



SOUTHEND YOUTH COUNCIL

**SOUTHEND YOUTH COUNCIL'S
SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH
SURVEY
RESULTS REPORT**

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Background

Mental health problems **affect about 1 in 10 children and young people.**

The need for better mental health provision in the UK is **essential due to the rising need.**

SYC conducted an a survey across the borough to gather the opinions of young people and **identify the issues they have with accessing support for their Mental Health.**

Out of the estimated 16,000 young people aged between 11-18, **we gathered 1757 responses.**

SYC believes the state of young people's Mental Health can be improved via **a series of small systematic changes in Southend's schools.** This report was created with the intention of **providing an insight into the problems that young people face and letting their voice and experience inform school policy.**

The overall goal is to **provide evidence for signing up to SYC's Mental Health Charter**

Survey participation

We had a good range of responses across year groups. However, to account for the Key Stage 3 years having a disproportionately large number of responses, the **responses were weighted by year group.**

Responses from **16 schools in the Southend borough** with the majority of responses being from one of the grammar schools (901) and one of the comprehensives (545). **This maintains diversity.**



Available Mental Health services

Across year groups, the **most** common form of Mental Health support available were **PSHE lessons** and the **least** common form available were **relaxation and wellbeing sessions**.

Although many schools do offer internal counselling, **it is not always known of, and not all students are willing to ask for more information about it.**

Relaxation and wellbeing sessions are very highly sought after by students.

Outside referral and an external school counselling service are also desired, **particularly in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.**

27.1% pupils said that they had accessed these services in the last 12 months: **over 1 in 4** of all survey participants.

A large percentage of all those students who access the counselling services in general find it useful.



The school environment

“Do you think that your school/organisation provides you with a SAFE place to share your issues and concerns around Mental Health and wellbeing?”

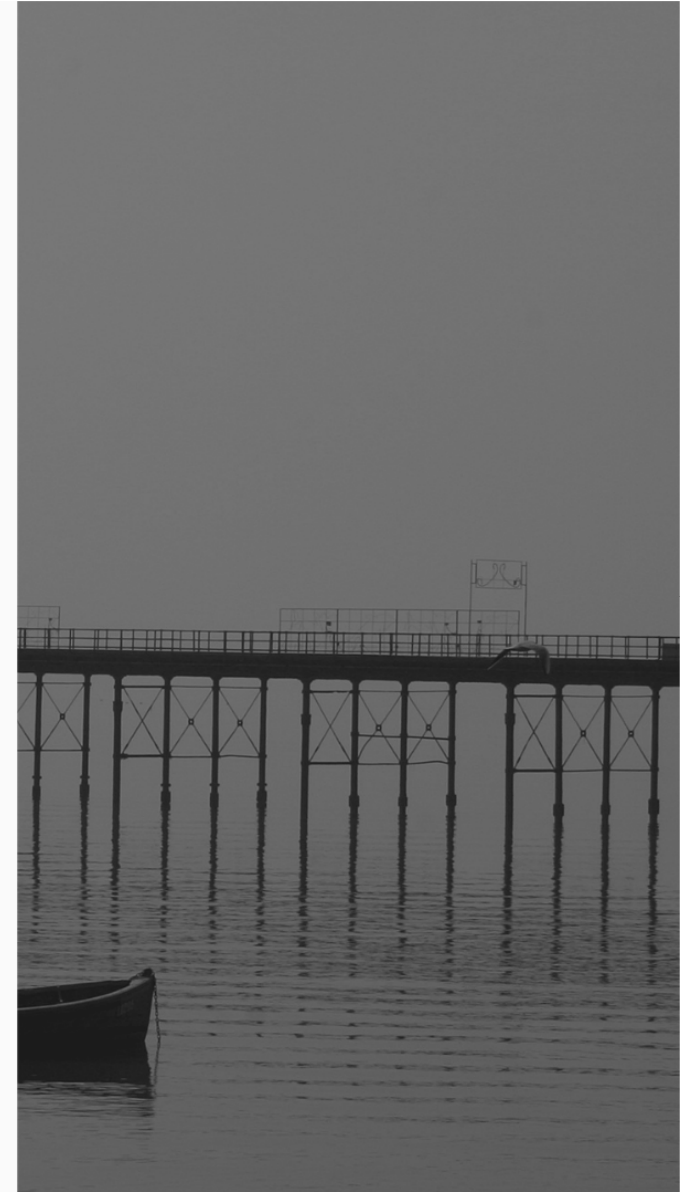
The answer to this question was overall a positive one. **1220 pupils** answered ‘yes’, which equated to over **82%** of the total replies.

