

healthwatch
Walsall

**Young Person's
Communication
around Health and
Social Care Services
Report**

April 2023



Introduction

Healthwatch Walsall is the independent voice of the public in health and social care in Walsall. Healthwatch Walsall collect feedback from the public about their experiences of using health and social care services and use that feedback to work with service providers and commissioners to find ways to improve services. One of the ways that we collect feedback is to carry out projects that reflect the priorities of the public and that focus on particular services, conditions or parts of the community.

We spoke with young people aged 14-24 about what matters to them, we listened to their experiences and their opinions. Based on this feedback, it became apparent young people were experiencing communication issues and were finding this a barrier to accessing health, wellbeing, and/or social care or progressing once accessed. To look at this further, we decided to explore the following:

The experiences and challenges young people face in accessing health and social care services and whether young people are aware of alternative options for their health and wellbeing.

How young people want to be communicated with by health and other professionals and their views, opinions, and experiences of this so far.

We conducted this project to give young people the opportunity to share their views and tell us what could help improve this for them.

What we did?

Healthwatch Walsall collected feedback by conducting a survey and speaking with young people at groups. A survey was created by us with the involvement of young people from Walsall, they told us how the survey should look and sound to be more engaging for the young people accessing it. This survey was both online and a hard copy. The hard copy was distributed within some schools, organisations, and community groups in Walsall and collected once completed. The online version was shared digitally via social media, Healthwatch Walsall website, shared through our volunteers with friends, family, colleagues, added into the Healthwatch newsletters and distributed to organisations within Walsall for sharing through their own networks.

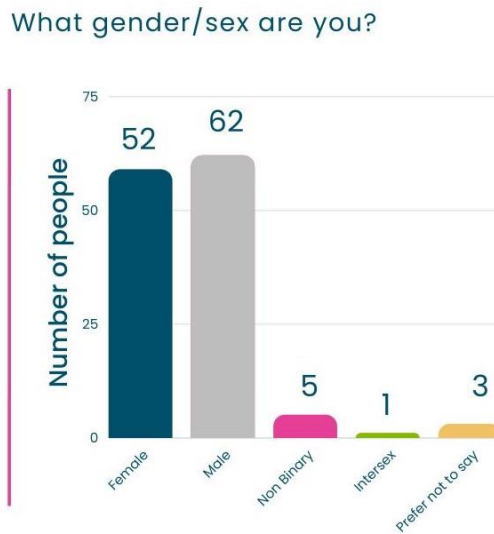
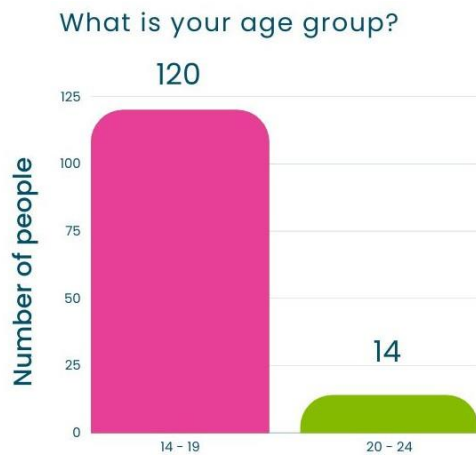
We visited young people at their place of education or training, we spoke through social media and engaged in one-to-one conversations, we used the survey as a framework for discussion to engage the young people into sharing their views and experiences.

Who took part?

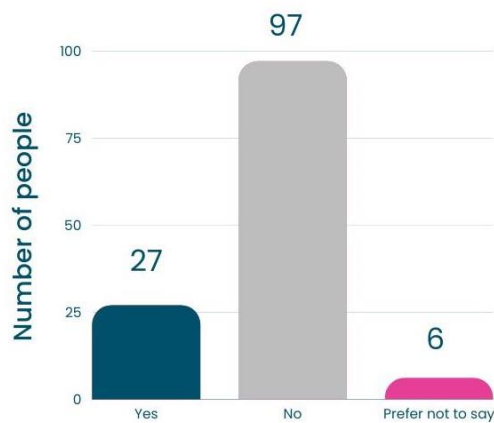
The project was aimed at young people aged 14-24 and **134** people responded to our survey and approximately 20 people were engaged with at groups. We also received feedback from our volunteers who spoke about the project with their peers. We were also

able to hear from young people who class themselves as having a disability and/or long-term condition.

