



Mental Health in Schools

Special Edition

**Minds
Ahead**

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Editorial

This is a special volume. It presents the creative responses of students from Hendon School, Barnet North London. I hope you agree with me that the students have produced some fabulous work and it is a privilege that we are able to publish it in this special edition.

Student voice is critical to all developments in education. Too often, policy makers, educators and external professionals make decisions in children's best interests and, in some cases, these expert views over-ride the perspectives of children and young people.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times.

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) emphasises the need to involve children and young people in all decision-making processes. The right to include children in all decisions is critical because giving children a voice improves their self-efficacy. Children should be consulted about their education and they should be fully involved in shaping policies and practices within the school.

Too often, children and young people become objects of power. However, their daily experiences and mental health are influenced by the structures that are imposed on them. These include, but are not restricted to, the influence of the social, cultural, political and environmental factors which shape children's lives. Educational structures such as the curriculum and assessment regimes to which children are subjected to can result in mental health problems. Children's mental health can be influenced by these structural forces. Therefore, it is important that the 'problem' is not situated within the child but is located within social forces which shape the lives of children and young people.

It is easy to assume that mental health difficulties require specialist intervention from experts and whilst the views of experts are essential, it is important to remember that young people are experts in their own lives. They have a good sense of what needs to change to make their lives better, their role in this and the role of other people. They can be part of the solution rather than the cause.

This publication would not have been possible without the contributions of the students and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed, in whatever way that was.

The copyright is retained by the young people. The pieces have not been edited in any way. Special thanks are extended to Noelle Doona for facilitating this collection of papers and for giving permission to use the photographs of Hendon School's Mental Health Conference.

Thank you
Professor Jonathan Glazzard

Photos from the Mental Health Conference at Hendon School



A letter to my mother

I'm sorry,
I can't go on any longer,
I would've said this before I died but I didn't want to bother,
You with all my problems and darkest desires,
I wouldn't want to add any fuel to our lit fires.

On my darkest days I always wished that I could go away,
So, one night I decided to tiptoe down the hallway,
I thought about your face and everything you'd say,
So, I took my final breath and said it's all gonna be okay.

Cause I'm broken
And I feel like I can't be fixed,
All these smiles that I faked were a sign that you missed,
But mum it's not your fault and
I know I should've told you,
But honestly there was nothing more that anyone could do.

So, when the doctor says, "I'm sorry, I'm afraid there's nothing I can do,"
Don't question what I did cause everything I felt was true,
Cause 1 in 4 means 1 in 4,
And that could even be you.
So, I'm sorry mum,
But all I can say is a final I love you.

By Angel Hemmings

Beyond what you see

Look in the mirror;
Look in the mirror;
No, really look;
Look deeper;
Look harder;
Look beyond what you see.

I see
A girl;
A short girl;
A short black girl.

You see
A girl;
A short girl;
A short black girl
But we do not see the same short black girl.

Because I see,
Intelligence, fun, a target
And you see,
Intelligence, fun, a target.

But you target and I get targeted
I get the banter
The comments
The stuff
The stuff you think I feel
I feel it
It slowly takes me over
It swallows my self-esteem
I become the short black girl you see not the one that I am.

So, look beyond what you see
Try using your spare pair of eyes which you use for people you like.
And look beyond what you see!

By Ella Marshall-Pinder

Butterfly

Butterfly, fly, fly away,
You have the whole day.
The clock is ticking,
You have to get away.

I wake up and the sun is still asleep.
It's another day on repeat.
The same old sky,
Dark and shallow.

In the room, which I despise,
I cry and cry.
All I see is the butterfly
All beautiful and pretty, flapping its wings.

The clock, tick, tocks
Another hour, another day.
I'm still stuck here
Tucked away.

Beep, beep the monitor goes
Telling me this is my last day
Just like the butterfly
I'm fading away into darkness.

Butterfly please take me away
At least for just one day.

Annie and Julia

Don't hide it

Why not share
The feeling we hide,
Instead of feeling shy
Express them with pride
Don't hide it.

Unknown

Happiness

Happiness is there when nothing else is.
When your life is in despair, happiness shows love with a kiss.
When times are rough, happiness comes through
It is there for me and you – sunshine, happiness, light

Everything around is amazing,
It makes us happy.
But there are days when the sun is hiding.
These days won't go away.

But when the sun shines its rays, those bad days fade away.
So, with this in mind no matter what is happening, the sun ... it never dies.

Ayesha and Sabarin

Home is where the heart is

I want to go home,
Open up the door and I'm all alone.
Its empty here, monochrome
I cry under my skin, I should have known.

There is a dog staring at me.
Pitch black and overgrown.
Its taken over me, completely
I speak up, boring and monotone.

