

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Healthwatch Camden Young Peoples Report: Mental Health, Sexual Health and Vaping	
<b>REPORT OF</b> Director and Project Lead of Healthwatch Camden	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> Health and Wellbeing Board	<b>DATE</b> 13 March 2024
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b></p> <p>Healthwatch Camden (HWC) have produced a series of 3 young people’s reports which provide an up-to-date snapshot of mental health, sexual health and vaping in Camden, including the services that support the prevention or mitigation of related issues.</p> <p>Healthwatch Camden coproduced their research and findings through a series of focus groups and 150+ surveys with three popular Camden youth groups.</p> <p>The reports include personal experiences of each area of concern and lived experiences within services that support young people’s health and wellbeing. The reports are summarised with a set of recommendations which HWC would like the board to consider for endorsement and action.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b></p> <p>No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Stephen Heard, Director of Healthwatch Camden 85-87 Bayham Street, London NW1 0AG <a href="mailto:stephen.heard@healthwatchcamden.co.uk">stephen.heard@healthwatchcamden.co.uk</a></p>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p> <p>That the Health and Wellbeing Board;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notes the recommendations made by the participating young people found in section 3.</li> <li>• Notes the recommendations of Healthwatch Camden in Appendix B.</li> <li>• Agree to revisit young people’s health at a future meeting.</li> </ul>	

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Heard', written in a cursive style.

Stephen Heard  
Director, Healthwatch Camden

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024

## **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1. This report is presented at the request of Healthwatch Camden to inform the board of Healthwatch Camden's recent work with youth groups and young people around the subject areas of mental health, sexual health and vaping. For each subject matter is a report with recommendations. Healthwatch Camden aims to share their multi agency, collaborative approach to tackling health inequalities in young people and how the findings can be best addressed to the board. The full reports are attached via Appendix A.
- 1.2 In light on the findings and recommendations of the Annual public health report pp 22-35, HWC aim to add and extend our collective knowledge of young people's mental health and what's needed to mitigate escalating poor mental health in young people.
- 1.3 This report comes at a time of significant focus on the health and wellbeing of young people, in mental, physical and sociological contexts. Vaping continues to be an area of great concern, especially for young people – including factors such as; ingredients, health messaging and its ease of access. HWC hopes that this report supports the implementation of restrictions around vaping and the purchase of e-cigarettes in Camden. HWC ask the board to consider if and how they can influence the acceleration of restrictions, locally.
- 1.4 Healthwatch Camden intends on shining a light on the current landscape of care and access to care for young people, especially in mental health services. Subsequently, co-produced recommendations will be shared to suggest amendments or additions to services for the board to consider that could better suit young people's needs. Healthwatch Camden would like to ask the board to consider a combined approach in achieving one of more of the recommendations in accordance with Camden's long-term health and well-being strategy.
- 1.5 Healthwatch Camden are committed to work with the board and wider partners to ensure young people's needs and voices are further embedded in future policy and practice.
- 1.6 HWC would like to encourage youth representation at the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure young people have a regular voice on behalf of themselves, at board level.

## **2. Report Background**

- 2.1. Healthwatch Camden have focused on three key areas of health that concern young people: Mental Health, Sexual Health, and Use of E-Cigarettes (Vaping), by conducting three 'deep dive' qualitative insight gathering. Healthwatch Camden held surveys and focus groups with 180 young people to assess their awareness and accessibility to services, knowledge of impact

on health, and the various factors that influenced their attitudes and behaviours in relation to each topic.

- 2.2. The Healthwatch Camden report on Mental Health, Sexual Health, and Vaping cuts across the all the guiding principles set out the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-30:
  - Prioritising prevention
  - Tackling inequalities and disproportionality
  - Empowering communities
  - Integrating and communicating
  - Sharing responsibility
- 2.3. The publication of Camden Council's Annual Public Health Report 2023 contains a chapter focusing on mental health in adolescents, with latest estimate for mental health disorders in 17–19-year-olds to be 23%, i.e. an estimated 2110 young people. Healthwatch Camden adds to the data by providing more detail on current factors contributing to challenges with mental health services and changes in perceptions among young people. While total spending on public mental health in Camden has seen a steady rise - third highest expenditure out of all London boroughs in 2022/23, outcomes for mental health in young people highlight a need for increased focus. While efforts have been made to provide a diverse range of support, the approach lacks personalisation and empathy for diverse needs. Feedback on experiences with CAMHS, mental health support in schools, and barriers to access related to primary care shows a need for understanding factors driving poor outcomes.
- 2.4. Camden total spending on sexual health services was higher than most London Boroughs in 2022/23 and ranked 9th highest out of 147 UTLA/UAs in England for new STI diagnoses. Camden also ranked 5th highest for HIV prevalence in 2023. Local sexual health services need support to meet the rising demand, and feedback from young people from diverse backgrounds need to inform strategies to increase awareness and access among this population. Publication of a new 10 Year Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy is long overdue. The government is currently reviewing the Relationship and Sex Education Curriculum in Schools, to be completed by this year. Feedback from the Healthwatch Camden Sexual Health report aims to enrich the new curriculum to allow local secondary schools to tailor the material to Camden's unique diversity.
- 2.5. The most recent Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire survey conducted in 2021 with Year 8 and Year 10 pupils in Camden showed 8% of pupils occasionally or regularly vaping. The proposed Government Ban on Disposable Vapes will only address a small aspect of the vaping problem which is rising in popularity among young people. The number of young people in the UK, especially older young people, who are experimenting with e-cigarettes has risen by 50% year on year. Emerging research on risk of nicotine addiction due to vaping, and presence of carcinogens in e-cigarettes demands cautionary measures to prevent young people from taking up the

habit while maintaining the balance of promoting vaping as a smoking cessation tool.

