

Young Persons Health and Lifestyle

Reflector Group Report

**On behalf of the Public Health Intelligence team at Hull City Council
(Previously at NHS Hull when this project was undertaken)**

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Celebrating 18 years in consultation 1991 - 2009

July 2009



Contents Page

1.0	Introduction	3
1.1	Background – Health and Wellbeing Surveys and Qualitative Research	3
1.2	Background – Young People Health and Wellbeing Survey	5
2.0	Sample/Methodology	6
3.0	Summary	7
3.1	Diet and Exercise	7
3.2	Smoking	7
3.3	Alcohol	8
3.4	Drugs	8
4.0	Findings	9
4.1	Post-school Reflector Groups (16-18 year olds)	9
4.2	School Reflector Groups	19

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background – Health and Wellbeing Surveys and Qualitative Research

NHS Hull is in the process of developing a number of strategies which aim to reduce health inequalities and improve the health status and quality of life for people living in Hull. In order to develop these strategies, the NHS have undertaken a series of consultations into the health and lifestyle of the residents of Hull since 2002. Consultations include:

- Young People Health and Wellbeing Survey 2002
- An Adult Health and Wellbeing Survey carried out in 2007
- A series of 12 reflector groups to review the findings of the above survey with adults in January 2008
- A series of interviews with 'industry professionals'
- Young People Health and Wellbeing Survey 2008/09, which this report focuses on.

Conclusions drawn from these consultations undertaken by SMSR with adults of Hull in 2007 and 2008 found that:

- Smoking rates were high in all groups with a variety of explanations reasons given for the higher frequency of smoking among men and women in Hull and mixed levels of success for those who had tried to quit. Psychological and economic pressures were cited most frequently as reasons for continued smoking and these were often related to unemployment and social deprivation.
- There was broad understanding of the components of healthy and unhealthy diets and agreement that the cost of a healthy diet barred some people from eating the right food. The poor access to fresh fruit and vegetable in some areas and the availability and the convenience of junk food were major factors, particularly for young people who were also most likely to ignore messages about consumption of good food. A lack of knowledge about shopping and cooking was identified as a serious issue for young families.
- On the whole, women were more likely to be taking regular exercise and conform to national exercise guidelines than men. Though many walked regularly, most were unenthusiastic about exercise and targets were considered to be unrealistic. Things that prevented people from exercising were related to finance, which prevented many from taking gym memberships; insufficient local facilities that caused queuing and discouragement and reduced access to public spaces, where family and retirement leisure and activity had been curtailed by the abuse of parks and open spaces.

- Perceptions about health risks associated with alcohol were mixed with young people disregarding the seriousness of their drinking habits. Though most over 25s thought that alcohol was more harmful than tobacco the anti-smoking ban had convinced younger people that smoking was more harmful and less socially acceptable. Health and social risks were well recognised across the other groups but the social impact of binge drinking was trivialised by the younger group. Binge drinking was accepted as a social norm by most people despite an understanding of its negative impacts, which included danger to the individual and the community.

All of the above conclusions drawn from the earlier consultations are also reflected in the findings of the Young People Health and Wellbeing Survey quantitative and qualitative consultations. The only exception to this was Exercise, of which we found the opposite of the gender findings in the adult consultations – however it may be that attitudes change the older people get.

1.2 Background – Young People Health and Wellbeing Survey

Following the consultation with young people in 2002, in September 2008, the Public Health Intelligence team at Hull City Council (previously at Hull Primary Care Trust / NHS Hull when this project was undertaken) commissioned SMSR Ltd to carry out a Health and Wellbeing Survey with 3,000 young persons across Hull, to enable them to collate new data from current children and young people across Hull and compare results with those of 2002.

In order to reach these young persons, secondary schools were invited to take part in the consultation, with children completing the surveys in their PSHE lessons. Participating schools were offered £50 worth of book tokens, a report of the findings of the survey, an invitation to a half day conference which would present the findings and £90 worth of cover to enable a representative from the school to attend the conference.

A total of 16 schools and pupil referral units took part in the consultation and completed over 3000 surveys – however due to inaccurate data given and partially completed surveys, the final total stood at 2,928 fully completed surveys that were returned to SMSR and used in the final analysis. The following schools took part:

School/Pupil Referral Unit	Number of surveys sent to the school	Number of surveys returned inc. partially completed
Andrew Marvell Business and Enterprise College	242	180
Archbishop Sentamu	450	269
David Lister School	250	176
Endeavour High School	320	193
Hull Trinity House School	65	52
Kelvin Hall School	260	171
Kingswood College of Arts	270	162
Malet Lambert School	892	755
Newland School for Girls	180	112
Pickering Sports College	240	129
Sir Henry Cooper School	256	126
Sydney Smith School	519	507
Winifred Holtby School	444	322
Ashwell Pupil Referral Unit	50	12
Fountain House	48	22
Schoolgirl Mums Unit	52	20
Total	4,550	3,208

