



MH:2K North Tyneside

A youth-led approach to exploring mental health

July 2018

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Foreword

North Tyneside has a rich tradition of participation, advocacy and engagement, so we were delighted at the opportunity to build on our existing work and take part in the MH:2K programme. Together with our strategic partners we recognise that listening to the voices of children and young people is crucial to supporting and improving mental health and wellbeing across the borough.

National headlines about young people's mental health sometimes make gloomy reading, so we decided to use the MH:2K process to go beyond the statistic of 'one in 10 young people experience mental health difficulties' that often dominates. We know that children and young people today face considerable emotional demands – educational expectations, impact of social media and peer pressure to name but a few, but we wanted to find out more about their experiences and what might help to alleviate some of these pressures.

Working with Involve and Leaders Unlocked to implement the MH:2K approach in North Tyneside has been a fantastic experience. Twenty-seven of our young people became 'Citizen Researchers' and were able to start different types of conversations that actively reached a diverse and large number of young people across the borough. These vibrant discussions and opinions have given us new insights and perspectives about how we can most effectively support good mental health for young people locally.

The following report outlines the findings and recommendations from this work and we have already started to consider how to implement them. We will continue to work and listen to young people as part of our overall strategic approach to ensuring that all children and young people can achieve their optimum mental health and wellbeing in North Tyneside.

Finally, we would like to thank all our local MH:2K Citizen Researchers for their dedication and hard work on this project, their continued energy and passion throughout the process was inspiring.

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Part One: Introducing MH:2K

Section 1: Introduction

Mental health conditions affect about 1 in 10 children and young people, with 75% of mental health problems in adult life, excluding dementia, starting before age eighteen. Given this, it is perhaps unsurprising that young people consistently identify mental health as a priority issue.

MH:2K seeks to give young people a role in solving this most important of challenges. Focussing on those with mental health issues and from at-risk groups, it empowers young people to shape decision-makers' understanding of both the mental health challenges they face and what solutions could look like.

About MH:2K

MH:2K is a powerful new model for engaging young people in conversations about mental health and emotional wellbeing in their local area. It empowers 14-25 year olds to:

- Identify the mental health issues that they see as most important;
- Engage their peers in discussing and exploring these topics;
- Work with key local decision-makers and researchers to make recommendations for change.

Its design builds on good engagement practice from within and beyond the youth mental health field. Specifically MH:2K features:

- **End-to-end youth leadership:** MH:2K's youth-led approach means it is grounded in the reality of young people's lives. Young people decide its focus, co-lead its events, and determine its findings and recommendations.
- **Peer-to-peer engagement:** By empowering young people to reach out to their peers, MH:2K creates a safe and engaging space for participants.
- **Close collaboration with key decision-makers and researchers:** By involving key figures in the project from its start, MH:2K builds trust, enthusiasm and commitment for MH:2K, and the implementation of its recommendations. MH:2K's six-part design is intended to be transferable. It could work in any UK local area.

In 2016-17 Oldham became the first local area to run MH:2K, supported by Oldham Council, Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group, and a Wellcome Trust People Award. In 2017-18, the success of the project led it to expand to four more areas: Birmingham, Central Lancashire, North Tyneside, and Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. It also recruited a National Advisory Panel.

MH:2K in 2017-18 was supported by the local areas involved and the Wellcome Trust.

The National Partners

MH:2K is delivered by a partnership of charity Involve and social enterprise Leaders Unlocked.

Involve is the UK's leading public participation charity, on a mission to put people at the heart of decision-making. It supports people and decision-makers to work together to solve our biggest challenges.

Leaders Unlocked exists to allow young people to have a stronger voice on the issues that affect them. It drives greater accountability and fairness by helping organisations to adopt new ways of working with the young communities they serve.

