

# **Youthwatch Survey Report July 2021**



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### **Introduction**

Healthwatch Blackpool is the independent consumer voice for health and social care, existing under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. We listen to the views and experiences of local people and aim to make services work for the people who use them. Through our work, Healthwatch Blackpool aims to engage with young people. We want to hear young people's voices and make sure that they are involved directly in decision making within our town.

As a result of this, Youthwatch Blackpool was established in March 2021, with the primary aim of giving young people in Blackpool a platform to share their views and experiences of local health and social care services. Youthwatch Blackpool commits to provide opportunities for children and young people, particularly those deemed 'hard to reach' to be involved in providing feedback and influencing local service delivery.

### **Method**

In order to hear young people's voices, a survey was created and distributed amongst young people, aged 11-18, living in Blackpool. The aim of this survey was to listen to young people's concerns, experiences and improvements for health and social care services in order to shape and prioritise our future work.

Through cross-referencing existing Youthwatch surveys from Healthwatch Leeds and Trafford, an initial survey draft was formulated to constitute the outline of the Youthwatch survey. Working alongside two young volunteers, the initial template of questions were scrutinised with several amendments made. Such amendments ensured the structure and wording of questions were tailored to young people, adding and removing extra questions where appropriate.

The final survey consisted of twenty-two questions, with these primarily focusing on health care access, priorities for young people, mental health support, experiences of local services, services frequently used, suggested improvements and demographic information (please see appendix). Additionally, an introductory and debrief page was created. These outlined the aims of the survey, GDPR policies and additional support/helplines for any of the issues discussed within the questionnaire. The online platform used to distribute and collect this data was Survey Monkey.

In total, fifty-nine young people completed the Youthwatch survey, with fifteen of these identifying as male, forty-three female, and one young person preferring not to say. Of the fifty-nine young people who started the survey, thirty young people lived in Blackpool and twenty-nine did not. Consequently, as living in Blackpool was a requirement to continue with the survey, twenty-nine young people did not answer any further questions. Of those who continued, three young people were aged eleven, two young people were aged twelve, five young people were aged thirteen, eleven young people were aged sixteen, six young people were aged seventeen, and

four young people answered other. Those who answered 'other' did not continue with the survey.

## **Distribution**

The survey was largely distributed among third sector organisations who regularly engage with children and young people. As a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, many organisations received the survey link via email alongside a promotional poster (please see appendix) for printing purposes. The poster contained a QR code to enable children and young people to easily scan and access the survey using their mobile phones. Organisations included Blackpool Sixth Form Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and St Mark's church Girls Friendly Society.

Despite this, Healthwatch Blackpool also attended youth groups in person where appropriate, to promote and distribute the survey. Such organisations included Blackpool Carers Centre, Windmill Youth Group, Boathouse Youth, Blackpool Athletics club and the Magic Club. Children and young people were encouraged to complete the survey and posters were distributed to each organisation.

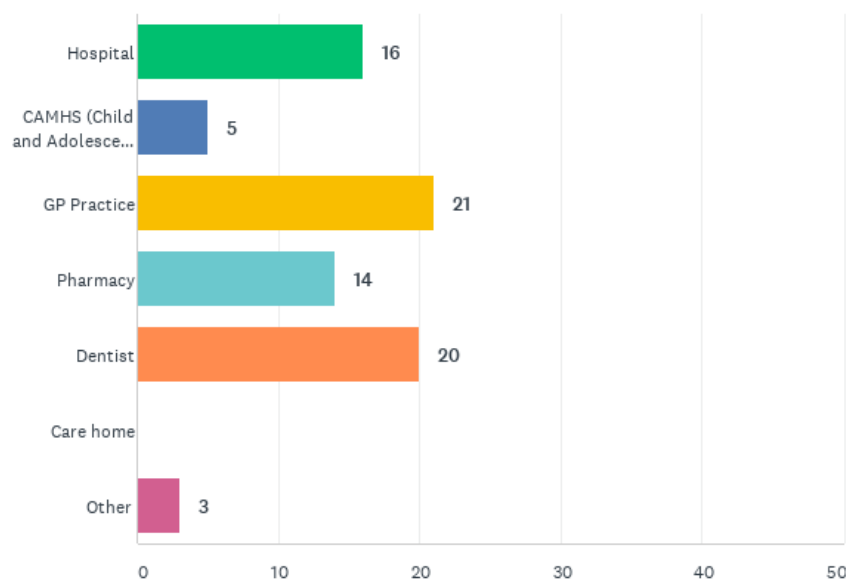
Finally, Youthwatch volunteers shared the survey amongst peers, as well as utilising social media to help reach other children and young people. Healthwatch Blackpool readily endorsed the Youthwatch survey on all social media platforms alongside Empowerment Charity.

