



# MH:2K North Tyneside

## A youth-led approach to exploring mental health

### Summary Report, July 2018

# Introduction

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.

MH:2K was developed by national charity Involve and social enterprise Leaders Unlocked. To-date, it has run in five areas: Birmingham, Central Lancashire, North Tyneside, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, and Oldham.

MH:2K is funded by the Wellcome Trust and the local areas involved.

This document summarises MH:2K North Tyneside's design, findings and recommendations, and initial impacts.

## What we did

MH:2K has six elements. In North Tyneside these worked as follows:

- **Recruitment:** We reached out through local statutory and community organisations, and recruited twenty-seven diverse young people to be MH:2K North Tyneside's Citizen Researchers.
- **Design Days:** The Citizen Researchers discussed their views and explored key information on youth mental health. They identified five topics as the top mental health challenges facing young people in North Tyneside. These topics were: healthy relationships; social media and self-esteem; awareness, stigma and support; self-harm and schools. The Citizen Researchers co-designed a workshop template for each topic and received training in areas such as public speaking and facilitation.
- **Roadshow:** Over four months, the Citizen Researchers used their workshop templates to co-lead twenty-nine events for their peers. In total, they engaged 522 young people across North Tyneside.
- **Results Day:** The Citizen Researchers used the information collected during the Roadshow to determine MH:2K North Tyneside's findings on the pressures facing young people. They worked with key decision-makers to co-create MH:2K's recommendations for solutions.
- **Big Showcase:** The Citizen Researchers presented their findings and recommendations to fifty-five decision-makers and researchers from North Tyneside and further afield.
- **Local Advisory Panel:** From its very beginning, MH:2K North Tyneside was supported by North Tyneside's Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategic Partnership which acted as a Local Advisory Panel for the project.

# Findings and recommendations

The Citizen Researchers recorded a total of **25 findings and 32 recommendations** across their five topics.

Their findings on **healthy relationships** cover young people's views on what makes relationships with other people and themselves healthy and unhealthy. They also look at young people's ability to put this knowledge into practice. Their recommendations on healthy relationships are:

1. **Train young people** aged 16+ to provide peer mentoring in a school setting.
2. **Ensure earlier and continuous education** on unhealthy relationships to build awareness from a young age.
3. **Run self-love workshops** to strengthen self-worth and encourage young people to take a moment for themselves.
4. **Increase awareness** of existing online platforms and create more anonymous online resources.
5. **Run campaigns to raise awareness** of the effects unhealthy relationships can have on mental health.
6. Teach classes in **physical and verbal self-defence**.
7. **Create ideal professionals** through staff training and only giving teachers lessons they feel comfortable delivering.

The Citizen Researchers' findings on **social media and self-esteem** cover social norms, fear of rejection, representation, online security and discrimination. Their recommendations on this topic are:

For decision-makers in North Tyneside:

1. **Create more offline opportunities** for young people in the local area, such as clubs and cheaper gym memberships.
2. **Promote more positive role models**, focusing on what the person has done not what they look like.
3. **Ensure better representation** in campaigns around sharing personal information and sexual pressure.
4. **Educate young people** on the positives of social media.
5. For social media companies:
6. **Introduce stricter age restrictions** and push the idea that you should only follow people you know and like.
7. Add an option to **hide followers, likes and comments**.
8. Create a **child-friendly** version of social media.

The Citizen Researchers' findings on **awareness, stigma and support** cover fear of other's responses, confidentiality, finding it hard to open up, denial and services. Their recommendations on this topic are:

1. Run an **advertising campaign by young people for young people** that breaks down the stigma and misconceptions surrounding mental health.
2. Introduce **compulsory health lessons and activities** that promote wellbeing in schools.

3. Listen to, and act on, **what young people want** from mental health services through their model of an 'ideal professional'.
4. **Train teachers to help young** people with mental health problems.
5. **Educate parents about mental health**, as you can't "talk to your parents" if they don't get it.
6. **Promote online help**, such as forums, messaging and websites.

The Citizen Researchers' findings on **self-harm** cover bullying about insecurities, appearance, peer pressure, life pressures and taking away the pain. Their recommendations on this topic are:

1. Ensure young people have **accurate information** about self-harm, including what it is and the different forms it can take.
2. **Help young people to help themselves.**
3. **Ensure young people know where to get help.**
4. **Educate parents** about self-harm.
5. **Educate teachers** about self-harm.
6. **Create more groups (safe spaces)** for young people where they can talk to someone and discuss their problems.
7. **Ask young people with experience of self-harm** to talk or write about its effects for other young people.

The Citizen Researchers' findings on **schools** cover grades, teachers, the future, judgement and relationship strains. Their recommendations on this topic are:

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.
2. Ensure all schools have **breakfast clubs.**
3. Provide revision materials, clubs and sessions.
4. **Run advice sessions and support groups**, including teaching about how to manage stress.
5. Run more visits where students go out of school to **learn about options for the future.**

## Conclusion: Impacts and next steps

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 initial results of MH:2K's independent evaluation show significant impacts on decision-makers, researchers, and the young people involved. Across the four areas that ran MH:2K in 2017-18:

- 92.8% of decision-makers and researchers who attended a Big Showcase event said that the recommendations are very useful; and 98.5% agreed or strongly agreed that they would do something new or differently as a result of the project;
- Citizen Researchers reported experiencing significant benefits. Among other examples, 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.
- Roadshow participants only spent one hour engaged with the project, but 60% reported gaining a greater awareness of where to go for help, and 47% said they would now have more confidence to seek help if they needed it.

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.

## For more information

MH:2K North Tyneside's full project report is available at [www.involve.org.uk/mh2k-northtyneside](http://www.involve.org.uk/mh2k-northtyneside)

For any questions about MH:2K, its work to-date or future plans, please contact

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