Young people need to be in their best possible health to achieve their full potential. The Department of Health is committed to improving young people’s health and wellbeing. As part of this commitment the Department funded a two-year programme to establish four ‘Teenage Health Demonstration Sites’ which developed innovative ways to improve young people’s physical and emotional health services. Bolton, Hackney, Northumberland and Portsmouth were chosen to show how services can be developed in a wide variety of circumstances. Each area developed services for young people in health and community settings aiming to reach the widest group of young people. The demonstration sites gained huge experience about building and delivering sustainable services for young people.

This is the second guide in a series of six which present key learning drawn from the independent evaluation of the demonstration sites. The guides are:

1. Involving young people in the development of health services
2. Making health services more accessible to young people
3. Taking young people’s health services into the community
4. Ensuring health services reach all young people
5. Working with partners to improve young people’s health services
6. Planning young people’s health services

Summary

We need to make health services accessible to all young people to improve their experience of services and their health outcomes. When thinking about how to make services more accessible to young people there are some key issues to consider:

- Developing services
  Find out about the services which young people are already using in your area. Make young people and clinicians aware of your service and find effective ways of telling young people what your service offers. Make sure your opening hours and location are not barriers to access.

- Young people’s experience of your service
  It is important that services are welcoming and non judgmental and have clear confidentiality policies in place. Providing a range of health information for young people is also important. Think about how you can improve the referrals process for young people and prepare young people for transition to adult services.

- Staffing your service
  A team of staff experienced at working with young people is key. Think about your staffing needs and prioritise training where necessary.
Why do we need to make health services more accessible?

To improve young people’s experience of services

Adolescence is a time of rapid transition when young people begin to make choices that impact on their health and wellbeing. For some, these choices, place their current and future health at risk. We need to give young people the information, advice and guidance they need to make informed decisions. Too often young people feel that services are not designed to meet their needs. For example, they fear that their consultation will not remain confidential or services are open at inconvenient times. As a result they delay or avoid seeking help and advice.

It’s their right

It is important to remember that young people also have legal rights to adequate health care: Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states: “Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health”. The duty to keep personal information confidential is also clearly linked to Human Rights legislation.

It’s a national priority

‘Healthy Lives, Brighter Futures’ sets out a ten year strategy for bringing about improvements to children and young people’s health and wellbeing. Making health services ‘young people friendly’ is key within this.

To aid the development of young people friendly services, the Department of Health developed the You’re Welcome quality criteria. The NHS Operating Framework for 2009/10 encouraged PCTs to review their provision against these criteria. The Healthy Child Programme: From 5-19 Years Old recommends that ‘all services are delivered in the ‘appropriate environment’ which is children and young people friendly and conforms to You’re Welcome.’

How to make your services more accessible

Box 1: You’re Welcome Quality Criteria

The Department of Health’s You’re Welcome quality criteria state that all young people should have “... access to age-appropriate services which are responsive to their specific needs as they grow into adulthood”. The sites promoted the use of the You’re Welcome quality criteria by community, primary, specialist and secondary health care providers and also worked towards making directly managed services achieve the criteria.

Key messages for the successful implementation of the You’re Welcome quality criteria are:

- Incorporate a commitment to work towards these criteria in the commissioning process and in service level agreements.
- Include You’re Welcome training in the workforce development strategy for all staff including GPs.
- Invest resources to enable dedicated staff time to carry out all aspects of the You’re Welcome roll out process.

To improve health and wellbeing outcomes

As well as being valued by young people, ensuring that health services are accessible will contribute to improving health outcomes for young people, which in turn will have economic and wider benefits for the NHS and society. Improving the ability of services to support prevention and early intervention will be of benefit to all.

An Equality Impact Assessment to accompany the briefing papers will be published in March 2010 on www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk.
Key action points

How to make your services more accessible

What happened at the demonstration sites?

Each of the Teenage Health Demonstration Sites worked to make their health provision more youth friendly. The demonstration sites focused on developing services in which all barriers to uptake were removed or minimised.

The demonstration sites worked to raise awareness of the need for accessible mainstream health services for young people and to provide information about how this could be achieved. As a consequence the profile of young people’s health increased in each of the areas and through the demonstration sites:

- influenced strategic planning and commissioning decisions
- made referral processes more effective, and
- improved young people’s access to services.

Developing services

Find out what young people are currently offered

You should aim to deliver a mixed programme of services in your area including universal and targeted services in both health and non-health settings. Consider what model of service exists in your area and whether it meets the needs of young people.

