## **Together** the young can



#### Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Annual Report 2022–23





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 eleanor.ryles@healthwatchcentralbedfordshire.org.uk.

There is a lot more information on the Young Healthwatch website, <u>https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/young-healthwatch</u>, 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 <u>eleanor.ryles@healthwatchcentralbedfordshire.org.uk</u> or call **0300 303 8554**.



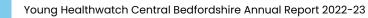
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## **Message from our CEO**

Hearing the voice of young people has never been more important. Commissioners and Providers of children's services are better able to plan and deliver services if they hear the experiences of young people, both positive and negative.

Over the past year, our Young Healthwatch (YHW) volunteers have worked tirelessly to feedback and raise issues of concern to health and care decision makers to effect change.

The research projects Young Healthwatch volunteers have been involved in, like the Ready Trial, which investigates the correlation between acute-medium depression, and physical activity in young people, has greatly informed the Trial going forward and will impact how children's services are designed in the future.

Their project work on eating disorders, where they created their own podcast and interviewed different groups of people affected by eating disorders and key professionals, led to the design of leaflets and an A6 booklet aimed at educating young people and adults, on how best to support those affected.

Their work with young Carers highlighted the support on offer for young Carers which they felt was not representative of need or equally received by all young Carers. Their report was shared with key stakeholders and the Health and Wellbeing Board to action improvement for young Carers. As part of their training activities, the young people have successfully completed their St. John Ambulance First Aid Training where they learnt key lifesaving skills which will be of benefit to them and their peers.

For the third year running, YHW have been awarded the 'Investing in Children Membership Award' in recognition of their activities, and to show the impact they have had on the local community. More details of all their activities can be found on their website here: <u>https://</u> <u>healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/</u> <u>young-healthwatch</u>.

I am enormously proud of all the work carried out by our young volunteers who have worked together to ensure young people's voices are heard and acted on, and I would like to thank them all most sincerely for their continued involvement and commitment to Young Healthwatch.

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Diana Blackmun Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Chief Executive Officer

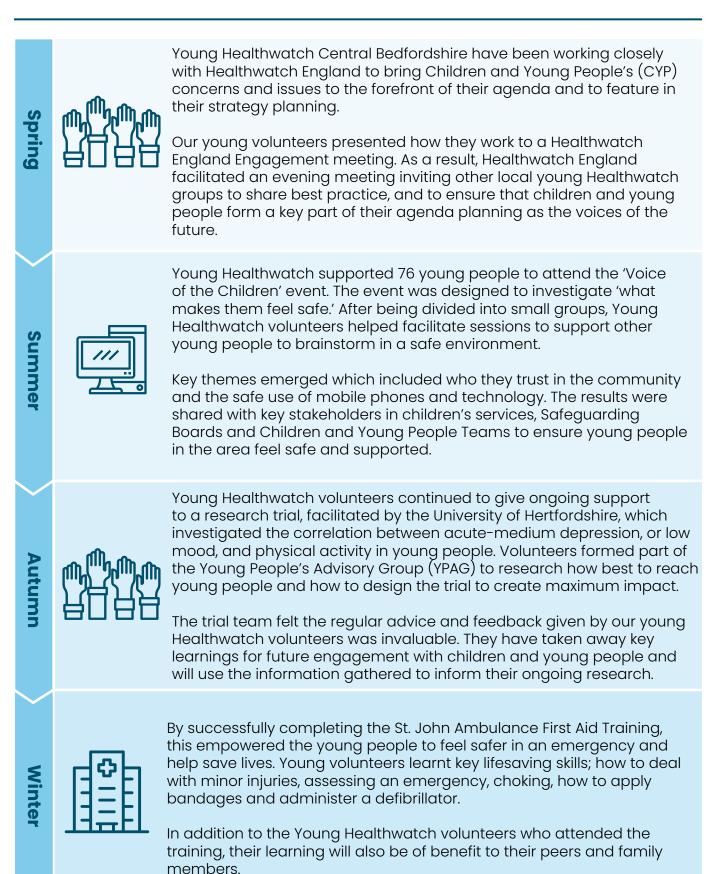




"I was super impressed by their insights and the way they communicated their views to me. They are clearly very in tune with both themselves and others around them and I think it is great that they have you to enable them to work with 'us professionals'. They are really observant and clearly see far more than some services realise, in my view. Needless to say, it so disappointing that our services are not giving them what they need, when they need it, but I hope the work that I am doing will enable this to improve."

