



**loudmouth**  
education & training through theatre

## 'Talking Heads'

# Theatre in Education Tour to support Mental Wellbeing Education

Funded and co-ordinated in partnership by Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust and Dudley Public Health Department

## Academic Year 19/20

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## Introduction

This evaluation report is feeding back on a theatre in education project that took place during the academic year of 19/20. The project was to use Theatre in Education (TIE) programmes to support the Personal, Social, Health & Economic Education (PSHE) in the Dudley area.

The tour was delivered by Loudmouth Education & Training using its brand new TIE programme, Talking Heads designed to educate key stage 3 pupils on mental wellbeing.

The tour was funded and co-ordinated in partnership by Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust and Dudley Public Health Department and we would like to thank Joy Newey, our contact for this tour, for her support.

Established in 1994, Loudmouth Education & Training is a theatre company that supports schools and other organisations with their PSHE. Loudmouth's aim is to help children and young people to be healthy, happy and safe. The company uses drama, interaction and discussion to explore issues that affect children and young people. Loudmouth's education and training programmes are proven to help learners to challenge attitudes, gain new skills and increase knowledge.

*"The Talking Heads programme made mental health a talking point with the year group, now they know where to go in school and outside school."*

*Teacher / Mental health first aider at the Link Academy*

*"As a result of seeing Talking Head, I know where I can go for help and the 5 ways to wellbeing."*

*Key stage 3 pupil at Sycamore Short Stay School*



## Executive Summary

- During the academic year of 2019/20 Loudmouth Education & Training delivered 15 sessions of their interactive TIE programmes, Talking Heads, on mental wellbeing, to young people in the Dudley area. 5 sessions got postponed due to coronavirus and the resulting school closures and are being rescheduled for January to March 2021.
- Loudmouth worked with 2,452 participants, aged between 11 and 14 years old, the vast majority being 11-12 year olds, in 15 different educational venues.
- After participating in the Talking Heads programme, 97% of students could name all of the 5 Ways to Wellbeing taught during the sessions. This was an amazing rise from none of the students knowing all 5 before the sessions and only 3% and less knowing any of the 5 ways.
- The key organisations and individuals that Loudmouth flag up that can offer help or support around mental wellbeing during the sessions came out top in the post evaluation. Kooth, free online counselling service, rose from 7% to 76%, The Mix, mental health support service, and SHOUT, text service for those in mental health crisis, rose from 0% to 61% and 23% respectively. Loudmouth promotes to the students to talk to their teachers and school nurses and these both rose during the session from 4% for teachers to 8% and school nurses from 0% to 11%.
- After participating in the Talking Heads programme, 94% of students said that they felt 'confident' or 'very confident' about spotting signs of poor mental health in others. This is a rise from 77% before the sessions.
- 98% of students stated that the Talking Heads session helps people to look after their mental wellbeing. The main reasons they gave were...
  - that the programme was interesting and appropriate for their age.
  - that it helped them learn about the signs of poor mental health so they can help themselves and others.
  - that the programme helped them understand more about mental health and wellbeing.
  - that it got across the importance of talking if they have a mental health worry.
  - that it gave good information about mental health.
  - that it taught them the 5 ways to wellbeing.
- 55% of students stated that as a result of the Talking Heads session they would act differently in the future. The main areas they commented on were that they felt now they would
  - be more able to identify signs of poor mental health.
  - understand more about mental health and so be able to support others more.
  - know where to go for support.
  - be more confident to get support.
  - know how to look after their own mental wellbeing including using the 5 ways to wellbeing.
  - be kind to others.
  - speak up and ask for help if they were experiencing mental health issues.
- 98% of all students evaluated as part of this tour said they would recommend the programme to the next year's students.

## Summary of Activity

In the spring and summer terms of 2019, Loudmouth created a new theatre in education programme, Talking Heads, on mental wellbeing for years 7, 8 and 9 pupils. Loudmouth ran research sessions with young people and professionals across the West Midlands including in Dudley.

