

School Story – The Triple Crown Centre

OUR PRU

We are a medical PRU based in the south of the Borough but catering for students from both north and south. Our young people have a range of needs, including OCD, ASD, anxiety and other mental health issues. A few have physical medical conditions. We have KS3 and KS4 students, in key stage three we look to reintegrate back into mainstream or alternative provision, whereas by KS4 our young people tend to stay with us for GCSEs. There is capacity for roughly 40 young people.

Obviously as a medical PRU, Healthy Schools is central to our thinking. It is imperative that we promote health, physically and emotionally and reinforce the link between the two. We are a small community and this makes it easier for all to be involved.

IDENTIFYING NEED

We asked the students in anonymous questionnaires what they felt our Healthy Schools Priorities should be. Our year 11s wanted more RSE and our school data from the previous Year11s suggested that teenage pregnancy was an issue with this year group. We put together an extended programme of study for RSE with help and contributions from Loud Mouth, Just 4U and PSHE team. For our year 10s there was the overwhelming response that they wanted to do something about exercise. Our first questionnaire to year 10s was to four students, all of whom were significantly overweight. Even when the group increased to twelve students, eight were overweight. They felt that the opportunity to do more exercise and feel confident enough to exercise would help them.

For healthy eating and exercise we planned to do two things, explore healthy eating and increase the opportunities for exercise and the variety of exercise in the school week. For RSE we decided to develop our already existing RSE programme and bring in more help from outside.

What outcomes did we focus on and why?

Exercise and Healthy Eating.

Our young people come with a host of difficulties. Many find the outside world intimidating and inaccessible. They often have issues surrounding eating and accessing opportunities to exercise is difficult for them. We wanted to increase the opportunities within the school time but we also wanted to develop a more positive attitude towards exercise. In this review we are looking at how our plans went with our exercise programme.

We decided to get the students to try out a range of activities:

- orienteering trips to the Lickey Hills
- bike ride at Kingsbury Waterpark
- Walking sessions during PSHE lessons
- Friday activities-gym and self-defence.
- Pool and table tennis tournament during ASDAN.

Generally the whole school were involved in these activities as well as the trained instructors and park rangers etc.

With the healthy eating we firstly decided that our focus on exercise needed to be supported by healthy eating. We did a survey the students as to what they ate over three days and what they considered a healthy diet. From this we could see that in fact their knowledge was more patchy than we expected. We wanted to increase the number that understood nutrition and could make healthy choices from 0% to 100 %. Many of our students feel awkward eating in front of people and did not like to eat at school. They don't eat breakfast (like many young people) and were then eating biscuits at break, not eating lunch and some reported then over eating when they got home. Comfort eating and being bored also came out as reasons for eating the diet that they did.

What happened?

The young people loved the orienteering in the Lickey Hills and in a written evaluation of the trip one student said "he had fun, exercise and freedom" many of the students asked if we could go again and a further two trips were planned. The young people fed back that they enjoyed working in teams and using those skills. Many of our young people have problems communicating and this was an unexpected benefit.

Bike riding caused some fear amongst the students and they were not at all confident about being able to physically cope with the challenge. Two students had never ridden a bike and some had not been on one in a long time. A frequent barrier we came across was their fear of being humiliated in front of others and being looked at. The bike riding was the most challenging in this respect because it was more noticeable if they failed in any way. Indeed this is the only activity that we have not repeated because it was not as accessible to the whole group. However, it was a successful day. On the day 11 out of the twelve year 10 students attended, which was a good turnout considering how nervous many were. Many of the students had worked with support staff prior to the event to plan for their needs and to address some of their difficulties. Many of our young people do not have their own bikes and this was the least sustainable of our activities, although it was a very enjoyable day and some of our students were very proud of their achievements.

One PSHE lesson a week was given over to walking around Lode Heath field or out in the community. We explained that this would be a regular activity and there were some complaints, fears and worries in the beginning. However, the pupils got used to the routine and would ask if we were walking that week because they enjoyed it so much. A barrier to this activity being sustained was the push to meet the requirements of the curriculum, enough support staff and the weather.

Weekly activities have always involved some time spent on physical activity but we thought that we would give more emphasis to this. We had some very successful self-defence lessons with a very inspiring trainer. The general self confidence that these promoted and the sense that they could deal more positively out in the community was marked and there was very positive feedback from the students. We also attended a gym for half a term and this engaged all the students because they could find a programme of exercises that suited them individually. The Hampton gym is very small and the students were not with members of the public, this overcame one of their problems with gym attendance. They said that although they wanted to do the exercise and try out the gym, that it was too public and that people would look at them. One student who very rarely left home started to go to the gym with his older brother after this and he is still going. We have always had golf and bowling as Friday activities and these are popular with the students. These activities do not draw attention to the students too much and no special sports clothes are required, so they can wear

what they feel comfortable in. An important consideration when body image is such a complex and difficult issue for many of our young people.

Another idea was to get the students using the pool and table tennis equipment. These are in the central area of our centre and although have sometimes been in fashion for periods in the past, there are times when none of the students feel confident enough to use them. Members of staff have tried to encourage the students to play at break or lunch but this has not had a sustained affect. We decided to run a pool and table tennis tournament in small groups in ASDAN sessions. This way they could all get to try it. Even in the small groups some found it hard and always because of lack of skill but simply because they were too much in the public eye. Frequently when a young person starts at the centre, they cannot bring themselves to sit in the central area with the others and it can take months (in one case a year) before they can face joining the whole group at break. This extreme anxiety is not uncommon in our students and so even something as simple as a game of table tennis holds challenges. The tournament went well and two of the young people we first targeted became very into the table tennis, as well as six of the year 11s who did not have quite the problems with body image and their weight.

