

Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

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Date: Wednesday 4 October 2006

Time: 9.30am – 12.30pm

Venue: Senedd, National Assembly for Wales

Title: Youth and Community Service - Flintshire County Council

Drugs Education Team

The team's transformation in 5 years has seen us move from humble surroundings in a back room of a county youth club and 1 part time worker to a 3.2 strong team that is able to respond to requests from schools and community groups for interventions and support. Thanks to continued support from Safer Communities Fund and Building Safer Communities we have been able to develop quality and lasting relationships with county youth clubs and schools. The team actively approaches schools (special schools and PRU's also) to offer support, help and advice regarding their PSE curriculum on substance misuse. Using informal education practice we address topics such as alcohol, solvents, drugs and exams, date rape/ drink spiking and also staying safe. Our interventions do not preach to young people or attempt to scare them, rather we feel we offer young people informed choices and up to date information.

The schools work isn't alone in our face to face practice, youth clubs receive visits from the team throughout the year as well, and in addition part time youth workers have access to all our resources and leaflets / posters.

Achievements in 2005/6

Over 2000 young people received drugs education

Solvent abuse campaign resulting in a poster competition

Training of over 30 professionals on drugs awareness

Actively involved in county SMAT

Consultation with all secondary schools, PRU's and special education schools

Recently we identified a gap in provision and appointed a full time outreach/ detached worker who has been busy forging new relationships with north Wales Police, community 1st areas, community

groups, YOT and schools. Some exciting new projects are beginning to take shape including lunch time drop ins in secondary schools, community surgeries in partnership with the Police, pub/ night club work, detached work in areas where young people have been using substances. The major new working relationship is the upcoming amalgamation of YOT and our own drugs education team to form a Young Persons Substance Misuse Service, this will coincide with the opening of the multi agency 1 stop shop to be opened in Holywell soon. We will have an active role within the provision offering support and advice for young people as well as treatment services including acupuncture and other holistic therapies. In partnership with the YOT also we have submitted a capital bid for an outreach vehicle that will enable us to visit rural locations within the county and offer diversionary activities for young people. This is an exciting development for the Flintshire that will benefit young people throughout the county in a variety of locations.

Peer Education in Flintshire

History

One of the four key aims of the Flintshire Substance Misuse Action Team is to help children, young people and adults resist substance misuse in order to achieve their full potential in society, and to promote sensible drinking in the context of a healthy lifestyle. Through this aim an identified need was that young people can become part of how drugs education is delivered around schools and youth centres in Flintshire. One of the ways that this aim can be achieved is through Peer Education. Peer Education in Flintshire is about giving young people the opportunity to experience a way learning that is interactive and participative.

Peer Education in Flintshire

The Peer Education projects created in Flintshire are primarily school and youth club based. What is meant by this is some Peer Educators are recruited through the school or youth club they attend. A difference between school based peer education projects and the project that has been set up within the youth clubs is some of the personal skills that the peer educators have learnt. Skills like confidence building, understanding their own substance use and in some cases a reduction in their personal use have been much more evident in the youth club based projects than in the school projects. Emphasis in schools is on delivering drugs education, what type of information is being delivered and the best way to deliver the information to a target audience where on the whole, drug use is relatively low. So in these different situations, different skills have been learnt. However the overarching aim has been about empowering young people to become involved and take part in the projects. The National Assembly for Wales Circular No: 17/02, Substance Misuse: Children and Young People, issued June 2002 stresses the an aim of substance misuse education is to empower children and young people to make responsible, well informed decisions about substances used and/ or misused within society and by involving peer education in complimenting the existing work that is already being completed by the Drugs Education Team, it is felt that young people will have access to this information. The Youth Work curriculum Statement for Wales focuses on opportunities on how young people can learn. Through being involved in Peer Education these four key concepts; empowerment, educative, expressive, and participation are being met. The projects have enabled young people to gain skills, knowledge, understanding and values. Young people have been

encouraged to share their responsibilities with other group members and learners. The peer educators have been empowered to understand that they can affect the lives of others around them. Also the groups are supported to deliver their information in a way that is dynamic and proactive and in a way they want to. The peer education work is supported fully by the many different organisations in which it works. The work is supported by Teachers, Youth Workers, YOT, Children Services, Police, and School Nurses.

Why have Peer Education?

It has been evidenced and documented that Young People take notice of their peers and are often influenced by their peers thus giving just cause for young people to be a useful resource in informing and teaching other young people about health topics such as substance use/misuse. Therefore they are huge benefits for both the educators and the learned. Over the last 18 months 108 young people ranging in ages from 14 – 19 have received Peer Education training in Flintshire with a total of 67 becoming peer drug educators. The groups in school have facilitated sessions to younger school years as part PSE curriculum. They have also taken part on health days. The youth club peer education project has facilitated drugs education around youth clubs spanning the county of Flintshire. The group have given up their own free time to complete the Peer Education training.

Pitfalls

One of the major pitfalls behind Peer Education is the level of training given to some young people. If they are not appropriately trained and supported, they may run the risk of giving out incorrect information or damage the self confidence of the peer educators. It is also vital that other professionals see Peer Education as complimenting existing services, not replacing it.

One of the major hurdles we have had in Flintshire has been getting other professionals to see Peer Education as a credible way of delivering drugs education. Some have been reluctant to give the time that is needed for the training, however as the projects have now been running for 12 months or so, lots of organisations are coming on board and realising the benefits of Peer Education.

Achievements

A group of peer educators have made a Drugs Education video about the date rape drug GHB which was distributed to all youth clubs around Flintshire.

The Peer Educations projects have devised new session plans which have included sessions primarily focusing on alcohol and solvents as a direct result from the 'Communities that Care' report. This has been achieved in a number of ways including drama, interactive quizzes, c.d.roms and power point presentations. These sessions have taken place during PSE lessons and health days with their schools.

All the groups that are involved in Peer Education are now represented on a North East Wales Peer Education Consortium and representatives from the projects will be attending a 'Peer 2 Peer' conference. Different peer education projects from across Wrexham and Flintshire will be getting together to share practice, knowledge and information with each other. It is the first conference in

North Wales designed solely for Peer Educators aged 11-25.

Young People from peer education projects in Flintshire will join together to establish a peer education steering group and are going to plan a North East Wales Celebration Event to celebrate and promote the work that has been done. This event will hopefully take place early next year.

On the 1st March of this year a group of young people represented peer educators in Flintshire at the Youth Achievement Event staged by the Flintshire Community Safety Partnership. The event was attended by members of the Welsh Assembly Government and HRH Princess Ann. As part of this day, a number of young people received an award on behalf of peer educators in Flintshire in recognition of the work that they are doing.

A group of young people have also attended a 3-day residential course. During this time the group received training on group work skills, team building skills and drugs awareness.

Future?

Hopefully continuation of Peer Education projects will be evident in Flintshire as ideas and how to these ideas forward develop all of the time. There is scope to develop peer education a lot further and introduce into partnership working such as developing a peer education project with YOTs. The peer education model can be used on a whole range of topics such as bullying, stress, anti-social behaviour as well as drugs education.

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