

15 Steps Visit Kettering General Hospital Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire

March 2025



Contents

Contents.....	2
Introduction	3
Preparation.....	4
Report from Young Healthwatch.....	5
Paediatric Emergency Department, Kettering General Hospital, 24 January 2025	5
Skylark Ward, Kettering General Hospital, 24 January 2025.....	9
Conclusion.....	13
Summary of Findings.....	14
Acknowledgement and Thanks	15
Response from Kettering General Hospital	15
About Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire	16
About Connected Together	17
About Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire	18
About EnFold	19
Contact Us.....	20

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 with various differences, including being young carers, having a physical disability or being neurodivergent. Despite their differences they are all young people. Their role is to ensure they consider all young people and their possible differences and how it may impact them when completing tasks.

EnFold is a charity which provides a range of support services for adults and children with or without an Autism diagnosis in Northamptonshire. The Young Peoples Autism Advisory Project (or YAAP for short) is an EnFold group for young people 11-25, who want to help their community become more Autism aware and friendly¹.

In January 2025 five members of Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire and EnFold YAAP visited Kettering 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 England². On the day of the visit Young Healthwatch and EnFold volunteers visited the Paediatric Emergency Department and Skylark Children's Ward. Staff from Kettering 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. 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 – one parent. 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 <https://www.enfold.org.uk/yaap/yaap>

² 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.

Preparation

At the beginning of November 2024 Young Healthwatch volunteers took part in a 15 Steps training session to prepare for the visit to Northampton General Hospital. Staff from Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire also attended and EnFold YAAP to deliver 15 Steps training to young people there too. The training included, report writing, expectations of volunteers and an overview of the NHS 15 step process.



Report from Young Healthwatch

Paediatric Emergency Department, Kettering General Hospital, 24 January 2025

When we got to A&E, the staff were kind, caring and very friendly. To enter the waiting room you go to reception where they will unlock the door for you once checked in. The locked doors were consistent throughout the department, only allowing staff members to unlock them with a key. Once through the doors from reception, there are fish on the floor that lead you to the waiting room. We were told by the staff that guided us that the reception staff would tell patients to follow these fish to the waiting room. This simplistic guidance is very helpful to patients who will likely already be feeling on edge.

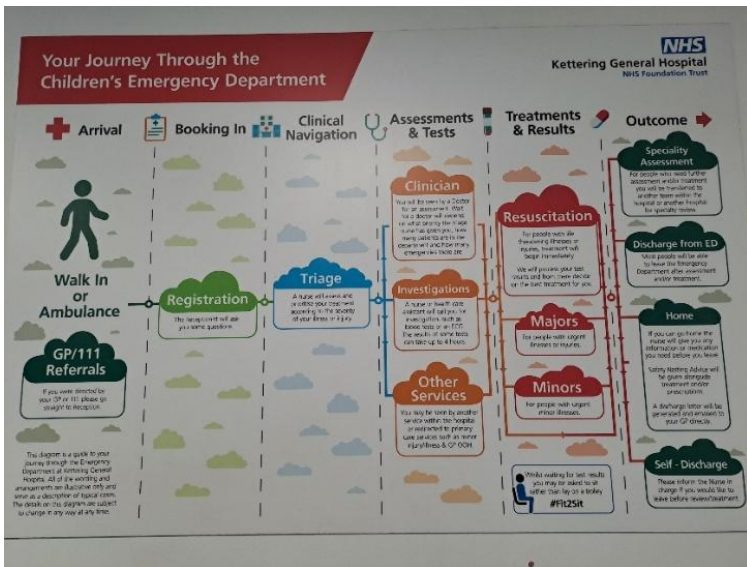


The waiting room had a calming atmosphere; it was quiet with no distinct background noises as well as no strong smells (i.e. cleaning products), or overbright lighting. The only sensory drawback was that the temperature was warm but a bit stuffy in the waiting room and across the Emergency Department.



The wall was decorated with a cartoon sea life on one wall, giving the room a calming atmosphere. Even though the room was designed well, skirting boards next to the drinks and toys were falling off the walls, which could have been a hazard for young children. We asked them if they had attempted to fix it, to which they replied that they had tried multiple times, but it kept breaking.

There was sufficient entertainment in the room, considering a lot of patients may have their own entertainment (e.g. phones/tablets). Options were available for all ages, with a corner for toys and activities on the wall for patients to do while waiting (e.g. count the fish). The toys are cleaned regularly, but there is also a sign requesting patients to use the displayed wipes after each use. There was also a sign displaying that Nintendo Switches were available to utilise. When queried about the games we were informed that there were options for various ages.



Towards the back of the waiting room, there was a large sign explaining 'your journey through the children's emergency department'. We found this to be very helpful for patients to calm their nerves and have a brief understanding of what their experience will be like.

There was also a notice board which warranted mixed feedback from us. While it displayed important information like the Espresso Yourself Café's, the format of it should be altered. The board is titled at the top with 'Exciting news ahead', but often this was not the mood of the materials displayed – for example a poster about measles underneath.



