

Scrutiny Inquiry Panel - Combating Loneliness in Southampton

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION / PRESENTATIONS

Thursday, 8th December, 2016
at 5.00 pm

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELATED TO THE LISTED REPORTS

Contacts

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

7 MEETING 4 - COMBATING LONELINESS FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND WORKING AGE ADULTS (Pages 1 - 40)

Friday, 2 December 2016

SERVICE DIRECTOR, LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE

Loneliness and Mental Health

Loneliness is both a cause and an effect of mental distress.

When the person isolates more they face more mental distress

With more mental distress they may isolate themselves more

Those with SMI are the most isolated

Loneliness and mental health

- **Increased propensity to depression**
- **Sleep deprivation**
- **Social anxiety**
- **Stress levels**
- **Cognitive decline**
- **Suicide ideation**

Lifestyle

- **Unhealthier diets**
- **Take less exercise**
- **Drink more alcohol**
- **Other risky behaviours**

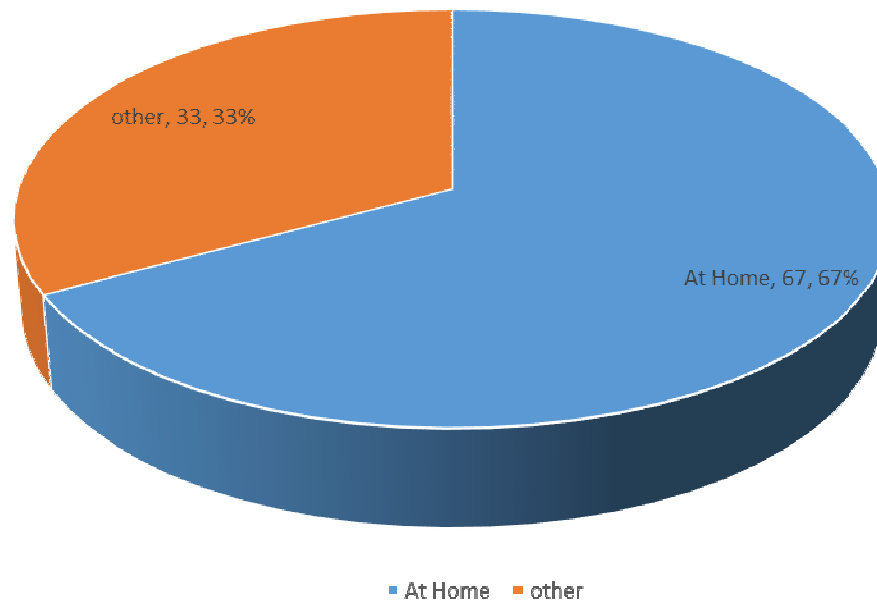
Southampton Suicide Audit

- Work closely with the coroners office
- There were a total of 60 deaths by suicide during the calendar years 2012 – 2015.
- This compares to 63 deaths in the period 2010-2012
Higher than the national average

Key features 2013-15 coroners audit

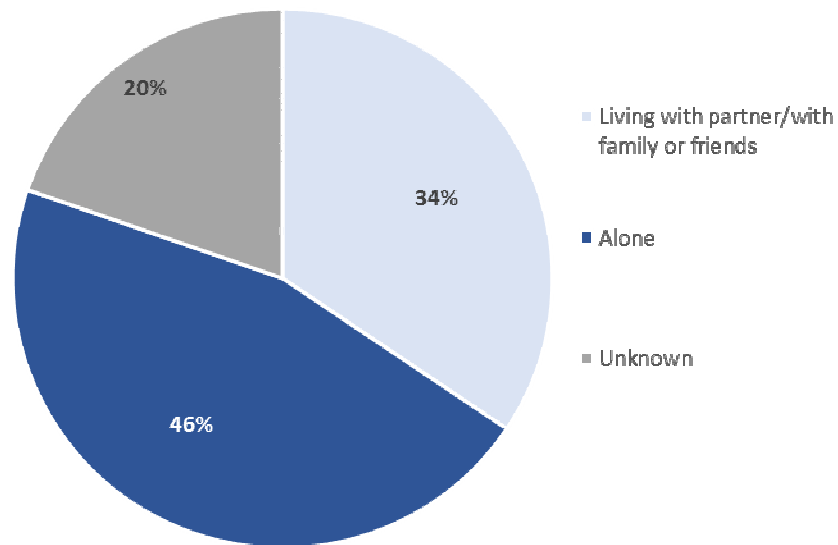
- **Total deaths by suicide 60**
- **Three quarters men**
- **Majority white British**
- **All ages but peak in age group 40-49**
- **60% employed**
- **Hanging at home most common method**
- **Most not known to services**