## Findings

When asked about health and social care services in Blackpool, the most frequently used service by the young people was GP Practices. This was followed closely by dentists, the hospital, pharmacies and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

When young people were asked to rate their experiences of using these services, four people rated them as excellent, eleven rated their experiences as good, nine rated them as okay, and one person rated them as poor.

If you answered yes, what services do you use? Please select any that apply:



## Suggested areas for improvement

When asked what needs improving with health and social care services, seven young people highlighted the length of waiting times as an issue, and suggested a reduction in these would be beneficial to improve the quality of care received. Additionally, three young people felt a need for health care professionals to provide them with more information, help and advice. One young person felt that better parking for a wheelchair accessible vehicle would be beneficial. Finally, another young person hoped for dentists to be friendlier towards children and young adults. Seven young people felt that no improvements were required.

## Staying fit and healthy

In regards to how young people stay fit and healthy, twenty-two young people noted they engage in sports and exercise, with the most common responses being walking, jogging and playing team sports. Six young people aimed to maintain a healthy diet, with one person specifying they try to get lots of sleep.



### Independently approaching medical professionals

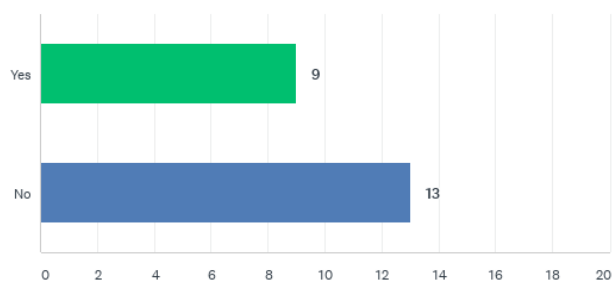
When asked if young people feel confident enough to approach medical professionals independently from their parents, ten young people answered yes, and thirteen answered no. Only seven young people answered yes to making their own healthcare appointments, with fifteen answering no.

Upon explanation, five young people specified how they rely on their parents to make their health care appointments. Two young people felt they needed support to make appointments, and two other young people did not feel confident enough to do so. One young person felt that health care professionals *'talk in words hard to understand'*.

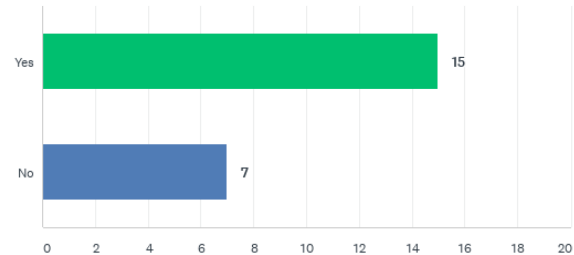
### Health care access

When asked if young people know how to access their dentist, nine people answered yes and thirteen answered no. Similarly, fifteen young people answered yes when questioned if they know how to access their doctors and seven young people answered no.

Q12 Do you know how to access your dentist?



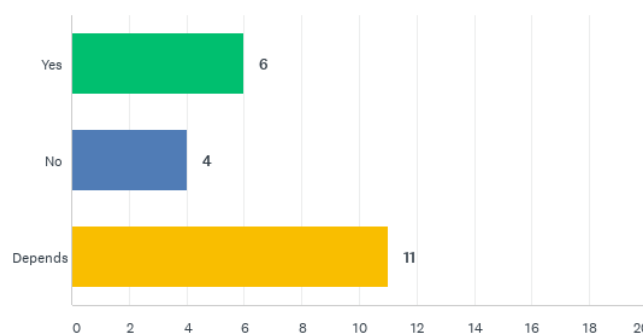
Q13 Do you know how to access your doctors?