The programme was designed to support schools in their teaching of mental wellbeing; both mental ill health and positive mental health. The drama and workshop covers mental wellbeing, social media, body image and explores the 5 ways to wellbeing.

The programme debunks the myths around mental health, giving young people the space to learn how to talk about mental wellbeing and emotions sensitively. The programme uses drama plus a discussion workshop to show young people the common types of mental ill health and their possible causes e.g. social media, as well as giving simple, proven strategies to support positive mental wellbeing e.g. the 5 Ways to Wellbeing. During the session the young people are encouraged to think of the people and places who could support them if they have any concerns about their own and or others mental health. They are also signposted to local and national organisations that can support them.

The programme is designed to give the young people the skills to recognise the early signs of mental ill health and the knowledge and confidence to know where and how to seek appropriate support. By the end of the programme the young people will have learnt strategies to support positive mental wellbeing and how to critically evaluate how their behaviour effects their own and others' mental health.

The tour for Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust took place in the academic year 19/20.

Loudmouth ran a showcase event on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019 for professionals working in the field of mental health and young people in the area, 26 professionals attended. The aim was to show the new Talking Heads programme, to promote the tour and to get feedback that would impact on the programme.

Loudmouth ran a total of 15 sessions of Talking Heads for young people in 15 different venues in the Dudley area. 12 of the sessions were with year 7 pupils in mainstream schools and 3 sessions were with a mix of ages from 11 to 14 in local non-mainstream educational venues.

Unfortunately, near the end of the tour, the schools in the area were shut due to the coronavirus pandemic and 5 sessions had to be postponed. These are being rescheduled to take place early 2021. The sessions are to be run at The Rosewood School, Bishop Milner Catholic College, Pegasus Academy, Halesbury School and Beacon Hill Academy.

The sessions that have taken place are listed below.

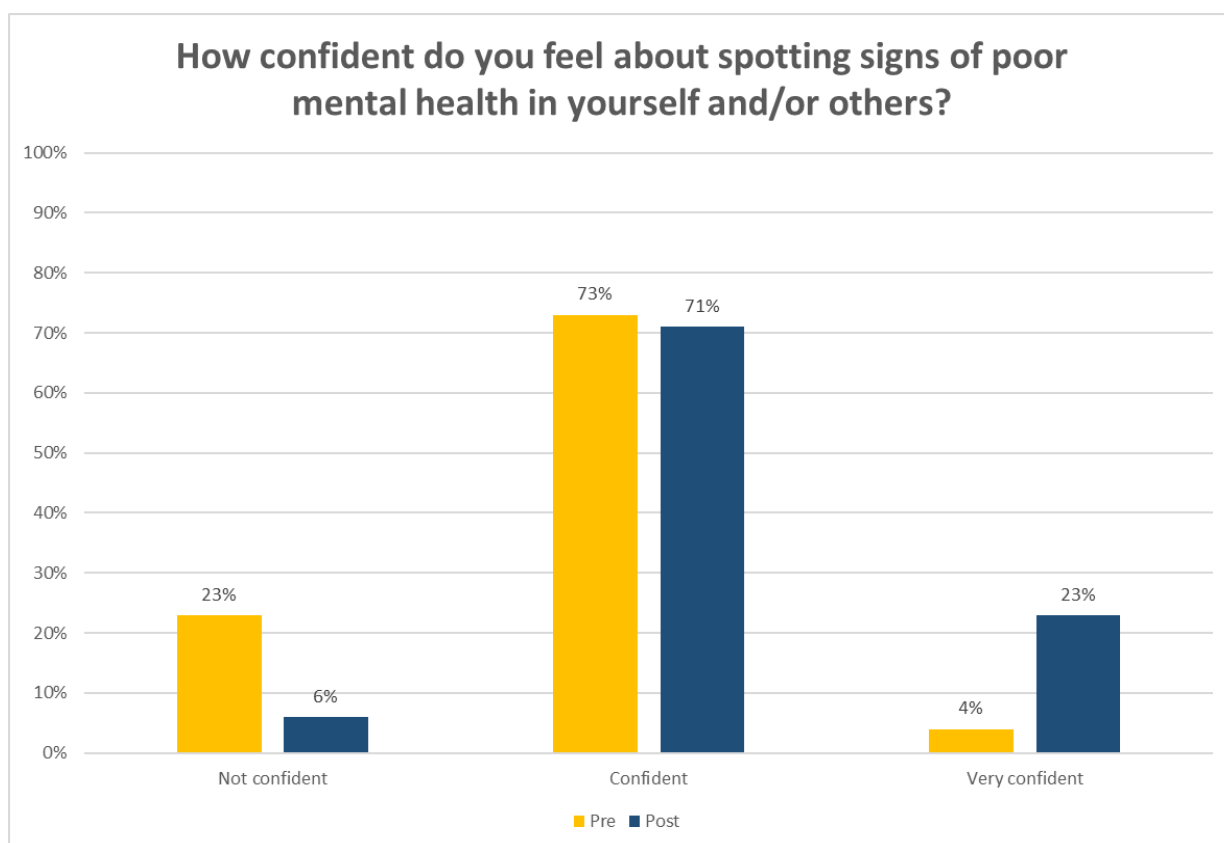
Venue Name	No of sessions	Year Group	No of students
The Links Academy	1	7	180
Windsor High School and Sixth Form	1	7	300
Cherry Tree Learning Centre	1	KS3	9
Thorns Collegiate Academy	1	7	200
Kingswinford School and Science College	1	7	200

