

Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire

Annual Report 2024–2025



A message from Young Healthwatch Manager



I wanted to start by saying what another fantastic year for Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire. The young people that volunteer with us have really worked hard this year. The skills and dedication that they have shown is fantastic and we would not be able to make sure that the voices of children and young people across Northamptonshire are heard without them. Thank you to everyone who has supported us this year, whether that is sharing a social media post, filling out a survey, asking us to present at a meeting or supporting us with focus groups. We really could not do it without your support, but most of all I want to thank the volunteers at Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire. Without them we would not be able to achieve what we have.



Esther Stimpson
Young Healthwatch
Manager



A message from one of our volunteers



I have been a member of Young Healthwatch for over five years and have learnt many lessons whilst here. I have gained experience learning about how the health care system works and how to navigate it both as a young person as well as later in life. The volunteers are all so kind and have helped me build my confidence with speaking in both small groups and presenting to crowds.



Kia
Young Healthwatch
Volunteer

Being at Young Healthwatch I have also gained a passion for working in the health sector, something I may not have considered as a career path before but am now exploring. The young people that volunteer understand the importance of community and will always try and help to make decisions to help the majority of the people that would be affected by them, by thinking outside of their immediate social circle. It is nice to also make sure that children and young people have a voice about the services that they use and how they given the information about their health. We are given experiences in multiple places such as hospitals, meetings, survey designing, and public events.





Young People's Experiences of Dentistry in Northamptonshire

In December 2024 two focus groups were held at local secondary schools to see how often young people accessed dentistry services, and to explore their knowledge of good oral care. The questions asked in the focus groups were designed by Young Healthwatch to focus on what they thought would be important.

Young People's Experiences of Dentistry in Northamptonshire

From what we heard from young people about dental care and access, experiences really varied between individuals. Some were able to see a dentist regularly and felt they had good oral health, while others faced long waits just to get an appointment. Most lived within a 40-minute drive of their dental practice, but a few told us they had to travel across the country or even abroad to access dental treatments.

Many young people also mentioned delays between being told they needed treatment and actually receiving it. In some cases, they'd waited three or even four years. A few said they nearly received the wrong treatment when they finally got seen, which did raise concerns.

Overall, those who took part in the focus groups said their experiences at the dentist were mostly positive, staff were friendly and they made the young people feel welcome. But some young people also felt that communication between dental practices and patients or their families could be much better, especially around appointments and treatment plans.

"We would like to thank Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire for sharing this report with us which will contribute to our understanding of oral health in Northamptonshire." – North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Council's Public Health

Read the report:

<https://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2025-03-19/young-peoples-experiences-dentistry-northamptonshire>



15 Steps Visit Kettering General Hospital

In January 2025, Young Healthwatch partnered with Enfold to carry out a 15 steps visit at Kettering General Hospital. Before the visit, young people taking part in the 15 Steps were trained on how to carry out a visit and report their findings.

During the visit, our young people looked at the Paediatric Emergency Department and the Skylark Ward whilst being shown around by staff.

15 Steps Visit Kettering General Hospital

When visiting the paediatric emergency department, young people described the atmosphere as calm and not too overwhelming. They noticed there were plenty of activities for children of all ages, though the activities were mainly aimed at younger children who might not have mobile devices. Decorations on the walls and floors helped guide families through the space, and corridors featured regularly updated information and feedback, though some of the young people felt this could be presented better and could be more engaging.

The hospital also showed the group one of its newly decorated treatment bays. All of the young people on the visit responded positively, saying they felt noticeably calmer in the themed room compared to the undecorated ones.

After exploring the emergency department, the group was asked to find their way to the Skylark Ward as if they were patients. They found it a bit tricky due to a lack of clear signage and had to ask a staff member for help. Once on the ward, they were given a brief tour and got to try some hospital food available to patients and shared their opinions.

After trying the food, they spoke to a play specialist, who explained how the hospital involves children and young people in their care. The group shared ideas on how to make medical information, such as MRI scans or surgeries, more understandable. They recommended using real people in videos instead of animations to make the content feel more relatable.

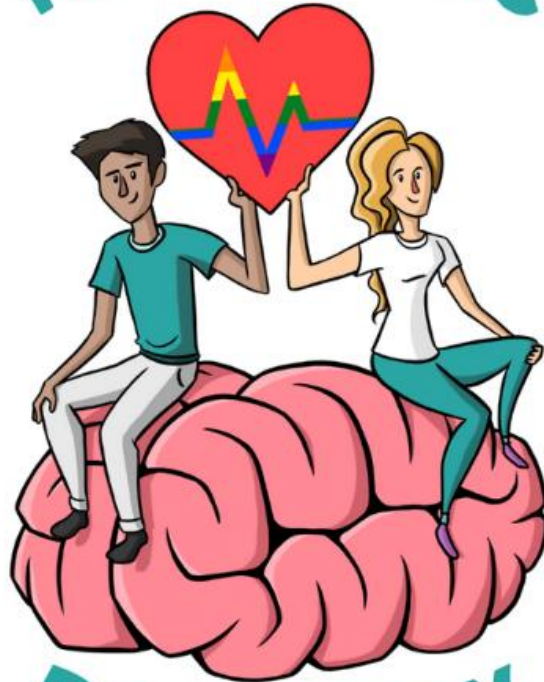
The Skylark Ward's waiting area was seen as welcoming but mostly geared towards younger children. Young Healthwatch suggested making it more inclusive for older age groups. They also highlighted how the feedback board helped patients and families share their views and felt reassured by the ward's focus on safety and calmness, even during busy times.

