



Eating Disorder Project

March 2023

YOUNG
healthwatch
Central Bedfordshire

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Introduction

This project was initially developed because a member of the Young Healthwatch group had had a personal experience of eating disorders within their family, and wanted to raise awareness of the issues and concerns this can cause, but to also help support other young people who were going through a similar experience.

Research has shown that eating disorders are a growing problem amongst young people across the UK. According to a recent BBC article, *“The number of young people with eating disorders in England ending up in hospital has risen sharply during the pandemic.”*¹

Young Healthwatch volunteers believe that if eating disorders can be picked up earlier, at a local level, this will improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people within Central Bedfordshire, and consequently reduce the need for them to be admitted to primary or secondary care, thereby reducing the pressure on local service providers, and improving the lives of young people locally.

Unfortunately, due to the recent pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, research has shown that eating disorders, along with other mental health issues amongst younger people, has increased. According to the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (BMLK ICB) between quarter 1 and quarter 4 2020–2021, there were 206 accepted referrals for eating disorders. In comparison between quarter one and quarter

four 2021–22, there was 214 accepted cases, with an estimate of 40–50% of these being in the Central Bedfordshire region.

As part of their awareness campaign, young Healthwatch volunteers planned to interview different groups of young people affected by eating disorders to help showcase their experience. The young volunteers also felt that the creation of their own podcast, in which to conduct the interviews, was an appropriate and popular platform to speak about eating disorders, and to reach young audiences.

Following the podcast, the young volunteers designed and created a leaflet and an A6 booklet aimed at educating and advising young people, their peers and adults, about how best to help young people affected by eating disorders.

The aim of this project was to help provide support for those affected by eating disorders, young or old. Young Healthwatch volunteers felt that their project, and signposting to support services available to other young people, whether locally or online, would benefit all young people in Central Bedfordshire.

To take this project forward, Young Healthwatch volunteers applied for a grant via Central Bedfordshire Council’s Inspiring Volunteering Grant. The funding enabled Young Healthwatch to hire the podcast studio and produce the supporting leaflets.

¹ Eating disorders: The terrible impact of the pandemic on the young – BBC News

Methodology

Young Healthwatch volunteers developed and planned this project at their monthly Young Healthwatch meetings. They generated a set of questions to ask in the interviews, discussed who to interview and detailed what information needed to be showcased in the supporting leaflets.

On 25th February 2023, the Young Healthwatch volunteers met with colleagues from a local charity, Hear2Listen, at their podcast studios in Shuttleworth, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire. Staff at Hear2Listen spent the morning supporting the young people in how to host and record their podcast.

Young Healthwatch volunteers subsequently created four podcasts by interviewing the following:

- ◆ Service user Evie, aged 17, and her Mum
- ◆ Service user Oliver, aged 14, and his Dad
- ◆ Kathy, local teacher
- ◆ Marie, CAMHS eating disorder specialist nurse



The podcast included in-depth questions about how eating disorders has affected each of them in different ways, and each episode offered advice and support for others who may be in similar situations.

A link to the podcast has been widely shared with the young volunteers, local schools, Central Bedfordshire Council, Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), CHUMS, East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT), youth groups, local charities, and other key stakeholders. In addition the podcasts have been promoted via social media, Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire website and in Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's (HWCB) weekly Ebulletin and Newsletter.

As a follow up to the podcast, the young volunteers designed and created a leaflet and an A6 booklet which has been shared with local schools and youth groups. These include key information, and signs to look for, relating to eating disorders in young people, how you can help, and key signposting to support groups.

One leaflet is a shorter fold out leaflet and the other is a more detailed A6 booklet. A snap shot of both can be found on the following page, where you will also find a link to the podcast via YouTube or a QR code.



Results

The podcasts can be found here:

[Healthwatch - Central Bedfordshire - YouTube](#)



Snapshot of the booklet produced:



Snapshot of the leaflet produced:

Young Healthwatch Podcast

Young Healthwatch volunteers conducted interviews with service users affected by eating disorders, an eating disorder nurse and a school teacher. By creating their own podcast they have been able to share their experiences which they hope will help and guide young audiences across Central Bedfordshire.

The podcast can be heard here:

Where to get help

- East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT) 0203 290338 <https://www.elft.nhs.uk/service/302/> Community-Eating Disorder Service-Bedfordshire-and-Luton
- Bedfordshire And Luton Camh Eating Disorders Service 0344 950004 <https://www.nhs.uk/services/service-directory/bedfordshire-and-luton-camh-eating-disorders-service/> N0387478
- Beat eating disorders 0800 811 9071 <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/>
- CAROLINE Eating Disorders Counselling & Support Service 0800 357414 <https://caroline.com/>
- Mind InLine 0800 223 3333 <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helpines/>
- Overcasters Anonymous 07000 734 985 <https://www.oa.org.uk/>

Get in touch

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Capability House
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0300 303 8554

info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

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Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire

@YoungHealth

yhwcentralbeds

Registered charity number 1194627

Understanding eating disorders and seeking help: a guide

Young healthwatch
Central Bedfordshire



Feedback

Some of the young Healthwatch volunteers, and the people who took part in the project, have shared their thoughts on being involved, as follows:

"My participation in the recording of Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's podcast on eating disorders was an interesting and enlightening experience. I feel privileged that I was able to hear more about the young people's experiences from them and had the opportunity to properly understand the emotions and societal pressures associated with a subject that sadly remains extremely topical in today's current society.

