

Leicester City HWB Mental Health update – Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Introduction

The OPCC sits across the whole of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and seeks to ensure a consistent approach to policing and related activity across the force area. To this end we convene the Strategic Partnership Board (SPB) on a quarterly basis. The Strategic Partnership Board has an interest in mental health and is particularly keen to ensure join up across the system, especially those elements which do not ordinarily fall under the direct influence of Health and Wellbeing Boards.

The OPCC does not directly deliver services but does commission a number of services across LLR and this includes a number of services which support mental health.

Issues identified in relation to mental health and emotional resilience due to COVID-19?

Due to our role as commissioner, rather than provider, we have not directly identified any particular issues but have had reported back to us a number of issues. Leicestershire Cares undertook a survey with young people they work with, a summary of which is appended below as young people seem to be particularly effected by the restrictions.

It has also become clear through national data that domestic abuse is on the rise which has a huge impact on mental health though this is still yet to be coming through strongly in local figures. Available data is suggesting that lower level abuse is particularly on the rise.

Child Sexual Abuse is also expected to have risen over the lockdown period as children have become more vulnerable to online abuse.

What we are currently doing to address these issues and support the local community?

We have already done much to addresses this increase in need such as:

- Accessing emergency MoJ funding and using some of this to bolster online therapeutic support for domestic abuse and sexual violence victims as well as enabling face to face providers to prepare their premises for safe return to work.
- Submitting a bid to the Child Sexual Abuse Support Services Transformation Fund (to be submitted on Wednesday 12th August) to provide wrap around support for victims and their families including online counselling support
- Providing a £100k Covid-19 grant fund, which is partly being used to address mental health concerns, particularly amongst the elderly and young people
- Committed to extending the Suicide Bereavement Service contract for a further 12 months

Issues we foresee arising in the future in relation to mental health and emotional resilience

We expect that the mental health impact of Covid-19 is likely to grow the longer social distancing restrictions continue to be enforced. This increase in need is likely to come against a backdrop of restrained public funding and so responding to this increased need will not be an easy task.

Plans to tackle future increased demand

We are particularly keen to ensure a cohesive and joined up approach across LLR and are seeking to enable this through the Strategic Partnership Board. We expect that working in this way will best deliver value for money for the public purse. We will continue to invest in therapeutic support for victims and will seek to access further funding to benefit LLR in relation to mental health.

Appendix 1 – Summary of LEICESTERSHIRE CARES survey results

Participants of the survey

The survey consulted 28 young people, mostly 1 to 1 by phone and one small group discussion. The participants are felt to be vulnerable and include those at risk of homelessness, with experience of the care system, a history of offending, long term unemployment and a lack of support networks.

The breakdown of participants in terms of age, race or gender is not included in the report.

The young people were asked questions relating to their experience of lockdown, the main challenges for them and what support was missing. They were also asked what their concerns and challenges are post lockdown. In addition they were asked to identify what or who has been useful.

Common Concerns expressed by the participants

1. A high level of boredom and social isolation.
2. Lack of routine and struggling to find activities to occupy themselves.
3. Limited internet access to take advantage of on-line activities.
4. Increased anxiety – this was exacerbated in those who already had mental health issues.

Concerns for the future

1. Finding employment.
2. Buying food and essentials (particularly those with children).
3. Coming out of lockdown and travelling safely on public transport.
4. Coping with anxiety and depression and having less energy and motivation.

Positive aspects identified

1. There were opportunities and resources to develop new skills, including continuation of a project to find employment.
2. There was the opportunity to be creative (baking, drawing)
3. Time to reflect on what is important in life.

The young people requested more sessions on mental health, cooking, exercise and also informal opportunities to socialize.

Leicestershire Cares, report that they are using the findings of this rapid assessment to inform their planning and support through the remainder of the lockdown and beyond, They urge other organisations working with vulnerable young people to do the same, and ensure that their services adapt and respond to participant's needs throughout this unprecedented time.