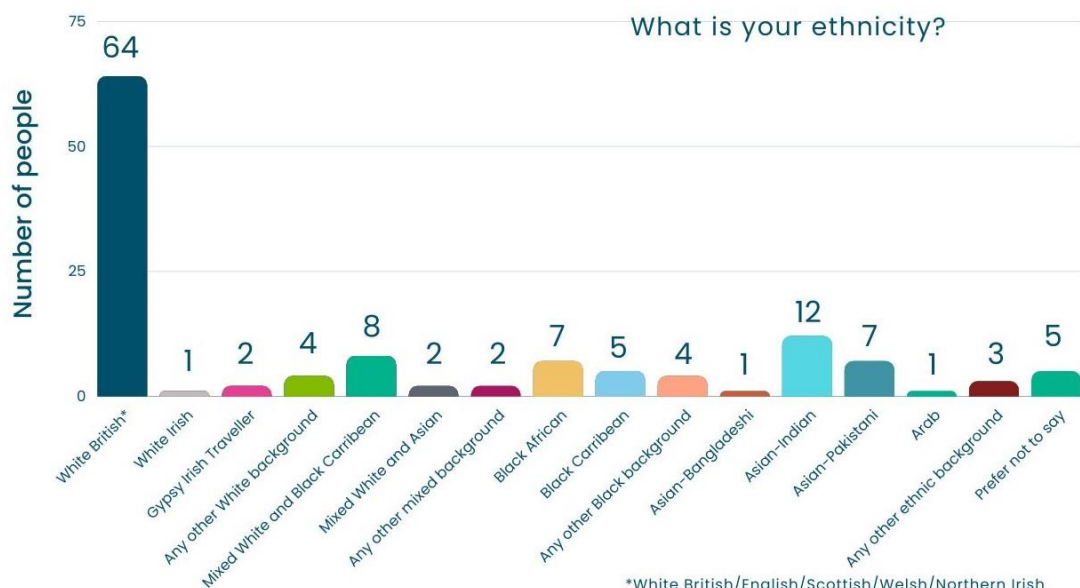
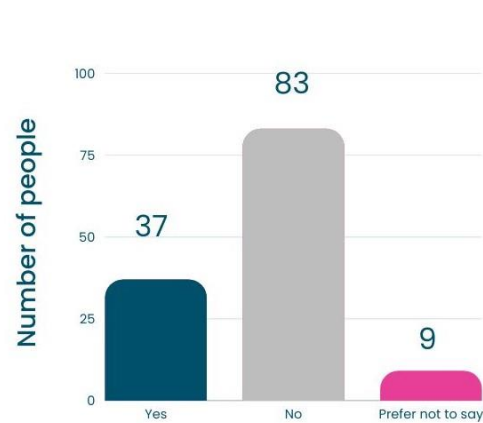
The participant demographics can be seen below.



Do you consider yourself to have a disability?



Do you consider yourself to have a long term health condition?



*White British/English/Scottish/Welsh/Northern Irish

Findings

To find out **the experiences and challenges young people face in accessing health and social care services** we asked if they are already accessing healthcare services, **118** people reported that they do, and **16** indicated that they do not access health care services.

Following this we asked **young people if they are aware of alternative options for their health and wellbeing**. **81** reported that they are, and **56** are not aware of what other services are available. To get a better picture of what knowledge young people have of what is available we asked respondents to explain by listing the services that they are aware of, these have been collated and are represented in the table below in order of frequency that they were mentioned.

Service	Frequency discussed	Service	Frequency discussed
GP/Nurse	20	Healthwatch	6
Hospital/A&E	13	CAMHS	6
111/999	8	Dentist	4
Mental Health	7	Pharmacy	4
Helplines	7	Education	4

We also asked if young people were given information about other services that were available for them to access when they had seen a health or wellbeing professional. **72** people advised that they had and **62** people advised that they had not been given information about other services.