Maybe when I'm all grown up
I will just get through
But right now, I've got stuff to do.

I came home yesterday,
Rainbow coloured lights
It was beautiful.
I felt happy, I felt bright.

I saw the dog in a quick glimpse
And the room returned to its
Original state.
Guilty, because I should have known
There's no progression for depression.

Now that I'm all grown up
I haven't got through
And I still have stuff to do.

By Kowsar

I don't know...

I don't know, where it starts or where it ends are you my new friend?
How do I know if it's all true, or is it all in my head?

I sit and cry on my bed but I might still be on my meds.
They all think they know, go out they say but to my dismay its hard.

Hard like the sharp jabs inflicted on me, would I be accepted in this society?
Listen to me; I said listen to me!
You won't let me be, but every time I plead you seem to leave.

Anxiety, depression, mental health, what do they have in common...death?
My head is a maze, why do you think I gaze?
What would be my escape?
I don't wanna die, don't wanna live – I need to take five and see what will give.

By Chika Alino

Keep it in

Keep it in they say;
No-one cares they say;
They won't understand,
That your sanity is about to snap
It is an elastic band,
so, I keep it in.

I sink lower and lower into the madness of my mind.
Am I losing it,
I am having thoughts,
Ones I shouldn't have,
So maybe I am
Losing it, this is.

They say the mind is beautiful,
But mine is not beautiful, why is it not beautiful?
Keep it in they say,
I keep it in.

But it hurts to keep it in,
It is a feeling of hanging to a cliff,
Hands bleeding,
Sweating,
Fearing,
But it's hard to keep it in.

It is the feeling of running to a destination,
Confusion,
Location,
Frustration,
So...
So, what
The movie in my not so beautiful mind, whispers
What are you going to do?

You have a choice,
I decide,
I won't keep it in,
I refuse to keep it in.

If the feeling of serenity,
Clarity,

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Wonder,
Joy,
All the positive emotions filling my soul.
Keep it in the say,
No, I won't keep it in I reply.

By Firdaws

Living as a young 18-year-old who identifies as gay

I'm sure most of you reading this are like "what in the hell is this about" well I am going to be talking about living as someone apart of the LGBT+ community and some of my life experiences. Also, don't expect this to be a well written academic piece of work because it's all from the heart and what comes from the heart can rarely be changed. Also, I want it to SCREAM Jake and add my own style of talking to this. I have written this article like this because once you begin reading it, you'll feel like I am actually in the room talking to you (don't worry I don't know where you are and I'm not a stalker ha-ha) because ones you can build a connection with your reader, they will become more immersed into what they're reading, and really take in what you have said.

What do I identify as?

Stereotypes would have me fall under Fem Gay which I don't necessarily disagree with because 1. I am in fact Gay (shocking, I know) and 2. I am also feminine, but I am not sure if that's all it. The way in which I view myself lies deeper than just 'Fem Gay' because I am currently not sure if I am Transgender or not because on the one hand I dream about being a girl and on the other hand, I like the way I am currently, but in saying that I would categorise myself (at the moment) as Gay and Gender Fluid.

When I knew I was gay:

I think the story here begins from when I first found out I was gay and fall under the premise of 'The LGBT+ community'. I found out I was gay from the very young age of 11, but denied it for fear of "retribution" from my peers.

When I came out:

I came out twice actually, the first time as bisexual and the second as gay. The first time I came out was to my Mother as I knew she would always accept me, but in saying that I did have an underlining fear that she could reject me or be disappointed in me (I guess most people do) so I thought, instead of going full force in saying "Hey Mum, I'm Gay" so I thought I would ease her by saying "Hey Mum, I'm Bisexual". When saying this, I also requested that she not tell anyone as I need to tell them myself, and as requested she didn't say anything. I then later came out to my entire family -as Gay- on Christmas Day because I'm a dramatic person and love a good dramatic opening to things ha-ha. I guess I'm one of the lucky ones because all my family were very supportive and accepted me for who I am. In saying that, I know that it could have been a completely different case and for that I am extremely lucky to have the family that I have.

My experience of bullying and my ways of tackling it:

Throughout most of my life I have experienced bullying of some degree, be it emotional or physical. At times it has been hard, but what is easy in life. Being a flamboyant 6ft 4, gay man with blue hair who is a little bit on the curvier side of life is hard because I get name called a

lot and stared at a lot. However, I get on with life because I know that (as the song goes) “I am what I am” and they’re just probably jealous of me ha-ha.

