



**2020-2021**

# **Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire Annual Report**

# Message from our chair



Being Chair this year has been a lot different to the other years due to COVID-19. I have not been able to get involved in as many events as I had wanted to, however I have still enjoyed it. I have had the chance to get involved in an interviewing process at Kettering General Hospital and was still able to support the other members of Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire by communicating online.

I chose to stay with Healthwatch throughout this pandemic as the work I have done with Healthwatch in the past 6 and a half years has been fantastic and I wanted to continue that this year as Chair. We managed to get an amazing response from the survey we completed on Young People's Experiences of COVID-19, and I am proud of the people I work with for sticking with us this year and pushing through. I cannot wait for the next years to come where I am sure we will continue to do some amazing work.

**Darcie 17**  
**Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire Chair**

 I volunteer with YHW because I enjoy it and it gives me a sense of confidence and belonging



# COVID-19

## Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire and COVID-19

Like everyone else across the country, Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire were impacted by COVID-19. We started last year in a full national lockdown but that has not stopped some amazing work from happening.

At the time the country went in to a national lockdown, Young Healthwatch were meeting monthly at various venues across Northamptonshire. It was vital that the wellbeing of our young volunteers was paramount. We moved to online meetings and these were used to check in with our young volunteers and to signpost them to any relevant resources. We tried to make the meetings fun and we joined up with other local Healthwatch across the country who had young volunteers and took it in turns to host online quizzes. Sometimes the purposes of our meetings were to keep connected with each other and to reduce isolation. Sometimes we set small tasks that we could do that week too.



# COVID-19

## A letter to future me and past me.

Two volunteers from Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire have written letters that reflect on the Coronavirus pandemic and the impact that it has had. One has been written to their 10-year-old self and one to themselves in 10 years time.

These letters were written to help them process what is currently going on at the moment and to help adults understand some of the issues facing young people. The letters detail worries around GCSE and A level results and what the future holds for them as well as how the world for young people has changed so dramatically.



### A letter to 10 year old me

Dear 10 year old me,

Currently you're living a happy and free life where you can go out and see your friends, have sleep overs every other weekend. However in 2020 a global pandemic will hit. Your life will change. School will stop in March and you won't get to sit your GCSEs. Teachers will make up grades based of what they think you deserve but you know that isn't fair, you know you deserve better as they don't see the work you put in at home. You struggle in exams to focus so you know there's a chance you'll fail if they want to use mocks to help make these grades up.

You won't be able to go out as often, only 30 minutes for exercise per day or essential trips only. You can't see your friends, your family. Your future will be uncertain.

The death rates will be so high, and many people will die all over the world. You'll have to sanitise and wash your hands constantly. Every Thursday for a set amount of week at 8pm you'll clap to show your support for the NHS and key workers.

Eventually the Lockdown will start being lifted. Slowly normality will return. By the beginning of August local lockdowns will take place and another spike in death rates will happen. However you just have to power through it, you have so many amazing friends to support you and the family will to. I can't say it's going to be fun but just think about what the future holds for you.

From,

Your future self ☺ x



## A letter to future me

Hello 28-year-old Anya!!

It's Anya from 10 years ago here and the worlds gone crazy; there's a global pandemic going on which you'll definitely remember for the rest of your life as it's heavily impacted everyone and how the world works.

Coronavirus stopped absolutely everything, and things are only just starting to get back to normal, or as normal as things can possibly be. It's crazy how the thought hugging someone feels wrong but hopefully by the time you're reading this in 10 years the virus will be under control (hopefully even eradicated) so the world can become more connected again. We have to keep a 2-meter distance from people which feels very antisocial, but most people are adhering to this rule, slowing the spread of the virus which is the aim.

When lockdown started in the UK, everything stopped; there were barely any cars on the road, no shops open and minimal people coming out of their houses. It all felt so strange being locked in the house for months, but things have slowly started to reopen, it's all less boring now. We all have to wear masks if we're in an environment where we're close to other people or in closed spaces which has made my face break out with spots but it's all for the greater good.

