

Healthwatch Newham Young People Engagement

Introduction

In 2017–2018, Healthwatch Newham (HWN) engaged with young people to obtain feedback regarding their experiences with Health and Social Care services in Newham.

We are arranging further engagement with young people and have brought this report to the HWBB to gather any initial responses and feedback and suggestions or recommendations on areas to follow up.

Background

HWN visited Newvic College in November 2017, which is a Sixth Form that specialises in working with young people aged 16 – 19. HWN were able to engage with young people regarding their oral, mental, sexual, and general health to gain an understanding about their experiences with Services in Newham. At the event we spoke with:

- approximately 40 students in total for oral, mental and sexual health
- an estimated total of 50 students for feedback on GPs and
- 15 students about general health.

During July 2018, HWN joined the National Citizen Service (NCS) team in Newham to organise three sessions to engage with local young people. We conducted two interactive workshops, which enabled us to find out about young people's experiences and views of health and social care services. NCS is a government scheme that brings a broad range of young people, of different academic backgrounds, communities and with a range of skills and conditions, to help them build skills for work life and the transition into adulthood.

- In total, we spoke with 20 young people aged 16 – 17, to find out about their experiences with services.

HWN also participated in the University of East London (UEL) Freshers' Fair in September 2018 to obtain feedback from young people about Health and Social Care services, specifically general health, mental health and sexual health.

- We spoke to 27 students.

Please note that not all young people provided responses to all our questionnaires and not everyone we spoke with was able to elaborate on their comments.

Findings

Overall, we found that young people said

- There is a lack of information on where to go for support and they have concerns around confidentiality of their personal information.
- There is stigma associated with accessing health services and feel that when they do raise concerns their issues are not taken as seriously as they should, which further deters young people accessing health services.
- That to make services more accessible to them, they would value friendlier GP staff
- The opportunity to see the same doctor would make them more likely to visit their GP as they emphasised the importance of having trusting relationships with healthcare professionals.

Comments students at Newvic College made about services in Newham:

- 'Helpful and effective services, supportive staff.'
- 'There should be more out-of-hours clinics in more hospitals.'
- 'Friendly GP services, make you feel comfortable.'

Newvic Engagement Event

Oral Health

In relation to oral health

- 55% of the students we spoke to said that they did know how to keep their teeth healthy
- 17.5% said that they had not visited the dentist in a year and
- 12.5% said that they could not remember the last time they visited the dentist.
- 57.5% of the young people we engaged with said that they needed to visit the dentist or A+E for emergency dental treatment.

Mental Health

We were also able to gain feedback from the students at Newvic College about Mental Health. Our findings indicated that

- the top barriers young people said they faced when using mental health services were lack of confidentiality
- they do not know where to go for support and
- they do not feel that they are taken seriously
- 17.5% would use the internet if they were worried about their mental health; the same percentage of young people would speak to the College Nurse; 15% said they would speak to their GP, Pharmacy or Hospital. It is useful to note that these services were considered as places that they would be least likely to approach for support with mental health.

Sexual Health

In regards to sexual health

- 80% of the young people we spoke to said that they would go to their GP if they had concerns about their sexual health
- 10% said that they would go to a clinic in Newham
- 10% said they would either go to the hospital or use the internet to find out what their sexual health issue could potentially be.

To find out more about what young people know about sexual health services we asked whether they knew they could visit any sexual clinic that was not in their local area and they did not have to register at that clinic. 60% said that they were aware of this and 40% said they were not.

GP Services

Through our engagement with Newvic College, we were able to gain an insight into their views surrounding GP services.

- 34% felt that positive attitudes of reception staff was a factor that contributed to GP services working well
- 22% of the young people indicated that shorter waiting times also had an impact on their attitudes towards GP services
- 34% of the young people felt that being treated like an adult had an effect on their experience at their GP.

Interestingly, factors that the young people indicated did not have as much of an effect on GP services working well included, having an online or app service and opening times.

Following on from the information we initially gathered regarding what works well at GP services, we engaged with the students to find out what could be improved about GP services. Our findings highlighted that

- 38% said that shorter waiting times would have a positive effect
- 30% indicated that better attitudes of reception staff would also improve GP services.

We were also able to gather feedback on how frequently young people visited their GP. We found that

- 30% had visited their GP within that month
- 28% said they had been six months ago, 10% had visited a year ago and
- 8% could not remember the last time they had visited their GP service.

General Health

In addition, we also asked approximately 15 students about where they would go if they were worried about their general health

- 47% said that they would go to their parents or carer
- 26% said they would go to their GP
- 20% said they would use the internet and
- 13% said they would go to the hospital.

Following on from this information, we asked the group whether the internet would be the first place they would go to if they had concerns about their general health

- 53.3% said that they would
- and 46.6% said that they would not, highlighting that there was a divide in terms of using the internet for general health concerns.

