

# **Queen Elizabeth Hospital Youth Council – Year One report**

Summary of the first 12 months

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# Who we are and what we do

Healthwatch Norfolk is the independent voice for patients and service users in the county. We gather people's views of health and social care services in the county and make sure they are heard by the people in charge.

The people who fund and provide services have to listen to you, through us. So, whether you share a good or bad experience with us, your views can help make changes to how services are designed and delivered in Norfolk.

Our work covers all areas of health and social care. This includes GP surgeries, hospitals, dentists, care homes, pharmacies, opticians and more.

We also give out information about the health and care services available in Norfolk and direct people to someone who can help.

At Healthwatch Norfolk we have five main objectives:

1. Gather your views and experiences (good and bad)
2. Pay particular attention to underrepresented groups
3. Show how we contribute to making services better
4. Contribute to better signposting of services
5. Work with national organisations to help create better services

We make sure we have lots of ways to collect feedback from people who use Norfolk's health and social care services. This means that everyone has the same chance to be heard.

# Summary

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital Youth Council was created after some previous Healthwatch Norfolk research suggested the hospital needed to forge stronger connections with young people within the communities it looks after.

From June 2024, we worked with the hospital to create a promotional film and assets for both social and traditional media use to help publicise the Council. This was accompanied by a formal launch organised by the hospital itself.

Alongside this, Healthwatch carried out an engagement programme with schools, colleges, youth groups and employers to raise awareness and encourage potential members aged 16 to 25 to join.

Recruitment was delayed until September 2024 due to the local and then general election and five members were recruited to start off the work of the Youth Council with support from Governors, a non-executive director and an administrator from the hospital, and two members of the Healthwatch Norfolk team.

They have since identified their first priorities to work on which are ensuring young members of staff and volunteers have access to buddying when they start work. This was based around both the observations of council members working for the trust, as well as those thinking of working there as an incentive to apply.

Members also wanted to understand what support is available to patients who may be victims of domestic violence. This followed concerns raised by one member who works in maternity and wanted more information about the help that could be accessed for those being cared for within the hospital.

Based on the first year of operation, we recommend continuing the recruitment process in order to bring on board up to 5 new members three times a year, up to a maximum of 15 members.

Communication is key and we recommend the setting up of communications platforms for the Youth Council members to share what they are doing with their peers and the wider community.

Linked with this, regularly referring back to the way the Council works through its Terms of Reference and highlighting what it has achieved is key.

As the Council works in parallel with the Governors, we would also recommend a Governor being seconded to the group to help take things forward alongside the hospital facilitator and it will also help show how the Council fits into the hierarchy of the hospital.

# Why we looked at this

## Introduction

In 2021, Healthwatch Norfolk was asked to work with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital NHS Trust (QEH) in King's Lynn to carry out some public engagement.

This aimed to find out how people within the trust's catchment area wanted to be involved in shaping the service the hospital provides.

They were asked about how they would like to be communicated with about their health, the hospital itself, and how they could be involved in making changes.

All the findings then helped with the development of the Trust's community engagement strategy.

## What were the main findings?

There were recommendations around recording the communications preferences and accessibility needs of patients and ensuring there is less clinical terminology and jargon in all communications, together with ensuring all written English is easy to read and understand.

There was also a recommendation to ensure there is a wide and varied approach to communications to reach as many people as possible.

You can find the full report at [https://healthwatchnorfolk.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2022-05-How-you-would-like-the-Queen-Elizabeth-Hospital-to-communicate-with-you\\_report.pdf](https://healthwatchnorfolk.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2022-05-How-you-would-like-the-Queen-Elizabeth-Hospital-to-communicate-with-you_report.pdf)

## Why set up a Youth Council?

Following the publication of the report and general discussions on engagement, the QEH Trust felt a youth council would help to bridge gaps in knowledge between the younger members of the community and the Trust itself. Following a series of meetings, Healthwatch Norfolk was asked to co-ordinate engagement and recruitment, and support the Council initially in its first 12 months of operation supported by departments across the hospital.

This report sets out the setting-up and recruitment process, the initial work of the Youth Council, and sets some recommendations for its future operation.

