AYPH

be healthy

booklet

animated film

resources

by young people

for young people and professionals

This booklet, and the accompanying animations, were created by the Be Healthy Health Advocates. It was completed as part of the AYPH Be Healthy project.

It is a booklet by young people, for young people and the professionals who support them.

For copies of the booklet email:
info@youngpeopleshealth.org.uk

To view and download resources visit:
www.ayph-behealthy.org.uk

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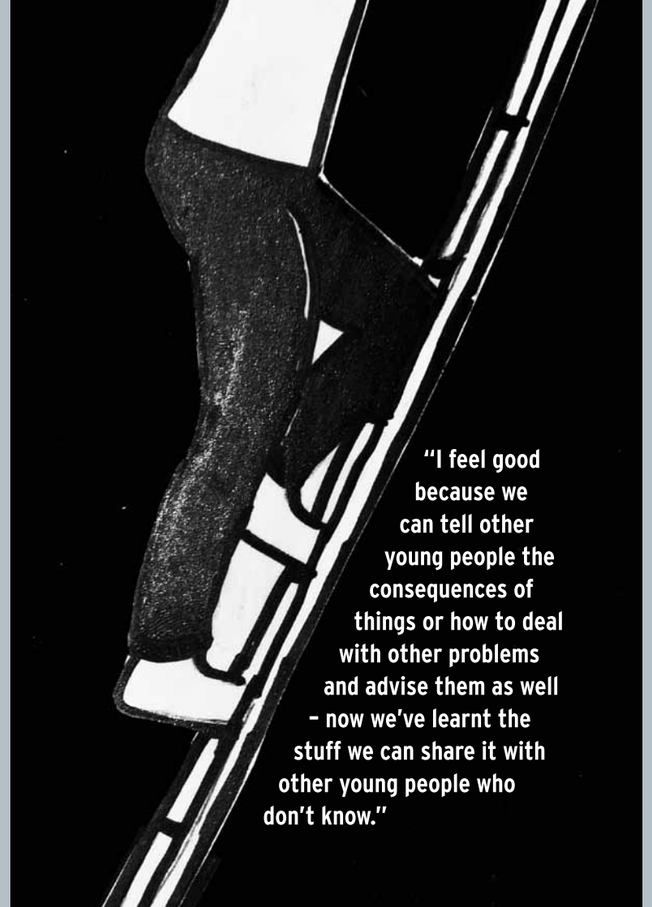
who we are

The AYPH Be Healthy Project worked with a group of ten young people from three different regions of England. Together they trained to be **Health Advocates** - researching and identifying barriers that young people affected by sexual exploitation may face when accessing health services. They addressed a wide range of topics including **substance misuse, body image, sexual health and emotional health.**

This booklet is part of that work and a chance to share their views, knowledge and experiences with a wider audience. We hope it will be used by young people to think about the issues they are facing or by professionals to initiate important conversations with young people.

From this point forward, it is written in our own words, talking about health and access to services the way that we talk. It is also all our own artwork!



"I feel good because we can tell other young people the consequences of things or how to deal with other problems and advise them as well – now we've learnt the stuff we can share it with other young people who don't know."

we are young women and young men

- sharing knowledge with young people
- sharing expertise as young people & service users
- sharing knowledge with professionals
- getting our voices heard
- learning MORE
- identifying & recognising RISKS
- helping OTHER young people
- working with other young people across England
- sharing different points of view
- respecting ONE another
- working together WITHOUT conflict
- developing CONFIDENCE

understanding health

What do we think about when we say the word 'health'? It's about how we all feel, physically - in our bodies and emotionally or mentally - in our minds.

