

We Will

In December 2017, eight young people from West Cumbria had become so despairing about the lack of youth mental health services in their area and the impact it was having on family and friends that they called a public meeting and came together to form the WE WILL youth mental health campaign.

All of the founding members of WE WILL had been impacted directly or indirectly by mental health problems and the lack of support available to young people. They were determined to do something about it and were adamant that as young people they were best placed to make change. Their plan was to gather young people aged 14-18 and to support young people to lead change in how we deal with youth mental health in schools, communities, families and wider circles.

‘Young people have been waiting up to 18 months for specialist mental health support. It’s simply NOT GOOD ENOUGH. No young person should have to suffer like this.’ WE WILL member.

They wanted to have an impact. They wanted to be heard. They wanted to create urgent and lasting change. They wanted to inspire other young people to take action with them. Tired of waiting for other people to make a change in the way that youth mental health is dealt with they knew that in order to make tangible change happen they needed to be passionate but also to be well informed, tactical, strategic, persuasive and practical. They knew however that the issues relating to mental health are complex. They therefore decided to

start by doing research. They spent their first year talking to GP's; friends; school staff; family members; health commissioners and health workers; community leaders and local decision makers. They organised a schools conference with a panel of Heads, teachers and governors and chaired the discussion. They presented to health and community groups, decision makers, funders, business leaders, senior health officials and attended countless meetings in an attempt to understand where they could make a difference.

In May 2019 WE WILL were invited to meet the (former) Mental Health Minister, Jackie Doyle-Price MP and Shadow Minister Barbara Keeley MP. WE WILL accepted the invitation on the promise that one young person from WE WILL could Chair the meetings. They developed the following proposal and pitched it to Minister's and MP's...

- We Will is a youth mental health group is based in the Ewanrigg ward of Maryport, Cumbria.
- Ewanrigg is in the 10% most deprived communities in the UK.
- We are one of the furthest constituencies from Westminster.
- A lack of public and third sector mental health support, health services, school nurses and counsellors, public transport, social mobility, accessible jobs and training opportunities compounded with rising mental health problems and rural isolation mean that our young people need urgent help.

- The impact of having to wait up to 18 months for specialist mental health services is having a devastating effect on our young people, their families, friends and schools.
- Young people and their mental health are not being taken seriously enough by those in power and influence in our county and our country.
- We welcome an increase in 2.3 billion for mental health has been announced however we have no confidence that this investment will make an urgent difference to young people in our area.
- Our young people need the youth mental health system to work for them.
Now.
- We need visible, urgent improvements in specialist mental health support in Maryport.
- We need to be piloting the initiatives in the NHS Long Term Plan for Children and Young People's Mental Health. We can't wait for other areas to get this first and then for the benefits and learning to trickle down to us.
- We can help you to make a start delivering on the commitments that you want to make happen as outlined in the NHS Long Term Plan.

Maryport makes an ideal location for piloting the initiatives outlined below in the NHS Long Term Plan for Children and Young People's mental health because:

- Our deprivation statistics are significantly higher than North West averages. The need is huge and if we pilot the initiatives the improvement will be huge.
- CAMHS West Cumbria is being taken over by Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust creating a timely opportunity to implement new ways of working with a stronger infrastructure and more clinical capacity.
- WE WILL have helped form strong youth mental health partnerships between schools, communities, young people and health groups. We have a track record of delivering bespoke youth led solutions to mental health problems in our area.
- We know that across the NHS we don't have the whole clinical workforce that is needed but we're not asking for that today. Many of our requests mean less reliance on the NHS.
- North Cumbria CCG, Cumbria County Council, NTW Foundation Trust and the Lord Bishop of Carlisle support WE WILL's approach to improving youth mental health.
- By investing into pilot projects to deliver the NHS Long Term Plan initiatives for children and young people's mental health in West Cumbria in partnership

with WE WILL, we can work together to reduce the strain on the mental health system and ensure that young people receive timely support in the family, in the community, in schools and from specialist providers.

- We can help you to make a start delivering on the commitments that you want to make happen as outlined in the NHS Long Term Plan.

Their story

The WE WILL group members undertook their research and looked at what they could do improve youth mental health in their area. The following is what they have achieved/undertaken...

They expanded the group to 15 active committee members with hundreds of supporters and advocates.

