

# YoH! Youth on Health

## Brief description

YoH! -Youth on Health, is funded by Leeds Primary Care Trust and is a partnership between Leeds PCT, Leeds Healthy Schools, Education Leeds, schools, Youth Services, and the Project West Yorkshire Youth Association, and supports the Citizenship & Investors in Pupils initiatives. Established in 2002 YoH! aims to provide; children and young people with the opportunity to share their experiences and concerns, and learn about health and health related issues, supported by the opportunity to influence decisions and policies on health, at local, school, city and national level.

There are six YoH groups, five for primary school aged children, based within the city's wedges and a sixth YoH! held centrally for secondary aged young people. Each YoH holds two meetings a term, where the young people meet, play games, discuss issues, share ideas, and think about how they can take what they have learnt back to their schools. YoH members host 'Young Delegate' events, where they meet with representatives from different organisations and agencies that have a responsibility for children and young people's well being.

The children and young people who volunteer to participate in YoH meetings are nominated or elected by their schools or parent organisations and some represent their school councils or healthy school forums. Through the close links with the schools and parent organisations, ideas shared at YoH! meetings can be fed back to improve the health of all, either through formal reports, the newsletter, DVDs or in the creation of information leaflets.

## Funding

Leeds PCT, Leeds Children's Fund

## Staffing

3 part-time staff.



## Nature of provision

### Which groups of young people does the project work with?

Any – those sent by schools to represent them – we try to encourage those that would benefit from informal education.

### What are the main health approaches used and activities offered?

Any health issue raised by the children and young people. Health is considered in its widest form and emotional, spiritual, environmental, physical, healthy eating would all be included. These themes are then further divided e.g. crime, bullying, school food, play, recycling.

The children and young people pick their themes and explore through the medium they are comfortable with – drama, art, words, music, supported by youth workers and specialist artists.

### How are young people involved in shaping the project/programme?

Children and young people are able to define health in their terms, decide which issues/topics are important to them, what they want to see changed and how, who they need to influence and share

their message with and how they will do this. Children and young people evaluate every session and the whole programme making recommendations for future groups.

**How does the project respond to the needs of different young people, particularly the most marginalised?**

The programme is inclusive, responding to and supporting individual needs. Using a range of creative mediums and being flexible in their use enables children and young people to share their experiences, concerns and ideas.

**Outcomes**

**How do young people benefit from their involvement in the project?**

Children and young people report that they have grown in confidence, they have made new friends and worked with people from different back grounds. They are encouraged and allowed to share their experiences and ideas, to talk in small and large groups and be a link with their schools reporting back to them. They all develop their understanding of health and gain information such as how to apply sun cream or 'what is a portion'? They develop their skills in a range of creative mediums and conference planning, facilitation, presentation and evaluation.

**How do others (other groups of young people, organisations or the wider community) benefit from the project?**

Members of Youth on Health represent their schools and city. They take back and encourage their schools to adopt the good practice they hear. The group acts as a sounding board for different organisations wanting to talk to children and young people. These include CAMHs; school dinners; free school dinner take up; road safety and accessing services. As children and young people interested



in health, they use their enthusiasm and expertise to work with other children and young people to bring about positive change, such as Can't Wait to Be Healthy, Childhood Obesity Strategy, Young People's Transport Scrutiny Panel, and Leeds Children Plan.

**Does the project contribute to local health priorities? If yes – which ones, and how?**

Yes – reduction in childhood obesity and increasing healthy eating and

physical activity.

**How are young people's progress and achievements captured/measured and recorded?**

The children and young people decide on what changes within their schools they want to make and how, who can help them and when they will do it by. These actions are then reported back at the next session and recorded. The children and young people decide if they have personally gained, staff can also confirm

changes in behavior and attitude, a growth in confidence, skills and knowledge.

**Measuring effectiveness**

**How is the project's work assessed or evaluated?**

The children and young people evaluate the programme and schools decide if the programme is benefiting

them. It is overseen by a professional steering group, chaired by a member of Education Leeds' Healthy Schools Programme.

**What are the findings of any evaluations to date?**

Findings would suggest that schools have become healthier, that YoH provides small actions that children and young people feel they can act on and share with their peers, so encouraging participation and a change in culture. Children and young

people can see results and so believe they have the power to bring positive change and improve their lives. This in turn increases their responsibility for their lives.

**What factors help the delivery of healthy youth work?**

Factors that help delivery – the participation that underpins the work, the combination of youth workers and artists. The partnership supports the work between: Leeds PCT; Education Leeds; Healthy Schools programme; schools and the project; and West Yorkshire Youth Association.

**What factors hinder this work?**

- Transport
- Differences in understanding participation
- Ways of working
- Organisational cultures
- Expectations of children and young people
- funding

**Partnership/ multidisciplinary working**

**What other agencies do you work with on a regular basis?**

Leeds Youth Service, Health Schools, school nurses, schools.

**When working in partnership, what is the distinctive contribution of your organisation/project?**

We use our experience of participatory working and informal education to enable the children and young people to take control of the agenda and share their experiences, ideas and needs.

Has this partnership resulted in greater collaboration or increased understanding between partners? Please give examples



Breakfast gives you energy for the day so you can do and learn more.

Parents could come to Breakfast Club or have their own room.

**Things we should do**

- 1) Exercise—walk to school
- 2) Eat 5 portions of fruit and veg a day
- 3) Eat a balanced diet -you can still have treats
- 4) Get enough sleep
- 5) Watch less TV including console games - Play out - exercise more



Yes – other initiatives have come from this work. The partnership has developed, and the value and contribution of participation recognised.

### Strategic impact

**Do you consider this project to be innovative, in terms of healthy youth work?**

Yes – enabling large groups of children and young people to work together, from a wide range of backgrounds, means a range of issues and solutions are shared. Meeting during the school day,

gives the programme a high profile in schools and requires schools to invest in the outcomes. Using informal education to support children and young peoples learning and personal development.

**How do you disseminate the learning from the project?**

Training is offered to professionals including teachers, mentors and school nurses. A termly newsletter shares the good practice and ideas and demonstrates the changes that YoH reps are making. YoH is used as an example of good practice for the city’s Participation Evaluation Tool.

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