

Youthwatch Trafford



Kooth.com

Mystery Shop Exercise May-June 2021

Results & Recommendations presented July 2021
& Kooth's response Sept 2021

Our presentation

Introduction: who we are &
what we did

The results of our mystery
shopper exercise

Our summary &
recommendations

Introduction: who we are & what we did

Who we are

healthwatch
Trafford

- We are the independent health & social care Services champion for the people of Trafford.
- We gather and represent your views to show where they are doing well and where they can be improved.
- We provide information, advice and support about local health and social care services

www.healthwatchtrafford.co.uk

Youthwatch
Trafford

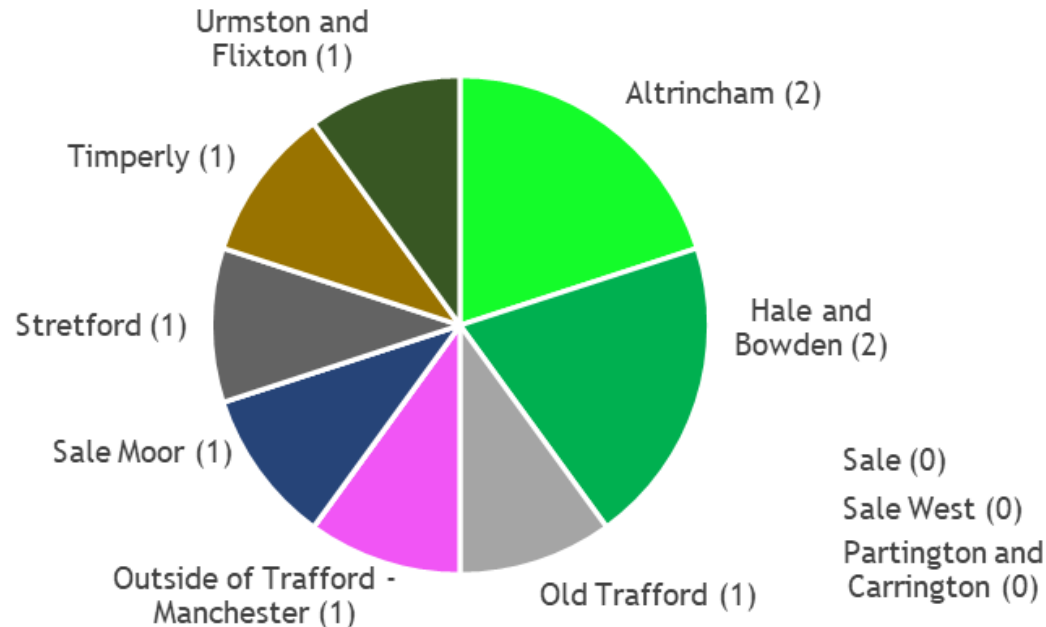
- We are Healthwatch Trafford's team of young volunteers (age 14-18), helping them to communicate with other young people and to find out about their experiences of health and care.
- We assess how good health and care organisations are at providing services to young people in our borough.
- We provide information & advice through our own website