The Earls High School	1	7	245
Pedmore Technology College and Community School	1	7	130
The Wenlock School	1	Mixed	15
Redhill School	1	7	240
St James Academy	1	7	180
The Crestwood School	1	5	210
Ridgewood High School	1	7	124
Sycamore Short Stay School	1	8	8
Ellowes Hall Sports College	1	7	200
Leasowes High School	1	7	211
	<b>15</b>		<b>2,452</b>

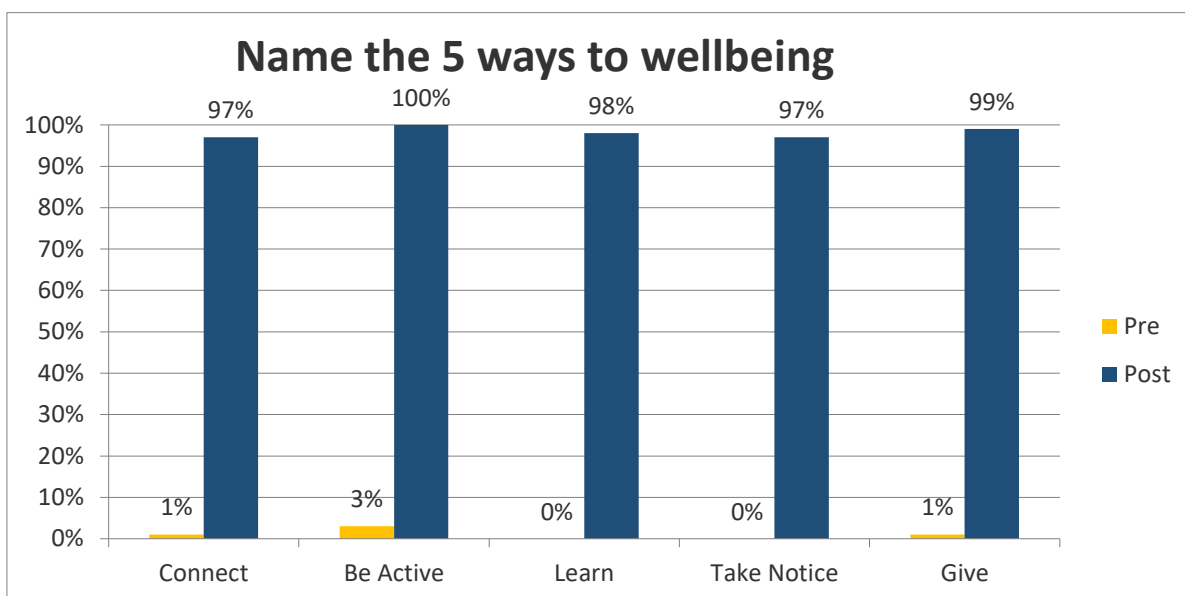
## Young People's Evaluation

A class size of young people in each session in the Dudley venues were asked to fill in pre and post evaluation forms. The results are below.

