



Health and Wellbeing Conference for Young People

24th October 2023

Centre Parcs, Bedfordshire

YOUNG
healthwatch
Central Bedfordshire

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Health and Wellbeing Conference for Young People 2023 – At a Glance

Over 73 people attended the conference including delegates, facilitators and volunteers



Young people travelled from 11 towns and villages across the region to attend the conference



Exciting and informative sessions delivered by six organisations from across the region



Advertised on Social Media platforms, reaching almost 1,600 people



After all their hard work, all delegates were able to use the Paradise swimming facilities to relax and have fun



Introduction

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) is the local consumer champion, promoting choice and influencing the provision of high quality health, social care and wellbeing services across Central Bedfordshire. Our role is to ensure that the voice of the consumer is strengthened and heard by those who commission, deliver and regulate health and care services.

HWCB wanted to ensure that children and young people were also heard and given a voice, to help inform children's services, commissioned and delivered across Central Bedfordshire. In 2016, we created a Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Group (YHWCB) specifically to advise and inform children's services.

A Youth Review, carried out by National Government in February 2022, found that, **'Young people showed enthusiasm for being involved in decision making and being proactive members of society, to have their voices heard, opinions respected, expressing a desire for more opportunities to be involved in democracy.'**¹ Young Healthwatch volunteers were therefore very committed to sharing their experiences and opinions, to help ensure young people's voices are placed at the top of the political agenda.

Young Healthwatch volunteers have been involved in, and worked on, a wide variety of activities and projects since 2016 and have gone from strength to strength representing the views of young people, working with other dedicated young volunteers and building relationships with Commissioners and Providers of children's services.



Reception to welcome delegates to the Conference

They meet regularly, with young volunteers aged between 13 – 25, working closely with a wide variety of organisations including Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (BLMK ICB), Healthwatch England, and other key stakeholders, voluntary and community groups across the region.

During the pandemic, specifically lockdown periods, it was clear young people were badly affected, being unable to mix with their friends, study effectively for exams they were unsure were going ahead, or access the vital support they needed to continue their education. When they were allowed back to school, they were subject to frequent stop/starts due to Covid-19 outbreaks which meant longer periods out of learning which resulted in serious implications for their mental health. Evidence of this period in their lives can be seen in their published report: **'Home becomes School'**² written by Young Healthwatch volunteers.

¹ Youth Review: Summary findings and government response - GOV.UK (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-review-summary-findings-and-government-response/youth-review-summary-findings-and-government-response>)

² <https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/home-becomes-school>

Young Healthwatch volunteers were therefore keen to plan a project and event that addressed their need for support with their mental health and wellbeing following the pandemic. This was also influenced by a recent meeting with the Pathway Team at Central Bedfordshire Council, who gave an update on the mental health offer, plus feedback from their peers and family members who felt very passionate about the lack of mental health support currently available. To highlight the effect on their wellbeing, a Young Healthwatch volunteer wrote a blog on how she developed Tourette's Syndrome due to Covid-19; available to read on our website: <https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/living-with-tourettes-syndrome>; which continues to affect her mental health.

The then Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Nadine Dorries MP, said in February 2022:

'As we recover from the pandemic, we face a unique opportunity to build back better. Young people need to be at the heart of those efforts. They have sacrificed a great deal during COVID-19, and those sacrifices have had a serious impact on their mental health and wellbeing. Anxiety levels are at a 12-year high, young people have seen the largest increase in unemployment during COVID, while a year of disrupted learning has widened the attainment gap.'

**Nadine Dorries
MP for Mid Beds and Secretary of State for Digital,
Culture, Media and Sport 2005-2023**

Planning for the Young Peoples Conference 2023, took place over several months. The young volunteers were committed to ensuring many young people had the opportunity to share their experience, talk about the pandemic, how it impacted their mental health, what support they accessed or would like to have accessed, and their ideas for improvement.

In addition, given that Central Bedfordshire Council's recent Children and Young People's plan 2022-2025³, which aims to ensure children and young people have the best start in life, including, 'positive mental health and wellbeing', they wanted to highlight how young people coped during the pandemic and what can be done in the future to address their needs.

The Health and Wellbeing event for young people took place on 24th October 2023 at Center Parcs, Bedfordshire and featured a keynote speaker who had previous experience of an eating disorder, a drama group showing an interactive play relating to mental health, and several workshops facilitated by local organisations.



Delegates listening to Keynote Speaker, Dave Chawner

³ https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/11/children_and_young_people/1418/children_and_young_peoples_plan

Executive Summary

Young Healthwatch volunteers wanted to create an event that addressed the challenges, and highlighted the struggles, young people experienced during the pandemic, but which also allowed them to do so in an interactive way which supported their mental health journey.

Since the pandemic, the mental health of young people locally has been seriously affected by home schooling, lack of social interaction and huge upheaval. Young Healthwatch volunteers were keen for young people to experience an informative and action packed day which also provided an educational element about local services available to support them.

In addition, by inviting local Commissioners and Providers of children's services to join the event, they were able to hear directly from the young people on how they could improve their service and meet their needs.

On 24th October 2023, the Young People's Health and Wellbeing Conference took place at Centre Parcs, Bedfordshire. This venue was chosen specifically as the young volunteers and Healthwatch staff wanted the young people to experience a modern, comfortable setting, to enable a lively discussion. Being able to relax and unwind after a stressful day in the Parc's Paradise Pool was also an incentive to attend the event.

The day included a wide variety of workshop sessions provided by Cambridgeshire Children's Hospital, MoreLife Healthy Lifestyles, the Discovery College 'Better Dayz', and Central Bedfordshire Council's Careers Team.



