Ten reasons for investing in young people’s health

There are 7.6 million young people aged 10-19 in the UK, making up 12% of the population. AYPH believes it is important to invest in their health, because:

1. **Adolescence is a critical time for health.** This age marks the beginning of risk-taking behaviour, the start of a sexual life, the first manifestation of many serious long-term conditions, and a time when life-long health behaviours are set in place.

2. **Adolescent health is not improving enough.** The Lancet recently reported higher rates of mortality in this age group than previously and no significant health improvements compared to other age groups. Teen cancer is the leading cause of non-accidental death in young people in the UK. Over 2,500 young people aged 13-24 years are diagnosed each year.

3. **Young people are not getting the health services or information they require.** They are regular users of primary care, but report a lack of satisfaction with communication and understanding of confidentiality.

4. **Good sexual health services, in particular, are critical.** In 2011, 2.1 million chlamydia tests were carried out in England among young adults (15 to 24 years), with over 147,000 diagnoses made. But the chlamydia diagnosis rate dropped by four per cent from 2010-11. This trend must be continued to meet the Public Health Outcomes Framework recommendation.

5. **Teenage pregnancy reduction must continue.** Under-18 conception rates for 2011 were the lowest in England since 1969, achieved by intense work at local level. That effort must continue or rates will start to rise again.

6. **Ignoring chronic adolescent disease costs money.** This leads to more emergency admissions. Diabetes, asthma and epilepsy in this age group resulted in 21,600 hospitalisations in England in 2009-10.

7. **Effects of poor health care in adolescence can last a lifetime.** One third of those aged 11-15 in the UK are overweight, one in six obese. Less than half meet minimum exercise requirements and one fifth of 16-19 year olds smoke. These behaviours have long term health costs unless they are tackled.

8. **Investing in adolescent health has benefits across the spectrum.** 29% of young people in England aged 15 have experimented with illegal drugs at some point and 28% are drinking regularly, which impacts on crime levels, accidents and A&E admissions.

9. **Health inequalities become established.** Poverty and health are intertwined from birth. Adolescence represents a final chance to intervene, before the next generation arrives.

10. **Important new research has brought new insights about, for example, the ongoing development of the brain, setting a new context for how we think about adolescent health.** New data recently confirmed that smoking cannabis before 18 can result in long term damage to the teen brain.

Prevention and early intervention are not just relevant for young children, they are equally possible in adolescence. Commissioning can prevent more expensive difficulties from arising or escalating.

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For background information and references go to www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk
Want to invest in young people’s health effectively?

We can help.

AYPH supports those working in young people’s health. We provide information, training and resources to support the delivery of effective health and wellbeing services to young people. We specialise in:

- **Participation**: Supporting young people’s participation with particular expertise in supporting the engagement from young people from vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- **Evidence**: Gathering research and data about young people’s health to support the work of front line practitioners
- **Meeting need**: Supporting the design of effective and sustainable services to meet young people’s health needs

We offer a range of sources of support for you and your organisation to help in planning and implementing an effective young people’s health offer

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