In the waiting room, there is also a place to rent a power bank for your electrical devices, as well as a water dispenser and juice to help yourself to. The staff mentioned to us the patients can request other food or drink during their wait – this was on the display board, but it could be displayed near the dispenser so patients are aware they have this choice. They also have free Wi-Fi but we did not see this advertised anywhere – it would be helpful to add this to the noticeboard or a sign elsewhere.

They are currently decorating different rooms in the department, one of them was already complete and we got to view it. First, we were shown the next room to be designed, which was currently dull and looked like a regular hospital bay. This could be daunting and worrying for children, but another bay was decorated with woodland artwork. This brightened our demeanours so much and like with the ocean wall design in the waiting area, there were activities for the children to do such as count the butterflies or mushrooms – this makes it evident that the investment the hospital is putting into decorating the rooms is very worth it to improve patient’s experience.



While we were visiting they asked us our opinions on their design for a different room. It was Paddington Bear themed and while we liked the design, a conflict was brought up with Northampton General Hospital having a ward called 'Paddington Ward'. We suggested other 'landscape' designs where you can count certain aspects e.g. amount of penguins (artic themed).

We were also shown another room which will be converted into a sensory room, this will assist families with children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in helping them adjust to the hospital environment. The room chosen is opposite the front desk to help staff be able to help patients if they need medical assistance.

The hospital have invested in an ultraviolet light in the plaster room to hard clean all surfaces – highlighting what is happening on a control screen outside (only accessed via staff key).



We requested to make our own way to Skylark Ward in order to get a feel of how easy it is for patients to navigate their own way around the hospital. Immediately upon leaving the Emergency Department, there were no signs around to lead you in the right direction, so we had to ask a volunteer, but after he told us which way to head there was frequent signage and we were able to easily find our way. It would be a lot easier however if that first sign was there outside the Emergency Department.

The staff told us that if the patient is aged 16-18, it will be up to the patient whether they go to the children's or adult's department – they previously didn't have this choice and instead, it was based on if the patient was in full-time education. They can change their mind at any time if they feel they would be more comfortable in the other department and those with learning disabilities can get a handover process when moving into the adult ward. We appreciated the care they put into making sure these patients felt safe and comfortable.

Further safety and clarity include all staff wearing a mask across the department and a sign in MIAMI (Minor Injuries and Minor Illnesses Department) with pictures of staff uniforms – explaining who's who.

Skylark Ward, Kettering General Hospital, 24 January 2025



When reaching the floor that Skylark Ward is on, you are immediately greeted with welcoming decor, this continues as you enter the ward with lots of gender-neutral colours throughout the halls and decorations of birds and trees on the walls. However, to improve this, there could be some colours added to the flooring of the hallway as you enter the Skylark Ward itself with dots (similar to those on the walls) or with some footsteps/fishes, for example. The corridor down to the main desk was decorated with hanging seasonal decorations – we were told these were changed regularly, providing something different to patients who visit often.

We got to visit one of the rooms on the ward and were very pleased with how it looked. The rooms feel spacious due to the large amount of light let in through the windows, allowing the nature outside to be visible from inside and ensuring the patient doesn't feel entrapped in their room during their stay, no matter how long or short it may be. It felt more calming and less overstimulating compared to a room we saw in the Emergency department earlier in the day.

There was a sensory room around the corner from the waiting room; we found this to be a great addition. It has been designed very well and we can see how it will make the kids feel more relaxed and chill. The playroom contained a large DVD selection, which, upon inspection, had a wide range of options for all ages. It feels like you're somewhere that you want to be, even though it still has all the hospital equipment needed.



After lunch, The Play therapist talked us through the different ways that children are supported and prepared for their treatment, whether it's for surgery, an MRI or a blood test. We loved the variety of options available to make the children feel safe and welcomed. For example, there may be children with different learning difficulties, ages and other characteristics that mean they will prefer to be comforted in different manners. Claire showed us cards with actions on that some non-verbal children may be more comfortable using, whereas other children may be more suited to looking at images.

KGH currently uses images of the stages of getting an MRI to mentally prepare children and give them an idea of what to expect, however they are theorising on the use of a walkthrough video of what an MRI will look like. They asked us whether we thought they



should use a real person or create a cartoon for this video – we were all in unison that it should be a real person. This will make it more personable, as well as being easier for children to understand and picture the process for themselves. We feel the video would be beneficial for the ward because it makes it more accessible to patients and parents as it can be placed on the KGH website.

They had an interactive projector just outside of the waiting room, which is currently broken but we think it would be a very good idea to fix it as it provides more entertainment to the waiting patients.

The waiting room had the potential to become cramped if there were too many patients. The toys available are all aimed at younger kids – nothing for the older children and could be a trip hazard laid out in the middle of a small room. We felt the waiting room in the Emergency Department was better for the children and that Skylark Ward could have some improvements made for both patient safety and enjoyment. However, the staff were always vigilant and seemed to communicate well with the patients.



