

# The value of listening

Young Healthwatch  
Central Bedfordshire  
**Annual Report 2023 - 2024**



Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (YHWCB) 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 actively putting 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 YHWCB volunteers to visit your service please contact us.

A lot more information can be found on the Young Healthwatch website, here <https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/young-healthwatch>, including one volunteer who was successful in applying for nursing college after detailing her experience as a Young Healthwatch volunteer. She explains how pivotal being a volunteer with YHWCB was in supporting her application, showcasing the work she was involved in through YHWCB activities and projects.

If you are under 25, why not consider becoming a member of Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire? Get in touch for more information, email [anna.bailie@healthwatchcentralbedfordshire.org.uk](mailto:anna.bailie@healthwatchcentralbedfordshire.org.uk) or call **0300 303 8554**.



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**“Over the last year, local Healthwatch have shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people’s views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities.”**

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England



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# Message from our CEO

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**Eliciting the views, feelings and aspirations of young people can be challenging and we have worked hard over the past year to encourage more young people to join our YHWCB Group, to give them the opportunity to share their views and experiences, to improve outcomes for children and young people, and help develop services that are 'fit for purpose'.**

By joining YHWCB our volunteers have been able to learn new skills, build their confidence and become active members of their local community. They have listened to other young people and worked on projects like improving hospital experiences for children and young people, by visiting hospital wards including Paediatric A & E, observing the service and talking to patients and staff, with action taken based on their recommendation's.

YHWCB volunteers have been involved in research to help improve the mental health of young people by supporting the development of 'Time Out' cards for students to use in schools, and by working with colleagues at Central Bedfordshire Council to give valuable feedback on a 'Mindful Mentor Badge'.

One of their main achievements this year was to organise and facilitate a Health and Wellbeing Conference for Young People as they were very keen to create an interactive event that addressed the challenges, and highlighted the struggles, young people experienced during the pandemic, and how to access help and support for their mental health. The conference was a huge success and provided attendees with the opportunity to hear from a keynote speaker with lived experience of mental health, take part in workshops and be involved with a drama group exploring their physical and mental states. All sessions were designed to give the young people different tools to help manage their mental health.

I am enormously proud of all the work carried out by our YHWCB volunteers who work tirelessly to ensure young people have a voice and can give their feedback on services that affect them. I would like to thank them all most sincerely for their continued involvement and commitment to YHWCB.



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

Diana Blackmun, Chief Executive Officer at Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire



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# About us

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## YHWCB Central Bedfordshire (YHWCB) is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use young people's feedback to improve care. We can also help parents and Carers to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice to support their young people.

### Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



### Our mission

To make sure young people's experiences help make their health and care better.





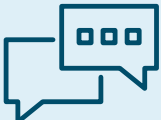





### Our values are:

- ◇ YHWCB exists to improve health and social care services in terms of accessibility, relevance, and inclusivity from the young person's perspective.
- ◇ Our role is to ensure that local decision makers in Health and Social Care Services centre the experiences of young people in service design and promote co-production.
- ◇ Young volunteers receive 'Enter & View' training and visit Health and Social Care Services used by children and young people.
- ◇ Our volunteers report their findings from their unique perspective and provide feedback and support to essential services for children and young people.



# How we've made a difference this year

Spring	 <p>At Central Bedfordshire College Health and Wellbeing Fair we provided healthcare resources to students, to improve awareness of local services.</p>	 <p>We presented information to Healthwatch England's Engagement Forum on how to facilitate a successful Young Healthwatch Group, to elicit meaningful engagement.</p>
Summer	 <p>Our young volunteers worked with Central Bedfordshire Council to support the interviews for an Assistant Educational Psychologist, their input ensured the candidate could work well with young people.</p>	 <p>Jointly conducted an Enter &amp; View visit to Bedford Hospital with a neighbouring Healthwatch to review quality of services for children and young people, ensuring that our recommendations from our 2019 visit had been taken on board.</p>
Autumn	 <p>Acted as mentor to colleagues at Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to support the development and creation of a Young Healthwatch group in their area.</p>	 <p>Organised a Health and Wellbeing Conference for young people, inviting key stakeholders to facilitate workshops and an interactive drama group to address mental health issues and well-being needs.</p>
Winter	 <p>YHWCB members provided social media updates and blogs on their work over the past year which included information videos on YouTube, raising awareness on issues that matter to them and engaging more people with our work.</p>	 <p>Commissioned by Healthwatch England to facilitate a session on Central Bedfordshire's model for Young Healthwatch. Other Young Healthwatch have committed to replicating our model.</p>