1. After participating in the Talking Heads programme, 94% of students said that they felt 'confident' or 'very confident' about spotting signs of poor mental health in others. This is a rise from 77% before the sessions.



2. After participating in the Talking Heads programme, 97% of students could name all of the 5 ways to wellbeing. This is an amazing rise from 0% before the sessions knowing all 5 and only 3% or less knowing any of the 5 ways (before the Talking Heads session). In the session Loudmouth teaches the 5 ways to wellbeing – connect, be active, learn, take notice, give.



3. The young people were asked name 3 organisations that can offer help or support to young people around their mental wellbeing. We have listed the 8 most popular post session. During the session of Talking Heads, Loudmouth teaches about a number of services and individuals that can support the students if they are concerned about theirs or others mental health. The key organisations and individuals that Loudmouth flag up during the session came out top in the post evaluation. Kooth, free online counselling service, rose from 7% to 76%, The Mix, mental health support service, and SHOUT, text service for those in mental health crisis, rose from 0% to 61% and 23% respectively. We promote to the students to talk to their teachers and school nurses and these both rose during the session from 4% for teachers to 8% and school nurses from 0% to 11%. We are very pleased to see the rise in knowledge of support services and individuals.

	Pre	Post
Kooth	7%	76%
Childline	68%	71%
The Mix	0%	61%
SHOUT	0%	23%
Loudmouth	21%	18%
Young Minds	4%	12%
School Nurse	0%	11%
Teachers / School	4%	8%

4. 98% of students stated that the Talking Heads session helps people to look after their mental wellbeing. The main reasons they gave were...

"Because it teaches people how to spot the signs and how to take action."

"Because it tells you that you can talk to others."

"They create performances that are full of advice while they still interest people. They made sure that they are aired to the right ages so people can relate."

"Yes, because it helps people look out for things and how to keep their minds healthy."

"Because they have taught me the five ways to wellbeing."

"Because it helps people understand more about wellbeing and helps people in real life."

"It taught me how I can look after my attack (panic) and anxiety in new ways."

5. 55% of students stated that as a result of the Talking Heads session they would act differently in the future. 38% of students weren't sure if they would act differently or not. The students who said they would act differently were asked to complete this sentence..."As a result of seeing Talking Head, I ....."

"know where I can go for help and the 5 ways to wellbeing."

"know more about mental health."

"know not to bottle things up and talk."

"feel more confident with asking for help and where to go."

"will look after myself and be kind to others."

"find it easier to spot the signs of poor mental health."

6. 98% of all students evaluated as part of this tour said they would recommend the programme to the next year's students.