Although I was initially nervous, the process was surprisingly easy, and the willingness of everyone involved to share their views and listen to each other meant the conversation could flow and people could feel comfortable voicing their opinions. I hope that this podcast opens up more conversation on a stigmatised and potentially, misunderstood topic.

The advice I would give for anyone looking to record a podcast on a cause they feel passionate about, whether that's a political issue or your favourite food, is to be open and create a safe space where people can feel free to talk and laugh, just like any normal conversation. And don't forget to have fun!"

Jemma, Young Healthwatch volunteer

"I would like to say that the podcast on eating disorders was an excellent idea and one that will be very useful to young people and parents. Increased awareness of eating disorders and the varieties is something I am very passionate about. The more people that are aware, means hopefully it will not be a taboo mental health subject and will be picked up by parents and professionals equally.

Undertaking this podcast was fantastic and great to see the young people I work with speak passionately about their illness and this will be very useful for young people going forward."

Marie, CAMHS Eating Disorder nurse

"I wanted to spread awareness and tell my story."

Evie, service user

"I found the podcast made me very proud of Evie and I wanted to share what had worked for us in case it helped anyone else in any little way."

Debbie, Evie's Mum

"When Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire asked me to participate in the podcast about eating disorders, I was more than happy to.

The whole set up was so professional and carefully curated to ensure everyone felt comfortable and safe to speak openly. The volunteers and Youth Engagement Officer made everyone feel comfortable and asked thoughtful and pertinent questions. I found the whole experience insightful and valuable, not only to my career as a secondary school teacher, but as a mother also.

I did bring the discussion into my classroom with my students and felt confident with expressing ideas that had come from the podcast.

The work that Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire do is amazing work that benefits all members of the community. I would be delighted to be a part of any project in the future."

Kathy, teacher



Recommendations for Next Steps

Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will continue to promote a link to the podcast across our area, and with key stakeholders, to encourage sharing and learning. We will prominently feature images of the leaflet and booklet on our website for all to access, with details of how to obtain hard copies if needed, and widely distribute the leaflets and booklets at our networking and awareness events that the Young Healthwatch volunteers regularly attend.

Young Healthwatch volunteers will continue to promote the project at every opportunity, to help raise awareness, and provide information and advice, to anyone affected by eating disorders, or for someone they know.

In the future, Young Healthwatch volunteers will review the work undertaken and determine, possibly via a survey, whether the podcast and promotional material distributed, has helped young people get the support they need or made them more aware of the impact of eating disorders in young people.

Advice and Support

If you need any help and support, please find some options below:

- ◆ East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT) 01582 293333
<https://www.elft.nhs.uk/service/302/Community-Eating-Disorder-Service-Bedfordshire-and-Luton>
- ◆ Bedfordshire And Luton Camh Eating Disorders Service 01234 893308
<https://www.nhs.uk/services/service-directory/bedfordshire-and-luton-camh-eating-disorders-service/N10874711>
- ◆ Beat eating disorders 0808 801 0677
<https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/>
- ◆ CARALINE Eating Disorders Counselling & Support Service 01582 457474
<https://caraline.com/>
- ◆ Mind Infoline 0300 123 3393
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines/>
- ◆ Overeaters Anonymous 07000 784 985
<https://www.oagb.org.uk/>
- ◆ Young Minds
<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/mental-health-conditions/anorexia/>
- ◆ Talk ED
<https://www.talk-ed.org.uk/>



Do health and care services know what you really want?

By sharing your ideas and experiences you can help services hear what works, what doesn't, and how care could be better in the future for Young People and the current challenges they face.



it starts with
YOU

T. 0300 303 8554

**[www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/
young-healthwatch](http://www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/young-healthwatch)**

**E: [eleanor.ryles@healthwatch-
centralbedfordshire.org.uk](mailto:eleanor.ryles@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk)**

**YOUNG
healthwatch
Central Bedfordshire**



Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire exists to make health and social care services work for the people that use them, especially young people.

Our role is to ensure that local decision makers and health and care services put the experiences of young people at the heart of their work.

We believe no one should be afraid to speak up because our opinion is as good as anyone else's.

Our volunteers have received appropriate 'Enter & View' training and are keen to put their learning into practice by visiting health and social care services such as hospital wards, surgeries and care homes. The young people will then be able to report their findings from their unique perspective. If you would like a group of young Healthwatch volunteers to visit your service please contact elleanor.ryles@healthwatchcentralbedfordshire.org.uk.

There is a lot more information on the Young Healthwatch website, <https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/young-healthwatch>, including the great achievement of one of our volunteers who has secured a fantastic apprenticeship with Cancer Research UK.

If you are under 25, why not consider becoming a member of Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire? Get in touch for more information, email elleanor.ryles@healthwatchcentralbedfordshire.org.uk or call **0300 303 8554**.





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@YoungHWatch



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