

Mind Your Head



Study of Youth Mental Health in
Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan

Summary

What is The Mind Your Head Study?

The Youth Mental Health Initiative (YMHI) in Sligo / Leitrim / West Cavan, through Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB, asked a team of researchers from St. Angela's College to carry out the *Mind Your Head* study. The goal was to get the views of a wide range of individuals so that all young people can enjoy good mental health and wellbeing.

*Those who support
young people
want to do
things better*

Who Cares?

The following groups of people living in Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan came together to share their views;

- Young people aged 12-25 years
- Parents
- Teachers / Lecturers
- General Practitioners (GPs)
- Counsellors
- Youth Workers
- Family Support Workers
- Student Support Workers
- Mental Health Professionals

1,050 voices
heard
(1,050 people care)

The Results Tell Us.....

Feel Good Factors

1 Friendships

You play a crucial role in the mental wellbeing of your friends. The following ways show how you can influence your friend's wellbeing for better or worse.

"I didn't think you could get

depression *so young"*

(Parent)

<i>Helpful</i>	<i>Unhelpful</i>
<i>Listening</i>	<i>Not taking them seriously</i>
<i>Getting help for your friend when they need it</i>	<i>Breaking trust by spreading gossip / rumours</i>
<i>Giving advice</i>	<i>Excluding them from your group as a result of what they have told you</i>

2 Home Environment

The relationship you have with your parent(s) and family is crucial in supporting your mental wellbeing.

3 School / College Environment

The school / college environment is important. These things matter...

- The importance placed by your school / college on your wellbeing
- How willing staff are to get involved
- The resources a school / college has around mental health

4 Resilience

The most important thing to maintain your mental wellbeing is resilience. The quicker you can recover from difficulties or tough times, the better your mental health will be. Being resilient does not mean ignoring your emotions or feelings. It is okay to experience grief, sadness, disappointment or anger, so long as you can keep things in perspective and continue on with life with a sense of hope.

Resilience

is being able to recover quickly from difficulties

5 Talking

A number of you, when upset or worried, choose not to talk to someone, even though talking can help to build your resilience. This tells us that we need to support each other, in every way possible, to talk to one another more. You told us that when you turn to somebody for support, you ask if they are...

- Trustworthy?
- Non-judgemental?
- A good listener?
- Able to help / advise?

If you develop those qualities in yourself, you will improve the way you support others.

What Stresses You Out?

The feedback from young people and those that work with young people tell us that the following things cause you stress;

- **You**
 - ☹ Body issues
 - ☹ Lack of self-confidence
 - ☹ Body image
 - ☹ Lack of knowledge around mental wellbeing
 - ☹ Fear of being excluded from your group if you talk about your problems
- **Your Home**
 - Conflict with / between family members
- **Parent(s)** - lack of knowledge around mental wellbeing
- **School / college**
 - ☹ Homework / examinations
 - ☹ Transitions e.g. from Junior to Leaving Cert / on to college
 - ☹ Cost
 - ☹ Time management
 - ☹ Bullying (post-primary only)
- **Community / Society**
 - ☹ Social networking pressures
 - ☹ Misuse of drugs / alcohol
 - ☹ Broken relationships
- **Money worries**
- **Worries about the economy**
 - ☹ Unemployment
- **Living in remote areas** - more difficult to access supports.

“Positive self-love or self-acceptance is considered as one of the most important influences on mental wellbeing”

(Service Provider)

Did You Know?

1 Doctor

The results highlight that you recognised the GP (General Practitioner) as the main person to go to if you had issues with your mental wellbeing. Some of you even considered the GP as the only person you would go to.

2 Marginalised Groups

The results tell us that some groups of young people find it especially difficult to link with services and / or to tell others if they are experiencing any mental health issues. This includes young people who are;

- Travellers
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgendered (LGBT)
- From new communities (parent(s) / child from other countries)
- Young people with disabilities

This is because they may fear being discriminated against because of who they are, where they are from or by the fact that their mental health is not good.

*"It's **difficult for parents** to relieve our stress because they are very stressed themselves"*

(John, 19)

***You are not alone,** you are aware that other people are going through what you may be going through*

3 Parental Consent

The results inform us that those of you under the age of 18, who need parental consent to talk with a service, consider it an issue. However, those who provide the services, tell us that they still need parental consent for those under the age of 18.

4 Privacy

You reported a desire for services / supports which guaranteed privacy in your local areas.

5 Make Services Better Known

The results highlight that although many services / supports currently exist in the Sligo / Leitrim / West Cavan region, many of you don't know they exist.



What Does Good Mental Health Mean To You?

The bigger the word, the more often you said it....



What Does All This Mean?

Overall, the results highlight that many young people cope very well with everyday life and its normal stresses, although some are challenged.

A range of mental health needs were identified and people felt we need to improve how we do things.

*Both you and your
parent(s) **require**
more
knowledge on
mental health*

*Most of you have
good mental
health*

What Happens Next?

The study has told us what we need to know about young people's mental health and what supports are already there. We will now put together a plan to improve how we support the mental health and wellbeing of young people. Examples of things that could be in the plan are shown below.

<i>What needs to happen</i>	<i>How we can do this</i>
<i>Develop resilience in young people</i>	<i>Guide parents in developing resilience in their son / daughter</i>
<i>Increase opportunities to discuss young people's mental wellbeing</i>	<i>Create opportunities for those who work with young people to discuss mental health on a regular basis</i>
<i>Support GPs in caring for young people's mental wellbeing</i>	<i>Provide training for GPs</i>
<i>Promote services / supports to those who work with young people and young people themselves</i>	<i>Create an awareness campaign</i>
<i>Broaden the categorisation of vulnerable groups</i>	<i>Include young people under financial strain</i>

If You Need More Help with Your Mental Health, Contact Your GP

Samaritans (24 hour)	1850 609 090
Aware	1890 303 302
Childline	1800 666 666
North West Counselling	071 914 2161
Teen Line	1800 833 634
St. Michael's Family Life Centre, Sligo	071 917 0329
Family Life Centre, Carrick-on-Shannon	071 962 1791
Rape Crisis & Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre, (Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan)	1800 750 780
Domestic Violence Advocacy Services	071 9141515
Bodywhys	1890 200 444
MABS (Money, Advice & Budgeting Service)	Sligo 076 102 2730 Leitrim 076 107 2730

Reach Out (<http://ie.reachout.com>) provides information on stress, anxiety, bullying, suicide, depression, bipolar and other issues that can affect your mental health and wellbeing.

Alive 2 Thrive (www.alive2thrive.ie) promotes positive mental health in Sligo and Leitrim.

Spun Out (www.spunout.ie) provides young people with the information to deal with life's challenges.

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