Making a Difference Conference – Improving health and wellbeing outcomes for young people, Edinburgh, March 1, 2011

Evaluation report

Introduction

The Association for Young People’s Health’s (AYPH) 2011 conference, ‘Making a difference – improving health and wellbeing outcomes for young people’ was a great success, attracting more than 130 delegates and exhibitors. Supported by NHS Health Scotland the event brought together young people and the professionals that work with them including health and education professionals, government officials, youth workers and academics.

We looked at improving health outcomes for young people by taking an asset-based approach to health focusing on supporting young people’s resilience and self esteem rather than looking at particular health concerns. This report sets out the how we performed against our aims and objectives for the day, feedback we received from delegates, a summary of the central themes of the day and key recommendations that we would like to work with NHS Health Scotland and our other partners to take forward.

“A: Aims and Objectives

We agreed the aims and objectives for the day with the planning committee for the conference. They are set out below with our achievements against each aim identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims and objectives</th>
<th>Activities and outcomes</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. To bring together a multidisciplinary audience of those working in young people’s health and with youth.</td>
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<td>i. To reach out to professionals in Scotland, raise awareness about AYPH and good practice in young people’s health and increase AYPH membership in Scotland.</td>
<td>A total of 132 people attended from various sectors including health, education, youth services, housing, government, academia and the voluntary sector.</td>
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<td>ii. To engage existing members and contacts of AYPH from across the UK</td>
<td>A total of 27 were existing AYPH members. We received a small number of new member applications from conference attendees.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Young Scot were members of the planning committee and we worked with them to engage young people from their project and plan the content of the young people’s sessions on the day. We also worked with five organisations to engage young people from their projects. In total 15 young people attended.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To work with Young Scot and other partners to engage young people in the conference</td>
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<td>iii.</td>
<td>In the afternoon a workshop for the young delegates was held – this session was run and planned by the young people, supported by an AYPH trustee and a Young Scot convener. In preparation for the session they had all been provided with camera’s to take pictures of the things which support their wellbeing. They shared the findings from their session in the final plenary of the day.</td>
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<td>For more details about young people’s participation see recommendations.</td>
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2. To provide delegates with research, policy and information about how to positively influence the health outcomes of young people focusing particularly on health inequalities.

   i. To provide delegates with successful examples of promoting resilience and well-being for all young people.

   ii. To provide more focused support for members and potential members in Scotland on this issue.

   iii. To provide delegates with a platform to feedback to AYPH what they would like in terms of support.

   iv. To share case studies and examples of practice from Scotland, UK and Internationally.

   Richard Sangster from the English Government’s Department of Health and Andrew Bruce from the Scottish Government’s Health and Social Care Directorate outlined their respective policy contexts.

   Candace Currie from the University of Edinburgh presented research from the UK as well as an international perspective from the HBSC study.

   Fiona Brooks and Antony Morgan from the University of Hertfordshire presented work on an asset based approach to improving health outcomes for girls.

   Janet Shucksmith from the University of Teesside made the case for youth health, including the protective factors, reducing health inequalities and effective policy implementation.

A wide range of case studies were presented:

- Young people shared their experiences, including Young Scot, who outlined their role as health commissioners, and The Big Shouter, who talked about their work in the field in East Renfrewshire, Scotland.
- Lesley Ross outlined the work of the Glasgow Association for Mental Health’s young carers project and Jane Roberts discussed Australian models of community provision.
- Work in schools in England on Personal, Social and Health Education was presented by Jan Gouveia and Glasgow public health researcher Pete Seaman presented his findings on alcohol.
- Sam Anderson from The Junction, Edinburgh, and Fiona McGrath from The Corner, Dundee, both described the projects they run for young people.
- Robert Blum from Johns Hopkins University, USA, outlined his work on interconnectedness via video.

Presentations were put up on the AYPH website and this report will be shared with all attendees and members.

3. To enable delegates to share their practice and think about how they can more effectively reach young people.

   The parallel sessions in the afternoon included structured discussion to share practice and think about priorities when looking at young people’s health using an asset based approach.

   The market place which ran all day enabled delegates to network and to share practice with the exhibitors.

   Delegates had a chance to network and feedback on sessions throughout the day and completed evaluation forms, many praising the young people’s presentations.

4. To bring together the findings of the event and share with professionals working in youth health, including policy makers across the UK.

   All the presentations from the conference were shared on the AYPH website along with a summary of the main achievements from the day. This report bringing together all the findings from the event is being circulated to all delegates, AYPH members and partners for the project as well as key policy makers from across the UK.
**B: Feedback**

A total of 37 adults and eight young people returned feedback forms, totalling around one third of the delegates.

Results showed that 86% of the adult delegates who responded and 63% of the young people thought the overall event was either good or excellent. Whilst feedback from young people was generally very positive some of the young people felt that they would have benefited from more sessions specifically for young people.