# How we did this

## Planning the campaign

We wanted to make sure all communications were relevant and young people from the hospital catchment area would engage with them.

From previous engagement experience, we knew younger people valued peer-to-peer communication and so we wanted to ensure it was shaped with their views and thoughts in mind.



*Figure 1; Fin Hanlon and Patrick Calow filming a scene for the Youth Council promotional video*

We collaborated with videographer Fin Hanlon, 24, and West Norfolk media student Patrick (Paddy) Calow, 18, (pictured above) to shape some initial messaging and communications which could then be enhanced and tested based on feedback we received. With the support of the QEH communications managers Debbie Burrell and Charles Thomas, a storyboard and script were developed. Members of staff under the age of 25 who work at the QEH were

interviewed by Paddy. A recruitment video was made using these interviews, with images and messages from it also used to create social media assets.

A first draft of the video was shared with sixth form students at Springwood High School in King's Lynn and Thomas Clarkson Academy in Wisbech and also shown to a small online focus group to gauge feedback.

It was also shown to the Communications, Membership and Engagement Committee of the Governors.

As a result of the feedback, we reduced the length of the recruitment video and also created short versions of staff interviews to use as social media communications tools.

In parallel with this, the hospital's Lead Governor Dr Antonia Hardcastle and Healthwatch Norfolk Chief Executive Alex Stewart worked together on a Terms of Reference document to help shape and set how the Youth Council would work initially, with the option for these to be reviewed by Youth Councillors, the Governors and Trust Board in the future.

## Official launch

The initial plans were to launch engagement in April/May 2024 to ensure the Youth Council itself was operating by the summer. Unfortunately, the local elections in May and the General Election in July meant the launch had to be delayed. NHS England guidance issued via the QEH was to pause the launch as it was felt this could prejudice an election.

This meant the official launch was put back to July 7. Initially, the plan was to do a media launch with key journalists, but the Queen Elizabeth Hospital was keen to make it a major launch with staff and stakeholders invited. Members of their team arranged a formal launch attended by around 60 people in the Hospital's boardroom.

As well as encouraging people to share social media, the launch was covered by the Eastern Daily Press, Lynn News, BBC Radio Norfolk, Radio West Norfolk and KLI Radio, as well as a short piece in Lincolnshire Live.

## Engagement

From June 2024, Healthwatch Norfolk began a period of intensive engagement and recruitment for the Youth Council. The main strands were:

- Contacting 15 major employers through a mix of face-to-face, online and email contacts as well as creating assets for the King's Lynn Business Improvement District (BID) to share with its members.
- Contacting all schools in the area and offering face-to-face engagement which was taken up by three schools (Springwood High School in King's Lynn, Fakenham Academy, and Thomas Clarkson Academy in Wisbech). We also made two visits to the College of West Anglia to promote the Youth Council as well as having a stand during their Freshers Fair. In addition, QEH Governor Chris Brewis distributed information and spoke to young people in his Holbeach patch to spread the word.
- Created assets including video clips, images, leaflets and a 4-page pdf booklet which were shared by youth groups in the area.



- Did a lunchtime engagement session at Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council and were also supported by Alive Leisure who let us run two engagement sessions at Lynnsport in King's Lynn and one at Oasis in Hunstanton.
- Had a presence on the Healthwatch Norfolk stand at King's Lynn and West Norfolk Pride which was backed up by a digital billboard which screened clips from the promotional film and QR codes linking to the Youth Council website.
- This was supported by social media support from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, NHS Norfolk and Waveney, as well as coverage through Healthwatch Norfolk's various channels.

## Recruitment

In September 2024, recruitment began for the first members of the Youth Council. We initially had 6 applications and saw five of them to talk through their applications and ambitions in more detail.

By this stage, we were joined by William van't Hoff, one of the Hospital directors, and Gilli Galloway, a Hospital Governor with experience of working with young people.

Rather than using an interview format, each candidate came for an informal chat with William, Gilli, and John Bultitude, Healthwatch Norfolk head of communications and marketing. This was an opportunity for each would-be member to ask more about the Youth Council, and for the panel of three to find out more about the young people's areas of interest.