Place of death



Housing Status

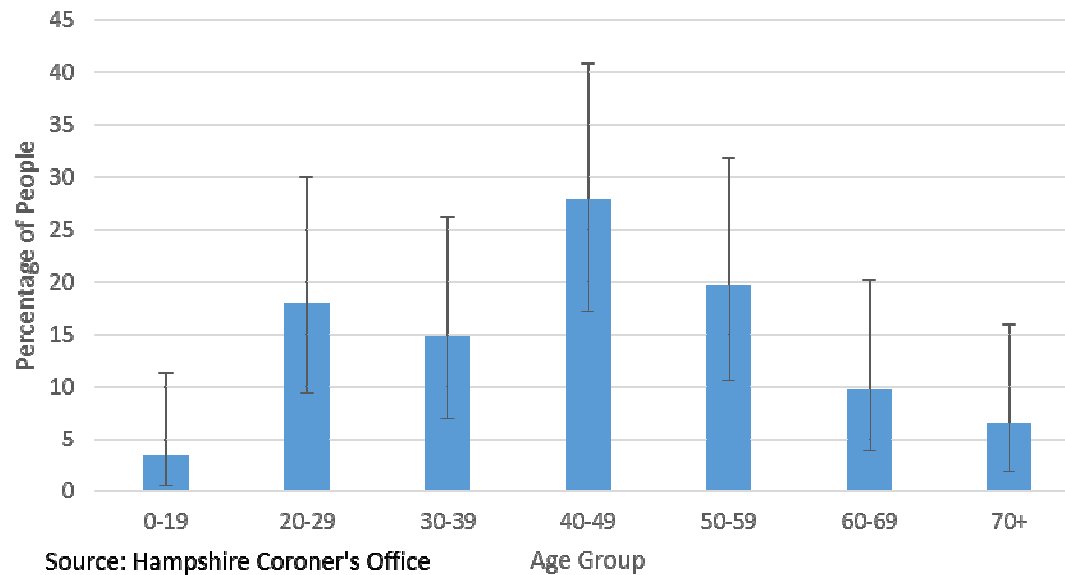
Housing Status of People Dying From Suicide: Recorded Suicides in Southampton: 2013 - 2015 Pooled



Source: Hampshire Coroner's Office

Age

Age of People Dying From Suicide: Recorded Suicides in Southampton: 2013 - 2015 Pooled



Contributory factors

- **Loneliness**
- **Chronic Pain/LTC**
- **Relationship problems**
- **Bereavement**
- **Not wanting to be a burden on others**
- **History of abuse**
- **Involvement with criminal justice system**
- **Debt**



Case studies

Student

Male

Lived halls of residence

Two years + study

No known MH issues or other health conditions

No one seemed to know him

Retired nurse

Female

Own house

Mother, grandmother, widow

LTC

Did not wish to be a burden

Never saw anyone

Southampton Suicide Prevention Plan (Southampton Suicide Prevention Group)

- **Reduce the risk of suicide in key high risk groups**
- **Tailor approaches to improve mental health in specific groups**
- **Reduce access to the means of suicide**
- **Support the media in delivering sensitive approaches to suicide and suicidal behaviour**
- **Support research, data collection and monitoring**

- **Feeds into Be Well – public Mental Health Strategy and Southampton Citywide Anti stigma work**

What else helps?