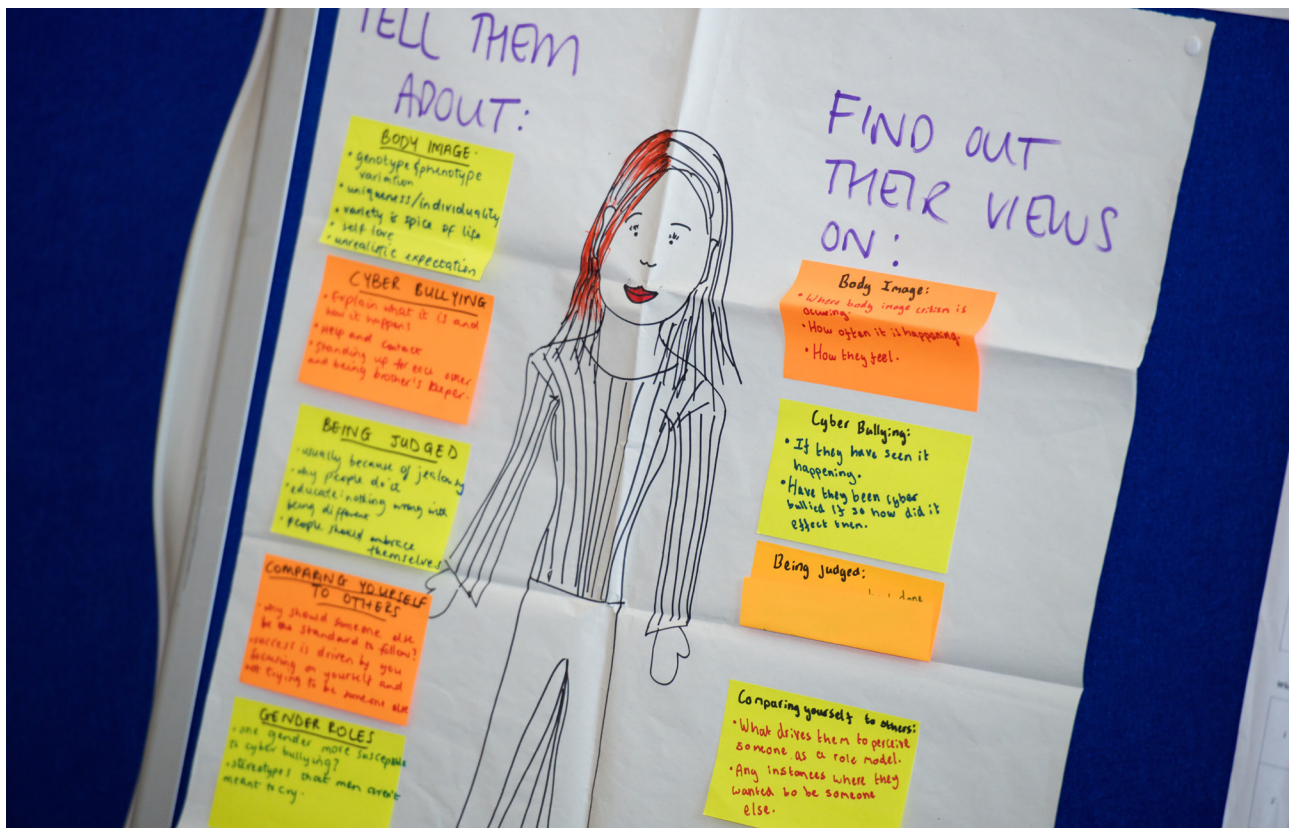
About MH:2K North Tyneside

From September 2017 to July 2018, Involve ran MH:2K in North Tyneside, funded by North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group and the Wellcome Trust, and supported by North Tyneside Local Authority.

MH:2K North Tyneside engaged over 500 local young people with diverse life experiences. Its participants chose to focus on five areas of challenge for young people around mental health:

- Healthy relationships;
- Social media and self-esteem;
- Awareness, stigma and support;
- Self-harm;
- Schools.

Over 60 local and regional decision-makers and researchers took part in the project's Local Advisory Panel or one of its events. This report presents MH:2K North Tyneside's design, findings and recommendations, and initial impacts.



Section 2: What we did

MH:2K North Tyneside used a six-part engagement model grounded in the principles of youth leadership and on-going decision-maker and researcher engagement. This section describes how it worked, taking each of the six elements in turn.

Recruitment (September - October 2017)

MH:2K North Tyneside began with the recruitment of twenty-seven diverse young people as the project's 'Citizen Researchers'. Reaching out through local statutory and community organisations (please see 'Roadshow' below), we were able to encourage a wide range of young people to apply. Of the Citizen Researchers we recruited:

- At least 78% had a history of mental health problems themselves, or had close friends or family with mental health problems;
- 26% reported having had another relevant experience (e.g. they are a young carer, care leaver or have been homeless);
- 15% identified as LGBTQ+;
- 11% were from BAME communities (compared to 8% of the North Tyneside population);
- 8% identified as having a disability.



Some of the MH:2K Citizen Researchers. From left to right: Elle, Maya, Kathryn, Nicola (staff), Angela, Kyle, Sarah (staff), Adam, Sarah, Lewis, Lauren, Bethany, Alannah.

Design Days (November 2017 - January 2018)

We held three one-day events with the Citizen Researchers. During these 'Design Days' the Citizen Researchers explored information about youth mental health in North Tyneside and nationally. They used this and their own experiences and views to identify the **top five mental health challenges facing young people in the area** – **healthy relationships; social media and self-esteem; awareness, stigma and support; self-harm and schools.**

They also decided where to focus under each of these topics. This included information they wanted to tell their peers, and questions which they wanted to explore.

With these decisions made, the Citizen Researchers worked with us to co-design a workshop template for each topic. They received training in areas such as presentation skills and questioning techniques to enable them to play a leadership role in the Roadshow.

Roadshow (February - April 2018)

Over three months, the Citizen Researchers co-led 29 workshops for their peers, engaging 522 other young people in North Tyneside. Statutory, community and voluntary organisations kindly volunteered to host the Roadshow events. Participating organisations, many of which had also supported the recruitment phase of the project, were:

Schools and colleges: Churchill Community College, George Stephenson High School, John Spence Community High School, Marden High School, Monkseaton High School, Norham High School, St Thomas More RC Academy, Tyne Metropolitan College, Whitley Bay High School.

Community groups: Army Cadet Force, Phoenix Detached Youth Project, The Base Young Peoples Centre, North Tyneside Carers' Centre.

Council groups: Children in Care Council, North Tyneside Youth Council.

Other organisations who helped with the Citizen Researchers' recruitment, but didn't host a Roadshow event were: The Albert Kennedy Trust, Burnside Business and Enterprise College, Catch 22, NE Youth, the Northern Initiative for Women and Eating (NIWE), The Prince's Trust, and VODA.

Through the Roadshow, the Citizen Researchers collected a wealth of information covering diverse young people's views on the mental health challenges they face and their ideas for solutions.

Results Day (April 2018)

At the Results Day, the Citizen Researchers considered the information collected during the Roadshow. They used it firstly to determine MH:2K North Tyneside's findings about the challenges facing young people on their mental health and emotional wellbeing. They then worked with the local decision-makers to write the project's recommendations. **These findings and recommendations** are covered in detail in the next section of this report.