There were QR codes for patients to give their recommendations for improvement across both wards we visited. In Skylark ward there was even a board showcasing examples of where they have listened to patient feedback and made changes for the

better. Displaying this shows the patients that their feedback will be listened to and acted on. We think it is very good to have this displayed as the opinions of the patients and parents/carers are very important, but they can often have doubts about whether their views will contribute to changes being made.



We found that the environment throughout the Skylark Ward was very safe, with lots of different areas to accommodate different needs. There is a mixture of public (waiting area) and private (sensory/quiet room) spaces for children and parents to stay. Safety seemed highly prioritised in this ward, as expected. During our visit, it tended to become quite loud with various alarms being set off, which were sometimes concerning, but as we were in a hospital setting, these are expected.

Other things we noted include there being a sign offering a 7 day parking permit if the patient's admission lasts longer than 24 hours. This is a good thing to have as parking charges can quickly build up – adding something else for parents/carers to worry about.

When speaking to a parent of a child, she told us that the overall care was good because of the personalisation of the treatment that she and her child receive, however felt like consistency in communication between the doctor and the patient could have been improved by simplifying or explaining medical terms to help understanding of illnesses. Communication could also be improved by knowing a patient's medical background, so they do not feel like they constantly must re-explain it. This would be beneficial and make the patient feel like they are being listened to fully.

The staff are putting together a theoretical 'hospital passport' for the patients that frequently come to the ward, in order to make it less repetitive for them every time they come in. We thought that both the parent journal and the hospital passport provided extra consideration for those patients who are long-term in this ward. Paired with the Parent Room, we found it comforting that the hospital accommodate for not only the care and wellbeing of the child, but also the parents.

Every member of staff within the ward seemed passionate about their job, taking extra effort to prioritise the welfare of the children above their own. We really appreciate the opportunity to look around the Skylark Ward and Paediatric Emergency Department and give our opinions on it.



Conclusion

Overall, Kettering General Hospital was a welcoming and calm environment. The staff that we saw on the day were kind, friendly and seemed happy. They all seemed to be aware of what was going on around them and followed the rules (like wearing masks). There are some areas that could be improved, such as the skirting boards in the waiting room in the Emergency Department and the lack of things for teenagers to do on Skylark ward.

Summary of Findings

Recommendations:

- If unable to fix, cover the broken skirting board in the waiting room of A&E to ensure that no one gets hurt.
- Change the way the noticeboard is displayed in the Emergency Department. We recommend changing the title or splitting the board into two sections to showcase information.
- Add a sign displaying that there is free Wi-Fi available.
- Signage from Paediatric Emergency Department to Skylark ward is mostly good and easy to navigate, but a sign immediately outside of A&E will be very helpful. This will save patients from having to ask for help or walk around trying to find directions.
- Make improvements to the Skylark Ward waiting room to improve safety and patient experience by adding entertainment for teenagers and minimising trip hazards.
- We recommend adding 'Are you a young carer?' to the check-in form as they may have additional difficulties that can be overlooked.
- There could be some colours added to the flooring of the hallway as you enter the Skylark Ward itself with dots (similar to those on the walls) or with some footsteps/fishes, for example.
- Display that other drinks can be requested by the drink dispenser.

What worked well:

- The staff were friendly, welcoming and seemed very passionate about their job and the patients' experience.
- The sensory room in the Skylark ward was a great addition and is very important in making children feel more comfortable and relaxed.
- The waiting room in the Paediatric Emergency Department was excellent in its design and entertainment and was accommodating for all ages.
- Safety was good across both wards with no potentially dangerous medical equipment within reach of the children and key only access – ensuring no unauthorised access and no children leaving on their own.
- The wall mural in Bay B was well designed and provides a calm atmosphere for children in a daunting experience.

Response from Kettering General

Hospital

The visit from the Young Healthwatch & YAAP was a rewarding, informative and enjoyable experience for the Paediatric Emergency Department and Skylark Teams. The feedback on the day and the summary report, has meant we have been able to make some immediate changes, as well as ideas for longer term decisions related to future estates work. As a service we would like to invite the team back in 6 months time to see the sensory room and review the changes we have made based on their feedback. We would also like to extend an invitation to consider the inclusion of a younger persons focused visit to the Adult Emergency Department.

Thank you again to all the young people that came. We are very grateful for the time and energy you have given us, and we value the opportunity to work in partnership with you.

Acknowledgement and Thanks

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

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 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

About EnFold

EnFold is a growing charitable incorporated organisation providing what we consider to be an essential service to the community that's impacted by autism.

We believe all people deserve an equal chance to flourish. To achieve this, we act as system navigators ensuring bespoke and better support, better communication and connecting people to the right organisations and resources.



We recognise that going through the diagnostic pathway as an adult is a long and challenging process, often resulting in more questions and answers. For parents and carers of children and young people, it can be a time where they get lost in the diagnostic system and are often confused and isolated both during the process and after it has ended.

We want to ensure that all children, via support to their parents, and all individuals receiving a diagnosis in adulthood can access the best services, information and support for them.

Website: www.enfold.org.uk

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:

