

# Health and wellbeing for children and young people

## What matters?

### Spring 2021

Your voice  
is important.  
so let's hear it!



# Introduction

## Children and young people's health and wellbeing in North West London

**How do we give children the best start in life? How do we support their health and wellbeing throughout their childhood and into adulthood? And how are current services working for them?**

NHS services, local authorities and other organisations have been working together to develop a Children and Young People's integrated care service in North West London, to plan and provide the best care.

The families, children and young people using the services in our communities are at the centre of this work. We believe that voices across the community must be heard in order to achieve the fairest, highest level of healthcare for everyone.

There's been a decline in young people's satisfaction with their health, only 52% were mostly or completely satisfied with their health

[ONS Young People's wellbeing in the UK 2020](#)

That is why on 22 April 2021 we asked young people, parents, grandparents, social workers and healthcare professionals to join us for an online workshop to reflect on their experiences and help shape our health priorities for children and young people.

We met an inspiring group of people each with their own unique experiences and a shared aim to improve health and wellbeing within our communities.

We heard about what health and wellbeing actually means to people, we discussed the services and people that help us to stay healthy and the barriers that can sometimes stand in the way.

# The bigger picture

## What we knew already.....

**We started the workshop by sharing these facts with our participants. We wanted to know what surprised them and what they recognised from their experiences**

**38%** 10 - 11 year-olds in London were **overweight or obese** when **leaving primary school** in 2017/18

**23,097 children** experienced domestic violence and abuse between 2017-2018



**103 young people** under 25 **were killed with a sharp instrument** in 2018, in England and Wales, up from 67 the previous year

Most drugs prescribed for children have **not been tested** in children



Some hospitals have special **clinics for 18–25 year olds** with long term conditions. To **help with the move into adult care**

**66.7% of 5-year-olds** had **2 doses of the MMR vaccine** in **Kensington and Chelsea** in 2019/20, England average: 86.8%

Most **children with special education needs** go to mainstream school



In all but eight London boroughs, **London's infant mortality rates** were **lower than the England average** (2016-2018)

Up to **10% of children and young people with asthma** in NW London face life-threatening wheeze attacks

**Nearly ¾ of children with mental health conditions also have a physical health condition or developmental problem**

**Waiting times for a formal diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder** for pupils in London were highlighted as unacceptable in 2016

**Over half** of young carers have felt overwhelmed and stressed during lockdown



**Breastfeeding rates** are lower among very young mothers and disadvantaged socio-economic groups

**23%** of 5-year-olds in 2019 had dental decay



“As a Muslim I wanted to see a **female doctor, I didn’t know I could ask...** I saw a male doctor and just lied about why I was there” Young person, Tower Hamlets

**“Children on the (autistic) spectrum are not diagnosed at a young enough age”** Local mother

**“Not many of the facts seem surprising from working in the area. From personal experience I thought the knife crime figure might be higher”** Nurse Consultant in Public Health

### What this tells us

- The facts that the group thought were **most surprising** were: the high number of deaths from knife crime and that most prescribed drugs for children have not been tested on children
- The group felt the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns had made many existing child health and wellbeing problems worse

# How do we define health?

**“When you are suffering either physically or mentally, there is someone there for you”**

**“Feeling happy and well, able to enjoy work and play”**

**“Healthy diet, exercise, mental wellbeing, my GP”**

**“An understanding employer who allows for a good work life balance”**



## What this tells us

- Health and healthcare isn't just from the Hospital!
- We need support from a wide range of people to feel healthy and happy



# Theme 1: Access to mental health support

**“Extremely long waiting times cause stress, then the competence when you finally get the review you’ve been waiting for..... the whole problem is compounded by lockdown”**

**“The threshold of 17 to 18 years old can mean you then end up on another waiting list”**

**“Assessments were promised this week, then 2 weeks, then 4 weeks”**

**“My daughter puts on a brave face because of social norms, how are you? I'm fine thanks”**

**“For my own mental health. I don’t want to feel patronised”**

## **What this tells us**

- Long waiting times and stretched service provision has left many families feeling that their mental health care needs are not being met
- Our participants want clearer communication from service providers, a swifter response to emergencies and continuity between the children's and adult branches of Mental Health care

## Theme 2: Mental health support in schools

**“Mental health has a negative connotation but it’s what everyone is feeling”**

**“Lots of my school friends have experienced suicidal thoughts”**

**“What really worries me is the bullying and behaviour over the phone, you can’t defend yourself. You are told at home what’s right and what’s wrong but that’s not how everyone else is behaving in school. That’s going to affect your mental health”**

**“The most important thing is feeling secure, having a teacher or friend taking my concerns seriously”**

**“Schools in my area have started providing counselling sessions for students, but they are extremely limited and capped per student. Which is not enough.”**

### **What this tells us**

- The pandemic has seen an increase in students struggling with their mental health and feeling suicidal
- Schools play a critical role in supporting young people’s mental health
- Our participants want more opportunities for health professionals to work with schools, to improve early intervention and bridge the gap whilst students are waiting to access services

## Theme 3: Navigating the system

**“When English is your second language its not always clear that GP means doctor. ”**

**“Further support & education for parents who are navigating the responsibility of their child’s care is needed”**

**“Peer support groups could make a difference to feeling isolated”**

**“It’s nice to know you are not going through this alone... wished that they had known about this support group earlier”**

**“I have to think twice if I should call for my child, is it serious enough? This can have a negative effect because you end up going too late when your child is too sick.”**

**“Your access depends on where you are and your situation e.g. having a parent in prison”**

**“Going to emergency is more effective, they do more tests, they are more open to your views”**

### **What this tells us**

- Healthcare provision in North West London is complicated and it can be difficult to find the services you need
- Better language services, parent education and peer support groups are key ways to improve access to the correct services

