

Young People's Mental Health Advocacy



CAPS
independent
advocacy

CAPS Independent Advocacy is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) Scottish Charity Number SC021772

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What is CAPS?

CAPS is an independent advocacy organisation for people who use, or have used, mental health services.

CAPS works with people as individuals or as members of a group to set their own agenda, to find a stronger voice, to get their point across, and influence decisions that affect their lives.

CAPS provides individual and collective advocacy in Midlothian and East Lothian. CAPS also has several Lothian wide experience-led projects.

Individual Advocacy is about working alongside a person to help them express their views and have more influence over decisions being made about their lives.

Collective Advocacy is about groups of individuals with a common cause who come together to raise awareness, campaign and influence service planning and provision.

CAPS is an Independent Advocacy organisation.

This means that we:

- Put the people who use advocacy first
- Are accountable
- Are as free as we can be from conflicts of interest
- Are accessible

BACKGROUND

In 2014 CAPS launched a collective advocacy project for people with experience of eating disorders. The project was funded by the Butterfly Bursary which was set up in memory of Lyndsey Weddell who died as a result of anorexia. The CAPS project, Seen but not Heard, produced a film with people who had personal experience of eating disorders, with the aim of raising awareness.

The film was screened in venues across Edinburgh and the Lothians such as the Scottish Parliament, universities and schools. People told us that although Eating Disorders often start at a young age there was no specific information for younger people.

CAPS then secured funding to do a piece of work with young people aged 16 – 24 on what issues they felt were most important to them. They produced another film called 'Spilling the Beans' that has since been shown, with really positive feedback, across many schools and universities across Lothian.

During the course of making Spilling the Beans, the young people who took part told CAPS that they did not feel that they had a strong voice on many aspects of their interactions with services. They said they would value more independent opportunities to have their say in the way they wanted.

To make sure that as many young people as possible had the opportunity to comment on this subject, CAPS produced a survey to find out what young people would like to say about the chances they have to talk about mental health.

THE CONSULTATION

The consultation was designed to find out:



What areas of mental health are important to young people?



How they would like to get involved in collective advocacy?



What young people would like to get out of a collective advocacy project.



How they would like to be involved in collective advocacy.



Where should any meetings or activities take place?

And most importantly



Do young people think there are currently enough opportunities to have a voice on mental health issues?

WHO RESPONDED?

CAPS was keen to ensure that the survey was as accessible as possible so we designed a Survey Monkey questionnaire as well as contacting organisations and groups across the Lothians that had contact with young people.



We also advertised on our website and Facebook and produced a print friendly version for hardcopy distribution.

The consultation received **92 responses** in total with **52 people** saying they would like to take part in a project.

70% were female, 25% were male and 5% selected other as their gender.

- 6 respondents were aged 15 years or under
- 76 respondents were aged 16 to 24 years
- 10 respondents were over 25 years

Responses came in from across Scotland with 35% of responses from the Edinburgh area, closely followed by 32% from East Lothian.

The remainder were spread across Midlothian and West Lothian, with occasional responses from Glasgow, the Borders, Fife, Perth and Livingston.



WHAT ASPECTS OF MENTAL HEALTH ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU?

DEPRESSION and ANXIETY	84%
SELF HARM	55%
IDENTITY and SEXUALITY	51%
EATING DISORDERS	51%
BULLYING	42%
RELATIONSHIPS	42 %
GRIEF and LOSS	35%

Other issues that were identified as important to young people were:

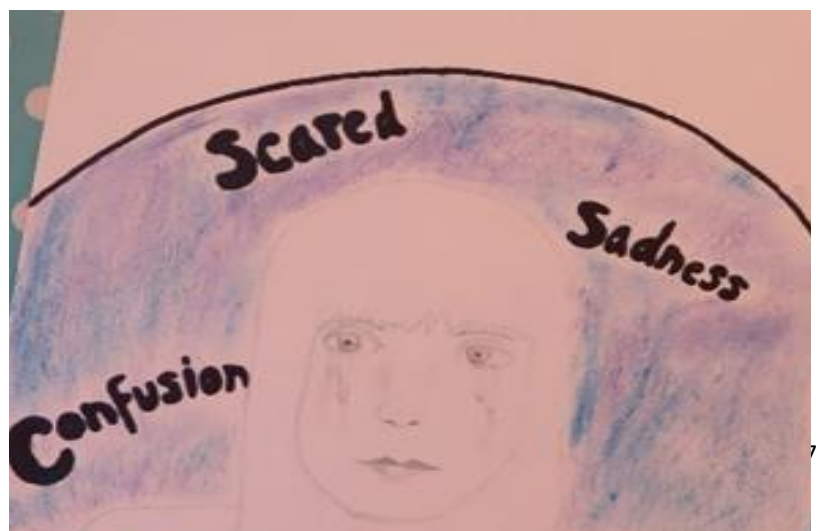
"Borderline
Personality
Disorder"

"Bipolar Disorder"

"Obsessive and
Compulsive
thoughts"

"Autism and Psychosis."

"School pressure and
exams"



WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO AS PART OF A PROJECT?

**HAVE YOUR SAY ON HOW MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ARE DESIGNED**

71%

CREATIVE - ARTS, CRAFTS, MUSIC OR WRITING

68%

SETTING UP / ATTENDING PEER GROUPS

64%

**FEEDING INTO GOVERNMENT POLICIES OR
NATIONAL AGENDAS**

45%

FILM MAKING TO RAISE AWARENESS

42%

Other activities identified were:

"Making changes
in school."

"Volunteering"

"Making information
more widely available..."



WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD BE A POSITIVE OUTCOME OF BEING PART OF A COLLECTIVE ADVOCACY PROJECT?

People could give more than one answer .



85% said “**CONFIDENCE**”



78% said “a **better understanding** of their own mental health and how it affects them.”



71% said “making new **friends** and having a better **social network**.”



68% said “being able to **talk about how you feel**.”



62% said “**learning new skills**, eg film making, communication, public speaking, being more creative”

Among the other outcomes young people identified were:

“ **Having a say in how mental health problems are approached and treated by society**”

“**Getting on better at school**”

“**Having a break from home life**”

HOW AND WHERE?



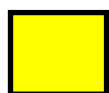
As part of the consultation we asked young people **how** they would like to be part of a collective project, and **where** they would like to meet as part of the project?



85% said they would prefer group meetings



82% said schools or community buildings



69% said that online communication would be a good way to take part in a collective advocacy project eg social media



39% said “1 to 1 meetings”

Other places that young people would feel comfortable meeting included:

Cafés

As part of groups that they already attend

Are you able to talk about mental health?

"Young people are often dismissed in terms of mental health as they are 'too young' to be stressed or depressed. A voice for young people would hopefully benefit the mental health of young people as well as develop political interest."

"Definitely not!!!"

"... Not enough opportunities for young people. There is still such a stigma surrounding mental health and a lot of misguided opinions about young people who struggle with mental health."

"... Help needs to be provided to help those who are afraid to speak out to grasp the opportunities that are in place."

"Not really, we're encouraged to talk to teachers, but they don't actually do much to help....mental Health Issues are often seen as signs of weakness in school environments."

SUMMARY



There was an overwhelming feeling that currently there are **NOT** enough opportunities for young people to have their voice heard on mental health issues.

It is important to young people that they are allowed to express their opinions in relevant arenas and not be made to feel that their mental health is any less valid than adults'.

Young people value the opportunity to have their say on how services for them are designed and would appreciate the opportunity to feed into larger policies and agendas.

Young people would like to be able to understand their own mental health and have the opportunity to benefit from peer support from other young people who also have experience of mental health issues.

Outcomes



Increasing self confidence



Learning valuable new skills

NEXT STEPS



CAPS will share this report with relevant organisations and at Lothian wide meetings.



CAPS will keep the young people that expressed an interest in being part of this ongoing work informed of any progress.



CAPS will continue to look for opportunities to involve young people in collective advocacy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CAPS would like to thank all the young people who responded to the consultation and the young people who produced the artwork used in this report from CAPS young people's Eating Disorder Project.



Contact details

CAPS Independent Advocacy
Old Stables
Eskmills Park
Musselburgh
East Lothian
EH21 7PQ

phone: 0131 273 5116

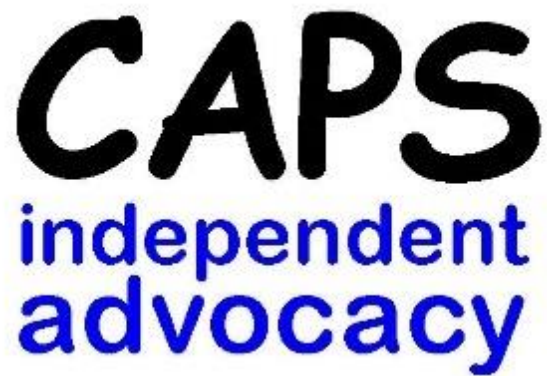
fax: 0131 273 5117

e-mail: jane@capsadvocacy.org

web: www.capsadvocacy.org

follow us on Twitter: [@capsadvocacy](https://twitter.com/capsadvocacy)

follow us on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/capsadvocacy>



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