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# Your voice heard at a wider level

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**We collaborate with other organisations and local Healthwatch to ensure the experiences of people in Central Bedfordshire influence decisions made about services at Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care System (BLMK ICS) level.**

This year we have worked with organisations across BLMK:



YHWCB met with the Chief Medical Director, the Public Health Registrar and the Primary Care Development and Transformation Manager for BLMK ICB. This team raised awareness amongst volunteers about early detection of cancer and asked YHWCB volunteers what appeals to them in terms of messaging. Volunteers will use what they learnt to inform how they can help educate young people and bust the myths of cancer, making it a less scary subject.

To improve the social prescribing offer in Central Bedfordshire and enable it to reach a wider audience. YHWCB volunteers spoke with colleagues from BLMK ICB and Active Luton to discuss how YHWCB can support the social prescribing project. Currently running one pilot project in Central Bedfordshire and looking at a wider roll-out, the young people were able to feedback on what would appeal to young people and what the offer would look like for a wider audience.



By working with the Co-production & Engagement Lead for Children's Services at Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), YHWCB were able to work with an Educational Psychologist who enabled two YHWCB volunteers to support their recruitment of an Assistant Educational Psychologist for her team. CBC were also keen to follow-up on actions recommended in our Carer's Report to see what additional support the Council can offer to the programme.

Breaking mental health stigma and encouraging conversations – YHWCB volunteers gave feedback on a Public Health project to create a 'Mindful Mentor Badge' for trained individuals to wear informing people they had attended training on young people's mental health. Feedback included what the badge should mean, look like and represent. The public health team have given feedback on the advice the YHWCB volunteers gave, and the messaging has since been rolled out across BLMK.





## Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing young people's 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 their offer to young people.



# Improving hospital experiences for young people

YHWCB volunteers visited Bedford Hospital on 1st August 2023, to undertake a '15 Steps' review of the Paediatric A & E, Neonatal wards and the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). This followed a previous visit by YHWCB in October 2019 and gave us an opportunity to determine if our previous recommendations had been implemented.

The '15 Steps Challenge' focuses on seeing care through a patient or Carer's eyes and exploring their first impressions. The 'Challenge is a simple way of making sure we listen to users of services and see things through their eyes so services can be improved.



**Following our previous visit in October 2019, colleagues at Bedford Hospital have confirmed changes had already been made because of our previous report.**

Evidence of good practice included:

- ◇ Welcoming and helpful staff at Reception
- ◇ People who said they knew about the play areas for children and young people considered them a positive addition
- ◇ Warm and comfortable stay for relatives
- ◇ Smooth handover from different teams
- ◇ Staff felt highly valued and respected
- ◇ Training of staff is welcomed and easy to arrange
- ◇ Sign language cards on walls



**Many thanks indeed for this report – excellent work by all the YHWCB volunteers, and it has been shared with Children's Services. It really is great to get the perspective of the young volunteers and their recommendations will certainly inform decision making and improvements for the team going forward. Please do pass on our thanks to everyone involved in the visit and production of your very professional report. Looking forward to the next one!**

Deborah Allman, Voluntary Services Manager, Charity and Voluntary Services, Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

# Improving hospital experiences for young people

## 2023 Recommendations

Following their observations and analysis of all feedback received, YHWCB volunteers made the following recommendations to help further improve the patient, relative and Carer experience of visiting the children's departments at Bedford Hospital:

- ◇ Increase the variety of meal options for patients
- ◇ Promote Play Specialists more widely around the hospital, particularly in children and young people areas for patients
- ◇ Improve staffing levels
- ◇ Easy to see and find "hospital maps"
- ◇ In the waiting area, smaller chairs for younger children
- ◇ The consulting room to be more colourful



YHWCB volunteers prepared a full report of their visit to Bedford Hospital in August 2023 which included 'What Worked Well' and the recommendations listed above. To see a full copy of their report please visit:

<https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/yhw-15-step-visit-to-bedford-hospital-2023>



**We were so pleased to welcome YHWCB back to our Riverbank Children's Ward, Meadowbank Special Care Baby Unit and Children's Outpatients – it was a great opportunity to show them that we have acted on their recommendations and more since their visit back in 2019. A great deal of work has been done to improve facilities and experience for the children and young people we care for and their families, with a fully refurbished playroom and a dedicated 'chill' zone with gaming and entertainment for our older patients. The input from YHWCB is invaluable in informing our vision for the future and continuous improvement to ensure we meet all our patients' needs.**

Helen Lindsay-Clarke, Paediatric Matron, Bedford Hospital

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# Training opportunities and awards

## Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and YHWCB held an 'Introduction to Sign Language workshop' for staff and volunteers.

Access Bedford, a local charity who work with the D/deaf and hard of hearing community, joined our YHWCB meeting in March 2024 to facilitate an 'Introduction to British Sign Language' training session. This was an opportunity for our young volunteers to interact with the D/deaf and hard of hearing community, to learn about their experiences and how to better engage with people with hearing difficulties. They were able to learn the alphabet, sign common phrases, and learn how best to communicate. This training enabled YHWCB to learn more about the D/deaf community and provided them with new transferable communication skills.

**In January 2024, eight YHWCB volunteers undertook Safeguarding Training to ensure they are equipped with the relevant tools when working with peers on activities and projects.**

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## Investing in Children Award

The Investing in Children Membership Award gives organisations national recognition for actively including children and young people in dialogue that results in change. It involves hearing directly from children and young people; how they have a voice and contribute to changes in your work with them. YHWCB submitted evidence of projects undertaken in the last year that demonstrated how the young people have led change. YHWCB members were invited to meet the Awards Manager to speak to in more detail about their activities and projects during 2023/24.

As in previous years, Investing in Children felt that YHWCB had fulfilled the criteria for the award, demonstrating good practice and active inclusion of children and young people resulting in change.

YHWCB volunteers will continue to use the voice of children and young people within Central Bedfordshire, to encourage joint working, to make a difference to service delivery, provision and access.

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## Luton & Bedfordshire Community Awards – 'Young Hero Award'



One of our Young Healthwatch volunteers, Mollie, was put forward for the 'Young Hero Award' due to her outstanding work with young people in the community, at the Luton & Bedfordshire Community Awards which is an annual ceremony, celebrating the unsung heroes of our diverse and multicultural community and applauding those that seek to make the lives of others, easier, happier and more fulfilled. Mollie was shortlisted in November 2023 and received a 'Highly Commendable' award. This was a great opportunity to showcase the work of our dedicated volunteers and praise the outstanding individual efforts of a young person.

# Three ways we have made a difference with young pe

Throughout our work we encourage our young volunteers to give their feedback on research

## The READY Trial and supporting research that impacts young people's health

Over the last four years, YHWCB volunteers were given the opportunity to be involved in a Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG) as part of the READY Trial. This trial was a study carried out by the University of Hertfordshire to investigate the correlation between acute-medium depression, or low mood, and physical activity in young people. Through the READY Trial project YHWCB co-wrote a report on the research they were involved in, and their work with the Centre for Research in Public Health and Community Care at the University of Hertfordshire, to ensure the research undertaken identifies with young people and was shaped by them. The READY Trial team confirmed that they welcomed the report written by YHWCB volunteers, on their experiences, so much so they have named the young people involved in the report as co-authors on the research trial paper.