www.youthwatchtrafford.co.uk

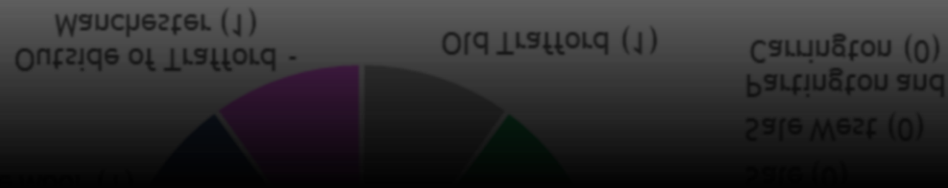
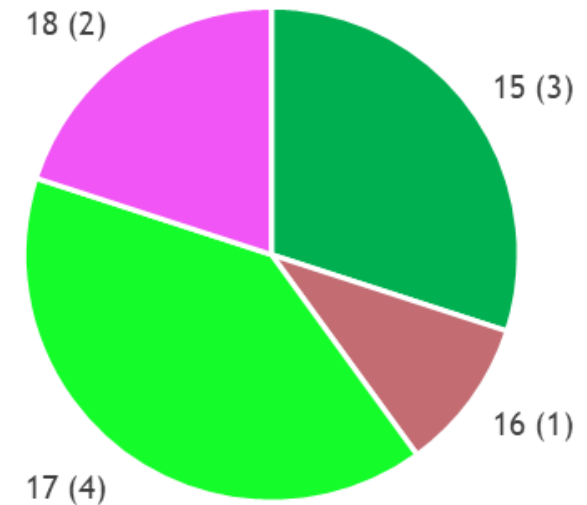
Our demographics

All of us were involved in at least one stage of the project, from planning to undertaking the exercise or contributing to this presentation

Which area of Trafford do you live in?



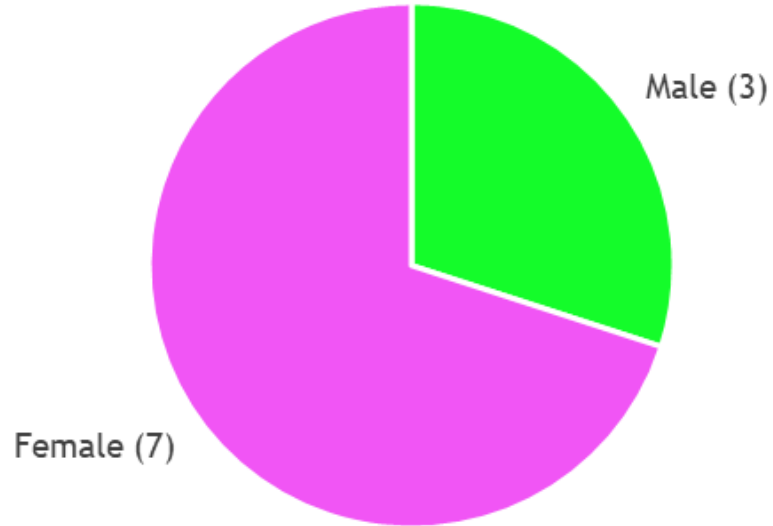
How old are you?



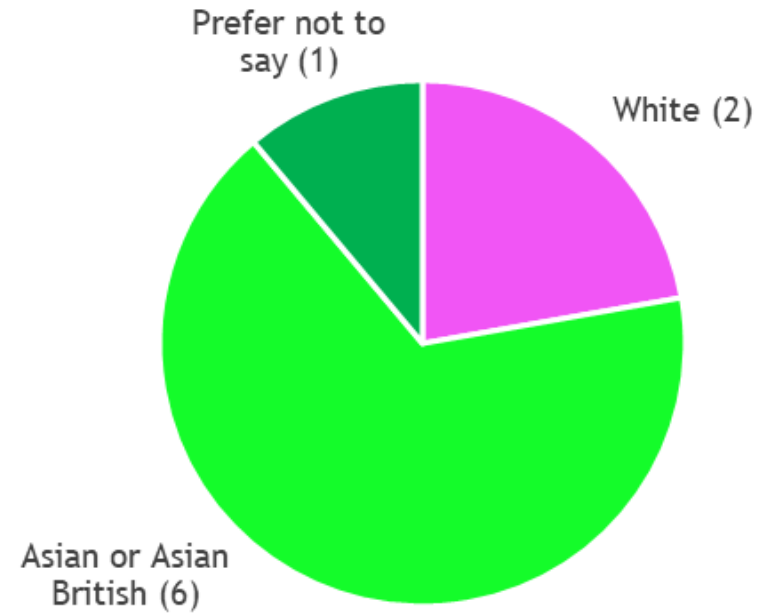
17 (4)

Our demographics

How would you describe your gender?



