



Report of the Day 2023

**Kent
County
Council**
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Medway
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Kent and Medway

The Big Mental Health Conversation 2023



More than 250 young people got together for this year's Big Mental Health Conversation on World Mental Health Day (10 October).

The free event gave 13 to 16-year-olds the chance to share their experiences of mental health support in Kent and Medway and learn new skills to boost their health and wellbeing.

The event was hosted by Kent County Council, iThrive & Participation Team in collaboration with NHS Kent and Medway.

Thank you to the following 28 schools for joining us on the day!

Charles Dickens

Duke of York Royal Military school

Ebbsfleet Academy

Forelands Fields

Grange Park

Hadlow Rural Community School

Harvey Grammar school

Hill View

Homewood

Knole Academy

Maplesden Noakes

NWK Alternative Provision

Oakwood Park Grammar School

Portal House

Queen Elizabeth's Grammar

Rochester Independent

Rosewood School

Rowans AP

Sir Roger Manwood's

Spires Academy

St John Fisher

St Johns Comprehensive

The Howard School

The Hundred of Hoo School

Tunbridge Wells Grammar for Boys

Waterfront UTC

Will Adams Academy

Valence School



The event featured a broad mix of attending schools and our interactive marketplace was supported by 29 organisations.



Thank you to the following organisations for joining us on the day!

- NHS Kent and Medway - ICB
- Active Kent and Medway
- Canterbury Christ Church University
- Ellie's Angels
- Emerge Advocacy
- Family Action
- Imago
- Involve Kent
- KCHFT
- Kent Country Parks
- Kent Cricket
- Kent Youth County Council - KYCC
- Kooth
- KCC - Sibling Support Project
- KCC SEND Information Hub
- KCC Early Help
- Medway Parents and Carers Forum
- Kent & Medway VRU
- Medway Council - Youth Service
- Metro Charity
- Mid Kent Mind
- NELFT
- North Kent Mind
- Oasis Domestic Abuse Charity
- Open Road
- Pets as Therapy
- Place 2 Be
- Porchlight - Be You
- Salus
- TONIC
- We Are With You - MAB

Thank you to the following organisations for providing workshops and CPD sessions on the day!

KCC – iThrive & Participation team
KYCC Young Leaders and volunteers
Kent Cricket
Family Action
KCHFT
Kent Country Parks
Lower Bush Alpacas
NELFT
North Kent Mind
Porchlight - Be You
KCC Early Help
Pets as Therapy dogs
KCC - Autism Education Trust Trainers



This year we provided eleven different workshops with young people able to choose two to attend.



Workshops included discussion and tabletop activities on a range of subjects.



Partners from across the county joined us on the day. Outdoor activities included dog walks, bug hunting, mindfulness and sports.

A special mention for Kent Cricket, who stepped in to deliver sessions all day.



The Pets as Therapy dogs were really popular with young people and offered unlimited affection, support and comfort throughout the day.





Hadyn, KYCC member and Young Volunteer, opened the event alongside Harrison, setting the scene for the rest of the day.



Liv, KYCC
Chair, did a
brilliant job of
opening the
first activity and
presenting to
the audience on
the topic of the
Mental Health
Continuum.



Harrison, KYCC
Young
Leader, engaging
young people in
discussions about
mental health.
Harrison was also
part of the social
media team on
the day.



Zak, a member of KYCC and Young Autistic Experts, staffing the market stall, alongside Melissa Devine from KCC.

Zak also co-delivered a CPD session on Autism and Anxiety in the afternoon.



Izak, one of our
KYCC Young
Leaders, delivering
CPD training
alongside
colleagues from
NELFT.



Joshen, one of our KYCC young volunteers, co-delivering the iTHRIVE workshop to young delegates from across Kent and Medway.



Quotes
from our
Young
Leaders and
Volunteers

'Thank you so much for this amazing opportunity. It was a true honour and such an amazing experience that I will remember! Thank you so much as well for the support and help!'

'I was really able to get a sense of every workshop, and it was clear to me that the young people were really enjoying themselves. It was an excellent event that I'm glad I was able to capture.'

Our fully accessible safe space featured mood lighting, comfy rugs and blankets and a selection of fidget toys, books and games.

The space was staffed by one of our participation team throughout the day.



Quotes from SEN School

'Our students find large crowds and accessibility challenging at these events, but we were all really impressed at how accessible it was.'

The students commented that despite feeling overwhelmed at times, they felt it had built confidence.

There was some good feedback from the sessions and students particularly enjoyed the more practical activities.

We look forward to joining you again next year'.

Quotes from Schools

'The enthusiasm of those who hosted and the way they interacted with the students and young people attending. They were exceptionally friendly and enthusiastic, and this helped our students reduce their anxiety and engage in activities set'.

