Sally is currently transcribing figures from data collected between 1984 and 1990 for a new book to be published soon. It is hoped that these figures will suggest the trends of the young people's lifestyles over this six-year period, enabling teachers and other professionals to see where the strengths and weaknesses lie, and where health promotion initiatives are desirable.

Sally is also processing cheques received for subscriptions to her journal. If you have received an invoice and haven't paid yet, please do! If you don't have a subscription and would like to receive Education and Health on a regular basis please phone for our rates.

Beryl and Di and their band of coders and punchers are beavering away processing the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaires from around the country and also from a large survey completed by the Canterbury and Thanet Health Authority.

John worries about this and that, but mostly that.

Facts and figures about the Hidden Army

Bringing road user education into the NC

Coping with stress at the King's Head

What do young people know about AIDS?

Knowing Me, Knowing You

A new drugs video

Carrie's baby

The term 'child labour' conjures up images of hapless waifs, their feet bare and their faces blackened with soot.

Reading some of the Local Education Authority bye-laws still in force to regulate the employment of children, you might imagine that such an image was appropriate. In some parts of the country it is still prohibited for children to be employed "extracting sugar beet from the ground", as a 'father boy in a barber's shop', working 'under a gang master' or 'swiping chimneyies'.

The danger is that such images, amusing as they are, cloud our understanding of the true nature of children's employment in the 1990s. The fact is that such employment is not confined to the harmless pastime of newspaper delivery. Much of it is unregulated and can place children at risk of economic exploitation, educational disadvantage and physical danger.

The National Child Employment Study, established by the Low Pay Unit and Birmingham City Council Education Department, has just published the results of a survey of 1827 secondary-school children aged 10-16 in Birmingham schools.
The Schools Health Education Unit serves...

School pupils... Over 20,000 have so far filled in our questionnaires. We hold the largest health-related behaviour data banks in the UK.

School teachers... Can reappraise the health education curriculum in the light of their school's questionnaire findings.

Parents... Can express their views about what the school should be teaching, and be involved constructively in curriculum debate.

Governors... Can see for themselves what topics pupils, parents, and teachers value, and with this information can make and defend informed management decisions.

LEA Advisers... Can promote curriculum review in groups of schools by organising joint questionnaire surveys, and can stimulate home-school liaison.

Health Authorities... Can derive data for health surveys as well as participating in health education initiatives, either alone or in collaboration with the LEA.

We have a decade of experience in running questionnaire surveys, ranging in coverage from small village primary schools to whole counties. We have also developed ways of presenting the results in forms suitable for different purposes, whether as a classroom presentation to staff, governors, or parents, or for LEA and Health Authority reports.

Please ring us (0392 264722) if you think we can help or advise with any research or curriculum development work in the field of health-related behaviour and health education.

Vol. 9 No. 1, 1991

- I got my fingers caught in the sole of my shoe.
- I went to hospital because a needle went right through my finger.
- I sliced half of my finger with a knife.
- I was working with a machine and my hand got stuck. It nearly ripped my hand off.

Examples such as these are shocking. But the full effects of unregulated child employment may be much more serious than a few years ago. The last official survey of children's employment was carried out in 1972. It concluded that:

Pupils who spend more of their out-of-school time in employment tend to be less able, less industrious and less well behaved; they attend less regularly, play truant more frequently, are less punctual and wish to leave school at an earlier age than those who work for fewer hours or not at all.

The Emrys Davies report caused considerable public concern and led to the passing, the following year, of the Employment of Children Act. Up to that point, much of the legislation relating to children's employment dated back to the 1920s and 1930s. It has not always been effective.

The Act would have brought the standards applied nationally up to the level of the best LEAs. It would have required that children be registered for employment before the employment was begun, and not afterwards as at present.

The failure to implement the Act was justified by the additional demands it would have placed on hard-pressed local authorities. LEAs are even more hard-pressed today, but more effective protection for children at work is still necessary.

Nobody wants to ban children's employment altogether: it helps children to develop independence and responsibility, while they earn the extra money to buy the next pair of trainers. But, unless we ensure that the work children do is properly regulated, there could be a heavy price to pay in the longer term.

The National Child Employment Study will be issuing a 'good practice guide' for LEAs. It will be pleased to hear from parents, teachers and others who have views and information about working children. Please write to the Low Pay Unit or to Anne Searle at Birmingham City Council Education Department.

Contact: Chris Pond (Director), Low Pay Unit, 9 Upper Berkeley Street, London W1H 4BY.

The report, The Hidden Army: children at work in the 1980s, is available from the Low Pay Unit, price £6.

Reference:

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