

Youth Fest Engagement Report

September 2026



Project Details

Project title	Youth Fest Engagement Report: hearing from young people in Redbridge
Purpose	To capture anonymous feedback from young people about their experiences of local health and care services, including GP practices, dental clinics and hospital care, and to identify the barriers they face and the changes they would like to see.
Date of engagement	Tuesday 18 August 2026, Youth Fest, Redbridge Youth Service
Methodology	Interactive engagement tablecloths. Young people wrote comments directly onto the tablecloth or spoke to a member of staff who recorded their exact words. Thirty young people took part, giving 19 written responses and 11 verbal accounts.
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Disclaimer

Please note that this report reflects the feedback shared with us at Youth Fest on Tuesday 18 August 2026.

It is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all young people in Redbridge, only an account of what 30 young people chose to tell us on the day. All comments were anonymous and no personal details were collected.

Introduction

Healthwatch Redbridge is the independent voice for people who use health and care services in the borough. We go out to community events so that residents can tell us about their experiences in a setting that suits them, rather than having to seek us out.

Youth Fest, run by Redbridge Youth Service, gave us the chance to hear from a group whose views we do not capture often enough. Young people use GP practices, dental clinics and hospitals like everyone else, but they are rarely the ones filling in a survey or coming along to a public meeting.

This report sets out what 30 young people told us on the day, in their own words. All comments were anonymous and no personal details were collected.

This is the first time we have reported on feedback gathered at one of our outreach events. We hear a great deal at events like this that has never been written down anywhere, and we intend to report on future events in the same way.



Methodology

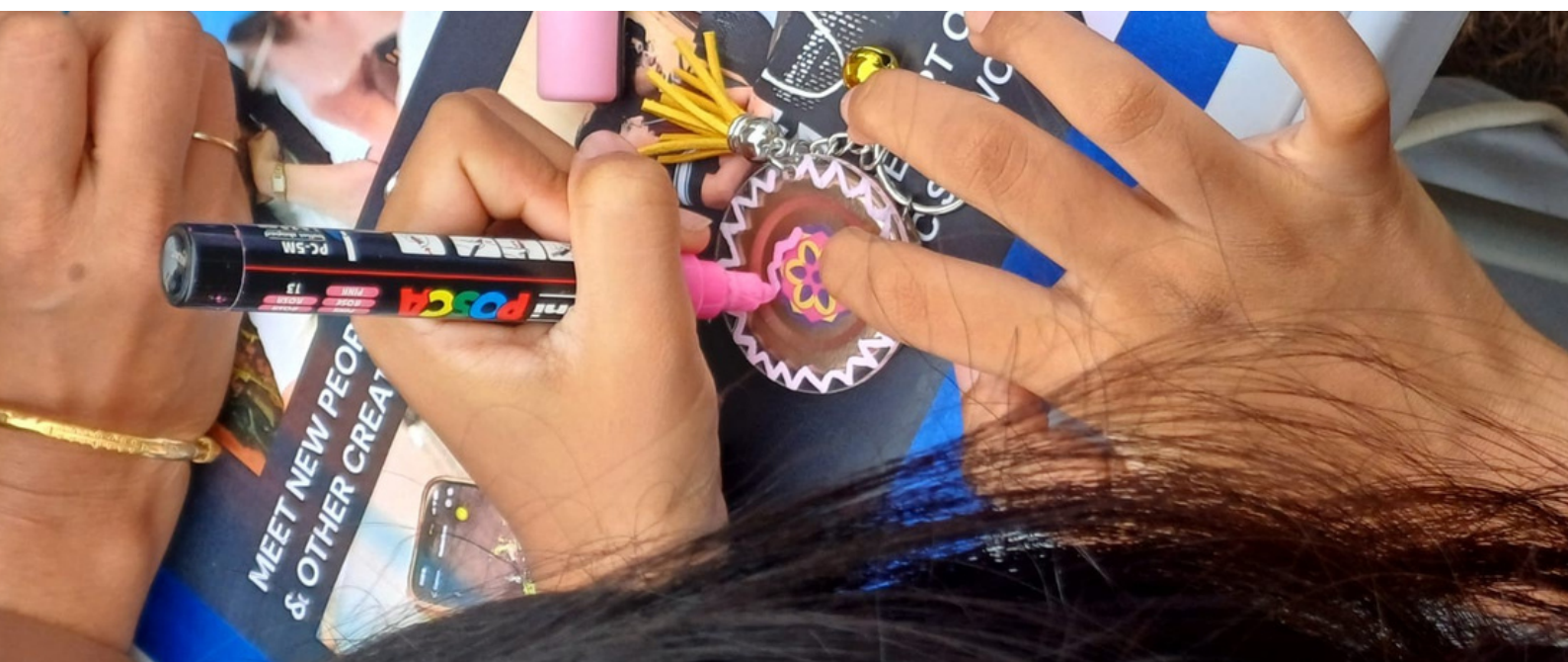
We attended Youth Fest on Tuesday 18 August 2026, alongside the festival's own activities, which included art, crafts and mocktail making.