All group members are Youth Mental Health First Aid trained. They have helped secure funding for over 300 local parents, teachers, pupils and community workers to gain a qualification in Youth Mental Health First Aid. This number is rising rapidly. After finding YMHFA training to be a vital tool in understanding youth mental health and teaching simple listening skills, the group then went on to encourage others in their community to take the course. The young people work as advocates for YMHFA training – encouraging people to undertake the training and also spread the word. They are also trained to pass on basic YMHFA and suicide alert messages to peers and the wider community. They have worked with the Ewanrigg Local Trust to fund

training so that anyone living or working with young people in the Maryport area can access the training (many courses have been offered for free depending on certain criteria). In one of their local secondary schools the group have set up a scheme whereby all teachers and sixth formers who are Youth Mental Health First Aid trained now wear green lanyards that clearly mark them out as a friendly and approachable person for any member of staff or pupil to speak to if they need guidance. Expanding the young people's work, one of their local secondary schools has become a champion of youth mental health and has successfully secured funding that enables EVERY secondary school in West Cumbria to nominate a member of staff who will access free training to become a qualified Youth Mental Health First Aid Trainer. This secures the sustainability of the above work across West Cumbria. Each secondary school will also offer free training to staff in primary feeder schools.

'I've done my YMHFA qualification. This doesn't make me a counsellor but it does mean that I'm not afraid to ask someone in school if they are ok and to listen and know what to do if they aren't. Being approachable and available can make all the difference to someone who has a lot going on in their head. This is why we want to get as many people trained as possible within schools.'

A We Will member.

The group helped recruit other young people and set up youth led mental health groups in their local secondary schools. Supported by the senior leadership team these groups devised and initiated bespoke solutions to the problems they faced. They have written and presented recommendations for

schools to improve youth mental health and regularly present these to West Cumbria secondary school cluster meetings see <https://www.itv.com/news/border/2019-06-24/conference-to-find-a-solution-to-west-cumbrias-mental-health-crisis/>. These recommendations include each school having their own bespoke youth led mental health group; a YMHFA trained Governor responsible for mental health for each school and a programme of activity for mental health awareness week.

‘Having a governor who took a lead on improving youth mental health was a complete game changer for us in our school. We had someone who we could go to with our recommendations and who could help us put them forward to the senior team. We met with this Governor and our Head teacher with a list of things that we wanted to do in school to improve youth mental health. We hoped that they might approve one or two. They approved all of them!’

As mentioned above, they wrote and presented recommendations for government and health commissioners to improve youth mental health and presented these in Westminster to the (then) Minister for Mental Health Jackie Doyle-Price MP; Shadow Minister Barbara Keeley MP, Sue Hayman MP and senior civil servants. Meetings in Westminster were also Chaired (at WE WILL members request) by members of WE WILL. The meeting led to Barbara Keeley MP offering to visit West Cumbria to speak to WE WILL and health commissioners to share the trailblazing example in her Manchester constituency, her letter is attached as an appendix. Westminster meetings also opened the door for WE WILL to speak directly to the most senior health

officials in the region and campaign for commitments to improve youth mental health services as bullet pointed further down.

West Cumbria is a historically underfunded area. The young people have brought in £10,000 of funding from #IWill to support their campaign. They have also brought in approximately £7000 in funding in kind from people who have heard about the campaign and wanted to offer support. Some examples include film professionals volunteering their time to teach film skills; a professional comedy workshop; a Guardian journalist offering a 'writing for social causes' course and a 'learn how to teach meditation' course. In addition a mother who lost her son to suicide has been in touch to say that she would like to fundraise to support the group.

WE WILL actively promote the importance of LISTENING. They have made three award nominated films that have reached over 100,000 people. They are also one of only 10 national successful applications for NHS Community Funding in 2010 – this new funding will enable them to make their next film and for it to be distributed by the NHS nationally as well as locally.

Their three films; BOY, WE WILL Listen and WE WILL Campaign can be viewed here.

Boy (HD)

<https://vimeo.com/334418615>

We Will Campaign (HD)

<https://vimeo.com/334432214>

We Will Listen

<https://vimeo.com/315768975>

‘I’ve been struggling with depression. I don’t think teachers understand how much it stops you learning. I feel like I’m in a fog. I can’t hear the teachers. I can’t remember anything. I want to be invisible. Some teachers think that if they shout at me it will motivate me. I’ve done the YMHFA training and I can tell which of my teachers have also done the training as they understand me better, I feel like I can talk to them which of course helps me to learn more.’

We Will member.

