

## **Your Voice Heard: Developing practice guidelines for working with young people aged 18 & under in relation to self-harm, suicide attempts & deaths by suicide.**

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This project looked at developing guidance about self-harm & suicide amongst young people. We got funding from the National Institute for Health Research Applied Research Collaboration (North East & North Cumbria). Thank you to everyone who spoke to us. Below is what young people, parents, carers & professionals told us.

### **Services & interventions: problems & some good things**

- Long waiting times to access services is a problem, but services were very good when it was a matter of life or death.
- Problems of workers cancelling appointments or not keeping appointments. This made young people feel worse.
- Young people want to be provided with coping strategies, but professionals should make sure ideas are based on knowing the young person's likes & dislikes. This means getting to know the young person & listening to them.
- Support should not feel like a punishment.
- Workers should be kind & caring towards young people & not judge them
- Workers should not use too many scales/tools to assess
- Medication can be helpful but professionals shouldn't see this as the first response
- Workers should not ask too many questions & they should try to have a conversation with young people
- Services need to find a way to work together & share information in order to stop young people having to keep repeating their experiences
- Moving from children's mental health to adult mental health/social care is hard & system needs to be better
- Information about mental health conditions needs to be easy to read & in plain language & possibly even words & pictures
- Workers should consider what it feels like for young people & parents/carers to be spoken about in meetings & should think about how to best involve them
- Some language is a problem. Everyone should avoid saying "commit suicide"
- Some workers 'go the extra mile' & this is appreciated
- Apps & online technologies are helpful & workers should know about these
- Volunteers with lived experience are valued by young people
- Workers thought safety plans needed to think about places which might be risky for young people in crisis. This will need lots of different organisations & departments to work together.

### **Families & support**

- Parents & carers can be helpful & a vital source of support, as long as the young person agrees
- Parents & carers might be desperate for help, which may be why they complain or are not being co-operative

### **Training**

- Some workers said they had been trained but others hadn't
- Everyone working with young people should have training about mental health; some professionals will need to know more than others

### **Recording & reporting & providing guidance for staff**

- It is important that workers know what to write down & who to tell about suicide & self-harm. Some things helped professionals do this but there were some things that got in the way. Staff need to be trained on this.
- Some staff did not know about policies for writing about & telling others when there were concerns
- Workers talked about not having one place to write about & report concerns to. Mostly worries were reported to children's safeguarding teams but this wasn't easy to do
- Workers need guidance about what to do, what to write down & who to speak to. It needs to be easy to do this & workers need to know why they are doing this
- Involving people with lived experience in writing guidance is important
- Any guidance should include apps & online support available
- There might need to be guidance for workers, parents/carers & young people