As a result of these meetings, each of the five young people interviewed was offered a role. They are:

- Jack, a trainee midwife from King's Lynn
- Kaci, from King's Lynn, who works in digital administration at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital
- Libby, from Holbeach, who is doing her T-levels and is working in administration as part of her work experience at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital
- A-Level student Kelly, from Holt, who is interested in a career in psychology
- Fellow A-Level student Rosie, who lives near Fakenham, who wants to work in health and care.

Once they had accepted a role, a media release was issued by both the Hospital and Healthwatch Norfolk in mid-December 2024 and this was backed up by stakeholder contacts and social media coverage.

## Recruitment levels

Initial hopes were for a starting number of 15 Youth Councillors. While awareness levels were high, that conversion from awareness to signing up proved challenging. When asking young people at engagement what their reticence would be, some of the key points raised in conversation were:

- Would-be members wanted to wait and see how the Youth Council operated before getting involved.



- Some staff members were reticent as they were concerned it would be a tick-box exercise rather than having any meaningful difference.

We aimed to address these concerns by creating a regular newsletter which goes out to all those who had expressed an interest in the Youth Council to ensure they are aware of events. This would help to reassure them there is progress. There has also been a request from the Youth Council for key updates and papers to be put on the Youth Council website. This is being actioned from March 2025, along with a request to the hospital for that content to be included or linked to the staff intranet.

## Youth Council in operation

### Meeting one on December 17, 2024

After a meet-and-greet, we asked members to initially have a think about the role of the Youth Council and what the first priorities should be. Their initial thoughts are shown in the images below:

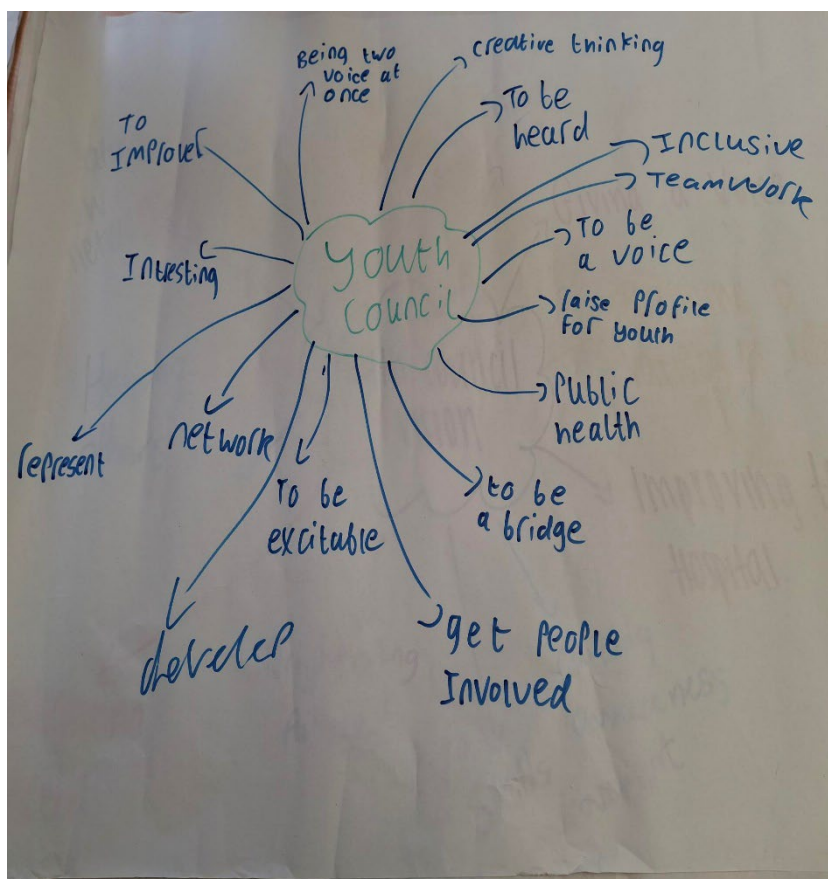


Figure 2: Youth Council members map of how they wanted the group to operate

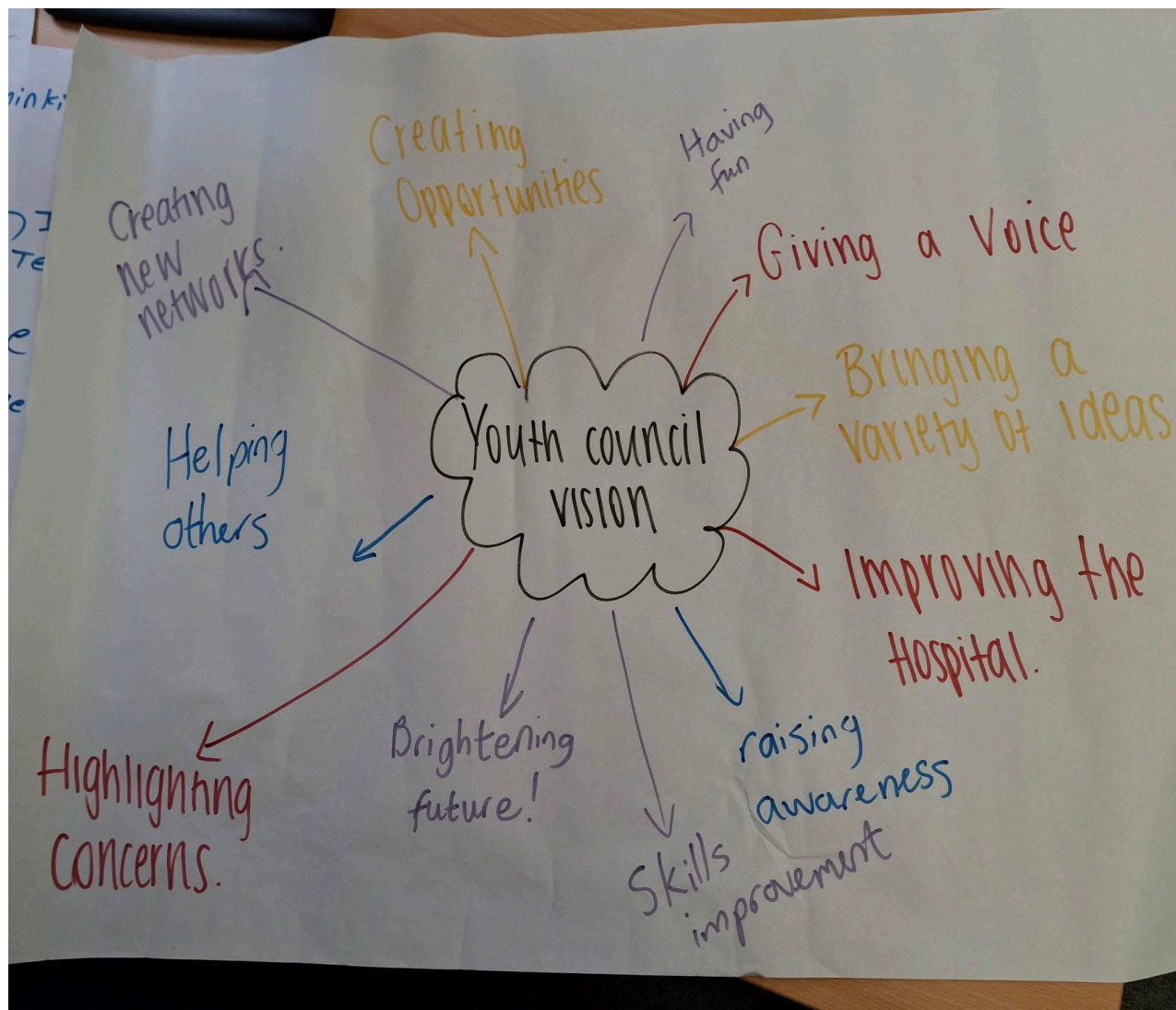


Figure 3: A second map created by Youth Council members on how they would like it to operate

The members also gained an insight into the operation and work of the QEH.

The team also decided they would initially like to meet on a monthly basis for around 2-2.5 hours.

