



## **Influencer Award**

### **Name of organisation or individual nominated**

YoungMinds Very Important Kids (VIK)

#### **1. What were you trying to change?** (maximum 200 words)

Help us understand your vision, aims and the factors that drive you forward

The VIK project aims to ensure that the views of children and young people with mental health issues from across the UK are heard within YoungMinds, across the whole children and young people's mental health sector, within government, policy makers and in the media

Every six weeks twenty young people with mental health problems aged 11 to 25 from across the UK come together to discuss the issues they would like to see tackled. These include the stigma associated with getting help or telling friends about their concerns, the problem of long waiting lists to receive support and treatment and their experiences of psychiatric units. They input into policy documents on young people's mental health and provide feedback on government strategies.

The panel of young people have created their own manifesto for change, using their own experiences of the mental health system, and have come up with the following 11 points

1. Stigma still affects us; it's about time we were able to talk about how we feel
2. Deal with problems when we are young: train primary school staff
3. Growing up is difficult; support us when changes happen in our lives
4. Getting what we need at secondary school; train everyone to understand teenagers problems
5. Waiting lists and assessments just make it harder; make them shorter and provide us with one worker for all care
6. Someone to speak up for us; we all need advocates
7. Some doctors don't listen to us; they need to understand and support us
8. Going to A&E can be traumatic; treat us with respect, see beyond our labels
9. Some psychiatric units feel like prisons; learn from the best ones
10. Lost in the system; don't forget about us when we are 16 plus
11. We're the experts; start listening

#### **2. How did you use your influence?** (Maximum 200 words)

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Who did you influence, what methods did you use to influence them and how did you overcome problems etc.

VIK members have worked with the media, politicians, key policy makers and mental health professionals to help bring alive the points of the manifesto.

This has involved:

- 4 VIK members speaking at the British Psychological Society Conference.
- Ensuring children and young people's are heard within the National Advisory Council (NAC) for children's mental health and psychological wellbeing, the independent body set up as the result of the National CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) Review. This has included meeting with Phil Hope, Minister for Care to highlight young peoples views on mental health services and setting up a user involvement panel to include VIK members to respond to the governments New Horizons consultation.
- Meeting with the Prime Minister Gordon Brown, and writing to him to encourage more support for children and young people with mental health problems in school.
- Creating a powerful and innovative film to bring alive their manifesto points  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NzPdo00pPrY&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NzPdo00pPrY&feature=player_embedded) which has been praised for its creativity in highlighting such a sensitive issue
- Sending copies of the manifesto to every MP, gaining 79 signatories on an Early day motion supporting the manifesto and meeting with MPs from all three of the major parties to discuss their work further
- VIK being interviewed in the regional press around the country and nationally on Radio 4's Bringing Up Britain Series, Radio1's Sunday Surgery and in a lengthy feature in Best magazine,

### 3. What changed? (Maximum 200 words)

e.g. Did you change a law, an attitude, a policy, a conflict situation?

VIKs work has helped to challenge attitudes and made sure that young people are being consulted when it comes to changes that will affect the mental health services they are using. Prior to VIKs involvement with the NAC there was no service user involvement despite the CAMHS review identifying that young people should be involved in decision making.

Their work has raised awareness of the issues young people with mental health problems face to the public, politicians and mental health professionals. Through this work the VIKs are tackling stigma head on, opening up the debate about mental health problems and demonstrating that mental health is everybody's business.

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