



## Cut waiting times for young people accessing mental health services



Health officials in Wiltshire will provide quicker access to mental health services for children and young people - thanks in part to the views of young people in the county.

New plans include earlier intervention through schools, online counselling and improved information and help for parents to reduce referrals to the more specialist counselling services provided through the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Our 'Young Listeners' spoke to 174 children and young people in the county to find out how they felt about using health and care services. The report with their findings was presented to Wiltshire's Health and Wellbeing Board, a committee which brings together all the leaders of the health and social care system in the county.

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A main issue in the report was that many young people thought waiting times for an appointment for CAMHS was too long, with some waiting eight weeks. Now Wiltshire Council and NHS Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have announced they are aiming to cut waiting times by bringing more mental health workers to children through selected schools and increasing online support to take the pressure off the more specialist services.

Kerry McKenzie, 18, helped to present the report to the board with Healthwatch Wiltshire Manager Lucie Woodruff. She said: "Before ever carrying out a listening exercise I was sceptical at the impact it would make on people. But then I got into it and realised young people who are talking to someone of a similar age to them open up more than they do to an adult. It's great that we are being heard and can make a difference."

Another Young Listener, 18-year-old Zoe Radford from Calne said: "I have had personal links with people suffering with mental health issues and this made me want to be part of something which looked at how we can make health services better for those who use them. It's great for young people to have a voice on health services they use and we are so pleased we have been listened to and changes are being made."



Healthwatch Wiltshire is a local independent organisation which exists to speak up for people on health and care. If you have used a service recently then we would like to hear from you. We use what people tell us when we meet with the commissioners and providers of services to make sure that they take account of your views and experiences.