How would you describe your ethnicity?



Female (7)

Asian or Asian British (6)

Initial planning and discussion

- Our team met via zoom in early 2021 after Trafford Council asked for our feedback about Kooth.com
 - [Kooth.com](#) provides online anonymous emotional and mental health support for children and young people
- All of us had heard of Kooth before, through our schools and through volunteering with Youthwatch Trafford



We signpost to Kooth on our own website's mental health page <http://youthwatchtrafford.co.uk/health-hub/mental-health/>

- We logged into Kooth and noted our first impressions (see next slide) and discussed ideas for tasks we could undertake in a mystery shop

Our first impressions of Kooth.com

When I first clicked on it was **bright and colourful**, however it said sign in and you had to use a user name and I understand it's anonymous **but i don't know if i would 100% trust it**. also I didnt want to create an account as i wont use it.
- EVIE

I thought it was **overall pretty good with a nice layout, especially the mini activities** which I thought were very helpful and could see users say how much they helped in the comments. However, one thing that I noticed was that **there weren't any trigger warnings** on some of the posts in the discussion boards area. For example, I saw a post where someone was talking about some potentially distressing topics in detail on their post and there weren't any warnings? I know from other social media platforms that trigger warnings are a major thing and so I was confused as to why there weren't any on Kooth. - DIYA

I've looked at Kooth's website **both on mobile and on laptop and they seem pretty similar and quite easy to navigate** - MALAIKA

I've looked through the Kooth website. **The layout of the website is good** and easy to use and it makes it clear what Kooth is for and who can use it. There is also a **one and a half minute video** on the website saying what you can do on Kooth which looked good as well. I started setting up an account to see the sort of questions you are asked, and cancelled near the end. I'm not sure about the idea of picking your own usernames as if it is supposed to be anonymous, **some people may choose a username that has their own name in it** and won't be able to change it back. Since no two people can have the same username, it could be better if it automatically generates a random username for each person, for the person to remember. The layout of the website is good and easy to use and it makes it clear what Kooth is for. Also, it says that it is completely anonymous but some people could feel as if the questions are too personal, because you have to answer questions asking for your age, birthday, ethnicity and location. - SOHAIL

I've looked at Kooth's website both on mobile and on laptop and they seem pretty similar and quite easy to navigate. Three good things I could see:

1. Anonymous
2. **Easy to access information** and other people, clear and concise
3. Seems very **personalised** - being able to set goals is nice and seems like a community can form between regular users which seems very helpful

- LUIS

The mystery shop tasks

- We shared our ideas for how to go about the mystery shop with Trafford Council who worked them up into a list of tasks.
- During May-June 2021 we individually logged into the Kooth.com website and recorded notes about our experience of the tasks:
 - 1: Forum messages & Covid content
 - 2: Mini activities
 - 3: Chat & articles

Limitations of our exercise

- While we do represent young people in Trafford, please remember there are only 10 of us 😊
- We don't cover every single age/ ethnicity / area of Trafford.
- We didn't log in to chat to a counsellor as we didn't want to take their time away from others who really needed it.
- This presentation is our report on the findings of our exercise. We've included our team's individual comments (anonymised) about their experience and an overall impression we agreed upon.

The results of our mystery shopper exercise

1: Forum messages & Covid content



OUR TASKS:

- Please can you set up a forum message/thread in regards to something and see if this gets posted.
- Please have a look around the site for any specific COVID/lockdown related articles/forums published by Kooth.

1: Forum messages & Covid content

Q1: Was your forum message posted and how quickly?

Messages were submitted but we didn't know where to locate them again. We found lots of posts on the site don't seem to receive responses.