- **IAPT**
- **CBT**

- **Mindfulness**

- **Strengthening communities**

- **Five ways to wellbeing**

- **Challenging stigma**

- **Befriending and peer support**

Any Questions?

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November 2016

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LONELINESS & MENTAL HEALTH



WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

- Having a mental health issue increases the chance of someone becoming isolated and feeling lonely, and feeling lonely can have a negative impact on your mental health. This creates a vicious cycle that can be hard for people to break without support.



THE CHALLENGES

Social contact is a recognised key contributor to good mental wellbeing.

- Many mental health issues such as depression and anxiety can make it difficult for people to make or maintain relationships and social connections, for example;
 - Anxieties about going out to new places, using transport etc can deter people from going out.
 - Fears and assumptions about what others think.
 - Low or unstable mood makes communication difficult to sustain, which has a negative impact on relationships (eg losing touch with friends during a low period then not feeling able to re-establish communication.)
 - Fear of judgement and feeling that no one understands makes it difficult for people to have to confidence to reach out.
 - Anxiety and fear of failure can make people reluctant to commit to things or see them through (eg social commitments) which impacts on friendships and triggers low mood/a sense of 'not being good enough.'

**“MY ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION
ISOLATE ME FROM PEOPLE, STOP ME
FROM BEING ABLE TO DO THE THINGS I’D
LIKE TO DO SO SOCIALLY IT CUTS ME
OFF.”** *Mind Service User*

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

- There is often an emphasis on isolation in older people, but surveys suggest that the issue is even more prevalent among young people.
- A recent UK survey showed that young people's greatest fear was 'not finding someone to love' – ranking higher than war, illness and family death in the responses. This suggests that many young people are concerned about the risk of long term loneliness.
- Expectations, social media, issues with anxiety and gaps in support all increase the risk of young people becoming isolated.
- In young people, anxiety and other mental health issues can often present as issues with challenging or aggressive behaviour and social boundaries, further limiting the young person's social opportunities. This can increase feelings of failure and being different and creating a vicious cycle which can be difficult to break without support.
- Children and young people can find it harder to understand and articulate their feelings, making it more difficult for them to access appropriate support and increasing the chances of them becoming isolated.
- In teenagers, loneliness and associated mental health issues can look like 'normal teenage behaviour' such as spending a lot of time in their rooms, which can make recognition of any problems slower.

STUDENTS

Although students often have a reputation for partying, for many the experience of going away to university can be lonely, and have an impact on their mental wellbeing. Risks include:

- **Living away from home** - usually for the first time, isolated from family and friends. As well as not having people to talk to, this also means that those people who know them best and would be most likely to notice warning signs of mental health issues are not around to do so. With no one that knows them well around, young people at university are at risk of becoming very unwell before anyone notices.
- **Expectation** – The expectation that students will ‘have the time of their life’ at university is strong and for many, hard to live up to. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy, which can make young people retreat further into their shells and ultimately become isolated.
- **Making friends** – many friendships are formed in the early days at university and for those that find the transition difficult they can end up feeling that they have ‘missed the boat.’
- **Accessing help** – Understanding who to ask for help can be daunting, as well as the fact that for many they will be needing to access things independently for the first time. For example, registering with a GP and asking ‘teachers’ for support may all be things that were previously done by parents and be overwhelming to a young person facing them by themselves. This can add to the anxiety and isolation, and delay support.
- **Feeling inadequate** – young people often compare themselves unfavourably to their peers, and those feelings can become overwhelming especially when away from usual support networks and with no one they trust to talk to. Young people at university can compare themselves both to their new peer group and also to friends from school/college who have gone to different universities, in particular via social media. This can make people feel ‘lost’ in between the two groups, who they perceive to both be ‘doing better’ and having more success than them. This can cause them to withdraw and become increasingly lonely and potentially unwell.