WE WILL want their simple message to be communicated globally and to make a difference to how people of all ages and backgrounds support young people. They have given up their time to formulate communication plans and key messages and they learned the strategic benefit of investing in planning their communications. The main message which they have created and want to communicate is:

- Have the courage to talk; have the courage to listen. No-one is alone.

To help spread this message WE WILL have given many interviews.

They have had an almost full page article in the Guardian newspaper, please read the article here

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/feb/12/mental-health-the-students-who-helped-themselves-when-help-was-too-slow-coming> The Guardian article resulted in much higher engagement figures than normally experienced in that section of the paper with an unusually high number of comments. The story was shared on to Facebook almost 8,000 times and over 200 people shared their personal stories on the Guardian online page with the feature sparking much debate (some of the comments are included at the end of this nomination).

They have achieved national media attention, inspiring thousands of others to recognise the problem and know how to make a difference.

They met the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge to discuss their mental health work and gave them a copy of their film BOY on a USB stick. Hours later the film was played by Kensington Royal Palace and was liked by 170,000 of their followers in 24 hours – a copy of the message is included as an appendix.

Please see to view the Instagram post

<https://www.instagram.com/p/Byk-frXFleM/>

When the group won a Diana Award for their outstanding contribution to improving youth mental health they were featured globally in the People Magazine which is the USA's second biggest online magazine see

<https://people.com/royals/kate-middleton-prince-william-met-mental-health>

[-campaigners-won-princess-diana-award/?fbclid=IwAR2VTA5gKGTQdETCRWxA1zfWZIB3jogGeEyolmKYnAbLectkO9b29chsMcs.](https://www.facebook.com/campaigners-won-princess-diana-award/?fbclid=IwAR2VTA5gKGTQdETCRWxA1zfWZIB3jogGeEyolmKYnAbLectkO9b29chsMcs)

They have been interviewed for the German equivalent of the BBC see...

<https://www.timesandstar.co.uk/news/17484289.german-tv-comes-to-maryport-to-interview-youth-mental-health-campaigners/> and in Italian online news articles.

They have undertaken media training to help them identify and communicate their key messages; to help them understand how to work with journalists and to understand the parameters and safeguards that they need to put in place around themselves when talking to the media. Local press has covered their activities from the beginning (News & Star, Times & Star) and they have been interviewed for CFM Radio. They have also been interviewed on BBC 5Live breakfast show with Nicky Campbell, appearing alongside local MP Sue Hayman. Their story has been shared on BBC Look North and also on ITV Border News.

The group have actively engaged with other local media opportunities and networks including working with the production team of Maryport Matters, a free 20-page full colour community magazine that is delivered direct to 8,000 homes in the area. They have provided regular articles and helped to create a youth focused special edition in September 2018. This edition carried listening tips created by the group and a self-help mood awareness cheat sheet for young people.

The group have given assemblies to local schools to convey their mental health messages. The last assembly they gave was filmed by CBBC for a half hour documentary about youth mental health which is due to be aired in February 2020 on Time to Talk Day. The documentary follows one of WE WILL's group members on a journey to find out how better nutrition, more sport and relaxation exercises can help improve mental health and includes interviews with the WE WILL group.

'You don't leave a person in a burning building for four hours. Why is it acceptable that young people have no out of hours mental health crisis care other than going to A&E?' WE WILL member.

WE WILL are currently planning their next two films to be made early in the New Year. One film will focus on their main campaign message for 2020 which is Just Listen – how to communicate with and listen better to young people. In the past few months alone WE WILL have presented to over 1000 people locally including employers; school pupils; Rotarians; health commissioners; philanthropists and health workers. Demand for them to present is greater than the time they have available therefore they are working with key stakeholders to create a film that can help them reach more people with vital mental health messages and specifically listening skills. For example North West Ambulance Service who employ nearly 5,000 staff have said that as staff training they will commit to regularly sharing a WE WILL Just Listen film. The other film has been commissioned by the NHS national Communication and Engagement Team and aims to inspire other people to

learn from WE WILL and to take a lead in their community to improve health and wellbeing.

The group have initiated meetings with local health service providers including GPs, CAMHS, counsellors, social workers etc. in order to research the issue and talk to them about potential areas for change. They have organised round table discussions, debates, taken part in questionnaires and surveys and constantly chased up to date statistics and information that can help strengthen the campaign for change. The group has actively engaged with local politicians and local authority figures throughout the campaign (including town councillors, county councillors and local MPs).

