

The You 2 project (contraceptive and pregnancy counselling for the under 25s) was set up in Milton Keynes with funding from the Department of Health for a period of 18 months.

It was set up following a question asked in parliament about the growing number of teenage abortions at a time when sex education was available in schools, and family planning advice could be obtained from clinics and GPs. The Health Minister announced that the DOH would fund three projects aimed at finding out what was going wrong and suggesting possible alternatives to the present system.

Research in action

Milton Keynes Health Authority, through the Health Education Services, was successful in its bid for funds to create this research-in-action service. In order to ensure the project's success, the Health Authority established a multi-disciplinary management committee to oversee the work of the project. The membership of this committee is shown in the box.

The name of the project was chosen for a number of reasons, but primarily because it could mean You Two (both partners), You Too (single, married, male or female), and finally because young people liked it.

The aims of the project were threefold:

- To create a new service which will provide information on contracep-

NAZIH FAKHER-ELDIN

'You 2': a sex education action plan for schools

tion and pregnancy for young people under the age of 25.

- To establish a peripatetic team to work within formal and informal settings, teaching and counselling young people.
- To provide an optional contraceptive service for young people.

In doing so it was hoped that the number of unwanted pregnancies would be reduced and the suffering and misery which they can cause would be mitigated.

Sex education provision

In order to achieve these aims the You 2 project undertook an extensive research into the provision of sex education in the comprehensive and high schools in Milton Keynes, and into the modes and methods of its delivery in the classroom. As a result of this research (see box opposite) a dialogue was established between some of the schools and the project which in turn led to closer links and much-appreciated co-operation and collaboration between the various parties.

This article was written for the purpose of helping

all those who are interested in the provision of sex education, be they teachers, governors, or educationists. It is by no means a blueprint but only an illustration of a successful attempt in this difficult area.

The first step was for the co-ordinator of the project to meet and negotiate with the policymakers of the various schools, usually the head teachers, the health education co-ordinators, and representatives of the governing bodies. The aims of these negotiations were as follows:

- To agree an action plan for the sex education in their school.
- To give an opportunity to establish the credibility of the health-care workers on the project (two doctors, a health visitor, a youth worker, a community development worker and a counsellor) and at the same time to investigate the level of commitment of the school to the project's proposals.
- To agree an action plan for the sex education in their school.
- To establish a communicative mechanism.

These events provided to be invaluable as they cleared a number of obstacles (for example the worry and fears that an outside agency generates, especially when talking about

This is what the research discovered among the schools surveyed. . .

School 1 provides an excellent spiral programme for all the years, starting from the age of 13 and continuing right through to 18.

School 2 has a health education programme which is co-ordinated by a deputy head (exactly like School 1). However, sex education is provided in accordance with an annual programme with some duplication of previous years' work, or omissions. On the whole, teachers need more training in programme co-ordination.

School 3 has no specific programme or any collaboration between classes or year forms. Sex education is provided by teachers who have responsibility for certain subjects: Home economics, biology, parentcraft, PE, etc.

School 4 has a similar arrangement to School 3, but on a much reduced scale.

School 5 has a sex education programme in a few selected subjects: PE (for girls only), biology (for those who study it), pastoral care (in certain cases only), and history (population growth, etc.).

School 6 could not be investigated because the governors refused us permission to investigate or help. The headteacher 'assured' the author that it has a very adequate sex education programme.

School 7 has a health education co-ordinator (head of 5th year form and RE teacher) who refused to co-operate. The headteacher always referred back to him.

an emotive subject like health education — also, the question of teacher training in the provision of sex education, as well as the role of visitors as speakers and helpers rather than supply teachers) and set the scene for implementation of the next stages of the plan.

A school's plan

At one school a small working party was set up, comprising the health education co-ordinator, the heads of the fourth and sixth forms, a science teacher, the school nurse, and members of the You 2 project. The working party met on four occasions over a period of seven months of planning. They debated the issues, agreed the plans, negotiated implementation and took on the responsibility for the organisation of the event.

The working party agreed that on the first term of the next academic year the school would become a 'healthy school' for one week. In that week all activities, including all teaching sessions, revolved around the theme of 'health'. For example, in maths the topic would focus on population growth, studying statistics and so on. In physical education topics would include First Aid, hygiene and the like, while in geography environmental issues would predominate. Health education, police, fire brigade, and ambulance

services were all involved in the week's activities.

The arrangements with teachers were negotiated by the teaching staff in the group. The deputy head and the year head met separately and discussed the issues involved in such an initiative. Afterwards they met with the rest of the teaching staff to hear their views and to brief them on decisions.

All arrangements with the police (to talk about safety), fire brigade (to talk about fire safety and prevention), and with ambulance services (to talk about their work and to complement first aid demonstrations) were done by the school nurse with some help from the teaching staff.

