

The background of the page is a vibrant green with a complex geometric pattern of overlapping triangles and polygons in various shades of green, creating a dynamic and modern feel.

# Executive Summary: Report on Young people and their Attitudes to Healthy Living

## GP Champions for Youth Health, Brighton & Hove

GP Champions: Amber Muir, Thomas Soud, Hayyan Asif, Hanna Ward-Penny, Lauren Stott, Kyle Stuart, Sam Mallender, Fiona Nyeko

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## 1.0 Background

There were 10 pilots nationally, overseen by a partnership between Youth Access, The Association for Young People's Health and the Royal College of General Practitioners. Each pilot was a partnership between a voluntary sector organisation and a GP practice.

Brighton and Hove pilot site is a partnership between YMCA DownsLink Group and Portslade Health Centre.

All sites had the aim of 'improving health outcomes for young people' and needed to involve young people in the project.

All the projects came together on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2015 to share learning and launch the National Toolkit for GPs, endorsed by the RCGP. A copy of the national toolkit can be obtained from AYPH here:

[http://www.ayph.org.uk/publications/623\\_GPToolkit\\_ONLINE.pdf](http://www.ayph.org.uk/publications/623_GPToolkit_ONLINE.pdf)

## 2.0 The GP Champions

The project worked with 8 different young people who were volunteers, 'GP Champions for Youth Health'. They decided that they wanted to conduct a young people's attitudinal survey on weight, exercise, eating and young people's relationship to their GPs on these issues.



(left to right, Kyle Stuart, Amber Muir, Thomas Soud, Hanna Ward-Penny)

They say, "One of our aims is to significantly reduce the communication barrier between health professionals and Young People, as we have found (through the survey results) that many people can feel uncomfortable talking about their lifestyles with GPs. We have done our research through distributing surveys and running focus groups, in order to develop a straightforward guide for GPs. This guide will explain the most appropriate and effective ways to approach Young People about their health, using information we have gathered from our findings."

The findings from the survey led to the development of a **guide for GPs**, in the form of a **mousemat, and leaflet**.

## 3.0 Survey and focus group findings

**Responses:** 246 surveys were completed by young people in Brighton and Hove.

### **Breakdown:**

69% female, 28% male, 1% trans, 2% did not state gender identity

44% were 13-16 yrs, 25 % were 17-19 yrs, 24% were 11-12 yrs, and 7% were 20-25 yrs

13 % were BME, 22% did not speak English as a first language

11 % had a long term health condition or disability

9 % had experienced homelessness/being insecurely housed

7 % were LGBTU

Further demographic information can be found in the full report.

## 3.1 The findings

We found that:

- 85% of the young people responding to the survey said that having a healthy lifestyle was important to them.
- 75% of the young people exercise regularly (Exercise in this instance was defined as: 30 minutes of brisk walking, cycling, aerobic exercise, sports, gym, etc); 19% said they exercised once a week, or a few times a month.
- 42% of young people think about their weight all the time or on a daily basis; 55% said that they were happy with their weight
- Overall, young people feel that they are equipped and confident to live a healthy lifestyle, giving 8 out of 10 for confidence levels
- When asked how they would change their weight young people overwhelming stated they would eat more healthily and increase their exercise

On the subject of the Young People's GP relationship, we found that:

- 78% of young people **would** be comfortable speaking to a GP about healthy living – and we gained a lot of qualitative information for GPs about how they would like to be spoken to about their lifestyles
- However, only 27% said that they would go to their GP for advice
- The top 3 places where young people would look for advice on healthy living were: Family, Friends, Internet

Overall, these results suggest that the majority of young people hold a healthy lifestyle to be important and feel confident that they have the ability to live one.

However, in spite of this a large number are not happy with their weight.

Our results suggest that young people are aware that the best way to live a healthy lifestyle is to exercise more and eat better; taking advice primarily from friends and family but also including their own research through the internet.

From our focus group reasons not to go to the GP about lifestyles are that they would be embarrassed, they might receive complex information around their BMI, they don't want to be judged or 'nagged', and also a lot of young people don't realise that they can go to their GP in the first place.

## 4.0 Recommendations

Here are some recommendations for GPs from young people:

1. Don't use terms like BMI, it's confusing to us
2. Ask every young person 'do you mind if I ask you about your lifestyle / do you have any issues with your lifestyle?' Make them aware that you ask everyone the same thing. This will give young people an option to talk more about any concerns they might have.
3. Although young people at the focus group thought that the 'brutal truth' was in order, there has been a survey recently which has suggested that this has the opposite effect<sup>1</sup>
4. Offer detailed advice, including signposting to relevant services across the City<sup>2</sup>
5. Offer follow up appointments
6. If possible offer drop-in slots for young people to improve accessibility
7. Train reception staff to talk to young people
8. Create a young person friendly surgery (for example, have a radio to help with confidentiality, display board, patient booklet – point 9)
9. Confirm and advertise that GPs or nurses at your surgery are open to talk about healthy living advice
10. Include information specific to young people in your patient booklet (see the example developed by GP Champions for Portslade Health Centre in the Appendix 4)
11. Read our booklet and use our mouse mat for handy tips at your fingertips!

Full Report Published February 2015, please contact [Eleanor.clarke@ymcadlg.org](mailto:Eleanor.clarke@ymcadlg.org) for an electronic copy

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2014/09/11/fat-shaming-doesnt-work-a-new-study-says/>

<sup>2</sup> For example, YMCA Youth Advice Centre, YMCA Right Here, B&H Food Partnership