

PRESENTATIONS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

Meeting of the APPG for Young People's Health House of Lords, 8th May 2018

Demi

Thank you for listening to me today. My name is Demi and I am 13 years old

Mental health and wellbeing has a huge stigma attached to it which we need to understand to enable change i.e. Someone who has a Mental Health issue = someone's Mental or a Psycho. If someone is talking about health & wellbeing they're a hippie. I honestly think a CAMHS or mental health appointment should be viewed in the same way we view a dentist or Opticians appointment.

Primary school are days with high expectations and a lot of pressure i.e. SATs, getting into that school you want and nerves of starting secondary school which I'm sure you'll agree any one of the above could be overwhelming, let alone combined.

Secondary school is a power struggle with parents and schools breaking rules and fitting in, along with stress of exams and extra curricular activities.

Pre teens and teenagers want to feel part of something and belong somewhere in society and can make poor choices and become vulnerable in order to fit in.

My story is a little different to the above and my mum has always told me not to complain unless I'm willing to fix it.

Here it goes:

When I was ten years old I was referred to my local CAMHS as I had become quiet and a little withdrawn at school. I had very little in common with my peers who played in the street till late at night and went to town without an adult. At my CAMHS appointment they noted I needed some intervention but 2 weeks later informed us that they could no longer offer any support as they were over stretched and the person I should have seen no longer had a position there. Fast forward 9 months later.

September 16

I became Independent! Yay 4 me. I started secondary school I attended my new secondary school for just 5 days before becoming really sick and spending months in Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH), where I was diagnosed with a number of life long conditions, had biopsies on my face and was diagnosed with facial palsy & Mixed connective tissue disease and given medication that has horrendous side effects i.e. Steroids - put weight on and changes your moods.

Along with other medication that has been linked to cancer and loss of hair this made me very self conscious.

Great Ormond St CAMHS team saw me and wrote to my local CAMHS team acknowledging previous history and informing them of the life changing events that were going on for me and asking them to take

me on. They declined and advised their tier 3 funding wasn't available for me as they only had that for 14 year olds and GOSH should take me back. GOSH refused and re referred me. I again got declined.

After a team around the family meeting and more referrals to CAMHS they refused me again. My mum at this point knew I needed more help than she could give and contacted an outside agent who diagnosed me with having low self esteem, attachment issues and anxiety.

She also re referred me as I needed a little more than she could help with.

In April 18 I was advised I had made the list for CBT but there was a waiting list of at least 6 months.

If you have a leak would you fix it as soon as possible in order to stop further damage and a larger bill at the end of it? Yes, so why wouldn't you do the same with mental health.

So realistically I wouldn't be seen till at least spring 2019. Unfortunately my story isn't unique, there are lots of kids in the same boat as me. So I think that maybe you could look at:

- group sessions
- people to call or message when you're struggling
- outside agencies to bridge the gap i.e. Place2be or similar
- do youth groups about it
- go and inform youth groups about mental health and the importance of it
- young people's forums

The young people's forum @GOSH is a really cool place to go because you get to know people who are the same as you and you make a positive impact for people in the hospital which also makes you feel good, because we have a chance to speak up about things and are valued and listened too it is a really cool opportunity. I think it would be nice to do something similar for mental health.

Thank you for listening.