The keynote speeches were rated as good or excellent by 79% of the adult delegates who responded and 76% of the young people.

The parallel sessions were rated good or excellent by 76% of the adults and 88% of the young delegates.

The venue scored highly, with 95% of the adults and 88% of the young people rating it as good or excellent.

The food was rated good or excellent by 94% of the adults and 76% of the young people.

Regarding the exhibition, 89% of adult delegates who responded and 76% of young people thought it was either good or excellent.

**C: Themes from the day and recommendations**

The themes and recommendations from the day have been drawn from feedback we received from parallel sessions, the final plenary session, evaluation forms and the planning group. The recommendations are designed to inform the work of AYPH and its partners across the UK. We hope the principles and actions can be applied within different areas with devolved governments and different health systems.

**Taking an holistic approach**

*Recommendation 1:* The conference underlined the need to focus on a holistic approach to health looking at young people’s general wellbeing. With a holistic approach we can tackle issues at their root cause and look at the underlying reasons for them such as lack of self-esteem or issues related to income, employment, education, access to health and social care, etc. Breaking down the holistic approach we can look at the assets that young people need to be more likely to have good health outcomes.

A holistic approach can also help to facilitate multi-disciplinary work as it embraces a wide range of partners and their different work areas and approaches.

We need better evidence about working with both asset and holistic approaches and AYPH would like to work with others to take this forward and share concrete examples. This might be through working with the Alliance in Scotland which was established in October 2010.

**Young people’s participation at events**

*Recommendation 2:* The event highlights the importance of having young people participating in events which are about them. Delegates gave very positive feedback about their contributions. *My most positive part of the day was... “having young people present – including their contributions, their experiences and their presentations.”* Young people speak about the issues we are considering from a different perspective which is extremely important for professionals working with young people to hear. AYPH will continue to involve young people in all its events and will strive to support partners in doing the same. Those needing
We recognise that young people should be able to access services independently in settings that suit their needs.


Young people’s involvement in the planning process

Recommendation 3: The conference highlights the importance of having young people involved in the planning process for events in which they will play a part. Speakers were briefed about making their content appropriate and young people were given details about the day in advance. For the future we will consider an early slot on the agenda to brief young people about the day and we will ensure that all speakers have clearer guidance about what to avoid in presentations so that they are clear to all participants.

The importance of trusted relationships

Recommendation 4: The importance of trusted relationships for young people, including parents of teenagers, teachers and skilled and competent staff and their value in improving health outcomes and reducing health inequalities was highlighted throughout the day. We would like to see this reflected more in policy and practice in young people’s health. There was particular emphasis on the need to support those caring for young people including parents of teenagers. Some of the data highlighted by Candace Currie highlighted the particularly important role that young women’s relationship with their fathers can play in their health outcomes. Overall the HBSC data shows that family support appears weaker in UK than many other countries.

Partnership work

Recommendation 5: The feedback from delegates throughout the day emphasised the need for partnership work and sharing knowledge between professionals and sectors. This is central to AYPH’s mission and to NHS Health Scotland’s values and principles and we will continue to work with all our partners to look at how partnership work can be increased in relation to youth health.

Flexible service provision

Recommendation 6: The need for flexible health service provision for young people in a range of settings e.g. schools or youth centres was emphasised throughout the day with positive case studies shared in parallel sessions. Flexible services reduce the barriers young people face in accessing health provision. Along with NHS Health Scotland, AYPH will continue to work with its members and partners to stress the need for health services to be provided in settings which meet young people’s needs. AYPH provides a briefing paper on taking health services for young people into the community and those with more specific questions can contact AYPH. NHS Health Scotland provides advice on youth-friendly health services via www.walk-the-talk.org.uk.

The importance of a focus on youth health

Recommendation 7: Many speakers highlighted the importance of prioritising young people’s health. Adolescence is a time when young people face many changes which can impact upon their health status. Within a changing political and policy environment across the UK it is extremely important to maintain a focus on young people’s health issues – and build on it. The health needs of young people can always benefit from being given greater priority by both policy makers and by clinicians. Young people’s health is important not just because this age group has a right to effective health provision, but also because the
appropriate management of adolescent health will pay long-term dividends for individuals and for society. The particular needs of adolescents in the health field are frequently missed because much policy thinking deals with children and adolescents as one age group.

Furthermore adults, even professional adults, often know little about the stage of adolescence, and are therefore unaware that young people do have separate and individual needs where health matters are concerned. AYPH will continue to take forward our work in this area together with NHS Health Scotland our members and partners.

D: Next steps

This report will be disseminated widely and go to all speakers, delegates and AYPH members. AYPH will work with NHS Health Scotland, other members and policy makers to take forward the recommendations.