

NHS Long Term Plan Engagement

A focus on Children & Young People



Shaping the future of our NHS in Central and North West London

“I would never go to a teacher as you just get sent to the nurse and given an ice pack, whatever the issue!”

Local young person

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What is the NHS Long Term Plan?

With growing pressure on the NHS - people living longer, more people living with long-term conditions, lifestyle choices affecting people's health - changes are needed to make sure everybody gets the support they need.

The Government is investing an extra £20 billion a year in the NHS. The NHS has produced a 'Long Term Plan' setting out the things it wants health services to do better for people across the country.

This includes making it easier to access support closer to home and via technology, doing more to help people stay well, and providing better support for people with long-term health conditions.

Engaging Local People

Whilst the national plan has set some clear goals, it's up to local areas to decide how they're achieved - that means engaging with local people and listening to their experiences and expectations of current and future services.

Healthwatch organisations in Central and West London, alongside the national Healthwatch network has collected local views on the Long Term Plan through surveys, focus groups and events between April and June 2019, to give tens of thousands of people the opportunity to help local hospitals, GP surgeries and community services hear about the changes people would like to see.

In this report, we look at experiences and expectations associated with Children and Young People.

What matters most to people in Central and North West London?

Engaging with 10 young people, we found that:

Children & Young People's Services

Schools

Students have opportunities to volunteer in the community (for example supporting elderly people in care homes) and this is seen as good way to 'learn how to communicate with individuals who have health problems'.

Some students feel that care in school is not focused enough and there is not enough empathy from staff - the perception is that young people's health complaints are not taken seriously. It is also suggested that school nurses are 'not trained properly' and 'offer ice packs for everything'.

Communication is also noted as a problem - teachers will often send an email to the nurse about a student's health concern that is not picked up until the end of the day.

Mental health issues are addressed at assemblies, however students cite a shortage of named teacher contacts, and lack of follow up.

It was felt that schools could be more inclusive by appointing health prefects and monitors who are trained in Mental Health First Aid, so young people have someone to talk to of their own age.

Primary Care Services

Young people cite good support from NHS 111 and GPs, and a 'good atmosphere' at the pharmacy. However, it is noted that 'staff are overworked' and this impacts on quality.

Some people comment on a lack of information from their GP and poor liaison between GPs and Pharmacists.

Emergency and Acute Services

An example was given of 'a clear and supportive' service from 999, however some young people feel they 'won't be taken seriously' and this can be a disincentive.

Learning from Discussion (Checklist)

Local children and young people would like:

- A 'focused' approach to care within schools.
- To be respected and involved.
- Well trained school nurses.
- Timely communication between staff.
- Access to named teacher contacts.
- Good levels of support and peer support.

From Prevention to Support

We talked about various aspects around prevention and support.

Key themes emerging from a Westminster workshop include how to successfully promote healthy eating, how to utilise technology to engage young people, how to highlight the adverse health outcomes of smoking and how to create an inclusive and nurturing environment for open conversations about mental health.

Communication and Engagement

Finally, we asked people how engaged they would like to be, and whether they would like to be involved in designing new services. As part of this, we asked them which aspects of communication and engagement could be improved.

It was felt that...

- There was a preference for group forums over other types of engagement.
- Volunteering should be flexible, young people have different interests and ideas so some room for manoeuvre would be helpful.
- The desire to be involved in the co-design and production of solutions for problems with NHS healthcare.

What did people tell Healthwatch?

Here, we take a more detailed look at the top themes emerging from discussion. Generally we asked people what they feel works well and what could work better.

1. Schools

Students have opportunities to volunteer in the community (for example supporting elderly people in care homes) and this is seen as good way to 'learn how to communicate with individuals who have health problems'.

Some students feel that care in school is not focused enough and there is not enough empathy from staff - the perception is that young people's health complaints are not taken seriously. It is also suggested that school nurses are 'not trained properly' and 'offer ice packs for everything'.