In fact one of the surprising outcomes of the exercise programme was that a small minority of our students did become obsessive with exercise and their weight. This is a danger with students on the autism spectrum. year 10 cohort that identified their weight as an issue that they would like to address have now left us. The issues have altered slightly in that we no longer have a significant group of overweight students. However, weight and body image are still problems. Even so, the exercise programme is stronger than it was and we still find benefit in getting out and exercising. As previously stated the orienteering has remained a popular activity. We may try cycling or even "Bikeability" with our students. Walking has been harder to sustain due to the problems mentioned of curriculum, support and weather, but writing this in November may mean we are not at our most confident on that front. Snooker and pool are still encouraged. Generally we are much more aware of the benefits of the activities we tried and how wide ranging these benefits are, and not just to physical health. How physical health encourages mental health, how exercise boosts mood, how doing something like orienteering can help bring very anxious and shy young people together and help form friendships, how trying new things in a safe environment can widen a young person's horizons, how mastering a skill can increase confidence and self-esteem.

In PSHE we covered healthy diet. We prepared simple healthy snacks in ASDAN and encouraged the students to try new foods, especially different types of fruit. We had a healthy food demonstration by Solihull Catering Services where many of the students had hands on involvement. We did an evaluation at the end with questionnaires and a quiz and all of the student's knowledge had improved. I would like to say that habits had changed for all the students; however, a significant 2 out of the original 4 had worked hard at changing their eating habits. Of the later 11, there was more confidence eating in front of people. As we mentioned before our pastoral officer had to keep a close eye on the eating habits of some of our students.

What outcomes did we on focus and why for SRE?

We decided we needed to increase the number of children and young people who know how to access specialist services and self-refer from 0 to 11 out of 11. We aimed to run this programme up to 20.7.11. We aimed to increase the number of children and young people who report that the

information received about relationships and sex was relevant and helpful from 0 to 11 out of 11. The targeted outcome was to increase the number of children and young people who know how to keep themselves safe and can explain what that would involve from 0 to 11 out of 11. We planned to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies in our year 11 group.

To do this we:

We reviewed our PSHE schemes and targeted them to the needs of that particular year group, although we decided that it was also important for our year 10s to be involved. We gave the young people a questionnaire asking what they knew about RSE and what they wanted to know. Some of our young people have missed a significant amount of schooling and knowledge within the group varies widely. We needed to start from the basics. We also needed to be aware that the history of some of our students can make this a very sensitive topic and that their maturity and ability to cope emotionally careful planning and sensitive handling.

We had help, support and advice from the PSHE team, Just 4U and the school nurse. After consultation we came up with a plan to:

- Use Loud Mouth to perform Nat, Zak and Baby Jack
- PSHE Team delivered half day carousel of activities which included, Just 4U Nurse doing condom demonstrations, information on other forms of contraception and STIs, an activity which looked at peer pressure and sexual activity amongst young people, also commonly held myths and beliefs about young people and sexual activity and STIs
- A session from Xtreme on HIV/AIDS

What Happened?

Some young people were nervous about completing the questionnaires and reluctant to do so. Generally we felt this was because of a lack of knowledge. We spent several sessions working on ground rules, appropriate terminology and stereotypes.

The RSE day was a great success with 100% attendance, which pleased and surprised us considering how unsure our young people had seemed initially. The students responded well to the drama from Loud Mouth and thought that it was fun, interactive and relevant. Lots of other members of staff got involved and both students and staff felt it was an affective vehicle for this type of information that is both factual and emotional and that the topic was dealt with in an engaging way without undermining its seriousness.

The carousel of activities was equally as successful and the seriousness of the topic was underpinned by having professionals deliver the sessions.

One student reported "the day makes you think about responsibilities and the effects of what you do" they also said they would recommend the session for next year's students.

Since then we have also had Loud Mouth in to deliver their STI/contraception drama Trust Me. They also delivered other PSHE based dramas.

For the following year we developed our RSE Day. In the morning we had the sexual health nurse from Just 4U to do the previous year's activities and the PHSE team to deliver a session on sexual exploitation, including the film *Dangerous Lover Boy*.

In the afternoon we walked as a group to the local Just 4U Clinic. Stuart the nurse showed us round, explained the procedure and answered loads of questions. They all said that it was a very useful thing to do to visit the clinic and that they would be much less anxious about going there now that they knew the layout and how unintimidating it was. Stuart also inspired confidence in them. 100% of the pupils demonstrated in follow up questionnaires that they now knew how to access specialist services and self-refer. They all also said that that the information and advice received about sex and relationships at school was relevant and helpful.

The X treme session on HIV and Aids was not as successful as we had hoped. There was a strong emphasis on the dangers of sexual relationships which made some of our young people anxious. Having said that, the students thought it was informative. But informal feedback to us made it clear that their approach was not appropriate to many of our young people although all of the young people could identify ways to keep themselves safe and explain what that would involve.

This strand was more straightforward for us because it was not so much about changing life styles and attitudes it was more fact based. We were pleased at how these activities enriched our schemes of learning and how receptive the group was. In the beginning we had this idea that we needed to deliver RSE before the temptations of Christmas. The majority of our present year 11s went through the programme in year 10, however, our present year 10 lack the maturity and are very unworldly. They are not comfortable enough as a group yet get the best from the RSE module.

At the Triple Crown Centre, we are all clear about the link between well-being and achievement. Our focus on exercise and healthy eating has been crucial in developing young people who can be successful in their learning and in wider aspects of life." Eleanor Clarke, Centre Manager.