Big Showcase (May 2018)

The Citizen Researchers presented the project's findings and recommendations to a much wider range of stakeholders from North Tyneside, and took part in a panel-style question and answer session.

Fifty-five decision-makers and researchers attended on the day. As well as hearing about the project, they were asked to offer their reflections on the recommendations and their thoughts about how they and their organisations might want to be involved in their implementation.

Local Advisory Panel (Ongoing)

From its very beginning, MH:2K was supported by **North Tyneside's Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Strategic Partnership**. The Partnership is multi-agency and includes representatives from key statutory organisations including the Local Authority, Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS Foundation Trusts, Education, Voluntary Sector and Youth Council. It sat as an Advisory Panel for MH:2K.

As MH:2K's Advisory Panel, the Partnership played a key role in the project. Among its many contributions, it helped identify the information on mental health given to Citizen Researchers at the first Design Day, provided the Citizen Researchers with feedback on their choice of focus areas, and identified and invited potential attendees to the Big Showcase. It also helped the project to build on, rather than duplicate, North Tyneside's existing work on mental health, and to make connections with local organisations working with young people. Six Partnership members attended the Results Day.

Since the Big Showcase, the Partnership has been proactive in driving forward implementation of MH:2K North Tyneside's recommendations. Further information on the steps taken and the impacts of MH:2K to-date can be found in the conclusion to this report.





**Part Two: Findings
and recommendations**

This section presents MH:2K North Tyneside's findings and recommendations. It takes each of the Citizen Researchers' five priority topics in turn:

- **Healthy relationships;**
- **Social media and self-esteem;**
- **Awareness, stigma and support;**
- **Self-harm;**
- **Schools.**

MH:2K North Tyneside's findings focus on the key pressures facing young people in North Tyneside around their mental health.

The Citizen Researchers decided these findings, based on information collected at 29 Roadshow events, attended by 522 of their peers. For information on Roadshow attendees, please see Section 2 'What we did'.

MH:2K North Tyneside's recommendations focus on solutions for improving the mental health and emotional wellbeing of young people in North Tyneside. The Citizen Researchers worked with members of the project's Local Advisory Panel to co-create these recommendations, which are based on ideas collected during the Roadshow.

It is important to note that not all of the pressures identified in the findings are addressed in the recommendations. The Citizen Researchers focussed the recommendations on the ideas for change that they felt were most likely to work and have the greatest impact.

Section 3: Healthy relationships

MH:2K North Tyneside's Citizen Researchers identified five findings on healthy relationships. These are presented below, illustrated by relevant quotations from Roadshow participants. As far as possible, Citizen Researchers' own words have been used alongside the quotations to explain why each finding is important.

The Citizen Researchers, together with the Local Advisory Panel, made seven recommendations for change on this topic. Again, these are covered below. Each one is presented with a brief comment from the Citizen Researchers.



Finding One: Signs of a healthy relationship with someone else

Young people see the signs of a healthy relationship with someone else as including: communication, consent, trust, honesty, support, equal partnership, having boundaries, no violence, forgiveness and understanding.

The Citizens Researchers felt that it is important for young people to understand what a healthy relationship is like. They suggested that the relationships you form when you're young can have a positive/negative effect on your mental health in the future.

Finding Two: Signs of a healthy relationship with yourself

Young people think that to have a healthy relationship with yourself you should: be comfortable with yourself, have self-respect, be proud of yourself, take care of yourself, know your own limits, trust yourself and have positive thoughts.

The Citizen Researchers suggested that to have a good relationship with others, young people first need to have a healthy relationship with themselves. They felt that self respect is an important factor in young people's lives when they are growing, changing and learning about themselves.

Finding Three: Why unhealthy relationships with someone else happen

Young people can get into unhealthy relationships for different reasons, including the fact that a relationship may not have been unhealthy at its start. Young people may also have low self-esteem and think they do not deserve better, or see the relationship as a self-sacrifice.

“They don’t always start unhealthy, they can become it”

“Hard to realise it’s unhealthy if it’s subtle at first”

“Don’t realise that they deserve better”

Young people see signs of an unhealthy relationship as including abuse, neglect, lack of respect, controlling or obsessive behaviour, pressure, and people being untruthful or untrustworthy.

The Citizen Researchers suggested that young people need to be aware of the signs of an unhealthy relationship from a young age.

Finding Four: Why unhealthy relationships with yourself happen

Young people can have unhealthy relationships with themselves for reasons including school pressure, bullying, lack of representation on social media, changes in health or appearance, family issues, differences between cultures, negative attitudes, feeling self-conscious, and blaming themselves for traumatic events.

“Lack of representation i.e. plus size models”

“Media - showing people better off than you”

“School pressures of being academic”

“Self-fulfilling prophecy of what others have told them”

“Responsibility for caring for family”

“Abuse from family”

The Citizen Researchers noted that young people are growing and changing, especially in their teenage years. They argued that young people can find it hard to experience these changes, alongside the added pressures of school, family and appearance.

Finding Five: What some young people don’t understand

Overall the Citizen Researchers concluded that young people often understand aspects of healthy and unhealthy relationships. However what young people don’t necessarily understand is how to make their own relationships healthy and get relevant support.

They argued that young people should therefore be taught more about how to have healthy relationships, and not just about what healthy and unhealthy relationships are.

