

# Comms Camp: Engaging with young people

What can we do to reach out to a younger audience?



## About this document

In July 2019 local Healthwatch from across England came together to see how we could improve the way we engage young people through our communications.

This document pulls together some of the thinking that was generated during the workshop and aims to help you improve your communications with young people.

## Understanding where you are

The first step to creating a campaign is to understand where you are now. A SWOT analysis can help you with this. Our workshop participants used their own experiences to highlight the following when it comes to engaging young people through communications:

### Potential strengths or opportunities

<b>Tested expertise and resources</b>	Use Facebook workplace and the reports library to ask questions and learn from what other Healthwatch have done. Together Healthwatch could build-up more shared communications materials and approaches that have been shown to work.
<b>Passionate volunteers</b>	Use the young people already volunteering with Healthwatch to help test your ideas and materials
<b>Young people care</b>	Gen Z cares about the future of the NHS. They are interested in being involved, so demonstrating your impact can encourage more young people to speak up.
<b>Brand appeal</b>	Young people are more likely than older age groups to find aspects of our role appealing: they like local causes, and the idea that sharing their views could make a difference.
<b>Our networks</b>	Many Healthwatch have strong links with other organisations and partnership is key to reaching more young people. Schools, colleges, youth councils and youth centres are key.
<b>Relevance</b>	Mental health is a top concern for young people. Our remit means we can look at this or any other health and care issues that are relevant to young people.
<b>Digital-first</b>	Instagram and WhatsApp, along with strong video and imagery, have been shown as great, low cost, ways to engage and reach more people. The important thing is to go to spaces where young people are so that they feel more comfortable to engage.
<b>Relatable content</b>	The positive ways that young people use the internet for communication, creativity and activism should not be overlooked as a way of engaging other young people. Students studying film and other creative industries are a great starting point.

### Potential weaknesses or threats

<b>Don't try to be cool</b>	Learn directly from young people about what they want and need. Make sure you develop and test content in partnership.
<b>Not enough resources</b>	Make sure you have the skills, resources, funding and time to carry out engagement work. Working in partnership with organisations that work with young people and replicating what other Healthwatch have done successfully can help.
<b>Bad timing</b>	Think about the best time to engage young people. If they are in education, should you avoid exam times or school hours?

<b>Poor targeting</b>	Be clear about who you need to reach and what you mean by ‘young people’? Are these people aged 10-14 or 15-17 or 18-14? Or are you looking at Generation Z (anyone born from the mid-90s to the early-2000s)?
<b>Safeguarding and protecting</b>	When working with or meeting young people, make sure you are meeting legal and best practice requirements. <u>Do have the right policies and procedures in place?</u>
<b>Seldom heard</b>	Avoid only speaking to young people whose views are already known or represented. Only relying on one partner or only using social media could result in this risk.
<b>Partner priorities</b>	Schools, colleges and other organisations working with young people are all very busy. To get partners to engage you need to be clear how your work will benefit them and their plans. For example, work on mental health could feed into a council-wide strategy on mental health in schools.
<b>Lack of relevance</b>	Young people might not be interested because they don’t know who you are, don’t think the issue you are asking about is relevant, see you as part of ‘the system’ or do not see how taking part will benefit them. Put the effort into working with young people in partnership to avoid these risks.

## Creating a campaign concept: The basics

### 1. What's your brief?

Starting with a structured, clear and concise brief is essential to ensure your campaign is successful. Here are some things to consider:

	What to consider?	Example: Get young people to share their views
<b>Goal</b>	What one clear goal do you want your campaign to achieve?	To understand what steps services can take to better support the mental health of young people
<b>Budget</b>	How much money do you have to run your campaign?	£2,500
<b>Audience</b>	Who are you trying to speak to?	16-25-year olds
<b>Approach</b>	What do you plan to do?	Message and materials created and tested with the help of young people
<b>Tactics</b>	How will you implement your campaign?	Strong digital focus, with resources invested in paid advertising. Strong focus on a partnership to reach more young people.
<b>Target</b>	What measures will you use to know if you're successful?	200 young people share their views and our recommendations are adopted by services.

### 2. Understand your audience

You need to better understand the audience which you identified in your campaign brief. You can use a persona, which is a semi-fictional representation of the person you're trying to reach to do this. Personas not only give a more detailed understanding of who your audience is, but what steps you should take to reach them.

#### How to make a persona?

- **Choose a name**  
Start thinking about this persona like a real person
- **What are their demographic traits?**  
Thinking about age, gender, education and where they live can help you position your message
- **What are their aspirations?**  
What do they feel? What are their goals? What are they motivated or influenced by?
- **Who are they influenced by?**  
Where do they get their information? Who do they trust for advice? What media do they consume?

- **What are their biggest challenges?**  
What do they struggle with - and how can Healthwatch help with these challenges?
- **Why would or wouldn't they engage with Healthwatch?**

[Check out HubSpot to make an interactive persona.](#)

How this could look in practice



## Amelia Baker

- 18 years old
- Female
- Single
- White British
- Sociology student at the University of York

### Finding information:

- Smartphone - always connected
- Instagram, YouTube, Google, Snapchat
- Prefers vlogs and stories from people she follows
- Top influencers: Emma Chamberlain, Hannah Meloche

### Interests:

- Fashion
- Body positivity
- Being environmentally friendly

### Challenges:

- Misses home, leaving home for the first time was difficult
- Worried about exams and the future
- Has issues with self-esteem
- Doesn't know who to speak to about mental and sexual health concerns

### 3. Generate ideas

Take time to think of creative ideas - you can go as big and bold as you like.

#### Activities to inspire you

##### *Random objects*

Look at the everyday objects around you. Whether it's a pen, book or fruit - can you come up with an idea which links back to your original brief and could be developed into a concept?

Here are some of the ideas our Comms Camp participants came up with:

- Stapler: Joined together
- Book: Everyone has a story, have you told yours
- Apple: Get to the core of the problem
- Hand sanitiser: Let's clean up health and social care

##### *Wishing*

If you had unlimited resources what would you do? Then think about how the idea could be scaled down into something practical.

Our Comms Camp participants said they want a:

- National bank holiday to celebrate young people  
*Scaled-down: Have an awareness day for young people*
- Storyline in a soap that involves Healthwatch  
*Scaled-down: Can you get an online influencer to talk about Healthwatch*
- Obligatory Healthwatch lessons in school  
*Scaled-down: Better links with schools to support early education about Healthwatch*

#### When choosing your final idea ask:

- Does it follow the brief?
- Is it appropriate for our audience?
- Does it capture attention?
- Does it have the potential for expansion?

### 4. Develop your concept

Take your final idea and develop it into a campaign concept. Think about:

- What the core message is - think problem, solution and action
- A headline, visual and tagline
- How your idea could look in practice (e.g. what would a promotional poster or a tweet look like?)

## Checklist for success

Based on the discussions from our event, we've compiled a checklist for success which you can use in your work.

### Empower young people and be flexible

- Remember, young people are the experts, give them ownership and responsibility.
- It is important to create any content, materials or research with young people. This will help to get them on board with any work you're doing.
- Allow young people to advocate for the project on your behalf.
- Bring young people to important meetings.
- Be willing to adapt your work if young people aren't engaging with it. It's okay to fail.
- Minimise any barriers that might stop young people from getting involved. For example, offer cash for travel expenses and think carefully about the timing and location of any meetings you hold.
- Don't just focus on older age groups. Older children and young teenagers can be involved too.

### Offer something to young people

- Make young people feel appreciated. A simple thank you can be as rewarding as a voucher.
- Provide relevant and interesting training to both young people and the organisations that support them.
- Establish peer support mentor programmes, so young people can learn from and support each other.
- Help young people to articulate and recognise what they contributed to your project. This will help them with job searches and college and university applications.
- Create opportunities for young people to connect with each other, you don't always need to ask them to do something for you.

### Work with partners

- You can maximise your impact by bringing together partners like schools, colleges, youth councils, care forums and community groups.
- Communicate your work through organisations young people are already connected to.
- Make sure to engage with different groups of young people by working with specialist schools and community groups.
- Offer something to partners and professionals to encourage them to work with you. Explore how you can help each other.

### Be creative, clear and responsive

- Use media and communication tools young people will respond to.
- Look for opportunities where you can explore an issue, as well as sharing advice and information.

- Identify key issues of interest to young people to ensure your work or campaign has a clear focus.
- Make the use of existing resources.
- Use plain English and avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Use a mixture of digital and face-to-face engagement.
- Have a strategy for social media.
- Use positive messaging.
- Identify gaps where you could provide information that other organisations couldn't.

### Other key takeaways

- Working directly with young people will bring new perspectives to your projects.
- You need a robust safeguarding procedure and relevant processes in place when planning a project that involves young people.
- Young people need to trust you and your organisation before they will share their experiences.
- Don't forget parents and carers. Consider how you could also engage and involve them when working with young people.
- If you don't have the time or money to conduct high-quality engagement with young people, look for external funding opportunities or projects you can host.
- Continually test, evaluate and refine your approach.
- Don't assume young people want everything online.
- Do less, better - focus on a specific issue, content type or research.