SOCIAL MEDIA & LONELINESS

Whilst social media in theory gives us more ways to connect with other people than ever, in some cases it can actually add to loneliness, particularly for young people.

- The increasing emphasis on comparisons with other people and their lives also contribute to loneliness, and feelings of isolation.
- The rise in social media contributes to this, especially for younger people, who can feel 'out of sync' with their peers, increasing anxiety and reducing their self esteem.
- For students or young people away from home, social media can act as a reminder of the things they miss, and make them feel that others are coping better with the transition making them feel lonelier still.
- Social media gives a 'filtered' version of life which is unrealistic and unsustainable for most people, which can lead to feelings of failure.
- An ever increasing number of ways of communicating can make people feel overwhelmed and anxious – as they are being 'bombarded' from all sides. This have the opposite effect of making people withdraw and communicate less, becoming isolated.
- Face to face contact is shown to be beneficial to mental wellbeing – for some people, social media can gradually take over from 'real life' contact, having a negative effect on mood and wellbeing in the long term.

**“SEEING OTHER PEOPLE
PROMOTE THEIR HAPPINESS
ON SOCIAL MEDIA MAKES ME
FEEL EVEN WORSE.”**

“GOING TO BED OR THINKING ABOUT WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING TENDS TO EMPHASISE THE LONELINESS.”

FURTHER BARRIERS

- Transport – A significant number of the people we work with at Solent Mind struggle to access transport due to anxiety, sensory issues and cost. This leads to people becoming very isolated within their own communities and increases loneliness, which then further impacts mental health.
- A further issue is that people who are isolated often do not access or even know about support opportunities.
- We need to consider how we promote and deliver services and opportunities in a range of ways so that they are accessible to a wide range of people;
 - For examples posters in community settings will not reach people who are not going out.
 - Referral from statutory services will not reach those people who struggle to engage with services or attend appointments
 - Location is important - many people who have become isolated will find accessing services in traditional mental health settings daunting and need something much more localised.

USING PEER SUPPORT TO TACKLE LONELINESS

- At Solent Mind, we believe that peer support is key to combating isolation, as it offers a very grass-roots approach to helping people reach out. We try to ensure that there is no 'wrong way' to access support so that it is accessible to all.
- We promote peer support not as a 'service', but as a relationship between people with a shared experience, based on understanding and empathy.
- We operate a number of peer-led initiatives to help combat loneliness and increase people's access to social opportunities to encourage them build relationships and connections.
- We develop peer support, such as our Side by Side programme, with a strong community development basis – holding groups in community venues, offering a range of access routes and promoting the opportunities in a wide range of ways. People with lived experience are involved in the planning and development of our work at all levels.

ACCESSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES

- **Group Peer Support** – A wide mixture of group activities, led by volunteers with lived experience, held in community venues such as cafes, community centres and shops across Southampton and the New Forest.
- **One to One Peer Support** – Regular peer support from one of our volunteers based on the needs and interests of the participant. Some examples have included supporting people to use public transport, go to shopping centres or just a chance to talk. This is a flexible, usually short term, approach to support people in building confidence which is usually used with people who have become very isolated and would be unlikely to access a group.
- **Social Opportunities** – Informal social meet ups in venues across the area, such as supper clubs, walks and football.
- **Online Support** – We promote Elefriends, Mind's online peer support community, which is accessible 24/7.

