Happy New Year!

YOUNG PEOPLE’S NETWORK BULLETIN

Issue 1: January 2019
Welcome to the first ever McPin Young People’s bulletin! Here, you’ll find out what’s happening in the world of children and young people’s mental health—especially at McPin. As well as this, you can find out about some of the ways in which you can be directly involved in mental health research. We’ll be releasing these every four months. I hope that you find it interesting :) 

Best Wishes,

Rachel

Young People’s Involvement Coordinator at the McPin Foundation, racheltemple@mcpin.org

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What have we been up to?

Launching the Top Ten Questions about Young People

On Tuesday 27\textsuperscript{th} November 2018, we announced \textbf{YOUR top ten unanswered questions} about children and young people’s mental health! We reached these final ten questions from a list of over 3500 original questions submitted by young people, parents, teachers and mental health professionals. Our Young People’s Advisory Group (YPAG), along with members of our wider network, came along to our Launch at the Houses of Parliament and spoke about each of the top ten. See our YPAG member Syinat’s summary of the event below:

**Being a member of the Young Person’s Advisory Group opened my eyes to how important it is for people to give their perspectives on research that concerns them, says Syinat Tageava.**

November 27\textsuperscript{th} marked the launch of the Top 10 priorities for young people’s mental health research at the Houses of Parliament. This was an exciting moment as it was the culmination of two years’ of work and the moment the list of priorities was revealed to the public. The list is invaluable. It allows funders and researchers to see which questions need to be answered, now. It assures them that these questions are important to hundreds of people.

Charles Walker MP hosted the event, adding insight and humour. After his introduction, the Top Ten questions were presented. Each was read out by a different young person, who also provided some background on the issue and their personal opinion on why it needs to be answered.

Researchers, funders, clinicians, teachers...everybody was in the audience. This meant that after the presentation of the questions, we had a lively discussion. A head teacher and a school counsellor raised the topic of whether it is a teacher’s role to identify mental health problems in their students. Representatives from various funders talked about what effective research into the questions could
by the questions, while we wait for research into a long-term solution. It was great to see so many views, sometimes different, discussed in one room.

On a personal level, the project has allowed me to enter the world of research. I hope that more young people can take part in research, especially research that concerns us. We can provide a fresh outlook. This is especially important for research concerning aspects of mental health, since more and more young people have first-hand experiences of this. We shouldn’t just assume that researchers know what is best for our mental health.

All that is left now is for the questions to be researched – no small task. But it seems that people are eager to get going. At the event, some people mentioned that they already had their eye on a certain question! I can’t wait to see what fruits research into these questions will bear.

**For the Top Ten Questions, and for more info on this project, [click here](#)**.

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**Growing our Young People's Advisory Group**

At McPin, we’re on a mission to build on the work that we do with young people. In December, we recruited some new YPAG members. They’ll be helping us to shape future mental health research projects to ensure that they’re relevant, effective and appropriate for young people’s needs. We’ll be having our first meeting of the year in early February!

With our YPAG at the forefront, we aim to accelerate the Right People, Right Questions journey. We’ll be developing a FAQ guide with the questions that were already answered by research, so that people who wanted those answers can access them easily. We’ll also be interested in getting involved in any projects that look to focus on the top ten that were released.

As well as our YPAG, we are planning to extend our Young People’s work even further. Please take a look at the ‘Get Involved’ section for more information! Click on the social media icons below to follow our work with Young People.
Mental Health and Young People in the News

Children and Young People’s Mental Health dominated the news in 2018. Here are some of the highlights. You can find more updates on our Twitter and Facebook pages.

The Scale of the Problem

Reports have shown that every 1 in 4 young women are struggling with their mental health. Click here to read the BBC story.

Services not solving the Problem

Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) not ‘fit for purpose’. BBC Panorama’s documentary highlighted that children need to be considerably severe in order to even be seen by CAMHS. Watch it by clicking here, or read more about it by clicking here.

A Source of Hope through Storytelling

Could story books help with the mental health crisis in children and young people? Books exploring negative feelings and how to manage them like Matt Haig’s ‘Truth Pixie’ could help children to understand their mental health. Click here to read the article.

Action-Taking:

Back in October 2018, the government announced big plans to confront the mental health crisis by increasing mental health support in schools. This includes introducing ‘wellbeing checks’ on pupils. Click here to read more.
Here’s your chance to have your voice heard. We’re looking for young people aged 13-24 to write about a mental health topic of their choice. It can be related to personal experiences if you like. We’ll offer you a £20.00 Amazon voucher as a thank you!

What we’re after:

- An article between 600-1000 words about a mental health topic related to children and young people
- The article should mention mental health research, e.g. would you like to see more research done in this area? Is there some research that’s been in the news related to this area?
- Article must be suitable and appropriate for a young audience

Interested? Contact Rachel: racheltemple@mcpin.org
In September of this year, I began my final year of university. It was an exciting time, but also pretty daunting because I had a lot of decisions to make about my future. Although I experience anxiety from time to time, I thought I could handle the stress of uni. After all, I had coped with stressful situations many times before!

In the few weeks before term started, I began to notice I was struggling to catch my breath. Where would I be living? What job would I have? Would anyone employ me? My plan had been to move to London, where my boyfriend was living and working, so we could be closer to each other. However, then a scary thought really started to worry me. I thought to myself –“Do I even love my boyfriend enough to move to London?”.

Immediately, that thought triggered intense fear and panic. And more thoughts. I had never doubted us before - did this flood of thoughts mean I did not love him? Did I need to break up with him? Why was I feeling this way? Where did it come from? Did I fall out of love? Do I not feel the same? Why don’t I feel the same anymore?

