

MIKE ROSE, ANNE SHARP,
CAROL MARLOW

Pupils learn to be 'smoking educators'

Fight it don't light it! and I don't, do you? were the two slogans chosen by pupils at Manor School, Raunds, Northants, to distribute on badges for National No Smoking Day in March 1990.

These were the winning entries in a competition which, together with other activities, grew out of strengthening links between the school and the Kettering Health Authority Education Officer, Anne Sharp.

These links had already led to a survey of smoking habits within the school, out of which developed counselling sessions for small groups of individuals who wanted to try to stop smoking.

This work, which initially involved the Health Education Officer and the School Nurse, is a year later still offering guidance and counselling. One one occasion, even an 'old boy' from some two years ago came back seeking help!

By the time No Smoking Day 1990 came round, in addition to the two professionally-printed badges and

another drawing turned into a poster, the 5th-year pupils produced an Assembly programme for the 1st-years on the dangers of smoking, containing facts, drama, and visual input. Five mountain ash trees were also planted by year groups in the school grounds at various ceremonies.

Showing concern

It was against this background of raising health awareness issues with and through the Manor School pupils that work concerning peer-counselling was investigated. The concept of 'peer-group training' within the continuing work of the school had much potential, as our pupils are encouraged to care and show concern for others around them.

After initial enquiries, a team of support staff was made up from Mike Rose (Deputy Head, Manor School), Anne Sharp (HEO, Kettering Health Authority), and Carol Marlow (Corby Detached Youth Work team) was founded, and the 1989-90

Ground rules for sessions

1. Arrive on time
2. Get along
3. Listen to other people's opinions
4. Equal amount of chores for everyone
5. No put-downs
6. Respect each other
7. Enjoy yourself
8. Respect other people's privacy and property
9. Smoking is outside
10. Try to understand and accept people's views

Year 10 pupils were asked to consider if they wanted to be involved in such a project. The response was such that 20 pupils initially showed an interest in the work.

The project's aims

The aims of the project may be stated as follows:

1. To train young people to educate other young people about smoking issues.
2. To overcome the barrier between health professional and lay person.
3. To allow young people to become active in the learning process, which would help them and others to develop knowledge and skills to make informed choices about their behaviour in relation to smoking.

The three main components of the project were philosophy, knowledge or factual base, and skills training.

They met regularly after school, giving of their own time freely, and quietly acquired a status and identity, finally calling themselves 'The Stub Club'. At the initial meetings ground rules were established as to how their group would run, and much time was spent listening to the pupils and their ideas and concerns.

We shall give an account of the most important results of these meet-

ings, in case readers have similar experiences to compare or seek guidelines for doing a similar project in their school.

*First session
(23 May 1990)*

The aims of this initial session were threefold:

1. To establish contact
2. To gain insight into motives
3. To begin working together

Establishing contact After an initial 'going round' saying who everyone was, they were all very able to talk about the group and why they wanted to have it.

Insight into motives The general consensus was that they wished to help other younger children understand the harm that smoking does. Some suggested working in primary schools.

Beginning working together They had several ideas on how to present work to the younger people:

- Drama
- Art work
- Videos
- Puppetry

They also felt that Assemblies might be a good way of presenting work.

We began compiling a survey, and they gave each other the task of making up a name for the group and designing some sort of logo.

Assessment A fruitful first session. They have got over the initial strangeness and are beginning to listen to each other.

*Second session
(7 June 1990)*

A good proportion of the pupils at this session were new, but some of the original ones were not present.

The aims of this session were threefold:

1. To set ground rules
2. To name the group
3. To begin to share information

Setting ground rules These were established as shown in the box on the left.

Naming the group The name was to be STUB CLUB. A logo would be designed so that they could have it on paper, etc., and they decided to have membership cards.

Beginning to share information This was not achieved.

Assessment Personalities are beginning to emerge from the group, restating in a positive way the aims of the group as 'to inform people of the harm smoking does'.