SUPPORTING OTHER ORGANISATIONS

- We work to support and train other organisations to develop peer-led, 'grass roots' support to ensure that as a wide a range of people as possible have access to social opportunities.
- We offer training and information to raise people's understanding of mental health issues, as we believe mental health is everyone's business, and by tackling the stigma within communities we reduce loneliness and isolation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- **SOLENT MIND** – www.solentmind.org.uk
- **NATIONAL MIND** – www.mind.org.uk
- **YOUNG MINDS** – www.youngminds.org.uk
- **STUDENT MINDS** – www.studentminds.org.uk



National Data

- Mental Health Foundation 2010 – ‘in general, the younger you are the more likely you are to feel lonely often (12%), and the more likely to have felt depressed because you felt lonely (53%)
- Aviva Health Check 2014 – ‘nearly half (48%) of 18-24 year olds say they often feel lonely compared to 25% of those aged over 65 and a UK average of 34%
- BBC Television Survey 2015 – three in ten of those aged 18-24 say they experience loneliness at least some of the time
- Opinium Survey 2015 – 83% of 18-34 year olds are ‘often, always or sometimes lonely’ compared to only 48% of over 55s

Get Connected Data

- 694 calls in one year where 'lonely', 'isolated' or 'alone' registered as key word
- 14% came from South East – highest outside London
- Major cause of loneliness is 'floating' or generalised anxiety – a sense that all is not quite right in their lives
- Possible to surmise that in case of 18-24 year olds this anxiety is linked to life transitions
- Coming in from the cold – ACEVO report into loneliness and young people in London has key data about cost implications relating to loneliness and health and social care, crime and unemployment

Youth Options Work with Children in Care and Care Leavers

- Young People have told us:
- Many of the people in their support network are employed to be there
- Find it hard to trust people therefore find it difficult to make friends
- Feel 'the odd one out' 'the person 'who's parents didn't want them' this leads to feelings of shame and loneliness
- Young parents that have had their child/children taken into care and those who have had no contact with family members are loneliest

