

Youthwatch Report for period April 2025–March 2026

Purpose

This report provides an update on Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Youthwatch activities for the period 1 April 2025 to March 2026.

Action required by the Board

The Board is asked to:

- Note the report

Author

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25th March 2026

1. Youth engagement

- We have seen a slow increase in volunteer engagement over the past year.
- The majority of volunteers have joined either because they have a vested interest in the specific project we are working on, or because they are building their CV for university and college applications.
- We have trialled our volunteer management with Volunteer O. Molly (Youth Engagement Officer) has trained the young volunteers and uses this regularly to communicate with the young people and

schedule meetings. Report uploads following meetings has been variable.

2. Youthwatch meetings

This year we have had a total of 12 online Youthwatch meetings. These have all included discussion of our project exploring the barriers for autistic young people accessing healthcare. In addition to this, Molly has introduced the volunteers to a series of speakers who have a vested interest in hearing from young people to shape their services.

3. Key Topics/ Highlights included:

28th April 2025: Sheffield Hallam university delivered insights into youth work on vaping and healthy dietary behaviour. Speakers thanked volunteers for their work on the survey which was used in their study.

12th May 2025: Talk from TEOM (The Expert on Myself) to deliver autism training part 1.

9th June 2025: Talk from TEOM (The Expert on Myself) to deliver autism training part 2.

30th June 2025: Talk from Plain Sailing – Motivational training

15th July 2025: Group meeting for those who requested more tailored motivators training from Plain Sailing.

11th August 2025: C-Card scheme presentation from speakers from Everyone Health. A focus group (Youthwatch) was held to inform the lead on rebranding and distribution of scheme.

8th September 2025: Talk from CCS Co-production specialist Sarah Kilby. A focus group was held to view the young person's portal and school nurses role.

12th November 2025: Training on autism and masking led by autistic young person from Voiceability.

13th October 2025: Sarah Kilby, CCS co-production specialist, shared impact of Youthwatch feedback on nurse portal with volunteers, implemented self-referral feature.

15th December 2025: Volunteer O training was delivered to the group, and we held a Christmas social online.

12th January 2026: Talk from Anne Hunte, Senior lead on health inequalities, learning disabilities and autism program ICS. Discussion about the autism workshop.

February 23rd: Online social meeting.

Research Project- Exploring the barriers for autistic young people accessing NHS GPs in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region

3a. Two planning meetings this month focused on preparing for the group. Young autistic volunteers presented to inform the workshop structure and review data collected:

10th February 2026: Planning meeting one

24th February 2026: planning meeting two

The workshop took place on the 3rd of March. We were impressed with the turnout of 17 participants. Of healthcare professionals we had two GP's, one social prescriber and two nurses.

Also present was a PHD student from the Cambridge Autism Research Centre and Miranda Knell from Healthwatch's signposting and information team.

- 3b. Five young people with lived experience attended. Three shared their preprepared anecdotes personally, with consent Molly spoke on behalf of one of the young people who couldn't make the workshop. Also in attendance were two parents of autistic young people and a autism support practitioner from Cambridgeshire County Council.

Best practise was shared amongst the group and everyone engaged and participated well in the discussion.

Both GP's made different pledges which they agreed to take away with them and implement in their practise.

4. Youthwatch Podcast

- The Youthwatch published their first podcast titled "Youthwatch Podcast: Let's Talk Vaping" to the Healthwatch Cambs & Pboro YouTube channel on the 22nd January 2026. This included Molly and volunteer Hani as hosts discussing insights from our vaping project paper, bringing these up to date with recent news.
- To make this happen, Molly met with 2 Youthwatch volunteers to support with the post production and worked with a studio in Peterborough Native Space.
- In April we plan to film a Podcast with one of our autistic volunteers focusing on health inequalities for autistic young people.
- There has been a lot of interest in producing further podcasts based on the health issues most prevalent in the lives of our volunteer's, Proposed topics have included the issue of accessing a local GP and getting prescriptions at university.

5. A snapshot of other young people's events attended:

- ARU level 5 students' - Live Brief presentation. Sue presented to 30 students as part of their course work. This links to our autism project and the findings will support our final report. As we currently have

many students volunteering for Healthwatch, it is a pleasure to collaborate with them.

- Young Leaders collaboration meeting. - Molly chairs meetings with other young Healthwatch leaders. So far including: Healthwatch Essex, Hertfordshire and Dorset. The objectives of these meetings are to update on current project work, share best practise and explore possibilities for future collaboration. The group have met three times in the past year with all attendees returning to each meeting, sharing they find these helpful.

6. Impact

Autism workshop - Present were clinicians from Boroughbury Surgery, Granta Practice and Thistlemoore Surgery. Things they would take away and raise with their teams were: Addressing longer appointments for those with 3 or more co-occurring conditions, additional training for staff on listening and understanding masking, addressing communication methods, addressing system issues, offering options to book appointments and receive results to reduce anxiety. Professionals agreed that further work should be done to introduce health passports into the GP surgery setting. The Youthwatch group will continue to take this work forward in partnership with other professionals.

6a. CCS school nurse portal for young people - A video has been produced to explain what school nursing does. The group gave their advice on improving the website. There is now a way to self-refer as a young person or parent. Their consent page has been updated/terminology changed. They have developed other ways of advertising the service to reach more young people.

6b. Everyone Health C Card service - The feedback from our group will be used to make sure the C Card pick up points are appropriate and accessible to young people. Also, other confidential ways of picking up

their condoms from places such as in post lockers which they had not thought about.

6c. Vaping report – The Vaping report data was used to support this report that researchers from Sheffield Hallam University were commissioned to conduct by Cambridge County Council. Sheffield Hallam University researchers have been conducting research on smoking and vaping for 2 years. They have referenced our vaping report findings in their research paper, into young people’s attitudes to vaping. Dr Helen Humphreys, Senior Research Fellow for the Centre for Behavioural Science and Applied Psychology (CeBSAP) | Sheffield Hallam University. Healthy Schools programmes are now including support to stop vaping in community settings, small groups and 1:1 support. This was a recommendation from our vaping report.

6d. Vaping animation – To raise awareness for those under 14 years of age. The students at Peterborough University studying media supported us to design this.

Let’s talk Vaping: Youthwatch podcast launch – The podcast has had 62 views so far on YouTube with numbers continuing to grow. We have had an Interest from Healthy You service to collaborate further on this and support promotion within their networks.

HAY (How Are You) Cambridgeshire and Peterborough website- Youthwatch reviewed and fed back on how young people would like to engage with the site. The feedback informed the update of their site.