Diana Blackmun, CEO, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire opening the Conference

Dave Chawner, a comedian with lived experience in mental health was our keynote speaker, and he was followed by a drama group called 'Tangled Feet', an interactive local theatre company who also gave a short performance at the end of the conference. The CEO of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire introduced and concluded the day.



Delegates interact with Keynote Speaker, Dave Chawner

All of the sessions throughout the day were designed to give the young people different tools to manage their mental health, as well as hearing from support services to increase their learning.



Delegates feedback included how, **'interactive', 'helpful', 'fun', and 'even better than I thought'**, the day was. This was also reflected in the facilitators' feedback who said how empowering it was to speak to so many engaged young people and to be able to offer support to young people on their mental health journey. They all felt the conference was well organised, within a great venue.

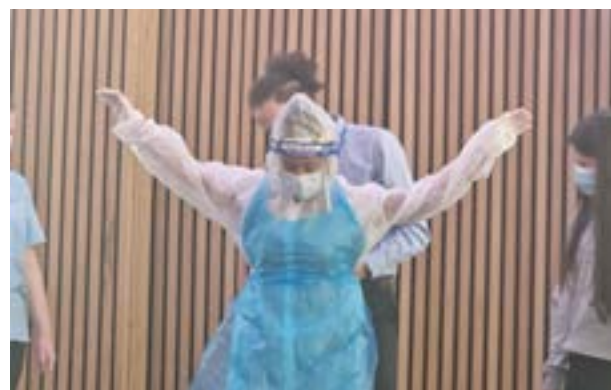


Young people in attendance at the Health and Wellbeing Conference



Delegates listening to Tangled Feet, theatre production

The delegates were given a 'goodie bag' at the end of the day, filled with information leaflets all donated from key services in Central Bedfordshire, as well as those services who attended on the day.



Tangled Feet, theatre production about the pandemic

The young people have been given ammunition to tackle the next step in their mental health journey as well as being able to spread the knowledge they gained from the conference amongst their peers. Similarly key learnings have been taken by the facilitators (more information can be found on page 23) to enhance and improve their services for young people in the future.



Delegates taking part in an exercise for part two of the Tangled Feet Theatre production

We will share our report of the conference with key stakeholders to ensure learning can be taken from the event to improve commissioning, provision and delivery of children's services across Central Bedfordshire.

Summary of Event

Planning for this event started in early 2023 and involved Healthwatch volunteers, staff, Board of Trustees, and key members of the community from across Central Bedfordshire. Comprising of a wide variety of ages, backgrounds and gender, they were able to provide a broad range of opinions and ideas to ensure the event was impactful and of benefit to local people. This enabled the young volunteers to plan a project that addressed their need for support with their mental health and wellbeing following the pandemic.

The planning committee wanted to develop an event for young people (aged 13-25) in Central Bedfordshire which would build on strengthening their resilience and mental health. The pandemic had a detrimental effect on young people's mental health and wellbeing, and the aim of the event was to:

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

The conference was held on 24th October, between 10.00–15.00 during school half term to enable as many young people as possible to attend. The Planning Committee wanted the young people to experience a high quality venue so chose Center Parcs, Woburn Forest to host the conference.

The young people enjoyed a hot lunch and delicious refreshments throughout the course of the day, and were able to use the Parc's Paradise swimming facilities at the close of the conference to help them unwind and relax after a busy day.

The conference was widely promoted across a variety of platforms to ensure full inclusion as follows:

- ◆ Cared for young people
- ◆ Central Bedfordshire Council
- ◆ Integrated Care Board for Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes
- ◆ Key local organisations, community and voluntary groups
- ◆ Schools in Central Bedfordshire including non-mainstream schools
- ◆ SEND organisations
- ◆ HWCB weekly e-newsletter
- ◆ YHW and HWCB social media

The conference opened with an introduction from our CEO and was followed by comedian, Dave Chawner, who was very informative as well as entertaining. Tangled Feet, an interactive theatre production followed, which involved the audience, and four workshop sessions ran throughout the rest of the day. These were delivered by:

- ◆ Cambridge Children's Hospital
- ◆ Central Bedfordshire Youth Support Service (Youth Careers Team)
- ◆ Discovery College and Better Dayz
- ◆ MoreLife Healthy Lifestyle



After observing the days sessions, Tangled Feet concluded with a short interactive summary bringing together feedback they gained in their opening set and observations they had made throughout the day. HWCB's CEO then closed the event and asked attendees to complete feedback forms. Each delegate was also given a 'Goodie Bag' which included information leaflets, pens, pencils, water bottle, sweets, stress balls and activity leaflets which were gifted from those organisations who had held sessions throughout the day, and other stakeholders who were keen to support attendees with advice and information.

The conference was filmed and photographed by a professional videographer and photographer, and some of the delegates were interviewed about their mental health journey and why they had attended the conference.

The video showcasing the event is published on HWCB's website and can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSIfkFQ8Q5Q>

The conference was supported by grant funding from CBC's Councillor Ward Grant Scheme, and special thanks go to Councillor Gary Summerfield, Councillor Mark Smith and Councillor Susan Clinch who generously agreed to sponsor the event. Grants were also successfully secured from the Bedfordshire and Luton Children Services team and the Robert Lucas Trust. The grants made a huge difference in financially supporting the event to ensure the conference would have a greater impact on improving the mental health and wellbeing of those who attended.



