

# Youth Out Loud (YOL!)

## End of Year Report

April 2021 – March 2022



**Youth Out Loud! (YOL!), is a group of young people aged 13-17 from Kingston and Richmond helping to improve NHS care and the wellbeing of young people.**

### **Our 2021-22 Young People prioritised work areas were:**

- a) Support Youth Out Loud! (YOL!) to review health and care services (in partnership with Healthwatch Richmond)
- b) Support delivery (with other partners including Healthwatch Richmond) of the Digital Youth Project (year 3) to complete a series of short health and care films and podcasts by young people for young people
- c) Support YOL! to develop its online and social media.

### **a) Support Youth Out Loud! (YOL!) to review health and care services (in partnership with Healthwatch Richmond)**

**AIM:** Support young people to have a say in their health and care services.

In Mental Health Awareness Week in May, YOL! invited Emma Hill, Engagement Officer at SWL St George's Mental Health Trust (SWLSTG) and Dr Rachel Mahoney, Clinical Psychologist and Professional Lead for Kingston & Richmond Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), to talk about local mental health services for young people and the impact from Covid. A few of the areas discussed and questions raised by our young people from YOL! were:

- More young people are now asking for help through CAMHS and waiting lists are becoming longer. Lots of referrals continue to come through. Whenever possible CAMHS offers face to face appointments but mostly, they are online, which is not an option for everyone.
- The increased referrals are not only due to the impact of Covid, but they have been steadily increasing in the past years. Not seeing people face to face has slowed things down, which has had a knock-on effect and led to more people needing help.
- 'Is there a specific age for people with mental health issues?' No, but each age presents typically (but not necessarily) different issues.
- 'How do eating problems start and why might people not want to eat?' This is a complex question, but in short, people may not want to eat because of trauma, difficult experiences or because of health issues.
- 'What is the typical provision of CAMHS services? Is funding available?' Funding is needed and this increases each year. However, the Government has put forward more funding for Children and Young People's (CTP) mental health services and it is hoped that in the future, this money will improve the problems highlighted above.
- One young person proposed that there is a need for more money to do outreach into schools, so that mental health awareness can be raised.
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- It was raised that mental health problems must be picked up earlier, as one young person pointed out that a friend could not get mental health support until their mental health declined severely. This friend said, “you need to be very sick to get help”.
- A 24/7 crisis line for young people was created by the SWLSTG Mental Health Trust.
- We encourage young people to seek help and signpost to Your Mental Health ([yolweb.info](http://yolweb.info))

### **YOL! was asked to review the ‘young carers survey’ for Kingston Carers’ Network.**

In a joint meeting with YOL! and the Kingston and Richmond Youth Council (KRYC) Diane White, Chief Executive of the Kingston Carers’ Network asked our young people to feedback on a survey to be sent to all young carers. Kingston Council, Kingston Carers’ Network and the South West London CCG are working together to write the Carers’ Strategy. The Carers’ Strategy is a plan of what the council would like to do over the next three years to support carers, including young carers. It is really important that the strategy reflects what is important to young carers, so Diane asked for feedback from our young people on the draft survey for over 12’s and what works and any suggestions they might have for both the survey and how to promote it.

YOL! helped to shape the young people’s survey and to promote it via our channels.



“Thank you so much for inviting me tonight, it was incredibly useful and interesting to hear everyone’s views, what an articulate, thoughtful and considerate group of young people. Please kindly pass on my enormous thanks to them, for all their very valuable contributions to the survey and therefore the carers’ strategy. I attend a lot of meetings and I thought I was an exceptional chair.”

**Diane White**, Chief Executive of Kingston Carers' Network

### **Wolverton Centre ‘Secret Shopper’**

In August YOL! were invited by Judith Murray, Lead Nurse from the Wolverton Centre, Kingston Hospital, to undertake a new ‘secret shopper’ of their new phone triage service and updated website. For the ‘secret shopper’ exercise Judith invented four scenarios with back stories and made up sexual health problems for our young people to portray. When reading through the four scenarios, it was very apparent that due to the difficult and embarrassing subject matter, it would only be offered to our older recruits aged 17 and over. Overall, the feedback was very positive for both the new website and the new phone triage service.

Everyone agreed that the phone triage service made them feel comfortable, safe and welcome to call. The only slight negative was that waiting times were sometimes long. The new Wolverton website looks much better and is simple to use. The links to other useful websites worked well too.

Feedback from this exercise was then used to progress the YOL! Sexual Health Film script. Please read more about the progress of the Sexual Health Film later.

### •b) Support delivery (with other partners including Healthwatch Richmond) of the Digital Youth Project (year 3) to complete a series of short health and care films and podcasts by young people for young people

AIM: Develop a library of health and care films and podcasts made by young people for young people.

Our work with YOL! focused on giving teenagers appropriate information on local and national services, raising awareness of young people's experiences, and growing the number of YOL! members. We also provide opportunities for young people to develop skills and experiences through our Digital Youth Project.