I try to combat feeling negative about myself and upset by trying to find good in life because there is always something that is amazing out there; we all just have to work hard to get it. I like to set myself goals so that I have something to strive for and when I’m feeling down I will think back to them and try to take time to better myself to get to that goal. This is better than worrying about what the haters have to say because at the end of the day not everyone will like you and that’s fine. However, that shouldn’t stop you or hinder you from doing what you want to do. Each day you should strive to be a better version of the person you were yesterday. I also came up with a saying “In our lives we experience many hardships, but many wonderful things too and for those wonderful things to happen, we have to experience the bad first and preserve through it.”

Also, if you’re currently feeling bad because of what someone has said to you or done to you, well forget it, you are who you are and that’s what matters. Be thankful for being you and get on with your life. Once you show those bullies that you don’t care about what they say to you, that day you have not only beaten them, but you have shown how strong you are and have undoubtedly come out as a better person. Once you show a bully an emotion, then they have won and will persist to do so, it’s better to just ignore them and get on with your life because they won’t help you, YOU have to help YOU! Furthermore, by retaliating and not showing that you can be the better person, you are then stooping down to their level, and yes, I know that bottling up emotions will just cause a bigger rage to come out when that bottle explodes but it doesn’t have to be that way. Help will be provided to you be it talking to friends to let out your emotions or contacting someone who will help to sort out this issue. (i.e. if you’re in school like mine then this person would be a teacher).

What is my goal for the future?

In the near future I wish to ace all my A-Level exams (fingers crossed) and go to a university to study law. The reason why I would like to be a lawyer is because I have always had a fascination with it and I would like to work on the issues of LGBT+ Rights and ensuring people are treated equally. I feel it isn’t really shown in the media or in society, it should be seen as acceptable as a norm in any tolerant society. I am also a strong believer in justice and would love to help people get/gain justice for what may have happened to them.

I hope you whoever reads this learns something, but also has a laugh because I have tried to incorporate comedy in subjects that seem upsetting for some as I believe the best medicine is happiness and laughter in overcoming issues in our lives.

Kind regards,

- Jake Daniel Nall

“No health without mental health” Department of Health, 2011

We are a group of 30 students aged 13-18 at Hendon School, Barnet North London, who have been working to improve Mental Health awareness and “SOS-Stamp Out Stigma” We organised, what we believe, was the first student led Mental Health Conference in July 2016. We have worked with Maria Kane, the CEO of BEH-MHT, together we have signed a Barnet Youth Mental Health Charter, worked to design an app for young people in Barnet to find out where to access help and have produced this document to share some of the findings of our research. The views in this document represent students from Hendon School and Northgate House, the Mental Health School, based at Edgware Hospital and included students from Barnet, Brent, Camden, Enfield, Harrow and Hertfordshire.

We asked to consider two questions in conducting this research, below is a summary of our findings:

	What needs to change in Mental Health provision?	Why do things need to change?
Training/ Prevention	<p>Our schools have some great staff but many do not have the skills or training to identify and support students with mental health issues. In our research, they have told us they would like more training.</p> <p>Training young people to recognise signs and support</p> <p>We found that people want targeted support /training to support them at key times</p>	<p>Rise in the number of young people with issues, if staff had the skills to help us earlier maybe there would be less crisis cases Prime Minister May has promised Mental Health First Aid training, but only one person in each school – this is not enough!</p> <p>Friends able to spot subtle changes - peer mentoring and support to find the help that they need.</p> <p>There are lots of times that are very stressful. There are key points in a young person’s life when students would benefit from extra support - transition from primary- to secondary or college/university Also at exam times – we see in the news that the numbers have risen</p>
Access to information	<p>Many young people want on-line sources to support them. We need somewhere to be able to find support and advice that we know is trust worthy and user friendly.</p>	<p>There are too many sites and how can we know that they are giving good advice, finding someone or an organisation to help show us what is relevant, maybe like verified on twitter.</p>

<p>Support groups</p>	<p>More availability of support groups for young people and parents to come together to discuss issues and tackling stigma.</p> <p>Introduction of a buddy system to support people through treatment, a named person to navigate the system</p> <p>Opportunities to meet young people who have had similar experiences, to show that things can be overcome</p>	<p>They thought it was important to get outside help to support discussions. Students wanted parents to understand them and their mental health issues. A number said that if they spoke to their parents about their mental health, they would be taken to their church/mosque for help as their parents didn't understand and in some cases, believe mental health issues existed.</p>
<p>Youth centred facilities</p>	<p>Students felt that some of the buildings were not very friendly and inviting.</p> <p>More CAMHS meetings held in school</p>	<p>Some talked about being put off attending as it made them more anxious.</p> <p>They felt that school was a safe space and they felt more relaxed. Others talked about using youth centres, shopping centres etc. as this would help reduce the stigma.</p>
<p>Communication</p>	<p>Better communication, we heard stories of people being told they were on waiting lists and then receiving letters to say that they had missed appointments – but they had never received any letters. Navigators/ a named person to help and support them through the system.</p>	<p>Poor communication can increase anxiety and make issues worse. Letters are not received, students being discharged for non-attendance, having to explain to lots of different people the same issue. This can be very stressful.</p>
<p>Treatments available</p>	<p>Being able to discuss what treatment we want, especially when they have experienced something that has worked before</p>	<p>Some of the students felt that they were not listened to, if they worked together in partnership, they hoped that there would be better outcomes in their treatment.</p>
<p>Waiting times</p>	<p>They are too long</p>	<p>Many students reported having to wait over 6 months for an appointment. Things could get worse whilst waiting and treatment could be costlier if not dealt with early.</p>