Delegates received a 'Goody Bag' of information leaflets, pens, pencils, water bottle, sweets, stress balls and activity leaflets



Watch the full video of the day



Central Bedfordshire Youth Support Service (Youth Careers Team)

The Workshops



Dave Chawner, Comedian

Dave is a number one bestselling author, award winning stand up, presenter and mental health campaigner. In 2014, Dave performed a show about his history with anorexia sensitively using comedy to change the tone around eating disorders. The show received critical acclaim, was made into a TED Talk and he received an award at The Houses of Parliament from The UK's Eating Disorder Charity 'Beat'. Dave now uses comedy to talk about mental health (rather than mental illness) engaging hard to reach groups, help vulnerable people, and lead with positivity rather than negativity.

In 2021, Dave created 'Comedy For Coping' which teaches standup comedy to people who have experienced mental health issues. The course builds confidence, communication and connection with other people, which helps combat loneliness and provides a platform for participants to stand up for themselves. Using peer support the course helps to nurture personal, as well as professional growth, and celebrates good mental health using humour.

Dave has presented and appeared on numerous television and radio shows including BBC's Tomorrow's World and BBC Breakfast, as well as Talk Radio and Radio 1.

Dave is patron of the award-winning Midlands based eating disorder charity 'First Steps', a patron of the mental health charity 'Recovery Assistance Dogs' (AKA RAD), and a patron of 'Oakleaf' in Guildford. He is Mental Health First Aid trained and a media ambassador for Mind, The Mental Health Foundation and 'Beat'.

Dave opened the Health and Wellbeing Conference talking about his own lived experience of coping with an eating disorder. Ava, a Young Healthwatch volunteer said, **'He went into detail about how he struggled quite severely with an eating disorder for a chunk of his life and how it affected him. By this point he had created a bond with the audience, and this enabled everyone to feel comfortable laughing along with him'**. Dave made the audience feel relaxed and provided guidance and direction on how they could cope with mental health concerns and issues. His content was relatable to the young people who were clearly engaged and entertained. Dave invited the audience to ask questions whilst talking about his journey and tricks and tips for coping with mental health struggles, all with an underlying calmness and comedy. Through his use of comedy, he allowed the audience to feel accepted and listened to their issues whilst also allowing them to accept that it is OK to feel a certain way.

Ava went on to say, **'The way he spoke about previously sore topics was something completely unique and honestly, very interesting and entertaining to watch'**.

76% of those attended said Dave was **'Excellent'**
and the remaining **24%** said he was **'Good'**

More information about Dave Chawner can be found at, <https://www.davechawner.co.uk/>



Tangled Feet, theatre company

Tangled Feet is a theatre ensemble and charity who create original, visually stunning, transformative performances, sometimes inside theatres but often in other public spaces. They aim to create atmospheres and experiences for the audience which are 'thrilling, surprising and memorable, which always feel live and in the moment, where the unique reality of this audience, in this moment, right here is acknowledged and celebrated.'

The ensemble has grown to encompass a larger group of 30+ regular artists and crew as well as a broad family of participants.

The planning committee wanted Tangled Feet to create an interactive piece using members of the audience. Nathan Curry, Co-Artistic Director for Tangled Feet, met with Young Healthwatch volunteers prior to the event at their September monthly volunteer meeting. He wanted to help shape the performance at the conference and ensure he was suitably positioning the performance, encouraging the young people to think about their own, and their peers, mental health.

Nathan's original questions to the young people were:

- ◆ What is your over-riding memory or feeling of the pandemic during lockdown(s)?
- ◆ How did the lockdown period change you and how are you affected by it now?
- ◆ Imagine yourself in lockdown. What did you want to change immediately, in a year, in 5 years?
- ◆ Can you write an imaginary letter to someone (family member, friend, teacher) imagining you are just coming out of lockdown and what message you want to send them?
- ◆ Why is Healthwatch important to you? What have you got out of it?
- ◆ If you had the stage and the microphone at the conference, what would you like the audience to know about:
 - ◇ Being a young person?
 - ◇ Health and wellbeing?
 - ◇ Healthwatch?⁴

Nathan and the team then used these answers to shape their performance at the conference on 24th October.

Tangled Feet presented their session with an interactive show focusing on the pandemic and how it affected, not only people's relationships with others, but their physical and mental states. A wonderful session followed, filled with raw emotions and talented actors using their bodies to create abstract visuals to express how it felt to be near people. In one part of the play all the actors rhythmically made their way towards each other but at the last second they danced around each other to avoid physical contact, their faces filled with sadness and their body language conveying their physical exhaustion. They also touched on what it was like for children coping with online schooling and those missing parents who worked long work hours for the NHS or other public bodies.

⁴The answers the YHW volunteers gave can be found on page 26 in Appendix B

One YHW volunteer said, ***'It felt like this team of performers had just taken the entire audience back in time with them to this crazy world we lived in only a few years ago. As much as this type of performance definitely isn't for everyone in the world, I think it's safe to say that everyone in that conference was completely entranced by it.'***

At the end of their performance, they asked the audience two questions they had to write down answers to anonymously on a piece of card; *'How do you support your own mental health?'* And *'How did Covid impact your life?'*⁵ The team then used these answers to create a session at the close of the conference.

At the end of the conference, Tangled Feet interacted and spoke with one another whilst rolling out barricade tape. This brought in elements of audience interaction, as multiple delegates around the hall were holding onto different ends of the tape. Essentially, the delegates were all trapped in the barriers no matter where they were sat. Following this, the actors talked about how the world is opening up and how the country is starting to gain more freedom as a country. Whilst this was discussed, they walked around and cut each line of tape into 2-4 small strips, by tripling the amount of pieces of tape in the room, now everyone was able to hold a piece of tape. Back on stage they read out some of the answers previously written and encouraged everyone to walk to the front of the stage if it applied to them and put their piece of tape into the bin; symbolising throwing away the troubles that held them down during lockdown.