- Has there been any needs analysis with young people in your area?
- What evaluation of current service provision has taken place?
- Are there services that you can enhance or is there the need for new provision?
- Where would your resources make the biggest impact?

Think about how your location affects what you should provide and ask young people what they want, for example, some demonstration sites found that some young people in rural communities did not want new services specifically identified with sexual health or drugs because they thought that attending these might compromise their anonymity within a small community. You could also consider whether transport links could be enhanced to enable better access to services.

Work with young people to develop your service

Make sure that you involve young people when you are developing a service and that their involvement continues throughout. For more information see Guide One of this series.

Make sure that young people can get to your service

Think about how young people get to your service and whether opening times are convenient. For many young people services provided at or close to their school are the most convenient. Keep in mind that school-based services are most accessible during term time and other provision should be available out of term-time. Consider whether your location is easily accessible by public transport. Opening times should reflect the time it takes for young people to travel to your service. In the demonstration sites some young people

Voluntary sector service manager

"... mix with other professionals and... mix with young people... having chats and being very relaxed and involving young people and developing a service poster... just becoming part of the furniture".

Make people aware of your service.

Professionals and young people need to know how to access your service and when it is available. Word of mouth can be a very effective way of reaching young people and having staff working across a number of services can give them opportunity to raise awareness. Work with young people to develop suitable advertising materials and advertise in places where young people already go. Ensure that information about the service is provided to other relevant organisations and professionals.

"... mix with other professionals and... mix with young people... having chats and being very relaxed and involving young people and developing a service poster... just becoming part of the furniture".

Voluntary sector service manager

"... mix with other professionals and... mix with young people... having chats and being very relaxed and involving young people and developing a service poster... just becoming part of the furniture".

Voluntary sector service manager
travelled considerable distances to reach specialist services, so make sure you advertise widely enough to attract these young people. Where possible consider taking services to where young people are. For more information see Guide Three of this series.

Tell young people what your service offers

Develop young person friendly materials which describe your service in detail. Ensure that someone is responsible for keeping information up to date. Suggestions for effective leaflets can be accessed from You’re Welcome – see resources section. Consider barriers to access, like language, or learning disability and what you can do to overcome them. Hackney created ‘Youth notice boards’ to give to GP practices and other local services. These were created with extensive input from young people and provided information on local youth services.

Make sure that your service is welcoming and not judgmental

Make sure that your premises are inviting to young people, this could mean having regularly refreshed and appropriate reading material in waiting areas, young person friendly posters and other information or entertainment like access to the internet.

Make sure that young people are not asked embarrassing questions in public, that they are listened to and that their concerns are acknowledged. If a staff member has an objection to something on moral grounds, for example abortion, make sure that alternative provision is available for the young person. Make sure that the young person is aware of this provision from the outset.

 “[doctors] … should actually acknowledge what the patient is saying… even if that involves training again… not just saying, ‘Oh that’s your problem, done, there’s your tablet or your cream.’”

Male, aged 18

Provide information on key health issues for young people

Make information about key young people’s health issues available. This could include content such as smoking cessation, healthy eating, alcohol and substance misuse, mental health and wellbeing, and sexual and reproductive health.

The demonstration sites found that providing access to emotional support for young people was very important. In practice this could be incorporated into standard medical appointments. In Northumberland, consultant paediatricians saw young people for specific health concerns but took time to cover other issues such as emotional wellbeing, smoking and sexual health during appointments.

Think about how young people are referred to your service

Encourage flexibility in referral pathways – foster self referral and don’t rely solely on traditional referral pathways. The demonstration sites found that young people were not comfortable asking for help from mainstream services when they were distressed and that they were more likely to approach a professional they knew, like a teacher or youth worker. Promote your service to these groups and encourage them to make referrals. In the case of emotional and mental health work the demonstration sites found that young people preferred to self refer to responsive confidential and non-stigmatising services.
Key action points (continued)

Prepare young people for transition through services

Transition through services is a difficult process as young people move from a service which they trust to new provision. The process is particularly challenging for young people with long-term medical conditions. Make sure that your service has a clear procedure in place and start the process well before transition needs to take place. Where possible work with adult services to encourage them to be more young people friendly.

“I’ve got no more help, they’ve gone. I’ve done what I’ve had to do, but I still need the help, and it’s up to you yourself to get it.”
Female, aged 17 years reflecting on transition to adult services

Staffing your service

Think about your staffing needs

Experienced staff who respect young people are central to making your service accessible to them. It is important to recognise the skills of your current staff and identify the additional skills you need.