More information about Enfold – enfold.org.uk

Read the report:

<https://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2025-03-13/our-visit-kettering-general-hospital>

TEEN CLINIC



DAVENTRY

Teen Clinic Daventry: An Evaluation

The Daventry Teen Clinic was set up shortly after COVID-19 to support young people with their physical, sexual and mental health. While it's a valuable resource and used by some local teens, stigma around asking for help still puts many off from accessing the support available.

Young Healthwatch were asked to design a survey for the young people in Daventry to help services understand what locals thought of the clinic. Our volunteers designed a survey that was simple for teenagers to understand whilst still collecting all the relevant information.

Teen Clinic Daventry: An Evaluation

We ran a survey for local young people to take part in within Daventry; this was to gauge the awareness and experiences of Teen Clinic Daventry. The survey results showed that most young people preferred to visit the clinic with someone else, such as a friend or family member – only 14% said they would attend alone. Some also felt the clinic’s location wasn’t ideal or convenient, and that it wasn’t open often enough to meet their needs.

Young people in Daventry who had used the service generally gave positive feedback and reported improvements in their wellbeing. The most frequently used support was the counselling service, which many found to be welcoming and helpful. However, there were a few barriers. Some were put off by worries about how others might view them going to the clinic, while others were concerned their issues might be too complex for the clinic to handle.

Overall, the teen clinic has been a valuable addition to the local area. But better communication around opening times and expanding those times, could make it easier for more young people to access it. Breaking down stigma by openly discussing available support with children and young people could also help reduce the anxiety around seeking help for their health.

Read the report:

<https://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2025-02-13/teen-clinic-daventry-evaluation>



Experiences of Autism and ADHD waiting lists in Northamptonshire

Young Healthwatch were commissioned by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to find out about young people and their families experience of getting a diagnosis for ADHD and/or Autism.

Our young people devised a survey to ask questions about the process of a diagnosis across the county. The survey looked at the support needed, and struggles highlighted whilst waiting for or just receiving a diagnosis. The survey was posted online and given to local schools.

Experiences of Autism and ADHD waiting lists in Northamptonshire

We heard from over 300 young people, parents and carers about their experiences of waiting for an ADHD or Autism assessment.

When the survey responses came back, 75% of parents and caregivers said that access to education was the hardest part of the diagnosis journey. Meanwhile, 73% of young people said the biggest challenge for them was developing social skills.

A key finding from the survey was that many young people and their families didn't feel supported during the diagnostic process. They often found the format confusing and weren't sure how far along they were in the process.

Another important issue raised was around schools – not all were fully trained or equipped to support a young person through a diagnosis. Support also appeared to drop off significantly after a diagnosis was made, leaving many unsure where to turn next.

Most young people said they would prefer to access further support within their school or education setting. On the other hand, very few said they would look for help online, with many feeling that digital platforms aren't where they naturally go for this kind of information or support.

Read the report:

<https://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2024-09-05/young-people-and-their-families-experiences-autism-and-adhd-diagnosis>



Vaping in West Northamptonshire

Young Healthwatch were commissioned by the Public Health Department of West Northamptonshire to see how young people who use vapes or other nicotine products viewed them.

Public Health provided a set of questions, which our young people then reworded into language that would be easier for other young people to understand.

Vaping in West Northamptonshire

The questions were asked during a focus group session, along with three one-to-one interviews. When asked how they accessed vapes, most young people said someone else bought them, or they bought them themselves without being ID-checked – despite being underage.

When asked why they vaped, responses included peer pressure, stress and using it as a way to cope with mental health challenges. Many of the young people said they knew vaping was harmful and wanted to stop, but didn't feel that apps or websites would work well for them.

Some suggested that future support could include peer-led focus groups, or sessions with someone who had previously vaped or smoked and who could genuinely relate to what they were going through.

Following these discussions, Public Health is planning to work with the local Stop Smoking team to support young people who want help and advice around vaping. They also aim to offer more guidance for schools, parents, and carers on how to talk to young people about smoking and vaping.

Read the report:

<https://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2024-08-20/young-peoples-experiences-vaping-west-northamptonshire>

Celebrating our volunteers

Our Young Healthwatch volunteers are at the heart of everything we do, they make it possible for us to hear and amplify the voices of young people. They play a vital role in making sure young people are listened to in local health and social care. We are proud to have these young people lead their Young Healthwatch organisation. We're currently reapplying for the Investing in Children Accreditation to recognise and reflect this commitment.

With them, For them, Because of them



healthwatch
North Northamptonshire
West Northamptonshire

Young
healthwatch
Northamptonshire

Healthwatch West Northamptonshire
Moulton Park Business Centre
Redhouse Road
Moulton Park Industrial Estate
Northampton
NN3 6AQ

🌐 www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com

☎ 0300 002 0010

✉ enquiries@healthwatchwestnorthants.com

✂ x.com/YHWNorth1

f www.facebook.com/younghealthwatchnorthamptonshire

📷 www.instagram.com/yhwnorthamptonshire/