I do hope by the time I'm 28 all the stress and anxiety I have about my A Level results feels like a blip because right now it is the biggest thing taking over my mind. I'm terrified but I have alternative routes in place just in case things don't go the way I had anticipated on results day. COVID-19 put an end to my school years very abruptly; I had my last day of school in March just before lockdown and soon after we got the news that summer exams were cancelled and our teachers will be giving grades to the exam boards. Soon I'll be getting grades for exams I haven't done so everything is so up in the air and very unpredictable so I've been planning for any possible scenario. Hopefully by the age of 28 I will be a qualified Physiotherapist working in the NHS after studying my degree in London; fingers crossed. Having a dog or two by my side would be great too.

One highlight of lockdown for me was signing up to a website called Borrow My Doggy where you connect with dog owners and walk their dogs for them; if I don't have a dog by 28 I still hope I'm spending time with dogs. We met a German Shepard called Harvey whose owner has arthritis so she can't walk Harvey as much as she'd like to, so we've been helping her by taking Harvey out for her. It's very rewarding and we get a taste of what it's like to own a dog before we commit to one ourselves.

So lockdown has had its positives and negatives but I can't wait for the world to return to some normality again in 10 years, I'm very intrigued to see what the future has to hold for humanity. 2020 has been a crazy rollercoaster so far.

18-year-old Anya xxx

# Projects and Reports

## Young Carers Project

Thanks to a Takeover Challenge grant, Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire and Northamptonshire Young Carers Service were able to work together to explore the needs and experiences of young carers.

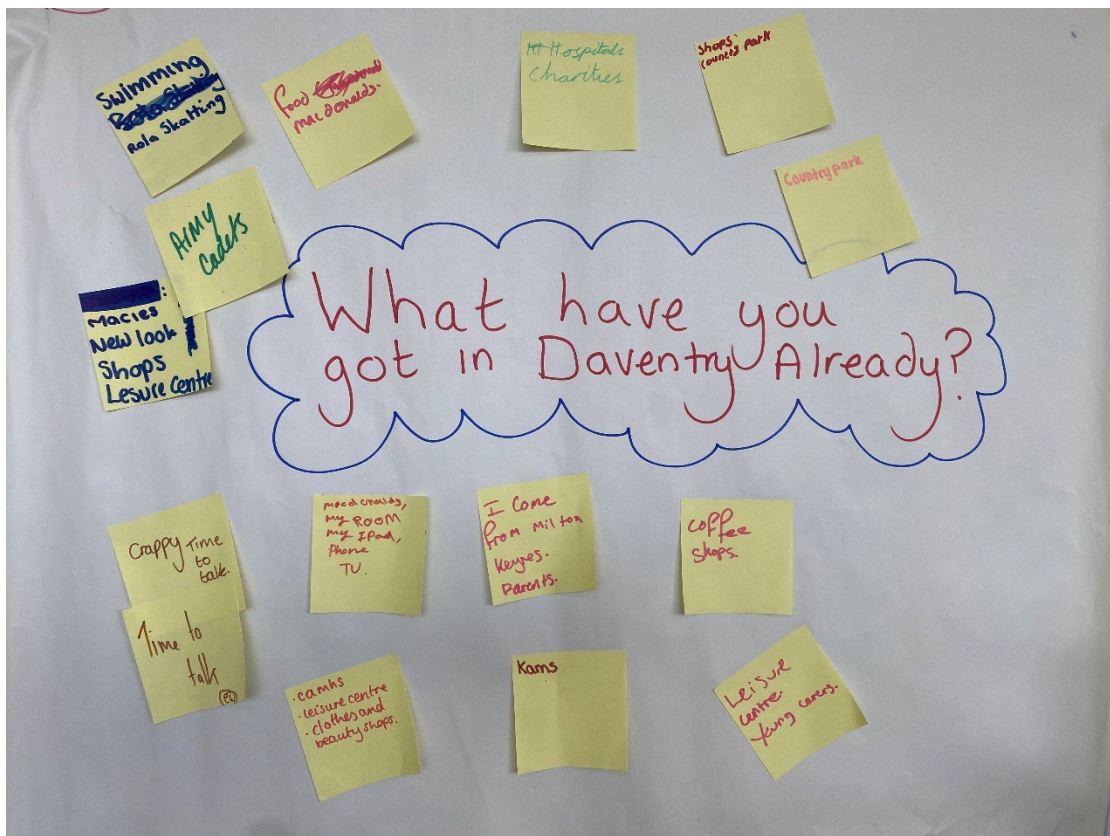
With the Takeover Challenge grant from NHS England, Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire and Northamptonshire Young Carers Service were able to work together with young carers to explore the needs and experiences of young people under the age of 20 who care for someone and help them to make their voices heard. A full report about the project was published to mark Carers Week in June 2020 and support Northamptonshire Carers' #CarersCan theme of 'Drive Change'.

**“It has been so important for the Northamptonshire Young Carers Service to work in collaboration with Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire. Young carers often come into contact with many health and social care services, for themselves and for the people they care for. Their unique experiences are invaluable in helping to guide services and making sure that they are accessible and appropriate for everyone. The opportunity to be part of Young Healthwatch has also positively impacted the young carers’ confidence and given them the chance to develop new skills and take part in new experiences.” - Philp Mayes, Senior Young Carer Worker at Northamptonshire Young Carers Service**

The Takeover Challenge was designed to connect young people with the NHS. By taking part in the project, Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire wanted to achieve the goals set out by NHS England, which included having a positive impact on how young people are involved in health and care priority setting, highlighting good practice, and demonstrating the value of working in partnership. They also wanted to recruit young carers to Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire so their voices continue to be heard by local service commissioners and providers. The inclusion of young carers in Young Healthwatch meetings has brought a new dimension to the meetings. It has made everyone who interacts with the group consider how services could work better for young carers and their families. The young carers have grown in confidence and gained new skills while being part of a team and a sense of identity.

You can read the report here: [www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2020-06-08/young-carers-takeover-project-report](http://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2020-06-08/young-carers-takeover-project-report)





## Being myself – Healthy Young Daventry

**In the summer of 2019 Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire was commissioned by Healthy Young Daventry to carry out a study into emotional wellbeing and self-harm among young people in Daventry.**

A survey designed by Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire was shared with young people across Daventry. The survey looked at young people's physical and emotional wellbeing, the activities and services they currently use to maintain wellbeing and which services they feel would be beneficial to them in the future.

473 young people aged between 11 and 19 completed the survey between January and March 2020. A similar survey for

parents/carers was also completed by 29 people. To gather the responses, we worked with two schools in Daventry - DSLV E-ACT Academy and The Parker E-ACT Academy.

Two focus groups were also held with 10 young people from The Parker E-ACT Academy. As part of the project seven semi-structured interviews were conducted by Time2Talk with young people who were already accessing their service to find out more about why young people self-harm and what helps them. The final report with findings and recommendations was published in December 2020.

The full report can be read here: [www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2020-12-21/being-myself-report-look-emotional-wellbeing-young-people-daventry-town](http://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2020-12-21/being-myself-report-look-emotional-wellbeing-young-people-daventry-town)



## Young People's Experiences of COVID-19 and Lockdowns

**Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire wanted to find out the experiences of young people during lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic. This included how it had impacted their access to health services and how they felt their emotional wellbeing was.**

This is the first time that YHWN have had to work on a project virtually without being able to meet in person, nor being able to go out and meet young people in person. The survey ran from January to March 2021 and the way in which Young Healthwatch worked on it had to change due to COVID-19.