YOL! recorded podcast#3, a joint podcast with the Kingston & Richmond Youth Council (KRYC) on Mental Health. It focuses on the effects that the pandemic has had on young people over the last 17 months. We had two joint meetings with all our volunteers to discuss what we wanted to put in it and to formulate a podcast plan. HW invited Emma Hill (Engagement Officer at SWL St George's Mental Health Trust and Dr Rachel Mahoney, (Clinical Psychologist and Professional Lead for Kingston & Richmond CAMHS Single Point of Access), to the meetings to provide a 'professional' view and latest borough wide statistics and perspective.



We recorded the podcast on Tuesday 20th July. Our young people were both brilliant. One young person hosted the podcast and asked questions. Our second young person was very open and honest about her mental health struggles and the challenges she has faced during this time. It takes a huge amount of courage to be so open and honest, but she spoke eloquently, empathetically and with her usual wit! Dr Rachel answered the questions from both a personal and professional point of view and the rapport between all 3 participants was engaging.

The podcast is hosted on Spotify and was promoted both by YOL! and KRYC via social media, [yolweb.info](http://yolweb.info), Achieving for Children (AfC) and SWLStG Mental Health Trust. It was also promoted in school newsletters across Kingston and Richmond and promoted via council newsletters.

### Digital Youth Project – Film 3 Sexual Health Film

Work on the Sexual Health Film finally re-started after the pressures of Covid restrictions, lockdowns, a department 'face-lift' and a slight change in procedure at the Wolverton Centre (at Kingston Hospital). We decided to do a 'go back to the drawing board exercise' as we had not truly been able to look at the script since December 2020. In hindsight the delay was beneficial as we were able to incorporate the fact that the Wolverton no-longer operate a walk-in service, but now operate a phone triage service as their first step to getting help. We also had newer YOL! members that are now involved and we want to incorporate their ideas too and some of our long standing YOL! members have moved on to university. We finally filmed at the Wolverton Centre on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2022 when thanks to Judith Murray, we had access to all-areas. Special thanks also to trainee GP Aibhinn Foley, both herself and Judith are film stars in the making. Final recordings of our young peoples' voices will be done shortly and we hope to release the film in April 2022.

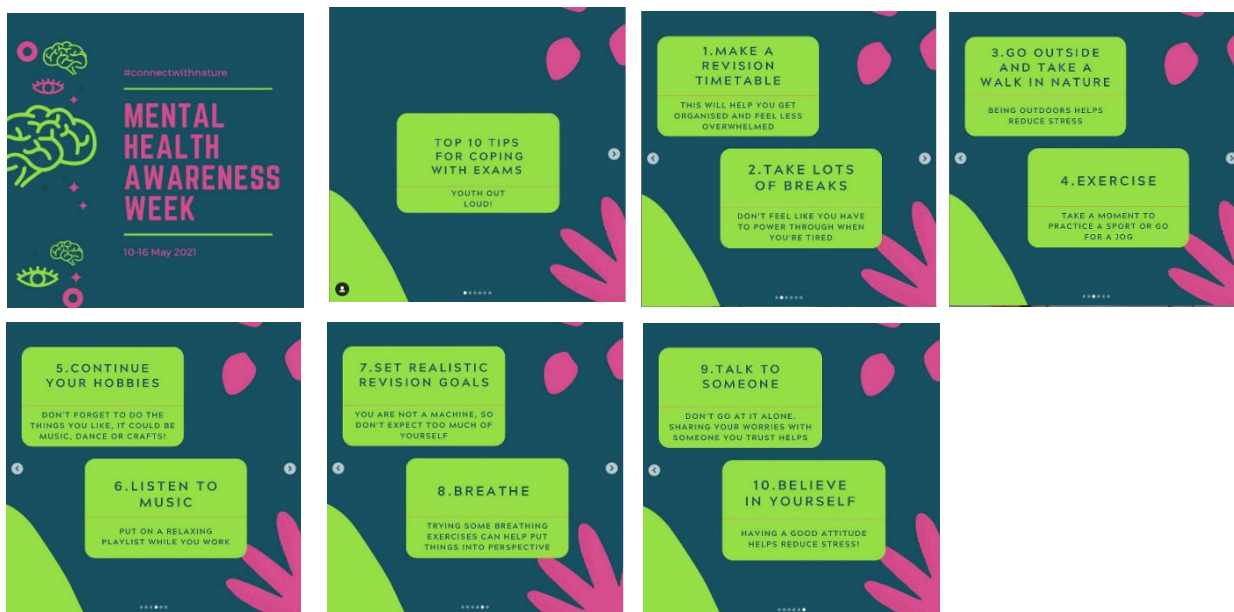
## 5c) Support YOL! to develop its online and social media

AIM: Support young people to safely communicate via social media.