The young volunteer added, ***'Despite not being as emotional, this performance still made the audience feel things as we got to hear other's honest and deep feelings about lockdown, a time when we all went through things, some the same and some different. At that moment in time, we felt connected with the people around us whether they were friends or strangers.'***

Tangled Feet created a thought provoking session and enabled delegates to continue to open up about their own mental health, to encourage them to think about what they enjoy, to be able to be happy with a fulfilled future.

Tangled Feet said, ***'It was a great to connect with this amount of young people and to hear their responses,'*** and ***'The attendees were really receptive to our performances, their responses were so heartfelt, truthful and inspiring.'***

56% of delegates said that Tangled Feet were
'Excellent',
27% 'Very Good' and **17%** said they were 'OK'

More information about Tangled Feet can be found at, <https://tangledfeet.com/>

⁵ The answers to these questions can be found on page 28 in Appendix C

Central Bedfordshire Youth Support Service (Youth Careers Team)

Part of the Central Bedfordshire Youth Support Service, the Youth Careers Team, support young people in Central Bedfordshire with career opportunities, providing reliable sources of information to help children and young people with important decision making and finding the right job for them.

The team led a fun and immersive session based around a game which helped the delegates to understand careers and how to choose a pathway into a job. The delegates were given different holiday destinations and then had to pick which one they wanted to go to. The Youth Careers Team kept giving the delegates a little more information on the holiday, like how much spending money you had and how many people could join you, and in the end the group counted up how many times each person changed their holiday location. This was to explain the idea of changing jobs and careers. After this game, the delegates split into groups depending on their age. Options for post and pre 16 years of age were discussed and then ideas given on what the young people would like to do post 18 years of age, and what careers they were looking into.

The Youth Careers Team explained the importance of getting all the information to make an informed decision and explained that choosing subjects that can help will influence their career; not choosing based on what your friends have chosen.

This session helped the young people to look forward and have a focus 'post pandemic', by supporting their mental health but ensuring they have a plan.

One delegate said, ***'I really liked the group and as I personally don't know what job I want to do, they gave me some great advice on how to keep my options open and where I could look for some further career advice. Overall, I really enjoyed the session'***

The Youth Careers Team said they received, ***'Really honest and useful feedback from delegates. They found it good fun with lots of laughter.'*** A key takeaway for them is the lack of understanding of who the Careers Co-ordinators are in school, with ***'Little knowledge of apprenticeships or exploration of options other than 6th Form. Year 11 and 12's had rarely discussed careers in school.'***



41% of those attended said the careers session was **'Very Good'**,
34% said it was 'Excellent' and **25%** said it was 'OK'

More information about Central Bedfordshire Council careers can be found at, Careers, education & training advice in Central Bedfordshire (<https://www.findyourfuture.org.uk/>)

Cambridge Children's Hospital

Cambridge Children's Hospital is a world-first hospital that integrates mental and physical health care for children and young people in the East of England. It is being built on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, next to Addenbrooke's Hospital, and will provide a whole new way of caring for children and young people, integrating mental and physical healthcare and having a life-changing impact on children regionally, nationally and globally. The hospital is expected to open in 2025 .

The Cambridge Children's Hospital Engagement team held a fantastic session asking the young people to provide their input into how they would like a children's hospital to be designed. They were shown plans for the teenage rooms in both mental and physical health wards, and then given creative freedom working on a canvas to express their thoughts through arts and crafts, specifically looking at how they would feel throughout their hospital stay, if it were to happen in the future. The team wanted the children and young people to 'be in flow', which meant feeling engrossed in an enjoyable activity, whatever that felt like for them. Their goal was to gain more feedback on how they can make sure the hospital meets the wants and needs of teenagers regarding spaces, environment, and activities available, specific to older children and teens.



Anya, YHW volunteer, said, 'I really enjoyed this part as I have personally experienced overnights in the hospital and being able to give input in such a creative way was such a fun way. We were able to be as expressive as we wanted and talk about emotions and how they could feel physically, for example putting springs on the bottom of feet to show excitement. I really appreciated the fact we were given the opportunity to give ideas about the hospital. Such as how it looked and physically feel in the room (smells and hiding medical equipment where possible). I think this was such a unique idea and helps us all to feel a part of something really special, and important.'

Madeleine Goodwyn, Engagement Officer, working for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT) on the Cambridge Children's Hospital Project said, **'The young people were brilliant, and we were able to gain more feedback and more detail than expected, which was fantastic and that will be fed back into the project as we move through the next design and development stages.'**

46% of those attended said the Cambridge Children's Hospital session was, **'Excellent'**,
44% said it was 'Very Good' and **10%** said it was 'OK'

More information about Cambridge Children's Hospital can be found at, <https://www.cambridgechildrens.org.uk/>

MoreLife – Healthy Lifestyle

MoreLife work with local authorities across the UK to provide high quality, evidence based programmes for individuals and communities. MoreLife focus on healthy lifestyles and self-care. More locally in Bedfordshire, MoreLife manage activities for families and young people. Activities can be undertaken in the home and help your whole family to build a healthy relationship with food and learn the importance of looking after our minds and our bodies.

MoreLife ran a great session at the conference talking about keeping fit and healthy in an educational but also fun way. The session consisted of drawing round a delegate's outline and then drawing on the outline to indicate where specific parts of the body are. The children and young people reviewed how they can keep fit and healthy, both mentally and physically, from the drawings on the paper bodies. This was a fun and interactive way of recalling information for fitness. At the end of the session, the group read through the annotations which helped them realise how many different things (within and outside of their control) could affect their physical and mental health.