Young People's awareness of services in Walsall

What young people told us who have a knowledge of services available

'I know what services are available in my area for the main issues that affect me'

'I know of services available but not where to find them or how to access them'

'I do know this and have used them'

Several people reported seeing 'leaflets', 'posters' or 'ads', with one specifying that the location of the poster was 'around my school'.

What young people told us who do not have a knowledge of services available

'I didn't know where to look'

'I don't have a clue'

'Didn't know I could go anywhere else'

'Never been told anything'

'I'm not really confident around this topic'

Communication issues

Healthwatch Walsall wanted to know what young people really think about the way they are communicated with, **how young people want to be communicated with by health and other professionals and their views, opinions and experiences of this so far.**

We wanted to listen to what they had to say and let them share their views, so we asked participants if they have ever experienced communication issues with a health or other kind of professional*, **77** young people reported that they had, and **58** reported they had not experienced communication issues with professionals.

(*By professional we mean – teachers, police, doctors, nurses, councillors, dentists, or any other professional they may have engaged with.)

To explore this further, the participants that answered yes were asked to explain their response, the feedback was analysed thematically, and 4 themes emerged.

Person-centred, Service response, Language and Barriers.

Below are some of the things they shared with us.

Person Centred Response

Young people told us that they feel they are...

'neglected'
'not taken seriously because of my age'
'severely misunderstood by teachers'

Another advised that they...

'would like them to speak kinder to me'
'they don't listen, they just send me home'.

Others reported that professionals...

'make a judgement without knowing me and don't learn to communicate how I need them to'
'don't listen to me'
'talk over me'
'in the past a teacher and doctor have disregarded my mental health as not an issue'
'don't help or give advice'
'school doesn't do what the hospital tell them to do'
'no one knows what's wrong with me'
'when I go somewhere new, I have to keep telling them'

Service Response

Professionals:

'don't tell you anything, you wait for ages and don't know what you are doing' are 'not responding'

Teachers:

'teachers sometimes don't answer'
'the comeback from school teachers is a very long process or sometimes they don't come back to you'

Language

Due to 'language difficulties' there is often a 'misunderstanding by the services I have been to'

'due to bad English I find it hard to understand'

'language barriers have caused me to struggle for appointments'

Barriers

'communication with health was difficult'

'inaccessible GP and social care'

'I accessed a service over the phone but there were issues due to bad lines'.

Communication methods and what young people most prefer

Healthwatch Walsall have a small group of young volunteers who support us with our projects. We talked about communication with them and asked their opinions, they also encouraged conversations with their peers and told us what they had heard. We gained information from outreach and one-to-one conversations around communication methods. We found it really did depend on the individual as to what method they would prefer to communicate. We wanted to find out what the most preferred method was, so we asked young people to choose. We found out that young people most prefer face to face as a method of communication, followed by phone. **87** young people prefer face to face communication, while **45** prefer phone call. Very few voted for videocall, text and email.

Healthwatch Walsall had discussions with CAMHS about communication and what young people want. We were asked to include the following question into our survey.

If you were to access support for mental health, how would you prefer a therapy appointment to be held?

Face to face appointment – 96

Telephone appointment – 16

Video call – 3

Less than 10 respondents told us they would prefer email or text.

Service information and access

Young people have been sharing their frustrations around the lack of information they feel they have access to. They have told us that simple, more available information would make accessing services easier for them and that they would be more likely to access services for their health and wellbeing if they felt more confident with the initial process.

Healthwatch Walsall visited young people at their college and spoke with them about our project. We let them tell us in their own words their feelings and opinions of accessing healthcare services.

Accessing Primary Care

When asking young people what they would do if they felt unwell and could not get a GP appointment, or needed mental health support they responded:

"I don't know, wait to get better I suppose"

"I don't know because if my mom couldn't ring [the GP] I wouldn't want to phone them, I wouldn't know what to say"

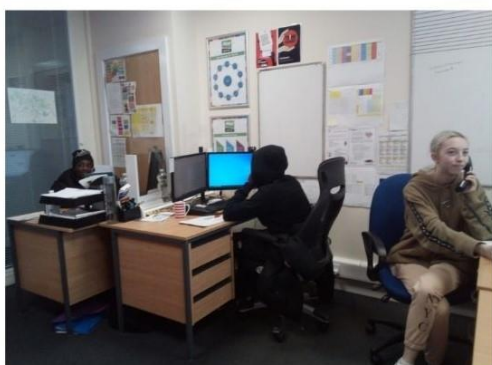
"Ask a teacher what to do"

"Depends on what it is because I wouldn't want anyone else to know, do they (professional) tell your Mom or Dad?"