There were also some changes in personnel to support the Youth Council. Gilli Galloway had to step aside.

Additional support was offered by Carrieanne Davies, who could provide that vital in-hospital support around admin, and Healthwatch Norfolk's Community Engagement Officer for West Norfolk, Angela George. Both have experience of working with young people in their employment roles.

## Meeting two January 28, 2025

The second meeting saw the initial list of priorities reduced down to some key areas and also more discussion about how the Youth Council could grow and evolve.

After meeting two, some members were concerned about the length of the meeting and the nature of the content. They also wanted to ensure there was progress and to be clear around the way their concerns are reported back to the relevant departments and people within the hospital, and wider NHS, where relevant.

It was felt Carrieanne should lead the meetings with admin support from John, and additional input from William and Angela.

This was also reflected in the layout of the room with the Youth Council members being on a centre table, so they felt able to share their views more openly and contribute with their peers.

## Meeting three February 25. 2025

This saw approval for recruitment to open for a second group of young people to join and also the first two key priorities for the Youth Council to explore were prioritised. They also took part in a session with Sara Dean, the hospital's engagement and communications director, on how the QEH communicates through both traditional and digital methods.

Further meetings will happen on the last Tuesday of the month.

# QEH Youth Council future priorities and work

## Future priorities

Over its first few meetings, the Council has looked closely at a number of areas and subjects which are important to it.

It has acknowledged there are a lot of key areas it wants to look at. As a starting point, it has identified two, with other subject areas to focus on in future.

These first two are:

- Identifying what support there is for students and young people within the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Members felt it would be good to understand what mentoring, buddying and support was available as they often felt they wanted support from their peers, and this could also help attract more people to work there.
- Exploring what safeguarding measures are in place for victims of domestic abuse at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Both of these initial questions are going to be taken on by William van't Hoff who will report back the Council.

Members also set some longer-term priorities around particular areas of work which they will also focus on.

These are:

- Public health. How education of different aspects of public health could help QEH patients who are receiving treatment as well as having a prevention role in the community.
- The development of the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Helping to ensure the under-25s have a say in how the new building is developed.

- Helping to increase awareness of the opportunities and career paths available for young people within the QEH, particularly among apprenticeships. Members felt people were often unaware of the employment opportunities available particularly among those who wanted to learn new skills.
- Digital methods of accessing health. Members were keen to highlight and support methods of ensuring their peers were aware of or using technology such as the NHS App or the Shared Care Record.

They were also keen to play a leading role in communicating their work to their peers. They will initially do this via the Instagram platform and will have a rolling item on their agenda to think about content ideas, film them and think about how these will be communicated. The Healthwatch Norfolk team will then compile and upload/publish each piece of content after approval by the QEH comms team.

## Ways of working in future

Carrieanne will continue as the in-person facilitator for meetings and provide the light-touch Human Resources advice and support.

Subject to budgets being approved, Healthwatch Norfolk will continue to provide administrative and communications support, co-ordinate and support members with engagement about their work and future recruitment and be the initial point of contact for members.

Recruitment will happen three times a year with accompanying engagement with a target of 15 Youth Councillors in place by autumn 2025.

Members have decided they would rather work collectively and not have a Chair or Deputy Chair so that all members feel they have a chance to speak.

They would also like to develop a form and accompanying guidance for anyone who is coming to them asking for help/support to ensure they have a clear idea of what they are being asked for so they can discuss it openly with full knowledge and also see how it fits in with their initial priorities as a youth council. This will be developed with them by Healthwatch Norfolk.

# Recommendations

These recommendations are for the Governors of the hospital and staff who work with the Youth Council to help maintain focus, growth, and effectiveness of the Council in the next 12 months.

## **Recruitment**

Continue with a phased recruitment process aiming to bring on board up to 5 members three times a year.

## **Publicity and awareness**

Set up communications platforms for the Youth Council to create and curate content within different media to ensure their peers and the wider community are aware of what they are doing and the outcomes they are creating.

## **Priorities**

Ensure a robust way of working based around the Terms of Reference so that both members and the local community can see that work is progressing.