Respondents feeling the school is not a ‘safe place’ or that there are barriers to support peaks through years 9, 10 and 11, whereas year 7s experience the least difficulty with Mental Health support. **This indicates that students could use more support during the GCSE exam years.**

Barriers to accessing support

“Are there any barriers to accessing wellbeing and Mental Health services provided by your school? If yes, why is this?”

14% of young people indicated that they felt there were barriers to accessing support. Some comments from those who answered “yes” regarded waiting lists for counsellors, lack of anonymity when asking for help and social stigma. Other general comments mentioned lack of knowledge and lack of courage.



Attitudes towards 'opening up' about experiences of stress and Mental Health issues

Who would tell their school, their peers/friends or their family if experiencing stress or a Mental Health issue

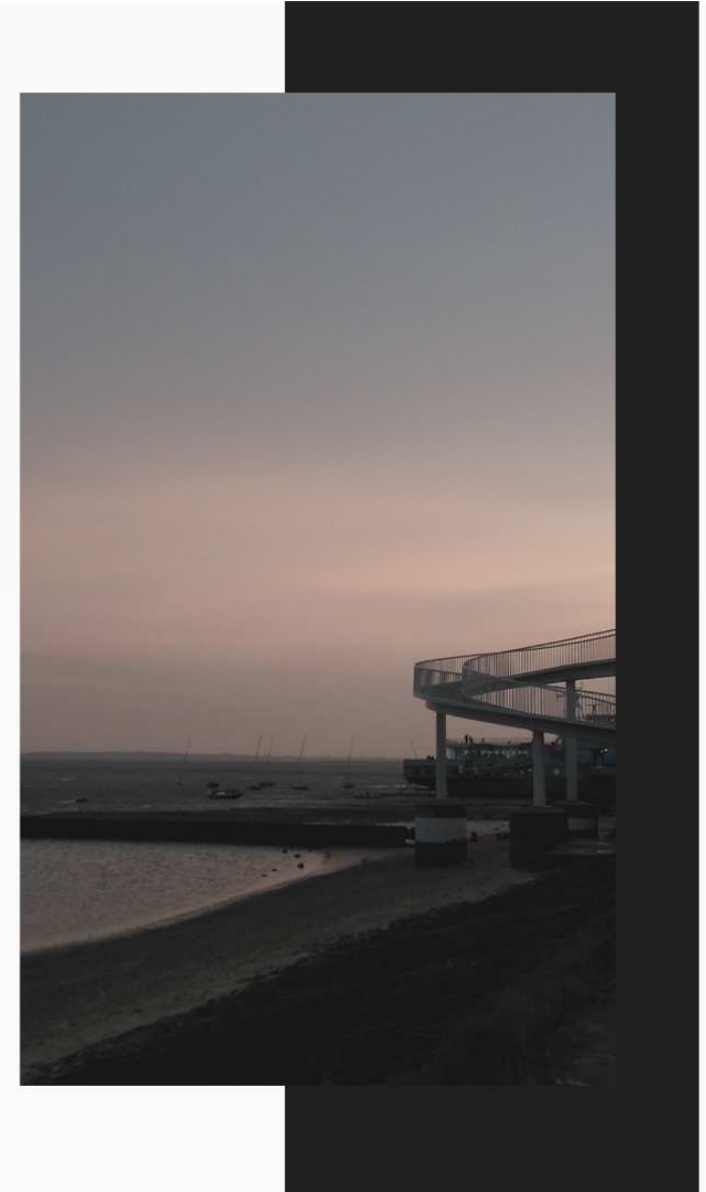
75% of students answered 'yes' regarding telling their peers, and over 90% said 'yes' regarding telling their family. This is a strong indication that the majority of students feel a sense of trust and confidence in those around them.

