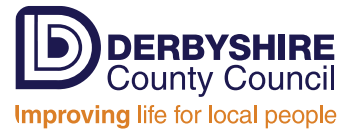


Delivering Derbyshire’s county-wide emotional surveys for young people



Background

Public Health within Derbyshire County Council (DCC) appointed The Training Effect (TTE) to devise, undertake and evaluate an emotional health and well-being survey, designed for Year 8 pupils in secondary schools across the county.

Information on emotional health and young peoples’ attitudes towards risk-taking behaviour in the county was inadequate. The only data available was anecdotal and focussed on hospital admissions or those who received support from specialist agencies, and studies showed that hospital figures only captured the ‘tip of the iceberg’.

DCC wanted to provide the young people of the county with cost-effective, successful interventions and ensure intervention happened as early as possible. The objective of the survey was to find out:

- What young people were concerned about
- Who they speak to when they’re worried about something
- What behaviours young people engaged to help them cope with concerns

“The majority of young people are happy with their lives but 15% report a low sense of happiness.”

TTE’s survey needed to give background information to cover the breadth of the county and paint a clear picture of what a large number of youngsters were concerned about and what activities they engage in. This was important in order to get accurate information on every youngster – not just those who were previously known to services.

DCC’s Public Health Manager, Claire Jones commissioned the survey and TTE worked with her and her team to deliver the project.

Solution

The project ran from April – September 2015. During this period, TTE developed an online, anonymous, age-appropriate survey for all Year 8 pupils in schools across Derbyshire, as well as a report for the council and each school summarising results.

Following completion of the survey, schools were presented with their students’ data, as well as comparable data from across the county so they could see where there were particular issues. This approach allowed each school to prioritise pupils with specific concerns who needed early intervention.

“This campaign was more than just a survey; it focused on social norms and understanding the full context of young people and risk-taking.”

The report for the council enabled baseline information to be collected, giving a clear picture of what young people are concerned about and the pressures they face. From the report, the council was able to identify any patterns or areas of concern within the county. The information allowed DCC to target preventative strategies and interventions more accurately, therefore achieving more cost-effective and positive results.



Outcome

Claire Jones DCC's Public Health Manager, said: "TTE's background was very strong and their case studies illustrated the wider package offered. There was a strong technical competency and we were very impressed with the staff who would be involved.

"TTE understood the theoretical models and why the survey was needed; we were particularly impressed with the social norms approach and the advice to schools as to how to present the data.

"The survey fitted into a clear understanding of young people, including the appeal and length of time it took to complete. TTE's solution delivered strong safeguarding practices, plans to address concerns raised by the questions underpinned by clear communication and project management."

The survey's key findings detailed:

- That 11% of young people surveyed may be experiencing or at risk of emotional health difficulties.
 - The majority of young people are happy with their lives but 15% report a low sense of happiness.
 - The majority of young people report feeling 'Happy' or 'OK' on most days but 9% report feeling sad.
 - The majority of young people in Derbyshire are happy with their local area, the things they have and their friends.
 - A minority of young people in year 8 are already engaging in experimental /recreational smoking (15%) and drinking (42%)
 - Parents continue to be a key area of support for young people, with 58% saying they talk to their parents about things that bother them.
 - 25% of young people are taking risks on the Internet and 11% report that they have been pressured into sharing something online.
 - Bullying is reported by 20% of young people with appearance being the most likely reason for bullying.
 - Feeling pressure to do certain things, to look certain ways or to act in a certain manner is a concern for many young people.
 - 76% of young people feel that they and their peers are accepting of the use of negative and sexist language.
- Following the initial survey work and evaluation, TTE presented further recommendations to DCC in order to gain further insight from the campaign. TTE advised:
- A further survey of the same group in the next academic year, to enable data comparison
 - Additional surveys of Year 8 students to enable year-on-year comparison of the data
 - The results of the initial survey indicated that 48% of young people reported having caring responsibilities at home – this is significantly higher than would be expected locally (given national estimates). TTE advised an investigation to look into whether these were issues related to the wording of the question, understanding of terms and then cross-referencing these with locally available figures for young carers.
 - Additional work should be undertaken with schools as 14% of young people reported they did not know if they had been a victim of bullying, and 20% reported they had been a victim of bullying.
 - Guidance should be given to schools to enable them to identify and support young people experiencing (or who are at risk of) emotional health concerns. This should be reviewed in conjunction with the Future in Mind Transformation plan.
 - The provision of evidence-based interventions to target and support young people at risk of emotional health concerns, increasing prevention and early intervention.

Mark Bowles, Managing Director of TTE and lead on the DCC project, said: “The project was a great success and we were able to engage with a high number of schools. The survey created a collection of data that can be used by individual schools to identify areas of concerns, as well as a main report for Derbyshire County Council outlining key findings.

“The data helped challenge the perception of young people, particularly the majority of young people who are not keen on taking part in risky behaviour. It has also highlighted and started discussions with other groups such as children’s services, safeguarding and substance misuse steering groups.”

Claire Jones concluded: “The experience of working with TTE has been great. The timescales were short on the project and they handled the deadlines very



well – they were always professional and kept in touch with regular updates.

“This campaign was more than just a survey; it focused on social norms and understanding the full context of young people and risk-taking. TTE went beyond what was requested, and we have decided to continue to survey Year 8s, with a year-on-year survey until they reach Year 11.”



Survey development

Since conducting the original one-off survey, TTE has been awarded the contract to deliver four-year surveys across Derbyshire.

The four-year project involves delivering a tracking survey which will follow the current Year 8 cohort until they reach Year 11.

Furthermore, TTE was commissioned to implement the same tracking survey for Derby City Council following a successful project which it managed for the Council in 2015.