

# THE RURAL REALITY

An Amplify and Advocacy Report  
Written by Jigsaw Youth Advocates

July 2024

**JIGSAW  
DONEGAL**  
Young people's  
health in mind

# What is this all about?

Jigsaw Donegal Youth Advocates took part in an Amplify and Advocacy project where we had the opportunity to amplify our voices, in order to advocate for change for young people's mental health in Ireland. We chose to focus our project on Access to Services. We felt being from the often "forgotten" County Donegal, it was the theme that resonated most with us.



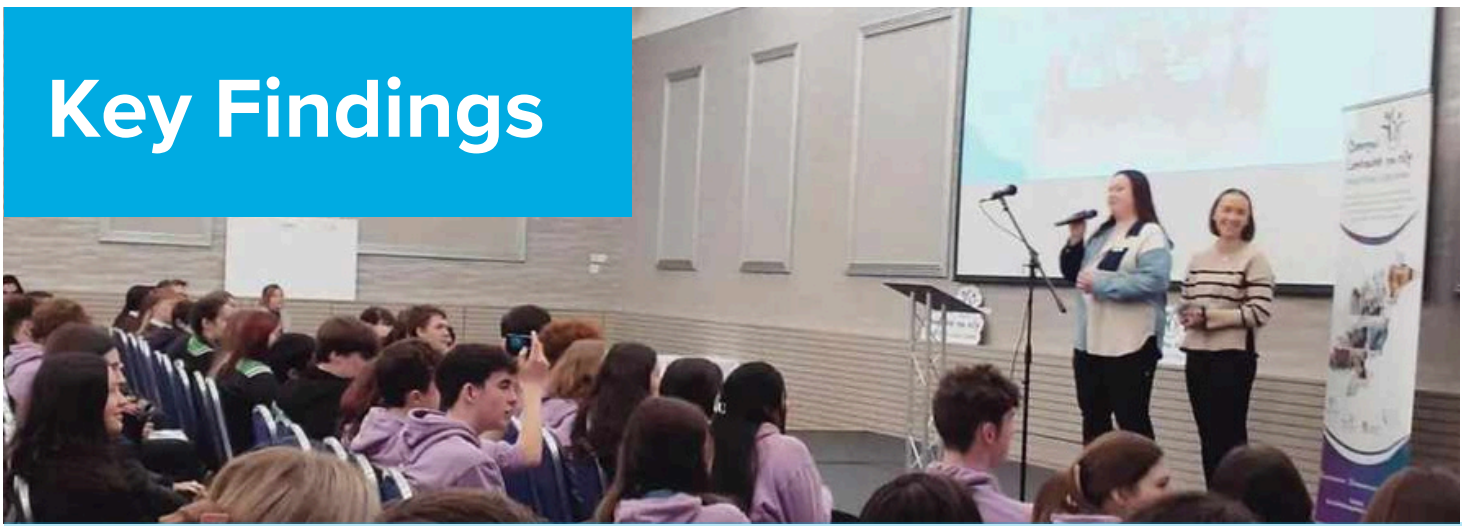
**“Jigsaw and Youth Advocates are huge proponents for young people having a voice and using that voice to effect change.”**

## First steps...

We created a survey in partnership with Jigsaw's Research & Evaluation Team. We launched the survey at Donegal Youth Council's AGM which received 89 responses from young people aged 12-18 years old from across Donegal. This report contains key findings from the survey and main themes arising. It contains our recommendations for opportunities to help young people from rural communities overcome barriers to help seeking and accessing services.



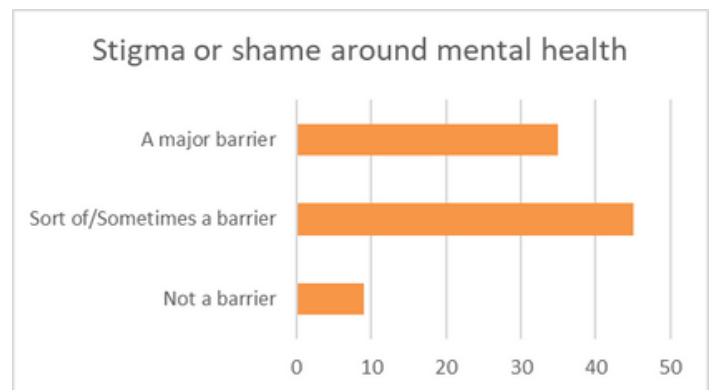
# Key Findings



The survey results revealed valuable insights into the barriers young people from rural communities face when seeking mental health support

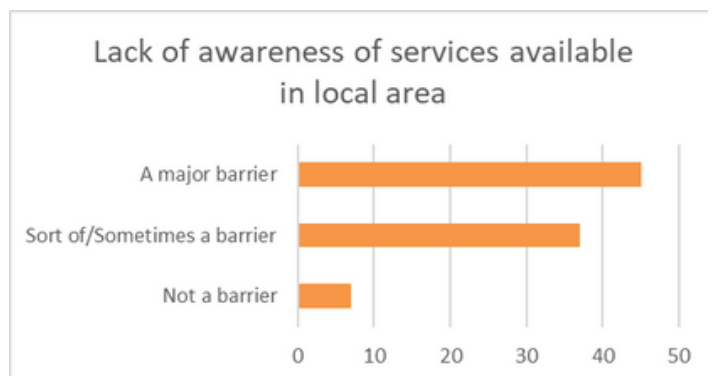
## ➔ Stigma or shame emerged as a significant concern.

35 respondents considered it a major barrier and 45 indicating it as a sort of/sometimes barrier.


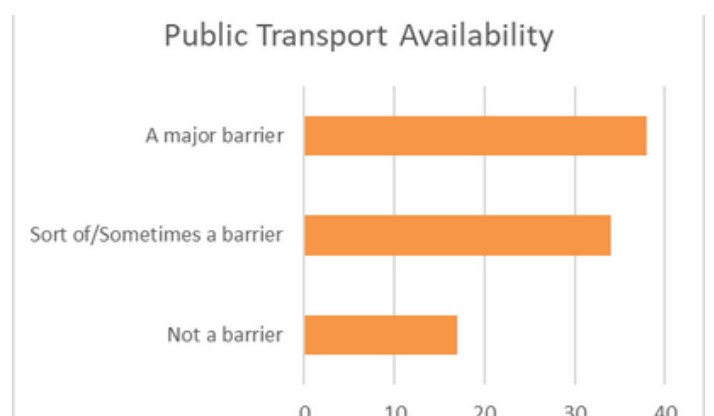


## ➔ Lack of Awareness

This was also highlighted with over 50 percent (45 respondents) identifying it as a major barrier



➔ Issues related to public transport availability, cost of transportation, and lack of trust in services were also identified as significant obstacles by a notable number of young people.



Surprisingly, WiFi connectivity was less frequently noted as a major barrier, possibly indicating a potential positive shift towards young people seeking or accessing digital support.

# Themes Arising

By amplifying the voices of young people themselves, we aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding youth mental health and service accessibility in Donegal. Through open-text boxes, participants shared their personal experiences and perspectives and from this, we have identified four main themes.

## Theme 1: Stigma

This stigma theme encompassed seeking mental health support in general, but also particularly for young men. Young people also reported facing stigma specifically from family members. These stigma areas resulted in students being apprehensive towards seeking support due to the lack of discussion surrounding the need for mental health support for males and due to the negative attitudes that parents may have towards mental health.



**“Men's mental health is never really spoken about”**



**“I fear how I will be treated in the service. Will I be accepted for who I am?”**

## Theme 2: Fear

The fear of discrimination from professionals and/or those around them can prevent young people from pursuing care. For example, it was noted that if a young person's mental health was impacted by identifying as LGBTQ+ and closeted. Then the fear of being outed may deter them from seeking help.

Also, young people living in rural settings who are from new communities, may have past experiences of racism which can lead to distrust of services. This only makes it harder for young people in minority groups to access services, even though they're more likely to experience mental health difficulties.

## Theme 3: Accessibility

The students highlighted that Donegal has a high proportion of rural communities. Many young people rely on public transport in order to access mental health services, which are often located in more urban towns/cities. It was noted that the financial cost of public transport, along with the reported infrequency/unreliability of public transport act as barriers to accessing services.

Furthermore, respondents also made reference to the consideration of young people who live in rural communities where English may not be their first language. Often, mental health literature or services are predominantly available in English. These language barriers may result in young people lacking the confidence to seek help.