Discussion continues concerning the smoking members of the group — should they stop? Again it was stated that this was not the aim of the group. It was, however, pointed out that the people they talk to may see them smoking, and it may reduce the credibility of the group.

The majority felt that if the smokers wanted to stop they could be given every help and support, but the value of their particular understanding of the smoking problem outweighed the loss of credibility to the group.

They decided on ways in which they could present their work: lectures, drama and plays, talks, videos, raps, songs, leaflets, and using computers.

The weekend course

After the initial meetings, through the generous funding of the Youth Services, a weekend at Fletton House Residential Centre, Oundle, was planned. During this time away, the group would be presented with a whole range of facts and knowledge about smoking (videos, games, leaflets, etc.), and they would consider how best to act as a group when they got back.

The weekend activities lasted from Friday evening until Sunday lunchtime, occupying a total of seven sessions. For this weekend the three adults already involved in the work were joined by Shay Downey (Corby Youth Services).

Friday night

Assessment The session was fairly lively. The majority of the young people had arrived by 6 p.m. and set to work fairly enthusiastically. The level of commitment of the group in this session was high.

Personalities which had begun to emerge were by and large accommodated by the group.

Achievement of goals was the important issue for the group, and a lot of thought went into their brainstorm and subsequent discussion of goals. These goals, though more specific, have not really deviated from the original premise that the group set — that is, to inform younger age groups of the dangers of smoking.

*Saturday morning:
Session 1*

The programme consisted of...

1. Brainstorm and discussion on smoking facts
2. Videos (including *Parents against tobacco* and *Seven ages of a moron*, showing the pressure of advertising), followed by discussion

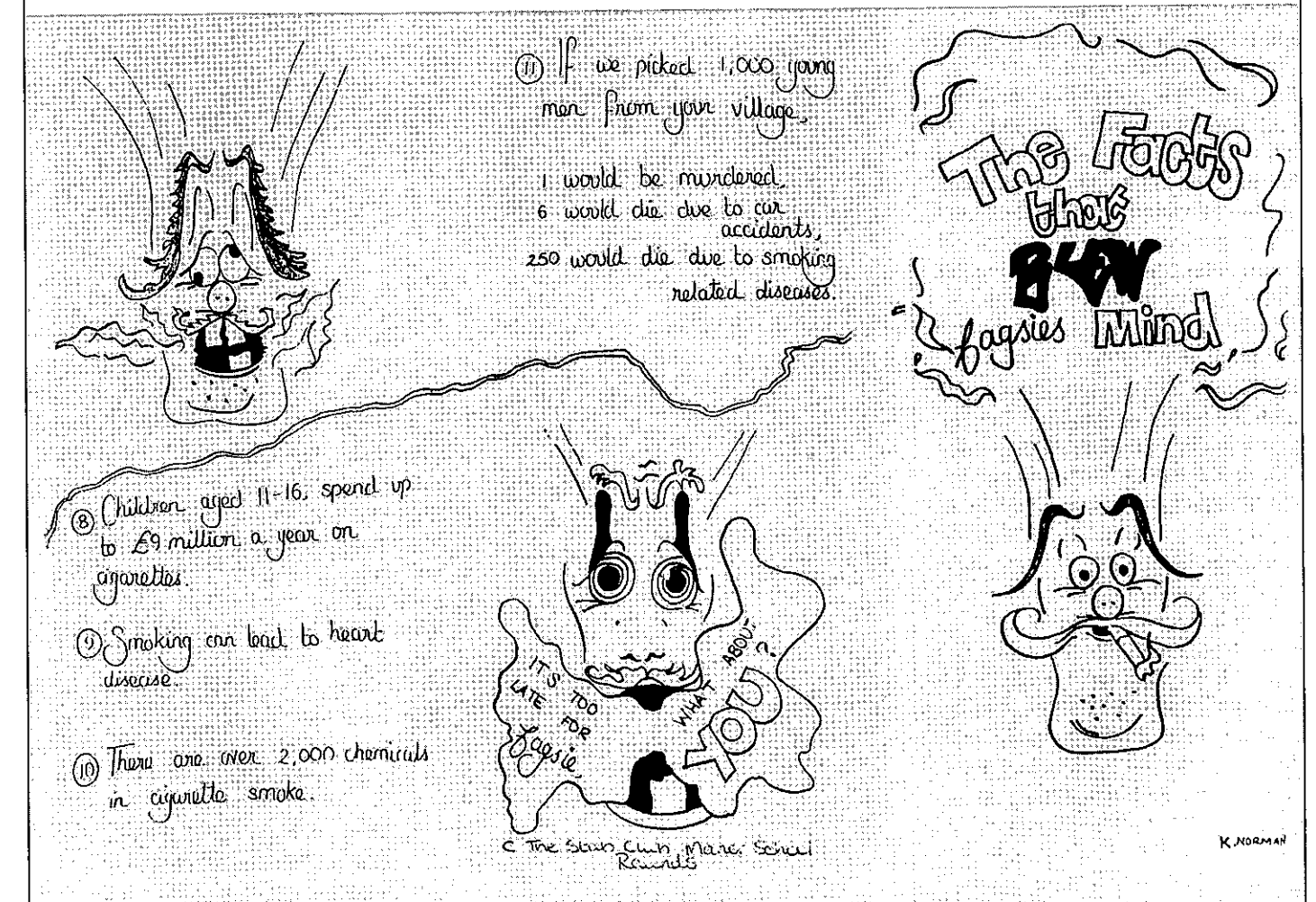
Assessment The introduction to our two youth workers (Carol and Shay) went very well, and they were accommodated into the group with comparative ease.