Communication is also noted as a problem - teachers will often send an email to the nurse about a student's health concern that is not picked up until the end of the day.

Mental health issues are addressed at assemblies, however students cite a shortage of named teacher contacts, and lack of follow up.

Schools

Selected comments:

"I would never go to a teacher as you just get to sent to the nurse and given an ice pack, whatever the issue!" [Westminster]

"Our health isn't taken seriously at school - it puts some people off asking for help." [Westminster]

"Student wellbeing should be a priority and should override any suspicion that a young person may be trying to skip class." [Westminster]

"Health services not embedded/normalised in daily school life." [Westminster]

2. Primary Care Services

Young people cite good support from NHS 111 and GPs, and a 'good atmosphere' at the pharmacy. However, it is noted that 'staff are overworked' and this impacts on quality.

Some people comment on a lack of information from their GP and poor liaison between GPs and Pharmacists.

Primary Care

Selected comments, GPs:

"Provides good support and reminds you to stay healthy and make regular appointments." [Westminster]

"Staff are overworked so can't provide optimal care." [Westminster]

"Information in the surgeries, and what is given from GPs, on specific conditions is sporadic." [Westminster]

"You can be charged for medication with no guarantee that it will be effective." [Westminster]

Selected comments, Pharmacies:

"In general, the atmosphere is calm which helps to relieve stress form patients." [Westminster]

"Not enough staff to serve at the counter so wait times can be very long." [Westminster]

"Sometimes pharmacies run out of stock. [Westminster]

"Communication between GPs and surgeries is not good - you can be given the wrong medication or they are unsure of what dosage. [Westminster]

Selected comments, other services:

"NHS 111 is a really efficient service" - they give you good instructions and keep you calm." [Westminster]

"NHS 111 - Some questions you are asked seem irrelevant and there is some time-wasting. If you have a serious issue these unnecessary delays could be life threatening." [Westminster]

"NHS Go - Very little awareness that it exists - worrying because it was specifically designed for 16-25 year olds." [Westminster]

3. Emergency and Acute Services

An example was given of 'a clear and supportive' service from 999, however some young people feel they 'won't be taken seriously' and this can be a disincentive.

Emergency and Acute Services

Selected comments:

"999 - Emergency call staff are supportive and give you clear steps on what to do." [Westminster]

"999 - It is rarely used by young people - partly due to the fear that they won't be taken seriously." [Westminster]

"Hospitals - There is not enough balance - there should be more hospitals in the less affluent areas." [Westminster]

"Hospitals - There can be problems with treatment: "I was given the wrong cast at St. Charles and had to go to St. Mary's." [Westminster]

"Hospitals "A&E waiting times are too long rooms and waiting rooms are too cramped which heightens the risk of stress and the spread of disease." [Westminster]

4. Experiences - From Prevention to Support

We talked about various aspects around assessment, diagnosis, treatment and ongoing care and support.

Key themes emerging from a Westminster workshop include how to successfully promote healthy eating, how to utilise technology to engage young people, how to highlight the adverse health outcomes of smoking and how to create an inclusive and nurturing environment for open conversations about mental health.

Prevention to Support

Responses to Key Themes:

- **Physical and psychological impact of smoking:** Regular engagement e.g. school assemblies on the dangers of smoking with real people who had lived through the damage it can do to body and mind - an accord was established that creating fear amongst young people of the impact of smoking was the best way to prevent it.
- **Early recognition:** Training for teachers and parents to identify signs of stress in young people that could lead to harmful behaviours like smoking.
- **Taking lessons from elsewhere:** There are adverts on TV about spotting the early signs of stroke, this should be applied for mental health issues amongst young people.

- **One-stop shop:** The NHS Go app should offer a young person needs to stay healthy, for example, you should be able to scan barcodes on food packaging to see the product's fat and sugar levels and the same process should be available with medication to establish if it suitable for you. However, there is an issue with data storage here.
- **Educational games:** Unlikely to rival the popularity of the big, commercial video games, but games with health messages should be available in GP waiting rooms and time should be dedicated to them at school in subjects like PHSE. Game apps would need to be free to attract young people out of school.
- **Tackling mental health stigma:** Teachers should take more responsibility in reassuring young people that it's good to talk through health concerns. This should include regular health 'check-ins' and a daily presentation at the end of the day discussing issues like exam stress and healthy eating.
- **Support for young people from young people:** Schools should have health prefects and monitors who are trained in Mental Health First Aid to offer support to young people and take their concerns seriously.
- **A place to go:** There is a real lack of free youth clubs. More work should be done to provide free access to these facilities. A great example of a successful and free youth club is 'Four Feathers' in Westminster.
- **Exercise in school:** Participation in group activities should be encouraged more as competition and feeling like part of a team are good for mental health.
- **Food warnings:** A traffic light system should be used for school meals. Any meals high in fat and sugar should have a clear red light next to them (and all around them) and healthy and nutritious options should have green light signposting.
- **Communication hubs:** A safe place to talk face-to-face with a professional should be available in the community and at school, websites and social media isn't enough.
- **Basic training:** Teachers should be given basic medical training so they are more able to establish warning signs early and can work together with school nurses.
- **Fizzy drinks:** Carbonated drinks that are high in sugar should not be allowed in hospital waiting rooms or schools, or at least they should have warning messages on them similar to cigarettes.
- **GPs Direct:** Young people should be able to have direct contact with their GPs to establish a rapport with them and build trust.

5. How could communication and engagement be improved?

Finally, we asked people how engaged they would like to be, and whether they would like to be involved in designing new services. As part of this, we asked them which aspects of communication and engagement could be improved.

How could communication and engagement be improved?

Key Themes - it was felt that:

- There was a preference for group forums over other types of engagement.
- Volunteering should be flexible, young people have different interests and ideas so some room for manoeuvre would be helpful.
- The desire to be involved in the co-design and production of solutions for problems with NHS healthcare.

Acknowledgements

This project was undertaken by the following Healthwatch organisations:



3 Rutherford Way, Wembley, London, HA9 0BP

☎ 020 3598 6414

✉ info@healthwatchbrent.co.uk

💻 healthwatchbrent.co.uk



Grand Union Studios, 332 Ladbroke Grove, North Kensington, London, W10 5AD

☎ 020 8968 7049

✉ info@healthwatchcentralwestlondon.org

💻 healthwatchcwl.co.uk



45 St. Mary's Road, Ealing, London, W5 5RG

☎ 020 3886 0830

✉ info@healthwatchealing.org.uk

💻 healthwatchealing.org.uk



3 Jardine House, Harrovian Business Village, Bessborough Road, Harrow, London, HA1 3EX

☎ 020 3432 2889

✉ info@healthwatchharrow.co.uk

💻 healthwatchharrow.co.uk



20 Chequers Square, The Pavilions Shopping Centre, Uxbridge, UB8 1LN

☎ 01895 272997

✉ office@healthwatchhillingdon.org.uk

💻 healthwatchhillingdon.org.uk



45 St. Mary's Road, Ealing, London, W5 5RG

☎ 020 3603 2438

✉ info@healthwatchhounslow.co.uk

💻 healthwatchhounslow.co.uk

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151 Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 9SZ

☎ 03000 683 000

✉ enquiries@healthwatch.co.uk


💻 healthwatch.co.uk

Distribution and Comment

This report is available to the general public, and is shared with our statutory and community partners. Accessible formats are available.

If you have any comments on this report or wish to share your views and experiences, please contact us.

Healthwatch Central West London, Grand Union Studios, 332 Ladbroke Grove, North Kensington, London, W10 5AD

 020 8968 7049

 info@healthwatchcentralwestlondon.org

 healthwatchcwl.co.uk

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Local young person