A recruit, aged 17 who started in April, applied as a volunteer through the Healthwatch Kingston website. They quickly became a great asset to the YOL! team with their particular interest in Mental Health and social media. In subsequent discussions about our social media strategy, it became very clear that we have age disparity in the group. We now have several older members and fewer younger members (aged 13 or 14 yrs.). We decided to focus on making our social media posts more relevant for both younger and older teens.

We implemented **social media training** with our YOL! members to teach them how to communicate safely online and how to create more relevant posts for our audience. We now have three members who research, design and post on behalf of YOL!. Their ideas have been great, and they are focusing on easing the current anxieties of young people and improving their Mental Health. Some examples of posts are below:

During **Mental Health Awareness Week 2021** our young people all wanted the focus to be on exams stress as this was providing them with the most issues at the time. Below are the YOL! Instagram posts. We are posting more than one page at a time to create a more impactful story.



After the **Wolverton Centre 'secret shopper'** exercise one of our older members designed an Instagram post about anxieties around a sexual health clinic.







## Empowering our YOL! members to be more confident and to have their say on Heath and Social care issues important to them: **#ATurnerGirlCan** campaign

**AIM:** One of our young YOL! members came to a meeting and bravely explained that she has Turner Syndrome and that only now has she the confidence to talk about it, raise awareness and help other young girls through the process of diagnosis, treatment and living with the condition.

As Turner Syndrome Awareness Month was in February, it was decided to form a social media campaign, backed up by reliable and useful information on our website [yolweb.info/turner-syndrome](http://yolweb.info/turner-syndrome) including:

**What is Turner Syndrome?**

**What are the characteristics of Turner Syndrome?**

**How is Turner Syndrome Treated?**

And most importantly - **What is it like to live with Turner Syndrome?**

**We put our young YOL! member's story on our website, along with her tips for coping with Turner Syndrome:**

We asked a YOL! member what it was like when they were diagnosed with Turner Syndrome and what it actually means for them:

*"I was diagnosed with Turner syndrome when I was around 10 years old. I went to a doctor because I was really short, especially in comparison to my family. The doctor instructed me that I needed to have blood tests done. A few weeks later, the doctor found out that I had a thyroid issue and shortly after that, I was diagnosed with Turner syndrome. Finding out was a rather strange feeling. It was kind of surprising, but also somewhat expected."*

*The first few months, were very confusing for me. I did not understand what type of things I would have to do as a result of having Turner syndrome and how it would impact me in the future, especially being a teen. But I had an excellent doctor and a team of nurses who explained it all. I was booked to attend appointments that were all based further away than where I lived. This became a regular thing, I still go to an Endocrinologist and have blood tests every 6 months, then to an E.N.T (ears, nose and throat) appointment every 6-9 months and further additional appointments because of my coeliac (also common when you have Turner syndrome.)*

*Having Turner syndrome does not really impact my daily life at the moment, but there are one or two things that do. For example, I have to deal with extremely irregular periods causing me to have leaks. I also have to take regular medication such as growth hormones and oestrogen."*

This was complimented by weekly social media posts all designed and created by our young YOL! member, including **'What is Turner Syndrome', 'Tips for girls with Turner Syndrome', 'Turner Syndrome and Mental Health'** and **#ATurnerGirlCan** post to continue the conversation and awareness of the condition all year- **well done to our young YOL! member!**



Being a YOL! member is really important to me because healthcare impacts a lot of young people's lives and as I get to see how much it does, I thought that I could help make a stronger online community for girls who have Turner Syndrome - YOL! Member (14)

# What's next for YOL!

- Recruitment of new volunteers
- Digital Youth Project – Film 4
- Podcast#4
- YOL!web – empowering our young people to keep this up to date and relevant
- Social Media – Staying safe online and relevant to our 13 – 17yr old audience.
- Re-engage with Twitter as there has been more involvement with Instagram this year.
- Continuation of #ATurnerGirlCan campaign
- Possible move back to face2face meetings

HW Kingston upon Thames  
Suite 3, 2nd Floor, Siddeley House  
50, Canbury Park Road  
Kingston upon Thames  
KT2 6LX

[www.healthwatchkingston.org.uk](http://www.healthwatchkingston.org.uk)



t: 0203 326 1255

e: [info@healthwatchkingston.org.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchkingston.org.uk)

 @HWKingston

 /HWKingston

 healthwatchkingston

Youth Out Loud (YOL!)

[www.yolweb.info](http://www.yolweb.info)

[Helena@healthwatchkingston.org.uk](mailto:Helena@healthwatchkingston.org.uk)

 [@Youth\\_OutLoud](https://twitter.com/Youth_OutLoud)

 [youth\\_outloud](https://www.instagram.com/youth_outloud)

[Youth Out Loud!](https://www.instagram.com/youth_outloud)

HW Richmond  
82 Hampton Road  
Twickenham  
TW2 5QS

[www.healthwatchrichmond.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchrichmond.co.uk)

t: 020 8099 5335

e: [info@healthrichmond.co.uk](mailto:info@healthrichmond.co.uk)

 @HW\_Richmond

 /healthwatchrichmond

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