"I have looked online before but the form was long, so I didn't bother"

Juniper Walsall Student Workshops

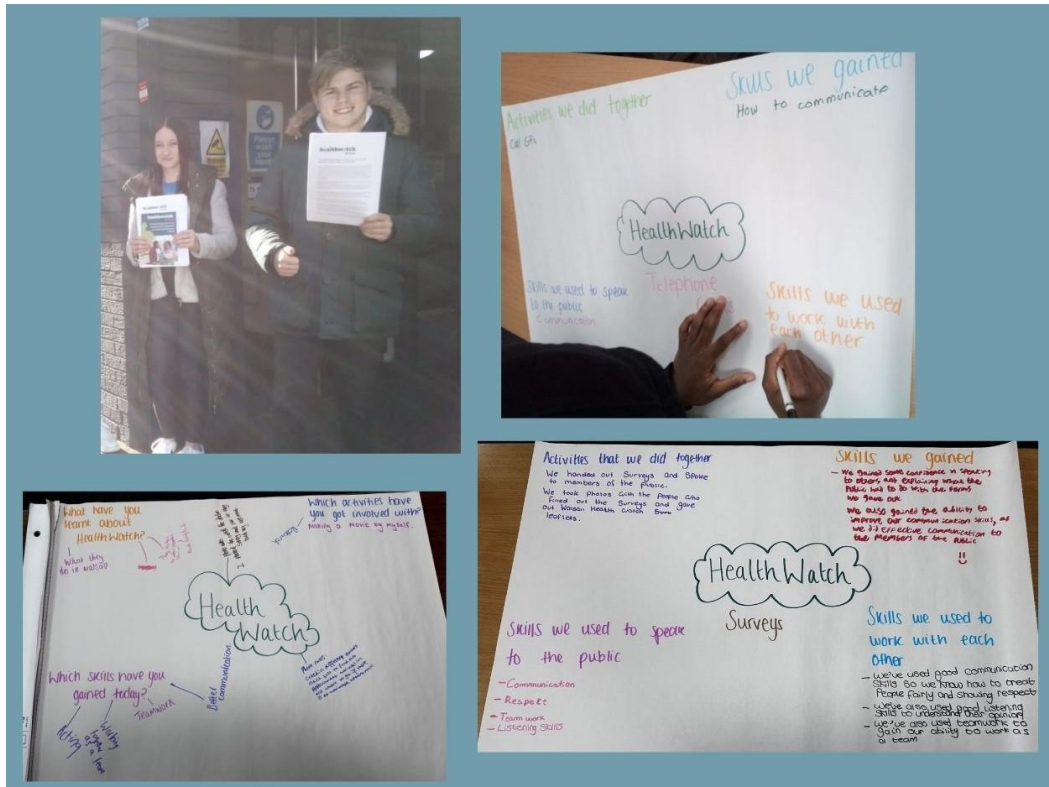
Healthwatch Walsall were asked to support 2 workshops at Juniper Walsall, here the students were able to support the with two pieces of work. The Healthwatch Walsall listening survey and GP out of hours access. This enabled the students to gain valuable work experience and a chance at confidence building. The students were supported to call a GP surgery and enquire about available appointments, they also went out with a member of staff and spoke local people about Healthwatch. After the workshops they told us what they had achieved.



- Confidence in speaking to others
- Speaking to the public
- Communication skills
- How to treat people fairly and with respect
- Good listening skills
- Being open to other opinions
- Used teamwork
- Talking with professionals

- Telephone skills
- What tone of voice to use
- Patience
- Acting
- Making a movie by myself
- Listening to other people's stories
- Learned about Healthwatch and what they do in Walsall





"I could definitely make an appointment for myself now at the Dr's"
 "I could make an appointment for someone else! It isn't even that scary once you have called them"
 "I know I can call out of hours GP now if I need to"
 "I didn't even know you could go to the pharmacy for that!"