To make taking part as easy as possible, we used interactive feedback tablecloths. Young people could write their comments straight onto the tablecloth, or speak to a member of staff who wrote down their exact words. Nobody was asked for their name or any other personal detail.

Thirty young people took part in total, giving 19 written responses and 11 verbal accounts. They told us about booking appointments, waiting times, communication with health professionals, dental visits, hospital care and registering with a GP.

These findings are a snapshot rather than a survey. Thirty responses cannot represent the experience of every young person in Redbridge, and they were gathered over a single afternoon at a festival. We have not named any individual GP practice, dental surgery or hospital, and where a young person referred to a specific booking system by name we have described it generally instead.

Young people's own words are used throughout, corrected only for spelling.



What We Heard

Findings:

Booking appointments and waiting times

Getting through to a GP practice was the issue raised most often, and waiting once there was a close second.

“Stressed because of longer waiting times for my name to be called.”

One young person described the frustration of trying to book an appointment at 8.00am, only to be met by an automated booking system rather than a person. They asked for that system to be removed. Other comments were more direct, asking simply for more GP appointments to be made available.

Waiting came up again and again, across both GP surgeries and dental clinics. Young people talked about the stress of waiting, not only about how long it took, and asked in plain terms for shorter waits. One wanted “more appointment less waiting time”.

One young person raised something we hear less often. They asked for a sensory-friendly environment in waiting areas, to help manage the stress of waiting while they are there.

What We Heard

Findings:

Talking to doctors and dentists

We heard from several young people that they find it hard to follow what health professionals say, and harder still to explain their own symptoms in return. One told us they do not understand what their GP says and cannot explain things properly, and that their mum tells the GP instead.

Being able to speak for yourself is part of growing up. Young people who cannot do that in an appointment are at a disadvantage from the start.

Dental visits produced the most negative comments of any service. One young person described their dentist as very strict and rude, and said they got angry when questions were asked. Another told us they felt stressed and angry about how hard it was to get an appointment at all.

“Sometimes when I go to the dentist, they are so focused on their work that they don't comfort people, and when they talk, they are hurting my teeth.”

What We Heard

Findings:

Hospital care and registering with a GP

We also heard from young people who had been to hospital, and from one who had been asked to change GP practice because of where they live.

Comments about hospital focused on how departments are organised, and on the effect that has on other patients as much as on themselves. One young person was clear about what they had seen.

“Needs more organisation, there are patients struggling please let them get their scan.”

One young person also raised a problem with borough boundaries. They had been asked to change GP practice because of where they live, and did not want to move away from a doctor they rate.

“If you live in one borough & the GP wants you to change. I don't, as my GP is really good!”

Recommendations

Based on what young people told us at Youth Fest, Healthwatch Redbridge would like to make the following recommendations. Each one is something local providers can act on directly:

What young people said	Recommendation
Services can feel confusing, rushed or difficult to understand.	Ask providers to improve youth-friendly communication by using plain language, checking understanding and speaking directly to young people where appropriate.
Young people can become anxious when they do not know why appointments or clinics are running late.	Introduce clearer updates when appointments are delayed, including reception updates, waiting room notices or verbal explanations from staff.
Waiting environments can feel overwhelming, noisy or unclear.	Pilot sensory-friendly waiting arrangements, such as quieter areas where possible, clearer signage, reduced unnecessary noise and better information about what will happen next.
Dental appointments can feel worrying if/when they do not understand what is happening.	Work with the ICB dental team to identify one or two dental practices willing to test improved explanations, reassurance and comfort checks during appointments.
It can be hard to get through to GP practices by phone.	Ask Primary Care Networks or selected practices to review peak-time telephone access and identify one practical improvement, such as clearer recorded messages, call-back options or better signposting.
Young people want to know that their feedback has been heard and acted on.	Agree a simple follow-up process so system partners report back on what they have considered, what they can act on and what needs escalation.

Other Issues Raised

Young people also raised broader concerns about access, which go beyond what any single practice or hospital can change on its own.

These included the availability of GP and dental appointments, waiting times for scans, diagnosis and follow-up care, and the way GP registration currently works.

These issues matter and we have recorded them here. They are shaped by wider factors, including workforce capacity, NHS funding, commissioning arrangements, national policy and system-wide pressure on waiting lists.

We will therefore raise these points for escalation with NHS North East London, NHS England and the relevant system workstreams, rather than present them as actions individual providers can deliver on their own.

What Happens Next

This is the first report we have produced from feedback gathered at one of our outreach events. Everything in it was said to us in a single afternoon, by young people who were not expecting to be asked.

We are sharing this report with Redbridge Youth Service and Child-Friendly Redbridge, with commissioners at NHS North East London including the primary care and dental teams, with the London Borough of Redbridge, and with patient experience leads at Barts Health and at Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals.

We would welcome a response from any of these partners, and we will follow up on the points raised in this report.

If you are a young person in Redbridge and you would like to tell us about your experience of health or care services, you can contact us using the details at the back of this report. Everything you tell us is anonymous.

We will keep going out to community events across the borough, and we will report on what people tell us at them in the same way. A great deal is said at events like these that has never been written down anywhere, and it should not be lost.





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