A new resource for the 16-19 age group

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Materials for use with the 16-19 year-old group are less widely available than those aimed at the primary-secondary age range. The appearance of the 'Health Action Pack', for use in sixth forms, FE colleges, and youth organisations, is therefore particularly welcome. In this article one of its authors describes the background to the pack, and its contents.

The Health Education Authority has recently produced a new resource for staff who work in health education with 16-19 year-olds. Published by the National Extension College, it is the outcome of a 3-year project funded by the HEA and based at Southampton University. Since its main focus is on active learning methods, it is called the Health Action Pack.

The emphasis throughout the pack is on ways of working which can be adapted to suit the needs of different groups. It is important to remember the breadth of experience and wide variety of situations encountered by this age range, and to recognise that their health and healtheducation needs will vary considerably from one group to the next. We need to take into account, for example, the age and sex of the young people concerned, as well as other factors such as race, social class, employment status, housing, marital status, whether their environment is urban or rural, their physical and mental abilities, their personal beliefs, and their self-esteem.

Because of this, we believe that health education should start with the young people themselves. Through negotiation it is possible to identify areas of health education appropriate to their needs and to select ways of working which they find acceptable.

Bearing this in mind, the project has produced a flexible pack, with the emphasis on methods rather than content. The methods are divided into activities linked to health-content areas. Each activity is described in a straightforward way which shows staff the purpose of the activity, what is needed and how to conduct the activity, and, where appropriate, variations and follow-on. There are also a number of activity sheets which can be photocopied and used with young people.

During January and February of this year, the Project ran a number of regional launches to bring the pack to the attention of as wide an audience as possible. At each launch there was an opportunity for questions, and some of these questions are answered in this article in order to outline more details about the pack.

How was the pack developed?

The pack was developed in close consultation with staff and young people. In the first year of the project, interviews were conducted with approximately 50 members of staff from FE, schools, and youth clubs to explore their views on health education in relation to 16-19 year-olds.

Groups of young people were also interviewed, and although they had mixed views on the health education they wanted, they were very clear about what they didn't want! Two typical comments

There's nothing worse than being sat down and they're saying like "This is a lesson you should do this, this, this, and not this".

If I don't like a lesson, I switch off,

These and other comments are recorded in the background notes to the pack.

Having conducted this research, the Project moved into a development phase. This included work with a national. multi-disciplinary group which helped to identify the type of materials that would be useful for staff working in this area.

Have the activities been tried out with young people?

Draft materials were tried out in over 30 different settings, including FE, schools, and the youth service. Some of the comments we received, both positive and negative, have been included in the pack; many amendments were made to the original drafts. Here are some examples of the staff comments we have recorded:

These activities are very rewarding and super at establishing a group identity. (FE lecturer)

It is essential that what is observed, experienced, and learnt on placement should be discussed in class, and the subjects taught should consolidate their practical experience. (FE lecturer)

We have a CSV volunteer working fulltime in the school to arrange specific projects. (CPVE tutor)

Fund-raising can become very competitive. (FE lecturer)

In the past we have used nursery placements, with LEA and conservation work in a local country park. (6th-form school teacher)

Placements become saturated - so many observers that the value of the placement is reduced. (FE lecturer)

What content areas are covered?

Although the pack focusses on methods, each activity is illustrated through health content. For example, in the section on Quizzes and word games there are:

A quiz on drugs

A quiz on pregnancy

A crossword on general health

A crossword on nutrition

A wordsearch on stress

The background papers for staff are also primarily concerned with health content, and cover issues such as sexuality, nutrition, drugs, and road safety. The topics were chosen in response to our research findings, but also take into account current health concerns relating to AIDS and drug use.

Is the pack limited to personal issues?

In the past, much health education has been accused of focussing solely on issues

The Health Action Pack consists of ...

A 192-page Health Activities book with ideas for active learning. The 11 sections cover different learning methods, from brainstorming to role play, from community activities to quizzes.

A Photopack containing 32 speciallycommissioned black and white photographs to serve as triggers for discussions and group work.

A Games pack with a board game and cards on contraception and sexuallytransmitted diseases, constituting an easy way into a difficult topic.

A 56-page book of Background papers for staff on the 16-19 age group and ten high-profile topics including AIDS, drugs, holistic health, sexuality, and nutrition.

The pack (ISBN 0 86082 982 0) is supplied in a sturdy PVC wallet.

of individual responsibility in relation to health. We have tried to strike a balance, including individual issues and also activities intended to increase awareness of the environmental and political influences on health, to promote young people's self-esteem, and to work together for change.

Does the pack offer a complete health-education programme?

The pack is not structured from A to Z, as staff are intended to select and adapt according to the needs of their group. Although the activities offered could provide the basis for a complete programme, we would recommend staff to draw on a range of materials. Further sources of information, and useful organisations, are listed at various points throughout the pack.

Can the pack be used in a range of settings?

The activities have been designed for a wide variety of settings. They have been tried out in FE, schools, and the youth service, and can be adapted for other institutions.

Is the material suitable for all ability levels?

Some of the activities require particular skills, and this is indicated where appropriate. There is also an introductory grid which indicates which of the activities can be used with young people with limited literacy skills.

Is there any training to support the pack?

The Project is now running a series of regional training courses in various parts of the country. These courses are for staff with responsibility for health education, personal and social development courses, and staff development, primarily from FE. They aim to develop participants' knowledge, confidence, and skills so that they can facilitate staff development using active learning methods.

Sources

The Health Action Pack: Health Education for 16-19s is available from the National Extension College, 18 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge CB2 2HN. The cost of a single copy is £39.95 including postage, but discounts are available on orders of three or more copies.

For more information about the training courses available, please contact the HEA 16-19 Dissemination Project, HEA Health Education Unit, Education Department, Southampton University, Southampton SO9 5NH.

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SMOKING AND ME

February 17th (Ash Wednesday!) was the publication date of *Smoking and me*, a teachers' guide to five lessons on smoking for 12-13 year-olds. This guide has been developed by the HEA Smoking Education for Teenagers project with the help of teachers, LEA Advisors, Health Education Officers, and others interested in smoking education.

A formative evaluation of the pilot version shows that the guide has been well received by teachers and pupils, and indicates that *Smoking and me* will be a valuable resource for teachers of the 12-13 year-old age group. It is hoped that a fuller account of *Smoking and me* will be included in the next issue of *Education and Health*.

Smoking and me is an A4 spiral-bound book containing 64 pages which may be photocopied as needed. The price is £7.25 including postage from the Health Education Authority, 78 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1AH.