## 'Time Out' cards and getting services to involve young people

YHWCB volunteers met with Assistant Educational Psychologists and colleagues from Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) to discuss the development of 'time out cards' for students to use in school which was previously raised as an issue by YHWCB volunteers. We developed a project to research the effectiveness of the cards, how they work in practice and recommendations moving forward. Psychologists created a survey to send out to young people, helped support young people on issues affecting them and worked with local schools to improve the experience for young people, using young voices to shape initiatives that are designed for them.



## The Mindful Mentor Badge and improving access to health information

YHWCB volunteers gave feedback on the development of a pin badge for trained individuals to wear to demonstrate they had attended training on young people's mental health and were happy to have a conversation about mental health and/or provide a listening ear. This was a Public Health initiative, supported across BLMK. YHWCB volunteers gave feedback on what the badge should mean, look like and be for. The Public Health Team have provided feedback on the volunteer's advice and the 'badge' is now being rolled out across the area, successfully encouraging a break down in the stigma attached to mental health issues and foster conversations with young people.



# People's feedback

h, services and issues that affect them.



**I have shared the YHWCB report with the READY researchers and they think it is brilliant.**

Professor Julia Jones PhD FHEA, Professor of Public Involvement and Health, Co-Chief Investigator – NIHR PHIRST CONNECT, Centre for Research in Public Health and Community Care (CRIPACC), School of Health and Social Work, University of Hertfordshire



**Earlier in the year you kindly worked with young people to help support us to develop a pin badge that would be given to all those who attended the central young people's mental health training as part of 'up skilling in the workforce' programme.**

**I wanted to give you an update to say that we now have had the badges created using the name chosen 'Mindful Mentor.' These will be given out to all those who attend the training scheme going forward (new programme attached). We also are now offering courses to workplaces that support young people. Those who have already completed the training will also be offered the badge. The idea is the badge will identify the wearer as someone who supports young people's mental health and can have supportive conversations with young people.**

**We are planning to work with CBC Comms to promote this to young people and will share this with you and any related comms.**

**I wanted to thank you all in your support with this work.**

Emma Bates, Public Health Practitioner – Public Mental Health, Public Health a shared service for Milton Keynes, Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire, Milton Keynes City Council – Civic



# Hearing from all communities

**Over the past year, we have worked hard to make sure we hear from young people 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.**

## **This year we have reached different communities by:**

- ◇ Talking to young people who had lived experience of cancer, interacting with support groups for young people, extending young people's knowledge of cancer, long-term illness, and disabilities in young people.
- ◇ Encouraging more young men to become involved with YHWCB to learn more about their health and care experiences. One of our young male Healthwatch volunteers wrote a blog to appeal to young males from all backgrounds to join our team.

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# Health and Wellbeing Conference for young people

**YHWCB volunteers organised an interactive conference to help explore and address how to access support, information and advice, for increased or heightened mental health issues following the pandemic.**

The Conference was held on 24th October 2023, and we invited speakers and organisations from across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK), as well as independent contributors to facilitate interactive workshops.

## Health and Wellbeing Conference for young people 2023

- ◇ Over 73 people attended the conference including delegates, facilitators and volunteers
- ◇ The conference was opened by a comedian with lived experience of mental health issues
- ◇ Exciting and informative workshop sessions delivered by six organisations from across the region enabling young people to be involved and contribute to local projects
- ◇ An interactive local theatre company, 'Tangled Feet', gave a drama performance encouraging young people to get involved
- ◇ Young people took part in interviews sharing their experience of accessing health and care services and gave their ideas for how services can improve for children and young people



**Thank you so much for having us as part of the delivery team at the Youth Healthwatch conference. Myself and the whole team really enjoyed the day and for sending this over and sharing with us, such a comprehensive report of the event with such lovely feedback and some excellent statistics.**

Emily Eversden, Participation Director, Tangled Feet Registered charity in England



**The video is incredibly powerful . Thank you for sharing - the comedian and theatre had the biggest impact in this house.**

Steph Phillips, Co-production & Engagement Lead, Children's Services, Central Bedfordshire Council

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# Health and Wellbeing Conference for young people

## Planning the Project

YHWCB 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.