- *“I started a discussion and it said that it might take a few days to be posted depending on how busy the team is...I'm not sure how to check where my discussion is/the website is quite difficult to navigate in terms of finding discussion I think I might want to follow”*
- *“It looks like many posts don't receive responses from others and sometimes it seems that it's not that helpful what they do receive. This could be due to the monitoring of responses, though I'm not sure.”*

1: Forum messages & Covid content

Q2: If you managed to find some COVID/lockdown related content, did you feel that this helped you to understand COVID and the general thoughts and feelings you have during this time?

We had contrasting experiences - some couldn't find the Covid information.

- *“Yes, I think there’s a great variety of information in their health and wellbeing section, including information for BAME groups, advice on how to use the Test and Trace NHS app, advice on caring for unwell loved ones and so much more. I think this can prove really helpful to people who want to see that there is help for what they’re going through, and that other people have been through a similar situation.”*
- *“Could not find anything covid/lockdown related immediately, upon further inspection, I still could not find anything on covid/the lockdown. Perhaps they might be hidden away in the discussions but there was nothing that I could easily access.”*

2: Mini activities



OUR TASKS:

- Please complete a 'mini-activity' and make a note of how it made you feel- this could either be during the activity or a comparison of how you felt before and after completing it.

2: Mini activities

Q3: Please make some notes here on how the mini activity made you feel - this could either be during the activity or a comparison of how you felt before and after completing it.

The activities relaxed us and gave us ideas to help us in future.

- *“Create your own activity jar: Really helps to organize activities and hobbies you'd like to try or get through, and most importantly helps to set aside time (e.g. 10 minutes) to relax and set aside everything else. Personally, it has worked as a really good stress-relief, after worrying about certain tasks I've set to complete in the day.”*
- *“Writing to my future self helped me understand what I wanted to accomplish in the future and what I had to prepare to do so. It lightened the pressure I had worrying about my future and made me relax preparing for any future situations”*

3: Chat & articles



OUR TASKS:

- Look at the chat function
- Look at the range of articles

3: Chat & articles

Q4: What are your impressions of the chat function provided on the site? Would this be something you would consider using if you needed any help, support or advice?

We think the chat function is really useful but we have concerns about the wait time for responses.

- *“Yes, I thought it was organised really well - there is a messaging feature that could be used for advice and a separate live chat feature that feels more like it is for longer conversations and discussions. Although they are only open for certain hours throughout the day and a wait for a response, there are links to alternative services e.g. Childline if you need immediate support. Also, the conversations are anonymous and confidential so it makes you feel comfortable talking to them.”*

>> more comments on next slide

3: Chat & articles

- *“The layout seems great, bright and perfect for the target demographic and I would definitely consider using this function. Yet the major drawback is the wait time. I understand it's not possible for every young person to be seen immediately but giving the young person some tips, information or activities to do in the meantime would probably be very beneficial to both the service and it's users. Giving some ideas for what should be done in the meantime may decrease the amount of people leaving midway before they've had a chance to talk to a kooth member about how they're feeling.”*
- *“Yes, as it seems useful to be able to talk to someone you don't know about any problems you may be facing and receive advice from someone who potentially has helped others to face the same issue. It's unfortunate that it takes a while to talk to them and that you can only talk to them once a week in live chat, but that's not that big an issue so long as you can talk to them really.”*

3: Chat & articles

Q5: What are your impressions of the articles section of the site? What are your thoughts on the range of topics covered? Are there any specific topics which aren't covered which you would like to see?

We liked the variety of articles and how they are arranged.

- *“I liked how the articles were arranged into categories to facilitate finding a relevant article and there are many articles on a wide range of topics, so it is easy to find an article on the specific topic you want to read about. It also was nice that amongst more serious topics, there were also lighter articles on e.g. gaming. Furthermore, the fact that people can share poems/ stories about their experiences anonymously allows others to realise that lots of people feel the same way they do and go through similar experiences, offering a sense of commonality to help people feel less alone.”*

>> more comments on next slide

3: Chat & articles

- *“Good range of topics and issues raised, I think an improvement would be more articles written on disabilities, eating disorders and psychosis.”*
- *“The articles and the forums are arguably the best part of Kooth, it lets young people voice their concerns and issues living with mental illness and/or disabilities and it lets other people interact with those who are similar to them. They are well written, a good fit to their demographic and cover a wide range of topics.”*
- *“I think there’s a wide variety of categories and sub-categories which cover anything I could think of, and more importantly the articles are high quality and lots of effort clearly goes into these, in order to help others as much as possible.”*

Overall impressions

Q6: After using the site would you use Kooth again?
Please provide detail on why/why not if you are happy to.