2.0 Sample/Methodology

Following the analysis of the results of the survey, a series of reflector groups were conducted to discuss the findings of the survey and explore further the health and lifestyles of young persons. A series of eight reflector groups were arranged to cover a broad range of ages and young persons from different backgrounds, the groups were as follows:

Group	Attendees	Number	Reference in the report
11-16 year olds	Sir Henry Cooper School	1	Group 8
	Archbishop Sentmanu	1	Group 9
16-18 year olds	The Warren (mixed – male and female)	2	Groups 1 & 2
	E2E Step into Care – part of Hull College (all female groups)	2	Groups 3 & 4
	Wyke College (mixed – male and female)	1	Group 7
	Hull Training – part of Hull College (all male groups)	2	Groups 5 & 6

Scripts were designed by SMSR Ltd in conjunction with the Public Health Intelligence team at Hull City Council (previously at the Primary Care Trust / NHS Hull when this project was undertaken) following the production of a series of graphs highlighting key findings from the quantitative survey, by the Public Health Intelligence team. The scripts were designed slightly differently to ensure the right amount and value of information was captured from the various age groups. The topics covered in each script were as follows:

Script Topics	
Young Persons – 11-16 year olds	Young Persons – 16-18 year olds
Diet and exercise	Diet and exercise
Weight – girls and boys separated	
Emotional Health - girls and boys separated	Weight
Bullying - girls and boys separated	Smoking
Smoking – year 11 only	
Alcohol – year 11 only	Alcohol
Drugs – year 11 only	Drugs

3.0 Summary

3.1 Diet and Exercise

The majority of children aged both 11-16 and 16-18 tended to think that they had an unhealthy diet. The ease, convenience and low cost of take-aways and 'junk food' tended to factor in their choice of diet. Although parents in both sets of age groups did encourage a healthy diet and prepared healthy meals for the young persons, many 'did not like the taste' of healthy food and preferred to choose convenience over health value.

Females also admitted to 'not eating very much' to maintain a thinner figure and tended to use celebrities such as Victoria Beckham and Cheryl Cole as role models. It was also felt by the females that males preferred thinner figures on women and so tended to eat as little as possible to impress the opposite sex.

In terms of exercise, males were much more likely than females to both enjoy and participate in any form of sport or exercise. A lack of confidence and worry about image in PE in schools tended to prevent females from taking part, as well as several lacks: of facilities, of variation in sporting activities and of 'girls only' teams. Males tended to enjoy and take part in football and rugby, with many being involved in teams in and around Hull.

Diet and exercise, or lack of it, were not seen as something that should be worried about at a young age, as with alcohol, smoking and taking drugs; young persons of all ages tended to think that health was something to worry about 'when you are older' and to 'live life to the full' while at a young age.

The impact of an unhealthy diet, lack of exercise and indulging in drugs, alcohol and smoking on young person's body and how it can affect them in the future needs to be addressed with the young age groups and awareness raised of how it will affect them and their lifestyles in the future.

3.2 Smoking

Smoking was something that tended to be started at an early age, with many of the 16-18 participants smoking from the age of 13 or 14; however within the school groups, just 2 of the participants had tried smoking – but had not continued. Image, stress and influence of peers were the main reasons for starting smoking, with the amount of cigarettes increasing with levels of stress.

Respondents aged 11-16 tended to be much more negative about smoking with personal experiences being a major factor.

3.3 Alcohol

All participants had tried alcohol, with the 11-16 year olds most likely to have tried alcohol in the presence of family members, with the older participants of this age group drinking socially at friends houses once a week. Year nine (13 or 14 years old) was thought to be the year that young persons tended to start drinking alcohol, due to influence of older friends, more socialising outside of school and an increase in confidence that alcohol gives them.

Participants of the 16-18 year old groups tended to drink large amounts of alcohol on a regular basis, with vodka and lager being the preferred options due to low cost and speed of which it gets them drunk. Access to alcohol was not an issue as many – even at the age of 14 - could buy alcohol in local shops without having to give ID.

3.4 Drugs

Worryingly, access to drugs was seen as incredibly easy, with children in school witnessing drugs being bought within the school grounds. The relative cheapness of them, along with ease of access were thought to be contributing factors in young people trying them. While the majority of participants of the 16-18 year old groups had tried and were currently taking drugs, just one of the 11-16 year olds had in fact tried drugs and was currently still using them.

Along with access and low cost, boredom and the influence of older peers – especially with females - were seen as reasons for the use of drugs. Cannabis was the most commonly used drug as it was not seen as harmful and simply used to 'relax', however 'harder' drugs such as cocaine and Ecstasy were taken by participants on an occasional basis.