Some of the students also commented:

“It feels like adults don’t care”

“If I hadn’t gone private, I probably would have killed myself while I was waiting for therapy”

“If you break your leg everyone rushes to help, but if you break your mind, nobody cares.”

“Treatments seems to be based on your social economic circumstances. If your parents are educated and know where to find services, you get on a waiting list. If not, then services are hard to find out about.”

We all know that 4 out of 4 people have mental health, like physical health it is important that we all work together to ensure good health. Our discussions with other students showed that many young people wanted to be equipped the skills and able to access early intervention to tackle mental health. They wanted support for their parents and more facilities available in school and other “young people friendly places.”

From tragedy to being the change we want to see in the world

Our journey began back in the summer of 2015, when I finished my first year of Sixth Form and had the pleasure of doing my work experience with Citizens UK. On one of the days, I visited Corelli College in Greenwich as they signed their very own Youth Mental Health Charter with their local CCG. This was the first time I had seen young people directly taking responsibility for their own mental health. Following the suicide of our beautifully animated Head teacher Kevin McKellar in the summer of 2014, as a school, like many we weren't having the right conversations about mental health. After being inspired by the work of Corelli College, I knew that this was something I wanted to do at Hendon School but wasn't sure how I would go about it. However, as if by chance the school was given the opportunity as Team London Young Ambassadors to pitch for Unilever Brightfuture's grant of £1000 and so we chose to run our own student led mental health conference.

After picking a team of 6 other students ranging from year 8 to 13, we began to plan our pitch and conference. We worked tirelessly for hours and hours to perfect our pitch with guidance from Team London Ambassador Veronica and Frank from Unilever; our SOS Stamp Out Stigma conference had been born. The team had mixed emotions on the 15th of December and the day had come for us to pitch for our Brightfutures grant. Commuters watched on while we rehearsed on the train on our way to City Hall wondering what on earth we were doing?! After a final run through at a practice room, the time had finally come for us to pitch in the living room, to host our mental health conference entitled **SOS - STAMP OUT STIGMA**.

In January, after 3 nervous weeks of waiting to find out if we were successful, we finally found out we were. Then the real work began. We had 6 months to organise the conference, surely that was loads of time! Firstly, we split up into teams: Budgeting, Logistics, Workshop design, Media and communications and we were given the challenge to encourage 4 other people to join each of our teams.

After thorough research and a number of conversations, we started the task of creating merchandise to put in our goody bags for including stress balls, pens and our amazing tote bag. All the work was student led, one of the funniest moments was when the bag company rang to discuss their quote. They rang asking for Millie and a confused receptionist said that she didn't work at Hendon. When the company found out that it was actually a 13-year-old girl placing the order they were so impressed that they gave us 10% off our order!

As well as the conference, 10 people, myself included, completed mental health peer support training with the charity SANE and now I feel confident to talk to people about mental health.

As well as the upskilling of students, mental work started to permeate across the school. We held staff training, organised lessons for all year groups and a range of guest speakers. The students organised a mental health competition, attended local meetings about mental health, organised the Time to Talk Day for staff as well as raising over £800 for two mental health charities.

The main aims of our conference were to raise awareness on Mental Health for young people and to sign the Barnet Youth Mental Health Charter with Maria Kane, who was the Chief Executive of Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust, to ensure that there was a legacy, something that the Bright Futures grant insisted all projects did.

We faced quite a few challenges as the conference came closer and we learnt to bounce back from setbacks. We were going to make sure nothing stopped the conference. One example was the day before the conference and the t-shirts for the team had still not arrived. We managed to get some of the team to go out buy t-shirts, iron on transfers and one of the team stayed up late into the night to make us all t-shirts.

On the day one of the local Councillor arrived, that we were not expecting. We had to adjust the times so had an opportunity to speak and be involved in the event. She initially said she would stay an hour but enjoyed the event so much that she stayed all day. One speaker didn't turn up and only let us know 20 minutes before they were due to arrive, we had to re-adjust the timetable so that all our visitors were still able to attend workshops.

