

Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire 15 Steps Visit Northampton General Hospital

January 2024



Contents

Introduction	3
Preparation.....	4
Report from Young Healthwatch.....	5
Paediatric Emergency Department, Northampton General Hospital, 24 November 2023	5
Childrens Outpatients, Northampton General Hospital, 24 November 2023.....	7
Disney Ward, Northampton General Hospital, 24 November 2023	9
Paddington Ward, Northampton General Hospital, 24 November 2023.....	11
Child Development Centre, Northampton General Hospital, 24 November 2023.....	13
Play Activity Centre, Northampton General Hospital, 24 November 2023	15
Conclusion.....	16
Summary of Findings.....	16
Response from Northampton General Hospital	17
About Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire	18
About Connected Together	19
About Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire	20
Contact Us.....	21

Introduction

Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire are 11–24 year olds that live in Northamptonshire. They ensure that children and young people have a voice in health and social care locally. The group is made up of young people of different backgrounds including being young carers, having a physical disability or being neurodivergent. Their role is to ensure they consider all young people and their differences and how it may impact them when completing tasks.

In November 2023 four members of Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire visited Northampton General Hospital NHS Trust to review and give feedback to the hospital about the Children’s areas from the view and perspective of children and young people. This was done using the 15 Steps Challenge that was established by NHS England¹. On the day of the visit Young Healthwatch volunteers visited the following departments: Paediatric Emergency Department, Children’s Outpatients, Disney Ward, Paddington Ward, Children’s Development Centre, and the Play Activity Centre. The staff from Northampton General Hospital and Healthwatch West and North Northamptonshire accompanied the young volunteers on the day and full training was provided to ensure all staff and young volunteers were prepared prior to the visit. This is the second time that Young Healthwatch has visited Northampton General Hospital, the first time in 2017². Posters were placed in the areas that we visited to inform the public about the visit so that they could talk to Young Healthwatch if they wanted to.

The report has been written by Young Healthwatch volunteers in their own words, allowing the young volunteers to express their own opinions. The report is based on what they observed on the day of the visit and of the people they spoke to – two children and their parents. The content of this report has not been altered by Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire or Northampton General Hospital apart from clarification on factual accuracy and necessary spelling edits.

¹ The 15 Steps Challenge is a toolkit with a series of questions and prompts to guide you through your first impressions of a ward or area of a healthcare setting.

²https://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/sites/healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/files/ng_h_report_final_120118.pdf

Preparation

At the beginning of November 2023 Young Healthwatch volunteers took part in a 15 Steps training session to prepare for the visit to Northampton General Hospital. The training included, report writing, expectations of volunteers and an overview of the NHS 15 step process.



Report from Young Healthwatch

Paediatric Emergency Department, Northampton General Hospital, 24 November 2023

“The first place that we visited was Children’s A and E often called paediatric A and E. In this department, we were shown around by a lovely nurse called Kerry who answered all of the questions we asked.

From the offset we noticed there was a lack of signs on how to get there, if you come from the other entrance, through the hospital as there’s not always available parking around there and have to come from the other side of the hospital, where the main car park is. We needed help from staff who were familiar with the layout, to find it. Despite this, when we found the location, it was incredibly good.

When entering the area you go through two security double doors. The door system was very safe and secure. Once you enter the staff are polite and welcoming and their badges make it very easy to identify the staff members. The environment is very clean and well taken care of. There were multiple information boards about pain and medication intake and what they were for and how to use them correctly. The stickers and illustrations on the wall may be pleasing to the children who visit there. When we entered the department, it smelt very clean and sanitized. Apron and face mask dispensers were available every couple of steps along with hand sanitizers. The windows were blurred, which gives a strong sense of privacy, and they also have restrictors so they can only open about 3cm. The staff seemed relaxed yet ready to fulfil their duty with little panic from anyone around”.