The glamorisation of drugs in the media, in television shows and films such as 'Skins', 'Shameless' and 'Trainspotting', were seen to be a sign of acceptance that people take drugs and it isn't 'that much of a big deal'.

All participants recognised the health risks involved with taking drugs and tended to feel that taking drugs was more harmful to health than alcohol and smoking; however despite this recognition, older participants felt that nothing would influence them to stop taking drugs as 'young people will try things regardless of what they are told'. Younger participants agreed that young people will try drugs, alcohol and smoking even if they are told not to, however felt that graphic, hard hitting, real life education at a young age – for example taking an addict into schools to show children what can happen if you take drugs and how it can ruin lives – would perhaps have an influence and stop young people trying them at a young age.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Post-school Reflector Groups (16-18 year olds)

4.1.1 Diet and exercise

The majority of participants did not think that they had a healthy diet mainly due to the convenience, cost and taste of fast food. Diet tended to be worse while young persons attended college and whilst out with friends. Many had a healthy evening meal prepared by their parents when they were at home however, they did not think they would prepare these meals themselves if they lived on their own, mainly due to laziness, lack of time and convenience of being able to eat take away/pre-prepared food (e.g. subway).

"I eat a lot of chocolate and crisps. I have subway twice a week because it's near college and I have takeaway a lot" (Group 4)

*"I'm at college so I eat c**p from the vending machines. Anything that's good for you costs more"* (Group 2)

"There's a chippy down the road that's nice so everyone goes there. It's miles cheaper than getting a sandwich" (Group 6)

"I live with my mum and she cooks for me. If I was on my own I wouldn't eat healthily because I can't cook" (Group 1)

"I eat crisps but I like fruit and veg. I wouldn't go out of my way to eat them, when I'm at home if my mum makes me it for tea I'll eat it" (Group 5)

As with other health issues the young people thought that a healthy diet was something they did not need to worry about until they were older however, girls were more aware and restrictive of what they ate due to them being more body conscious. The majority thought that celebrity culture and the desire to impress boys were to blame for this trend. Only one male participant reported changing his diet however, it was to benefit his health rather than change his appearance.

"I don't need to worry now, I eat whatever I enjoy which is usually junk. When people leave uni they should start thinking about what they eat because they have the money to buy healthy food" (Group 1)

"I don't like salad and healthy stuff, if I die I die" (Group 2)

"Girls don't eat much at all and if boys are around they won't eat at all" (Group 6)

"Girls are more unhealthy then boys because they want to be like Barbie dolls. Most of them think they're fat when they're skinny" (Group 5)

"I read food packets all of the time to see how many calories are in them, I worry about putting on weight all the time" (Group 3)

"I need to eat a healthy diet because I want to stay slim. I think boys are more impressed when they see skinny girls" (Group 7)

"Girls are naturally self-conscious but people only look at people who eat too much as unhealthy when it can be worse not to eat enough" (Group 2)

"I wanted to feel better and healthier. I had healthy food at home but I started being healthy at college as well" (Group 5)

After being shown the results from the survey, the groups were asked to comment on the validity from their own experiences. Almost all participants thought that the trend of diet getting worse in the older years of school was accurate and that the pattern would continue past year 11. In younger school years it was thought that pupils were healthy because they had little choice in what they ate. From 13 onwards diet was determined by peers rather than parents or the school and therefore became unhealthy. The government initiative to improve school dinners was not seen as successful as children still eat unhealthy food - just not in the school canteens.

"People eat healthier when they're younger because their parents tell them what to do. When you're older you're more independent and make your own choices" (Group 5)

"Year 11's don't care what they eat. In year 7 everyone's a goody goody but by year 11 they're going out drinking and eating takeaways" (Group 2)

"Schools have gone all healthy but it just means more people go out for their dinner" (Group 3)

"We had 2 canteens. One was a mini McDonalds which kids go to because they like the taste. Even if 1 person from a group wanted to go to the healthy side they wouldn't because they want to be with they're friends" (Group 1)

The groups questioned the accuracy of girls eating more healthily than boys during school, again because girls think that eating too little is healthy and also due to boys being embarrassed to admit they eat healthy food as it is not seen as "cool".

"Boys just lie about what they eat so their mates don't say anything" (Group 2)

"Girls all want to look like Cheryl Cole. They want to look good so that boys like them and because all of their friends do" (Group 5)

"Looking good in front of boys" also emerged as the main reason why girls were less likely than boys to do PE or other sports. It was also thought that girls were not encouraged to do enough sport, with many schools not having

clubs aimed at them and a general lack of female sporting role models. Pupils who did not want to do PE could easily avoid it by either getting their friends to forge them a note or forgetting their kit.