'The workshops and marketplace, I learnt a lot in a short space of time'.

'It was a very enjoyable and informative day'.



Quotes from young people

'This event was the first time I have spoken about my mental health to anyone.'

'I didn't know all of these services in the marketplace existed.'

'I learnt how emotions work.'

'The big mental health conversation was engaging and enthusiastic.'

'I now know where to get help.'

'Feels good to be creative and making the (Pride) flags means something.'

'At school I fidget with anything I can get my hands on, but here I could use specific things.'

'I want to learn how to go to sleep easier.'



More quotes from young people

'Instead of just listening, we did activities'.

'The day has made me learn a lot of new things that are good'.

'Made new mates'.

'I felt like I wasn't judged and they were accepting and the staff were kind'.

'The tea and coffee station = independence'.

'The dog walk, peaceful and allowed pupils to talk to each other'.

'How nice the people are, like really nice'.

'I had a fun day. It was nice to get out of school and breathe, it was relaxing'.



Even more quotes from young people!

'I really enjoyed the sultanas mindfulness and feeding the alpacas'.

'I didn't know all these apps existed'.

'I didn't hear any of this until I thought about it (Mind Magic activity about things you can see, hear, feel ,smell, taste)'.

'Found it useful, liked the activities'.

'If you go to CAMHS, they do things like anxiety and depression'.

'I've got ADHD and I should have medication but I don't want it'.

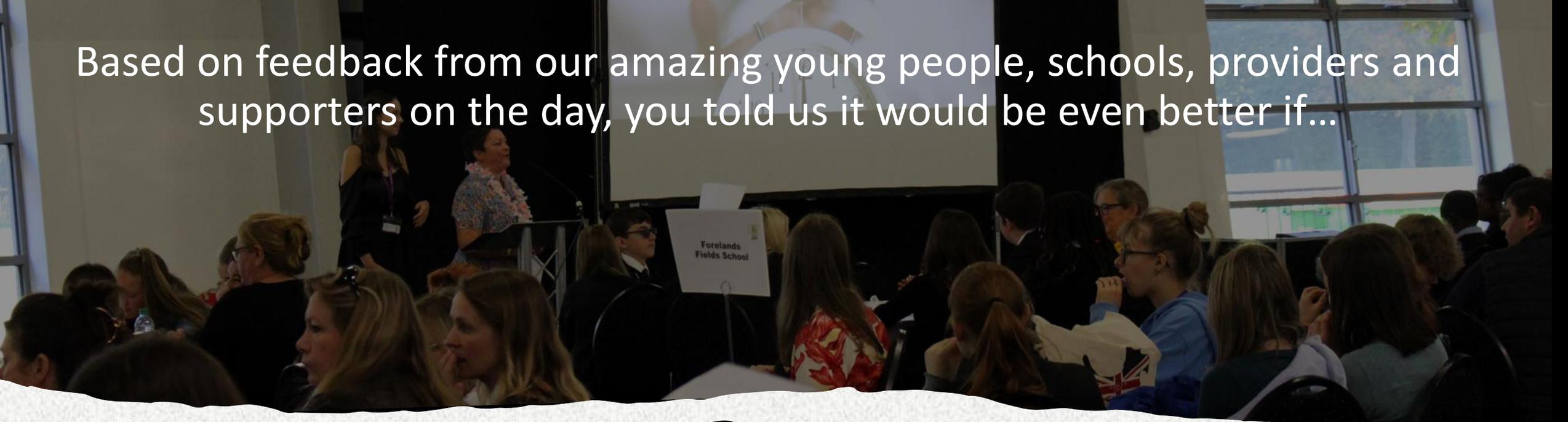
'If my little brother won't go into school, I won't. He needs support'.



Quotes from Providers

- 'We all really enjoyed the conference, it was so good to spend time with young people and the whole day was really well organised'*
- 'I enjoyed the opportunity to engage with other services and young people that may not be aware of ours. it was great to network'*
- 'The marketplace was fantastic, engaging and full of passionate people. The general organisation was excellent and was a real show of collaboration and CYP led planning'*
- 'The workshops were what the young people I spoke with liked the most. They particularly liked the sensory workshop.'*
- 'As a Mental Health practitioner, I found networking and learning about the different support services very enjoyable and useful.'*

Based on feedback from our amazing young people, schools, providers and supporters on the day, you told us it would be even better if...



- We provide opportunities for young people to design, deliver and evaluate the event
- Clear, coproduced information about workshops and CPD is made available before the event
- An even better venue with separate break out spaces can be sourced
- Young people have more space and time to access the marketplace
- There are more opportunities for young people to attend workshops with their friends
- We offer additional workshops and even more animals!