“There are 3 different colourful waiting rooms with different coloured chairs. The waiting rooms are spacious and comfortable for waiting patients. In each waiting room there is a TV with 1 having a movie and another having a radio station. They have DVDs available in the waiting room to occupy the children who are waiting to be treated. This is good as it will be familiar to the patients, allowing them to be distracted for a brief moment. We feel it is aimed more at younger children and needs more to be done for

an older child or teenager. Although this department hasn't got a lot of things for the older children that come into this department, they do have hospital WIFI you can connect to”.

“There are two designated mental health rooms for children or teens who are in crisis or in need of help. Rooms 10 and 11, everything there is designed so that you have nothing to hurt yourself with. There are panic strips around the walls that you can press and a member of staff will be alerted and come to help you. Although everything in there is great the rooms look very clinical and that may scare some of the children and young people who are admitted to those rooms. The rooms could be made to look more welcoming but also not too busy so that they don't alert the children and young people. The taps in the mental health room were faulty and the sinks were failing to drain. This is serious as someone could do something to harm themselves with the water especially due to the fact it was in a room for mental health crisis’.



The medicine was locked away and out of reach from children but maybe not keep the medicine cabinet out in the open even though it is securely locked because anyone can get a hold of the pin pad lock, break-in to it and get access to the drugs.

Despite these major positives there were minor issues. One of these was the language used. An example was the term “triage” that we were unfamiliar with, this shows it will likely confuse patients and possibly their parents. The information given on the signs/posters is visible and quite easy to read. Although the language may not be so helpful (easy to understand), maybe consider making the information easier for other people to read.

Overall however, the Children's A and E was a great place and showed many great positives”.

Childrens Outpatients, Northampton General Hospital, 24 November 2023

“There were no issues finding Childrens Outpatients, it was well sign posted from inside the main hospital building. Immediately at the entrance we noticed that the gate was high and required to be unlocked which would stop young children from escaping. There is also a doorbell system to ensure the safety of the children in there and so the staff know everybody coming and going from the department. The staff that were in the department were lovely, easily approachable and very welcoming.



Children's Outpatients was consistently clean and hygienic. There was a big welcoming desk and it's very colourful with lots children's drawings and a football table along with an Xbox with superhero games for the older children and baby toys for the younger ones. There was a craft table with multiple choices on however, this was too small for older children or teenagers to use. There was the option to watch a Disney film while waiting to be seen.



The waiting room was filled with lovely pictures and drawings from patients. There were fun murals along the windows and walls for children to look at and hot air balloons hanging from the ceilings. When things such as blood pressure, height and weight need to be taken, stickers and certificates are used if needed, as a distraction. There are also play specialists and play assistants to play and help the children. Even though the area may be slightly busy, it is calm.

But it isn't very age inclusive. This is because people who are aged 12 or above may feel like the displays are a bit childish for them and there might not be things that they like.

When patients are waiting to be seen a member of the play team will play with them through their appointment or before it. They also have a baby section where they weigh babies and do other tests. In this area they have no hot drinks signs and blurred out windows for patients' privacy. There is an emergency medical trolley that is secured and locked to the wall to ensure safety in the department. In



the baby corner there are more toys and a play kitchen for the younger children. We were told that the play team come down multiple times a day to clean the toys as well.

There is a great use of signs internally within the area which direct you to which particular rooms to go to. In one of the rooms, we saw that all of the files and information they had was organised very well and the staff had good knowledge on all that was going on.

Overall, we can think of no notable negatives in this area and it was incredibly good. It is fair to say that one word that would describe the whole area is welcoming”.



Disney Ward, Northampton General Hospital, 24 November 2023



“When entering the ward you come to an intercom system that communicates with the nurses station on the ward so they can monitor who comes into the ward or exits. It was noticeably scarier than the other areas due to it being an actual hospital ward. Naming the ward Disney can make children feel more comfortable and familiar despite having to be in a negative scenario. Disney ward was very colourful with

lighthouse murals on the walls. When you first walk in it's very comfortable, warm and well decorated in a Disney theme with mealtimes posted.