After months of sending invites and telephone conversations with Maria Kane's office to ensure that the event was in her diary she finally agreed to attend. However, the Friday before the conference we received an email to say she was unable to attend. Charlotte from Citizens UK and I decided to take matters into our own hands. Next thing I know, I was at Maria Kane's office delivering flowers with previous letters of her confirmation and another invite. Miraculously, we heard on Monday, she had managed to find an available slot in her diary and would attend for the final hour of the conference.

There was a real buzz during the conference, with delegates really surprised and very complimentary that a team of students have managed to achieve something so amazing. Something I felt was great pride at seeing their ideas coming to fruition. Over 175 people attended the conference from schools across London and even some teachers from Salisbury made the journey. The event was a mixture of guest speakers, workshops, a marketplace where local and national mental health organisations were able to share what they were able to offer, entertainment and we hoped the signing of the Barnet Youth Mental Health charter.

Maria Kane arrived on time to the conference but had decided that she was not going to sign the charter without confirming with other members of her team, despite the weeks of negotiating the wording we had already undertaken with members of her team. So again, we weren't taking no for an answer! The charter was the climax of the conference. I took Maria into the meeting room with members of the team and we managed to persuade her that signing the charter was the right thing to do. Really excited we returned to the hall for the next part of the event. In what felt like the longest 20 minutes, a member of her team was trying to talk her out of signing it. Not deterred we sent our previous Head Boy Elso to sit with Maria and stop that from happening! Thankfully she signed the charter, thanks Elso!

As students we have received a great deal of positive feedback from the delegates and speakers alike. One wrote "I just wanted to congratulate you on a wonderful conference today. It was a privilege to come and speak. It's brilliant to see how motivated young people are to better understand mental health and make a difference - please do not underestimate the impact you've had not only on your generation, but the younger children following in your footsteps. The charter signed today will save lives, of that I am sure."

Leeds Beckett University

The conference was supposed to be the culmination of our Mental Health work, but it turned out to be only the beginning. All the way through our planning we had written, "Conference finish 3pm, collapse in a heap 3.01pm!" However, by 3.02pm the team were buzzing and agreed that a second conference would be held.

None of us saw the impact receiving the BrightFutures grant would bring, we have grown as a team. As a school we have taken a tragic incident and turned it into, we hope a positive legacy. If we have made a difference to just one person, encouraged just one person to have a conversation then it has been worth it.

Sharmarke Dhaqane and Millie Turner

The pressures of being a teenager today

Imagine not being able to wake up in the morning. Under your eyes are heavy wells of tears from the previous night. Imagine crying yourself to sleep. every. single. afternoon. You dread going into school because you're afraid.

Insomnia sweeps you up into his arms and cradles you, you are helpless. You come into school half an hour early just so you can avoid everyone. You know the answer but don't raise your hand.

The selfish school system softly stomachs students she is a siren sweetly singing. There is always something on your mind, all you ever do is nit-pick and worry over the stupid things.

Your journey back is a hitchhike home. You've got to walk fast avoid eye contact, but most importantly, you've got to place your keys in between your fingers as if you are Wolverine.

Who can blame you, how else are you supposed to feel safe? After all we do live in a world where misogyny is not considered a problem, danger lurks everywhere.

You've been taught to dress accordingly to other people's standards. You've got to make sure you're not wearing anything suggestive or 'asking for it'. Just because grown men don't know how to control their impulses and fantasies you've got to be stripped from your childhood.

Procrastination and overthinking go hand in hand like milk and cookies like peanut butter and jelly like fish and chips. Anonymous anxiety approaches anyone available.

You're a party piñata constantly beating yourself up, putting yourself down until you eventually explode. The thoughts will get the better of you, some days you put your anxiety in a cage, other days it frees itself and escapes. It climbs on your back leaving cold sweated footprints. The beast has been unleashed.

You're suffocated and silenced, maybe ending it, all would help. This is what goes through the mind of many teenagers.

The youthful population take up 40% of the world. We face many hurdles in everyday life, most of these are hidden and not many parents are aware. All these problems start in school.

It is impossible to teach a class of students all with different abilities and strengths the same thing. We all have various methods of learning something, yet the school system doesn't fully recognise that.

The amount of agony we are put under is astronomical. We are taught that bad levels = a bad life, however that is not necessarily true.

Why are we going by a system that hasn't changed for over 100 years? Whilst the workplace is constantly changing.

Why do we expect 13-year olds to know what they want in life when they have barely experienced it?

In 2010-2011 Youngminds (a charity specialising in aiding the youths) received 6332 calls to the helpline. 884 were about 16-17-year olds and 30% of these were about school and exam stress. It is estimated more than 10% of young people have a diagnosable mental health issue, that will affect them in their adult lives.

So many years of education but we are never taught to love ourselves.

