

# Children In Care Review Health Assessment Report

A report by Young Healthwatch East Sussex

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**healthwatch**  
East Sussex

# Introduction

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT) commissioned Young Healthwatch East Sussex (YHWES) in late 2022 to engage with young people (aged 11 to 19) in foster care in East Sussex. The goal was to understand how ESHT could improve the Review Health Assessments for young people in care.

## Context

Young people in foster care in East Sussex (aged 5 to 18) are offered a Review Health Assessment (RHA) every 12 months by the Children in Care nursing team. This assessment allows young people to speak with a specialist nurse to identify any physical, emotional, social or mental health needs the young person may have, and to set health actions and goals for the next 12 months.

The nursing team at ESHT, who are responsible for conducting the reviews in East Sussex, told us they felt that many of the young people they encounter were disengaged with the process and seemed to think its only purpose was to 'weigh and measure' them.

The ESHT team wanted to know in more detail how the young people felt about the RHA's current format, and what they could do to make the experiences more personal and helpful.

## Methodology

Our young volunteers worked together with ESHT colleagues to co-design a 15-question online survey for young people in care about their experiences of having a Review Health Assessment.

The survey was designed to assess young people's understanding of why they are offered RHA's and identify areas where the experience for the young people involved could be improved.

The survey contained a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions, keeping the survey simple and engaging, while still giving participants the chance to tell us their views and opinions in their own words.

# Findings

A total of **19** young people in care completed the survey and using their answers we were able to identify several key themes and subsequent recommendations. Below is a summary of our findings.

When asked about their previous experiences having a Review Health Assessment, **68.4% (13)** felt that the assessment was 'about them', focused on their needs, and felt generally confident about their experience. **100% (19)** of participants stated that there wasn't anything they felt they couldn't talk to their nurse about during the assessment.

**3 (15%)** participants mentioned their nurse in a positive way, highlighting how important it is for young people to feel safe and comfortable talking to their nurse.



*"Yes, I felt comfortable, the nurse was lovely."  
"It was all okay I felt comfortable talking to the nurse."*



Although mostly positive, not all young people felt their previous experiences of RHA's has been good. A further **3 (15%)** participants stated that they felt anxious and/or overwhelmed by the experiences.