The brainstorming produced a large amount of information which was discussed and shared. The main points were:

- Smoking kills
- Bad smell/breath
- Lung diseases
- Heart disease
- Birth problems
- Passive smoking
- Habit/addiction

The group was a little subdued in this session compared with the previous evening (probably due to lack of sleep and a session on reinforcement of ground rules!), but several people continued to contribute.

They were fairly divided as to the effectiveness of the videos. One was a campaign production, the other a stylised humorous presentation.

Introducing Fagsie...

Part of the folded two-colour leaflet featuring 'Fagsie', designed during the residential weekend and distributed as part of the Stub Club's campaign.

The discussion revealed that they were concerned about the role of humour in the delivering of a serious message.

Saturday morning: Session 2

The programme consisted of studying various resources from the Health Authority, including videos, quizzes, and a smoking machine.

Assessment The subdued atmosphere of the first session had been replaced by an atmosphere of anticipation and a willingness to learn. They were very interested in the visual aids and the results coming out of the equipment.

Discussion centred around the brainstorming of knowledge. People are beginning to share ideas.

Saturday afternoon: Session 3

We established three groups to work on different projects.

Orange: This was the largest group, with three things to produce on video — a play, a scripted interview, and a rap (a rhythmic, musical piece with words that are often spoken, not sung).

Green: Production of a leaflet, a board game, and a poster.

Purple: Production of a photonovel using a camera.

Assessment The orange group became fragmented due to each faction competing for attention, and two people tried to disrupt the work.

After confronting the problem it was decided to divide up and work on separate ideas. The work then seemed to take off and they have achieved a lot, resulting in people feeling better and more enthusiastic.

The green group are artistic and fairly well motivated. They have come up with some super ideas and insist on working in their free time. This appears to be a quieter, more settled group, able to take to their tasks easily.

The purple group are very disorganised and are not able to com-



Top: Group discussion at the beginning of the weekend. Middle: A rap — recording the piece. Lower: One of the Stub Club members working with primary pupils

municate effectively their purpose. It was decided that they should produce some story boards and outlines.

