

## **Teenage health centre development project / HINT.**

### **Contributors**

HINT (Health Information for Nottingham Teenagers)  
Daniel, Susie

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Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
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HUNT



**TEENAGE HEALTH CENTRE  
DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**



### INTRODUCTION

Growing up has never been easy. The teenage years mark the transition from being a child to becoming an adult. These years are probably filled with the most confusing and rapid maturational changes faced in life – from the physical, pubescent changes, to the growing independence and development of an autonomous personal identity. Alongside these individual changes are the outside influences of rapid social changes and the stresses caused when young people feel they have little control over their future – from the fears of unemployment, to the fear of the nuclear holocaust; from the destruction of the environment, to the reality of being homeless.

At this growing-up stage of life, it is natural to be involved in 'risk-taking' behaviour. Most young people 'test the limits'. They are curious. They imitate adult behaviour and they experiment. It is all part of the natural process of 'finding oneself' and developing a personal identity. The needs of young people at this time are recognised but they do not fit into any existing health care systems – they aren't 'ill' but they are healthy young people in a normal transitional and developmental stage.

The risk-taking behaviour can be dangerous, immediately and to their long-term health. It's an important time to intervene, in a positive manner, to help improve their prospects for a healthy and emotionally satisfying adult life. Feeling positive about oneself and having a high self-esteem are essential elements for reducing risk and increasing health.



### WHAT RISKS DO YOUNG PEOPLE FACE?

The stresses of growing up are immense. Their growing independence can alter the family relationships and cause crisis situations at home. Boy or girlfriend relationships may require outside counselling help. They often feel powerless in defining their own lives. Suicide is the third leading cause of death in the 15-19 year age group and there are indicators that attempted suicides are steadily increasing amongst the young.

Experimenting with drugs and/or alcohol can lead to misuse and life-long problems of addiction. We live in a drug orientated society, with pills for all of our ills, and young people will imitate the adult society around them. Alcohol is perhaps the biggest drug risk because it is such an accepted part of our lives.



Young people face risks in many areas of their lives. Becoming sexual, whether at 13 or 19 years, can be exciting and fulfilling but also involves the risks of unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, cervical cancer, and, most worrying today, HIV infection and AIDS. The age of first sexual experience is consistently becoming younger but the level of knowledge and of information has not greatly increased, with many 'old wives tales' persisting to misinform youth. Sexual abuse is becoming a more recognised, widespread risk and many teens who faced abuse at a younger age need help in adjusting to becoming sexually active in their teenage years.

Homelessness, unemployment and poverty are all factors of disadvantage with obvious negative health influences. These crisis situations all contribute to the depression and lack of self-esteem amongst the young.



## Health Centre Development Project

### WHAT IS "HINT-HEALTH CENTRE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT"?

As a result of work carried out by a Joint Planning Team for Children Working Party on 'Meeting The Health Care needs of Young People', development work has commenced for the **establishment of an independent young people's, full-time health centre in Nottingham.** The Centre will be targeted at those young people who have limited access to, or use of, existing services: **homeless youth who seldom have any primary health care, young people in care or just leaving care, young people with disabilities, minority groups, young mothers, young people from abusive family environments, young unemployed.** Outreach work will play an important role and many entry points to the centre will enable these young people to become involved.



### **WHAT EXISTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN NOTTINGHAM?**

There are existing services for young people, including the primary health care offered by GPs/family doctors and the school health services. For the past three years we have had a Teenage Health Clinic. Initially it was only one, two hour session per week but the demand was so great that it is now opened three sessions every week. The response has been phenomenal with more than 30 young people attending each session. Most of the young people are attending for contraceptive care, or fear of pregnancy. The clinic is staffed by medical officers, nurses, and a clinical psychologist. The overwhelming response has highlighted a great, previously unmet need. Another Health Authority initiative is 45 Cope Street, a centre to meet the needs of young mothers and their babies.

Other agencies and services are available for youth, from schools and youth clubs to Family Therapy counselling. Often, though, young people are caught between the provision for children and adults. There is often little integration between the services and agencies. As a group young people do not refer well between different agencies and they are rarely able to advocate for themselves, often facing bureaucracies which are seldom 'user-friendly'.





### WHAT WILL THE HEALTH CENTRE OFFER TO YOUNG PEOPLE?

The Centre will provide: a programme of activities and events as identified by young people and will contribute to their integrated holistic health care; a crisis intervention centre, where young people can drop-in 6 days a week, from mid-day until 9-10pm, with a 24 hour ansaphone; a cafe where they can come to get a cup of tea, a meal or just some company. There will be a full-time creche for the benefit of young parents.

Important issues that will need to be addressed include:

- HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING
- SEXUAL ABUSE
- SEXUALITY & SEXUAL HEALTH – Immediate pregnancy testing – HIV/AIDS
- RELATIONSHIPS – FAMILY PROBLEMS – BOY/GIRL FRIEND
- PERSONAL IDENTITY
- DRUGS/ALCOHOL
- DISABILITY
- RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND OTHER OPPRESSIONS
- WELFARE RIGHTS
- EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT
- SPORTS INJURIES
- PARENTING AS YOUNG PEOPLE
- PROBLEMS AT SCHOOL
- LITERACY AND NUMERACY

The Centre will facilitate group work with young people on issues raised by the young people themselves; there will be on-going outreach/street work to bring young people into the Centre and to continuously evaluate the immediate needs.