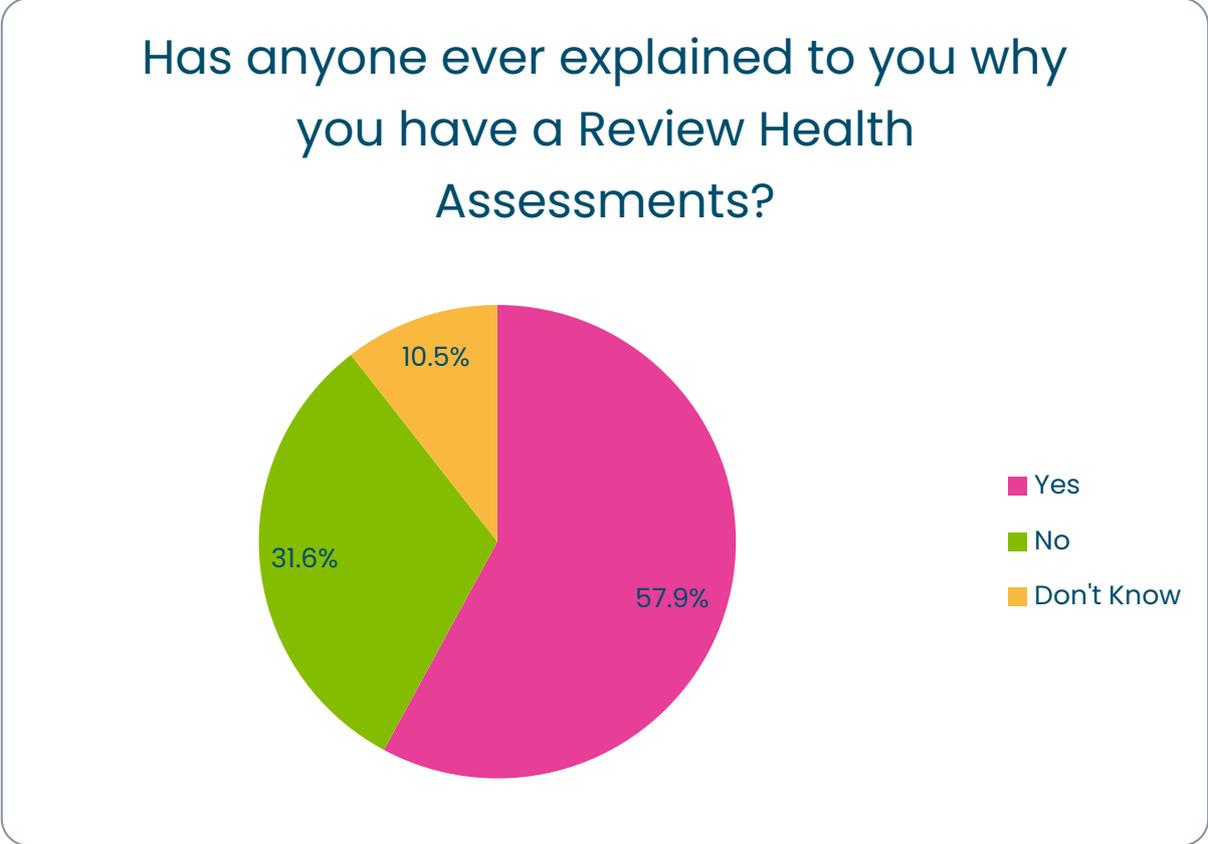


*"I felt anxious to talk to the nurse and worried about them judging me."  
"Anxious (because) she was someone I never had before."*



When asked 'Overall, how would you rate your experience of having a Review Annual Health Assessment? (With 1 being very poor and 10 being excellent)' the most common answer given was **6** with the average (mean) answer being **6.9**.

When asked if anyone had explained why they had a Review Health Assessment each year, just over **half (11) (57.9%)** answered 'Yes'. Of those who answered Yes, **8 (72%)** stated that it was their foster carer at the time who explained the reason why they had an RHA to them, not their nurse or social worker.



We asked participants if they remembered being weighed and measured during the RHA, and if they did, had anyone explained why they were being weighed and measured. **16 (84%)** participants remembered being weighed and measured, with **12 (75%)** of those stated that the reasoning behind this had been explained.

Although most of the participants understood the reasoning behind the need to be weighed and measured, one participant explained that their wish to not be informed of their height and weight had not been respected.



*“Yes, they did explain why, but I asked not to know the weight and they told me when I told them not to and it made me very upset and broke my trust with them.”*



When asked if they were aware that they could decline to be weighed and measured, **73.6% (14)** said they did not know that they could decline.

When asked if they remembered agreeing to health actions/goals with their nurse at their last assessment, **53.7% (10)** did not remember if any actions or goals had been set.

**79% (15)** of participants stated that they had either never been given a copy of their health assessment notes, or that if they had, they did not remember being given them.

We then asked participants if they felt that being given a copy of their RHA notes would be helpful to them. The response was mixed, with **42.1% (8)** saying that they would like to have a copy, **36.8% (7)** saying they did not feel they didn't want a copy, and **21.1% (4)** were unsure.

## **‘What would a good/excellent Review Health Assessment look and feel like to you?’**

- **4 (21%)** participants said that they would like to be able to choose to have their foster carer in the room with them.
- **4 (21%)** participants said that a friendly, kind nurse who listened was important to them.
- **3 (16%)** participants said they would have liked to be able to be alone with the nurse for the review.
- **2 (11%)** participants expressed desire to choose the topics spoken about during the review.
- **1 (5%)** participant felt that the review could be kept shorter and to the point.

## 'What does a bad Review Health Assessment look and feel like to you?'

- **6 (32%)** participants felt that not being able to control who was in the room made the experience worse.
- **3 (16%)** participants said that they did not like having the assessment at school or in a place that they had not been before.
- **2 (11%)** participants said that nurses being 'rude' or 'rushing' them would make a bad experience.
- **1 (5%)** participant said that they didn't like being compared to others/the average when discussing height and weight with the nurse.