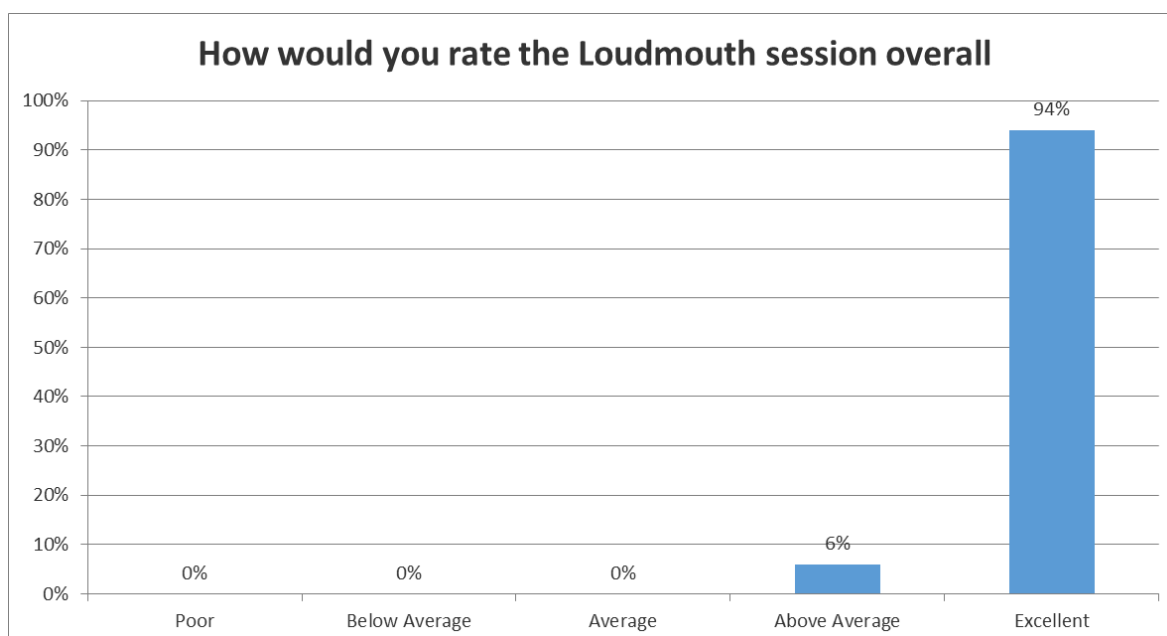
## Staff Evaluation

*"The Loudmouth staff impacted my own preconceptions of social media and the impact of mental health on young people by a drip feed of constant negative comments to a section of society who are already vulnerable and crave acceptance from their peers."*

*Teaching assistant, Kingswinford School*

We asked staff who were present during sessions to complete post session evaluations. Here are the results:

1. On a scale rating of 'poor', 'below average', 'above average' to 'excellent', 94% of staff rated the programmes as 'excellent'. 6% recorded that they thought the programmes were 'above average'. No teachers rated the session as 'average', 'below average' or 'poor'.



Reasons that teachers gave for their rating of the programme....

*"Engagement with the staff and children was fantastic! Friendly, approachable, knowledgeable of the topic."*

*"Really hit home key points about mental health issues made really clear in a non-threatening way. Focused on 'real life' situations that students could relate to. It generated excellent discussion back in class."*

*"Engaging and moving, students were hooked throughout!"*

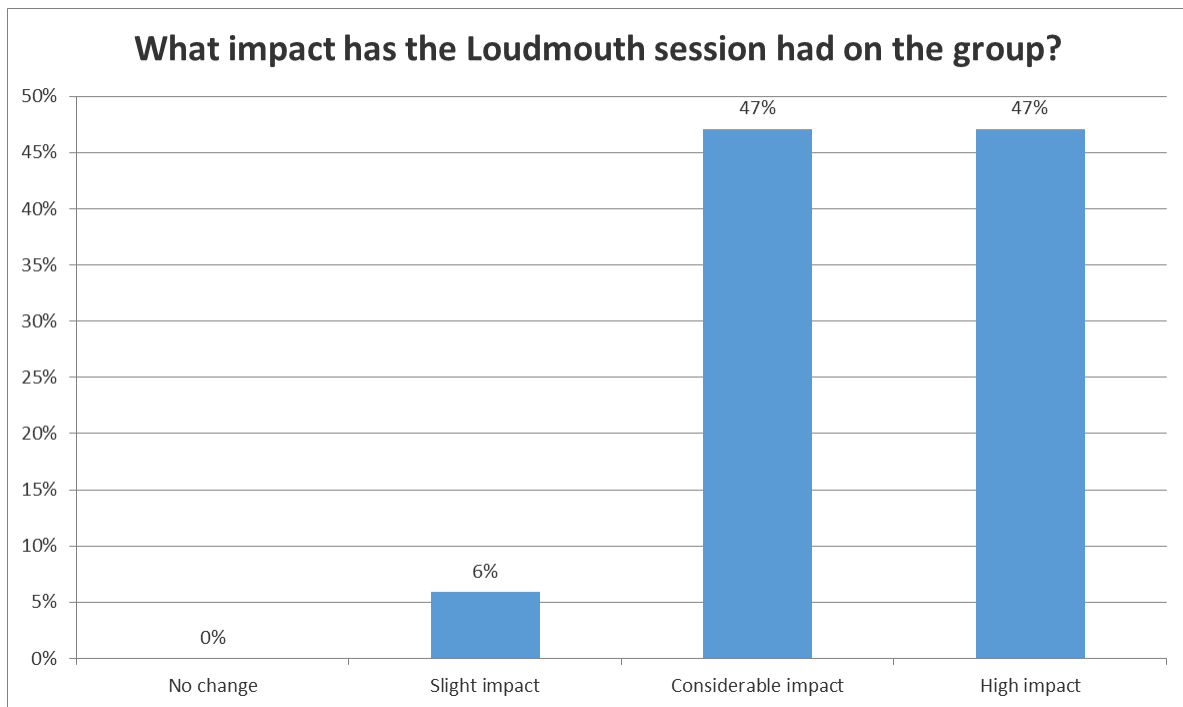
*"It was on the level of the students using language that they understood."*