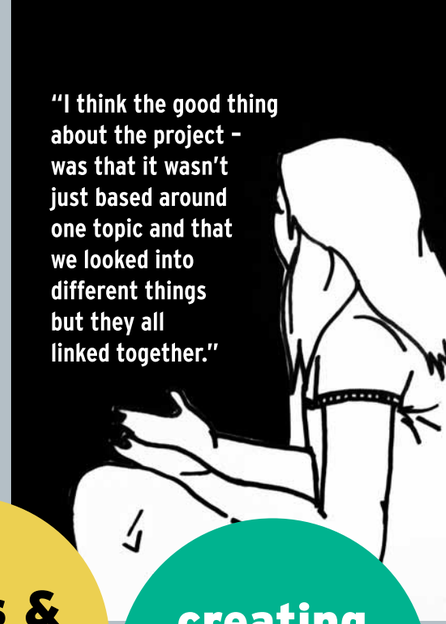
Everyone is different. We're all affected by things in different ways.

thinking about health

The project helped us to think about health in different ways: recognising how different issues link together. We also thought about how events in our lives impacted on our health.

We looked at some health issues that young people face in terms of root causes (what leads to a health issue or problem) and consequences (what happens as a result of that health issue or problem). Often, when something goes wrong in one part of your life, it makes other parts of your life more difficult. **Nothing's ever simple!**

Over the next few pages we share some of our views and experiences of dealing with different areas of health like:



self-esteem & mental health

body image

drugs & alcohol

creating healthy relationships

There are lots of other important health issues we haven't included but we chose these because we think they're important to lots of young people affected by sexual exploitation.

self esteem and mental health

'Self-esteem is how you think about yourself, the opinion you have of yourself. If you have low self-esteem, the thoughts you have about yourself tend to be negative and focus on what you think are your weaknesses. Having a low opinion of yourself can make you more prone to mental health problems such as eating disorders, depression or anxiety and phobias'.

definition from: youngminds.org.uk

Lots of us wanted to talk about 'low self-esteem'. This is a really big issue for lots of young people.

We tried to think about what leads to low self-esteem (the root causes) and what might happen if you are struggling with low self-esteem (consequences).

We found that low self-esteem can be a vicious circle. Have a look at what we talked about.

causes could be...

- feeling nervous or like you don't fit in
- being forced to do things you don't want to
- dealing with difficult things that happened in the past
- peer pressure
- being bullied or put down by someone
- worrying about how you look
- having a difficult relationship with a family member or partner

We know everybody is affected differently by these issues. Having low self-esteem can affect lots of different areas of your life - school, college, work, relationships, your social life.

consequences could be...

- Feeling anxious or nervous ✔
- Feeling sad or depressed ✔
- Not taking care of yourself ✔
- Risky or unhealthy dieting ✔
- Putting yourself in risky situations ✔
- Harming yourself ✔
- Lacking confidence to ask for help ✔
- Getting involved in unhealthy relationships ✔
- Taking drugs or alcohol to feel better about yourself ✔

body image

We talked about body image and how it's something that a lot of young people worry about. There are lots of messages in the media about beauty that are really **unrealistic** and **unachievable.** These messages put people under **pressure** to look a certain way. They can make you feel quite **unhappy** about how you look.

what is beauty anyway?

We learnt that ideas about what is beautiful have changed over time and across different cultures. That means there is no right idea about what is beautiful or how you should look?

Why aren't there more alternative images of beauty in the media? Men and women of different sizes and styles?

So, what causes us to worry about the way we look...

- celebrity culture
- friends
- peers
- BBMs
- facebook
- fashion
- magazines
- pressure!

Magazines are: rude!, obsessed with weight, airbrushing everyone, promoting cosmetic surgery, sexist, un-natural body shapes, lollipop looks (big hair/ tiny bodies), clones, fake!, criticising everyone, making lots of money for the beauty industry

consequences

Sometimes you feel like you can't win because people criticise you no matter what you do!

It's no wonder sometimes young people don't have any self-confidence!

but...

If you're happy with your body it's got nothing to do with anyone else.

We think that confidence and feeling comfortable with yourself is really important - much more important than how you look or dress.

