

Children & Young People PSC	CYP/21/12
4 October 2012	

Young Essex Assembly

Written updates on work carried out on behalf of the Young Essex Assembly

Enquiries to Graham Redgwell Tel: 01245 430360

grahamr@essex.gov.uk

A) Bullying, Crime and Feeling Safe Subgroup

The Young Essex Assembly (YEA) is the elected youth council for Essex. Young people are elected for a 2 year term of office in elections held across Essex. In 2010, the current YEA members were elected by over 8,000 young people and at the time of voting, young people were asked to identify what they thought were the most important issues for young people in Essex. The top four issues would then become the work focus for the subgroups of the YEA. One of these therefore became the 'Bullying, Crime and Feeling safe' subgroup.

The south area sub group have focused on bullying for the last 18 months. At the beginning of their term of office, the Young Essex Assembly as a whole, held a conference for schools called 'The BIG Involvement Event'. The event took place on Tuesday 22nd March 2010 at Towerlands in Braintree and offered schools across Essex the opportunity to bring pupils along to express their views on the issues that came top in the Young Essex Assembly survey. The day consisted of different workshops for young people, these were:

- Bullying, Crime and Feeling Safe
- Negative Images of Young People and Stereotypes
- School, Education and Exam Stress
- Smoking, Drugs and Alcohol

One of the outcomes from The BIG Involvement Event was that young people did not always feel safe and that they were not sure who to talk to.

Following this event, the Bullying, Crime and Feeling Safe Subgroup decided to run a day for young people to focus on the issues that had been identified. This was called 'Keeping young people safe from bullying'. Here, schools were invited to take part in a day of drama, workshops and different scenarios linked with bullying. Guest speakers gave inspirational talks to the young people about their own experiences with being bullied and how they have overcome this.

In more recent times, after doing research into the subject and linking up with Julie Keating, Principal Officer (Anti Bullying and BAPs), the subgroup discovered the service being offered by schools to young people differed from person to person, school to school and teacher to teacher. Due to this, the subgroup have now turned their attentions to focus on

teacher training and trying to get a standardised bullying policy throughout schools in Essex. To do this they have looked at different approaches that staff can use when dealing with bullying, and the best ways for young people to get the advice they need. They have been in touch with Ofsted for help and support on the subject.

The subgroup are also looking to link up with Peta Ullmann, Manager of the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Service. The EMT Service are planning a training day for teachers on the 16th November and have asked the bullying subgroup to address the conference. This is still in the early stages of development but the group are hoping this will go ahead.

Feeling safe is going to be their next piece of work and to do this they are going to look into a some sort of publication for other young people. To go with this they are also looking into working closely with Essex police in online safety.

B) EATING DISORDERS

A group of young people who sit on the Young Essex Assembly, started working with Cllr Aldridge, to tackle the issues relating to eating disorders in young people in Essex.

In the Spring of 2011, the young people designed a snap shot survey to find out, in the first instance, if young people believed eating disorders to be an issue amongst their peers. Over 300 young people took part in the survey with over 80% saying that it was an issue.

Following the results of the survey, in Spring 2012, the young people then met and devised a series of questions to be discussed in more depth in focus groups.

Topics for discussions were:-

- Knowledge and understanding of what an eating disorder is
- The issues that may affect someone developing an eating disorder
- What role do schools play/ help and support in school
- Where young people can go to get support
- The impact of friends and family

Focus groups took place across the county with a representative sample of young people from a variety of backgrounds and an additional 42 young people gave their views.

Key findings from these discussions identified:

- The majority of young people taking part in discussions appeared to think that young people do know what an eating disorder is

- The most frequently discussed issue around young people not knowing what an eating disorder is, was the overall lack of awareness and information given either in school or by family members
- The most common things that young people thought had an effect on those who develop an eating disorder or not were home life, financial situation, bullying, mental health, and the influence of the media
- The majority of young people said they would get support either from family members or doctors/ NHS for issues relating to eating disorders
- Eating habits were discussed fairly frequently, with young people suggesting that what they eat, heavily depends on the influence of family and friends

Since the focus groups, the intention is to meet with the young people and health professionals from the NHS. This is temporarily on hold with the cabinet member for children and young people now changing; however, the proposal is that once we have a more final view of what young people think, we will explore the viability of taking this forward as a project for a youth scrutiny panel to look at eating disorder support services in Essex. (There are two reports which have been produced from this work, one on the snap shot survey and one for the focus groups- please contact the Involvement Team if you would like to see copies of these)