## **Governance**

To ensure there is a clear pathway for the Youth Council members to understand what happens with their recommendations. As the Youth Council slots into the hospital hierarchy alongside the Governors, we would recommend a Governor presence at meetings. The Governors' role would include escalating questions/concerns/findings through their presence and highlighting a clear pathway for the members inside the hospital alongside CarrieAnne as facilitator.

# Formal response from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital

I am incredibly proud to acknowledge the publication of The Queen Elizabeth Hospital's Youth Council Year One Report, developed in collaboration with Healthwatch Norfolk. This milestone represents a significant step forward in ensuring that the voices of young people are actively listened to and meaningfully included in the development of our hospital services.

Our Youth Council has demonstrated insight, maturity and a genuine passion for improving patient care and staff experiences across the QEH. Their focus on areas such as buddying support for young staff and volunteers, raising awareness of domestic violence resources, and increasing understanding of public health initiatives, highlights their commitment to the wellbeing of both our patients and our workforce. I am particularly encouraged by the council's interest in contributing to the development of the new hospital. Their perspectives will be vital in shaping an inclusive, accessible and future-ready environment. Additionally, their emphasis on digital health and careers education supports our wider efforts to innovate, inform and inspire the next generation of healthcare professionals.

The report outlines a clear direction for the year ahead and we look forward to supporting the Youth Council as they continue their journey. Their contribution is invaluable to our organisation, and we are committed to ensuring that the voices of young people remain central to our planning and service delivery.

**Rebecca Martin, Medical Director, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, King's Lynn**



# Appendix 1

## QEH Youth Council – ‘The way we work.’

### Introduction

‘The way we work’ describes the purposes, membership and format of the QEH Youth Council. It was coproduced by Youth Council members and supporting staff and should be reviewed annually. This version was approved in March 2025 and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

### Our purpose

We want to represent the voice of young people in supporting QEH and health improvement in West Norfolk.

### Our membership

There will be a maximum of 15 Youth Councillors. The commitment for Youth Council is usually two years, with an option for an additional two years after that if they wish.

Other people attending, working or volunteering within the hospital can attend the meetings by invitation by the Youth Council, to comment and support councillors to make decisions on areas or projects they would like to take forward.

### How we work

We recognise the Trust’s values of Kindness, Wellness and Fairness.

We will all listen to each other and respect ideas.

We will make sure everyone has a voice.

There will be a time for everyone at each meeting to raise anything important to them.

We will create an action plan for us to work from which will be updated at every meeting to look at the progress made and any next steps.

We recognise that some issues may be more complicated to resolve or work on, so we will categorise these as short-term or long-term actions.

### Meetings

Agendas and background papers will be sent to members at least five days before the meeting.

Our facilitator will take the meeting forward, ensuring it runs to time and any key decisions are noted, and actions followed up on.

Notes and minutes of the meeting will be taken by an administrator and sent to members no later than two weeks after a meeting.

If people outside the Youth Council and its support team are asked to attend, those invitations will be managed by the facilitator and administrator.

### **We will:**

Ensure we deliver on things we want to do making sure the community is aware of what we are doing. Listen and speak to young people in the community and bring their issues to the group to discuss and highlight to the hospital.

Make sure all members have a platform around issues which are important to the hospital/trust. Have a promotional and advisory role around health and care roles for our peers.

Bridge the divide between the generations to enable everyone to work even more closely together.

## **Communications**

All members will help shape communications about their work including the style and tone. This includes regular newsletters, media releases and digital media content. All digital media campaigns will be prepared by the Healthwatch Norfolk team (or whoever is providing administrative support) based on a brief by the youth council. Media content will also be prepared in the same way and will also require approval from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital trust Communications team.

All communications must also be in line with the social media use guidelines of the hospital trust, and also compliant with media law and best practice.

## **Reviewing our work**

The administrator will prepare an annual report around the work and processes of the Youth Council by March 31 of each calendar year.

The Youth Council will also review its progress in September of each year reporting back to the hospital's Council of Governors and Board. If necessary, the Youth Council's Terms of Reference, the official name for this Way We Work document, would be reviewed at the same time.





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