The demonstration sites used a number of approaches when recruiting, including adding a recruitment criteria of having experience and skills in working with young people. In some circumstances it might be beneficial to involve young people in the interview process. Young people in Northumberland were trained and supported by youth workers to take part in interviews, their input was extremely beneficial and in every instance the decision reflected the young people’s preference!

Case Study
- You Count, Portsmouth

A senior adolescent mental health worker seconded from CAMHS developed ‘You Count’ a counselling service for 13-19 year olds in Portsmouth. The service was located in a neighbourhood-based drop in centre, schools, sheltered accommodation and youth groups. ‘You Count’ aimed to assist young people within a week of referral. Confidentiality was at the heart of the service, the worker and young person worked together to devise a treatment plan until the young person felt empowered enough to share it with others. The service allowed the young person to decide where to be seen – skate park, café, home. The young person had free access to their notes and a say in what was written about them. The service was advertised in GP surgeries, young people’s magazines, local newspapers, schools, Connexions and websites. Referral was more flexible than under the traditional system (via GPs, to CAMHS). Self referral was possible as was referral directly from schools, families and Youth Offending Teams. The worker found that self referral suited young men and hard to reach young people. By the end of the Demonstration Site Programme the ‘You Count’ worker’s post had become permanent and ‘You Count’ had become a key part of the adolescent health service for Portsmouth.

Prioritise training

It is important to support and train staff around core issues such as, confidentiality, consent and safeguarding. All staff that young people will have contact with, especially those who will be the first point of contact should have the skills and knowledge to deal with young people’s enquiries effectively and in a young person friendly manner.

Staff at the demonstration sites suggested that services would be improved if medical staff were trained to listen to young people in distress. Consider using youth workers or other professionals who are experienced in communicating with young people in stressful circumstances to train any medical staff who have little experience of working with young people.

“Using case studies and evidence from young people themselves is one of the most effective and powerful training tools.”
Manager, Northumberland

Enable staff to work across a number of settings

Having the same trusted individuals delivering services in a number of settings can encourage young people to access new or different services. Staff in the demonstration sites worked with individuals and groups in education and community settings and also provided one-to-one services in traditional health settings.

Partnership working

Consider how to work with other services to provide shared care of patients. For more information on joint working see Guide Five of this series.
Below are a few resources which may be helpful for your organisation when working to make your service more accessible to young people

- **You’re Welcome** quality criteria: Making health services young people friendly. You can access the criteria self assessment tool and guidance at [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

- **Young People's Special Interest Group (YPHSIG):** [www.yphsig.org.uk/](http://www.yphsig.org.uk/) YPHSIG is a network of paediatricians interested in all areas of young people’s health, including young people friendly initiatives such as You’re Welcome.

- **Adolescent Health e-learning project:** The project provides access to free on-line training for health professionals. It is a Department of Health supported initiative run in partnership with NHS E-Learning for Healthcare and professional bodies. For more information and to register go to [www.e-lfh.org.uk/projects/ah](http://www.e-lfh.org.uk/projects/ah)

- **GPs4YP – Resources for General Practitioners:** The Adolescent Health Group of the RCGP launched GPs4YP in November 2009. All GP’s can access resources, news and an online forum through the AYPH website [www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk](http://www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk)

- **“KNOW UR RIGHTS AT THE DOCTORS”:** A poster informing young people of their rights when visiting a doctor designed by young people, as part of a project commissioned by the General Medical Council and undertaken by the National Children’s Bureau. To download a copy visit: [www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/news_consultation/children_and_young_people.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/news_consultation/children_and_young_people.asp)

- **Young People Friendly websites:** AYPH has a section of its website for young people which includes links to a range of health websites. Go to [www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk](http://www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk) and click on information for young people. Sites such as Teenage Health Freak [www.teenagehealthfreak.org](http://www.teenagehealthfreak.org) and Youth Health Talk [www.youthhealth.org](http://www.youthhealth.org) are useful tools for both young people and for practitioners.

- **Transition: moving on well:** This good practice guide on effective transition to adult services produced by the Department of Health and the Department of Children, Schools and Families can be accessed at [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

### Contact details

For more information about the Teenage Health Demonstration Sites and other work that the Association for Young People’s Health is undertaking to share the learning they have generated contact AYPH: Tel: 0207 022 1885 email: info@youngpeopleshealth.org.uk

### Thank you to...

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### Footnotes


Department of Health and Department of Children, Schools and Families (2009) Healthy Child Programme – From 5-19 years old.