

The Health and Wellbeing of Young People in Leeds

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Introduction

There are 99,876 young people aged between 10 and 19 living in the city making up 12.3 % of the total population of Leeds. Many health and wellbeing issues emerge during adolescence, including mental health problems, tobacco and alcohol use, living with obesity and physical inactivity. Understanding the barriers to health for young people is critical as there are many opportunities to support young people to improve outcomes now and in the future.

The aim of this health needs assessment (HNA) was to support decision makers to further understand the health needs of young people and identify future priorities for partners in Leeds who can impact the health and Wellbeing of young people.

What did we do?

The children and families public health team undertook a HNA between August 2023 and autumn 2024 which focused on 10-19-year-olds based on WHO definition of an adolescent.

[We used the Maternal, Newborn & Child Health and the WHO consensus framework](#) as a structure as it provided a holistic view of health and wellbeing and enabled the examination of subjective and objective wellbeing in young people.

We sought views from professionals (33) and young people (47) and provided recommendations and identify future priorities for partners in Leeds who can impact the health and wellbeing of young people.

Why did we do it?

We wanted to ensure young people in Leeds experience and achieve their best, in terms of health and wellbeing and understanding the barriers to health for young people was critical to this.

We identified gaps in research where young people's voices were not captured and knew that previous HNAs had focused on children but didn't specifically capture the experience of views of young people.

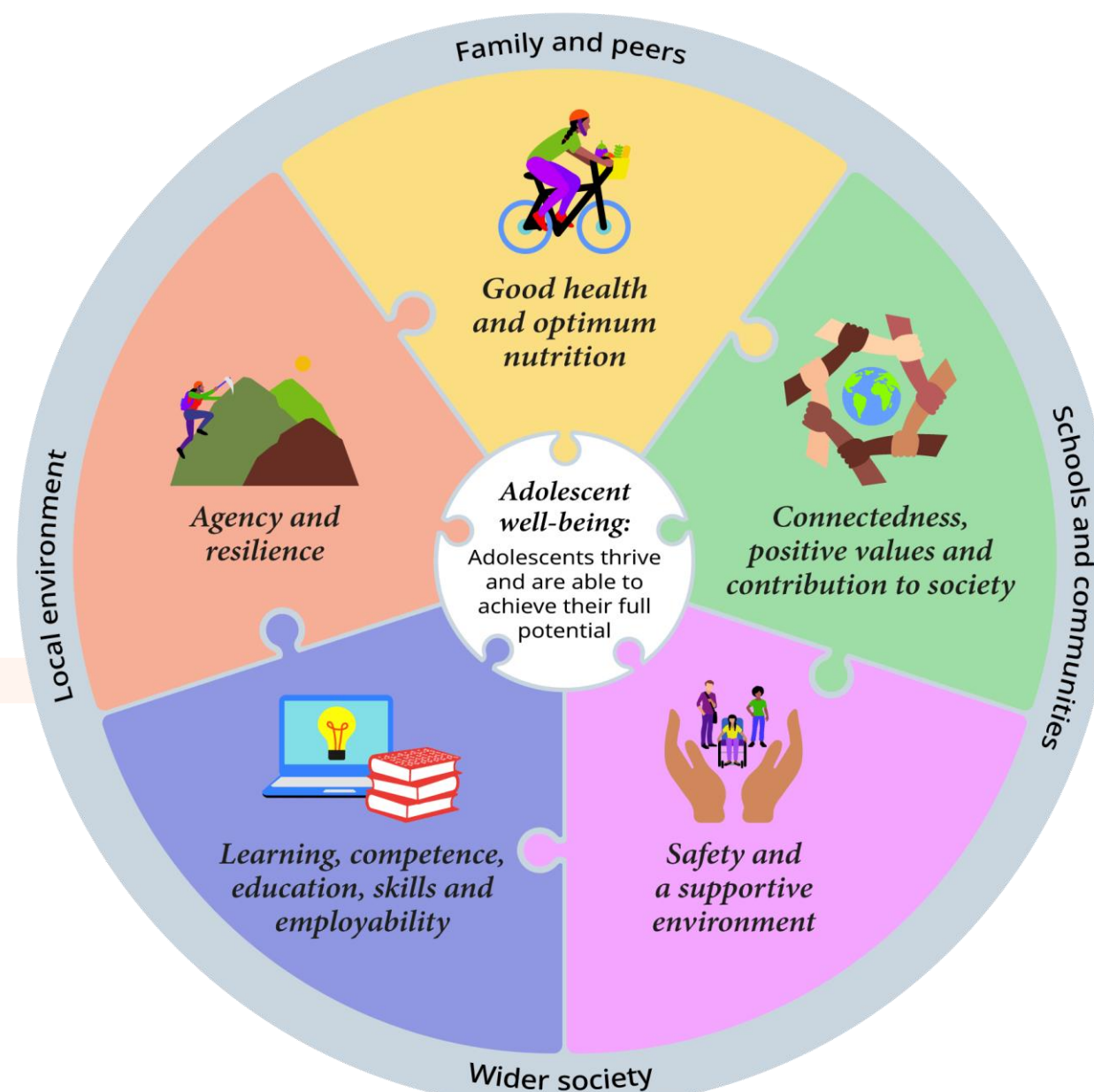


Figure 1: Maternal, Newborn & Child Health and the World Health Organisation (WHO) Consensus Framework

What was the impact?

This HNA captured the views of stakeholders and young people themselves and engaged with groups of young people who experience greater barriers to health and wellbeing.

This HNA made system wide recommendations and is being used to effect change to improve the health and wellbeing of young people in Leeds through collaborative working.



What did we find in the data?

The number of crimes against and involving young people is increasing.

There has been a decrease in school attendance and academic attainment.

The primary need of Autistic Spectrum Disorder has tripled since 2018.

34.6% of young people living in the most deprived decile are recorded as smokers by their GP compared to 2.2% in the least deprived.

There is a higher prevalence of 'experimenting' with vaping in Leeds compared to England.

What did stakeholders tell us?

They thought mental health, vaping and violence were key issues affecting the health and wellbeing of young people

They were worried about a lack of mental health services, long waiting times and nowhere to signpost to while young people were waiting.

They felt there wasn't enough 'young people friendly' spaces across the city.

What did young people tell us?

Money and lack of access to a range of accessible activities made it hard to be healthy.

Some young people only ate meals at school.

It's important to have someone to talk to stay mentally healthy.

Services needed to be more 'young person friendly'.

They enjoyed being online but recognised that it had negative effects on their self-esteem.

They felt under pressure to meet expectations, fit in and meet their own goals and expectations.

Voice of young people

"a vape is cheaper than an ice cream nowadays' and lasts longer. Ice creams are too expensive, I'd rather have a vape."

'I feel 'crappy' inside'

'Don't talk about our needs as don't know who would help us'

'Social media makes me feel bad about myself'

'It's nice to feel safe'

