About Debating Mental Health

Debating Mental Health is an exciting programme empowering young people with mental health needs to have their voices heard on the mental health topics that matter to them. Every young person already has a voice. We want to help them realise the power of that voice so that they can use it to drive the change they want to see in the mental health system.

We started in 2016 with a one-off, London-wide competition for young people aged 14-21 who had previously, or were at the time, using Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), delivered in partnership with the London and South East Children and Young People's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (CYPIAPT) Collaborative and the English-Speaking Union. We supported over 60 young people to learn to express their thoughts and ideas through a bespoke 12-week debate training programme. The programme ended with a day of debate competitions and skills showcasing held at Facebook’s UK Headquarters.

Since then, we have grown into an independent organisation, developed our ideas and worked with a broader range of young people, but our aim remains the same: to equip young people with the skills they feel they need to make their voices heard and to give them access to the platforms they want to be heard on.

Why Debating?

Participation in formal debate can support children and young people to develop a number of skills, including:

- Research skills
- Team working
- Empathy
- Learning how to use their voice
- Empowerment
- Structuring an argument
- CV-skills
- Interview and workplace skills
- Self-esteem and confidence
- Resilience.

These benefits may be even greater for children and young people with mental health support needs, as many of these young people will have experienced issues with low self-esteem and low self-confidence. Problems with low self-esteem and low self-confidence may prevent young people from fully engaging at school or with mental health services and professionals they may be in contact with. By empowering young people to speak out and be heard through debating, we support them to realise that their voice is powerful and that what they have to say is important. They also learn how to say what they have to say in a way that means they will be heard. That’s important because when children and young people believe in themselves, they engage better in school and feel hopeful for their futures, which improves their chances of success in whatever they decide they want to do.
The young team are ready to share their ideas and lead change with policy makers. Contact us to work with them!

Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit, 9th-10th October

10 young people with experience of mental health needs, from across England, selected, trained and briefed.

They facilitated the 'Children, Young People and the Now Generation' work stream, including formulating recommendations for Ministers.

Met the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Prime Minister Theresa May, mental health policy makers and a few celebrities.

Next Steps

We're contacting Ministers and policy makers and supporting them to make progress on their Summit commitments.

The young team are ready to share their ideas and lead change with policy makers. Contact us to work with them!

Why not have young leaders facilitate your next Children and Young People’s Mental Health Conference? The team are trained and ready to go!
Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit, 9th-10th October

In October 2018, the UK Government, in partnership with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) co-hosted the world’s first Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit in London. We were asked to lead on the design and delivery of the ‘Children, Young People and the Now Generation’ work stream, hosted by the OECD.

We worked with ten young people (17-25) from across England. During the morning session on 9th October, the young people presented a series of self-selected global best practice case studies through fun, interactive activities. In the afternoon, the group facilitated discussion in the work stream to build the consensus statements and recommendations that were submitted to Ministers the and informed the Global Declaration on Achieving Equality for Mental health in the 21st Century (link found in resources).

During the Summit, we were delighted that four of the young people were able to meet and then present in front of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. On the following day, five of the group were invited to a World Mental Health Day reception at 10 Downing Street. We were also invited to join a discussion with Theresa May herself. Five young people (four from other organisations and one from Debating Mental Health) were invited, along with Laura, our Director, to share their experiences of the mental health system with the Prime Minister.

This was an excellent opportunity for the young people we work with to be heard on a global scale. They all demonstrated perfectly why now is the time to equip young people with the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to lead change on mental health. The group received multiple, well-deserved compliments from Summit organisers, staff and delegates. A number of Ministers also commented on the work and recommendations of our work stream and we are working on following up with them to ensure a commitment to the recommendations that goes beyond the Summit and to ensure that they are accountable to young people.

"Participating at the Global Ministerial Summit for Mental Health, as a young person, with Debating Mental Health, was empowering and eye-opening. It was a fantastic platform upon which to use my voice and expertise, alongside that of other young people, and I felt privileged to be able to work with leaders in their field and Ministers from around the world. "
Lucy, Young Presenter

"The contribution by you at Debating Mental Health in bringing together a diverse group of young people from the UK who presented case studies and developed recommendations to give to ministers was, for me, the highlight of the summit. Several ministers commented to me on how much they appreciated the fact that young experts-by-experience were involved and that their voice was heard."

Mark Pearson, Deputy Director, Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD
Debate in Association with Maudsley Debates
31st October

Young people from across the UK attended a training and selection day. Four of those were selected as panellists and received specialist training.

The first Maudsley event to include young panellists and the first to exclusively include those with lived-experience.

Motion debated: “This House Believes: That people below the age of 18 should never be detained under the Mental Health Act.”

Next Steps

The young debaters would love to help you shape and implement new mental health policies. Get in touch to find out how!

We’re going to be holding more debates like this across the UK. Get in touch if you want us to come to your area!

Listening to young people and hearing their ideas isn’t meaningful unless there’s also action. We’re developing ideas to turn debates like this into real, meaningful action!
On 31st October 2018, four young people with experiences of mental health needs came together to speak as panellists at a public debate on the use of the Mental Health Act on those under 18.

The debate, was hosted by Debating Mental Health, in association with Maudsley Debates and saw young people debate the following: “This House Believes: That people below the age of 18 should never be detained under the Mental Health Act.” The young people came from a range of backgrounds and have different experiences.