Recommendations on healthy relationships:

1. Train young people aged 16+ to provide peer mentoring in a school setting.

Young people find it more personal and relatable to talk to someone of a similar age. Peer mentors could support young people with additional needs (e.g. falling behind or being bullied). Mentors should be provided with appropriate training and have access to support themselves. They should come from a different school and be paid to create a professional boundary. Mentors should serve for one year each.

2. Ensure earlier and continuous education on unhealthy relationships to build awareness from a young age.

Young people should receive positive messages promoting healthy relationships in primary school. Relationship education should start properly from Year 7, with the content changing to remain age-appropriate as young people get older. It should include relevant examples.

3. Run self-love workshops to strengthen self-worth and encourage young people to take a moment for themselves.

The workshops would help young people find their personal identity, realise their self-worth and develop confidence. They would also help to prevent social isolation and encourage young people to develop boundaries. They should be youth led.

4. Increase awareness of existing online platforms and create more anonymous online resources.

This would eliminate the anxiety of talking to someone face to face and the worry of embarrassment. It would promote conversation. Any resources should be inclusive.

5. Run campaigns to raise awareness of the effects unhealthy relationships can have on mental health.

This would show people that it is okay to talk about the issue. It would also bring mental health into people's realities, in an area of their lives where it is not normally seen.

6. Teach classes in physical and verbal self-defence.

This would help young people know how to look after themselves. It would give them the power to stand up for themselves and defend themselves respectfully. Verbal self-defence is how to effectively overcome someone who is manipulating you with words.

7. Create ideal professionals through staff training and only giving teachers lessons they feel comfortable delivering

This would ensure that education on relationships and sex is delivered appropriately and effectively.

Section 4: Social media and self-esteem

MH:2K North Tyneside's Citizen Researchers identified five findings on social media and self-esteem. These are presented below, illustrated by relevant quotations from Roadshow participants. As far as possible, Citizen Researchers' own words have been used alongside the quotations to explain why each finding is important.

The Citizen Researchers, together with the Local Advisory Panel, made seven recommendations for change on this topic. Again, these are covered below. Each one is presented with a brief comment from the Citizen Researchers.



Finding One: Pressure to conform

Young people face pressure to conform on social media. This includes pressure to get a certain amount of likes, look a certain way, and accept social norms. Young people can fear rejection and standing out.

"Pressure to be liked / get likes / popularity"

"Being someone you're trying to be when your not"

"People influencing the way you think you should look"

"People change their looks so that they don't get bullied"

The Citizen Researchers suggested that this could leave young people lacking a personal identity, feeling pressured to change themselves, and being easily influenced to do something that they don't want to do.

Finding Two: Unrealistic expectations

Social media creates unrealistic expectations of women and young girls. There is a lack of representation, and pressure around body image (linked to photoshopping) and sexualisation.

"Body image - 'the perfect body'"

"Pressure to look a certain way (filters, photoshop, celebrities)"

The Citizens Researchers argued that social media can lead to isolation, depression and anxiety. They felt that social media is stripping away people's identities. They noted that women can end up the object of other people's desires.

Finding Three: Low self-esteem

Social media can lead to low self-esteem. Young people compare themselves to friends and celebrities, put themselves down and aim for the impossible.

"Trying to 'compete' with people online - many people create a 'fake image'"

"Trying to look like other people!"

"Showing off e.g. with holidays, clothes, new fashions"

"Care more about what other people think"

"Trying to be friends with people who judge you"

The Citizen Researchers felt that this was at the root of other problems such as depression, anxiety and eating disorders, and can restrict young people from doing things.

Finding Four: Bullying and discrimination

Social media can encourage bullying and discrimination.

"Being ridiculed because of race, sexuality, religion etc"

The Citizen Researchers reported that young people feel able to "hunt" others over social media because it's hard to identify them. Relatedly, they argued that people are overly confident on social media when it comes to bullying. *Young people can also feel pressure to participate in bullying to protect themselves.*

"Pressuring you to say mean things"

"Being told to die"

"Body shaming"

The Citizen Researchers argued that bullying and discrimination can be at the root of depression, anxiety, eating disorders and self-harm. They also said that it sent out the wrong message about respect for other people.

Finding Five: Personal information and sexual images

There is a lack of awareness around sharing personal information and sexual images.

“Pressured to send inappropriate images”

“Inappropriate pictures and sexual pressure”

“Sharing personal information”

The Citizen Researchers suggested that young people don't always recognise the negative consequences that sharing this type of content can have. They argued that it can haunt people for the rest of their lives and lead to depression, anxiety, self harm, eating disorders and other mental health problems.

Recommendations on social media and self-esteem

The Citizen Researchers split their recommendations on social media and self-esteem into recommendations for decision-makers in North Tyneside, and recommendations for social media companies.

1. Create more opportunities for young people in the local area, such as clubs and cheaper gym memberships.

This would provide young people with a form of escape. It would also allow them to build relationships, self-esteem and an identity.

2. Promote more positive role models, focusing on what the person has done not what they look like.

This would help young people to develop the right aspirations, and focus on the inner-self not the outer-self.

3. Ensure better representation in campaigns around sharing personal information and sexual pressure.

These campaigns should include, for example, people with different sexualities and ethnic backgrounds. They should also be more realistic. These changes would make campaigns more relatable and therefore more impactful.

4. Educate young people on the positives of social media.

This should include stressing that social media can be used to create an identity.
For social media companies (mainly):

5. Introduce stricter age restrictions and push the idea that you should only follow people you know and like.

This would help to prevent social media having a negative on young people's mental health for as long as possible.