## Theme 4: Young peoples ownership of their healthcare

**“We should give young people and children more time”**

**“Communication and lack of support. Information is lacking and what is given is directed at the parent and not the child. The parent then has to be the one to pick this up and educate their child.”**

**“That communication is often directed at the parent, rather than the child – resulting in the child being disengaged in their health and treatment rather than empowered to be involved in discussions/decisions around their health”**

**“Frustrating and difficult to navigate as a parent.”**

### **What this tells us**

- Our participants want consistent and clear communication between healthcare professionals and young people and more opportunities for young people to be involved in decisions about their health
- Communication is often directed at parents and not at the child or young person. This causes the young person to disengage from their treatment and from decisions about their health
- Parents are often left with the responsibility of answering questions about specific treatments/therapies without specialist knowledge and support

## Theme 5: Pressures on parents

**“In the time of zoom, everything is on the parents”**

**“Children are losing out through zoom”**

**“Parents don’t have confidence in themselves. There is a lack of resources, books and guides “**

**“Family centres helped in building confidence for children and parents but there's not as many around as there used to be”**

**“Language delays are now common. They are not able to communicate, not able to learn. Effects emotional wellbeing. It creates a snowball effect.”**

### **What this tells us**

- The pressure and responsibility that parents feel for their children's health, wellbeing and development has intensified over lockdown
- The lack of face-to-face education and the shortage of community support is impacting parents

## Theme 6: Maintaining a healthy weight

**“Obesity has been made worse from lockdown”**

**“Children as young as 10 come to school drinking energy drinks”**

**“Parents don’t know how to support their children who have gained weight in lockdown”**

### **What this tells us**

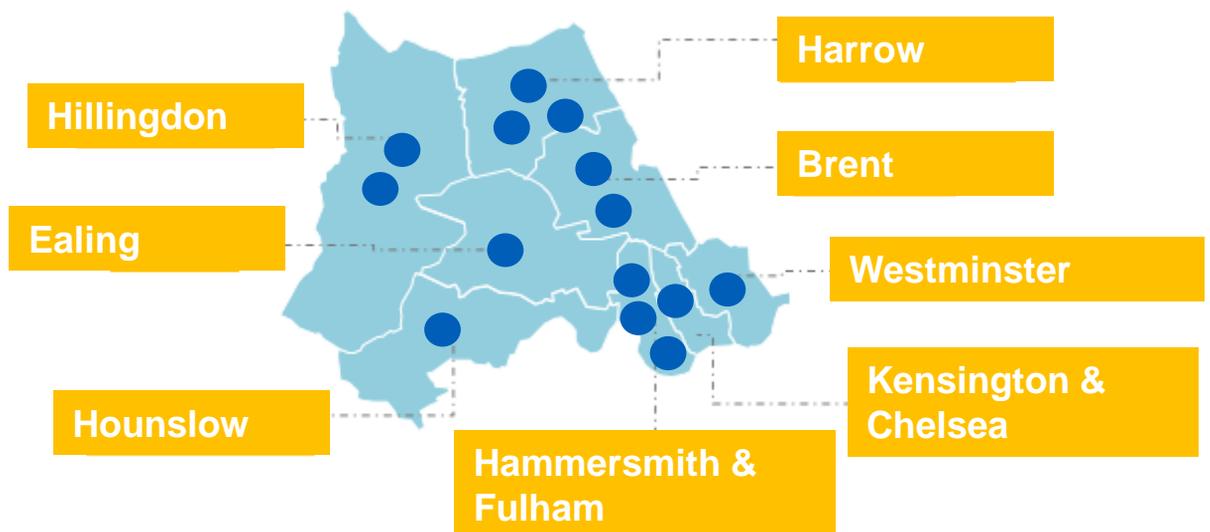
- Childhood obesity was a problem in North West London before the pandemic but lockdown has made the situation worse
- Families and young people need more support and want to know what local support is available



# Who attended?

**We had people from a wide range of backgrounds with a variety of experiences join the workshop, from across the eight boroughs:**

- Children and young people with long term conditions, educational needs and disabilities
- Parents and carers
- Families and young people with English as a second language
- Looked after children
- Young peoples health and wellbeing advocates
- Community volunteers
- Health research teams
- HealthWatch



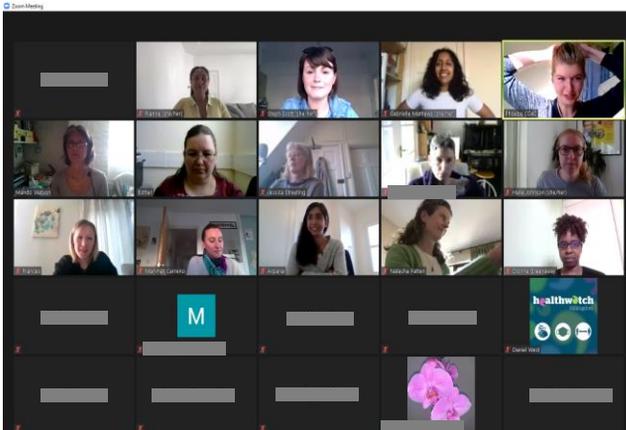
The dots represent participants who shared where they live, work or go to for healthcare. We also had professionals who work across the whole of North West London or over several boroughs

# What's next?

The participants told us what matters, our next steps are to:

- Bring these themes into work that is already happening across North West London, and find more opportunities to address them
- Maintain and build the relationships with the participants who joined on the day and reach out to others
- Promote workshops that provide more opportunities for children, young people and families to share their experiences and be heard

A huge thank you to everyone involved!



A huge thank you to all the workshop participants and our colleagues who helped to promote the event across North West London

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