Saturday afternoon: Session 4

Assessment The group work continued, and we have amalgamated the orange group again.

All groups worked well, and are well on the way to producing something reasonable. Some people have become so involved that they are continuing to work through free time.

The atmosphere is one of activity and anticipation. There is constant movement in and around the house. The enthusiasm and involvement continues...

Sunday morning: Session 1

Assessment There was a late start due to sleepyheads, but they were all very keen to start work in their groups so that they can present their finished products.

Sunday morning: Session 2

The presentation of their work to each other showed a remarkable quality of work, both in factual knowledge and creativity.

The green group presented a leaflet with a cartoon character called Fagsie, which monitors his progress through the main facts about smoking; a poster of Smokey Joe discussing what he looks like; a board game called *Fag Fax* based on the idea of snakes and ladders. This would be aimed at 7–12 year olds.

The purple group produced a photonovel which, when the photographs were developed, would be produced on laminated boards, with the additional option of creating a leaflet or magazine, specifically aimed at 11–13 year old girls.

The orange group produced four videos, all of which need to be edited. These are *The Cancer Brothers* (related to Blues Brothers); *Rap; Till Death Us Do Part* (a short drama); and *Interview with Smokey Sue*.

Assessment The quality of the work was reflected in the confidence of the young people and their obvious pleasure in their work. They accepted the acknowledgment of their work and were eager to discuss how they wanted to use it.

Several people feel that their self-confidence has been raised, while others need some reassurance.

They are very protective of their work and have made sure that it is safe.

The final session has ended on a high note.

Into school, Part 1...

The Stub Club visited a primary school twice, and found it quite a challenging experience. Initially there were the constraints of a small room, 31 primary pupils, and nine Stub Club members and staff — it was cramped, to say the least! Also initially there was some nervousness on the Stub Club members' part, but this soon melted once they began to work with the children.

They paired off naturally and took a group of about six pupils each. After introducing themselves they began by talking about smoking and asking the children to brainstorm. A member of staff then tried to pull it all together by listing the good and bad things about smoking.

'Fagsie' leaflets were also given out with the facts on which they were to work (also — a mistake — we gave out the Fagsie balloons as well, which became something of a distraction). They were asked to look at a game we had brought for them, and we instigated a poster design competition.

The first session was completed by starting to watch the video *Seven Ages of a Moron* — starring Smith & Jones, of TV fame.

Into school, Part 2...

The second session was spent evaluating the game we left with them and looking at some of their designs for games to get smoking facts over to pupils. This was followed by a discussion and role-play experience to

show them how to say "No" when offered a cigarette.

They enjoyed this, and a Stub Club member integrated with a group of primary girls and took part in their sketch — disregarding his age, size, etc. The winning poster was identified, and finally we finished by watching the concluding part of *Seven Ages of a Moron*.

There was a real sense of achievement (and exhaustion) in the group when we left this time, and I felt they had finally put into practice much of what they have been trained to do.

The next step

Much time was spent on publicising the group (in the local Community Magazine and to parents) and seeking financial support funds to publish the group's leaflets and to buy sweatshirts, badges and so on to make more impact when they present the information to the pupils.

The work this term with Years 7 and 8 will take a similar format, and with funding becoming available a training weekend for the new Stub Club 91/92 can be planned. We hope to recruit from Years 9 and 10 at the Manor School, and use some of the present group as trainers. The project now established should become self-perpetuating, a legacy of concern and action for the pupils in the years ahead.

Contact Mike Rose (Deputy Headteacher), Manor School, Mountbatten Way, Raunds, Wellingborough, Northants. NN9 6ND.

We welcome letters from teachers, governors, parents, school nurses, health education officers, youth leaders, district medical officers, social workers, road safety officers, project and resources personnel — and even pupils! Brief letters may be dictated over the telephone. Just ring us at Exeter (0392) 264722.