

Healthwatch Central West London

Launching Young Healthwatch Westminster

Report 2019

healthwatch
Central West London

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Introduction





We are Healthwatch Central West London. We put local people at the centre of conversations about their health and social care services in Hammersmith & Fulham, Westminster, and Kensington & Chelsea.

Whether it is improving existing services, or influencing how our health care will be delivered in the future, we make sure that your voices are heard.

-  We get local people involved with health and social care decision making.
-  We work with the NHS and local councils to make sure the information they share is clear and accessible to everyone.
-  We provide information about health and social care for local people.
-  We monitor the quality of health and care services.

Who are Young Healthwatch?

Young Healthwatch is part of Healthwatch. They are a network of volunteers aged 14-25 who represent the views of children and young people living, working or studying Westminster, and they:

-  Raise awareness of different health issues that affect children and young people.
-  Reach out to young people in their area, gathering their views on the health issues and services that matter to them.
-  Work with health and social care services to improve and influence services for children and young people.
-  Develop research and community organising skills to work on local public issues.

This report details the steps we took to launch Young Healthwatch Westminster, the challenges we encountered, and our next steps.

Young people and health in Central West London

Representing local people's experiences of health and social care means we need to reach **everyone** in our communities.

When we conducted our 2018 membership engagement survey, Healthwatch Central West London found only 1% of our respondents were 14-25 years old. We were missing the opportunity to hear young people's experiences using health and care services, and we needed to act to resolve this.

Young people and health

Adolescence is a critical time for health, when risk-taking behaviour such as smoking begins.¹, and many serious long-term conditions become apparent.² It is also a critical time for mental health, with half of lifetime mental illness starting before age 14.³

Young people in Westminster

Studies have shown that health outcomes for children in London reflect its high levels of poverty and inequality.⁴ The same reports raise concerns from youth professionals about mental health and obesity levels in particular.

¹ R.R. Kipping, R.M. Campbell, G.J. MacArthur, D.J. Gunnell, M. Hickman (2012) [Multiple risk behaviour in adolescence](#) (Journal of Public Health, Volume 34, Issue 1 pp. i1-i2)

² http://www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/KeyData2015_Chapter7.pdfh

³ CAMHS - Facts and Figures <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/bright-futures/bright-futures-camhs/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-and>

⁴ London Youth, Young People's Capital of the World? Understanding and responding to young Londoners' changing needs www.londonyouth.org/our-impact/our-impact-with-members/ ; Young Westminster Foundation; 2017: 'City Within a City': <http://www.ywfoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/YWF-City-Within-A-City-Final-Report.pdf>

Young people and policy

Other reports have shown that involving patients in their care and treatment can improve their satisfaction with these services and improve knowledge of their health status, which contributes to better health outcomes overall.⁵ Young people are generally not well involved in the development of the health services relevant to them.⁶ The British Medical Journal supported this view in 2015, stating that “there is a need to involve children and young people not just in their care, but in the policies that set out how such care is developed, designed and delivered.”⁷

Case Studies

Local youth health engagement services

Healthwatch Central West London conducted research to identify local youth health engagement opportunities in Westminster. We found that while there are engagement activities for young people in health and care at a local level, these initiatives rarely reach a strategic level. Some national platforms include **The National Services Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (2004)**, **The Children’s Commissioner for England**, **NHS Youth Forum**, as well as other local initiatives across England.

We found there was a need for more proactive local involvement of children and young people. We sought to develop an initiative where their voices would be heard by people with the power to make change happen, under the guidance of Healthwatch Central West London.

⁵ Dept of Health (2010) Equality and Excellence: Liberating the NHS

⁶ JSNA (2017) Health and Wellbeing Needs of Young Adults aged 18-25 (Westminster)

⁷ British Medical Journal (BMJ) (2015) The voices of children and young people in health: where are we now?

Local Young Healthwatch activities

A number of other local Healthwatch organisations have developed a Young Healthwatch in their local area. We spoke to them to find out the different ways they involved young people, and discussed the issues they had encountered. Most Healthwatch organisations focused on two main areas:



Young people as volunteers



Young people as a consultative forum

Based on evidence from studies of young people's local, regional and national involvement in health and care (see Appendix), Healthwatch CWL decided to develop a Young Healthwatch in Westminster that could act as a strategic advisory panel, made up of local young people. Our main aim was to provide space and support for young people to find solutions to the issues they encounter in accessing health services. We would assist the young people in getting these heard by decision-makers and commissioners.

A number of other local Healthwatch organisations have developed a Young Healthwatch in their local area; we spoke to them to find out the different ways they involved young people, and discussed the issues that they had encountered. One of the main difficulties they experienced was keeping young people engaged and interested.

Designing Young Healthwatch Westminster

We held initial consultations with young people in Westminster to discuss the ways in which they could get involved with a Young Healthwatch group. We heard that they would like to be involved in **influencing decisions on local youth health and care provision**, particularly in **planning, design, delivery and feedback**.