Without realising it, I had begun to spiral into an endless cycle of what is known as intrusive thoughts and rumination, which was leading to more doubts about my “true” feelings. I felt, in the moment of panic and fear that I would have to end my relationship. My loving, amazing, healthy relationship that was of no threat or danger to me. I felt sick, I could not eat, and I cried uncontrollably. The more I tried to push the thoughts away, the more I would think of them. I honestly felt that I would never stop obsessing over whether or not I loved my boyfriend.

Thankfully, after three weeks of unremitting rumination and looking for constant reassurance that my relationship was okay, I came across a term called Relationship Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (ROCD). It sounded just like what I was experiencing! The relief I felt at finding something I could relate to was immense.
At the time, I thought Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) was a condition characterised by behaviours such as repeatedly needing to check the door is locked or an urge to wash one’s hands. However, ROCD is a common “theme” of OCD. It can be defined as the fear or uncertainty that you may not love your partner, or your partner no longer loves you. Often, this is not the case, but your brain becomes addicted to the uncertainty and it leads to a series of compulsions and further anxiety.

Although there is information online and some helpful Facebook forums, there is not enough research on ROCD. Considering relationships are a huge part of our lives, there needs to be more awareness around this condition to help people recognise the signs and equip professionals so that they can offer appropriate support. A major difficulty I had was accepting that it was ROCD I was suffering from, rather than having “fallen out of love”.

I found a counsellor who had heard of ROCD. Sadly, through online support groups, I found out that many others who seek professional help are often made to feel that their thoughts are true: that they need to end their relationship. In reality, it could just be the compulsions and intrusive thoughts leading them to feel this way, rather than any underlying relationship problems. This is why more research needs to shed light on what is really going on for people.

I have heard of some therapists offering to find the root cause of the doubts – to get to the bottom of what is wrong with the relationship, which only exacerbates the obsessions even further. Those with ROCD need support with reducing their compulsions, not worsening them! This is why, when the research is being done, it is so important to involve those who have previously experienced ROCD. It is difficult for someone who has never experienced it to truly understand the triggers and thought processes.

Right now, I am still working through my ROCD. I take anti-anxiety medication and I see a counsellor weekly. There are still moments when I have intrusive thoughts. But I have learned that love is a choice, and that feelings will always ebb and flow, so obsessively checking whether I love my partner or not is not the way forward. For me, there is no such thing as ‘The One’. Instead, I’ve learned that I can choose who I love. Most of all, I have learned that anxiety is powerful, but so am I.

If you have been affected by this article, or feel you would like to learn more, please see the links below for further advice and info:

ROCD.net  OCD Action  OCD LA

Note: Online private support groups can also be found via Facebook
Get Involved!

Young people’s involvement in mental health research is so important, especially if we want research to be good quality and focusing on what matters the most. Here, we’ll share the latest opportunities to get involved in mental health research.

We would like a new logo to represent our Young People’s Network at McPin!

Send your designs to us and our YPAG will choose their favourite. The winner will receive a £10 Amazon voucher as a thank you! You can draw something and send a photo to us online, or you can mail it to: RachelTemple@mcpin.org by Monday 4th February 2019.

Help Expand Our Network

Are you a member of our Young People’s Network? If so, we’d like to get to know you! We are hoping to grow our work with young people here at the McPin Foundation. If you have signed up to our network but have not given us any details about yourself, we’d love to hear from you. Your details will be stored in a secure, protected database. This will help us to know when to get in touch with you, if a project comes up that we think you’d be particularly interested in.

The information that you send us will be kept in strict confidence and will not be shared with anyone. It is purely so that we can help to identify when a project may be a good fit for you. If you are happy for us to have your details, please return the completed form below to RachelTemple@mcpin.org. Or download an online copy here:

Your Name: 
Your Address: 
Your Email Address: 
Your Contact Number: 
Your Date of Birth: 
Your Gender: 
Your Ethnicity: 
Do you have experience of mental health difficulties that you would be happy to share with us?
Become a Young Ambassador for OCD UK

OCD-UK are running three different projects related to children and young people. They are looking for young ambassadors to represent these projects. This would involve working with other young people, sharing stories and helping to raise awareness of OCD. Click here to find out more.

If you’re interested in getting involved, please get in touch with Sue by email: sue@ocduk.org or call: 07495 557405.

Let’s Talk Mental Health: Fancy being interviewed?

Following the success of the first series of Let’s Talk Mental Health, the organisers are looking for young people to appear in the second series. The series will include a recorded discussion between a young person with lived experience of mental health difficulties, and a young professional working in a mental health related field. The series will be shared on various social media platforms including YouTube and Twitter.

For taking part, you’ll be offered a participation fee and will be reimbursed for any expenses incurred during filming. Interested? Get in touch with: mentalhealth.fellow@kcl.ac.uk

Introducing the HYPE Project

The HYPE (Improving the Health of Young People) Project is an online recruitment, risk assessment, and resource platform for young people (aged 16 and over). The HYPE project aims to improve the understanding of problems affecting young people’s health, increase young peoples’ involvement in research and improve access to online and community social and health related resources.

The project aims to empower individuals within their neighbourhoods and communities by:

- providing an environment for young people to voice their opinions on mental health inequalities
- helping them to reduce these inequalities

The HYPE online platform offers signposting to relevant charities and organisations, self-help materials and information about community activities and events.

For more information about the project and to sign up to the online platform, please go to https://hypekcl.com. You can follow them on Twitter: @hype_project and on Instagram: @hype_projectkcl.
The next edition will be released in April. Got any questions or thoughts? Make sure you get in touch.

You are free to Subscribe or Unsubscribe to our network at any time (contact Rachel)

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