

Engaging young people to inform health improvement commissioning in East Sussex

Chris Cocking, Nigel Sherriff & Lester Coleman

c.cocking@brighton.ac.uk;

Twitter: @DrChrisCocking

7/12/15

Outline

- Background to project
- Engagement activities
- What did we find?
 - Focus on Well-being & Emotional Resilience
- Implications
 - Theoretical & Practical

Project Aims

- Engagement & participation activities with young people, with a view to improving existing services across the county
- Provide greater understanding into the views & experiences of young people with regards to both existing & commissioning of future health improvement services
- Topics included 3 areas of health improvement
 - Whole-school approaches (WSA) to health improvement;
 - Sexual health improvement
 - Emotional wellbeing and resilience (EWR) programmes (focus of this talk)

Methods

- YP engaged in variety of ways
 - Participant Steering Groups, Focus Groups, Individual interviews etc
- Diverse range of YP representing ESCC demographics from broad range of services
 - Schools, Academies, PRUs, LGBTQ Youth Groups etc
- Collected data from over 100 YP in less than 8 weeks!
 - 23 interviewed on EWR topic
- Data analysed thematically

Results

- Awareness of/ engagement with term 'Resilience'
- Constraints on Resilience
- Individual/ collective strategies to achieve resilience
- Role of schools in achieving resilience

Some engagement with term

- Popular with LGBTQ Ps to cope with homophobic bullying

We do all have to be resilient every time we walk out of our front door, that is when we have to start being resilient because you don't know what's going to come from where, like it is difficult but to be ourselves it's what we've got to do

It's useful. Just like it's like a protection word. If you call yourself resilient then you're going to get confidence from it because you know you're stronger than some people who would put you down because in a sense you're better than them because you can take it on a daily basis whereas maybe they wouldn't be able to cope with it

But not always!

- *I: Do any of you know what resilience is?*
- *M: Yeah it means...I know what it is. We used to talk about it in my old school like it was something massive... They said it was the ability to bounce back.*
- *I2: That's almost the classic definition.*
- *M: It's annoying though...*
- *I2: Because?*
- *M: ...People continue talking about it like we don't know what it means. Teachers talk to us like we're stupid when obviously we're not, they think we're absolutely retarded.*
- *I: Would you say, was it useful or not?*
- *M: No not at all.*

Constraints on Resilience

- Physical limitations of some educational establishments
 - E.g. PRUs
- *F: We're kept in prison in these classrooms so we can't get out. Oh yeh, no we can in these classes, yeh we can but the teachers stand in front of the door, like guards... At like a fucking zoo.*
- *I: If you could change one thing about this place, what would it be?*
- *M: To not have locks on any of the doors. It's so annoying.*
- *F: Yeh.*
- *I: How does that make you feel?*
- *M: Literally like I'm in prison.*

Constraints on Resilience

- Schools not dealing with bullying can have unintended (& creative) results
- *I go to an all boys school so you always hear around school, you hear oh 'gay' or 'faggot'... When I was in year 7, 8 and 9 I'd hear it everywhere and I was called it everywhere I went, 'oh he's gay' or... 'he's queer' and it really put me down. **The school did, maybe nothing over it, it was like 'oh we'll deal with it don't worry' and then just slid it under the rug**, then ever since I came out they stopped saying it, which is quite weird*
- *I: Did you say they stopped saying it when you came out?*
- *Yeh. It was like, it was kind of like they were shocked. They kept saying it and then I came out and they kind of went 'oh'. They kind of paused for a minute...because...the definition of an insult is taking away someone's identity so if you're calling someone gay and they are, it's kind of like it's not even an insult, it's just pointing out the obvious. So I think that's what happened at my school and they kind of just went 'oh we can't call him that now what do we do'. I was left on my own.*

Individual/ collective strategies

- YP often find creative ways to achieve resilience
 - Whether or not they engage with term itself
- Use individual & collective strategies to achieve resilience in/out of school
 - eg physical activities, 'time-out', informal support structures
- Mutual/ peer-support often more effective than teachers due to trust issues, shared identity etc

Do you find people help each other when people get stressed?

Yeh ...like say another student is getting stressed, I think like being how close that they are I think another student would be able to help that other student that's getting stressed more than the teachers will on certain situations.

Broader collective resilience?

- Emergent resilience not just from mass emergencies
- YP report enduring collective resilience in more mundane adverse situations!
- *I've become friends with people I thought I would never have become friends with. Because of exams we'd always rely on each other and I think it's brilliant that **even something that's so intimidating can just bring people closer together and shows that humans in general - in a time of need - will band together like our natural instincts would***

Schools taking a lead?

- *I: At this school, do you feel supported in helping to deal with your stress?*
- *SEVERAL: No.*
- *I: Can you think of any examples when you do feel supported?*
- *F1: When you have like a problem, like with another student or anything, you can go to the Head of Year or [staff member] and the Deputy Head of Year and they do help but they talk you through it to calm you down but they don't necessarily do anything about that problem.*
- *F2: They can only help you to a certain extent.*
- *F1: Yeh they can only help you understand the situation more but **they don't actually do anything about it, just help you cope***

Implications- Practical

- Need to engage YP in concept of resilience & make it more relevant to their own experiences- don't assume knowledge
- YP often creative in finding ways to achieve resilience
 - May depend upon physical/social constraints
- Mutual peer-support schemes embedded within WSA?
- Optional time-out/ de-stress spaces that YP can ask to go to
 - Not just for forcible exclusion!
- Consider role broader social contexts can play in encouraging (or constraining) resilience
 - Avoid purely individualised approaches that risk 'blaming' individual for adversity

Theoretical implications

- Broader/ collective approaches to resilience
- Supports notion of resilience emerging from shared collective experience of adversity SIMCR (Drury, 2012)
 - Importance of shared social identity in providing & receiving support from in-group
- Need for more critical perspective to resilience- more than just sociological Prozac!
 - bounce back or forward? (Walsh, 2002)

Thanks for listening!

- Cocking, C (in Press) 'Collective Resilience and social support in the face of adversity- evidence from Social Psychology' in Kumar, U (ed.) *Resilience: A Psychosocial Perspective*. Sage: London, UK
- Drury, J. (2012). Collective resilience in mass emergencies and disasters: a social identity model. In: Jetten, J., Haslam, C. and Haslam, S. A. (Eds), *The Social Cure: Identity, Health and Well-being* (pp. 195-215). Psychology Press, Hove, UK. <http://www.amazon.com/The-Social-Cure-Identity-Well-Being/dp/1848720211>
- Sherriff, N.S., Coleman, L., and Cocking, C. (2015). Engaging young people to inform health improvement commissioning and delivery in East Sussex. Final report to East Sussex County Council. Brighton: University of Brighton. <http://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/healthpromotionbrighton/files/2015/11/ESCC-Final-Report-Nov-15-12afr8l.pdf>
- Walsh, F (2002) Bouncing forward: Resilience in the aftermath of September 11. *Family Process*; 41, 1 Spring 2002
- My blog; <http://dontpaniccorrectingmythsaboutthecrowd.blogspot.co.uk/>