Health education staff were asked by members of the pro-

ject to contribute on the first day in order to be able to put this programme into a real-life context. One regrettable omission was of the Community Dietician who could have worked with pupils and catering staff alike.

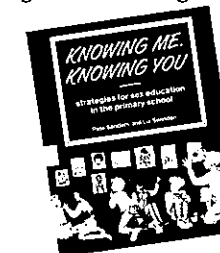
The You 2 project was entrusted with the provision of five sex education sessions lasting 45–75 minutes, to pupils in the 13–14 age group, with the following aims in mind:

- To encourage young people to be aware of their own and other people's feelings.
- To explore options open to them in making decisions about their lives.
- To explore the pressures on them and the ways of responding to these pressures.
- To provide the facts necessary for informed decision-making about their future personal relationships, including sexuality and contraceptives.

A great emphasis was placed on co-operation with parents. Though

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The You 2 committee consisted of . . .

- A consultant in Public Health Medicine
- A senior officer from the LEA
- The deputy director of Social Services
- A consultant in Adolescent and Child Health
- The Area Youth Officer
- The Locality Nurse Manager (Family Planning)
- The District Health Education Officer
- A Clinical Psychologist
- A Senior Researcher and the Manager of British Pregnancy Advisory Services

governors approved the programme the co-ordinator of the You 2 project felt that parents, who after all are ultimately responsible for the well-being of their children, should be both informed of and if possible involved in a programme of this size and nature.

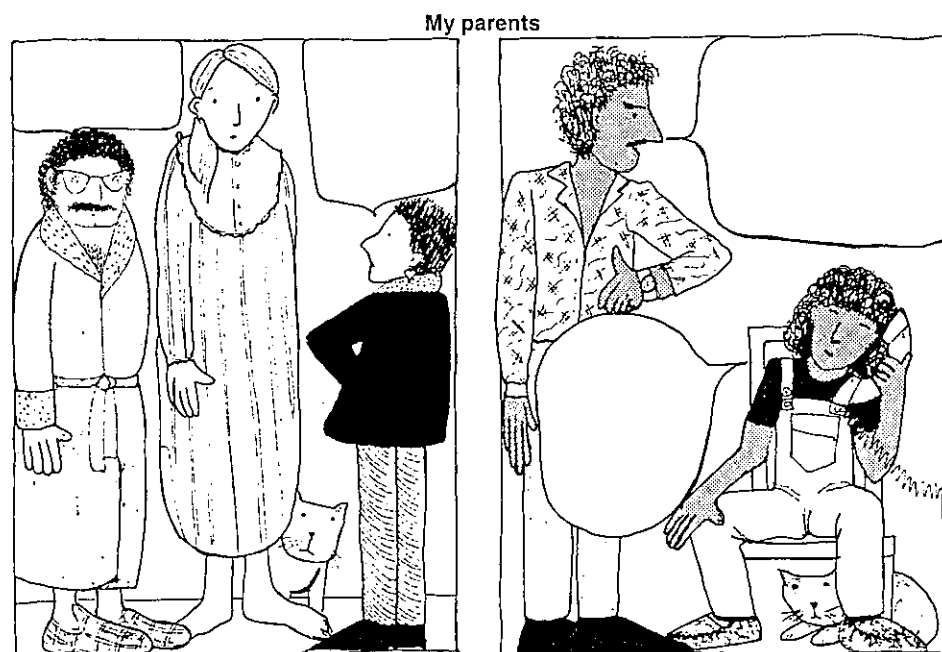
Invitation to parents

The school sent letters to all the parents inviting them to a seminar and to get involved in a demonstration tutorial session. The seminar was organised for the evening in order to give the opportunity for as many parents as possible to attend. About 10% of the parents in the year group turned up. They first listened to an introductory talk by a deputy head-teacher and then to a presentation by a member of the You 2 project. They were then invited to participate, in small groups, in all the activities planned for their children as outlined below. The programme was accepted in its entirety by the parents.

The first session was an introductory one which included exercises in promoting positive self-image and confidence and in overcoming the difficulties in communicating sensitive issues to others. This session was based on the work of Barry Hopson and Mark Scully in their *Lifeskills teaching programme*, but it could also have been found in *Skills for adolescence* (TACADE).

The second session was devoted to trying to develop a good and trusting relationship with peers, parents, and authority (teachers, policemen, doctors, etc.). Case studies, such as those devised by the Brook Advisory Centres and others, were used extensively.

The third session was delivered in a completely different way, giving factual information and initiating debates on issues such as contraceptive methods, legal issues, anatomy, physiology, and relationships, using the Grapevine board game available from the National Youth Bureau, Leicester (0533 558763).



A task from *Taught not caught*.. The discussion arising from this exercise could include factors for effective communication with parents, reasons for parents trying to control and discipline children's lives, parents' different expectations for boys and girls, and ways in which young people can try to make parents understand their point of view. Published by LDA, Wisbech, Cambs.