## What Young Healthwatch said:

We wanted to conduct this survey as we wanted to highlight the views of young people related to the pandemic. Young people aged 11-19 are all at different points of their childhood, we wanted to see how each age group and education setting were affected. Emotional wellbeing is a huge part of YHWN's core values, and these survey questions were what we felt would summarise young people's experiences and would give us an indication of goals and recommendations for local providers to work towards locally.

The final report was Published in June 2021

The full report can be read here: [www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2021-06-22/young-healthwatch-northamptonshire-covid-report](http://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2021-06-22/young-healthwatch-northamptonshire-covid-report)





## Community Healthcare Focus Groups

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In the autumn of 2020 Public Health Northamptonshire and NHS Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) commissioned us to carry out some focus groups with young people to find out more about their views and experiences of community health and wellbeing services. The focus groups were designed to answer some of the questions raised by the results of Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) and NHS Northamptonshire CCG August 2020 surveys for children, young people and their families. To find out more about what young people think we gathered their views at three focus groups across the county in September 2020.

This report will form part of wider engagement activity to help Northamptonshire CCG and Public Health Northamptonshire understand where, as a system, services are right and where the gaps are that need a solution to improve and modernise services for the future.

The full report is available here: [www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2020-12-10/community-healthcare-young-people-focus-groups-report](http://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2020-12-10/community-healthcare-young-people-focus-groups-report)

# Partnership Working

## Kettering and Northampton Hospitals

We have worked with both Northampton General Hospital and Kettering General Hospital to ensure that the voice of children and young people has continued to be heard during COVID-19.

A member of Young Healthwatch filmed a patient story of their experience of transitioning from Children's services to Adults services during the pandemic, this was then shared with senior leaders in the trust and the transitions team, to enable them to make changes.

Both hospitals have continued to feedback the progress made with the friends and family test to Young Healthwatch as well as continuously ask for input for the new Paediatric Emergency Department designs at Northampton General Hospital.

In February, Darcie The Chair of Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire was on the interview panel for the new Patient Experience Manager for Kettering General Hospital.

"I believe this is an important process for young people to be involved in as it allows us to get a say in the people we work with. It also offers a chance for a us to give a different perspective on the way they would like to communicate with us and how we feel about the candidate. During this day, I felt very included in the interviews, each candidate listened to. What I had to say was considered throughout the day, I was treated as an equal. Overall, the day was extremely successful from my point of view, I learnt a lot about interviewing skills and the work behind hiring candidates. I would recommend to any young person if they have the chance to take part in interviewing for a role you would be working with." Darcie 17

Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire volunteers took part in a virtual 15 steps visit to Maternity Services at Northampton and Kettering General Hospitals, along side Maternity Voice Partnership volunteers ensuring that the voice of young people was heard. The virtual visits were the first of their kind in the country, the full report can be read here:

[www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2020-08-24/15-steps-maternity-virtual-visit-report](http://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2020-08-24/15-steps-maternity-virtual-visit-report)



# Thank you to our volunteers

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**You have continued to volunteer through the strangest and hardest times. We know that it hasn't been easy for everyone all of the time but you did it!**



# THANKS!

**Young  
healthwatch**  
Northamptonshire

**The greatest volunteers ever!**

**"I'm going to university to study physiotherapy and I'm so excited! Back in January when I sent off my application to universities, my personal statement was full of achievements and knowledge I had learnt through Healthwatch experiences. I had written about all the hospital visits which helped universities understand how I have been exposed to the clinical environment which they were incredibly impressed with, so I was invited to interviews. Once again at these interviews I made sure to drop all our enter and view visits, told them about my BBC interviews which Esther organised and got offers from all the interviews I did! I have learnt a lot about soft skills too which helped me do well in interviews, during my time at YHW we have been given many opportunities to talk in front of a crowd and talk politely to professionals." – Anya 18**

# Contact us

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