

# Be Healthy Project

## Project Summary

A project training sexually exploited young people as 'health advocates', building peer education expertise through direct work and on-line activities. Health Advocates will be offered ASDAN accredited awards and will produce information to improve other sexually exploited young people's access to and experiences of health services.

### Background

Research has shown that sexually exploited young people have multiple undiagnosed health needs, particularly relating to sexual and mental health. Project work with sexually exploited young people shows that they may find it difficult to recognize or understand their rights and needs in relation to health and how to access services for help. The Department of Health recognizes that marginalized, vulnerable young people have poor take-up of health services. The Healthy Child Programme (DH and DCSF) and evaluation of the DH's Teenage Health Demonstration Sites show health inequalities and poor health outcomes disproportionately experienced by vulnerable youth groups who are less likely to access services.

### What are the project aims?

AYPH is leading a partnership with the University of Bedfordshire and the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Young People to implement an innovative model for engaging vulnerable young people and improving their health outcomes. The emphasis is on empowering young people to understand their health rights and needs and enabling them to 'cascade' the information out to other young people in similar situations. The overall aim is to test this youth participation and peer-to-peer model and to improve health outcomes for young people from these vulnerable groups, and in so doing, to learn more about their health needs.

### What does the project involve?

Three local projects working with sexually exploited young people in different parts of the UK have recruited young people to be trained as 'Health Advocates'; up to ten young people in total. In the first year of the project (2011-2012), they will discuss various aspects of their

own health needs and those of their peers, and will work towards an ASDAN Accredited Award in PSHE (personal, social, health and economic education), through participatory workshops and on-line activities. A programme of seven participatory workshops will cover topics such as drugs and alcohol, eating and body image, sex and relationships, and website and leaflet design. Workshops will take place with small project based groups locally and bringing health advocates together for national events.

In the second year, the Health Advocates themselves will identify up to 50 other young people to take part in workshops or other events that they will lead, to cascade the learning, and will work on developing other materials such as a website and leaflets to provide a lasting resource for young people, health professionals and policy makers. Dissemination events will share the findings from the project, 'show casing' useful materials, and offering opportunity for extension of the 'health advocate' training scheme.

The project is funded by Comic Relief and Children in Need.

### **Project timescale**

The project began in Spring 2011, and is due to complete in Spring 2013.

### **Final outputs**

A number of outputs are envisaged for the project, and in the first instance these will include:

- Young people's evaluations of the project and its impact.
- External evaluator report on the success of the project and the organizational learning.
- A regular Be Healthy newsletter
- Series of dissemination activities by the young people, potentially including presentations, innovative media formats, leaflets and a website.
- Reports to the funders
- AYPH Summary Report on the project learning and main findings.

However, we will also be looking for further ways to disseminate the project to a wider audience, and to feed the results into policy and practice development.

### **Contacts for more information**

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Check out the AYPH website at:  
[www.youngpeopleshealth.org](http://www.youngpeopleshealth.org)