What is the Youth Health Champion Programme?
Introduction

The Youth Health Champion model is designed to give young people the skills, knowledge and confidence to act as peer mentors, increasing awareness of healthy lifestyles and encouraging involvement in activities to promote good health.

The Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) has worked with the founding team of the programme to develop an Ofqual accredited qualification and a range of training packages to deliver a consistent and effective approach across the country.

How does it work?

Young people from age 14 undertake an RSPH Level 2 Certificate for Youth Health Champions, which is equivalent to a GCSE Grade A-C. It consists of four modules; the first gives a basic understanding of the key determinants of health, followed by a research task about the health facilities in their own community, practice at delivering health messages to their peers, and one specialist module to deepen their understanding of a specific aspect of health.

The young people then offer support to their peers by providing confidential signposting to specialist health professionals, by raising awareness of health issues through the delivery of health promotion campaigns and by acting as healthy role models in their communities.

Campaign topics include:

- Mental Health five a day
- Physical activity taster sessions
- Breakfast surveys and taster days
- YHC anti bullying
- Smoking Pledges
- 100 ways to show someone you love them without having sex
- Binge Drinking- What REALLY happens to your body
- Beat exam stress
Five a day - are you getting it?
Headaches and Hydration

What is a Youth Health Champion?

It is important to be clear about the main responsibilities of a Youth Health Champion, and also to recognise the boundaries. A Youth Health Champion is not expected to give direct health advice, nor offer counselling or one to one support. They are, however, required to act as “signposters” or “links” between students and other health professionals and services.

As a team, the Youth Health Champions plan and deliver health promotion campaigns to their peers.

The topics for the campaigns can be drawn from a number of sources:

- Data from the Schools Health Improvement Survey
- Food For Life Partnership priorities
- Public Health priority areas (either locally or nationally)
- School priority areas
- Youth Health Champions’ own experience
- National Campaigns such as Fruity Friday, Meat Free Mondays and Change 4 Life etc

Youth Health Champions can also be involved with school committees, school councils, pupil voice and steering groups. They can support the delivery of PSHE lessons, and organise health focus events during break and lunchtimes.

There are several models of delivery of a Youth Health Champion programme, and it can be adapted to a variety of settings.

How can it work in secondary schools (mainstream)?

The most popular and well evaluated choice for a Youth Health Champions team is Year 9 students, who will be recruited and trained during year 9, then start their role in September of
year 10. The benefits of using this year group are varied; they are more confident at campaign delivery and as they have not yet started their GCSEs, they have the available time to attend training, meetings and deliver campaigns.

Some schools recruit students from across the year group as Youth Health Champions, while others encourage an entire year group to take the qualification, or embed it into specific courses related to PE or Health and Social Care.

**How can it work in youth centres?**
The qualification can be delivered over a longer period of time, for example one hour per week. The certificate is assessed by means of the completion of workbooks, so these can be completed module by module during the sessions, and campaigns can be delivered in the same way as above. Youth Workers can also benefit from accessing this qualification as they are then fully trained to be able to pass on the messages about healthy choices to all the young people they work with.

**How do I implement the YHC programme?**

*In schools:* It is recommended that two (or more) schools from each area are selected as the school coordinators are then able to support each other, with additional support from RSPH when required.

*In youth centres:* One or more youth workers will book to attend an RSPH Train the Trainer event (via the RSPH website). This one day course will give learners the skills and knowledge to be able to deliver the YHC Level 2 Certificate. A cohort of five or more young people are selected between the ages of 14 and 25 and the course is delivered in whatever time frame suits the centre.

The organisation can also register to become an RSPH centre which reduces costs as all assessment and training of the YHC team can then be carried out in-house.

**How much does it cost?**

Initial costs to set up the pilots have been based on RSPH delivering the YHC training. For subsequent cohorts one option will be for staff to attend a bespoke Train the Trainer day so that local authority staff can train their own teams in schools and youth centres, supported by the resources provided by RSPH.

RSPH can offer support in a variety of ways:
• Training delivery and programme set-up
• Programme support
• Links to YHC Hub – a place for resources and sharing of best practice with other schemes
• Assessment of the YHC Certificate

How do I find out more?

For more information contact yhm@rsph.org.uk or visit www.rsph.org.uk/youthhealthmovement