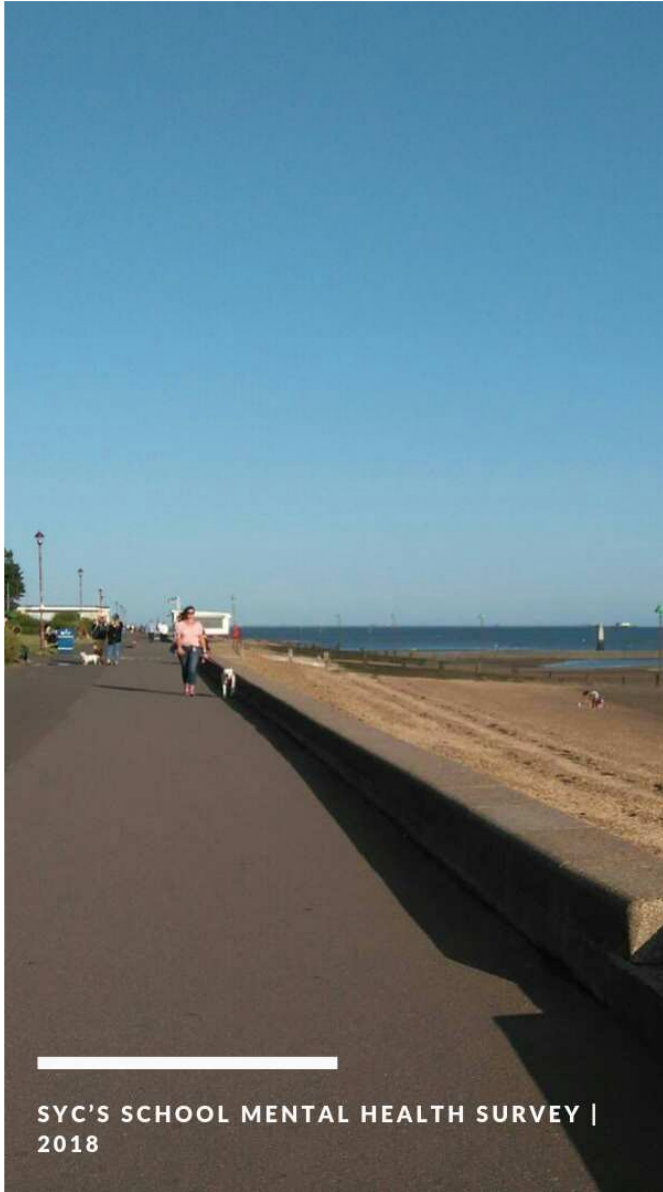
It is evident that bullying continues to be an issue, along with judgement by both students' peers/friends and their family; this is likely a symptom of a lack of education on Mental Health and stigma.

With family, some students feel that they can't talk about their own Mental Health problems due to fear of it adding to current stress and worry and a small portion of respondents indicated that their family is the cause of their Mental Health issues.

Some reasons for not opening up:

- Feeling embarrassed
- It may add to already stressful family situations
- Wouldn't want to "play the victim"
- Would not be believed
- Are scared of being talked about (by peers and staff)
- Would be seen as weak





Prevalence of Mental Health issues

Overall the largest Mental Health issue that people told us that they had experienced was anxiety and the second largest was depression. Prevalence of both anxiety and depression rise with the age of the respondents.

The results also show that over 1 in 5 pupils attending Southend schools suffer anxiety. This figure should also take into account that some answers may have been self diagnosed, as opposed to being professionally diagnosed.

Phobias also appear to be an issue, with a large number of the proportion having phobias being Key Stage 3 students.

This is evidence that there is a community within schools for those with experience of Mental Health issues, who are in need of support.

Cyberbullying

On the one hand, **83% of responses to the question asking if they had experiences cyberbullying were “no”**. This is relieving and suggests that current preventative measures against cyberbullying are effective.

Observations made by those who experienced cyberbullying:

- It worsened their wellbeing
- They were unable to focus on schoolwork
- It lessened their confidence in person
- They received verbal abuse

The charts imply that the majority of cyber bullying situations are perpetrated by people that respondents know in person.

In some isolated cases, there were references to racial abuse or suicidal thoughts occurring as a consequence of cyberbullying.

Concluding observations

Above all, it is clear and encouraging that **to pupils in Southend schools, Mental Health and wellbeing issues clearly matter and are valued significantly.**