Disney ward has a total of 19 beds and this ward would have the children who are suffering from illnesses like sickle cell, have surgery or who have infections. Infectious patients are separated into their own cubicles instead of sharing rooms, to keep risk of infection low. There are two bathrooms which are accessible for people who are in need of the bath.

The ward is very clean and so are the toilets and the building is kept nice and tidy. It smelt like it had been cleaned recently. The ward had a warm welcoming feeling and the staff who showed us around the ward were very lovely and easily approachable their names were Jan who is the ward manager for Disney and a lovely nurse called Michelle. The staff seemed calm and were not panicking.

The medicine cabinet was secured to the wall in the corridor and is kept safely with a pin pad lock. However, out in the open someone might get access to the locks. There was a radiator that was on with no warning on or around it.

We spoke with a 15 year old patient who has diabetes. They said they felt safe and knew there were nurses close by. Even though it was a bit loud sometimes they felt it was calm and that everyone's needs were met. They felt the smaller rooms made it seem much calmer and that they were well taken care of.



Overall, this ward was a lot less friendly but that is to be expected due to its more serious nature however everything appeared to be running well and it seemed well managed and good”.



Paddington Ward, Northampton General Hospital, 24 November 2023



“This ward was officially licensed by the creator of Paddington, which gives it some friendliness that it is a recognisable character. When entering Paddington ward you also have an intercom system with a camera to see who’s coming in and out of the ward, to protect the children.

When coming in you are greeted with lovely pop out art of Paddington Bear’s, to make the children feel a little better about being in the hospital and being poorly. Upon entrance we noticed there was a speaker system in place that would alert staff when and where they are needed, leading to less panic.

This ward would be for the children who are having breathing problems or have infections etc. The children who are contagious are given a cubicle on their own instead of sharing a hospital room. In the rooms where the actual patients are going to be treated, some chairs can recline and turn into beds so the parents/guardians of the child can be with their child.



When entering the ward it smelt clean, like bleach, this was a good sign that its sanitary and cleaned often. There were mask dispensers outside each room along with hand sanitizers.

While walking down the ward you are greeted with lots more art and pictures from patients, along with a staff bord. The staff board showed which staff are on shift and little facts about themselves. We were told that this was done when it was COVID to let the children know what staff looked like and to be more approachable and comfortable with them while sticking to the COVID guidelines.

The doors on the ward were labelled well. Such as a toilet being labelled as ‘child only’. The medicine cabinet is stuck to the wall so nobody can try and push it away and the medicine is safely locked, there are also no needles in the drawers, only syringes.

In this ward you have a parents' room which is good as parents would be very stressed as well. In here the parents and carers can come make a cup of tea or coffee but cannot take any open top cups back out on the ward they have to have a top or be in a plastic cup with a lid then they are able to take it into a room.

Overall this ward was very good and seemed to do the most it could for the patients and their families. Paddington is very welcoming, and the staff are very caring”.



Child Development Centre, Northampton General Hospital, 24 November 2023

“There were clear signs on how to get to the Child Development Centre from inside the hospital. To enter the department, you can either go in a lift or go up two flights of stairs. These staircases were old and weren’t very safe as it was easy to hit yourself on a low standing wall. At the top of the stairs there was a gate with a lock on both sides to stop anyone from falling down the stairs. When you first walk in there are many information posters and a board introducing staff.



Inside there was an open plan room for assessments. This room was faultless as it was clean and seemed great to be in. Throughout it there is a Winnie the Pooh theme. The walls are covered in beautiful Winnie the Pooh murals, one with the map and characters all around the walls, even the bathroom signs were cartoons they also have a board with the staff and names to make the kids feel less nervous. Once inside it was



a very friendly environment with activities to occupy children, but it was focused on incredibly young children. The area is welcoming for most children but not all because older children may find the area a bit boring and unentertaining. However, the staff pointed this out and were open to making a separate waiting area for children school aged and as a group we were asked some advice on how they could change the little extra

waiting room into one more suitable for the older children from around 13-18 years olds.