### Mental health support

When asked if young people feel comfortable to approach medical professionals about access to mental health support, six young people answered yes, four answered no, and eleven young people answered depends.

Q14 Do you feel comfortable to ask your doctor about access to mental health services?



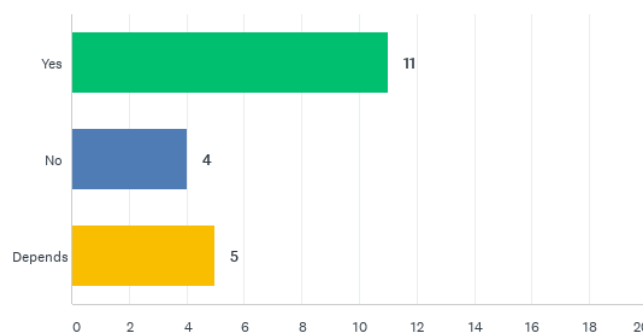
Upon explanation, five young people specified issues with speaking to professionals, for example, *'they do not listen'*, *'I do not want to talk to them'*, *'I would not know how to ask'*, *'I am socially awkward'*, and *'they are not really helpful'*. Others questioned patient confidentiality, with one young person stating *'they would tell my parents and not keep confidentiality'*. Similarly, one young person specified that they would be willing to open up *'if it is just the doctor and my parents in the room'*, or if *'I have met the doctor or nurse before'*. Finally, one young person spoke about the potential future implications of a mental health diagnosis, noting *'a mental health issue being on my record could affect career options'*.

Additionally, when asked if young people were aware of what mental health support is available in Blackpool, eleven young people answered yes, and nine answered no.

### Outlook on medical professionals

When asked if young people feel like medical professionals take them seriously, eleven young people answered yes, four answered no, and five young people answered depends.

Q17 As a young person, do you feel like medical professionals take you seriously?

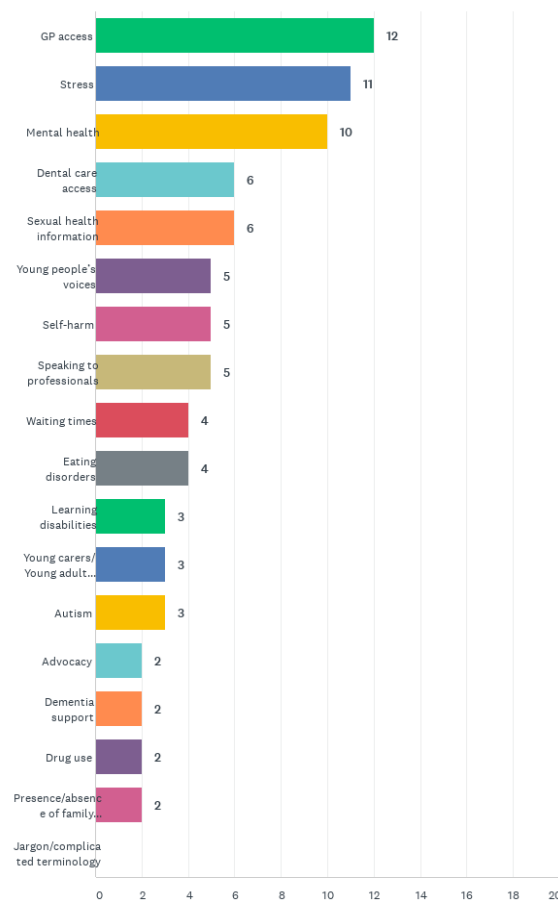


Explanations to account for these findings vary from not feeling believed, to hormonal changes:



## Health and social care priorities for young people

GP access was deemed a priority for twelve young people, followed by stress, mental health, dental care access and sexual health information.



## Collecting feedback

Eleven young people said they like completing surveys, whilst nine said they did not. When asked which was the best way to give feedback, six young people preferred speaking in person, whereas seven young people preferred surveys. One young person suggested leaving reviews, and another recommendation was utilising 'adult support'.