‘It’s almost impossible to get accurate, up to date useful statistics about our local youth mental health services but we managed to find out that the number of referrals of young people from West Cumbria to CAMHS quadrupled in the previous year. QUADRUPLED! This statistic helped us to push open doors, ask really challenging questions and continue to demand action and improvement.’ WE WILL member.

Having evaluated their achievements in 2019 WE WILL decided that whilst they had reached and influenced many people, their aim for 2020 should be to gain more commitment from people to improve youth mental health. They have refocused their campaign and are now putting plans in place to secure the following commitments...

1. Gain commitment from health commissioners to meet what we call our 4 x 4's target
 - 4 week waiting times for specialist youth mental health services (inc CAMHS and MyTime)
 - Young people in crisis to be seen within 4 hours
 - A mental health specialist available 4 all schools
 - Youth mental health services to be accessible 4 young people aged up to 25 years of age.
2. Gain commitment from West Cumbria schools, community groups and employers to implement a mental health policy which includes a named YMHFA governor/board member responsible for overseeing...
 - Putting in place a YMHFA training plan for staff and volunteers
 - A plan for mental health awareness week including watching and sharing our films
 - Clear signposting so people know where to go if help is needed
3. Gain commitment from members of the public to watch and share our youth mental health awareness films (including a package of new films) during Mental Health Awareness Week May 2020

In order to pursue the above commitments the group have put forward the commitments outlined above to key individuals and have already set up meetings for the coming months. They have encountered no barriers and in fact due to their positive working relationships and reputation have been welcomed to meet with the Chairs of local health trusts, Secondary Head Teacher clusters and a number of large employers including Sellafield Ltd.

As far as we know WE WILL are unique in being a youth initiated partnership of young people from different schools and colleges who have established themselves with the goal of improving youth mental health. When the group formed only a couple of them knew each other before. These young people have driven forwards and undertaken their own research. They have identified problems and opportunities and formulated their own strategy and campaign plan even down to creating their own logo and strapline ‘Have the courage to talk; have the courage to listen. No-one is alone.’

The impact of the group’s activities has been huge. Their voluntary research has been absolutely vital – not only in shaping their campaign, but also in sharing knowledge and understanding across ages and sectors. As young people, they have not only managed to make their voice heard more clearly and loudly than perhaps adults could have, they have also doggedly asked forthright and challenging questions until they have gained the information needed or found a way forward. They have had boundless energy and enthusiasm and have pursued issues that may have been dropped by adults who sadly don’t have the time or have had to prioritise other things due to budget restraints, capacity etc. Lots of this research and ‘enquiring’ has resulted in practical and visible changes.

Going above and beyond

These young people face individual and collective obstacles with a fierce, selfless and socially minded determination. They made the decision at the

beginning to focus on creating lasting change rather than discussing their own personal stories. These young people have given an estimated 3000 volunteer hours since they started the campaign. This would be extraordinary for anyone but is phenomenal considering the personal challenges that they face.

Examples of some of these challenges is as follows...

Time – all involved have been dealing with enormous academic pressure; on top of which many have jobs which involve working every weekend as well as weekday evening shifts.

Caring responsibilities – some of the young people are caring for grandparents, parents and siblings with poor physical/mental health.

Personal challenges – some of the group struggle with their own mental health without specialist support available to them. Several in the group struggle with health conditions which affects their ability to participate in ‘normal’ activities.

Financial – many in the group live in the most deprived areas of the UK and are working in paid jobs to provide for every day necessities and to support their families.

Geography – compared to most other areas we have less available public and third sector mental health support, health services, public transport, social mobility, jobs and training opportunities. All of this, with rural isolation contributes to mental health problems as well as making it more difficult and expensive to study, to access health support, to volunteer and to work.

Access to mental health support – those in the group who are struggling with their own mental health challenges have waited on average over 12 months for CAMHS or Tier 2 support. Support when received is of varying quality.

Ongoing recruitment issues mean that it is not unusual for mental health providers to be on long term sick and/or leave at short notice leaving posts unfilled often for long periods.

Despite all of these daily challenges, these young people contribute thousands of hours of their time to help others and are determined to continue to find a way of ensuring that young people can and will access the right youth mental health support in the near future. What surprises people who meet this group is that not only are they passionate, selfless and motivated, but they know ‘their stuff.’ They do their research and they put their point across in their own words, in their own style and with so much persuasiveness and planning that they are a force to be reckoned with and are truly making a difference in their community.

