

Involving young people

Four different
approaches

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Introduction

Speaking to people in your communities about their experiences of health and social care is at the heart of Healthwatch. However, getting some groups of people engaged can be more complicated than others.

Here, Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire share four different approaches to involving young people in their work and how to make them a success.

Higher and further education

One of the best ways to hear from more young people is to go where there are lots of them! Higher and further education settings are an excellent opportunity to build connections to work with and hear from young people about their views of health and social care.

Take time to build relationships with college or university staff

Try face-to-face meetings with college and University staff to explain Healthwatch and how working together can be beneficial for both parties. You can attend staff training days and deliver interactive sessions, which work well. Pastoral care tutors and college health and social care leads are great starting points.

Get involved in university events throughout the year

There will be events held at colleges and universities throughout the academic year, such as mental health days, careers fayres and specific health days. Build contacts within the college and university to ensure they include your Healthwatch. Prepare well for each event. Plan your activities around the topic and make them fun for young people. You will gain more qualitative data this way.

Go to fresher's events.

Fresher's events at the start of the academic year are a good opportunity for young people to identify Healthwatch branding and understand what Healthwatch do and why they need to share their views. You will be competing with other agencies, so make sure your stand is attractive. You can try these suggestions:

- Take pens with your local Healthwatch branding on them and your contact number.
- Provide small branded paper bags so they can take leaflets away.
- They can participate in an instant poll (anything from a voting system online to simply popping a counter in a jar).
- Take promotional materials that are specific to your local Healthwatch.

- Ask them to complete a quick survey on a topic that affects young people. Surveys can be more effective than asking them to share their views generally as it will focus them.
- Be as creative as you can when gathering young people's views, as you may get more responses.

Target Health and Social Care students

Targeting Health and Social Care classes is an excellent place to start, as this young group is already interested in the topic. Offer to present to classes to explain what Healthwatch is, what is happening locally and how young people can get involved.

These classes are an ideal opportunity for local Healthwatch to ask specific questions to young people or to get them to share their last experience of a health setting or service.

Collect views and opinions from students

Here are a few suggestions:

- Cut out paper shapes related to the topic, e.g. if you are asking for views and opinions on secondary care, you can have pieces of paper in the shape of a hospital. Ask the young people to write their comments on it or on speech bubbles. They can place them on a larger picture which could be the letters of your Healthwatch or the name of the service.
- Carry out focus groups if you need in-depth information for a specific project. You could contact established youth groups or arrange these with the college and university. Use your contacts to help you.
- Make sure your focus groups are interactive and fun to speak to young people.

Remember to adapt activities for specific topics or groups of young people.

Prioritise accessibility, do your research and work with tutors to ensure your activities will meet the needs of the groups. For example, suppose you are consulting with a group of young people diagnosed with ADHD. In that case, you may want to ask the group to move around, and you would always tailor your activities for young people with a learning disability or sensory impairment.

Consider offering placements

Talk to your local college or university about what students need on placements. Is there a set number of hours they need to complete? What are the time commitments? What level of course is it?

Design a programme that meets the number of hours they need to complete. It should include all aspects of your work and various activities for them to participate in. This will keep them engaged and allow them to try new things,

discover what they like most, and help you discover their skills. Offer training yourself and finds out what else is available locally. Development opportunities add to the young person's CV and college portfolio.

You will need some documents and a service-level agreement with the college or university to offer student placement. These could include:

- Application form
- Consent form (if under 18)
- Confidentiality form
- Next of kin/allergies etc.
- Risk assessment
- Release form from the college
- Expenses (is the college or local Healthwatch paying for bus fares)
- Make sure the college or university offers all students the opportunity.

Offer volunteering opportunities

Attracting young people to volunteer can be difficult for all local Healthwatch. However, if a student has been on a placement with you, they are more likely to volunteer long-term.

Research projects

If you are going to do a project about an issue affecting young people, involving them in your research is a great place to start.

Young people can better identify research methods and questions that fit their peers' needs and experiences because they understand their preferences and capabilities.

Here are four steps to involving young people successfully in your research projects:

Step 1: Choose a meaningful research project.

Make sure your project is meaningful and not just used as a tick-box exercise to say you have worked with young people.

- Have you identified through information received that young people are having issues accessing a service, or do they feel they are not communicated with adequately?
- This information would come from an initial consultation with young people or identified by a need for responses from that demographic.
- Do your desktop research first and involve the young people in that process and the final decision.

Step 2: Decide if you are using co-production or co-design

Co-production and co-design have different starting points, and both have benefits.

