

Jacqui Kearney is the Healthy Schools Advisor with the Healthy Schools Team, NHS Wirral.
For communication please email: Jacqui.Kearney@wirral.nhs.uk

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Healthy Schools Pupil Panel - voices for change

Ensuring robust and meaningful consultation with young people is never easy!

Time and again young people tell adults they want to have a say in the health services that are developed for them, and they want to be part of the evaluation.

In Wirral, this was approached by forming a 'Healthy Schools Pupil Panel', there are 125 schools in the area, 90 of which are primary schools, 22 are secondary schools and 13 special schools across all key stages.

Representatives

For Primary children we split the area to east and west, bringing two representatives from year 6 to a short day of activities and discussion, addressing the same issues as the high schools but age appropriate.

For Secondary Schools, including those that cater for children with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD), Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties, and young people who have other life challenges we have three full days of consultation and discussion throughout the school year. Each secondary school has the opportunity to send two representatives to attend. These young people act as a conduit from the Healthy Schools Pupil Panel to their own school council enabling them to have a strong voice and feed into strategic plans of agencies such as the School Nurse service, Drugs and Alcohol team (DAAT), and more recently the "Health Service in Schools" initiative.

'The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has served as the foundation for policymakers at a national level to promote and implement consultation with children and young people' (Whittles, S, 1998).

Article 12 states that "Children have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account".

At a local level it has been shown that "if young people have the opportunity to express their views and they are respected and valued" (Department of Local Government, 1998) then they are more likely to participate in opportunities developed as a consequence of them.

There is genuine commitment by the Healthy Schools team to take on board the views of the young people and ensure that they are fully involved in the development and evaluation of health and well-being services. The views of young people are fed to providers so they are able to develop these services in places and at times young people want them.

Over the last few years the agenda items have covered:

- Mental Health - Stigma and Discrimination
- Young Carers
- Health and Well Being Charter for Wirral Children and Young People - Making It Real
- Personal Social Health Education Curriculum & Transition - from this day the young people felt that they needed

two resources to help support their PSHEe Curriculum and Transition. One in the form of a game for use in year six that would cover generic information about changing schools, and one as a set of scenario cards that could be tailored to each individual high school, they felt these would be more appropriate for year seven. The scenario cards could highlight when to access the school nurse and how! (prior to going to high school young people would only come into contact with the school nurse with their parents or guardian).

· 'You're Welcome' criteria, know your rights!

The government vision for a 21st Century school is that "Every pupil will go to a school that promotes their health and wellbeing,

where they have the chance to express their views and where they and their families are welcomed and valued" (Building a 21st century schools system, DCSF 2009). The Healthy Schools pupil panel after 12 years is still developing to ensure that we continue to support this ethos and that it is truly inclusive!

References:

Department for Schools, Children and Families (2009) *Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system*. London.

Department of Local Government (1998) *How young people would like to be consulted*. London.

Whittles, S. (1998) *Can You Hear Us? Including the Views of Disabled Children and Young People in Decision Making*. London: Save the Children & Bolton Metro Social Services.