

## Briefing Note:

### Young People and Digital Healthcare Report 2019/20

#### Introduction

This briefing note provides a summary of the key findings and recommendations from research completed by Healthwatch in 2018 and 2019. It accompanies the full **Young People and Digital Health** report, which identifies the health needs and aspirations of young people in Hammersmith and Fulham, before exploring how these can be addressed by using digital technology. The full report will also be available to view on our website, [www.healthwatchcwl.co.uk/reports](http://www.healthwatchcwl.co.uk/reports)

#### Why did we focus on young people and digital healthcare?

- To meet the current need for information on how young people access healthcare
- To test the common assumption that young people want to access healthcare online
- To grow engagement between Healthwatch CWL and young people
- Because the digitalisation of the NHS is increasing, both in terms of online engagement and through use of digital technology for service delivery
- Because the introduction, and subsequent popularity, of the Babylon GP at Hand service\*<sup>1</sup> in Hammersmith & Fulham suggests that there is increased demand for online consultations

#### What is the aim of this project?

The project was focused on giving some initial findings to answer the following questions:

- How, and if young people they want to access healthcare digitally
- Which of their healthcare needs (if any) could be covered by digital technology
- What a digital healthcare system for young people would look like

#### Key Findings

- The use of digital technology is not necessarily linked with health
- Self-care and patient empowerment through knowledge and information provide opportunities for digital interventions
- A combination of traditional and digital approaches is required to address wider healthcare needs
- There are concerns about receiving wrong information when searching online

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<sup>1</sup> A practice in Hammersmith & Fulham that offers 1) general medical services to patients registered with them and 2) a digital first service using a mobile app which is provided by Babylon Health. [www.gpathand.nhs.uk](http://www.gpathand.nhs.uk)

## Engagement

- We completed a survey with 16-21-year olds, mainly through outreach at West London College, and received 72 responses.
- We held four focus groups, with a total of 32 participants aged 11-21 years, at Hammersmith and Fulham Youth Council, Youth Action on Disability, Sobus and St Andrews Church
- We held four youth leaders' sessions with young people in their 20s

We used a creative visual approach for the focus groups that was mainly focused on two exercises:

- 1) Discussing pictures of health issues
- 2) Drawing health journeys

We have developed an engagement tool for digital healthcare based on our methods.

## Key Themes

### 1. Mental Health

Mental health has been identified as a key issue for the young people we spoke to. They highlighted the need for prevention, raising awareness and the need to act timely to identify if there is a need for professional intervention before reaching the point of crisis.

### 2. Nutrition

Young people stated their lack of knowledge regarding healthy eating and nutrition and were critical of unhealthy body image and stated the obsession with image and the need to attain a 'perfect' body to keep up with trends.

## Interaction with the health system

### i) Preferences

The young people we surveyed, most of them aged 16 to 21, would prefer to see a GP face to face, while they placed more importance into seeing the same health professional rather than accessing health services quickly.

At the focus groups, these preferences seemed to be particularly strong among the younger ones aged 11-16 and young people with learning disabilities that would turn to their parents and carers for advice stressed that everyone needs to "trust the doctor".

### ii) Information

The young people we spoke to seemed to be aware of the danger of false diagnosis online and said that they wouldn't use the internet to check their symptoms. Most of them would choose contacting their GP as their first point of contact.

There was limited knowledge of NHS 111, NHS Go and the newly launched NHS digital app. HealthHelpNow was about to be introduced to the public at the time we conducted this project.

### iii) Treatment and self-care

Participants at focus groups also expressed the need to be able to address health issues themselves without visiting the doctor at all if they could find suitable and reliable information. Another potential digital intervention that has been identified was the use of video consultations and text messages in follow up treatment to check progress.

**Medication app:** Project participants suggested the development of an app that would provide information on each medication and enable them to double check side effects.

## Key Recommendations

- **Digital Healthcare: Information and communications**

**Recommendation 1:** North West London Collaboration of Clinical Commissioning Groups (NWL CCGs) should develop a communications plan focused on digital healthcare, which should be implemented in advance of the new Primary Care Contracts of April 2020 to support the development of the Primary Care Networks.

- **Prevention: Focus on Mental Health**

**Recommendation 2:** Hammersmith & Fulham Health and Wellbeing Board and the Integrated Care Partnership should commit to develop a patient pathway that addresses mental health concerns before reaching the point of crisis. They should set out how they will develop this by April 2020.

- **Checklist: Digital interventions provision**

**Recommendation 3:** H&F GP Federation, H&F CCG and the Primary Care Networks Clinical Leads should co-produce a checklist to ensure that they are delivering digital healthcare that reflects local needs with current and perspective users. The process for this should begin by April 2020.

Healthwatch Central West London works across Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster. It is an independent charity with the duty to ensure that people's voices count when it comes to shaping and improving local health and social care services.

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