The Maudsley Debates take place three times a year at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IoPPN), King's College London. Topics generally focus on issues that have a direct impact on mental health services, service users and mental health professionals. This was the first event to feature a full panel of people with experience of mental health needs and also the first debate on a young people’s topic to be led by young people themselves.

In this particular debate, the young people were assigned to teams, rather than choosing their own, This approach was taken, because it allows young people to explore different sides of an argument and to learn to distance themselves emotionally from an argument, allowing them to appreciate the full extent of a topic. This is an important life-skill and is something that young people may find difficult when discussing particularly evocative topics.

It has never been more important to support young people to take the lead in the discussion around their mental health and care and to empower them to work with policy makers to create change. We will continue this work to bring young people's voices to the public and, in 2019, we will expand this work, to ensure that action is taken and meaningful change driven by young people, with policy makers, because simply listening to young people is no longer enough.

"We were allocated proposition or opposition, meaning that we didn't necessarily agree with the side we were debating for.

It was a very empowering experience and I have learnt skills that I will most definitely continue to use. It helped me to get past the fear of being judged for what I say and it has given me a sense of freedom.

Pushing ourselves a little bit out of our comfort zones helps us to develop, and also allows us to build resilience." Rose Anne, Debater

( Link to Rose Anne's Blog on the Debate is available in 'Links' at end of report)

"It was great - would definitely do it again", Dr. James MacCabe, Convener of the King's College London Maudsley Debates

"Since joining Debating Mental Health in 2017, I've managed to step out of my comfort zone and push myself to achieve goals I used to think were impossible. Debating Mental Health has helped me break out of my shell and meet amazing people, its so important that us young people have a platform to express our views on mental health." Naz, Debater
More 2018 News

-Became a member of the Global Coalition on Youth Mental Health and supported their successful campaign to get mental health on the agenda at the G7 Summit, hosted by Canada.

-Presented at the NHS Health and Care innovation Expo in Manchester.

-Worked with the Royal College of Psychiatrists, supporting them to include a young people's debate as part of the Annual Residential CAMHS Faculty Conference in Glasgow. Trained and supported the young speakers ahead of the conference.

-Invited to join the Mental Health Innovation Network, who have featured Debating Mental Health as an innovative organisation.

"The young people's debate at the Annual Residential CAMHS Faculty Conference was utterly magical. Four young people from diverse backgrounds debated one of the hot topics of our time: access to CAMHS services. The training they had received from Laura Wallis from Debating Mental Health ensured that all four participated enthusiastically and explored the topic from all angles. The audience was so galvanised that the chair had to close down their questions 25 minutes after the programme end."

Dr. Helen Minnis, Academic Secretary for the CAMHS Faculty of the Royal College of Psychiatrists

2019 Plans

-We're building on the success of 2018 and will be working in even more locations across the UK, to equip even more young people with the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to work with policy makers and lead change across children and young people's mental health.

-We're developing new ideas, projects and ways of working to make sure that what we do is even more valuable for young people and policy makers alike.

-We want to work with YOU. All of our programmes are bespoke and adaptable. We can deliver one day workshops and on-going projects.

-We will continue to work with the young people we have already supported and they will continue to help shape our work.

-Got an idea or something you want to explore? We'd love to hear from you! Get in touch with Laura, our Director:

Laura@debating-mh.co.uk
Twitter: @DebatingMH
Facebook: /DebatingMH
Work with Us

With young people's mental health receiving so much political and media attention and as services face new challenges and much change, now is the time to empower our young people. We equip them with the skills, knowledge and information they need to ensure their voices are heard and that decision makers are working with them to drive change. Equipping young people with these skills and giving them opportunities to lead will be crucial in the coming years and in the future, as we face great change across the mental health sector. This is where Debating Mental Health comes in.

Our goal is not only to support you to engage with young people and hear what's important to them in mental health, but also to provide those young people with a brighter future, new found confidence, self esteem and pride.

We're here to offer you a fully personalised and unique service as we know that each and every region, service and person is different, with different strengths and different goals. We have created a fully adaptable programme to suit every requirement and make sure that we are providing the most useful service for you and the young people you work with/in your community.

Our Packages/Services

We start by offering you a free, no obligation consultation, either face to face(location dependant), via Skype or telephone. We will share a bit more about our work and values and, most importantly take this time to learn everything about you and your requirements and to answer any questions you may have. Following the consultation we will go away and create your fully bespoke package and quote, based on your needs. This can be discussed and adapted further as required.

Here are just some of the packages that we have delivered so far:

- 12 week training programme for young people who had visited CAMHS across London, culminating in a 'Grand Final' competition debate and showcase.

- Workshops to prepare young people to speak on panels or in debates at conferences, including for the Royal College of Paediatric and Child Health and for the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

- Training events to support youth steering groups to explore and articulate their ideas, gain new perspectives and develop leadership skills.

- Support and training for staff to co-deliver our training, to experience the workshops for themselves, or to support their own skills development.

Please get in touch to register your interest for your free consultation, we would love to hear from you:

Laura@debating-mh.co.uk    www.debating-mh.co.uk
Thanks and External Links

Thanks to the following people whose work features in this report and is linked below:

- Fran Dunne
- Rose Anne
- Shifted Productions

Thanks also to:

- All of the young people we work with, you're wonderful!
- The Global Summit Team, who supported us every step of the way.
- The Maudsley Debates Team, for helping us to try out our ideas and for all of the hard work behind the scenes.
- Everyone who has volunteered, given advice or helped out with our work, projects and start-up questions.

The Global Declaration on Achieving Equality for Mental Health, produced following the Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit can be found here.