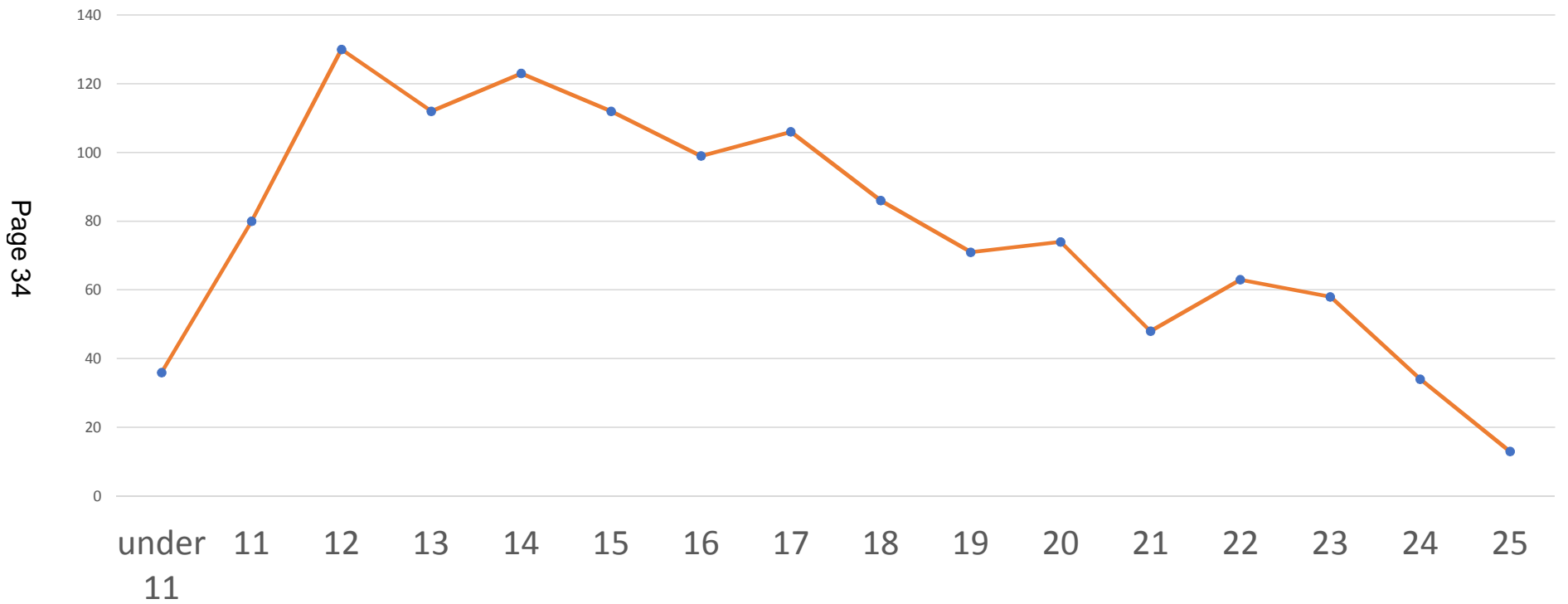
Feedback from young people

- 84% of young people on next steps strongly agreed that the project meant they had a better support network and felt less lonely
- For the question “This is what I like about Youth Options” young people from projects for children in care and care leavers (5 projects) included making new friends/socialising in their responses
- Young people from Next Steps comments about what they like about the project included “meeting new people” “Love that mums and babies get to meet and go out” “Helped me get out and make new friends”

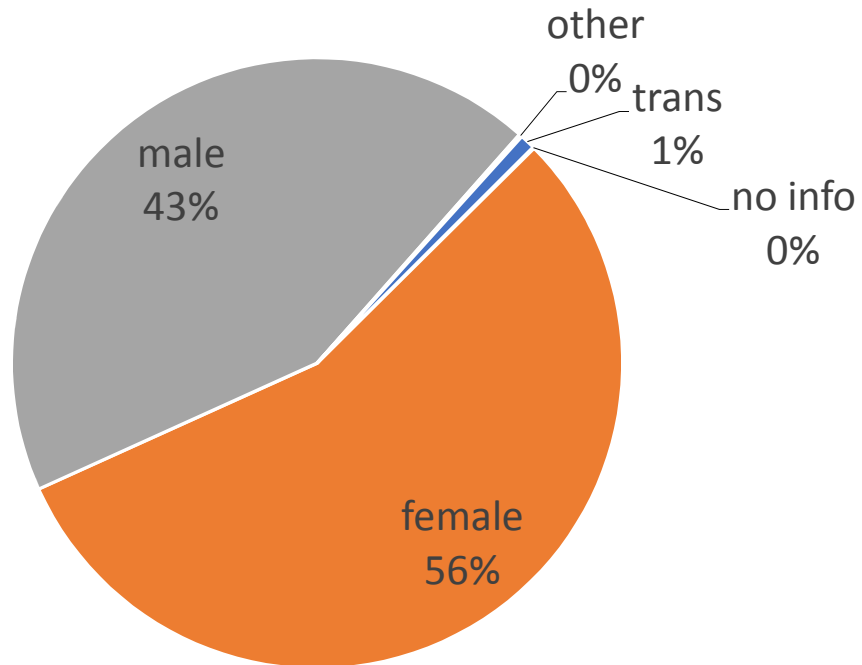
Support offered by No Limits

- In the year 2015-16 No Limits offered information and support to 5,865 Young people on 33,357 Occasions.
- Of these 1,245 (21%) Young people discussed feelings of loneliness or difficulty relating to others on 3,521 Occasions.

Breakdown by age of young people accessing support feeling lonely or having difficulty relating to others.

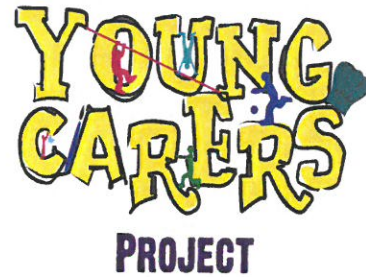


Young people reporting feeling lonely by gender



Some feedback from young people who attend groups at No Limits.

