



investing in children

INVESTING IN CHILDREN

HEALTHCHECK

Report

The information for this report came from research carried out
in
Ferryhill Comprehensive School
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Young People's experiences of 'health' services

We think 'Health' should be seen as anything to do with keeping well and not just about being ill. So for young people access to services such as leisure, or advice on diet and healthy living is as important to health as a visit to the doctors or hospital.

Leisure

Leisure centres are seen as a way to encourage people to have a fit and healthy life style. Many towns and cities have a leisure centre which is open to all members of the public. Unfortunately such centres are not as 'open' as they claim. The majority are not friendly to us and stop us going in at certain times of the day. There is also the issue of cost - staying fit costs money and not all young people can afford to. A lot of leisure centres do not have a swimming pool and when we asked young people what they would most like to do in their spare time, most said they would like to go swimming.

Advice

Much of the advice about health issues is useful. But it seems that posters and booklets etc. are often aimed at parents and not directly at young people. We feel as teenagers we are capable of making informed choices if we are given the right information. Many parents are incapable of looking after themselves never mind passing on good advice to young people. We don't think that people who drink and smoke should give advice about health.

For younger children advice has to be more clearly presented so they can understand it. For example, research we carried out amongst years 7,

8, and 9 in Ferryhill Comprehensive School showed that the words used about healthy foods are hard to understand (carbohydrates, protein and fibre etc.) We asked people if they knew what polyunsaturates were and not one person knew, some thought they were good for you and some thought they were bad for you. When we asked what came to mind when we say a healthy diet most people said it would be things they don't like. When asked what sort of foods are healthy most people in the school said salads or pasta.

School

A lot of young people felt that school food is unhealthy, and even though our school has a healthy food counter they still serve the usual unhealthy food which most still prefer to eat. So there isn't much point in giving us advice on healthy food and feeding us unhealthy food.

Some young people talked about not being able to eat properly because of worry over homework and exams. Schools do provide activities and P.E. lessons so that you can keep fit and get exercise. After school activities are provided mainly for those who are good at sport and get picked for the football team or the netball team. We talked to people who were not very good at sport but would still like to take part in after school activities. No one talked about smoking, we found this surprising.

Home

Many people told us that their parents were too protective, especially during the dark nights. This means that young people spend too much time in the house sitting about instead of playing out. Some mentioned that homework kept them in the house when they would rather be out.

Most people preferred the food they got at home to school food.

A visit to the Doctor's

A lot young people do not feel comfortable about making their own appointments and visiting their family doctor without their parents. Yet there are times when a young person would like to see a doctor on their own. Many people we talked to did not feel confident that what they said to their doctor would be kept confidential. Doctor's receptionists sometimes ask personal questions and this stops young people from ringing up. Nobody we asked seemed sure about how old you had to be to make your own appointment. Many of the young people we asked felt Dentists were far more friendly towards them and felt more at ease talking to them or making appointments. We all agreed that Doctors always seem to be in a hurry to get you out.

The Hospital

When we asked young people what came to mind when they talked about the 'health service' most said 'hospitals'. A lot said the health service was for 'old and sick people'. Not many of the young people we asked had been in hospital. Some had been for checkups and had to wait a long time to be seen. Some thought that if the Doctors and Hospitals provided more things for us to do while we waited it we would not be so bored or worried. Some had brothers and sisters who had been in hospital and they said they were well treated by the Doctors and Nurses.

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