There will be a full information, advice and referral system, as well as crisis intervention counselling for those young people in crisis. They will then be followed up with the provision of relevant services within the Centre.

There will be specific clinical sessions:

- COUNSELLING
- SEXUAL HEALTH – Contraception, Smears, STD Screening & Treatment
- PRIMARY HEALTH CARE – Targeted at homeless young people.

Lots of other activities will take place in the Centre including:

- SELF DEFENCE – PARTICULARLY FOR YOUNG WOMEN
- DRAMA
- MUSIC – PRACTICE ROOMS, MUSIC GROUPS
- SPORT & LEISURE ACTIVITIES – Including aerobics, weight lifting
- ARTS AND CRAFTS

## WHAT IS NEEDED?

A large city-centre building needs to be found to house the Centre. The accessibility of the building, from its location in the city centre to the access for people with disabilities, is the most important aspect. The location in the city centre, and not as a neighbourhood identified centre, will provide greater access to all young people throughout the Nottingham area.

It is important that the Centre is not seen by young people as specifically identified with one agency, such as a health centre or an existing youth club. It should be seen as neutral, though not as a separated and isolated unit but as a complement and supplement to existing services. By offering a variety of services and activities – a cafe, a drama workshop, sexual health clinic sessions or seeing a counsellor – the Centre will provide many non-threatening points of entry to young people.

The structure of the Centre will be as an independent and autonomous project, drawing on a multi-agency base of support and funding. **The Centre will be registered as a limited company with charitable status.** This interagency work and support is essential to create the necessary integrated approach.



Consultations within the statutory and voluntary sectors showed a great deal of support for such a centre. As a result of this work the development work started in May 1990. The Community Unit of the Nottingham Health Authority is funding a project development worker for 18 months and Nottinghamshire County Council is funding an administrator to work jointly on this stage of the development work. A Steering Group has been formed of nominated officers from the various local authority and health authority agencies involved with young people. They aim to have a policy and advisory overview of the development work. A Working Group has been formed of workers and members of provider groups to youth. This Working Group meets monthly to identify the necessary tasks to lead to the securing of funds and the eventual opening of the Centre. Task Groups from the Working Group are looking at the specific issues of youth involvement and funding.

It is vital that this project is developed as a partnership between the voluntary and statutory sectors. The integration of young people's needs also needs to be reflected in the organisation of the Centre, with all relevant groups having an input and involvement. This co-ordination will aim to help to improve the service input throughout all the involved agencies.



## MISSION STATEMENT

To provide a model of holistic health care reflecting the needs of all young people living in the Nottingham area by the establishment of a teenage health centre. This centre will provide a range of counselling, recreational, legal and educational services, together with specialised health services. The services will be accessible to all young people between the ages of twelve and twenty-five. The target group will be young people with specific health needs and those who are most at risk.

## AIMS

The aims adopt the World Health Organisation definition of health:

'HEALTH IS A STATE OF OPTIMAL PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING AND NOT MERELY THE ABSENCE OF DISEASE OR INFIRMITY.'

- To develop a cross-cultural Teenage Centre which will provide an integrated service for all young people in the Nottingham area.
- To promote physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual health, utilising a whole person approach.
- To prevent the occurrence of avoidable health related problems.



## OBJECTIVES

1. To involve young people in the planning, development and co-ordination of the teenage centre.
2. To promote open access to the services provided.
3. To develop services which meet the specific and differing needs of young people, taking into consideration: race, class, gender, sexuality, culture, physical and mental abilities.
4. To develop clinical and counselling services, as well as ongoing recreational and creative programmes incorporating the needs of all young people.
5. To provide an interagency forum for the co-ordination and planning of all health related services for young people.
6. To provide resources, networking and training opportunities for all young people and workers.
7. To undertake research relating to, and reflecting, the health needs and choices of young people; ensuring that the work of the centre continues to meet the changing needs of young people.
8. To provide an ongoing evaluation of the work of the centre in relation to its aims.



HINT has a commitment to an active Equal Opportunities policy in order to counter all kinds of discrimination against individuals or groups.

HINT is committed to putting a coherent Equal Opportunities policy into practice which will enable any young person to have equal access to support and to have equal access to the facilities offered by the project.

To the same end, it is considered important that those employed in the project also reflect, as far as possible, the different social groups in the community at large in order to offer a sensitive provision to those young people who approach the project for advice and support.

There is an Equal Opportunities recruitment and selection policy which endeavours to recruit fairly and efficiently for all available posts.

HINT's day-to-day running reflects its Equal Opportunities policy by positive action in the way young people are welcomed and encouraged to take part in the project.

The teenage health centre reflects on its practice by having active monitoring procedures to ensure that Equality of Opportunity is practised at all levels of the project.

**HINT/BASE 51**

51 Glasshouse Street, Nottingham NG1 3LP  
Telephone: (0602) 241359  
Fax no: (0602) 413371

Project Director: Susie Daniel

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