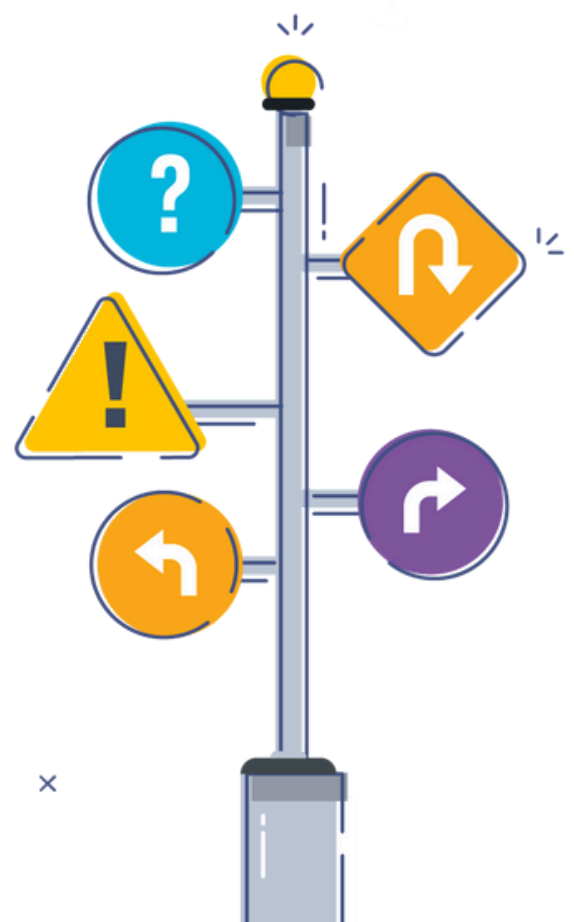


**“Hard to help-seek when I’m unsure of what services are available in the local area, it can be hard to know what the right service is for the need.”**

## Theme 4: Lack of Awareness

Another key barrier noted by students was the lack of awareness towards services that are available to support student’s mental health., they were unsure of where to go for help.

This involved uncertainty towards which type of services students should be reaching out to based on the type of support they were looking for but also the lack of awareness towards the range of services available e.g. online services or services within their locality.



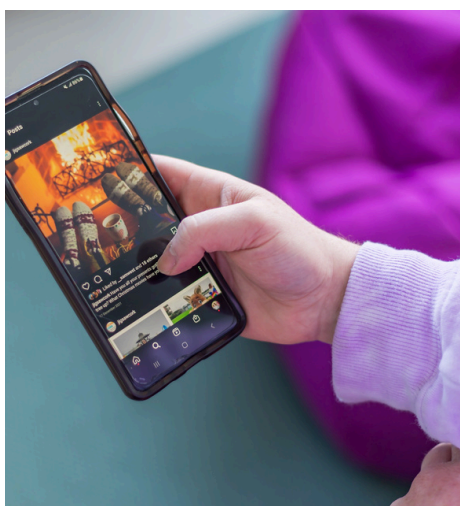
# Commitments ( in Jigsaw)



## 01

### **Increase visibility campaigns**

Increase visibility campaigns encouraging young men to access services. Commit to making services more inclusive for different ethnic backgrounds (ie. Not white Irish), LGBTQIA+, non-native English speakers, migrants.



## 02

### **Promotion of Online Services**

Increase promotion of Jigsaw's online services e.g. Jigsaw Live Chat, Group Chats and resources on [jigsaw.ie](http://jigsaw.ie).

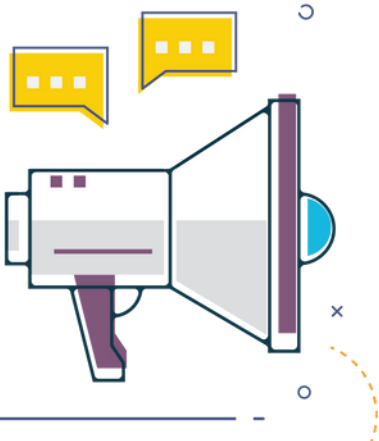


## 03

### **Create community map/tool-kit**

Create a tool kit of coping mechanisms and strategies (available online, in schools and in the hub, on the website) Create an interactive online community map of services.

# Demands ( of key decision makers)



**Increased routes and more reliable public transport in Donegal.**

**Free transport for young people (Germany, Luxembourg, Malta, Italy, Spain, France and many other countries all have schemes in place) Ireland is a ‘test country’ for many EU policies brought in by popular vote. Now is the time for Ireland to have a free transport scheme in place for young people to avail of.**

## Together we can...

1. Promote mental health as a priority in our communities through campaigns, school based initiatives and removing barriers to accessing services and support.
2. Provide resources to people who do not speak English as a first language when accessing services.
3. Break the stigma and barriers to accessing mental health resources, ( ie. One Good Coach, One Good School, One Good Adult, etc.) especially for young men.





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