- ◇ This project was influenced by a meeting with the Pathway Team at Central Bedfordshire Council, who gave an update on the mental health offer for young people, 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 YHWCB volunteer wrote a blog on how she developed Tourette' Syndrome due to Covid-19 which continues to affect her mental health

Delegates feedback included how, *'interactive'*, *'helpful'* and *'fun'*, the day was, which 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.





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# Health and Wellbeing Conference for young people

## Benefits for young people:

- ◇ Delegates were given a 'goodie bag' at the end of the day, filled with information leaflets and interactive equipment, all provided by key services across Bedfordshire, and the organisations that attended on the day
- ◇ 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 to enhance and improve their services for young people in the future



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# Health and Wellbeing Conference for young people

## Creating young person-centred, health and wellbeing knowledge

All the sessions 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.

### Interactive workshop sessions included:

- ◇ Cambridgeshire Children's Hospital
- ◇ More Life Healthy Lifestyles
- ◇ The Discovery College 'Better Days'
- ◇ Central Bedfordshire Council's Careers Team



*Interactive workshop session: Cambridgeshire Children's Hospital*



*Interactive workshop session: More Life Healthy Lifestyles*

# Health and Wellbeing Conference for young people



*Interactive workshop session: The Discovery College 'Better Days'*



*Interactive workshop session: Central Bedfordshire Council's Careers Team*



**Thanks for the information regarding the conference which I thought was amazing if I haven't already said so. It was a triumph and great to see so many young people really engaged at an event like this. I thought the workshops were well thought out and well organised and if we ever do anything similar, we will certainly follow your model!**

Heather Lord, Volunteer Manager, Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough



**Wow! What a great report. Love the video too. Well done! It was a pleasure to work with you and your team.**

Lynne Vardon, Youth Careers Advisor, Youth Support Services, Central Bedfordshire Council

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## Blogs

**Our YHWCB volunteers develop writing, media and communication skills through regularly writing blogs about their experiences as volunteers. This ensures young people’s voices are heard by Commissioners and Providers of services, which encourages others to engage with the wider Healthwatch community.**

Healthwatch England’s Digital Communications Team shared articles and featured biographies of YHWCB volunteers during Student Volunteer Week in February 2024, on their website and social media platforms, which you can view here: <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/blog/2024-02-12/meet-some-our-lovely-student-volunteers>

Here is a quote from our most recent blog:



**We had a very good meeting with the Directors and staff of HWCB and learnt about all the project’s Healthwatch had been a part of and helped with over the last year, and saw the itinerary for all the projects to come next year which look very exciting. Many questions were asked during this time, and we gained a very good insight into how HWCB can effectively help the local community. One of the issues discussed was about Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) and how some of them were not as effective as they could be in their local areas, so we talked about how they could be improved and gave our input on how young people can be encouraged to join their practice PPGs.**

YHWCB volunteer

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## The Medequip art project

**As part of an Artwork project for Medequip, a local assistive technology supplier, YHWCB volunteers designed illustrations and graphics associated with the idea of ‘what makes you happy’. These pieces will be displayed in a local medical equipment supplier’s warehouse to promote positive well-being in the office.**

YHWCB volunteers were asked ‘what makes you happy?’ and to write down or draw anything they wanted to.





## Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, YHWCB is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's making a complaint, raising an issue of unmet need, or seeking advice about support organisations in your local area – you can count on us.

### This year we've helped people by:

- ◇ Helping young people access the services they need
- ◇ Providing up-to-date information young people can trust
- ◇ Helping young people access mental health support
- ◇ Supporting young people to develop professional relationships, work experience and skills

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## Projects in development

It's essential that young people have a role in influencing services designed for them.