## Discussion

As a consequence of the survey questions, young people have specified a need for a reduction in waiting times, alongside more information, help, and advice being provided from professionals and health care services. Interestingly, when asked if young people feel confident enough to approach medical professionals independently from their parents, less than half of the young people answered yes. Similarly, less than half of young people answered yes to making their own healthcare appointments. Future priorities could focus on providing young people with more support to make their own healthcare appointments, alongside building

confidence to approach medical professionals independently. This could be supported by a reduction in the use of jargon, in order to remove some of the barriers young people face. In addition to this, young people were largely uncomfortable approaching medical professionals about access to mental health support, despite this being deemed a priority by young people. Young people felt that medical professionals do not listen and are not helpful. Under half of the young people spoken to were unaware of the mental health support available in Blackpool. The overarching themes regarding medical professionals were not feeling believed, listened to, or the professionals blaming medical problems on hormonal changes. Such issues could be addressed, with a need for medical professionals to be open and understanding with young people.

Despite these findings, it is worthwhile noting that this survey contained a small sample size and so may not be representative of all young people, with a large drop off rate.

## **Future plans**

Healthwatch Blackpool are in the process of inducting new active volunteers, aged 11-18, to help represent Youthwatch and support our engagements. They will listen to other young people's experiences of services and share intelligence to identify what is needed in the locality. Through attending colleges, schools and youth clubs, Youthwatch Blackpool involves young people to 'have their say' on how services like doctors, dentists and social workers could be made better, gathering feedback and engaging with the system.

Through upcoming projects, we hope to coproduce change through working collaboratively with the system. Upcoming work aims to focus on the effects of the Covid-19 vaccine on fertility, brought to our attention by existing Youthwatch volunteers. Through anecdotal evidence, volunteers have recognised hesitancy from young people towards having the vaccine for fear of negative effects on fertility. Consequently, a recorded question and answer session has been scheduled with Dr Arif Rajpura, director of Public Health, to answer young people's questions, fear and concerns. This session will be distributed on social media and shared among peers.

As a result of the findings, Healthwatch Blackpool wish to use the common themes' noted in the survey to conduct a focus piece of work with Youthwatch volunteers. Consequently, Youthwatch volunteers are currently focusing their efforts on creating a tool to raise awareness of the mental health support available in the local area. In addition to this, future projects would also like to focus on young people independently and confidently approaching medical professionals and making their own appointments.



## Appendix



**Have your say on priorities for Youthwatch 2021**

Complete our survey - We are all ears!

Scan the QR code with your camera to start:



it starts with **YOU**

T. 0300 3232 100  
enquiries@healthwatchblackpool.co.uk

**healthwatch**  
Blackpool

1. What gender do you identify as? - Male/female/other/non-binary/rather not say
2. Do you live in Blackpool? - Yes/No
3. How old are you?
4. Do you use health and social care services in Blackpool e.g. doctors, dentists, hospitals, support services - Yes/No
5. If you answered yes, what services do you use? Please select any that apply - Hospital (including mental health services), GP Practice, Pharmacy, Dentist, Care home, other
6. How did you find the experience? - Likert scale - Terrible/poor/okay/good/excellent

7. Could anything be better with any of these services?
8. Do you feel able to approach a medical professional independently from your parents? - Yes/No
9. If you answered no, please share your experiences of approaching medical professionals.
10. Do you attend/make your appointments yourself? - Yes/No
11. Do you know how to access your dentist? - Yes/No
12. Do you know how to access your doctors? - Yes/No
13. Do you feel comfortable to ask your doctor about access to mental health services? - Yes/No/Depends
14. If you answered no or depends, why is this?
15. Do you know what mental health support is available in Blackpool? - Yes/No
16. If you have answered no, would you like some information regarding mental health support?
17. As a young person, do you feel like medical professionals take you seriously? Yes/No/Depends
18. If you answered no or depends, why is this?
19. Which of the following matter the most to you? Please select up to three.
  - Mental health
  - Dental care access
  - GP access
  - Waiting times
  - Sexual health information
  - Learning disabilities
  - Advocacy
  - Dementia support
  - Jargon/complicated terminology
  - Young carers/ Young adult carers
  - Young people's voices
  - Autism
  - Stress
  - Self-harm
  - Drug use
  - Eating disorders
  - Speaking to professionals
  - Presence/absence of family members in consultations
20. What social media platform do you use the most - Facebook/Twitter/Instagram/TikTok/Other
21. Do you like completing surveys? - Yes/No
22. What do you think is the best way to give feedback?