Useful Resources

We asked young people if they would find a resource pack detailing local services and how to contact them useful. **98** people reported that they would find this useful, and **36** people indicated that they would not find it useful. We asked what format would they prefer the resource pack to be in, this was an open ended question and the responses can be found below.

Paper copy of resources – 46

Resources sent by text – 6

Online resources – 45

Posters or leaflets – 10

Resources sent by email – 2

Any format – 3

Conclusion

We identified that there is a lack of awareness of services available to young people, and where there is some awareness of what is available, there is little knowledge on how to use the service. Young people want easy, clear instructions and simpler ways of accessing information and services. While we understand a certain amount of effort must go into accessing a service, once a young person has made the decision, the journey from decision to access to progress within a service, should be simple, quick, clear, and timely.

Young people want to be listened to, understood and recognised. They want their health and well-being to feel important to the professionals they engage with. We heard words like 'neglected' 'they don't listen to me' 'talk over me' 'not taken seriously because of my age' these are all key factors in why young people are holding back and unhappy when accessing services and engaging with professionals. Last year we heard young people tell us "I was given an anxiety leaflet when I didn't have anxiety" This remains a clear indicator that young people do not feel listened to.

We saw comments like 'don't help or give advice' 'don't tell you anything, you wait ages and don't know what you are doing' these are the very reasons young people do not ask for help with access. These are the reasons why access and progress within services need to be made simpler, if a young person believes they can't ask for help and they are struggling with access and progress for different reasons, what is the next solution for them? We saw from previous feedback that young people will 'wait to get better'. Last year we heard young people say, "I went to a therapy appointment, and it was a group – no one told me it was a group" We can see from feedback during this project that young people feel they need communicating with on where they sit within a service and the progression for them within that service.

We found out that young people prefer face to face communication. Young people still want to see or hear a person that is supporting them. However, we must acknowledge that this is usually once they have already progressed into a service. The initial access still must take place and a general confusion within young people is preventing them from accessing services. From listening to young people, we feel they are 'put off' by the lengthy process of making the first step to access well-being and/or mental health services as it can be quite long winded. Thus, allowing young people to slip further into unhealthy lifestyles and/or mental wellbeing states.

Information around healthcare and confidentiality must be made known to young people. If they are unaware of their patient or confidentiality rights, they are more likely to be untrusting of professionals. This can lead to ongoing issues with health, mental health, and other conditions. A young person accessing a service for emergency contraception may not have a good understanding of their confidentiality rights, they may not be aware of what is available unless they have easy, clear, simple information that is readily available.

Recommendations

- Information on services needs to be shared more widely and thoroughly with young people and follow up questions asked by professionals asking if the young person they are engaging with understands what is being said and a trust from the professional that the young person does understand.

This can also prevent young people accessing services that are not suitable for them.

- An offer of help with accessing a service, whether it is to support the young person with filling in a referral form or encouraging and supporting them to make an appointment.

Gentle encouragement and support will hopefully lead to more independence around access. Making an appointment can be a simple task for some, for others it can be daunting.

- To empower young people to take ownership of their health and wellbeing and educate them of ways in which to do so.
- More inviting environments, friendlier staff, and a general understanding of how to engage with and speak to young people.
- Clear updates on where people sit within services.
- Clear and simple information on how a young person's information will be used.
- Well trained staff within schools, education settings, community groups and organisations that support young people, staff should feel confident in sourcing the correct and most appropriate information and services to help the young person they are supporting.
- Improved interprofessional communications.

Throughout 22/23 young people have shared their thoughts and fears about accessing different types of services. By having a clear guide for professionals to work from we can hopefully overcome confusion, build better relationships between young people and professionals, and give young people a better patient experience.

Acknowledgments

Healthwatch Walsall would like to thank our young volunteers for their support with this project, for sharing the survey and raising awareness of Healthwatch. We would like to thank all the organisations who have supported us by sharing our survey, talking with young people, and feeding back information. We would also like to thank Willenhall EAct senior school and their school council for their support. We are looking forward to working with you all again this year.

Healthwatch social media



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youthhw

Healthwatch Walsall

79, Thames Road

Walsall

WS3 1LZ

0800 470 1660

info@healthwatchwalsall.co.uk

healthwatch
Walsall