
POSTER ABSTRACT

Healthcare specialists and communities working together to improve health for children and young people in London, UK

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Introduction

The collateral impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and prolonged school closure on children and young people's (CYP) physical and mental health is a huge concern. (1) The complex consequences of the pandemic for CYP can only be addressed with community engagement. (2)

Young Healthwatch Westminster (YHWW), was set up to amplify young people's voices in meetings with decision makers in health and to connect CYP with the requisite support.

Aims Objectives Theory or Methods

By working in close partnership with a paediatric hospital team that supports an integrated care collaborative, Connecting Care for Children, foundations were laid for sustained change in health services, with young people at the centre, driving change.

Place-based work from this partnership in the past year included:

- co-produced webinars delivering health information and support for local CYP
- findings from the YHWW mental health survey (written entirely by the YHWW volunteers) shared with health commissioners
- a local community radio show hosted by young people
- co-produced health and wellbeing literature

Highlights or Results or Key Findings

This partnership provided professional healthcare and peer-to-peer support for 'hard to reach' groups. It championed a 'joined up' approach and shaped plans for health provision as part of Covid-19 recovery and continues to influence design and delivery of regional health care.

Empowering young people to have a meaningful stake in services boosts the confidence of the individual and provides a brilliant resource for health and care systems. Cate Latto, from One Community Radio said "Huge thank you, you guys were just amazing. It is a tough and desolate landscape sometimes for the young and now is perhaps tougher than ever but they are also resilient, courageous and innovative."

Together we learnt that health promotion materials work best when requested by and designed with families/CYP and distributed through their networks. Webinars for citizens work best when hosts have experience delivering community workshops and when hospital teams have experience of community engagement.

Conclusions

Hospital teams have specialist resource that can be used well beyond the walls of the hospital. Teams that have taken the time to build relationships with community groups deliver the best results for citizens.

This hospital partnership with YHWW has strengthened the health care offer to the local population.

Implications for applicability/transferability sustainability and limitations

Sustainable models of health and care place citizens as equal partners, with systematic 'listening' to understand what matters to communities and interventions that build on these insights.

Real change for CYP will happen when young people are embedded in all local authority and local paediatric teams.

References:

1.ADC 2021;106:111-113

2.BMJPO 2020;4:e000848"