The fourth session centred on the issue of responsibilities within relationships and caring for self and for partners. This was facilitated by an exercise on raising awareness of the pressures exerted by friends and partners and their effects on our actions. The exercise dealt with ways of coping with these pressures and with the consequences of taking any action including that of saying 'no'.

At the end of this session a 10-minute video (*Contraception — ready or not?*) was shown. This video talks about facts, myths, and attitudes to contraception in a witty and light-hearted way.

Family planning

The final session dealt with family planning and its meaning to the pupils themselves. Discussions ranged over why people space their families, reasons for delaying the starting of a family, why people may choose not to have children, and so on.

Last but by no means least the 'contraceptive kit' itself, which includes all the various contraceptive options, was made available for a 'hands-on' session. Pupils were en-

couraged to ask questions, which they did, including some on the relevance of various methods to them at this stage of their lives.

After each session the pupils were given 'homework', for example to think about what makes it easy or difficult to talk to someone, or to find out who provides family planning in their area, at what times and at what venues. A series of cartoons were handed out showing scenes of typical parent-teenager clashes in which speech bubbles had to be filled. An example is shown above: it is from *Taught not caught — strategies for sex education* by The Clarity Collective, published by LDA, Wisbech, Cambs. (0223 357744).

A week after the programme ended, the pupils were asked to evaluate the input of the You 2 project by means of a questionnaire. This was divided into two sections. The first part asked how useful (or not) and how enjoyable (or not) each session had been. The second part consisted of a series of open-ended questions:

What did you learn that was new to you?

What did you like best?
Was there anything you did not like?
Is there anything you would like to be included in future sessions?
Any other comments?

On the whole, the vast majority (80%) of the pupils found each and every session useful and enjoyable, but there were a number who were very sceptical. Some commented that it was quite hard for them to come to terms with exposing their feelings to colleagues. Others commented that they knew the topics anyway and had discussed some issues with their teachers, parents, or others.

Popular

As for general issues in the evaluation of the programme as a whole, we learnt that the methods of delivery were very popular, whether

they involved discussion, games, or hands-on material.

When they were asked what they did not like, the answers varied from nothing to everything. Some commented on being embarrassed to talk, others said that some boys tried to 'take the mickey' out of others, some found it hard to talk about private or personal issues, and others found the questions a little too complex.

The answers to what else should be included in future sessions were somehow surprising. Top of their list were homosexuality, AIDS, and abortion. Some wanted more sessions on communication skills, assertiveness, debates, and accurate details of helping agencies and help-lines.

The comments received at the end of the form, needless to say, were

mostly complimentary. Those illustrated here were chosen arbitrarily by the writer:

- *I would like to see this done for every 3rd year.*
- *Please more sessions in 4th, 5th, and 6th years.*
- *It should be a proper lesson in schools like Maths and English.*
- *It is useful for later in life.*
- *It made us more confident because not everyone could normally talk about that kind of thing.*

This was an example of good co-operation between governors, teachers, parents, and an outside agency working together on a sensitive topic in education. The governors executed their duties in a sensible way. The teachers enjoyed the experience and continue to provide sex education in the school. The parents were aware of what their children were learning and were prepared for any questions or queries. The You 2 project learned that all the hard work put into planning, organising, and delivering this programme was immensely worthwhile.

Immediately afterwards, two other schools were able to benefit from this work. In one of the schools the project delivered the same programme but each lesson was 75–90 minutes over a period of five weeks. In the other school, lessons were of 50 minutes but the programme was spread over six weeks.

In the light of the changes imposed by the National Curriculum, a successful sex education programme must not only be properly planned and co-ordinated across the curriculum, but it should involve governors, parents, teachers, and (most importantly) pupils.

Acknowledgement Many thanks to Margret Albrecht and the staff and pupils of the school involved.

Contact Dr Nazih Fakher-Eldin, You 2 project, The Bakehouse, 6 Church Street, Wolverton, Milton Keynes MK12 5JN.

Dear Parents

Great importance is placed on the health and wellbeing of our community. We are continually being given advice about what we should and should not do with regard to cigarettes, alcohol, food, etc. However, as I'm sure you are aware, 'Health' has a much broader significance.

It is therefore our intention at _____ School to highlight health awareness during the week beginning December 5, and during this week we are fortunate in having the support of various outside agencies including YOU 2, who will help us deliver sessions on a varied selection of health related topics. So that you may become a little more informed about the work of YOU 2 we have arranged a seminar on November 23 at 7.00, when should the demand be sufficient you will have the opportunity to become involved in a demonstration tutorial session.

Could we please, therefore, ask you to return the slip at the bottom of this letter to enable us to plan the evening successfully.

We look forward to meeting as many of you as possible in November, and should you have any queries in the meantime please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

This is the text of the letter used by the school to invite parents to the 'sex education' evening.