*"Clear messages delivered in an engaging way! The students were transfixed and were keen to find out more. You explain this really clearly and positively."*

*"Very engaging with students. Excellent performance and workshops. Very informative. Encouraged contributions from students. Made them feel comfortable enough to share thoughts."*

2. 100% of staff agreed that the programme had had an impact on the group, with 94% stating that Talking Heads had had a 'considerable' or 'high impact' on their group.



Comments below from the staff on the impact they felt the programme had on their groups of students.

*"Students could recall key points from performance. Could name 5 wellbeing parts. Really engaged with the performers. Started to discuss mental health issues and things that worried them. They said they would find me if they needed to talk."*

*"Able to talk about tough issues in a safe environment."*

*"Students fully aware of how to access support if needed. Students know that it's ok to feel differently to others. Help is out there and they know it's ok to ask for it if needed."*

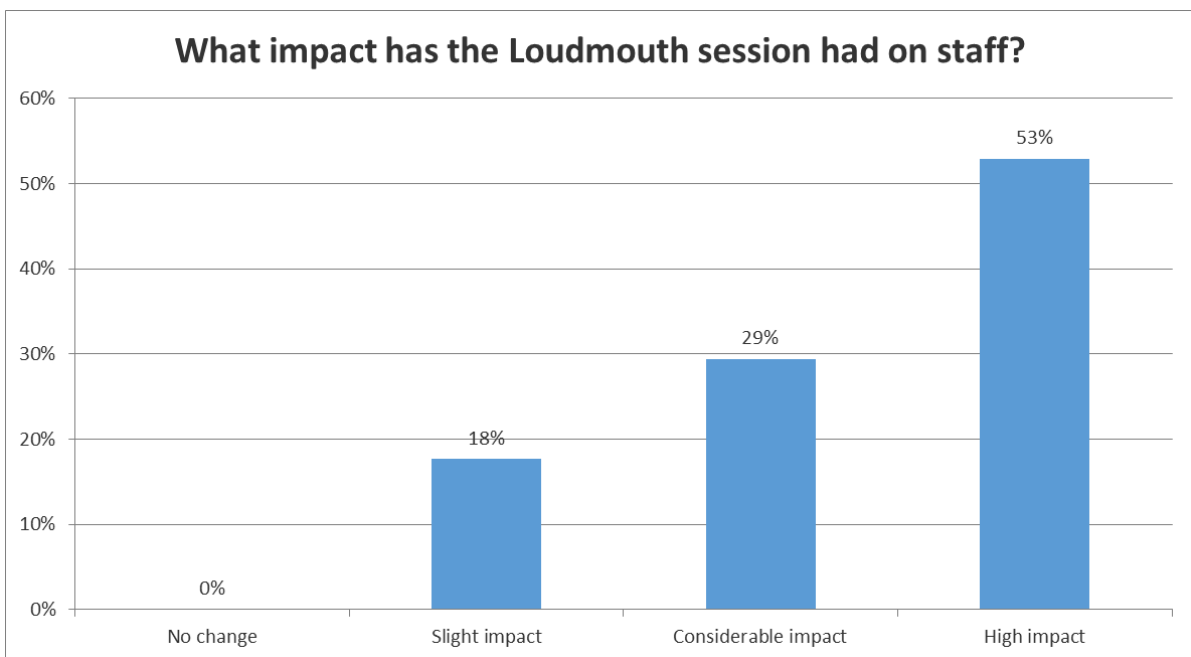
*they're being given - you've given them lots to think about."*