"I have a different perspective now about things. Like before I think I used to judge people a lot more but I think I realise more now that everyone's different and they're their own person."

AcCePTanCE

drugs and alcohol

One issue we talked about was drugs and alcohol. Young people take drugs and alcohol in lots of different situations: at home, parties, outside, inside, with friends, or with people you've just met. There are lots of different reasons why young people use drugs and alcohol. Here are some that we talked about:

because you **don't see any danger**

curiosity wanting to experience things **for yourself**

wanting to **fit in or feel cool**

trying to block out **emotions and experiences you can't bear to think about sober**

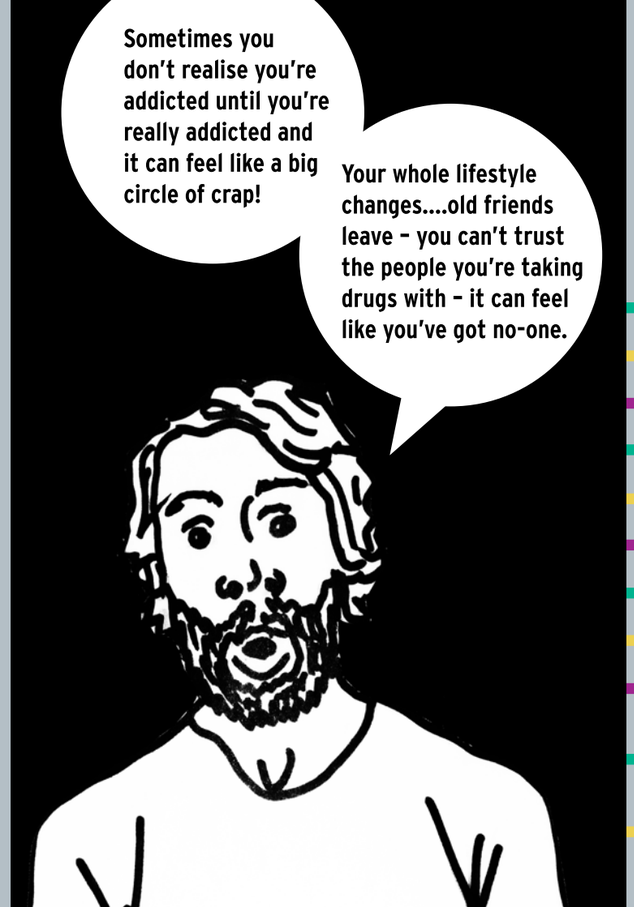
feeling low **or down**

Force or coercion from others

to have a good time

because they are **there**

peer pressure **or being enticed**



There are lots of different consequences. These depend on what you take, how much and in what circumstances. Here's some we recognised.

consequences could be...

- No money ✔
- Feeling tired and crap the next day ✔
- Bad skin ✔
- Being moody, paranoid or insecure ✔
- Not doing well at school ✔
- A trip to the hospital ✔
- Falling out with some of your friends ✔
- Becoming involved in anti-social behaviour ✔
- Getting addicted or becoming dependent ✔
- Getting trapped in a relationship that isn't positive ✔
- Losing your inhibitions... ...and then feeling used ✔

creating healthy relationships

Throughout the project we talked about what makes a healthy relationship? We talked about the need for **love** and **respect** and for someone to make you **feel good about yourself.**

Healthy relationships let you be **honest**, **be yourself** and are **never controlling.**

Despite this we know that sometimes young people find themselves in relationships that feel difficult, controlling, abusive or exploitative.

Power imbalances can create risk in relationships. They can make you more vulnerable to being controlled or even abused. We talked about some of the reasons relationships can be unequal:

are you and your partner **equal?**

- ✔ **Physical power and strength**
- ✔ **Differences in self-esteem and confidence**
- ✔ **Age and maturity**
- ✔ **Knowledge and intellect**
- ✔ **Money - financial differences**
- ✔ **Sexual power**
- ✔ **Emotional control**
- ✔ **Drug and alcohol dependencies or addictions**
- ✔ **Family and community – what pressures are you under?**

You don't ever think that sexual exploitation is going to happen to you - it's not always like how you see it on TV or how you expect it to be.