6. Add an option to hide followers, likes and comments.

This would help to get rid of the need to conform.

7. Create a child-friendly version of social media.

On this version, blocking and reporting functions should be more obvious, and all mature and harmful content should be removed. This would help stop young viewers from seeing content that could have a negative effect on them.

Section 5: Awareness, stigma and support

MH:2K North Tyneside's Citizen Researchers identified five findings on awareness, stigma and support. The findings seek to answer the question **'Why don't young people access support?'** They are presented below, illustrated by relevant quotations from Roadshow participants. As far as possible, Citizen Researchers' own words have been used alongside the quotations to explain why each finding is important.

The Citizen Researchers, together with the Local Advisory Panel, made six recommendations for change on this topic. Again, these are covered below. Each one is presented with a brief comment from the Citizen Researchers.



Finding One: Fear of others' responses

One reason that young people may not access support is a fear of others' responses. They can worry about being singled out, treated differently, dismissed or laughed at, or receiving too much sympathy. More generally, some young people worry that people may just think negative things about them.

"Scared of consequences"

"Fear of being treated differently"

"People might crowd you and ask for your feelings / what's happened. You might not feel able to walk away or cry because they'll laugh at you"

"They might think people will laugh at them"

"Feel like they won't be taken seriously"

"Can be dismissed because of age / hormones / attention seeking"

The Citizen Researchers argued that young people aren't engaged in enough conversations about how to respond to other people's mental health issues. As a result, they learn from the media and people around them – and this is not always good advice.

Finding Two: Confidentiality issues

Young people can fear that information they share won't be kept confidential. Young people may also need to escape their parents or carers.

"You disclose that you're being abused, they tell your parents and then nothing changes - it only gets worse"

"A fear of it not being confidential"

The Citizen Researchers suggested that many young people's mental health issues are caused or worsened by their parents or guardians. Young people can feel that their issues will only get worse if others find out. They therefore prefer to keep problems to themselves rather than taking steps to recovery.

Finding Three: Finding it hard to open up

Young people, especially young men, can fear looking weak.

"Don't want to seem weak. They think they can deal with it by themselves"

"People saying 'man up' = negative language"

Young people can also feel uncomfortable starting the conversation, and speaking about their mental health and issues. This can be particularly true if a young person lacks confidence or struggles to trust others.

"Stressful knowing a stranger knows everything"

"They don't know how to come out with it"

"You might say too much or not enough"

"Feel uncomfortable talking about it"

"Might not trust anyone to tell them"

The Citizen Researchers argued that the idea that mental illness makes someone weak needs to be stamped out. They suggested it showed that society still views mental health issues as lesser than physical issues. They noted that the conversation surrounding mental health needs to be kept up so that talking about your issues is normalised.

Finding Four: Denial

Some young people don't want to accept that they have a problem, or how severe their problem is. Some may think that others have it worse.

"Some people are in denial about their problems"

"Avoiding reality"

"Easy to dismiss it as a bad day"

"Don't think their problems are as bad as other people's"

Other young people may not recognise their issues.

"You think it's just you, you blame yourself. You might not know you have a mental health problem." "Not knowing what is going on"

The Citizen Researchers suggested that this showed young people are still quite uninformed about mental health issues. They aren't clear how to identify them, especially when they don't want to admit that they have a problem. The Citizen Researchers argued that this shows why the dismissal of mental health issues is a huge problem.

Finding Five: Services

Young people are often unaware of services because schools don't promote them.

"Lack of understanding of what support there is"

"Don't know where to go to get help"

There can also be issues with services themselves. It can take too long to get help, and they can be hard to get to especially for under 18s. Mental illness can also make services harder to access.

"Hopeless – services take too long"

"Available services inconvenient"

"Don't have someone to take you"

"People's illnesses may prevent them from seeking help such as anxiety or social anxiety"

Services can require young people to repeat themselves; this is something young people want to avoid.

"Frustrating to have to say it all over again"

"Repetitive to talk about"

The Citizen Researchers felt that it was hard for young people to improve their health mental without support. They argued that services should be effective, promoted and destigmatised.



Recommendations on stigma:

The Citizen Researchers' recommendations on this topic focus on how to ensure that young people who need it access support.

1. Run an advertising campaign by young people for young people that breaks down the stigma and misconceptions surrounding mental health.

The campaign could use Spotify, posters, social media and TV. Young people feeling afraid to speak up or invalidating their own experiences can stop them from getting support. The conversation needs to be mainstream and normalised.

2. Introduce compulsory health lessons and activities that promote wellbeing in schools.

The lessons should cover mental health issues, how to identify them, how to support one other and the range of support available. Schools should also provide activities that help young people to look after themselves and feel less lonely. These could include meditation, music, art, self-help guides, baking and exercise options for all levels of ability.

3. Listen to, and act on, what young people want from mental health services through their model of an "ideal professional".

Every adult who works with young people (e.g. counsellors, teachers) should be aware of what the ideal professional is according to young people, and organisations should take this feedback seriously. The vision of an ideal professional should include knowing how to communicate with young people: adults shouldn't be condescending, critical, or compare young people to others. They should help young people, not study them. Young people should have the right to a 1-2-1 private conversation, respecting privacy and confidentiality. They should be able to see the same person (continuity) and not be rushed through recovery.

4. Train teachers to help young people with mental health problems.

Teachers should know how to help young people with mental health issues. Like counsellors, they should know to communicate with young people.