**It is our priority to centre the youth voice in health and care services to drive up quality and influence change.**

**Our young volunteers have shared ideas for projects which we will look to facilitate in the next twelve months:**

**AUTISM:** Develop a project relating to rising rates of autism diagnoses and why young people feel the need to secure a diagnosis. Designed to provide evidence on a topical issue in young people's mental health and shed light on a condition that increasingly affects young people.

**DENTISTRY:** Undertake research into why cavities are so high in children, creating an opportunity to support YHWCB volunteers' interest and develop research skills.

**MENTAL HEALTH:** Following on from their work on the READY Trial, YHWCB volunteers are keen to develop a project that further explores the correlation between physical exercise and mental health using our volunteers' experiences and that of their friends and colleagues.

### **YHWCB want to share positive health and well-being initiatives.**

- ◇ This year's focus of activities is under the theme, 'What Makes you Happy?' and will continue with projects, like the Medequip artwork project, to explore this theme further
- ◇ For our summer projects we will look to nature for accessible fitness and mental health activities
- ◇ We will always be youth-led and seek ideas from our volunteers

### **Digital tools can make a positive difference to healthcare – but only if they are attractive and engaging for young people.**

We are currently using test accounts of a gaming application for young people, so YHWCB can give their feedback on the application to ensure it is age appropriate, fun and something that is both helpful and interesting.

**Lumi Nova: Tales of Courage** is an engaging child-led, parent/guardian supported therapeutic intervention, that can be used on most smartphones or tablets. It facilitates graded exposures with psychoeducation to empower 7 to 12 year olds with mild to moderate needs to learn to self-manage fears, worries and anxiety. By being able to feedback on this resource, will ensure its continual improvement and success for young people.



# Volunteering

**We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of what we do. 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 YHWCB and what we have to offer
- ◇ Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- ◇ Carried out Enter and View visits to local services to help them improve



**“Working as a volunteer at YHWCB has been tremendously rewarding. They have offered well-organised programmes and a friendly community, which has made it simple to make a significant contribution. I’ve had the chance to work with driven people and have learned and developed useful skills in the process. Watching everyone’s combined efforts have a noticeable effect is satisfying to see. Not only has YHWCB given me the opportunity to give back, but it has also enhanced my personal development.”**



Ileri –  
YHWCB volunteer



**“I volunteer for YHWCB as it is so rewarding and a brilliant, friendly organisation of which I feel proud to be a member of. The team is so welcoming, and understanding, and it’s as if we’re all a family. The different experiences that are open to us are great and so informative, with loads of chances to learn new skills. It’s an amazing opportunity for young people to have a voice, make a difference for our community’s health services and it’s really given me an insight into what career paths are available.”**



Abi –  
YHWCB volunteer

## Do you feel inspired?



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

 <https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/young-healthwatch>

 0300 303 8554

 [info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](mailto:info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk)





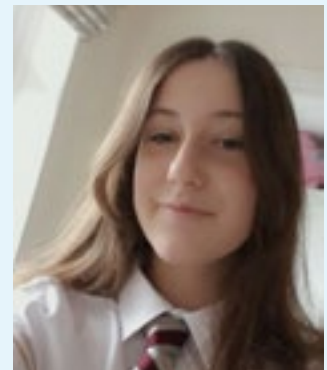
**“YHWCB has been a great platform for me to learn and share information on health and social care issues with a likeminded panel of volunteers. For example, I was a part of the Enter and View visit at Bedford Hospital in August 2023. We reviewed the paediatric wards and offered service improvements to the local Trust. I also did some follow-up report writing of our visit and had the chance to give an insightful audio review on the NHS App for people who want to start using the app.”**



Olivia –  
YHWCB volunteer



**“I have really enjoyed my time and experience with Healthwatch so far! I have worked on so many projects and they’ve all been ones that I myself have been passionate about. I really enjoy doing Enter and Views at hospitals and giving feedback. Specifically, I like working on mental health and neurodivergent projects as these are something I am extremely passionate about. I have made such good friends and enjoyed great conversations with people about topics everyone is passionate about. I especially enjoy getting to see the follow up and impact my work has had within these projects and I can’t wait for future ones!”**