Zahra Dhamani, Transformation Programme Manager (BLMK Neurodevelopmental Disorder Pathway Review)

## How we've made a difference this year



#### **Healthwatch Hero**

#### Celebrating a hero in our local community.

Molly, who has a hidden disability, is a Young Healthwatch Hero for bravely sharing her experience of discrimination and abuse whilst sitting in a disabled seat, when travelling on public transport.

We helped Molly tell her story by undertaking a project to determine how aware people are of hidden disabilities. The young people observed passengers using public transport while Molly sat in a disabled seat, to notice whether they showed signs of discrimination against people who had a hidden disability. The young volunteers also handed out surveys to members of the public whilst riding on the buses, and distributed to the local community.

Key observations noted by Molly and our young volunteers included a distinct lack of knowledge and awareness of hidden disabilities in the general community.

By Molly telling her story, leading public transport companies in Central Bedfordshire have agreed to improve staff training highlighting that not all disabilities can be seen, to create awareness posters to be displayed on public transport, and to encourage the local authority to develop a marketing campaign, involving local voluntary, community and social groups, to help educate all local residents about hidden disabilities when travelling on public transport.



# Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feed this back to services and help them improve.

## Improving support for young Carers

#### Concerns were highlighted about the current offer for young Carers in Central Bedfordshire, which they felt was not representative of need, or equally received by all young Carers.

As part of Healthwatch England's 'Social Care and Unmet Need' project Young Healthwatch volunteers interviewed three young Carers. They all spoke about the lack of assessment and support they had received, as well as the heavy burden of responsibility they carry as a result of their role.

Young Healthwatch volunteers therefore determined that a wider survey would need to be undertaken to better understand the support and services available to young Carers in Central Bedfordshire. The snapshot survey generated over 80 responses with a wealth of additional comments from young Carers, and those that live with young Carers.

**85%** of respondents confirmed they did have a young Carer in their household, or one that supported them.



**66%** of survey respondents indicated they were not receiving any support in school for their caring role.

**77%** of young Carers told us they, or the young Carer they were aware of, had not had a Needs Assessment with some indicating they did not know what a Needs Assessment was.

#### What difference will this make?

- Ten recommendations were made as a result of feedback given, which included increasing the number of activities and events offered, and a review of current data showing total amount of young Carers who requested a Needs Assessment to allow an evidenced comparison following an update to the Young Carers website.
- Our report will be presented to members of Central Bedfordshire Council's (CBC) Health and Wellbeing Board in July 2023 to respond to our recommendations.
- CBC's Children Services Team want to work together to capture the voices of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The Co-production and Engagement Lead for Children's Services is also keen to have information on their local offer that outlines ways in which children and young people's voices can be heard to include Young Healthwatch.

"There seems to be next to no support locally for young Carers. We occasionally receive emails about events, but these are rarely nearby, and this is not the sort of thing my young Carer would be interested in as she has social anxiety. We would much prefer to see support given as well-being check-ups, counselling or regular meetings with school to make sure they are being supported in all areas of their life."

Family member of Carer from Central Bedfordshire

## Making Keech Hospice a better experience for young people

#### Young Healthwatch volunteers were invited to Keech Hospice to 'bust the myths' about hospices and improve the experience for both young patients and visitors. Volunteers wanted to assess the needs of young people when visiting older relatives and friends, in addition to their requests if they were to have treatment themselves.

In August 2022, five young volunteers visited the hospice to survey the adult and patient bedrooms, reception areas, relatives' accommodation, children play areas inside and outside, the garden for adults and young people, and the Art room, in addition to sampling the patient menu.

Our report provided insight into how services are delivered within the Hospice, as well as a summary of feedback from patients, Carers/parents and staff, about their experience, written from a young person's point of view. Recommendations for a better experience for the young people included the following:

- · Increase staff levels and develop staff training.
- More extensive children's menu and hot meals for visitors in the evening.
- Child friendly colours in children's reception and re-decorate children's bedrooms.
- Leaflets in main reception about support services available in their local area.
- Greater variety of outdoor activities for older children and address the strong odour of the pond.

#### What difference will this make?

Keech Hospice have made key changes as a result of our feedback, as follows:

- The education programme has been reviewed and the role of the practice educator who will offer a larger range of clinical skills training is under consideration.
- The children's bedrooms have been redecorated considering the colours and feedback from the group.
- Keech continue to review the menus and work with their provider to improve the range and choice.
- The pond is now functioning well.
- There are plans in the forward maintenance plan to decorate the children's reception.
- Other recommendations continue to be on the action plan, and staffing has improved since Young Healthwatch visited, with some successful recruitment.

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"We were delighted to welcome the young people who were a credit to your organisation; very professional. The report is great, thank you, and we look forward to taking forward your recommendations."