There's a stereotype of people who sexually exploit and if they're not like that you might not realise what's happening. They could be young and good looking, or the same age as you, or female – it can be anyone and it can happen to anyone.

links to sexual exploitation

So what does all this stuff have to do with sexual exploitation? And what is sexual exploitation anyway? Here's how we made the connection.

Sexual exploitation is some one taking advantage of you sexually, for their own benefit. Through threats, bribes, violence, humiliation, or by telling you that they love you, they will have the power to get you to do sexual things for their own, or other people's benefit or enjoyment (including: touching or kissing private parts, sex, taking sexual photos).

As defined by the Young Women's Group, New Horizons: 2008 (the NIA project & The Children's Society)

low self esteem

"I've learnt about low self-esteem and how it affects other things and might lead to different situations. It's also opened my eyes more to sexual exploitation. I've learnt more about the signs and become more aware of it. I can see now it might link to other things like mental health, self-esteem or your peers."

Everyone of us has 'mental health' issues and deals with low self-esteem at some point in our lives

It's good to find out where there are places near to you that you can go to get help

Emotional health is important – especially not keeping things in when you do need to talk

"I think the body image session - I think its made me feel like – I don't need to be really skinny and I should feel confident in my own skin. Looking how the ideal body and beauty changed over time – its made me realise that there isn't one way that you should look – I think its just how you feel comfortable and confident."

body image

We think that there are links between messages from society about how you should look and how young people feel about themselves. Lots of young people feel really unconfident about their appearance.

Sometimes this can be used by other people. They can try to control you by making you feel bad about yourself. Sometimes your partner or other people might even try to control what you wear and how you look. Nobody has the right to do this.

drugs & alcohol

Sometimes using drugs or alcohol feels like an **escape** if you're being exploited.

Sometimes young people's use of drugs or alcohol puts them at **risk** of being exploited.

Sometimes other people use drugs or alcohol to make you more **vulnerable** to exploitation.

For example, we questioned why it's always **straight vodka and spirits** that get handed around at certain parties – it tastes awful – so why do people make us drink it straight?

Why do they want us to get really drunk?

"Through our discussions, I've become more aware about society and the ways people can manipulate other people. We talked about how people use drugs and alcohol to sexually exploit and I could see that there can be more than one cause and more than one consequence for every situation.

There are difficulties in people's lives that can make them get into bad situations and it can be hard to recognise risks in your own life."

some useful numbers

If you'd like to talk to someone in confidence about any of the issues we've raised, here are some places we recommend.