The delegates were also given a topic to make fun posters. Using mind mapping, they created different ideas of how to be healthy as a young person and how to encourage this. For example, on topics such as healthy eating and physical activity, they divided into pairs and fed back to the group once they had finished.

The MoreLife team said, ***'Learning more about how young people view being healthy was great and learning more about the barriers and their suggestions to improve this.'***

Another Young Healthwatch volunteer, said, ***'The poster making was interesting and then we also presented our posters to each other to teach and recall what we had learnt, it was really fun and I enjoyed how interactive our group session was. I learnt a lot.'***

45% of those attended said the MoreLife session was
'Very Good',
31% said it was 'Excellent' and **24%** said it was 'OK'

More information about MoreLife can be found at, <https://www.more-life.co.uk/in-your-area/bedsmk/>

Discovery College and Better Dayz

Better Dayz and the Discovery College are managed through the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The Discovery College is an educational project, focused on improving young people's wellbeing. It is for young people aged 13-18 living in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton, to join the free workshops held online or face-to-face. It is a great way for young people to explore their potential, learn new skills and flourish within their community. Better Dayz organise a year of creative workshops for children and young people across Bedford Luton and Milton Keynes (BMLK), promoting positive mental wellbeing.



A very informative and collaborative session, in a relaxed and safe environment, encouraged the young people to talk about their experience accessing mental health services. The group discussed the quality of the CAMHS and NHS diagnostic services, as well as the support offered to parents whose children had Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The young people were informed about programmes running and supported to fill out 'plans'. In the plans they looked at ways to cope when they were personally struggling and the tools they can use to help themselves during tougher times. The rest of the session was spent openly discussing school and other worries, in a very supported atmosphere.

Discovery College and Better Dayz team said, ***'We really appreciate you inviting us. The event was a great opportunity to connect with young people and professionals altogether. The talks we had around the table about the pandemic and its effects were very interesting and nourishing. Many young people engaged and shared their opinions and experiences. Even though it was a collective challenge, it is always eye-opening to hear about personal struggles and coping strategies on dealing with such an unprecedented situation. Once again, we saw the importance of group acceptance, how being respectful about other people's opinions builds that safe space where young people get the confidence to express themselves.'***

Liam, a Young Healthwatch volunteer, said, ***'Many attendees spoke about their personal experiences in the service and gave suggestions and advice on how to improve the service. Additionally, we created a resource to help us manage and regulate our emotions, as well as filling out a short survey. We also got to enjoy some fidget toys during the session.'***

59% of those attended said the Discovery College and Better Dayz session was, ***'Excellent'***, **28%** said it was ***'Very Good'*** and **13%** said it was ***'OK'***

More information about the Discovery College and Better Dayz can be found at, <https://www.elft.nhs.uk/services/bedfordshire-and-luton-discovery-college>

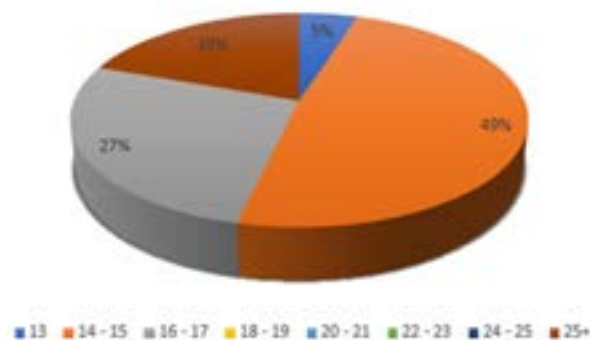
Feedback – Delegates

The delegates filled out a questionnaire at the end of the conference to let us know their thoughts about the day. Feedback of the individual workshops can be found in the workshop sections on previous pages.

The delegates were asked to rate the following:

	Excellent	Very Good	OK
Venue	51%	44%	5%
Refreshments	51%	39%	10%
Helpfulness of HWCB staff and volunteers	54%	39%	7%
Session presentations overall	37%	56%	7%
Overall event	51%	49%	0%

- ◆ 100% of attendees felt the conference met their expectations
- ◆ 88% of those who attended were female and 12% male.
- ◆ The majority of those attended were between the ages of 14-15 (49%), followed by 27% aged 16-17, 19% aged 25+, and 5% aged 13. None of the attendees fell into the other age categories.



- ◆ When asked how the delegates travelled to the venue 65% came by car and the remaining 35% shared a car.
- ◆ When asked how did they hear about the conference the answers included:
 - ◇ Friends
 - ◇ School email
 - ◇ Social media
 - ◇ Staff at my care home
 - ◇ Work email
 - ◇ Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire

◆ Delegates came from across the region including:

- ◆ Ampthill
- ◆ Barton-Le-Clay
- ◆ Dunstable
- ◆ Flitwick
- ◆ Houghton Regis
- ◆ Marston Moretain
- ◆ Maulden
- ◆ Peterborough
- ◆ Silsoe
- ◆ Stevenage
- ◆ Stotfold

◆ When asked if the delegates wanted to add comments about their experience of the conference, these included the following:

Fab event.

Really good.

It was even better than I thought it was going to be. I thought we'd be talked to, not do activities, which I liked.

My friends and I had a brilliant time at the conference today and the swimming.
Excellent day with the young people, with the presenters and all services.

Thank you for everything.

Very interactive, good variety.

It was a bit cold inside.

Really helpful.

I thought the 'Better Dayz' one was really good.

It was nice; the food was also nice as well.

I really enjoyed the Discovery College talk.

I liked the fiddle toys.

Good.

It was great.

Very good.

Very good service and useful for our young people. Well done to everyone.

Very fun.

Was fun and food was great.

Very interactive and inclusive.

Needed to have social type story beforehand to manage 'unknown' and expectations, sensory needs etc. Would be good to have visual information beforehand e.g. what the conference venue looked like, pictures of staff etc. Like a social story, for those young people who are autistic – expectations re. involvement in workshops – i.e. time out/ breaks/ managing this.

Carer

It was brilliant. And the kids had a really good time too!!! Thank you so much.

Carer

Feedback – Facilitators

All the facilitators shared details of the event before 24th October to help promote and many shared their feedback on the day, via social media posts.

When asked what they felt had gone well at the conference, they said:

Facilitator	What went well
Better Dayz and Discovery College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Access to venue and engagement with the young people. ◇ Access, food, engaged young people giving great feedback. ◇ Very structured, venue was brilliant.
MoreLife	Easy to find, nice venue, helpful staff, nice lunch, good to talk to the young people in more depth.
Cambridge Children's Hospital	Very engaged young people; lovely venue.
CBC Youth Support Service (Youth Careers Team)	Lovely venue, nice lunch, manageable group, great comedian.
Tangled Feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Well organised. ◇ We loved the lunch. ◇ How much people engaged with the performance. ◇ A great day – access/ parking was great, lunch was fab! Great to connect with this amount of young people and to hear their responses. ◇ Everything was so well organised and went according to plan.
Dave Chawner	Tech was great.



When asked what did not go so well for the facilitators, they said:

Facilitator	What did not go well
Better Dayz and Discovery College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Lack of quiet space. ◇ Timing, organisation.
MoreLife	N/A
Cambridge Children's Hospital	N/A
CBC Youth Support Service (Youth Careers Team)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Unloading information from car park – this was a long walk when on my own. ◇ Lack of time. ◇ Noise level – a partition within the room would have been very beneficial.
Tangled Feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Water dispenser only gave sparkling water. ◇ In the main room where the speeches and performance took place, the back wall made me dizzy because of the vertical lines. ◇ More vegan options would be nice.
Dave Chawner	N/A

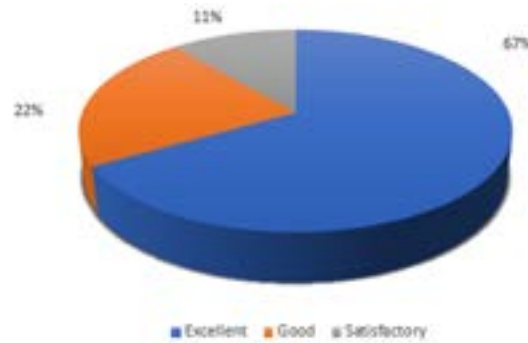
The facilitators were asked what, in hindsight, would they change about their session, having interacted with the attendees:

Facilitator	What would they change
Better Dayz and Discovery College	I think due to the short spells, the discussions worked well in small groups.
MoreLife	No changes.
Cambridge Children's Hospital	We were really happy with our sessions and were able to achieve (our) desired outcomes.
CBC Youth Support Service (Youth Careers Team)	Not much – the time was limited, and we signposted to schools – would have been useful to have had careers co-ordinator details. Smaller groups – more time to have in-depth discussions.
Tangled Feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ More participation. ◇ The attendees were really receptive to our performances. ◇ Maybe having the chance to ask more detailed questions, as their responses were so heartfelt, truthful and inspiring.
Dave Chawner	No changes.

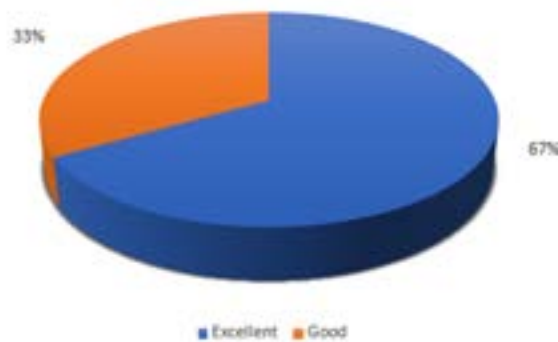
When asked if the event met their expectations, **100%** of the facilitators confirmed it did, with supporting comments including:

- ◆ **Good 'talks' and good to have the time to talk'.**
- ◆ **Engaged young people and support.**
- ◆ **Event was well organised – Lovely team and we really enjoyed attending.**
- ◆ **Loved it.**

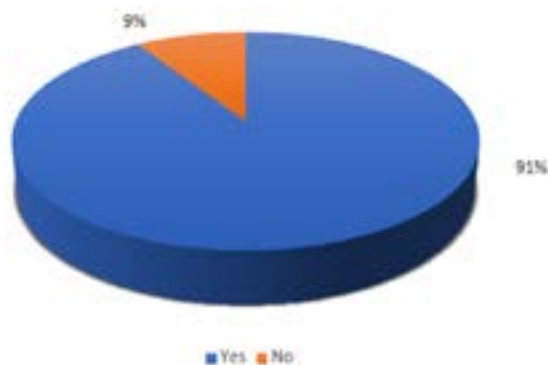
When asked to rate the organisation of the event, the majority confirmed the organisation was excellent (**67%**), **22%** said it was good and **11%** said satisfactory.



The facilitators were asked what their overall opinion of the event was, from what they had seen. **67%** said it was excellent and **33%** said it was good.



When asked if they would like to attend other Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire events **91%** said yes and **9%** said no.



100% of facilitators confirmed they would you be interested in working with Young Healthwatch on projects in the future.

Conclusion

It is clear from feedback received that both delegates and the facilitators felt it was a very successful event. A great atmosphere and buzz was prevalent throughout the day, and everyone was very pleased they had attended.

The conference met expectations and although mainly females attended, good representation also came from males, and it was good to see that young people came from across the area by car or car sharing.