5. Educate parents about mental health, as you can't "talk to your parents" if they don't get it

There should be a resource pack for parents about mental health in young people. Parents should also be able to access face-to-face support, possibly delivered by school nurses. This could happen at parents' evenings or via drop-ins. At the moment many parents just don't know what to do or blame themselves.

6. Promote online help, such as forums, messaging and websites.

Young people (like adults) often struggle to communicate their feelings out loud. If the conversation starts anonymously, at a time that works for them, it is more likely to develop. Existing resources should be promoted in schools, at bus stops – everywhere.

Section 6: Self-harm

MH:2K North Tyneside's Citizen Researchers identified five findings on self-harm. The findings seek to answer the question **'What pressures cause young people to self-harm?'** They are presented below, illustrated by relevant quotations from Roadshow participants. As far as possible, Citizen Researchers' own words have been used alongside the quotations to explain why each finding is important.

The Citizen Researchers, together with the Local Advisory Panel, made seven recommendations for change on this topic. Again, these are covered below. Each one is presented with a brief comment from the Citizen Researchers.



Finding One: Bullying about insecurities

Some young people are bullied about their insecurities. The bullying can be physical, emotional or verbal. It can be cyberbullying or offline. Young people can be left with low self-worth, low self-esteem and low confidence.

"Being beaten up because of your insecurities"

"Insecurities e.g. their body"

"Bullying: verbal, physical, cyber"

The Citizen Researchers noted that if a young person felt like self-harming because of their insecurities in the first place, then being bullied about those insecurities would amplify that feeling.

Finding Two: Appearance

Young people can feel that they have to be attractive to 'fit in' and have friends. If a young person feels that they're not attractive, it can make them feel extremely lonely and intensify the feeling to self-harm.

Young people's self-image, clothing, self-esteem, looks and how people perceive them are all relevant.

"Making people feel as if they are not worth anything / ugly due to photoshopped photos"

"Made fun of for clothes and shoes. Poor/Rich"

"Lack of self worth"

"Your looks"

Finding Three: Peer pressure

Young people's family, friends and teachers can create "false" expectations –expectations that young people don't actually have to meet. If young people then feel that they don't meet these expectations, they can feel worthless and potentially self-harm. Relevant issues include pressure to do well at school and the influence of social media.

Finding Four: Taking away the pain

Some young people believe that self-harming will take away the pain. They believe it will make problems or experiences like grief or loneliness go away.

"Some people believe it takes away the pain"

"Sense of relief"

The Citizen Researchers said that self-harming can seem like it takes away the pain for a short time, but that it actually doesn't. Young people can self-harm over and over, trying to get rid of the problem, but it won't work.

Finding Five: Life

Some young people feel like everything is going against them and nothing is good. This can drive people to think that self-harm is the only option. Relevant issues include quality of life, arguments, financial issues, relationships, school and family problems.

"Homosexuality - their family may not agree"

"Took away from family and put into care, foster home, or adopted - find it hard without their parents"

"Separation / parents splitting"

"Missing family and friends who have passed"

"Money"

"Bad relationships"

"School - getting it wrong all the time"

Recommendations on self-harm

1. Ensure young people have accurate information about self harm, including what it is and the different forms it can take.

Young people should have the correct knowledge of self-harm, so that they don't form assumptions from the media. There should be Personal Development lessons in school on the issue.

2. Help young people to help themselves.

Not all young people have the confidence to seek help from therapists and other professionals. Young people should be taught ways to help themselves (e.g. listening to music, doing art etc).

3. Ensure young people know where to get help.

Young people should be made aware of all the different ways and places to get help (e.g. at school, GPs, therapists, online resources etc).

4. Educate parents about self harm.

If parents don't properly know about self-harm, they can become quite dismissive. This can be harmful. Parents should know how to spot the early signs of self-harm and how to help. They should encourage young people to go to social groups (e.g. scouts).

5. Educate teachers about self harm.

Teachers should know how to support young people who self harm. There should be less stigma around the issue so that it's easier for young people to talk about it, and come forward. It would help ensure that young people are understood more and better.

6. Create more groups (safe spaces) for young people where they can talk to someone and discuss their problems.

There should be spaces where young people can go and talk about their personal experiences with others who are going through the same kind of thing. This would also allow them to discuss their individual problems.

7. Ask young people with experience of self harm to talk or write about its effects for other young people.

This would make young people more aware of the effects self-harm has on themselves (e.g. scars, impact on their future) and those around them.

Section 7: Schools

MH:2K North Tyneside's Citizen Researchers identified five findings on schools. These are presented below, illustrated by relevant quotations from Roadshow participants. As far as possible, Citizen Researchers' own words have been used alongside the quotations to explain why each finding is important.

The Citizen Researchers, together with the Local Advisory Panel, made five recommendations for change on this topic. Again, these are covered below. Each one is presented with a brief comment from the Citizen Researchers.



Finding One: Grades

Young people can face pressure from parents, teachers and peers to get good grades. They also face pressure to maintain good grades, when their grades are falling, and from comparison with others. They are told they need better grades, in order to have a better career in the future.

"If grades fall teachers are on your back all the time"

"Too much revision - pushed too hard by teachers"

"Pressure to succeed"

"Judged on results by other students"

Finding Two: Teachers

Some young people reported that teachers are 'on students' backs' to get work and revision done, and can overload students with the amount of work they need to do across different subjects. Most teachers want their subject put first, but it isn't possible for young people to prioritise every subject.