- Co-production is where you start from a blank sheet of paper, come up with ideas as a group, and plan your project with no real agenda from either side.
- Co-design is where you have an initial idea and work with young people to develop this. Both have pros and cons, but you must decide what is best for your local Healthwatch and be honest.

Step 3: Try different recruitment methods and offer options

- Students studying health and social care courses are an excellent place to recruit young people for research projects.
- You can also try social media advertising but use the channels used by young people, such as TikTok and Instagram.
- Students who sit on Local Youth Councils or Youth Parliaments may want to be involved in research projects.
- Offer different involvement choices as they may want to design surveys, conduct interviews, or write reports. If you offer options and opportunities for them to change their minds, they are more likely to get involved and stay engaged.

Step 4: Work together to collect and write up findings.

Allocate roles and agree on a project plan. Check in with the group regularly and support them in collecting and writing up their findings.

They may want to write a report together, one may wish to take the lead, or they may want to deliver a presentation or produce a video.

Please make sure they are part of any meetings to share their findings with service providers and that you share any outcomes with them.

Social media

Social media is a great tool to communicate who we are and what we do, pushing out advice and information and encouraging people to share their opinions.

Young people consume much of their information from social media channels and often have a strong interest and capabilities in this area.

Here are three ways you can involve young people in your social media:

Content creation

Contact digital media students about your work and volunteering opportunities, as they can be involved in specific campaigns or general Healthwatch promotion. Students often must complete a project towards their final qualification or carry out volunteer hours, depending on the course.

Digital media students are competent in using film equipment and editing and usually want to practice their skills and boost their CVs. This process can take some time as you will need to contact your local college or university media department and discuss how you can work together. It will help if you have a specific campaign or project you can promote and if you give them enough time to get involved.

Managing and posting content via micro-volunteering

Getting involved with the scheduling and posting is another great option. Make sure there is a named contact in your team for support (usually the person who looks after your communications). It is a good idea for the young person to create the content, which your comms lead can check and 'tick live'. They should meet with the young person regularly, even virtually or over the phone, to offer feedback and praise and explain why they made any changes.

Campaign creation

You have a few options for involving young people from the start in deciding the media work they want to support. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Start with a blank page and ask the young people to develop their own topic or social media campaign. This should have their buy-in from the start (co-production)
- Start with an idea you already have, perhaps a national campaign you want to work on, and support them to develop a communications plan that they are happy with (co-design)
- Ask them what is important to them. Making it personal will help them plan a social media campaign or digital project that really matters to them and that they want to be involved in

Be clear from the beginning how much say the young people can have in designing the project or campaign. Be honest about how much support you can give, the timescales, and any deadlines. If you can only recruit two social media volunteers to support a planned campaign, say so, as it will still be an appealing option for many young people.

Young Healthwatch Ambassadors

Create a specific role description

Be clear on what you want the young ambassadors to achieve. See below for an example of a role description that you can adapt.

Agree on the purpose of the role

This role can encourage young people to work with Healthwatch and collect their peers' views. If young people in Further/Higher Education want to micro volunteer, becoming a Young Healthwatch Ambassador is an ideal opportunity. They can feed back any information about health and social care services promptly so that we can identify themes and trends for social media, research projects and other work.

Choose how you want to receive feedback.

There are several ways to do this, and you will find what works best. Here are some options you can try:

Google Forms

Give your Ambassadors a link so they can input the information they receive directly into a data collection system. If you already use Google Forms, you could set up a separate form for your Ambassadors to allow them to analyse their data separately. This will enable you to separate the data they collect easily.

You will need to train your Young Ambassadors to input the data. The advantage of this system is that young people can only input data and cannot read all of the responses, so you will need to ensure you share overall findings with them and keep them up to date with the difference they are making.

Survey Monkey

Survey Monkey is a simple way to collect data that will go straight to your Healthwatch for you to analyse.

Feedback Sheets

A young person can complete a hard copy and hand them to the local Healthwatch team, who can then input the feedback into their data collection system. This process doesn't require training and is quick and easy for the volunteers. However, there may be a delay in receiving the information back, and you would have to input the data yourself.

E-mail

Young people can use their college or personal e-mail address to send feedback to your general enquiries e-mail address or to a named contact in your team to collate. If you want more structure, they can send completed feedback forms electronically. It's best to agree on timescales with the young

people. This is a flexible option for your volunteers that they can easily fit into their day, but it may be more time-consuming for you.

All these options have pros and cons, so use what you have and decide what is best for your Healthwatch. Talk to the young people about their preferred choice and work with them to design the process. If they feel included, they are more likely to participate. You may need different options for each Young Healthwatch Ambassador. Remember to include them when you report your findings and have any outcomes to share.



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