Young people told us that they wanted to lead the conversation about health and social care services for their age group. This shaped our objective for setting up a Young Healthwatch: that young people involved would be full members and stakeholders in the work of Healthwatch Central West London and would lead the development of any of our work that focused on young people in Westminster.

We created our Vision for Young Healthwatch Westminster:

“Young people directly influence the health and care services that they use, and that young people lead the work that Young Healthwatch Westminster undertakes”

To achieve this, young people need:



Support from Healthwatch CWL, including **resources, support and guidance**, opportunities for **skills-building, training, mentoring and networking**.



Access to decision-makers, commissioners and service providers to contribute to decisions that impact their community.



A sustainable Young Healthwatch that will build on the work that it undertakes and will be accessible to more young people in the future.

Engagement

Healthwatch CWL spoke with local youth-oriented organisations, including the Young Westminster Foundation, to identify existing programmes for young people. We looked for organisations or individuals who could help us set up a Young Healthwatch in Westminster. This included local councillors, members of the Westminster Council Family and People Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee and other services providers.





We ran engagement events at places that young people frequent, such as colleges and youth centres, between March and July 2018. At these, we asked participants aged 14-25 their views on having an independent young people's space for discussing health and care priorities. We carried out two consultations in partnership with **Westminster Youth Council**, **Cardinal Hume Centre** and the **Caxton Organisation**.

We also met with prominent groups who work with young people⁸. We listened to their experiences of working with young people and shared our ambitions for Young Healthwatch with them.

We spoke to **Caxton Youth Centre** about how they could be involved, as a charity that provides services for young people living with a disability and/or learning difficulties.

Findings

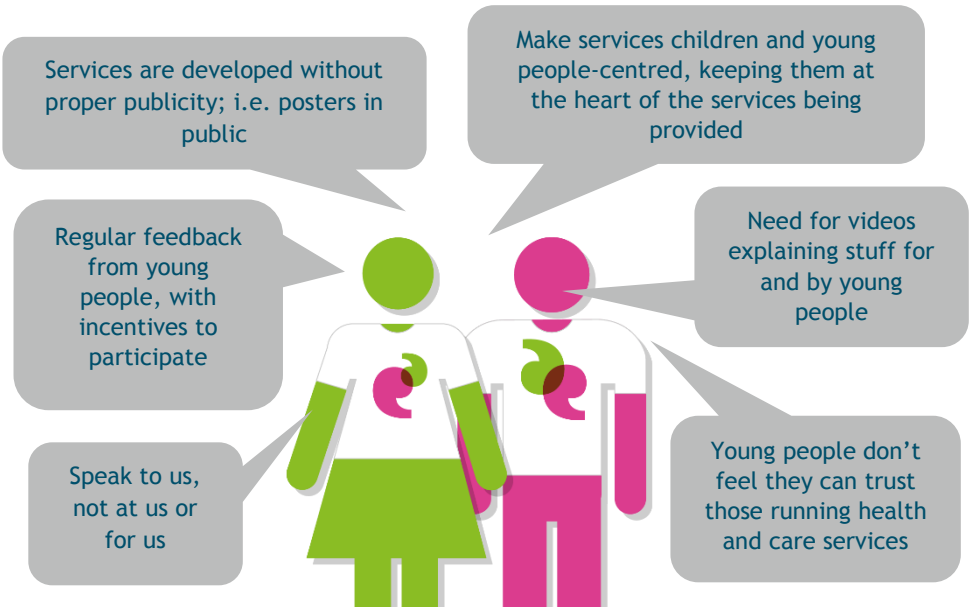
These groups discussed four questions:

-  What challenges do young people face in accessing health and social care?
-  What would make health and care exciting for young people?
-  How can health and social care be improved to meet the needs of young people?
-  If you had the opportunity, what one thing would you like to see improved, changed or reviewed in the health and social care you have accessed?

⁸ Children and Young People's Network (run by OneWestminster), Young Westminster Foundation, Peer Power Network, Greenhouse Sports, Queens Park Primary school (QPPS) and Community Champions (works with QPPS)

We heard from young people and those working with them that, although they have social spaces to meet, there is no clear way for them to feed their concerns into local policy development or to strategic bodies for health and care services.

We found that young people know which health and care services are available, but they do not feel involved in their development. We set out to find a way to make sure young people's voices are heard at the highest levels of statutory discussion.







Young Healthwatch Westminster is launched

“Making services children and young people-centred, and ensuring young people are at the heart of the services being provided”

Young Healthwatch Westminster is an opportunity for local young people to contribute to their health and social care services. It is targeted at young people between the ages of 14 and 25, with capacity for 20 members. These members receive in-house training that develops community organising, research and communications skills, in addition to other skills that will support their community outreach and local decision making activities.

We want to ensure that involvement in Young Healthwatch Westminster provides other opportunities in addition to getting their views on health and care services heard.





What are Young Healthwatch Westminster's aims?

