

Healthwatch Newcastle and Healthwatch Gateshead 'Eight Ways to Make a Difference' Report

– XenZone Response



Introduction

Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle have published an 'Eight Ways to Make a Difference' report which looks at the implementation Kooth as a part of Children and Young People services across Newcastle and Gateshead.

Kooth is a web based confidential support service available to young people aged 11-18 years and up to 25 for care leavers. Kooth provides a safe and secure means of accessing mental health and wellbeing support designed specifically for young people.

Following on from the report Xenzone, the company who manages and operates the service Kooth would like to give some information about the response to the report, highlighting our learning and approach moving forwards to promote Kooth across both Newcastle and Gateshead.

Kooth in Newcastle and Gateshead

Kooth has been operating in Newcastle and Gateshead since 2018 and has been welcomed by schools and other services as an early intervention pathway. During this time since being established we have delivered year group presentations to many secondary schools and have delivered some specific group work around preparations for exams and anxiety and stress.

To ensure that all young people receive the same consistent message of how Kooth can support them a generic presentation is used by Kooth's Integration and Participation workers, highlighting that the service is not just about receiving 1-2-1 counselling support highlighting the peer to peer support and self-help resources. Young people if preferred to can schedule a date and time to speak to a counsellor or can send the Kooth team a private message.

Throughout April 2019 to March 2020 over 2,500 young people across Newcastle and Gateshead registered to Kooth with 90% of young people giving feedback that they would recommend this service to a friend. Most young people heard about the service from school, which reflects the main role of our Integration and Participation workers.

Whilst Kooth reaches out to large groups of young people at any one time, many may only feel that Kooth is relevant for them at the time and with having this knowledge the Integration and Participation workers will attempt to build a relationship with the schools and other services so that they can regularly visit and present directly to young people.

Concerns raised within the report

The report highlighted some concerns from the surveyed people. Below are some responses from Kooth to these concerns.

- **Inappropriate sharing of information online by children and young people**

Kooth response: Everything on the site is post and fully moderated. This includes the registration process creating a username, ensuring that no young person identifies themselves by using first or last names, gaming names or numbers which could identify them in any way to others using Kooth.

Users are asked to provide their age so that they view age appropriate content. If they wish to write articles or make comments on other articles and discussion boards this again is all moderated before displaying live on the site. Anything deemed not appropriate or risks identifying a young person is not permitted.

- Effectiveness of the service without seeing the young person, especially if they have high needs and require more intensive support

Kooth is recommended as an early intervention/step down service for young people although we do have young people at crisis point seeking support. The service provides full details of all crisis services on the site but also through the counsellors,

All young people who would like to chat online with a counsellor agrees to a safeguarding statement as well as completing an initial assessment, giving the counsellor an insight into how that young person may be feeling prior to coming into the online session.

The counsellor has all information which will allow a young person, if they are in agreement to be referred or signposted to an appropriate local service.

- Service not widely known

Kooth is promoted by Integration and participation workers. As a service our main audience is young people. Most respondents in this survey was adults so this is perhaps why this was highlighted as a concern. We appreciate that more can be done to promote the service and whilst we do introductions of Kooth to professionals we will look to promote wider to parents in the future.

When approaching the schools Kooth does offer a parent letter which schools can send out via a newsletter to make them aware young people in their household may be accessing the service and gives information about what Kooth offers. If parents have any further concern they can contact the Kooth team about any issues via parents@xenzone.com

- Accessibility of the site for people who struggle to read

Kooth recognises that it does not have the ability to reach out to all young people due to some additional support young people may require. This is something which Kooth are looking to develop to ensure that not only young people who need support to read can access the service but also looking into accessibility for young people who may have physical impairments. Kooth advises that if young people do require support to access the service that they ask an adult or support worker who they trust.

If anyone does have any safeguarding issues they can email safeguarding@xenzone.com

Learning from the report

Kooth is committed to improving the users experience and supporting young people to sign up to the service as and when they need it. Upon receiving this report, it is evident from the small number of people who completed the consultation process that further work is required from Kooth and its Integration and Participation workers to ensure increased awareness and better working relationships with partners and stakeholders.

Reaching out to parents:

Kooth are equipped to liaise with parents. The website provides a section for parents and an email (parents@xenzone.com) should they have any queries. Whilst the service does not actively promote to parents, a standard parents letter is provided to schools if they feel appropriate to send out via their school newsletter or separately with their pupils.

We will make more information available for parents to understand the service in more detail, for example, how Kooth can support their young person by attending parents' evenings if requested and holding virtual presentations for parents on an evening where they can actively engage and ask questions they may have.

Closer working relationships:

Kooth will contact and establish a better relationship with the Single Point Access Service (SPA). Integration and Participation workers will attend meetings where relevant to ensure that we are aware of what is happening around other services and vice versa.

Raised awareness in areas:

Respondents to the survey highlighted that further work was required to raise awareness across Gateshead. This is something Kooth was already aware of and Integration and Participation workers are going to build on relationships within schools and with stakeholders. We will be attending more relevant forums across both areas, to present to stakeholders and young people.

Social Media Promotion:

Kooth does use social media such as Instagram to target young people and we are aware of the advantages to using other forms of social media. Whilst there are many positives part of the Kooth service is allowing young people to remain anonymous where possible. Some forms of social media may expose young people's identity but Kooth will be looking at other safe means to promote via this channel.

If anyone would like further information about Kooth please email contact@xenzone.com