sexual exploitation or abuse

NSPCC Childline: 0800 1111

Missing People: call/text: 116 000
email: 116000@missingpeople.org.uk

self-esteem & mental health

Young Minds: youngminds.org.uk
020 7089 5050

Samaritans: 08457 90 90 90
email: jo@samaritans.org

body image & eating disorders

BeatYouthline: 0845 634 7650
text: 07786 20 18 20
email: fyp@b-eat.co.uk

drugs & alcohol

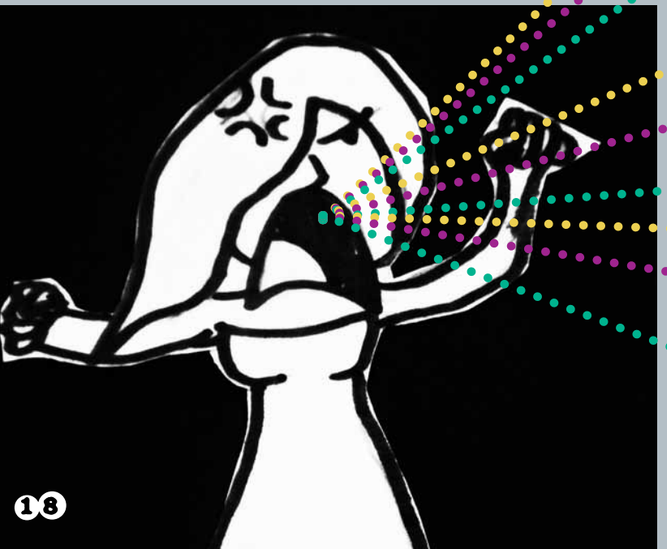
FRANK: 0800 77 66 00 / talktofrank.com

sex & healthy relationships

Brook: 0808 802 1234 / askbrook.org.uk

getting help

We know that asking for and getting help can be really difficult. There are lots of reasons why young people might not want to ask for help or find it hard to accept help from a service. These are some of things a young person might be worrying about or thinking:



I don't think I've got a problem so why would I go and see someone about it? I can deal with things on my own!

I'm not ready to change. I'm not ready to talk about it and I don't want to be told what to do.

I'm not sure services can help me: I don't know if my problem is serious enough for this project.

I'm 17 so most young people's services won't even think about taking me.

I'm worried about people judging me: My friends will laugh at me.

I'm a young man – I'm not supposed to ask for help.

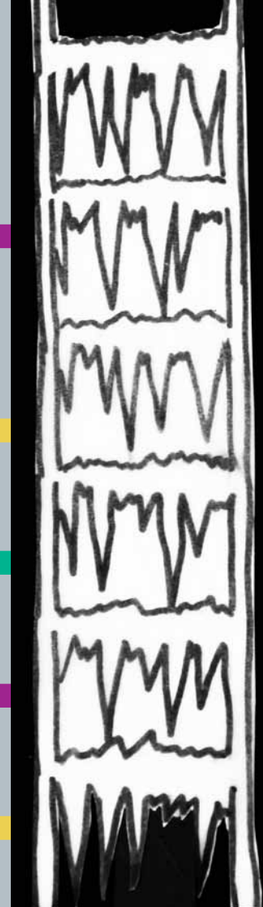
People will think I'm stupid if I tell them I've been feeling sad.

I'm frightened about what will happen if I tell someone: how many people will get involved in my life?

I've got too many other things to worry about right now.

but...

- If you're starting to think about or have accepted help you have probably already done a lot of the difficult work. Feel proud.
- It's normal to take a long time to be able to trust someone again. Don't worry if you need to spend the first few months just building up a relationship with someone rather than working on issues.
- Tell your worker what works for you and what doesn't. If talking makes you uncomfortable, what about writing, or drawing?
- You are not the only one! Sexual exploitation happens to all genders, all sexual orientations, ages, races and classes.
- Find out if there are opportunities to work with other young people who have had similar experiences. Trust us, it helps.



"Getting help and recovering from difficult experiences can feel like climbing up an icy ladder. You're trying to get up but you keep slipping. When you hit rock bottom it's really hard to get on that first step. You feel like noone cares. Sometimes when people try to help, you end up pushing them away. You want help but at the same time you don't want help.

You need your own willpower to make the first step but people can support you once you've taken that step. You just need to wait for the sun to come out to melt the ice. Having people to support you is a big help. People who care and will stick around. And it's about making sure that you fight your way to the top."

using services

We talked about our ideal service. It's about workers but it's also about what services offer and how they deal with confidentiality.