-  To involve children and young people in the development and improvement of their local care, through sharing their experiences of health and care services.
-  To respond to local consultations, by sharing the group's experiences of local health and care services and feeding back on local issues.
-  To identify issues that matter to them and develop outreach, research and reporting strategies to highlight these issues in their local area.
-  To contribute to and work alongside other local organisations on shared projects that address local health and social care concerns.

Healthwatch Central West London will provide some support to Young Healthwatch by sharing CCG consultations, highlighting national health awareness weeks and local projects, and making introductions to other local organisations, when required. However, it is a key aim of Young Healthwatch that the young people decide their own objectives, plan their own projects and deliver their plans in the way that works best for them.

Promoting Young Healthwatch Westminster

To promote Young Healthwatch Westminster we:

-  Attended volunteer fairs at local educational institutions.
-  Contacted local secondary schools and visited regularly.
-  Used Healthwatch CWL social media channels and a dedicated Young Healthwatch Westminster page on our website.
-  Directly contacted and circulated promotional materials to youth organisations, community centres, youth and sports centres, schools, and the general public.

Recruitment

Recruitment started in June 2018 and ten interested young people were recruited by July 2018. Five people attended the first meeting in August 2018.

We contacted groups for vulnerable youth about working together to ensure that all young people who want a say, including those who find meetings difficult, get the opportunity to do so. We will regularly visit these groups to discuss Young Healthwatch Westminster's work and to collect their feedback.

Meetings

Young people chose for Young Healthwatch Westminster meetings to be once a month, on a Friday from 5pm-7pm, to accommodate their busy school, college, work schedules.

The first meeting took place at Greenhouse Sports Centre, Marylebone. Five young people attended and discussed how the group should run, agreed objectives and outcomes. The group got to know each other and shared their experience of school work, their career ambitions, and experiences of local health services.

Subsequent meetings

Attendance at meetings dropped after the initial meeting, prompting us to reflect on how we could better appeal to interested young people.

We returned to Westminster Youth Council and Cardinal Hume Youth Hostel to discuss with them what we could do to support young people. They suggested changing the time of the meeting to 6pm to accommodate work and study schedules. Members and partner groups voted that the next meeting be held at the end of October. The group has since held monthly meetings and additional team-building day activities.

What will Young Healthwatch Westminster do next?

After looking at local evidence of need, hearing the experiences of their friends and colleagues in schools and work, and holding workshops and discussions, in December 2018 Young Healthwatch Westminster members decided to make Mental Health services for young people in Westminster their special focus.

To contribute to their understanding of mental health issues, Healthwatch CWL arranged Mental Health First Aid training for the group in March 2019.

Benefits of Young Healthwatch Westminster membership

Members of Young Healthwatch are learning new skills and taking part in new activities.

Five members hold roles within Young Healthwatch Westminster, ranging from being the Chair of Young Healthwatch Westminster to overseeing publicity for the group. A further six members are active volunteers for Healthwatch CWL and have helped us talk to local people about their experience of health and care services

at outreach events. They have also become Dignity Champions and contribute to our Enter and View visits to publicly funded care homes to hear about what residents think of the care they receive.

Challenges

We encountered some challenges in setting up Young Healthwatch Westminster. We outline these here and present solutions, which we are currently applying.

Recruitment

Challenge: the group is growing and stabilising; it has passionate, engaged members, but it is yet to involve service user feedback and reach a strategic level.

Response: We continue to promote Young Healthwatch Westminster to young people through local stakeholders. We have opened our training up to other young people in Westminster. Young Healthwatch members formed part of a discussion group run by Healthwatch CWL as part of its NHS Long Term Plan engagement, where they discussed their experiences using different health services and explained the health issues that matter to them.

Poor attendance to meetings

Challenge: Of the 18 young people currently signed up, only about 11 are active.

Response: Healthwatch CWL is organising a recruitment event in 2019, which will include an introductory training session, for which the young people will receive a certificate. We will be reaching out to local youth organisations, schools and colleges as part of this ongoing recruitment drive. Healthwatch CWL has found that, despite these challenges, young people in Westminster are passionate and willing to share their opinions, when given the opportunity.

We have taken all the above into consideration and are working with Young Healthwatch members to find suitable solutions.

Acknowledgements

The first two meetings of Young Healthwatch Westminster in August and September 2018 were held at **Greenhouse Sports Centre**, Marylebone, who provided the space for free. We are grateful for this and continue to work in partnership with them.

Young Healthwatch Westminster has also met at Westminster City Hall, as guest of Councillor Hamza Taouzalle. Councillor Taouzalle, the youngest councillor in Westminster, is a founding member of the group. He has also been a member of our Westminster Local Committee since 2016, and has played a significant role in ensuring that young peoples' voices are heard in our work.

Huge gratitude to Young Westminster Foundation who provided us with free tickets to London Zoo which was given out as a Christmas gift to the young people. Other partners who have helped include OneWestminster, especially through its Children & Young People's Providers Network.