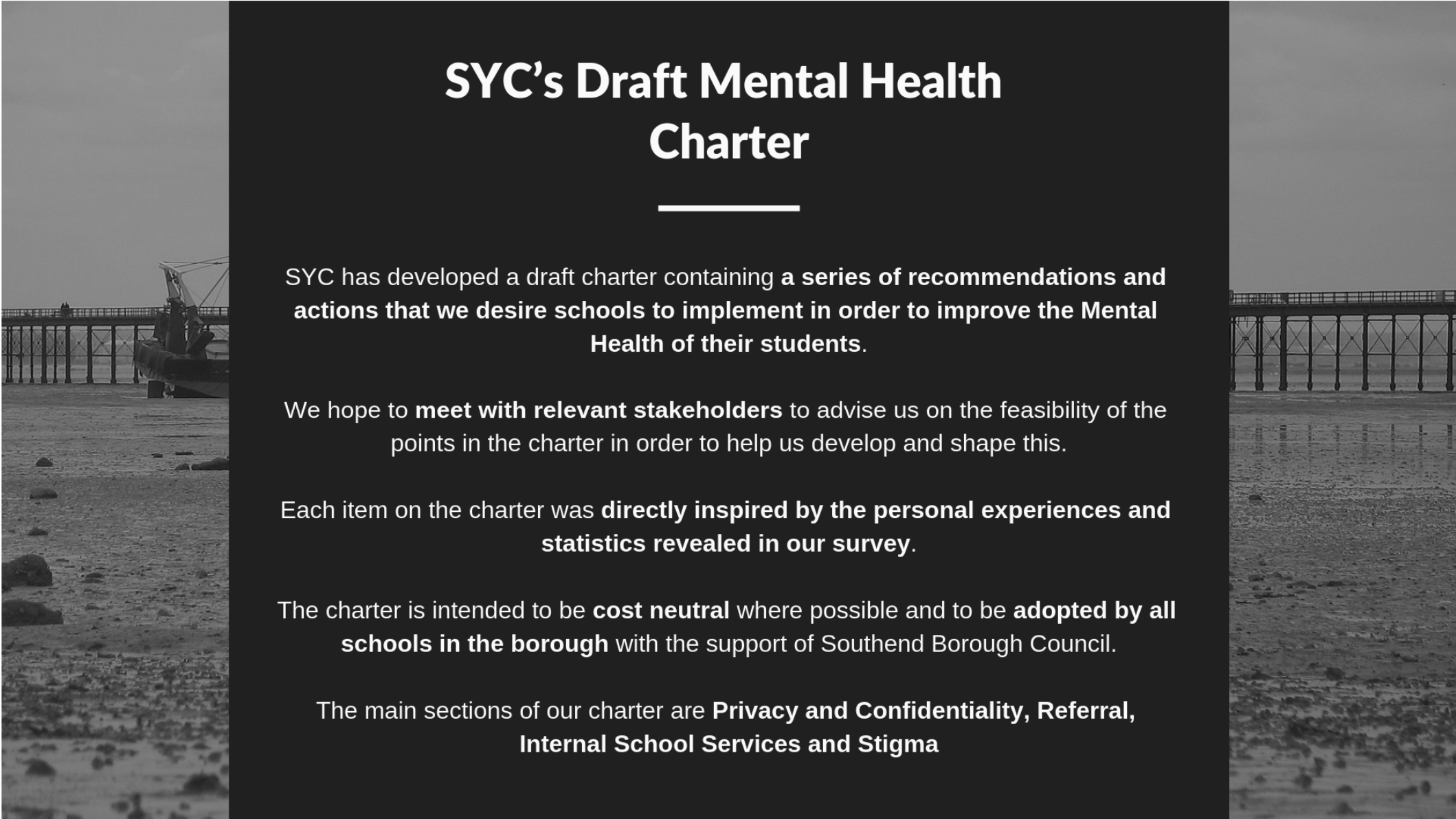
Students offered what they felt would improve the school community as a whole to help those “silently suffering”.

Some plans of action are:

- Removing the stigma within the school.
- Reduce the likelihood of potential teasing and bullying for those who want to access help.
- Provide better insight and information to students so that Mental Health and wellbeing is better respected.
- Provide spaces in the school where students feel safe and supported with their Mental Health.
- Making existing services more available to students, particularly amongst Key Stage 3 pupils.

Next steps

- Gaining opinions and advise on the feasibility of the charter
- Launching the charter officially as a revised version

A black and white photograph of a beach with a pier in the background. The pier extends from the right side of the frame towards the center. The beach is sandy with some rocks scattered about. The sky is overcast.

SYC's Draft Mental Health Charter

SYC has developed a draft charter containing **a series of recommendations and actions that we desire schools to implement in order to improve the Mental Health of their students.**

We hope to **meet with relevant stakeholders** to advise us on the feasibility of the points in the charter in order to help us develop and shape this.

Each item on the charter was **directly inspired by the personal experiences and statistics revealed in our survey.**

The charter is intended to be **cost neutral** where possible and to be **adopted by all schools in the borough** with the support of Southend Borough Council.

The main sections of our charter are **Privacy and Confidentiality, Referral, Internal School Services and Stigma**