

Health and wellbeing of young people a major challenge says health charity

Councillors, senior healthcare and social care professionals gathered at a round table event on 28 February to hear Healthwatch Redbridge's chair Vanda Thomas and CEO Cathy Turland share findings from their 'Healthy Living Project'.

The Healthy Living Project is set up to look in to the health and wellbeing of young people. As part of the project, a confidential survey gathered the views of over 500 young people aged 14-18 on the state of health and wellbeing in Redbridge. The survey looked at issues such as diet, exercise, emotional wellbeing, smoking and alcohol and showed overall that:

- **85%** of young people surveyed were eating less than the recommended amounts of fruit and vegetables (*in Redbridge, the rates of childhood obesity in year 6 are above average for England, and have increased since 2012*)
- **98%** told us they exercise for less than the recommended 7 hours per week
- **12%** said they felt they were not coping well emotionally
- **12%** told us they smoked with most saying they used a shisha pipe. Smoking in young people also appears to be higher than the national average of 3%. The use of e-cigarettes was low, deviating from the national trend which has seen an increase in the use of e-cigarettes.
- **16%** told us they drank alcohol. Although alcohol consumption is similar to the national average (10%), we were concerned that at least 12 young people told us they drank alcohol more than twice a week.

At the event, Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England gave a keynote speech on the NHS Long Term Plan and commended the work being done by HWR. He said: "I was very impressed to hear of the great work Healthwatch Redbridge was doing to make sure people's experiences will make a difference to the quality and effectiveness for health and social care services.

"Healthwatch is uniquely placed to champion the value of engaging all elements of the community in developing a service which is fit for the future and Healthwatch Redbridge is proving that."

Cathy Turland highlighted a number of concerns that she said the Healthwatch will be putting before the Council's Health and Wellbeing Board in March. She said: "We are concerned that our findings which seem to show young people are not getting the best start in life.

"We need to continue working with our councillors and statutory partners to support our communities and identify the challenges and trends that impact on health and social care and get commitment from service providers to respond to them."

Ends

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Photos: Round table discussions - L to R (Jilly Szymanski, Scrutiny Coordinator LBR; Marie Price, Director of Corporate Services, BHR CCG; Cllr Beverley Brewer, South Woodford; Sir Robert Francis; Miranda Peers, Volunteer Coordinator; Marie Clough, Patient Experience Lead, Whipps Cross Hospital.
2. For more information please contact Nat Cato on 020 8553 1236 or email nat@healthwatchredbrige.co.uk
3. Healthwatch Redbridge is a network of voluntary individuals, local people and community groups who work together to improve local health and social care services. For more information visit our website, <http://healthwatchredbridge.co.uk/>
4. Our Healthy Living Report will be published shortly. Please see our website for details or join our mailing list for updates
5. Sir Robert Francis QC: <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/our-committee>
6. For more information on the NHS Long Term Plan, please visit: <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/2019-01-08/new-long-term-plan-just-start>
7. An example of our recent work with Health Scrutiny can be found here:
http://healthwatchredbridge.co.uk/sites/default/files/intermediate_care_report_unannounced_visit.pdf
<http://moderngov.redbridge.gov.uk/documents/g7443/Public%20reports%20pack%2028th-Mar-2018%2019.15%20Health%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf?T=10>