Anya –  
YHWCB volunteer

## Do you feel inspired?



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

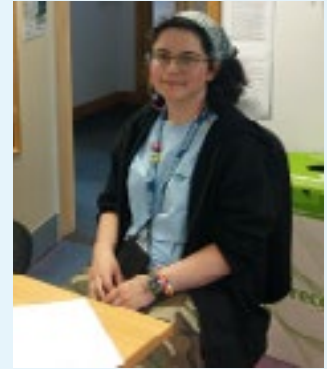
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**“I have been volunteering with YHWCB for three years and it has been a great experience all around. I have learned a lot about different healthcare services by doing various projects and have made some good friends!”**



Mars –  
YHWCB volunteer



**“Through YHWCB, I have been able to explore my interests within the healthcare sector and improve my teamwork and communication skills with other volunteers. By engaging with it, I have also been able to get involved in other valuable opportunities and important organisations like Cambridge Children’s Hospital Youth Forum. I would recommend to anyone looking to go into a career relating to public health, or working within a community, to get involved!”**



Jemma –  
YHWCB volunteer

## Do you feel inspired?



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

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## 2023 - 2024 Outcomes

**YHWCB Central Bedfordshire give children and young people a voice so that they can be part of shaping services now and in the future.**

## 2023 – 2024 Outcomes

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire volunteers continued to work on activities and projects throughout 2023/24, some more of which are detailed here:

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
<p><b>Healthwatch England (HWE) presentations</b></p> <p>YHWCB Central Bedfordshire (YHWCB) worked in partnership with two Healthwatch to help train other local Healthwatch to set up and develop a YHWCB for their organisation. YHWCB secured training for the final session which looked at the formal model; getting started, how to maintain a successful group and developing outcomes.</p> <p>Information and advice was presented at HWE’s Engagement Session in June 2023 using practical tools, and why this is needed to ensure success.</p> <p>A 90 minute session was delivered on <i>‘how young people’s involvement can be formalised’</i> sharing best practice and examples.</p> <p>Eleven Healthwatch registered for the training and eight Healthwatch colleagues attended every session.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Developed to ensure children and young people were included in strategy discussions by HWE</li> <li>◇ HWE more aware that children and young people should have a recognised voice, given research opportunities and a platform to ensure their voice is heard and listened to</li> <li>◇ HWE appointed a ‘Lead’ for Children and Young People projects to improve the role they have and given support in future activities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work experience</b></p> <p>A YHWCB volunteer joined the Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire team for work experience in July 2023.</p> <p>Projects were planned and ‘shadowing’ staff arranged plus attendance at an outreach event. The volunteer learned the process involved in planning an event, how we use our communications and helped to design a poster. Research was also undertaken on the ‘Time out card project’ and how to manage a new volunteer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Supported a YHWCB volunteer to develop transferable skills, valuable work experience and an insight into a Healthwatch office environment</li> <li>◇ Supported a young person (and a YHWCB volunteer) to develop their career path</li> <li>◇ The volunteer wrote a blog of her experience to encourage other young people to join the team. Read the full blog here: <a href="https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/young-healthwatch-volunteers-gains-work-experience">https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/young-healthwatch-volunteers-gains-work-experience</a></li> </ul>