*"They now feel that it is ok not to feel ok, and that there are people who they can go to and share their feelings with."*

*"They were able to ask questions and were genuinely interested in the answers from the actors from Loudmouth."*

*"They have been asking lots of questions which shows that they trust the information they're being given - you've given them lots to think about."*

3. 100% of staff also stated that the programme had had an impact on the staff with 82% of staff stating that Talking Heads had a 'considerable' or 'high impact' on staff.



The staff's comments on the impact of Talking Heads on staff at their venues are below.

*"More aware of not 'brushing off' concerns and how important it is to them even if it seems trivial to you."*

*"It was done in a fun way and it was good to be present so we knew what was said and how to deal with any questions."*

*"Made me reflect on how I manage situations. Opened my eyes to what students get upset about and how they react."*

*"Will be more aware of students worries."*

*"You will be coming back for more sessions for both secondary and primary!"*

"The Loudmouth staff impacted my own preconceptions of social media and the impact of mental health on young people by a drip feed of constant negative comments to a section of society who are already vulnerable and crave acceptance from their peers."

"Good to see that the students are able to open up and talk about their feelings. I don't think I realised so many students had so much mental health going on."

"Staff were really impressed with their students' engagement - they are glad that these issues are being addressed."

4. The staff were asked to complete the sentence... I feel the Loudmouth session will add value to the school's Relationships / RSE and Health Education by..... here are some of their comments below.

"...educating the children in a way that they can implement this knowledge in day to day life! Creatively drilled in the importance of good mental health and wellbeing."

"...breaking down stigmas and barriers to talk. Students are engaged and find all sessions valuable and insightful! Ace!"

"...adding an interesting spin on the curriculum and presenting it in an interactive way."

"...highlighting experiences and issues that young people are going through and how and who they can approach to help resolve these."

"...providing us with additional resources to continue the good work on students' mental health."

"...giving the young people the courage to speak out when they are not feeling 100% mentally and knowing where to go for help."

"...adds extra gravitas to our own conversations and we can refer to these sessions - thank you!"

"...making students feel confident to tell members of staff about their issues or feel that they are safe know a place to go to for help."

5. 100% of staff said they would recommend the Loudmouth programmes they saw to other schools and organisations.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This was the first tour of this new programme on mental wellbeing and we, at Loudmouth, were so pleased with both the students and staff's responses which clearly showed a positive impact on attitudes, knowledge and skills. The evaluation of the Talking Heads sessions clearly shows the importance of this initiative by Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust and their commitment to funding innovative mental health education and positive approaches to mental wellbeing.

The tour reached 2,452 participants in 15 different educational venues, with a range of pupils, with very different learning needs. The evaluations showed that the pupils and staff felt that Talking heads was engaging, appropriate and educational.

The quality of the TIE programme both the content and the delivery were commented upon with 98% of the young people who participated recommending the work for future year groups and 100% of teaching staff saying they would recommend the work to other organisations.

The report also demonstrates that this approach of using TIE is a powerful way to communicate key messages about who to go to for support around mental wellbeing. The key organisations that we flag up during the sessions came out top in the evaluation.

Next academic year (20/21) we will be rescheduling the 5 sessions that were postponed due to coronavirus and look forward to being able to work new year groups in even more Dudley schools if funding is repeated. We would recommend that schools are asked for a small contribution towards their sessions to help the funding get the work out to even more people.



**For more information about this tour or any of Loudmouth's work**  
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