Mixture of responses from our team:

- *“Personally, I don’t struggle with stress, anxiety, depression or other mental health issues and so while I think Kooth can still be good for people like me to find new ways to relax and cope with new, different stressful situations I don’t think I’ll need to use it again.”*
- *“No. It’s quite difficult to navigate and the site is quite unappealing, the forums seem a bit bleak in terms of layout. The idea and resources available seem to be very helpful but are difficult to access.”*

>> more comments on next slide

Overall impressions

- *"I would use the site again as it gave me reassurance that I'm not the only one who deals with these issues, the forums were especially reassuring and helpful by letting people with disabilities/ mental illnesses connect with each other and assist with finding solutions to their problems. It also has an exceptional range of topics on the website with young people discussing everything from low mood to psychosis to specific learning disabilities and this was very encouraging because these are much less common and there's still a taboo regarding living with these disorders. I think even if people aren't willing to speak to a counsellor on the website they should at least have a look at the forums and articles section of Kooth."*

Overall impressions

Q7: Would you encourage another young person (friend/peer/sibling) to sign up to Kooth?

Overall, yes, we would encourage others to use Kooth.com as we think it can really help people.

- *“Yes, I think the information and the activities provided are really helpful to help people help themselves. On top of that, with the anonymity of the site people don’t have to worry about others finding out about their worries and problems which can be really personal. Even with this anonymity, there don’t seem to be any negative comments which makes it really encouraging to use. Finally, the counselling service seems best of all, having someone to talk to that can listen to you and potentially help.”*

>> more comments on next slide

Overall impressions

- *“No. It was very frustrating to navigate, the content is good but the website is not as easy to use as it could be.”*
- *“Yes, I think it's a great app for young people to use especially if they're feeling isolated, or like they're the only one going through these issues. It also provides a lot of information about living with mental illnesses which can be very helpful to some. However I wouldn't recommend they use the app to speak to a professional simply because the waiting time to do so is very long and exhausting. An improvement to this may be providing links, videos and tips on what to do whilst waiting for your appointment or preparing for the appointment, by perhaps writing down what's going on for the young person at that time.”*

Overall impressions

Q8: What are your thoughts on the accessibility of the site (e.g. is there a range of font sizes and/or translation into different languages)?

We couldn't see how to change font size/language.

- *“There doesn't seem to be an option to change font size or to change languages, I don't think its very accessible, however, I can understand that it might be difficult to translate forum posts into other languages due to the nature of the informal language used (i.e. it might be difficult to translate slang/certain tones of the text) however, I think the website would benefit from having resources available in different languages.”*
- *“There doesn't seem to be any change in font sizes or different languages available, so it does seem very focused on solely English speakers, however due to the nature of the website where each comment and post is monitored it does make sense and would prove to be difficult to include other languages - something which may have to be considered in the future if it does expand (though whether they want to is a different question).”*

Our summary & recommendations

Our summary

What we liked:

- The layout of the website is good and easy to use - it makes it clear what Kooth is for and who can use it.
- Good variety of articles
- The live chat function is really helpful
- Mini activities were relaxing
- Good on any type of device
- Introductory video
- Personalisation – e.g. setting own goals
- We might not need Kooth ourselves but we would recommend to others

Our summary

What we liked - comment from one Youthwatch Trafford volunteer:

- *“The anonymity which lets you discuss topics freely. The Kooth practitioners who let you talk about your issues with another person in real time. The monitored posts and comments which mean that the site is used for what it’s intended - no insults or people taking advantage of the sensitive information. And, the variety of activities and information which you can use on your own if you don’t want to participate in the community. It’s suited to many types of people.”*

Our summary

What we didn't like:

- Difficult to find our forum post
- Covid information wasn't obvious
- Lack of translated articles
- The length of time it takes for chat to be responded to
- Some of us found the site difficult to navigate

Our summary

What we didn't like - comment from one Youthwatch Trafford volunteer:

- *“It seemed very clinical and lacking colour which was quite off putting and I don't think that this would be suitable for older audiences, some of the language used in the activities seems quite patronising i.e. practise asking for help. I feel like this type of advice is not very helpful as it is repeating what a lot of young people are already told. I think for this specific activity, it may have been more helpful to learn how to ask for help i.e. identifying which people in their lives they would feel comfortable disclosing sensitive information to, understanding that they don't have to tell someone everything if they're not comfortable... More specific advice would be beneficial and a site which is easier to navigate would attract more users. Perhaps it may be beneficial to look at popular social media outlets and mimic their style of information presentation, as young people are already quite familiar with this layout, it may be easier and less stressful to navigate the website this way. Furthermore, to search discussions more accurately, perhaps the website could have a search bar to navigate content?”*

Our recommendations for Kooth.com

Updated with Kooth's response

Youthwatch Trafford said:

More reassurance about anonymity when logging in



Kooth said: This is something we have also heard in some of our sessions with young people, and we totally agree with it - anonymity and confidentiality are essential parts of Kooth. We will take this feedback into consideration when we next improve on the introduction parts of our site.

Youthwatch Trafford said:

Generate random usernames instead of users choosing



Kooth said: Great idea! In fact, it's one our teams have already explored as a way to help people find anonymous usernames, and it's a feature we want to explore when we next get a chance to look at improving the username creation experience.

Our recommendations for Kooth.com

Updated with Kooth's response

Youthwatch Trafford said:

More user testing for site navigation to identify how to improve

&

More explanation about what happens when you post to the forum and how to find your post



Kooth said:

This is something our design team has explored after receiving similar feedback from user testing. We have some things we're looking to implement to improve the navigation of the site, including launching labels to make it clearer what the different parts of the site are. We also hear a lot about the difficulties people have in finding posts they've created, and we really appreciate how challenging this is. The team has also been exploring ideas to solve this problem.

Our recommendations for Kooth.com

Updated with Kooth's response

Youthwatch Trafford said:
Include trigger warnings



Kooth said:

Our Participation team ran a series of workshops with young people, to understand how we might make it more visible that content is shared in a safe and age-appropriate way, and the topic of trigger warnings came up in these discussions. The research there showed that people wanted some key words to be used as warnings before clicking into content, so they would know if there was anything potentially triggering in it. The Kooth Content team has already started to make some improvements to how content is described.

Our recommendations for Kooth.com

Updated with Kooth's response

Youthwatch Trafford said:
Improve accessibility by providing translations of key articles



Kooth said: Accessibility and inclusion are very important to us, and we've invested a lot of time in ensuring that the things we're building are meeting a high standard of accessibility. We recognise also though that providing translations is another key area for improving accessibility, and have been exploring ways to make this happen.

Our recommendations for Kooth.com

Updated with Kooth's response

Youthwatch Trafford said:

Ideas of how to help yourself
while you wait between weekly
live chats



Kooth said: This is a really interesting idea! We will take it into consideration and think about how to make it clear that there are activities, articles and discussions on the site that could support people while waiting between chats. We also want to help people find the things most relevant to them, so that they can get the support they need.

Thank you for asking us to undertake this exercise and for listening to our feedback!

We'll follow up after one year.

Check out our website at www.youthwatchtrafford.co.uk

and follow us @youthwatchtraff !