We all know that it is difficult to make change. In an area like West Cumbria when the population is mostly intransigent and people are isolated by the sea on one side and mountains on the other, cultural change can feel almost impossible. The group have had to learn how to deal with people who are resistant to change and/or unwilling to engage with them. They have had to learn to respond politely and respectfully and to know when to be persistent and when to ‘return to the drawing board.’ They have to continually review

their campaign strategy, weighing up which doors to 'push at' and how to focus their limited resources most effectively.

'People think that because we live in Cumbria we live in a chocolate box of pretty cottages, lakes and mountains. They don't get past the Lake District to see the poverty, the daily grind and the isolation.' WE WILL member

Ewanrigg, where the campaign is based is in one of the 10% most deprived wards in the UK. High rates of child poverty, incapacity claims and worklessness are combined with poor access to transport and services. The nearest A&E to Ewanrigg is a 30 minute drive away. One WE WILL member bravely gave an interview to our local press explaining that when she had a mental health crisis the 'out of hours' answerphone message told her that she must get to A&E however 42% of residents in this area have no access to their own transport. This is a classic example of the kind of challenge that young people here face and that their campaign seeks to address. The young people liaised with local youth mental health services and the newspaper to do a front page article in the local newspaper and online a few weeks before Christmas putting pressure on the commissioner to do more for young people in crisis in Cumbria and signposting young people and their loved ones to crisis hotlines that would be available 24 hours a day during the festive period.

One of the things about this group that makes them so unusual is that they are a group of young people leading change. The young people approached their local community development organisation (the Ewanrigg Local Trust) with a

germ of an idea who have provided them with the operational support to explore and develop their ideas and to apply for small pots of funding to help cover costs such as travel. They have been supported to make their own decisions regarding the direction of the campaign, what things they want to change and how they are going to do it. They have been supported to carry out their own research, work out their priorities and decide on their activities. They have been supported with training so they could formulate their own slogan (“Have the courage to talk; the courage to listen. No-one is alone.”) their own key messages and their own branding. At each stage of the process they have made their own decisions on how they want to get their messages across. They chose to use film as a medium. With no adult input they wrote their own script and their own storyboards. The Ewanrigg Local Trust put them in touch with a local film crew who offered to help with the practicalities and the equipment and who were so impressed with the young people and their potential they helped them to make their first film and wouldn't take any payment for time, travel or equipment. In 2020 they are chasing commitments to change regarding youth mental health so have decided to work in small teams, dividing themselves into representatives who 'take on' either health commissioners, schools, community and employers.

‘We as adults would have meetings after meetings to achieve what WE WILL manage to get done straight away.’ Media expert on meeting WE WILL.

Their campaign was started on the basis that ‘they were sick of waiting for other people to make a change and decided to do something it about

themselves.’ Taking responsibility and taking action are two qualities that are vital to the survival of our society. WE WILL have demonstrated both of these repeatedly – and to great effect. As a skilled, passionate and determined group they have proven that young people are best placed to create a culture change and visible change with adults listening to the needs and recommendations of young people. Their energy, their approach to problem solving, their well-researched knowledge about mental health, their capacity to understand complex problems and come up with deliverable solutions continues to inspire and demonstrate to adults the value of involving young people in decision making.

Encouraging others to take a stand, encouraging others to make their voice heard, encouraging others to be part of the solution.... These are the sorts of values that make great role models. These are the sort of young people we need in our future. The group will be three years old in December 2020 and will arguably have achieved more for their community in these three years than many people will achieve in a lifetime.

What do others say?

I wanted to thank the We Will group – through you – for their time and energy in our meeting last week.

We were all impressed by the commitment and positive approach taken to improving the support available for young people.

I think some strong connections have been made between the group and the health system and I am keen that we keep that going at a practical level, and at a senior leadership level. We all took away issues to progress.

I'd like to suggest that we have a catch up with the group in the Autumn, but I am also aware of the need for us to schedule this at a time which is convenient and accessible for the group.

Many thanks again.

Best wishes

Robin

Professor Robin Talbot

Chair

Cumbria Partnership NHS FT

The WE WILL group is a very impressive collaborative of young people from the community reaching into different schools across the area. Their approach – although motivated by disappointment with NHS services – has been positive, innovative and about driving a better future.

The group has secured the support of their community, their schools, their local authority and our CCG. It has worked with local councillors and the local

MP and visited parliament to meet shadow ministers. Their work was showcased on a royal visit to Prince William and Kate who praised them for their approach and achievements.