The event was shared and promoted via many different media platforms including, social, newsletters, word of mouth and family, which ensured a wide age range attended.

The venue received a great deal of positive feedback with many enjoying the swimming facilities after the conference, as well as the refreshments during the day.

The comedian, Dave Chawner, was very popular with all delegates who rated him 'excellent' or 'very good'. Supporting comments by delegates showcased that they found the conference very interactive, useful and fun.

Feedback from facilitators shows they enjoyed meeting many engaged young people, and all felt the conference met their expectations. They said it was well organised, structured and they also enjoyed the high quality venue. They felt that using smaller groups meant they could really engage with the young people, although at times felt the space was a little noisy. However, all wanted to work with Young Healthwatch again and attend other events, and when asked to rate their overall opinion of the event all said it was 'excellent' or 'good'.



Next Steps

Additional comments and next steps from the facilitators included the following:

'The young people were brilliant, and we were able to gain more feedback and more detail than expected, which was fantastic and that will be fed back into the project as we move through the next design and development stages.'

Cambridge Children's Hospital

The feedback from the careers groups showcased that young people felt they had, 'very little help or support in school, no real understanding of who their careers co-ordinators are or how to book appointments, little knowledge of apprenticeships or exploration of options other than 6th Form. Parent Carers who attended also felt like they didn't have much insight'. The Careers Team have vital information to take back to try and enhance and develop the guidance young people are exposed to in school.

**CBC Youth Support Group
(Careers Team)**

'Engagement with the young people went really well during the conference and we got great feedback to use in our service improvement.'

'In one of the sessions there was a young person who had previously attended a wellbeing session in one of the schools we worked with in Central Beds. Even though during that school session they did not engage that much, during the Healthwatch event there was a significant growth in participating alongside other young people. The reason they shared was due to the fact that we were a familiar face, and this environment was more casual. The young person also shared feedback about our delivery in that school, which is helpful for our School Project'.

'Another example is in the value of having young people and adults around the table, a space where listening, sharing and learning from each other can add great value to someone's toolkit when dealing with challenges. As we do invite parents/carers and other professionals to attend our community workshops, this was encouraging to see, and we will keep having that approach'.

'The talks we had around the table about the pandemic and its effects were very interesting. Many young people engaged and shared their opinions and experiences.'

Discovery College and Better Dayz

'The age group we had at the sessions are ones we struggle to engage with. We received very positive responses from the following question – 'If you needed to access a weight management service, would you like a physical activity programme or sessions?' They included what we already offer in our programmes which was reassuring. The responses from the questions will help us shape future programmes and gave us good insight into what children and young people (CYP) would like support with.'

MoreLife - Healthy Lifestyles



We would like to take the opportunity to thank all those involved in putting on this conference, without whom, we would not have been able to (in alphabetical order):

- ◆ Bedfordshire, Luton & Milton Keynes (BLMK) Integrated Care Board (ICB), especially Anona Hoyle for supporting the conference on the day
- ◆ Bedfordshire and Luton Children's services, especially Lydia Rosseter for also supporting the conference on the day
- ◆ Better Dayz and Recovery College
- ◆ Cambridgeshire Children's Hospital Careers Team
- ◆ Center Parcs
- ◆ Central Bedfordshire Youth Support Service (Youth Careers Team)
- ◆ Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC)
- ◆ Councillors Gary Summerfield, Mark Smith and Susan Clinch for the Central Bedfordshire Ward Councillor Grant Scheme
- ◆ Dave Chawner
- ◆ Moonwatcher Media, Colin Skevington - videographer
- ◆ MoreLife
- ◆ Robert Lucas Trust
- ◆ Tangled Feet
- ◆ YHW and HWCB volunteers
- ◆ HWCB volunteer, Alan Jackson - photographer
- ◆ HWCB staff and directors

We would also like to thank those who donated additional items for the 'Goody Bags': be active, CBC Libraries, Mind BLMK, Samaritans, SNAP, Terrence Higgins Trust



Appendix A

Programme for the Day

09.30	Arrival and Registration		
10.00	Diana Blackmun, Chief Executive, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire		
10.05	Keynote Speaker – David Chawner, Presenter & Comedian		
11.00	Tangled Feet – drama production (part one)		
11.45	Break		
12 noon	Break-out Session 1	A. Careers B. CCH	C. Healthy Lifestyle D. CAMHS
12.30	Lunch		
13.00	Break-out Session 2	A. Careers B. CCH	C. Healthy Lifestyle D. CAMHS
13.30	Break-out Session 3	A. Careers B. CCH	C. Healthy Lifestyle D. CAMHS
14.00	Break-out Session 4	A. Careers B. CCH	C. Healthy Lifestyle D. CAMHS
14.30	Tangled Feet – drama production (part two)		
14.45	Close – Diana Blackmun, Chief Executive, Healthwatch		
15.00	Event close		



Appendix B

Answers Young Healthwatch volunteers gave to Tangled Feet Co-Artistic Director, Nathan Curry

1. What is your over-riding memory or feeling of the lockdown during Covid?

- ◆ *Doing school work*
- ◆ *Pretty chill and relaxed*
- ◆ *I felt like it was the time in which I was the most alone in the world but I see it as a godsend because I feel like I “found myself” during this time. I found my confidence and discovered things about myself in that time.*
- ◆ *Isolation, boredom and anarchy*