We are the next generation, doesn't our mental health matter? The outcome of school is to turn us into identically civilised and well-rounded individuals. Realistically not everyone is going to meet the standards set. Downtown depression drives dangerously down a deep dark alleyway steering students away from success.

Everyone has a mental health whether it's you being mentally healthy and stable or you being mentally ill. 20% of teenagers battle with depression that is 1 in 5.

Depression is invisible that is why it is so deadly. It's a heavy weight that deprives you from doing everyday things.

1 in 4 teenagers deal with anxiety. Most of the depression is mixed in with anxiety, of course you've got to sprinkle in some self-hatred and voila! One unhappy teenager coming your way.

So, ask yourself, why are we sweeping these statistics under the rug? How long until we realise these statistics are actual people and not just figures. Why aren't we doing something about this when WE know about these issues?

Young women have become the most high-risk group in society. One in four among 18-24-year olds self-harmed. 2,311 cases in 2014-2015 of self-harm were treated as hospital inpatients.

Mental health issues are not always physically recognisable and that is why they are so dangerous. There is way too much stigma around this topic.

However, ministers want to 'normalise' discussions about mental health in school to tackle the rates of depression and anxiety among teenagers as it has gone up to 70% in the last 25 years.

The government has also promised to put £1.4 billion into care of troubled kids during this parliament to ensure that at least 70,000 more under 18s get high quality care. They also want to put more NHS workers in schools to be able to speak to children but with huge budget cuts on the NHS recently we don't know how likely that will be.

Social media presence has fuelled body image anxiety and eating disorders amongst the youthful. The survival of the prettiest is everyday life. There is an expectation to look a certain way. Who doesn't want to fit in and feel beautiful?

People went as far as using shot glasses to enlarge their lips temporarily. This ridiculous 'challenge' went by the name of the Kylie Jenner lip challenge. Her lips seemed fuller this was because of lip fillers, but teenagers were stupid enough to get glass in their lips. This caused lots of minor health issues such as scars and bleeding.

Sadly, many are resorting to diets and as a result are deliberately trying to look like those highly photo shopped models. These unrealistic beauty standards need to be banished.

In France, underweight models are no longer allowed to work in the industry. Photoshop is also not allowed. These rules should be passed worldwide to reduce the rates of eating disorders.

The calculator in my head is ticking like clockwork, emotions are mixed up like some clothes except this cycle never seems to end.

We don't just regurgitate our food to feel pretty. We have to regurgitate pointless information onto various tests to make us feel worth something.

A solution to support young people with mental health issues has been created. In 2013 a project which goes by the name of Reading Well for young people was launched and since then has benefitted more than half a million people. The scheme provides 13-18-year olds with high quality information to support a variety of mental health issues.

Another way to reduce stress is to not give students as much homework. This might be deemed as unacceptable but even if it's for one day without homework, students will have time to unwind and do something they enjoy.

We have to relax as well as work. We aren't robots and require time to ourselves.

Have you ever noticed when you look at a child in primary how excited they are about school? Whereas a teenager in year 10/11 just seems sick of it. What went wrong in those few years? It's the school system. We are slaves to the system and this everlasting cycle won't end. We are like clowns riding a unicycle trying to juggle subjects whilst balancing our social lives too. What have we become other than some Guinea pigs for an experiment to see how we cope under pressure?

So, are you just going to sit there and let these things carry on happening? Are you really going you blame our problems on hormones or typical teenage behaviour?

Do you want to make a change in the world and improve the atmosphere you live in?

So, let's actually do something about this and break down the barriers. Let's put an end to this brainwashing. It's time to make a change to society and to the system.

Soufia

Untitled Poem 1

I put my hands down my waist wondering why I am not an hourglass yet but then I am reminded that I do not want to be an apple core. I do not want to be chewed up and spat out. I won't be silenced or suffocated. I trace my fingertips delicately down the winding paths on my thigh. They glow a bright red reminding me that I am flesh. Reminding me that I am human, reminding me that it's okay.

When I stare into the mirror I try to see beauty that is skin deep. I try to smile but end up staring longer than anticipated, seems like every day I am learning new things about this body of mine. My eyes instinctively look at something else to get the imagine out of my head. How can I say I am proud of who I am and who I have become? When I don't even like me.

When I am angry I am a storm. I breathe in and out huffing and puffing– does that make me the big bad wolf? My diaphragm rises for a second making me feel on top of the world. That might be because there is an invisible corset around my chest making me feel pretty and perfect. My bubble is burst, the moment is destroyed as soon as I am reminded to breathe out again.

The oh so subtle self-hatred peppered within my daily vocabulary has become normal to those around me. Others just stop me abruptly telling me to close my mouth because no one wants to listen and others have it worse.