### Key Themes:

- It is important to young people in care to be in control of **who** is involved in their Review Health Assessment and **where** the assessment takes place.
- Young people in care want to **feel respected, listened to and empathised** with by their nurse.
- More could be done to inform young people in care of the **reasoning** behind the RHA's and **their right** to decline to be assessed.

# Recommendations

## Recommendations for East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust:

1. Young people should be given the power to choose **who** they would like present during their Review Health Assessment (RHA). Before each RHA young people should be reminded that it is their choice who is there during the review, and this should be reiterated at the start of the RHA. This gives the young people a chance to consider their options and decide without being rushed or pressured.
2. Young people should be given a choice about **where** their Review Health Assessment takes place. A comfortable, safe and known environment is likely to help young people to be more open and engaged during an RHA. This choice should be made clear to young people when they are booked in to have a Review Health Assessment.
3. Young people would benefit from being better informed about the reason for their Review Health Assessments and their right to decline. We suggest that a letter be sent to each young person prior to their RHA with a paragraph which briefly explains **why** the assessment is taking place, and how it is meant to support them. The letter should also explain that the RHA is optional, and that young people do have the power to decline the assessment, and **how** they can do so. We also suggest that young people are contacted by phone to organise the RHA appointments time and place, as this makes the experience more personal.
4. The Nursing Team Manager should ensure that relevant and appropriate training is available to all specialist nurses who facilitate the Review Health Assessments. These could include training around taking a **Person-Centred Approach** when working with young people and using a **Trauma Informed Approach**. These approaches could work particularly well when talking about **weight and height** with young people, which can be a sensitive and uncomfortable topic.

## Key learnings for YHWES:

The methodology used underwent several changes due to a number of challenges, most prominent of which was difficulty engaging with young people in care to participate in the project.

In future work with vulnerable and hard to reach young people, we will ensure that we have a more methodical and established approach to engaging and communicating with the target audience.

# Appendix 1: Survey questions

Table 1. Children in Care Review Health Assessment Survey

<b>Name:</b>		
<b>Telephone:</b>		
<b>Email:</b>		
<b>Q1. Do you remember having a Review Health Assessment before?</b>		
YES	NO	Don't Know
Please explain your answer:		
<b>Q2. Did you feel the Review Health Assessment was about you?</b>		
YES	NO	Don't Know
Please explain your answer:		
<b>Q3. How did you feel about the questions during the assessment?</b>		
Please explain your answer:		

(i.e., Did you feel comfortable talking to the Nurse? Did you feel anxious about anything?)

**Q4.** Is there anything you would have liked to talk about during your Review Health Assessment but didn't feel able to?

YES

NO

Don't Know

Please explain your answer:

**Q5.** What issues/concerns would you like to talk about with your specialist nurse?

Please explain your answer:

**Q6.** Has anyone ever explained to you *why* you have a Review Health Assessment?

YES

NO

Don't Know

If YES, who explained this?

Nurse / Doctor / Social Worker / Foster Carer / Other (please specify)

**Q7.** Do you remember being weighed and measured during the Review Health Assessment?

YES

NO

Don't Know

If YES, did the Nurse explain to you why they were weighing/measuring you?

YES	NO	Don't Know
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**Q8.** Did you know you can decline being weighed and measured?

YES	NO	Don't Know
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**Q9.** Do you remember agreeing to the health actions with your Nurse at your last Review Health Assessment?

YES	NO	Don't Know
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**Q10.** Have you ever been given a copy of the Review Health Assessment?

YES	NO	Don't Know
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**Q11.** Would you/did you find it helpful to have a copy of the Review Health Assessment?

YES	NO	Don't Know
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Please explain your answer:

**Q12.** What would a good/excellent Review Health Assessment look like and feel like to you?

Please Explain: (i.e., Who is there? What do you talk about? How do you feel?)

**Q13.** What does a bad Review Health Assessment look and feel like to you?

Please Explain: (i.e., Who is there? What do you talk about? How do you feel?)

**Q14.** Did you know that you can refuse to have a Review Health Assessment?

YES	NO	Don't Know
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Please explain your answer:

Overall, how would you rate your experience of having a Review Annual Health Assessment? (With 1 being very poor and 10 being excellent)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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