Clinical Director/ Deputy CEO of Keech Hospice

## Improving young people's hospital stay

#### Young Healthwatch volunteers were keen to continue their '15 steps' review of hospital services which was interrupted by the pandemic, and in August 2022, they completed a visit to the children's wards at the Luton and Dunstable University Hospital.

Nine Young Healthwatch volunteers carried out the visit, once again using a '15 steps' review, which is an approach to service/quality improvement that focuses on 'walkarounds' and their first impressions of the service from both a visitor and patients' perspective.

The final report provided insight into how services are delivered. The feedback given highlighted several areas for improvement, including the following:

- Consideration to be given to the provision of food for parents/Carers staying overnight.
- Larger waiting room in Paediatric Accident and Emergency.
- Installation of accessible hearing loops and training for staff in how to use them.
- Provision of more chairs for patients, family members and Carers.
- Increased nursing staff and staff training in areas such as mental health.
- More readily available snacks and drinks outside of mealtimes.

#### What difference will this make?

Hospital confirmed changes made as a result of the feedback in our report, as follows:

- Recruited more nursing staff, and are now fully staffed for nurses across the unit.
- Created a post for a senior Mental Health Nurse to work with young people and are training the nursing staff so they have additional skills when supporting children and young people with mental health conditions.
- Recruited a Psychologist who is supporting staff with wellbeing sessions and training.
- New catering supplier and a new menu.
- Hearing loops for both Luton and Bedford sites, and the Patient Safety Matron has been training staff to use the equipment.
- The building work is almost complete with more chairs and a brighter waiting room. Fundraising is ongoing with the Trust charity for a sky panel in the ceiling and more technology items to re-design and improve our clinical Emergency Department space for our paediatric patients.



"The Children's team at Luton Dunstable Hospital really enjoyed and appreciated the enthusiasm and input from the Young Healthwatch team during their review visit in August. The time taken to prepare and carry out the review was exceptional and a credit to all those that took part. The insight and views of the young volunteers are an essential part of our ability to continue to develop and improve our services."

General Manager of Children Services at Luton and Dunstable University Hospital

## Raising awareness of support for eating disorders

A Young Healthwatch volunteer had a personal experience of eating disorders within their family, and this project was developed 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.

As part of their awareness campaign, volunteers were keen to interview different groups of people affected by eating disorders to help showcase their experience. 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.

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.

Four different podcasts were created speaking with two service users and their parents, an Eating Disorder Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Nurse and a Teacher.



Following the podcast, 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.

#### What difference will this make?

- Copies of the leaflet have been posted to 31 schools in Central Bedfordshire which will enable students to access the podcast via a QR code and read how to help their peers if they are struggling with an eating disorder.
- 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.
- This project has helped young people be more comfortable talking about eating disorders and knowing where and how to get help.

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"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 and the more people that are aware, 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."

**CAMHS Eating Disorders Specialist Nurse** 

### Three ways we have made a difference f

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by spea Healthwatch has worked closely with local stakeholders to improve the mento

#### Reviewing 'Kooth' a mental health online service

Young Healthwatch volunteers were asked by a senior Commissioner for Children and Young People's (CYP) Mental Health, Bedfordshire Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (BMLK ICB), to review 'Kooth' - the online counselling service for young people commissioned in Central Bedfordshire.

Our volunteers reviewed a survey, given to all young people who access the service, which was used by 'Kooth' to assess its effectiveness. The service has since been disbanded following the contribution of our volunteers, and a new service created called 'Reflect', which is a free text support service, commissioned in its place. It was felt the new service is a more effective way for young people to feel supported when experiencing mental health concerns. Helping to in mental hea Central Bed

The public he representing Cent Council (CBC) w from our young vo why they felt the o mental health sup people needed

This followed the young of 'Kooth', because passionately about the could be made. A key reco creating a pin badge s healthcare workers to w young people with mental Healthwatch volunteers ho qualification requirements, around the badge. This wi feel supported and kno to for su

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## Reviewing ADHD and Autism pathway

Following their work with the Public Health Team, the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (BLMK ICB) were keen to hear from our volunteers to better understand young people's experiences of services supporting ADHD and Autism. They were interested in our volunteers reviewing what worked, what didn't, and any recommendations going forward.

Our volunteers were keen to give their insights, and as a result of their recommendations for improvement, which included more collaboration with schools and young people, these have been sent on to the Transformation Board where a programme of work to implement changes will be actioned. The Board are very keen to continue to co-produce the ADHD and Autism offer and the young volunteers look forward to hearing the next stages.



Over the past year we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently, to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard and services meet their needs.

Children and Young people are a seldom heard group. Members of our Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire group are represented by young people from:

- A wide variety of ages, from 12 years to 25 years
- All areas across Central Bedfordshire
- A wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and nationalities
- All genders; males and females, and those that describe as non-gender specific



Young Healthwatch volunteers always strive to improve health and social care services for young people living in Central Bedfordshire. They have been busy planning new projects for the next 12 months and are looking forward to ensuring their voice is heard, to influence the decision makers and providers of services for young people.

## **Continuing the '15 Steps Review'**

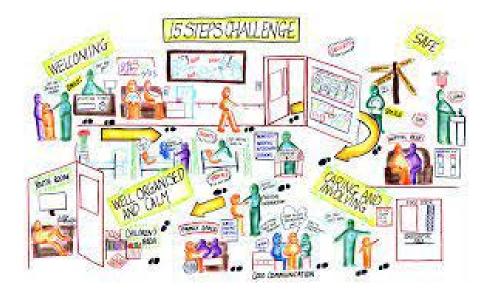
Young Healthwatch volunteers previously visited Bedford Hospital in October 2019 as part of their '15 Steps' Review and are planning to visit again in the summer of 2023 to assess the difference improvements have had on the patient's experience since their last visit, and to determine if any further improvements may need to be introduced.

Responding to Young Healthwatch recommendations from the report of their previous visit, Bedford hospital staff have confirmed the key changes made, which include:

- Creation of pre-printed journals for patients including menus, map, and space for young people to write in.
- General signage improved.
- Children's Nurses now have a rainbow on their name badge.
- Adult sandwich options are available for teenagers.
- New space provided with sofas, lights, TV and game console.
- More accessible vending machine for out of hours food.

In August 2023 the volunteers will once again be undertaking a '15 steps review', which is an approach to service/quality improvement that focuses on 'walkarounds' and their first impressions of the service from both a visitor and patients' perspective.

The outcome of the visit will help to inform improvement actions and give an insight into service delivery from a young person's point of view.



"Thank you so much, to you, your colleagues, and your young people for having me over last night. It was really useful. Your young people are great."
Senior Social Prescription Link Worker (Children and Young People)



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## 2023 Health and Wellbeing Conference for Young People

Young Healthwatch volunteers are planning an event for young people to attend from across Central Bedfordshire, which will help to build on strengthening their resilience and mental health. The pandemic had a detrimental effect on young people's mental health and wellbeing and this event is designed to:

- 1. Explore what has really affected young people during and since the pandemic.
- 2. Educate young people about services available to access support in their area; including general activities and volunteering.
- 3. Help to better prepare young people to develop key skills needed for their current environment; including a work placement.
- 4. Empower young people to learn together and give feedback on their experience of services to key stakeholders; commissioners and providers.

The event will take place during the autumn school half term, and young people between the ages of 13-25 years will be invited to take part. A variety of workshops will be included, to enable the young people to share their learning and experiences with key stakeholders, who will be able to use the information and feedback to help improve service provision locally.

This event will bring together young people; a seldom heard group; from across different communities within our local area; with stakeholders from across Central Bedfordshire.



"Becoming a volunteer has helped me to learn more about health and social care, which I have thoroughly enjoyed, and I hope I can continue to work with Young Healthwatch more in the future."

Isabelle, Young Healthwatch volunteer

## Improving cancer awareness in Young People

Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire have been working closely with colleagues from the Bedfordshire Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care System (BMLK ICS) with the aim of improving awareness of cancer in young people.

BLMK ICS colleagues initially met our young volunteers earlier this year to raise awareness of cancer screening and the importance of early detection.

In highlighting the above, they also requested that the young people spread awareness amongst their peers and talk to their friends and older members of their family. The idea being that they will consider detection as normal behaviour and will not be overly concerned when called for screening.

BMLK ICB colleagues want to continue to work closely with Young Healthwatch to explore other ways in which they can raise awareness and understanding of cancer amongst young people and to develop a robust programme of education and awareness.

Undertaking this project will result in more young people being aware of the early signs and be comfortable when talking about treatment and support.



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"Being a part of Young Healthwatch has helped me to make a difference in my community. It has also been a learning experience because I have been to places that I wouldn't have visited myself. I have enjoyed volunteering with Young Healthwatch as we work as a team to make a difference for young people like us."

Charley, Young Healthwatch volunteer



## Volunteering

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of Young Healthwatch. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving.

#### This year our volunteers:

- Visited communities to promote Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and what we have to offer
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out enter and view/ '15 step' visits to local services to help them improve
- Attended monthly meetings mainly in person
- Collated information and complied reports on their projects and activities, all in their own words
- Created digital content on our website and social media
- Collaborated on project work to give vital insight from a young person's perspective

#### Securing the 'Investing in Children' award for the third year running reflects all the hard work of our young volunteers.