Look, the emotional unstable wreck is crying again. Oh, she's such an attention seeker, what a loser. Anxiety is a swimming pool in which I am drowning; unusually there is some comfort at the bottom of the pool. My struggles are invisible, there is always a level or standard we have to meet. The selfish school system softly stomachs students, she is a siren sweetly singing.

Procrastination and overthinking go hand in hand like milk cookies like peanut butter and jelly like fish and chips. Anonymous anxiety approaches anyone available.

You're a party piñata constantly beating yourself up, putting yourself down until you eventually explode. The thoughts will get the better of you, some days you put your anxiety in a cage, other days it free itself and escapes. It climbs your back leaving cold sweated footprints on your back.

Downtown depression drives dangerously down a deep dark alleyway steering students away from success.

Soufia

Untitled Poem 2

There's this creature who lurks amongst us,
not a scary one but one you find comfort in,
it sticks to you like glue,
who needs friends when I have you?
except you're not really a friend, are you?
you've stopped me from doing the usual,

you've turned me into a walking mess,
you, my friend are the reason why I cry every night.

Yet, we've become so close I just can't seem to let you go,
without you, there is no me,
you've become a part of my identity,
without you, there is no me,
without you, I am empty.

You've even started to take away those I care about,
like last week when you stood and watched,
one morning before English,
one of my best friends and I sat outside our class whilst the eager boys stood laughing
nearby,
we spoke about the best way to die,
we both say pills in unison and then list the benefits,
you see downtown depression drives dangerously down a deep dark alleyway and its taking
us with it.

The cackles of the hyenas nearby comes to a halt,
they giggle nervously not realising that for us this is reality,
that anonymous anxiety approaches anyone available.

We don't have our five a day instead we state five ways to end it all.

Soufia

The Making of The App:

The SOS – Stamp Out Stigma Mental Health team at Hendon School is entirely student-led. As young people, we knew that we needed to find a straightforward way for other young people to understand and learn more about mental health, so we decided to design an app ourselves to help combat the stigma around the subject.

As a part of our first conference on the 13th of July 2016, our aim was to get Maria Kane, the former Head of Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust, to sign a charter, designed by us, enclosed with a list of actions that the Borough of Barnet would promise to undertake to do with mental health in young people. One of these actions was to provide support for Digital Natives, to help navigate the wealth of information about mental health and ensure it was found in just one easy to access location. She agreed to help us create and fund an app - 'Speak Out Barnet!'.

To create our app, we knew that we needed to find professionals that would work alongside us to help bring our ideas to life. We decided to partner with Middlesex University to help us find students within their university with knowledge in app designing, psychology and design itself. Many students applied and after a lengthy process of both shortlisting their applications and interviewing all the applicants ourselves, we finally hired our app design team.

Together with the students from Middlesex University that had previously hired and our own team of students at Hendon school, we began to meet on Fridays afterschool to begin the journey of creating our app. With a team of students ranging from year 9 all the way to university, we were overwhelmed with many ideas and the creativity between us was outstanding.

In the first couple of meetings, we begun by jotting down what features we wanted on the app. After collectively coming up with ideas and feeding back to the whole group, we split off into different teams – information, layout and logo. We had a tough deadline to meet as we had previously planned to launch the app on the day of our second conference.

The process was not easy - we had many disagreements along the way and at times we felt we were not taken seriously, since we were just a group of students doing this by ourselves. But after a couple of months, everything begun to come together. One of the Yr12 students designed a logo named Barney, collected information on several types of mental health disorders that young people face and had decided on a layout for the app. We had even come up with a name – 'Speak Out - Barnet!'.

However, there was one last obstacle that we had to face. Although we had Middlesex students on our team who were at the time studying a degree in Psychology, we needed to get all the information on the app, surrounding mental health disorders, approved by the professionals. With A-level and university exams approaching, it became difficult for the team to meet and get that information approved. So as a result of this, we couldn't meet our initial deadline but with the conference date set, we had to make it work.

But this didn't stop us all from persevering on. After many more meetings, the day of our second conference approached. There was nothing more that we could do. It was now up to our app designer, Samuel. To no surprise, Samuel had finished the app. We struggled to get a meeting with the Mental Health Trust and they were only able to meet on the day of the conference. They were impressed and after a five-minute meeting, we had noted down the final changes that we planned to make to the app. The team worked furiously for the next few hours with Samuel but we had published it to the app store! All our hard work had paid off and we had done it. We were all ecstatic and so very relieved. Our job was finally done. Well almost, currently we only have an ios version and the android version is being developed and will be published shortly.

The entire process was both stressful and rewarding. As a group we learnt how to work in a team, take tough criticism and work hard to meet a deadline. Despite the few bumps in the road we faced, we're sure of one thing... If we could go back in time and repeat the full process, we wouldn't change a thing.