Here's what we want (and what we should be able to expect):

workers who are

- Understanding ✔
- Non- judgemental ✔
- Someone you can relate to ✔
- Not trying to be someone they're not or trying to 'act young' ✔
- 'Unshockable' ✔
- Calm and reassuring ✔
- Not pushy; they give you freedom to talk or not ✔

services that

- Are honest and transparent: explain what they can (and can't) help with ✔
- Make us feel wanted
- Make us feel normal – not like victims ✔
- Offer us choices and opportunities ✔
- Provide a confidential service – as much as possible ✔
- Work at our individual pace
- Give us a choice about how to express ourselves ✔
- Provide a chance for dialogue: letting us and our workers be heard ✔
- Show consistent support: allow us to work with the same person over time ✔
- Support us to build good self-esteem: its something that lots of us struggle with ✔
- Help us to help ourselves
- Help us with different issues – so we don't have to go to different services for each problem ✔

"A young person doesn't want to feel like a victim – make them feel normal and reassure them that they're not the only one"

"If services don't make it easy for young people to say 'no' to them they might just find other ways to avoid them – turning off their phone or giving stupid excuses!"

"It's too risky not to help these young people. You need to be willing to spend money now because if not you will end up spending more money later on anyway."

"Services shouldn't force you to talk about stuff if you're not ready."

And some things that we don't find helpful

workers who

- Pass us around from one worker or service to the next making us retell our story
- Are snobby and patronising
- Make us feel labelled, or judged
- Judge or blame our family and parents
- Don't tell us when confidentiality is going to be broken

about confidentiality

As young people using services we know that information sometimes needs to be shared to keep us safe BUT we also think it's really important that this is done in the right way. We need to understand, how, where, when and why information gets passed on.

Services that

- Don't explain things properly
- Treat us like a victim and show that they feel sorry for us
- Force us to talk
- OR don't ask if we want a chance to tell our own story
- Feel embarrassing to use

"I would rather that services are straight up at the beginning about confidentiality. Otherwise they tell you it's confidential and then you end up telling them stuff and then they pass it on and say 'oh we're worried about you and we had to tell someone' and then you get more angry."

When confidentiality gets broken and we haven't been properly prepared or informed about it, we can:

- Feel let down
- Stop trusting the workers and services that are there to help us.
- Stop being honest with professionals
- Stop using all services and support

so if it does happen

Whoever broke confidentiality without preparing or informing us should apologise. We understand that mistake happen.

We can make a complaint - it is our right to.

We can ask if it's possible to work with a different worker.

We can expect...

- To have the confidentiality policy explained, including what it means in practice
- To be reminded of this regularly
- Information to be shared only if necessary
- If information is passed on, to be told why, who will be told, and what might happen
- Never have our files left lying around
- Never be gossiped about to colleagues or other young people!
- To have our views respected even if our worker doesn't agree

looking after Ourselves

We know that everyone deals with things differently. There's no right or wrong way.

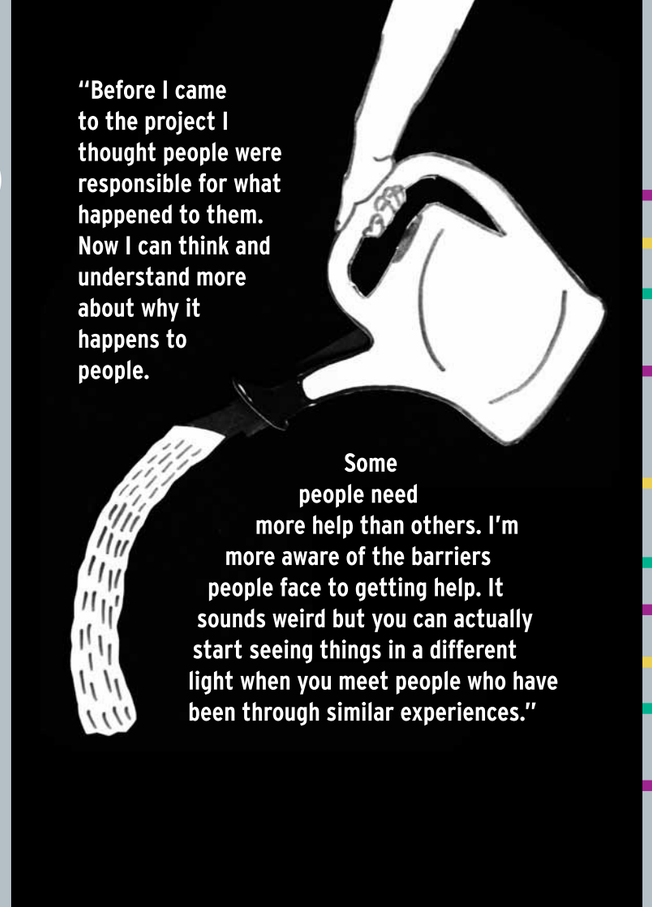
Here are some things that helped us stay safe and get through when times were hard. We have divided these into two groups:

protective factors:

things in our life that help us when things get difficult

coping strategies:

positive things that we can do to make us feel better about ourselves



protective factors + coping strategies

- Having a family member or adult you trust to talk to ✔
- Having a routine ✔
- Having a safe space ✔
- Being registered with a doctor you trust ✔
- Having someone to ask 'is what I'm feeling or dealing with normal?' ✔
- Being around people who don't judge you ✔
- Eating healthily ✔
- Having a good friend to talk to ✔
- Being cautious about taking risks ✔
- Having something to do and work towards ✔
- ✔ Do an activity that you enjoy
- ✔ Have a day out with someone you're close to
- ✔ Spend time with a pet
- ✔ Relaxation techniques
- ✔ Reach out to people (don't withdraw)
- ✔ Reward yourself – allow yourself a treat
- ✔ Feel grateful for what you've got
- ✔ Do something for someone else
- ✔ Take all the time you need to move on
- ✔ Talk to people in a similar situation
- ✔ Accept yourself

Sometimes we do things to feel better that might not be as good for us or keep us safe in the long term. These are some less healthy coping strategies we talked about.

but...

- Know that you're not the only one
- Don't be afraid to talk to somebody – some people out there will help you
- Whether you're a young man or a young woman don't be afraid to speak out
- Try to learn about what services and help are out there for young people
- If you're not happy with how a professional has treated you, it's your right to make a complaint and ask for another worker
- You will probably have to have to deal with what you've experienced one day, but deal with it when you are ready
- Know your limits
- Try to be a good role model to others
- Believe in and value yourself because whatever anyone says, you matter!

messages for professionals

We think this whole book will be helpful for professionals but we've also come up with these special messages to help you work with us more effectively.

Value young people no matter who they are or what they have done!

We don't feel like we know enough about mental health - people often don't talk to us about it. There's not enough awareness or help out there.

Young people don't want to be sent to a different service for every different problem that they are dealing with. They want someone to help them work through a variety of different issues, recognising that they're often connected.

Take low self-esteem seriously – it's a big issue for lots of young people and for lots of different reasons.

Young people don't have many opportunities to talk about body image. We found it useful in this project to have space to think critically about where ideas about the 'ideal body' and beauty come from. It helped us feel more confident.

messages for professionals

Young people often need help with lots of issues – sometimes at the same time.

Don't judge young people for what they have done, or might be doing – you might not fully understand all the reasons for this.

You need to understand that if someone is addicted to drugs or alcohol and being exploited then the person (or people) exploiting them want them to continue taking drugs. It makes them dependent on them and isolated from their friends. Try to understand how difficult it can be for that young person.

Make sure young people have all the information they need about where they can get help if, and when, they are ready to accept help.

Consider helping young people's families to get support as well.

Lots of community drug and alcohol services are for young people over the age of 18 Think about what support you can provide for young people under 18 who are dealing with substance misuse.

Share our film and booklet widely. Also print out copies of our leaflet "You Get Me?" and give them to the young people you work with. All of this is also available on **ayph-behealthy.org.uk**

thank you!

This project would not have been possible without our partner projects:

Believe in children
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