

Healthwatch Central West London publishes Young People and Digital Health Report

Healthwatch Central West London (HWCWL), an independent organisation for people who use health and social care services, has published its latest report: [Healthcare in the Digital Era: an exploration of young people's health needs and aspirations in Hammersmith & Fulham](#). Through our research and local engagement, we make sure that local people's views are always at the centre of decision making about health and social care.

The report tests the assumption that young people want to access healthcare and health information online. We spoke to young people¹ (16-21 years old) in Hammersmith & Fulham in 2018 and 2019, to find out how they want to access health services, both online and in person.

The report responds to the growing digitalisation of the NHS and meets a local need for more information about how young people in Central West London access their health and social care services. HWCWL is inviting responses to the findings and recommendations (shared below) from local authorities, NHS providers, and local service users.

Key Findings

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

Key Recommendations

1) Digital Healthcare: Information and communications

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.

2) Prevention: Focus on Mental Health

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

¹ 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.

will develop this by April 2020.

3) Checklist: Digital Interventions Provision

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.

Olivia Clymer, CEO of Healthwatch Central West London, comments:

“As more patients are being given the option to access health services and information online, it is the responsibility of HWCWL to put the patient’s voice at the centre of discussions about current digital interventions, and possible future strategies. We would like to thank the project’s participants for trusting us with their views.”

“We hope that this piece of work can contribute to discussions about the digitalisation of health and social care at both the local and national level, particularly following the publication of the NHS Long Term Plan, which laid out plans for increased investment in digital services over the next decade.”

The report was produced by Eva Psychrani, the HWCWL Engagement Lead for Hammersmith & Fulham. HWCWL was supported by Sharon Tomlin, Community Organiser at Sobus, and Sakina Dharas, Instructional Designer and Clinical Pharmacist, at University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation, throughout the delivery of this project. We also received assistance from Hammersmith and Fulham Youth Council, Youth Action on Disability, Sobus and St Andrews Church, in organising the focus groups with young people in this project.

The report can be read in full [here](#)

A briefing note can be read [here](#)

ENDS

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