

# Background

## We explored:

- Q Young people's views and experiences of health in East Sussex;
- Q How young people could improve their health and gather ideas on what seems to work and what doesn't;
- Q We used participatory qualitative methods focusing on three topics
  - 1 Whole-school approaches to health
  - 2 Emotional wellbeing and resilience
  - 3 Sexual health.

# Listening before commissioning

## Young people's views on health improvement in East Sussex



## What did we do?

109 young people took part:

Activities were held in academies, youth centres, and community schools and colleges from across East Sussex during February-March 2015

97 in participatory focus group discussions

4 in the project steering group

8 helped us develop the project recommendations

## What did we find?

### Young people said:

- Schools should pay more attention to health;
- They don't know enough about school nurses, where to find them or what they offer;
- Schools should give more opportunities to find out about, take control of, contribute to, and feedback on, health initiatives in school.

*I don't think they give us enough... one lesson a week is not enough to go in-depth about the [health] subjects you're learning about*



## What did we recommend?

- Schools should continue to show young people how to prevent poor health, but also need to include positive ways in which health can be developed and improved;
- The school nurse should be easier for young people to find, talk to, and explore opportunities for health;
- Schools need to ensure all pupils have equal access to physical activities regardless of gender, and that a range of activities are available beyond traditional school sports.

### Young people said:

- Many are not familiar with the term 'resilience' or why it's useful to know;
- They nevertheless still use strategies that result in resilient outcomes, and these strategies can be individual or collective;
- There are ways schools can support resilience including 'time-out' spaces, more opportunities to participate in a range of physical activities, and peer support systems.

*I: Do people help each other when they get stressed?*

*M: Yeh ...I think another student would be able to help more than the teachers on certain situations*



- Schools should provide a physical space where young people can go if desired, separate to any existing isolation room;
- Schools should consider how diverse physical activity can be encouraged as an individual strategy to cope;
- Schools should listen to young people when developing health initiatives. One way to do this is to set-up a Health Promotion School Council.

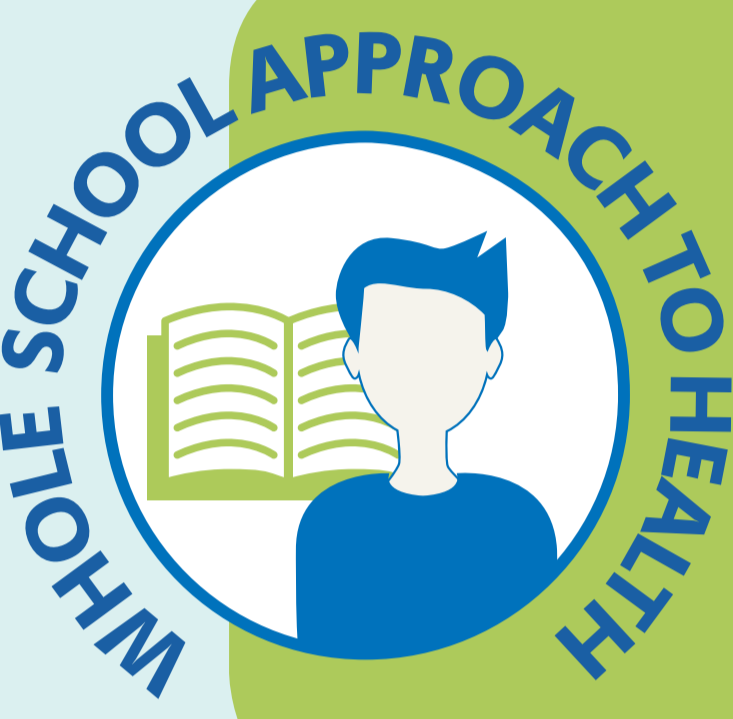
### Young people said:

- They want teachers with specialist knowledge, greater opportunities for discussion, and more help on how to improve their own sexual health;
- They learned from, valued, and enjoyed the East Sussex 'Safe Around Sex' programme;
- They were aware of the Condom Card (C-Card) but not clear on how to get one;
- They were not familiar with any sexual health campaigns.

*Some teachers were very awkward how they taught it because they didn't want to teach it but had no choice*



- Schools should recognise positive individual and social responsibility for sexual health not just focus on avoidance and abstinence messages;
- Schools should start talking about sexual health when young people start secondary school to normalise the issues, and to re-visit and increase the complexity of discussions over time;
- Schools should ensure that staff have the specialist knowledge to develop and teach high quality Sex and Relationships Education.



## Thank you!

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**Authors:**  
Chris Cocking and Nigel Sherriff,  
School of Health Sciences,  
University of Brighton.

**University of Brighton**

**Further information:**  
@ n.s.sherriff@brighton.ac.uk  
www.c360.org.uk  
Full report available at  
www.eastsussexjsna.org.uk

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