NCS Workshops

Feedback about Services:

Our main activity aimed to find out what services young people use or do not use at all when they have concerns about their Health. Participants were asked to rank where they would go in case of need from 'Not at all' to 'Most likely'.

Through both workshops, we found that the vast majority of the young people would go to their friends for advice or help when they have issues surrounding their health. A comment we received was *'you can tell your friends everything and they would usually do their best to advise you on what to do.'*



Through this activity, we found that 90% of young people would not inform their school about concerns with their health and wellbeing as this was rated at the place they would be least likely or not to go to at all. Some of the comments we

received were *'you cannot tell the school everything... the school may go straight to your parents and the school does not really understand our issues... the school counsellor might inform other people in the school about your issue without your consent.'* 30% would not visit a pharmacy or hospital if they had concerns about their health and wellbeing.

Our findings also indicated that 40% would be likely to go to the hospital or clinics such as a sexual health clinic if they had a serious problem.

In terms of GPs, hospitals and pharmacies we found that there was a concern from young people around confidentiality. For example, an individual said 'Hospitals are not usually confidential if a person is under a certain age. This causes distrust and young people keeping their health problems to themselves.' We also found that 60% of the young people we spoke with said that they did not make appointments with their GP regularly and if they did, it would be because of a serious health issue.



Feedback about GPs:

As we felt that there were some issues surrounding the GP, our next activity focused on understanding how GP services could be improved. Some of the reasons that we were provided about why young people do not go to their GP include:

- that there are delays at GP services to arrange appointments
- reception staff and doctors are not helpful when you do arrive for your appointment.

A comment we received was that *'doctors at the GP can be patronizing as they do not speak to us like adults.'*

In addition, some of the young people said that a lack of confidence to speak on the phone to arrange an appointment or have a telephone conversation was an issue too and feeling as though their health concern is not serious enough to visit their GP.

We wanted to find out what would cause young people to make a GP appointment. Some of the reasons presented were for prescriptions, general sickness concern, check-ups, vaccinations and blood tests.

We asked young people to think about what their ideal GP would be and what would make them visit their GP. Some of the feedback we received was that the GPs should have

- a good appointment system
- doctors should be easy to talk to
- all staff to provide helpful advice and
- to be able to see the same doctor regularly so that they could have a good relationship with them.

The young people present were also able to provide us with their views on what would make it easier for young people to approach their GP. Some of the key themes found were

- confidentiality, consent and trust; 80% of the group agreed that their personal information should not be shared and if it is, then they should be given the option to consent to having their medical records shared
- having a good trusting relationship between a patient and a doctor

UEL Freshers Fair

General Health

We asked people whether they accessed any health services. 10 people said that they go to their GP, 2 people said they went to the hospital. 2 people visit drop in clinics and one individual said they would go to a pharmacy when they had any concerns with their health and wellbeing. In terms of what barriers people faced that prevented them from visiting health services,

- 3 people said that feeling like they would not be taken as seriously as they should was a barrier
- 2 people said delays with appointments was an issue for them
- 1 person said they didn't know who to talk to
- 1 person said they felt like their issues weren't important or urgent enough
- 1 person said they only went to see a doctor once a family member had made the appointment on their behalf.

Sexual Health

We asked people whether they knew where to go when they had a sexual health concern

- 2 people said that they didn't and
- 9 people said that they were aware of where to go.

Of those who knew where to go when they had a sexual health concern

- 5 people said they would go to their GP
- 3 people said they would go to clinic in Newham
- 3 people said they would use the internet for help
- 1 person said they would go to a clinic outside Newham.

Mental Health

5 people completed our feedback for mental health. In relation to who people would approach first if they had a concern about their mental health, 80% said they would visit their GP and 20% said they would speak to their family.

In relation to what barriers people faced in accessing Mental Health services, the majority said that

- this was due to stigma by society
- concerns about confidentiality and
- not knowing where to go or who to talk to.

Next Steps

Healthwatch Newham will continue its engagement with young people. We are keen to explore some areas in more detail, such as

- Understanding how young people are using the internet for information. We want to check that young people are not buying medication or potentially harmful other health or beauty products.
- Understanding young people's general appetite for online services, particularly GPs, and what makes an attractive app.
- Whether young people have used some of the more recent mental health support services in schools, and whether they are still concerned about confidentiality
- Young people's awareness and experience of sexual health services. There have been recent changes to the location and availability of services. We have had some initial negative feedback from adults and would like to find out young people's views.
- The barriers to visiting a dentist; some young people may be concerned about costs or have experienced a lack of available NHS appointments.

Initial Recommendations:

- Young people friendly materials should be developed (paper and online) to ensure young people have better access to information concerning their health and where to go if they have concerns.
- Improved information, clarification and reassurance around young people's personal data and information should be provided, as confidentiality and privacy were major concerns among young people when considering visiting a GP or health service.
- Provide guidance on the importance of prevention and self-care for longer healthier adulthood.