- 2.6. All three reports explore factors, both causing health-risks or protecting health, that influence perceptions and behaviour among young people, relate to the young person's biological, psychological, and social factors intersecting in different ways. Young people, especially those belonging to ethnic minority backgrounds, experience stigma around discussing sexual health and mental health, and their reservations about being seen accessing support services hinder their health-seeking behaviours. A young person's cultural and religious background plays a protective role in preventing some young people from taking up vaping, but also prevents them from discussing their sexual health and mental health in a safe, informative way.
- 2.7. Key messages from youth feedback in the Healthwatch Camden:
- Peer influence, social media, family, culture, and advertising are significant forces shaping young people's attitudes and behaviours towards vaping. There is a need for a multifaceted approach to interventions that address health risks as well as the broader social and cultural contexts of vaping.
  - The diverse population of Camden necessitates sexual health services and education that demonstrates cultural responsiveness and religious literacy. Stigma associated with sexual health leads to young people feeling embarrassed and ashamed about discussing their sexual health with peers, educators, or medical professionals. It also affects health-seeking behaviours, where young people refrain from attending sexual health clinics even if their location was known about, due to fear of being identified by staff, peers, or members of the community.
  - While efforts have been made to provide a diverse range of mental health support, the approach often lacks personalization and empathetic understanding. The experiences shared by young individuals highlight a system that can feel impersonal, intimidating, and unsupportive. Administrative hurdles, lengthy waiting times, and the daunting transition from child to adult services further exacerbate the challenges faced by young people seeking support.
  - Healthwatch Camden has put the three reports to voice young people's direct experiences and perspectives about their mental health, sexual health, and use of e-cigarettes. The youth recommendations are directly derived from this feedback, and Healthwatch Camden have included their own set of recommendations, found in Appendix B, which underpin this feedback ensuring relevancy to the HWB Board.

### **3. Young Peoples Recommendations for Services Related to the Report Series**

#### **Vaping**

1. **Regulatory enforcement** – Stricter ID checks and restrictions on the sale of disposable vapes, in line with the government’s recent statement of intent. Harsher penalties for breaching conditions of sale, with increased capacity of trading standards to enforce this.
2. **Packaging of products** – products to contain warnings about ingredients using real life examples of health impacts.
3. **In-depth and targeted health risk education** – clearer and wider prevalence of public health messaging around vaping risks and living examples of health consequences.
4. **Innovative educational approaches** – Health risk education to match the target market including those who are highest risk of bad long term health as a result of vaping, namely young people.

## Sexual Health

### **Recommendations for Education**

1. **More Comprehensive and Accessible Education:** Simple, accessible and practical information including holistic approaches.
2. **More Relatable and Safer Spaces:** Facilitation of peer to peer education and safe peer to peer spaces to do so.
3. **Involvement of Professionals:** Include medical professionals in the education process to ease any discomfort students may have learning from their teachers.

### **Recommendations for Services**

1. **Enhancing online visibility and resources:** Prioritise digital availability of information and discretion when accessing services or service related information.
2. **Building trust:** Through enhancing confidentiality and discretion of access and supportive environments, and community-based service delivery, such is through chemists.

## Mental Health

1. **Integrated Access and Awareness of Mental Health Services: Develop** a unified approach to enhance navigation through Camden’s mental health system, providing clear, step-by-step guidance and increasing transparency for users.
2. **Trust and Comfort in Supportive Settings:** Focus on building trust by improving communication about privacy and confidentiality in mental health services.
3. **Expanding Support through Peer and Community Engagement:** Combine the expansion of informal support options, like social prescribing, with the enhancement of peer support networks, including programs like Kooth. Promote the creation of dedicated mental health spaces in youth clubs.
4. **Continuous Care with Compassionate Training:** Advocate for comprehensive training of healthcare staff in compassionate and empathetic care, particularly focusing on integrating lived experiences and co-designing care approaches. Ensure smooth transitions in care, especially during the

critical shift from child and adolescent services (CAMHS) to adult services (AMHS).

#### **4. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services**

The Director of Finance has been consulted and has no comment to add to the report.

#### **5. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

The Borough Solicitor has been consulted and has no comment to add to the report.

#### **6. Environmental Implications**

There are no environmental implications to this report.

#### **7. Appendices**

Appendix A: Full series of reports with youth recommendations

Appendix B: Healthwatch Camden Recommendations to HWB

**REPORT ENDS**