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# Involving Young People in Our Work

18 September 2019 Event Note

# About this resource

In September 35 Healthwatch delegates came together for the Involving Young people in our work event. This provided the opportunity for them to:

* Learn from and share experiences of involving young people in Healthwatch
* Hear about approaches that work best when involving young people in Healthwatch projects and attracting young volunteers
* Collect resources from other Healthwatch who are involving young people in their work
* Develop a common understanding of our objectives when involving young people
* Help shape a common offer for young people that all Healthwatch can apply

During the day presentations were received from local Healthwatch, the NHS England and NHS Improvement and Healthwatch England focussed on involving young people.

# Hearing from local Healthwatch

Colleagues from Healthwatch Cumbria and Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire presented their ways of involving young people. This highlighted two different ways of working with young people; project and general engagement & running a Young Healthwatch respectively. Jade Ainsworth talked about her experiences within Healthwatch Cumbria as a young person who engaged with 700 young people gaining their views on mental health. Jade’s role was instrumental in being part of the Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Thrive bid. A video of Jade is also within the presentation. Becky Knagg discussed Healthwatch Cumbria’s general engagement of children and young people, the impact and the learning from engagement and involvement of young people.

The PowerPoint presentations, with incorporated speaker notes, is on the Network Support Site.

Following the Healthwatch Cumbria presentation attendees were asked four questions. The answers are below (and summarised in some cases):

Q1. How would you describe your current involvement of young people in your work?

Several Healthwatch have a significant amount of involvement from young people including delivering youth focussed projects and Young Healthwatch. Some were at the beginning stages and were planning to start involving young people.

Q2. What are you doing to involve young people? Share good and not so good practice.

* Several Healthwatch have a young Healthwatch
* Youth specific projects e.g. emotional wellbeing in high school
* Working with existing youth groups and networks

Q3. What could you do differently to improve your involvement of young people?

Recruit young volunteers but there needs to be a purpose for this and not for the sake of it

* Careers fairs at schools and colleges can be good way to recruit volunteers and engage young people
* Early planning key to engaging via schools and PHSE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) coordinators are good contacts
* It’s key to identify areas of interest to engage young people
* Young volunteers and ambassadors are better placed to gather the views of other young people than staff, including via social media

Q4. What do you see as the barriers to involving young people and how can they be overcome?

**Barriers:**

* Funding and other resources are needed e.g. staff, staff time to dedicate to this – children and young people engagements can take a lot of time to set up.
* Difficulties getting into schools
* Health and care - boring (subject) and needs to be made attractive to young people
* Schools/youth groups etc still not knowing who Healthwatch are

**How to overcome the barriers:**

* Developing good contacts (again this does take time, but worth it in the end) as building effective relationships lead to partnership working
* Recruit/support young people to help with social media
* Perseverance
* Tapping into existing groups e.g. youth groups and charities with access to the target group rather than doing a big recruitment of children and young people campaign
* Need to look at using technology and virtual groups better as geography and travel can be a barrier for young people
* Engagement and or involvement of children and young people **must** have a purpose otherwise it will be tokenistic (be clear about this from the start of your involvement of young people)
* Involvement of children and young people need to fit into the organisation
* In terms of engagement it is always important to feedback regardless of the outcomes and to help relationships continue.
* Partnership working

After the Healthwatch Cumbria presentation Amy Eymor from Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire shared her experiences of starting Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire in her role as the Youth Engagement and Volunteer Officer. Videos of members of Youth Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire answering questions set by Amy was played to attendees. Their answers provided content that will be useful for all Healthwatch when considering how to involve young people including what keeps them involved in Young Healthwatch and what benefits they obtain. Please see Annex for the answers from the young people. Note: the videos are in the event presentation slides.

# Ours and their offer

From various discussions during the event the table below summarises the offer to young people from a Healthwatch and what they can offer a Healthwatch. This will be helpful in targeting young people to become involved in Healthwatch i.e. in recruiting volunteers.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Healthwatch offer to young people | Young People’s offer to Healthwatch |
| * We connect them to their community * Provide them an opportunity to make a difference in their community * Provide training and development opportunities that are beneficial to both them and Healthwatch e.g. presentation and research skills and experiences * Support with university applications, CVs and employment- volunteering in a Healthwatch benefits future endeavours * Provides a group to belong to and a sense of ownership | * Young people are effective at engaging with other young people effectively i.e. through social media networks, engaging on a face to face basis * Provide a fresh perspective to engagement * Provide connections to schools, colleges etc. * Provide challenge to the usual way of doing things * If undertaking a college course with relevant modules i.e. research this could be beneficial to the Healthwatch * Young people are the future including service users, future workforce – it makes sense to engage and involve them. |

# Advantages and disadvantages of young people groups

During the event attendees were asked to give their thoughts on the advantages and disadvantages of running young people groups such as Youthwatch/Young Healthwatch and youth specific projects.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Advantage | Disadvantage |
| Have a group that feel fully engaged with the work of Healthwatch and are contributing their part to the success of Healthwatch | Risk of ‘professional service users’ who CCG etc use to ‘engage with young people’ |
| Get to know a group well | Sustaining the group becomes the “end goal”, rather than improving health and social care services |
| Knowledgeable group that helps to set the direction of Healthwatch | Needs extra resources including funding to run it |
| Can attract external funding outside of the core Healthwatch funding from local authorities | Can Healthwatch England commit to providing support for local Healthwatch, resources etc. in this area (are there resources for this)? |
| Constant voice of children and young people in Healthwatch | Is a job in itself |
| Provides children and young people with a platform to be listened to | Could end up being a job on its own if you need to dedicate a lot of resource i.e. staff time to running a specific youth body such as Young Healthwatch or Youthwatch |

# Advantages and disadvantages of one off young people projects

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Advantage | Disadvantage |
| Can be incorporated into other work | Easy to lose touch with participants in comparison with volunteers in a group |
| Can be done within limited resources |  |
| Ensures work is targeted to local needs |  |
| Can reach more young people |  |
| Can help target groups by topic |  |
| Helps children and young people find their voice and be listened to |  |

# NHS Youth Forum

Nagina Javaid, NHS England and NHS Improvement and Gabrielle Mathews, NHS Youth Forum Alumni & NHS Assembly member discussed the purpose, achievements and future plans of the [NHS Youth Forum](https://www.england.nhs.uk/participation/get-involved/how/forums/nhs-youth-forum/). Attendees were invited to think about a joint movement of young people in partnership with the NHS to affect change.

*You have the power to shift the way we (Healthwatch and NHS) work and engage with people – how can we make the most of this?*

* Need to co-produce together
* Need resources nationally to support Healthwatch
* We need to network better

*Is it possible for young people to be part of the culture change (in the NHS)?*

* Resourcing, staff time, local Healthwatch need to have the time at work to commit to this

*Can young people support us to have facilitated conversations in senior spaces?*

We could support young people to have better communication with the Healthwatch board. Logo and branding can make a difference. ’Young’ Healthwatch is a better name as it gives it an identify that it is targeted at young people.

***How can we build the momentum and interest in youth social action, participation and volunteering through blogs, mini videos and attending and influencing at national events?***

* Are young people reading blogs?
* Need resources for this
* Give young people responsibility but don’t overload them
* Would be good to have an ambassador like a celebrity blogger

# Healthwatch England Mental Health Project

The last presentation of the day was by Urte Macikene who provided an update on the Healthwatch England Mental Health project which has been informed by the intelligence from the network. Attendees were asked several questions in relation to the intelligence, the direction of the project and reflect on their local situations in relation to mental health services and wellbeing.

# Next steps

We will be working on providing more support and advice to the network on how local Healthwatch involve young people effectively in relation to their local circumstances and resources. At the event several local Healthwatch shared their resources such as Healthwatch Leeds ‘Ways of Working’ and Volunteer role descriptions. In line with this there was a request from the event for support with guidance and templates for involving young people. This will be taken back to Healthwatch England for consideration.

# Annex

**Insight from young people from the Youth Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire as captured by video.**

**Q1. What selling points would grab your attention and make you want to join Young Healthwatch if I (Amy) came into an assembly?**

* Explaining opportunities through the organisation and the explain the amount of input they would have in every decision made
* Emphasis that it is volunteering and it looks good on any applications
* Food and drink makes it sound more fun but also meeting new people
* In any schools near Silsoe you can tell them how close it is as this makes it seem very convenient
* Benefit on their CVs and community feel you get from the group
* Begin presentation of how YHW is helpful for CVs and personal statements enabling teenagers to stand out and show their engagement with their local communities
* Boost applications, personal statements etc
* Discussing real world issues that aren’t talked about in school
* Gives you a voice and a say
* I would want to know the benefits- First Aid Training, Enter & Views
* How appealing it is to universities
* What the other volunteers are like (a video of the volunteers)

**Q2. If you took up the opportunity to becoming a volunteer and went along to a** **first meeting, what would put you off and make you think again about volunteering?**

* If I didn’t feel involved…felt uncomfortable, if everyone had their own formed groups and I felt unable to participate.
* If there wasn’t enough breaks
* If the group was big/intimidating
* If the meetings were boring/didn’t have much going on
* If it was too official and not a lot of people there
* Being talked at the whole time
* Really long texts before I’d even got to a meeting
* No food and drink- especially if it had been used as a selling point
* Not being given the chance to speak
* Not being listened to
* If it overtook my school work…if that (need to focus on school work) wasn’t respected
* If people were keeping to themselves and my answers not been taken seriously…it would put me off

**Q3. What opportunities do you want with Young Healthwatch?**

* The ability to understand the healthcare system in depth, to develop my research skills through research projects and to engage with my local community
* I would like more opportunity to complete Enter and View visits whilst building good relationships with the places visited and Young Healthwatch
* Certificates
* Training programmes
* Enter and Views
* Work placements
* Report writing
* Carrying out research
* Getting recognised training certificates and seeing the change in our community with the work that we do
* Getting our first aid training was a great opportunity
* Just learning skills and collecting evidence for my personal statement
* Would like to do more Enter and Views in future to see how the services are run
* More training programmes just so I can be more experiences like the 15 Steps Challenge

**Q4. Why do you keep coming back?**

* Young Healthwatch has given me the opportunity to become more confident in public speaking. I enjoy challenging myself to do more.
* I just enjoy being there. I enjoy seeing all the people that are there. We get to eat pizza. I’ve got a cool polo shirt and I can talk about any issue I’ve had during the week, school work, mental health.
* Volunteering looks good
* It’s good fun
* You meet new people
* You get a voice and are listened to
* You get to be part of a group and we all get matching T-shirts
* I really like it. I enjoy the work we do and the amount of time we spend on it. I just like making a difference within the community. It’s helped me with my public speaking skills. I got to be on BBC… that was fun.
* Gives you something outside of school that’s actually worthwhile doing
* Boost university applications with new skills and training –makes you stand out
* Get new experiences, to meet new people and we get lots of food
* It has helped me with my future endeavours like working here at Cancer Research UK.