2. How did the lockdown period change you and how are you effected by it now?

- ◆ *A lot less social and have a completely different friend group*
- ◆ *Affected socialising skills and studies. We became quite used to staying indoors and being lazy, that getting back into studying and socialising required some time. We spoke to our close friends but not many others.*
- ◆ *It changed me for the better. The changes I made to myself in that time have stuck until now. Before Covid I don't even recognise myself because I felt like I was always trying to be someone I wasn't because that's what I thought I had to be.*
- ◆ *More naive than others at our age, less close relationships and more independent.*
- ◆ *Isolation, boredom and anarchy*

3. Imagine yourself in lockdown. What did you want to change immediately, in a year, in 5 years?

Immediately	In a Year	In 5 Years
<i>Go see my Grandma</i>	<i>Everything be open/be able to go to swim club, be in sixth-form with options I liked.</i>	
<i>Reopen businesses. We feel like a lot of small businesses suffered tremendous losses during the pandemic.</i>	<i>Be able to go out and socialise again and see friends.</i>	<i>COVID doesn't exist.</i>
	<i>I wanted to change the way I saw myself and my attitude to the world. I hated the way I saw myself and I hated the way I saw the world. I immediately wanted to get back to school because I felt like I needed to be surrounded by people, to know who I was myself.</i>	<i>I don't know what I would have wanted to change, I didn't really believe I'd have 5 years into the future, I wasn't in a good place, the thing I would have wanted to change is there being a “5 years from now” which I can proudly now say that there is.</i>
<i>Instantly reduce restrictions.</i>	<i>Keep in contact better.</i>	<i>Use the pandemic to our strength.</i>

4. Can you write an imaginary letter to someone (family member, friend, teacher) imagining you're just coming out of lockdown and what message you want to send them?

- ◆ *That I can't wait to see my friends and that I miss them.*
- ◆ *Not really sure because we kept in contact with the people we are close to. But, hypothetically, if we were to think of a letter it would probably be about us being excited to be able to see them again and go out.*
- ◆ *My message would be that I was worried about being accepted by the world in my new self. When I couldn't stand myself I knew I didn't have to worry about being accepted because I was who needed to be accepted by the world or by my peers but once I had found myself my biggest fear was how people would perceive me now that I wasn't what they needed or wanted me to be.*

5. Why is Healthwatch important to you? What have you got out of it?

- ◆ *It let's people be heard and I learned more about the health care system.*
- ◆ *We think this organisation is quite useful as it looks to help many people through its events. I like how Young Healthwatch are looking to improve existing programmes and systems to improve people's experiences and to improve their health and wellbeing.*
- ◆ *I would want to explore that Covid-19 wasn't always negative for everyone (obviously excusing the deaths, I mean isolation wise). I want to focus on the differences between a good lockdown and a bad lockdown. Healthwatch is important to me because it has helped me connect with new people, it has pushed me and expanded my comfort zone. It has made me feel like I am forgiven for my past actions or attitudes because I am now trying to give something back to the world.*
- ◆ *Connecting me to my wider community, makes me feel like I'm making a difference and bettering my opportunities in the future.*

6. If you had the stage and the microphone at the conference on October 24th what would you like the audience to know about:

A. Being a young person? B. Health and wellbeing? C. Healthwatch?

- ◆ *Being a young person can be stressful but remember to chill sometimes.*
- ◆ *Your mental health won't always be bad. It will take work but it will improve.*
- ◆ *Healthwatch is great for learning.*
- ◆ *We would say that it is relatively okay. It honestly just depends. It depends on the school you go to, the people you hang out with, the course you want to do and the pressure it puts you under etc. Its different for everyone but for us i would say its relatively tough. Mostly because of studies and university applications and the pressure of it all, just the idea that our future kind of depends on it.*
- ◆ *I would want the audience to know that it is never too late to make your mark or to redeem yourself.*
- ◆ *I want the audience to know that their mental health and well-being is just as important as their physical well-being. I want them to see how injuries or illnesses whether physical or mental can affect people in different ways, it's not just black and white.*
- ◆ *I would want them to know the importance of what we do, how good it makes you feel about yourself, how open minded we are as a group of people. That we are always welcome to helping people or accepting people exactly how they are and however they need us.*
- ◆ *Being a young person is very different now than a few decades ago - different struggles, not harder or easier.*
- ◆ *It is the most important thing we have as it changed how much time we have , only thing we can't buy*
- ◆ *Everything we do is confidential and we rely on your complaints/comments to function - don't be afraid to call in.*

Appendix C

Answers delegates gave to Tangled Feet, theatre production

How do you support your own mental health?

I socialise with friends

Tried 'Bedford open door' but It didn't help much

I talk to my mum sometimes

Self-care days

Self-reflection

Talking to a loved one

Therapy

Tell someone if something is wrong

Listening to music

Gym/exercise

Take a day each month to reset

Reading

Watch a TV series

Go to work daily

Going outdoors

Make it through each day and don't give up

Spend time by myself

Follow a routine

Counselling

Medication

Have classes to speak about emotions

Art

Engage with pets

Mindfulness/meditation

Gaming

Religion/spirituality

Being kind to yourself



How did Covid-19 impact your life?

I was able to find myself

Some friendships didn't last due to lack of regular contact

Learnt to love my mind and body

Found how to support and improve myself

Wasn't able to see my loved ones

Found new hobbies

Found what was really important in life

Needed a break from day-to-day stress

Self-awareness increased

Social skills got worse

Had time to practice and improve at hobbies

Got to spend more time with family

Missed my loved ones

Bad mental health/isolated

Had to stop hobbies

Education affected negatively

Strengthened friendships **Exercised more regularly**



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

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**YOUNG
healthwatch
Central Bedfordshire**

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 eleanor.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 eleanor.ryles@healthwatchcentralbedfordshire.org.uk or call **0300 303 8554**.





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Healthwatch **Central Bedfordshire**