feeling happy again but [counsellor] at [service] has given me guidance and has been an amazing listener; I feel that I will make it... one day!"*
- ☞ *"[Counsellor] should be knighted."*
- ☞ *"I feel I have found the person I used to be with [counsellor's] support and confidence in me I was re-*

*ally in a dark and trapped place before but now I feel myself wouldn't be where I am today without [counsellor] and [service]."*

- "My worker, she deserves a medal, the most help and support that anyone could ask for."*
- "My counsellor is very good, a lot better than others I have experienced in the past, which was a pleasant surprise."*
- "[Counsellor] helped me with a lot and she was really caring, understanding and knew how to make me feel comfortable."*
- "I think that my counsellor is very understanding and is amazing at her job."*
- "My counsellor has been outstanding and it is sad to part with him."*
- "[Counsellor] really made me feel comfortable and listened and came across like she cared. Seems like such a lovely woman."*
- "I feel like working with [counsellor] has helped me more than any place I have been in the past."*
- "It is really amazing – give [counsellor] a raise!"*

## 2. Recommend to others

Testament to the positive experiences detailed in ESQ13, 30 comments (representing 10.4% of the responses to this question) contained spontaneous reports that young people had already or would in the future recommend the service to others:

- "I have recommended the services to a few friends already as you were a great help for me."*
- "I think it is an amazing service and definitely recommend it."*
- "I really enjoyed coming here because I find it very helpful to speak to someone about how I feel. I would recommend it to other people that need help like myself."*
- "10/10, would recommend."*
- "I feel like this service is extremely beneficial and I would recommend it to anyone who needed this type of support."*
- "It was amazing, I'd 100% recommend it to anyone who needed it."*
- "Fantastic service for young people and I would highly recommend it."*
- "I'd recommend it to everyone. I really feel as if this is helping me."*

## 3. Gratitude

27 comments (representing 9.3% of the responses to this question) were declarations of gratitude for the support young people had received, from their counsellor mainly but also other staff and the service in general:

- "Brilliant! Thank you very much."*
- "More young people need access to this service. It has dramatically helped me cope and manage my day to day life. I will be forever grateful."*
- "I am grateful for getting the support at a stage in my life where I really needed it as there have been and will be a lot of changes. I felt supported here. Thank you very much."*
- "I am so happy and grateful. I really would recommend it to anyone. I can't thank [counsellor] enough."*
- "Thank you so much for the support you have given."*
- "I am very grateful (thank you) because by coming here I have become a more confident and positive person. It has really helped me."*
- "Thank you for helping me, I can now recognise my achievements."*
- "Everyone has been extremely kind and supportive and understanding, I am exceptionally grateful to everyone."*

## 4. Suggestions

As young people had found their experience of accessing support personally beneficial they were keen for awareness of the service to be increased. 8 comments were made (representing 2.8% of the responses to this question). Suggestions were for the service to be advertised more, in appropriate settings:

- "That it should continue and be advertised more."*
- "That I'm very grateful of the service and maybe more people should know about it as they would benefit greatly."*
- "I would like you to raise more awareness and help more people."*
- "Leaflets could be given out to schools so teens could find out about the service that way."*

Or suggestions focussed on service provision:

- "Do more group work."*
- "It would be good to have an opportunity to recap in private."*

- 💡 "Food please (possibly biscuits/cakes in waiting room?)"
- 💡 "It would be helpful to know is there a way to get referral to a therapist/CBT or further help."

## 5. Less positive feedback

Only five less positive comments (representing 1.7% of the responses to this question) were made and were often offered after a positive comment or couched in an acknowledgement that it is difficult for the service to offer what service users wanted due to funding and capacity issues e.g. shorter waiting times or more sessions:

- 💡 "Wonderful service, you just need new receptionists, they are off-putting."
- 💡 "It was great. I don't think that six sessions was enough."

- 💡 "There was quite a long wait to get on to the therapy sessions (around three months) but I felt that I could call my key worker in that time which was good and helpful."
- 💡 "Though I know it is difficult to deal with, the waiting list is so long and any way to shorten the time it takes for young people to get what they need would help me so much."

A couple of young people commented on issues that YI-ACS could more easily address, such as timekeeping and participation in weekly routine outcome measures:

- 💡 "Late starts, difficult with communication with therapist."
- 💡 "I asked not to fill in CORE every session as I didn't find it helpful. The questions are closed and leave little room for variants in people's illness."

# Conclusions

The findings of this report show that young people found many positives about their care. Talking and being listened to, and feeling understood and accepted were areas in which young people reported services performed well.

The main area for improvement was the environment and facilities in the YIACS. Clients often recognised that this was due to lack of funding or limitations of the building, although there were some improvements that could be made more easily, such as softening, brightening or better maintaining the premises.

When young people were given the opportunity to say anything else about the service they received, their comments were overwhelmingly positive and full of gratitude.

The qualitative data, of these three questions on the CHI ESQ, has given a platform to young people's voices and enabled us to gain a rich idea of their experience of services. It showcases a number of points that the quantitative outcome measures alone are less able to demonstrate, including: the power and excellence of the work; the impact it has had on young people's lives; and the sense of relief, hope and optimism that exudes.

This said, it also exposes limitations. This method of data collection will only suit those young people who feel comfortable using written word and may miss feedback

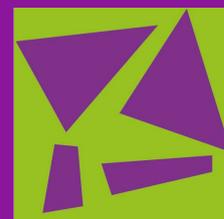
from those who find it easier to communicate verbally, or those who are less able to externalise their thoughts and feelings. This reinforces the need to examine current outcome measures and further explore the best ways to elicit valuable feedback from all young people.

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