It is very well organized and there are specific rooms for specific things. Including an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) testing room and a sensory room. The ADHD testing rooms are normal non decorated because of the child doing the test in that room to keep them interested and to finish the test. The sensory room has lots of different colour



lights and floor mats. There are funny mirrors and fish tanks with floating jellyfish in there for the children who get overstimulated or the children who struggle attending appointments or getting through them calmly. We liked the sensory room a lot due to its contents.

Overall, this area of the hospital had a few issues regarding waiting rooms, however they are aware of this and trying to fix it. We hope to see the progress and to keep updated”.



Play Activity Centre, Northampton General Hospital, 24 November 2023

“You can only access this through the children’s wards Disney and Paddington. It is colourfully signed so easy to find. There is a sign telling you what time it opens and closes.

It is quite a big space that was clean and friendly. The staff there were kind. When you walk in you are welcomed by staff which wear pink logoed shirts to stand out. There is a tv, Xbox and Wii to use as well as many crafts too. The staff in the activity centre were lovely. Today we met and spoke to a lovely lady called Emma and there are several staff on duty everyday who try get the kids to engage in playing with toys occupying themselves so they are not bored they go around asking the children if they like to come down to the if the child isn’t able to access it a member of the play activity would come ask you what sort of things you like.

Staff also help the children in any way they can. These members of staff are not medical they are here simply for the comfort and support of the children in the wards care for.

There is an outdoor area with 2 slides, playhouses, plants, benches and space to run around yet the outdoor area it isn't all wheelchair accessible. They are also looking to improve the children’s play area in between the wards by accessing it from the play centre only, they also intended to make the Garden suitable for the children with disabilities or children who need wheelchair access.



The children and their parents can sit and play with the toys. We spoke to a patient who was 4 years old. He had been in hospital for 5 days. He said he was always excited for the play activity centre to open. His dad said that it feels very safe especially because all of the doors are locked, which means it stops intruders from coming in.

Overall, this area was great and seemed perfect for a hospital to have to give some patients a temporary escape. There was again the issue that it seemed focused on young children but again they had plans to create a section for older patients to relax and play games”.



Conclusion

The areas that we visited at Northampton General Hospital are very welcoming and appear clean and well managed. They are calm and the staff that we saw were confident. The patients and their parents that we spoke to were happy with their experiences. There are many well thought out areas of Northampton General Hospital for children however there appears to be a lack of thought for teenagers, although in some areas this has been acknowledged and staff are looking to change this.

Summary of Findings

Recommendations:

- Signage to Paediatric A and E could be improved so that it can be found easily when accessing it from all areas of the hospital.
- Ensure that the language used is simplified enough so that it can be understood by young people.
- Make the emergency mental health rooms in paediatric A and E look more welcoming by adding some colour or designs to them.
- There could be more thought given to young people and teenagers in all areas of Northampton General Hospital. Although there is free Wi-Fi available a lot of the areas are aimed at smaller children.

What worked well:

- Security was good in all areas ensuring no one unauthorised could enter and no children could leave.
- All areas appeared to be clean and tidy.
- In every area we visited the medicine cabinet was locked and secured.
- Staff we encountered were all positive, kind and caring and seemed approachable.
- All areas were welcoming and calm.

Acknowledgement and Thanks

With thanks to Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire volunteers. Staff at Northampton General Hospitals and Patients and their parents who took the time to talk to us about their experiences.

Response from Northampton

General Hospital

We were delighted to welcome the visit from the members of Young Healthwatch. Their observations and feedback will help us to understand how we can improve our services from the perception of a younger person. The visit covered the children's wards, the Child Development Centre, children's outpatient clinics, the Play Activity Centre and children's A&E which hopefully gave Young Healthwatch a good insight to the services they may encounter at Northampton General Hospital.

By working in a collaborative approach with Young Healthwatch, we are able to drive forward improvements with the focus on the experiences of patients and their carers being at the heart of our services. This report encapsulates very valid recommendations provided during the Young Healthwatch visit and helps us celebrate aspects that the group felt were positive. Since the visit on 24th November 2023, we are pleased to announce that the hospital has been provided with funding to make improvements to the Play Activity Garden with funds from the Northamptonshire Health Charity and the Estates Department at Northampton General Hospital.

About Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire is the local independent consumer champion for health and social care. We are part of a national network of local Healthwatch organisations. Our central role is to be a voice for local people to influence better health and wellbeing and improve the quality of services to meet people's needs. This involves us visiting local services and talking to people about their views and experiences. We share our reports with the NHS and social care, and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) (the inspector and regulator for health and social care), with recommendations for improvement, where required.

Our rights and responsibilities include:

- We have the power to monitor (known as "Enter and View") health and social care services (with one or two exceptions). Our primary purpose is to find out what patients, service users, carers and the wider public think of health and social care.
- We report our findings of local views and experiences to health and social care decision-makers and make the case for improved services where we find there is a need for improvement.
- We strive to be a strong and powerful voice for local people, and to influence how services are planned, organised and delivered.
- We aim to be an effective voice rooted in the community. To be that voice, we find out what local people think about health and social care. We research patient, user and carer opinions using many different ways to discover views and experiences. We do this to give local people a voice. We provide information and advice about health and social care services.

Where we feel that the views and voices of Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire and the people whom we strive to speak on behalf of are not being heard, we have the option to escalate our concerns and report our evidence to national organisations including Healthwatch England, NHS England and the Care Quality Commission.

Find out more at www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk

About Connected Together

Connected Together Community Interest Company (CIC) is the legal entity and governing body for Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire.

The remit of the Connected Together CIC includes:

- Contract compliance
- Legal requirements
- Financial and risk management
- Sustainability and growth
- Agreeing strategy and operations
- Agreeing policies and procedures



Connected Together CIC is a social enterprise and a partnership between the University of Northampton and Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire. It aims to be first for community engagement across the county of Northamptonshire and beyond.

By using our expertise and experience, we can help you in delivering community engagement programmes including workshops, research, surveys, training and more. Contact us to find out how we can help your community.

We welcome ideas and suggestions for projects that benefit Northamptonshire and its community.

Find out more at www.connectedtogether.co.uk



About Young Healthwatch

Northamptonshire

Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire are a group of young people between the ages of 11 to 24 who are health and social care champions.

What we do:

- Look at local health and social care issues
- Give young people a voice for all aspects of health and social care locally.
- Work with professionals on the health and wellbeing of young people locally and nationally
- Set our own work plan
- Learn new skills
- Report back to the Healthwatch Northamptonshire Board

WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR MORE YOUNG PEOPLE TO JOIN US. PLEASE GET IN CONTACT



[Facebook.com/younghealthwatchnorthamptonshire](https://www.facebook.com/younghealthwatchnorthamptonshire)



[Twitter.com/YHWNorth1](https://twitter.com/YHWNorth1)



yhwnorthants (scan our code)



[yhwnorthamptonshire](https://www.instagram.com/yhwnorthamptonshire)

POWER OF YOUTH
CHARTER

If you are a professional that wants to work with us please contact us on the details on the next page or email younghealthwatch@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk

Young
healthwatch
Northamptonshire

Contact Us



Address: Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire
Moulton Park Business Centre
Redhouse Road
Northampton
NN3 6AQ

Phone: 0300 002 0010

Text: 07951 419331

Email: enquiries@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk

Website: www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk

Facebook: [Healthwatchnorthamptonshireandwestnorthamptonshire](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchNWN)

Twitter: [@HealthwatchNWN](https://twitter.com/HealthwatchNWN)

We confirm that we are using the Healthwatch Trademark (which covers the logo and Healthwatch brand) when undertaking work on our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

If you require this report in an alternative format please contact us at the address above.

© Copyright Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire 2022

Part of Connected Together Community Interest Company Registered in England and Wales. Company No. 8496240

Email: hello@connectedtogether.co.uk

Facebook: [ConnectedtogetherCIC](https://www.facebook.com/ConnectedtogetherCIC)

Twitter: [@ConnectedCIC](https://twitter.com/ConnectedCIC)

Website:

