

## Rainham Mark/Healthwatch event:

### Family and relationships:

- Students noted that the older generations need to have a greater awareness of what life is like for young people. Society is much different to what it used to be and students said that some people from older generations find it difficult to understand the pressures and the new issues faced by young people today. For example there are some older people who aren't accepting or don't have a good understanding of LGBT issues.
- Student discussed how there was generally a good service within schools however not everyone has the confidence to share what's going on as they may be worried that if they share their issues then it can lead back to their parents which causes further issues. Young people want to be able to seek help and support without necessarily having to have their parents involved this may be because young people want more independence and control of their lives and because for many young people their parents are still a part of a generation which doesn't open up and talk about their problems.
- Students mentioned how they feel that there should be more support and guidance for young people when they are having problems with their families. Social services aren't always needed and sometimes young people just need a place to offload or spend a bit of time away from family pressures to clear their heads. Many young people leave home and end up in far worse situations because of family issues which aren't resolved because the young person doesn't have the appropriate release or organisation to talk to.
- Some families in relationships can be controlling. There are a hidden number of issues not just locally but nationally with regards to what goes on behind closed doors. For some young people there may be abuse taking place in whatever format or issues in the home which they feel they cannot discuss outside of it.
- Students were unable to identify any services or organisations for young people relating to family and relationship issues that wasn't ChildLine or social services.

### Sexual Health:

- Students highlighted that sexual health clinics are either too far away from where they live or open at weird times in the day while they are at school/college such as the Twydall Green Clinic (2-4pm).
- RMGS had school visits from a sexual health workshop which students said was useful as they could have tests done as well be given useful information on what STIs are put there and what people need to do in order to stop any spread. Students stated that before the workshop they would not have known what they would need to do or who they would need to speak to. Potentially there could be opportunity in the future for visits on a more regular basis around all schools so that students have the services come to them.
- Students noted that there was very limited information given to young people about the risks and the dangers. Most people know about Chlamydia and AIDS but many young people aren't aware that some diseases can spread through other ways.
- The general consensus from students was that they would never really discuss sexual health with their parents and it would probably right in assuming that there wouldn't be a huge % of young people in Medway who actually would talk to their parents about sexual health.

## Mental Health:

- Students were all really aware of mental health issues and completed a survey on mental health provisions for young people in Medway.
- Students pointed out that men are typically less likely to come out and discuss their issues due to gender stereotypes such as 'man up'
- Students noted facts and figure relating to mental health issues such as '3/10 young people suffer from a mental health condition' showing that the work which has been done to promote different types of metal health issues have seemingly been successful.
- Stigma is still around from young people's parents' generation. Nationally, mental health is still a taboo subject and young people are starting to be more expressive and come out and talk about issues but still have a barrier from other parts of society. There is still a culture of 'keep yourself to yourself' and that most people are likely to bottle up their problems.

- Students were aware of Samaritans and what they do. Students knew that in the very worst of situations there is still a hotline which can be called.
- There was discussion that children in school should be more educated on types of mental illnesses in the same way that there needs to be more sexual health lessons. PSHE seemingly doesn't adequately cover the big issues in today's society. Learning about the subject in school can lead to a decrease in stigma as young people are taught to open up and discuss their problems.
- Some students knew about places they could go to i.e. the GP or a school counsellor but services were few and far between in Medway and NHS waiting times for mental health treatment can be up to 6 months waiting times.

### Domestic abuse:

- There are seemingly limited services for young people to come forward a report any abuse. (Similarly to family and relationship services)
- Police involvement was mentioned- do they always have to get involved if you come forward for assistance. In a lot of cases police involvement is necessary by law however the sunlight centre in Gillingham offers drop in services that doesn't involve the police if the person does not want them involved.
- Women's aid was the only service mentioned by the students. Highlighting either a lack of services or lack of knowledge about what services are available.
- Young people who suffer from emotional abuse find it hard to come forward and talk about their problems as it can be difficult to prove. All students said that they would be prepared to intervene and seek help for a friend if they felt they were being emotionally or physically abused.

### General points:

- The general pattern from the discussion was that there is very limited services available for young people and that even provisions are in place not many people know how to access them or get information about them.
- Students were open and discussed seemingly sensitive issues really well which suggests that there young people are willing to discuss issues and seek help if they are guided and supported.
- Students showed that with the right information and the appropriate services coming into schools or being more easily available then they would be inclined to use the services.