By Angel Hemmings

What have we personally achieved through our Mental Health Work?

As students we are lucky to attend a school that gives us opportunities to run our own projects in our school and local communities to help us make a difference. Our school vision is Believe, Achieve, Lead and Belong. Student Voice and student leadership underpins the action teams who work together to make improvements. Students are given the opportunities to research issues that they care about and are encouraged to take action within their own communities. Supported by staff and older students we are told that “Anything is possible!”

Through the student-led mental health work done at Hendon School, the SOS – Stamp Out Stigma Mental Health Team have become known for our work and have been recognised by different organisations. Because of this, we have won various local and national awards both individually and as a whole team.

Individually, members of the team have been awarded 3 Jack Petchey awards; 2 British Citizen youth Awards; an #iwill ambassador, Vinspired certificates and numerous Hendon School Community awards.

As a team, we have successfully won:

- A London Team Award – Health and Environment category
- A British Values Project Award

“I have really enjoyed the work that we have done as it gave me the chance to help others and do something better for the community. As a result of the community work that my school has offered me I have won a British Citizen Youth Award at parliament in October last year which only 20 young people in the country have won. This award makes me feel a sense of achievement and pride of work that I have done to help the community. But the best part is that I can have the letters BCyA after my name.” – **Millie**

“As a result of the mental health work I am now one of the 150 #iwill ambassadors in the UK. I have also been awarded a Points of Light Award from Prime Minister Theresa May. I continue to keep in touch with Hendon School, as I am now at university, but want to continue to work with the team. I have recently completed my Mental Health First Aid training and now look to focus my work on improving mental health in the Somali community. I will also be using my skills to volunteer with the Council of Somali Organisations to organise a mental health conference which aims to give Somalis insight into provisions and services for mental health. I have also represented my university at the International Somali awards - something I could not have dreamt of when I look back to at my younger more troublesome days!” - **Sharmarke**

However, awards are not the only thing we have achieved through our mental health work. The most important thing we as a team have achieved is the development of our characters along the way. We have seen team members grow more confident within themselves as well as learn new skills that can help them in both their academics and daily life.

Leeds Beckett University

Team members have developed their skills such as resilience, communication, listening, creativity, leadership, time management and many more. As young people we are confident in following our dreams to make a change, we know that our voices are important and can be heard. Additionally, as young people have developed a long-lasting passion for volunteering and most importantly we are now able to advocate for what we believe in.

Our aim was to give young people a voice and through our mental health work we, as a team, have all become young advocates for both mental health and other important causes in our communities, using the voices and skills that we have all developed along the way. We believe that anything is possible, we are all leaders who have the power to make a difference.

By Angel Hemmings

Why we joined the Mental Health team

At first, I joined the mental health team as I wanted to start community work. I soon realised that mental health was a big topic and I wanted to be one of the people who would kick start a conversation. By being part of the team, I have achieved great things like my BCyA and my Jack Petchey award. I still attend as it is a great thing to take part in and I get to meet lots of great people. I have developed lots of different skills and I am now the Head of the Budget team. I am the only original team member and I don't intend on leaving any time soon!

A'mari, BCyA

Having a bad mental health is frustrating and painful, it's like a cold dark shadow that looms over you constantly, an iciness always washes over you like you can't feel happiness ever again, not truly from your heart. It feels everything is crushing down and you have no control over it, like your whole life is slipping away in your hands and you can't do anything about it. It definitely isn't pleasant. I joined mental health team because I don't want anyone to feel the kind of dread I have felt, or worse. I want to be able help young people like me, or others who's in need to cope with problems healthily and I want them to be able to get help whenever they need. Being a part of this team and campaigning and holding conferences is something I've always wanted to do - to do something that encourages and help others. Also, it improved my confidence and communication skills, by attending meetings and exchange and introducing ideas to different people.

Xuan

Mental health is important to me because it has personally affected my peers. This motivated me to join the team as I wanted to make a difference in my community by informing my peers about the importance of our mental health and wellbeing and how it can affect us all. I joined the team after attending the first conference held at our school.

Angel

The second mental health conference for me was absolutely amazing. I'm so grateful to have been a part of the event and been given the opportunity to join the Mental Health Team. Being on this team has enabled me to understand the effect mental health has on people's lives. Therefore, I'm now able to know and understand when someone has mental health; and what to do to support them. Being part of the team able to host the conference was exciting and nerve-racking. I'm glad to see change happening, to see the affect our work and raising awareness has done for us as students, the team and our school- it's truly a phenomenal and fantastic team to be part of and I'm happy to say that I'm part of the team.

Chika

HENDON SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE (PHOTOGRAPHS)













