Do You Need to Talk?
A Listening Service in High Schools

Setting up the project

Background
A local medical centre and an area locality health group were aware of a significant demand on GPs’ time by High School pupils. It was felt that many would benefit from being listened to by a skilled listener in the first instance. The schools also identified a need for listening within school to supplement what they could offer from the Pupil, Care, and Support staff. A pilot project involving two high schools, two GP practices and the Department of Spiritual Care was established.

Introduction
The aims were:
• to provide an early intervention and/or additional support for pupils.
• to offer the support within the school day
• to promote good mental wellbeing for young people and effective signposting if further support or referrals were needed.

Methodology
The Spiritual Care Department and the schools worked collaboratively to set up the project. This included weekly time slots, an easily accessible booking system and a dedicated room in both high schools. A member of the NHS Tayside Department of Spiritual Care provided the service using an assets-based listening approach. The referrals were given from staff, GPs and pupils. Clear processes were put in place for referrals and feedback to the school following the schools policies.

Listening Service

CREATES
SPACE
a safe place to talk

GIVES TIME
within the school day

EXPLORE
WHAT MATTERS
pupils speaking about their stuff

OFFERS STRATEGIES,
GIVING HOPE
Overcoming life’s challenges

TAKE THE NEXT
STEPS
putting insights into action

Project by Numbers

188 appointments
2-3 appointments per young person (average)
75 different young people seen over the last 10 months

Ratings and Reviews

PUPILS
I was listened to
4.8 out of 5
"Has shown me how to cope a bit more with myself"

What we did was important
4.7 out of 5
"Good talking to someone not involved"

I liked what we did
4.2 out of 5
"Made me more confident and happy"

I would use the service again
4.4 out of 5
"Made me realise that I can’t always solve everything at once just have to take each day as it comes"

"Helped me through a really hard time"

CAMHS & GPs
Reduction in Referrals
7 out of 7 GPs
3 a few less
3 significantly less
1 some

‘Listening service has had a very positive impact locally’ GP

‘This is the sort of social prescribing activity we should be encouraging from a young age to improve community resilience’ GP

‘As CAMHS becomes more pressured to only see young people with moderate to severe difficulties, services such as the listening service are very important.’ CAMHS

‘I think being located in school makes it an accessible service with potentially less stigma attached.’ CAMHS

‘It’s been a great resource’ GP

Conclusion

The ‘Do You Need to Talk?’ pilot project has illustrated the potential of this service. It has provided an early intervention service which promotes mental wellbeing amongst young people. This work enhances what is provided in the schools by staff and has been shown to reduce referrals and support GPs in a small locality. Whilst the results are positive, a larger study group would be required for a second stage. The next steps will be to share the learning from this with relevant partners within the Health and Social Care Partnerships and to explore the potential of this service further.