“Every teacher wants their subject placed first”

“Give you homework on top of revision - shouldn’t give you homework near exams, we need all the time we have to revise”

“Workload”

“Overload”

“Teachers can also create pressure by comparing young people with one another”

“Stop comparing with other classes / schools”

Finding Three: The future

Young people said they faced a constant demand to think about their future. They felt that it starts from too young an age (14 years old).

“Exams - if failing, my life is messed up”

“Your future”

“Trying to decide what you want to do after school”

Young people said that options other than university are sometimes not discussed. Young people can worry about the financial strain of university and their career prospects.

The Citizen Researchers said that young people also face pressure around things that they felt aren’t important, like going to Cambridge.

Finding Four: Judgement

Young people feel that judgement comes from everywhere within the school environment. It includes judgment about young people’s appearance and what grades they get.

“Judgemental people (judge the way you look and the way you are)”

“Being judged on background / race / culture”

Finding Five: Relationship strains

Young people face relationship strains at school. This includes difficulty finding free time to maintain friendships, arguments and feeling left out. Relationships with teachers can be an issue too.

“Fitting in a social life”

“Late nights are insensitive and free time is gone”

“Friends – arguments”

“Not having any friends”

“Making new friends”

“Getting left out”

Recommendations on schools

1. Introduce a student mentor or buddying system, where older students (Years 12 and 13) are trained to run sessions and clubs for younger students.

This would give younger students someone who isn't a teacher to go to for advice. The older students involved would need to be trained.

2. Ensure all schools have breakfast clubs.

This makes sure students eat something before school. It also gives them the opportunity to speak to teachers, ask for help about things that are making them stressed, and gain friendships and revision buddies.

3. Provide revision materials, clubs and sessions.

All young people revise differently, so revision materials should be available in different ways to help them revise. Revision materials should be available in hard copies as well as online. They should be accessible and there should be easily enough to go round. There should also be revision clubs and sessions.

4. Run advice sessions and support groups, including teaching about how to manage stress.

These sessions should be accessible to everyone. They should include advice from young people (perhaps student mentors) who have recently gone through the same experiences. The Citizen Researchers felt that advice from other young people would be more reliable.

5. Run more visits where students go out of school to learn about options for the future.

These should include visits to universities, apprenticeships and colleges. They would give young people information about options other than university, and make it easier for them to make life decisions.

The Citizen Researchers also identified concerns about how schools support bullies. They noted that, when bullying occurs, support is given to the bullied young person. However, often very little is done to find out why the bully is behaving as they are and what support they might need. The Citizen Researchers had a long conversation about this topic during the MH:2K Design Days. They felt that schools should provide more support to bullies and think about their wellbeing, not just what they've done wrong. This issue was picked up immediately and acted on by Local Advisory Panel members. This is why this issue is not part of MH:2K's formal recommendations.



Part Three: Conclusion

Conclusion: Impacts and next steps

The publication of MH:2K North Tyneside’s findings and recommendations marks the finish of its six part methodology. A fitting end for this report is therefore to look both backwards and forwards – to consider what impact MH:2K has had to date, and what is likely to happen next.

All of the findings below are taken from the initial results of MH:2K’s independent evaluation. Unless otherwise specified, they show the findings from across the four local areas who ran MH:2K in 2017-18, rather than for North Tyneside specifically. There is no indication at this stage that the results for North Tyneside as an individual area deviate in any significant way from this overall picture.

Impact on decision-makers and researchers

MH:2K aims to produce recommendations that are useful to decision-makers and researchers. The initial evaluation results suggest that decision-makers and researchers see MH:2K as having achieved this aim:

- 92.8% of decision-makers and researchers who attended a Big Showcase event said that the recommendations are very useful;
- 98.5% agreed or strongly agreed that MH:2K would make a positive difference to mental health services in the local area;
- 98.5% agreed or strongly agreed that they would do something new or differently as a result of the project.

Usefulness of findings and recommendations (138 respondents)	Not at all useful	Not very useful	Fairly useful	Very useful	Fairly / very useful
	0%	0.7%	6.5%	92.8%	99.3%

“I think MH:2K will make a positive difference to young people’s mental health services in North Tyneside.” (134 respondents)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree / strongly agree
	1.5%	0%	40.7%	57.8%	98.5%

“I will do something new or differently as a result of the findings and recommendations from MH:2K.” (130 respondents)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree / strongly agree
	0%	1.5%	43.1%	55.4%	98.5%

Decision-makers and researchers attending the North Tyneside Big Showcase identified a wide range of specific actions to take forward or changes to their thinking. Examples include:

“Changed thinking about which priorities need to go into strategy.”

“Rethink how to include the needs of 18-24 in the adult mental health services.”

“Use the recommendations to shape this year’s service plans.”

“How we work with other professionals, services, schools to promote services available to young people across the country. In future it is essential to ensure the workforce has up to date and relevant information about specialist services young people can be signposted to.”

“To send findings and recommendations to schools with contact information on how they can access support.”

“Reflect on our emotional health charter and ensure it includes MH:2K findings.”

“I plan on implementing sessions for parents and carers around safeguarding and mental health.”

Headteachers in North Tyneside – who heard about the findings and recommendations at a separate event – also made suggestions for specific actions to take forward.

Impact on Citizen Researchers

MH:2K is not just about influencing mental health decision-making and research. It also aims to provide a developing and empowering experience for the Citizen Researchers involved.