- I've been a part of safe house for two months, it's been really handy to have somewhere to go where I feel accepted. Being around other people who are in similar or different situations is really good . You get to talk things through, there is a mutual support between everyone.
- I find everyone at safe house really supportive and it's nice to have people to talk to who understand.
- I have been put on the peer mentor training and that involves meeting up with new group members and making sure they feel welcomed and fit in, I've also been helping them with their problems. I feel good for helping others and good about myself for helping others, which has helped me to be happier.
- Safe House taught me the meaning of friendship, it has literally saved my life.
- Being able to talk to other women has helped me feel normal. I've never had anywhere I can be myself before.



SOUTHAMPTON VOLUNTARY SERVICES YOUNG CARERS PROJECT

The Southampton Young Carers Project provides specialist support, respite and activities to children and young people who are caring for a family member in their home. Young Carers may support one or more family members with disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health problems; drug and alcohol problems. **They have no choice about their caring role**, unlike adult carers who can, and do, walk away..... Due to their caring role they may not be able to access the opportunities their peers can; they can suffer with issues around confidence and self esteem and their caring role may impact significantly on their school attendance and educational attainment and ability to sustain friendships.

CURRENT SITUATION

SYCP is currently supporting over 150** children and young people at any one time and supports over 200 young carers per year; of these:

- 68 young carers support someone with a mental health problem
- 43 young carers support someone with a Learning disability
- 92 young carers support someone with a Physical disability
- 4 young carers support someone with a drug/alcohol problem*

*Anecdotal evidence tells us that many more children are living in households where alcohol and drug use is a problem.

** Some of these young carers support someone with one or more of the stated issues.

- 59% are caring for a parent
- 29% are caring for a sibling
- 20% are caring for multiple family members

THE IMPACT

The impact on these children and young people's lives is profound. They become:

- Isolated
- Marginalised
- Lacking in confidence
- They have low self esteem
- They are unable to go out to play with their peers
- They are often in benefit dependent households with scarce resources
- They are often singled out by bullies as they don't 'fit in' at School – they are often regularly late for School or may appear tired, lack concentration, don't achieve in line with their peers.

THE YOUNG CARERS PROJECT PROVIDES:

- An opportunity to give back some of their childhood
- Support with discrimination and bullying due to their caring role within School – a high number of young carers identified that they are bullied for being 'different'.
- Regular in-school support to advocate for them and support their school attendance and attainment.
- Fortnightly evening group for all children aged 8 – 18 years to come and share their experiences, challenge themselves and achieve higher self esteem and confidence.
- Support to raise their aspirations in spite of their circumstances
- Activities are provided that they can enjoy together and reduce their isolation. Activities that they may not otherwise experience due to their caring role and lack of opportunity and financial resources.
- 1:1 support for children and young people who are finding their caring role particularly difficult – approximately 60 children and young people are being supported through 1:1 support, by a support worker, at any one time.
- Support from up to 20 volunteers and befrienders.

TO CONTACT THE YOUNG CARERS TEAM FOR REFERRAL /FURTHER INFORMATION:

TELEPHONE: 023 80 216032

EMAIL: yc@southamptonvs.org.uk

Dear Mark,

Unfortunately I am unable to attend this meeting this Thursday due to prior commitments. My comments on this issue for homeless people would be as follows:

Loneliness is inherent in the state of homelessness, usually the complex trauma experienced by people who find themselves sleeping on the streets or lodged in a hostel or other temporary accommodation has likely been extreme enough to divest them of any social capital they may have had.

Generally for people who become homeless, families are estranged, they find they have lost a peer group of friends, colleagues etc and a loose alliance with other homeless people may be formed but this camaraderie is ephemeral and based often on substance misuse or passing mutual need.

High rates of completed suicide amongst people who find themselves homeless owes a great deal to the social isolation they experience. This is mitigated to some degree by professional relationships with support workers, probation officers, street outreach etc, but these, however kind, can never replace the spontaneous relationships of family and friends.

I hope this proves helpful.

Best wishes

Pam

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