## 2023 – 2024 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
<p><b>Voice of the Children Conference</b></p> <p>A YHWCB volunteer attended the conference on behalf of YHWCB to talk about his experience and feed into the narrative. YHWCB exhibited at the event and facilitated a table discussion. The theme was about bullying and how to differentiate, and identify, healthy and unhealthy relationships. The young people who attended gave feedback to the facilitators, and each other, about their perspective of bullying.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ The young volunteer gained confidence and skills by attending the event and wrote a blog about his experience</li> <li>◇ Voice of the Children Conference - <a href="https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/voice-of-the-children-conference">https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/voice-of-the-children-conference</a></li> <li>◇ The feedback provided by the young people was shared with local children's services to improve service provision and support for children</li> </ul>
<p><b>YouTube videos</b></p> <p>Via our YouTube platform, young volunteers created videos talking about their experiences of local health and care services and how they are affected by them, to ensure their voices are heard.</p> <p>This produced a wide variety of feedback on local mental health services, CAMHS, Phlebotomy and the NHS app. The videos were shared with BLMK ICB and other stakeholders to showcase young people's voices, to promote change and improvement.</p> <p><a href="https://youtu.be/UyKw6FWIO2k?si=Ck16DhPkieP0I3LY">https://youtu.be/UyKw6FWIO2k?si=Ck16DhPkieP0I3LY</a></p> <p><a href="https://youtu.be/y3Ai9DsLnn4?si=gN0P86V-I3bNc-R5">https://youtu.be/y3Ai9DsLnn4?si=gN0P86V-I3bNc-R5</a></p> <p><a href="https://youtu.be/qzIQ4iriTSA?si=TxeIW_RNp1ApyC9I">https://youtu.be/qzIQ4iriTSA?si=TxeIW_RNp1ApyC9I</a></p> <p><a href="https://youtu.be/nMnNDUM2p9w?si=ujnocStCNTqT2kFp">https://youtu.be/nMnNDUM2p9w?si=ujnocStCNTqT2kFp</a></p> <p><a href="https://youtu.be/PlkANPM-YTM?si=3POJLWIVRmXjintrv">https://youtu.be/PlkANPM-YTM?si=3POJLWIVRmXjintrv</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ The videos were short and easy to listen to and watch, which helped to improve accessibility to information, and feedback from young people</li> <li>◇ By creating these videos young people had a chance to control the way in which they could feedback to service providers and commissioners</li> <li>◇ Young people voiced their feedback and were at the centre of this project, promoting youth-led projects</li> <li>◇ As YouTube is a public platform, we were able to reach wider audiences</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pen Pal project</b></p> <p>A few of our YHWCB volunteers continue to write to their pen pal via our Pen Pal scheme supported by Respite at Home and Biggleswade Day Centre.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Young volunteers continuing to support elderly people and isolated members of public</li> <li>◇ Supports volunteers' writing skills and developing new relationships with different communities</li> <li>◇ Supporting local stakeholders and other community organisations/charities</li> <li>◇ Encouraging long-lasting and positive relationships with stakeholders</li> </ul>



# 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
- ◇ Access Bedford
- ◇ Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board
- ◇ Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- ◇ Cambridgeshire Children's Hospital
- ◇ Central Bedfordshire Council
- ◇ Central Bedfordshire College
- ◇ Centre Parcs Woburn
- ◇ Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- ◇ Healthwatch England

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- ◇ Investing in Children
  - ◇ Key stakeholders and partners who have responded to our recommendations for improvements to local services.
  - ◇ Luton & Bedfordshire Community Awards
  - ◇ Medequip
  - ◇ More Life Healthy Lifestyles
  - ◇ Public Health Team for BLMK
  - ◇ Respite at Home
  - ◇ ‘Tangled Feet’ – interactive local theatre company
  - ◇ The Discovery College ‘Better Days’
  - ◇ University of Hertfordshire
  - ◇ Young Healthwatch team for all their outstanding work and projects to highlight the experiences of young people in their community.
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## Acronym answers

A & E	Accident & Emergency
CAMHS	Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CRIPACC	Centre for Research in Public Health and Community Care
BLMK	Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes
BLMK ICB	Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board
BLMK ICS	Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care System
HWCB	Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire
HWE	Healthwatch England
NICU	Neonatal Intensive Care Unit
NIHR	National Institute for Health and Care Research
PHIRST	Public Health Intervention Responsive Studies Team
PPG	Patient Participation Group
READY	Randomised Trial of Energetic Activity for Depression in Young People
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
YHWCB	Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire
YPAG	Young People’s Advisory Group

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