

Youth friendly general practice: *rhetoric or (possible) reality?*

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Background:

- Young people report mixed experiences of primary health care.
- Young people with mental health concerns face additional barriers to access.
- GPs are reluctant to initiate discussions about mental health, yet young people see GPs as important sources of advice and support.
- 75% of adult mental health problems are manifest in adolescence, and delays in detection are long, usually between 5-15 years.
- Health behaviours established in youth can have long term consequences.

Findings:

- Participation can result in improved responsive access, enhanced quality of care and positive outcomes for young people and staff working in collaboration.
- Further efforts are needed to engage young people with mental health concerns in meaningful ways in health care delivery
- Clear guidelines, training and support are helpful to address the needs of disadvantaged young people.
- The contribution of peer mentors and youth volunteers are recognised in some services, including mental health promotion.
- You're Welcome (DH 2011) identifies key areas to improve accessibility and acceptability of health services.

Methods:

We undertook a rapid review of the available literature to look at what has been proposed to address barriers and enablers of effective consultations between GPs and young people.

Examples of local research into action:

Our Health Our Voice (2011) Newcastle LINK report

Young people's recommendations for health care professionals:

- Take time to talk, explore health concerns and treatment options.
- Offer different ways to access services and communicate with young people, including online.
- Reinforce messages about confidentiality, consent and information sharing.
- Welcome friends to attend appointments.
- Work in partnership with other services to ensure smooth transition.
- Act on young people's feedback.



Right Here Brighton & Hove

Youth-led mental and emotional wellbeing project



- **Award-winning research:** Almost 200 young people aged 16-25 were interviewed across Brighton and Hove about their GP experiences: www.right-here-brightonandhove.org.uk/campaigning/young-people-and-their-gp
- **A good practice guide/mug** was created and distributed to surgeries, giving tips to GP practice staff on how to be a youth-friendly practice.
- **How Can I** (a short film) informs young people how to make the most of their GP visit, and encourages a two-way dialogue www.howcanifilm.com
- **Doc Ready:** A new webapp launching Summer 2013, to prepare young people for mental health related GP appointments: www.docready.org
- **Where To Go For:** Launching late 2013, a new national online directory of mental health services for young people: www.wheretogofor.co.uk
- **GP training:** Young volunteers regularly train doctors and surgery staff, GP registrars (and recently, attendees at the RCGP Adolescent Health Group event, April 2013) in how to improve communication with young people, especially those who experience mental health issues.



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Conclusions:

- UK general practice has the potential to support young people friendly health care which will produce long term benefits.
- The participation of young people is deemed critical to inform planning and delivery.
- Learning from initiatives developed with strong participation from young people may be the key to unlocking the current gap between the rhetoric and the reality.

References:

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