#### Bami, 23

"I got involved with Young Healthwatch to expand my knowledge of the health care system and what improvements could be made. When I started university, I wanted extra experience that related to my course and joining Young Healthwatch was an opportunity to gain an insight into what would be expected, when I do start my career, and this would enhance my CV. I didn't know what was available until I went to a careers fair, which introduced me to Young Healthwatch.



We attend monthly meetings, where we discuss what changes could be made to health services, from a young person's perspective. This requires going to hospitals, universities, reviewing websites, posters, leaflets and discussing projects. Young Healthwatch has motivated my passion for psychology by bringing mental health experts into the monthly meetings requesting how we can help their services. As a result of volunteering with Young Healthwatch, I was able to get a job that required the skill set I was able to develop by being a part of Young Healthwatch."

#### Elli, 17

"I joined Young Healthwatch after Eleanor visited my sixth form. I decided to sign up as I love to make an impact in the local community as well as work with like-minded young people. I also really wanted to meet new people and volunteer for a great group. So far, I have done a range of different projects: fed back to Fire and Rescue Services for the local area, qualified as a basic first aider, been selected as a member of the Public and Patient Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) Panel, for a project with PHIRST London South Bank, aiming to improve the mental health of 16-25 year olds in Bedfordshire, as well as feeding back on other local projects involving us as young people.



I have gained lots of social skills and confidence already after only volunteering for about seven months and I've made good friends with the other volunteers. Working for the PPIE Panel has given me lots of skills including replying to formal emails, keeping up with the work needed, and joining meetings with the evaluation team. I wouldn't have had this amazing opportunity without Young Healthwatch."



#### Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new young volunteers, so please get in touch today.

- 🐼 www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk
- 🌭 0300 303 8554
  - info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

#### Jemma, 17

"I joined Young Healthwatch after I had completed my GCSEs, as I had more free time and was keen to get started on building a portfolio of skills and volunteering experience. Young Healthwatch was not only an organisation local to me, but the focus on health services and young people really interested me, particularly as I was looking to go into medicine at the time.

Through Young Healthwatch, I have been able to participate in a wide variety of activities, from attending the monthly meetings

to doing Enter and Views at the Bedford and Luton & Dunstable hospitals. Recently, I wrote an article that was posted on Young Healthwatch social media, and co-hosted a podcast about eating disorders, an issue that is sadly still hugely relevant today and was particularly eye-opening to hear about first-hand. As a youth volunteer, I have not only been able to gain confidence and learn more about a field that I would be interested in potentially pursuing in the future, but also gain a greater understanding of the world around me and have a say in actions to mitigate some of the issues facing young people today."

#### Jenifer, 22

"As a volunteer with Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, we report, research, and capture the aspirations and experiences of local people; ethically collect public opinion on issues; and, when necessary, provide recommendations for change based on the public's opinions and experiences.

Volunteering within this team has helped me develop skills such as team-working, the ability to express findings, including in reports, the psychological knowledge to understand behaviour in a scientific way, excellent communication and interpersonal skills, and the skills to conduct research and analyse results."

#### Do you feel inspired?

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"I have done a couple of Enter and View sessions at Luton and Dunstable Hospital and Bedford Hospital. It's fascinating to be able to get an insight into the background and thought process behind charities and hospitals, and I love the fact that my contributions and feedback could help someone else in the long run."

Jemma, Young Healthwatch volunteer



## Thank you

## Thank you to everyone that is helping us put young people at the heart of health and social care, including:

- Young people in the community who shared their views and opinions with us
- Central Bedfordshire College
- Central Bedfordshire Council
- Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board
- Key stakeholders and partners who have responded to our recommendations for improvements to local services.
- East London Foundation Trust
- Respite at Home
- Ivel Valley South Primary Care Network
- Keech Hospice
- Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Hear2Listen
- Our young Healthwatch team for all their outstanding work and projects to highlight the experiences of young people in their community.

### **Acronym Answers**

ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
CAMHS	Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
СҮР	Children and Young People
BMLK ICB	Bedfordshire, Milton Keynes and Luton Integrated Care Board
BMLK ICS	Bedfordshire, Milton Keynes and Luton Integrated Care System
PHIRST	Public Health Intervention Responsive Studies Team
PPIE	Public and Patient Involvement and Engagement
READY	Randomised trial of Energetic Activity for Depression in Young People
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
YHW	Young Healthwatch
YPAG	Young People's Advisory Group



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