There are no easy answers to the challenges caused by increasing demand, fragility within NHS service and our CCG has recently been through a lengthy process of recommissioning mental health services with a larger Trust to help support sustainability and improvement of services. Our teams are very supportive of the approach taken by the group and their approach to developing support that is relevant and accessible to their peers.

The young people have been commended by the local newspaper group in their education awards and in the Cumbria Diversity Awards.

On a personal level I have met the young people many times over the last couple of years and have always been impressed by their professionalism, their energy and the way they care for their team. They are fantastic. They will deliver this work and be valuable in sharing really good practice.

Julie

Julie Clayton

Head of Communications and Engagement

NHS North Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group

On behalf of the High Sheriff of Cumbria and her guests, thank you and your amazing group of young people so much for the fantastic visit yesterday. Our group thoroughly enjoyed meeting the enthusiastic young people and were so impressed with their well-prepared presentation on mental health support for young people. They said it was very well presented and the videos were “extremely well-produced, focused and punchy”. We wish you continued success with your valuable work and thank you again for showcasing it with us. Kind regards, Kristine

Please can I thank the WE WILL group for coming and speaking at our ‘This is me’ event. You could have heard a pin drop during your talk and I don’t think there was a dry eye in the house. Every single person that I spoke to was overwhelmed with what you have achieved and learnt something about how they can support young people. I spoke to someone who was there and who the following day was talking to his daughter who was worried about her friend, he signposted her to your website and videos which I know had a positive impact. Police Inspector Annette McClement

I’m astounded once more! What an unbelievably talented, motivated and courageous group of young people they are. I have shared a link on my Twitter feed and I hope there has been lots of traction around this conversation during the week. It goes without saying that if they ever need some support, advice, someone to talk to, workshops, panel discussions, whatever I’d be happy to get involved. Please feel free to share my email. Thanks again and please pass on

my deepest regards and respect to these wonderful people. Clive Judd Theatre
Director

Echoing what Clive said – it’s amazing what you and the group are doing. Really can’t tell you how important it is and how inspiring I find it. Speaking to the group was still one of the most moving moments of last year, and have been talking about it to so many people since. And yeah, again what Clive said, – any support or anything like that just give me a shout. Simon Longman
Playwright.

I’m surrounded by men – “geezers”, who are woefully under equipped and have no outlet for their fears and emotions. Instead, they, we, put on a facade and self-medicate through alcohol and the rest. I’ve been thinking about starting down the studying counselling route for a while now, reading your post has spurred me on, so thank you.” Guardian online comment responding to the WE WILL feature in the Guardian.

“Obviously the factor that caused this is the first place is a travesty but the response by these young people is the most uplifting story I’ve read in ages. Guardian online comment responding to the WE WILL feature in the Guardian.

Of course CAMHS needs to be funded to meet needs but it really needs to be seen for what it is, a clinical service for young people with mental health issues. It’s currently overwhelmed by young who’ve been pushed to the brink of ill health by external pressure that’s beyond their control.

Clinically diagnosed mental health conditions occur throughout the population and should be treated as quickly as possible to help the people concerned.

What we're seeing in this example is an unnecessary level of stress being placed on young people creating mental and physical ill health. These young people did for themselves what we should be doing for all of them. They listened to each other and gave the space to breathe and realise that they weren't alone. The thing is the factor causing the stress in the first place is mostly imposed upon them by the very people nominally in charge of their welfare.

We've chosen not to do anything about social media so they're free to prey on our kids. We've made schools into academies with "management" on telephone number sized salaries who know their job is on the line if the results don't come through: that goes all the way through the school from teachers to the poor sods in year 9 who've just found out that they've got to choose what they want to do for the rest of their lives and must get it right or they'll shame the school, parents and themselves.

Add to this mix being a teenager in a world where adults have effectively decided we're collectively fucked and given up trying to make a better world and bingo you've got this article. Kids realising the adult world isn't the same as a "grown up" world and realising they need to do it for themselves.

I hope these young people go on to be the leaders they and their peers deserve not the bloated morally bankrupt lickspittles my generation has inflicted on the country.

The current situation in this country, irrespective of your viewpoint, is a test for anyone over thirty. We either decide enough is enough and show those in charge that playtime is over and they'd better tidy up pronto, or we become remembered as the generation who betrayed its children.

Whatever happens with Brexit, climate change and the global economy we'll pass on to our young the world they'll think we wanted for them. That can either be a blessing or a curse but it's the responsibility of us all and we need to wake up and start expecting more from ourselves and especially the people to whom we give the privilege of power." Guardian online comment responding to the WE WILL feature in the Guardian.