The initial evaluation results show significant self-reported impacts for the Citizen Researchers. 91% said that their knowledge of mental health issues had increased. 89% identified improvements to their presentation skills, 86% to their confidence and 82% to their feelings of wellbeing. 86% said that they now felt more optimistic about their future.

Self-Reported Impacts (based on 44 responses)*	Status now, compared to before MH:2K...					Overall better
	Much worse	A little worse	About the same	A little better	Much better	
Knowledge of mental health issues in general	0%	0%	9%	39%	52%	91%
Knowledge of young people’s mental health in my local area	0%	0%	9%	23%	68%	91%
Presentation skills	0%	0%	11%	32%	57%	89%
Listening skills	0%	0%	20%	25%	55%	80%
Confidence	0%	0%	14%	34%	52%	86%
Overall feeling of wellbeing**	0%	0%	16%	32%	50%	82%
Optimism about my future	0%	0%	14%	36%	50%	86%
*One additional response was excluded due to uncertainty over its accuracy						
**One Citizen Researcher didn’t answer this question						

Evaluation interviews with individual Citizen Researchers suggested additional impacts. For example, some Citizen Researchers reported that MH:2K had made them want to work in the mental health sector or had reinforced their wish to do so. Others suggested it had helped them find employment.

Impact on Roadshow participants

Roadshow participants only spent an hour (one Roadshow workshop) participating in MH:2K. The content of the Roadshow workshops also varied, with some having a much more explicit focus on where to go for help than others.

Despite the above, young people who participated in the Roadshow did report some impacts from their involvement in the project. These included increased awareness of where to go for help (60%) and more confidence to seek help (47%).

Impacts (based on 872 responses)	Knowledge about mental health	Greater awareness of where to go	More confidence to seek help	New or improved skills	Other
	59%	60%	47%	47%	11%

84% of Roadshow participants said that they had enjoyed taking part in the project.

Next steps in North Tyneside

The MH:2K North Tyneside Big Showcase was held on Tuesday 8 May 2018. In the few weeks since then North Tyneside's Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Strategic Partnership has begun discussions about how to take forward MH:2K's recommendations.

The early signs are extremely positive. The Partnership has made a commitment to take forward the recommendations, including through the Local Transformation Plan. They have also confirmed their intention to continue to involve young people as they do so.

The partnership remains committed to the importance of prevention and early intervention, supporting young people to build resilience and coping skills from an early age.

Conclusion

MH:2K North Tyneside has achieved the aims it set out to deliver. It has empowered 14-25 year olds to:

- Identify the mental health issues that they see as most important;
- Engage their peers in discussing and exploring these topics;
- Work with key local decision-makers and researchers to make recommendations for change.

In addition the project has had, and looks set to have, significant impacts. This is true of its effect on both participating young people, and on decision-makers and researchers.

MH:2K's independent evaluator will return to North Tyneside next year to see what has changed as a result of MH:2K's recommendations. We look forward to seeing the progress that has been made.



Appendix

Appendix: Where to seek help with mental health problems

The tables on the next two pages list some of the services and resources available to young people in North Tyneside and across England. These are all services that young people can use themselves without needing someone to refer them.

Helplines and services

What's it called?	What is it?	How to find it
Kooth.com	An anonymous online qualified counselling service for young people aged 11-18, covering any issue. Includes instant messaging, drop-in sessions and 1-2-1 chats.	www.kooth.com
Phoenix Detached Youth Project	Face-to-face support and guidance for young people aged 12-25 and living in Meadowhall, Percy Main, East Howdon, The Royal Quays and Chirton. Includes group work and one to one support, and can cover mental health, sexual health, employment, training and education.	Call or email to arrange an informal chat in a place where you feel comfortable: 0191 258 5806, staff@pdyp.org Or drop in to the office: 14 Front Street, Chirton, North Shields, NE29 7QW
The Mix	Free confidential support for under 25s, including 1-2-1 online chat, a telephone helpline, telephone counselling, webchat counselling and email advice.	The helpline number is 0808 808 4994 www.themix.org.uk
Childline	A free, private and confidential service for children and young people - online, on the phone, anytime.	The free phone number is 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk
Papyrus	A charity that aims to prevent young suicides. It has a helpline for young people at risk of suicide or for people worried about a young person at risk of suicide called HOPELineUK.	The helpline number is 0800 068 41 41 www.papyrus-uk.org
Speak out and stay safe	A free helpline with specially trained volunteers for children in primary school.	The helpline number is 0800 1111
Relate	Provides local counselling services for all ages including young people.	www.relate.org.uk
Rise Above	Helps 11-16 year olds build emotional resilience by equipping them with knowledge and skills to deal with pressures they may face. It also provides an online platform through which young people can converse with peers alongside professional support.	www.riseabove.org.uk

Information hubs and self-help

What's it called?	What is it?	How to find it
Kooth.com	As well as their support services, Kooth.com's website includes message forums with other young people, self-help tools, an online magazine, games, blogs, and other features.	www.kooth.com
Childline	As well as their support services, Childline's website has lots of great information, advice and self-help tools.	www.childline.org.uk
The Mix	As well as their support services, The Mix's website includes lots of information on different mental health issues.	www.themix.org.uk
The Moodzone	An information hub including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tips and advice to boost mental health • Self-help and treatments • Other people's stories • What to do if you need urgent help now 	www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression
Young Minds	Lots of information for young people and children about mental health and emotional wellbeing.	www.youngminds.org.uk/find-help
Alumina	Online group and individual courses on self-harm for young people aged 14-19 years old.	www.selfharm.co.uk/alumina

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