"There are a lot more things for boys to do, even if girls want to do things they can't. At school they don't have girls' teams and if girls join the boys' teams they have to work harder to prove that they can play" (Group 2)

"Girls just want to sit with their mates and bitch. Boys don't care what they look like so they actually enjoy it when they play sports" (Group 4)

"Girls don't want to run around in front of boys in case they look stupid. If the boys couldn't see them they'd probably be less scared of trying things" (Group 5)

"Exercise isn't cool, you end up getting sweaty and that doesn't impress the lads" (Group 7)

"You don't see any fit girls in magazines or on T, it's always rugby players or football players" (Group 7)

"I'd say I was ill then go and stand and smoke" (Group 1)

"I'd just twag or forget my kit every week so I could get out of it" (Group 2)

Overall the majority reported doing more exercise since leaving school with many being members of gyms or clubs. As occurred within school, boys were more likely to do some form of exercise and in the Hull Training groups all participants did so regularly. The most popular choice of activities for boys was football, followed closely by boxing and the gym. Girls preferred walking, swimming and the gym which could further explain why girls are less likely to do sport in school. Price was the main deterrent for people who did not have a gym membership. Cheaper prices and travel to the facilities/facilities closer to their home would encourage young persons to use exercise facilities, as many college students complained that once they have received their EMA and bought college materials (books etc) they are not left with enough to live off. When asked whether or not they would sacrifice their 'alcohol money' to pay for a gym membership, perhaps unsurprisingly, the groups would not.

"I use the pedometer to measure how far I walk every day and I run up and down the stairs when I'm at home" (Group 3)

"I'd go to the gym if it had female only sessions. It's embarrassing when boys are there because they only go to look at the girls" (Group 7)

"I go to the gym but it would be better if you could pay every time you go because some months I don't really have the time" (Group 2)

"I'd go to the gym if it was cheaper. I wouldn't mind paying something though" (Group 4)

"You need money to do things so people end up just stood around outside shops" (Group 6)

4.1.2 Smoking

Most of the participants were currently smokers, with the daily amount smoked ranging from 3 to 30. As almost all had begun smoking whilst at school, they thought that the results were either accurate or slightly low. There were various reasons that were identified as the cause of starting smoking however, the majority said that despite not feeling pressured into smoking; they had started because their friends were. Other reasons included; parents separating, to lose weight, boredom and to be like the popular people in the school. It was common for smokers to have considerably more cigarettes whilst consuming alcohol or when feeling stressed.

"I thought I looked good when I started because all my friends were doing it but now I want to stop because it makes me feel sick" (Group 3)

"The most popular girl in primary school smoked in year 6 so everyone else followed her" (Group 2)

"At school people smoke because they think it makes them look cool. There's a hierarchy in school and the smokers are cooler than the footballers" (Group 1)

"I just picked up a cig one day when I was bored, it wasn't a big deal to me" (Group 5)

"I don't really smoke during the day but when I go out I have about 40. Some nights it's more, it just depends how drunk I get" (Group 3)

The tendency for there to be more female smokers than males was considered accurate, mostly due to the lack of activities for girls to do and the desire to impress boys, as previously mentioned. A desire to lose weight was also highlighted as a contributory factor with many girls continually using a cigarette to replace a meal.

"Girls rebel more and mature earlier than boys. Boys are happy running round the field but girls need other things to keep them occupied" (Girls 7)

"Girls are sat around bored so they're more likely to try things but boys are with their friends playing football" (Group 4)

"Girls smoke to impress lads. They think it makes them look good and that the older lads like it but I think it looks awful" (Group 6)

"Boys carry cigarettes more but only so they can sell them to girls. Girls always go up to boys and ask for cigs because they think it makes them look older" (Group 2)

"I tried to quit at school but I started getting really hungry. I don't have a fast metabolism anyway so I started again so I didn't get fat" (Group 1)

"If you have a cigarette and a cup of tea it fills you up so you don't want food" (Group 3)

Accessibility was not problematic for children whilst at school as shops do not ask them for ID, regardless of whether they are wearing a school uniform. It was common that older children would use their dinner money to buy a packet of cigarettes and then sell them to the younger children who cannot buy their own. Similarly punishment for smoking within school was not a deterrent as teachers were lenient, either taking the cigarette, ignoring what was happening or in some cases having a cigarette themselves with the students.

"All shops need to clamp down, even the big chains don't ID people enough when they're buying cigs. In most places school kids can get served when they're in their uniform" (Group 2)

"We used to have a deal with teachers, we wouldn't ask them for cigs if they didn't tell on us when they saw us smoking" (Group 2)

"If teachers caught you smoking they would only take them off you or make you put them out. Some teachers would walk past and ignore you but some used to join in" (Group 4)

"if you buy a pack of 10 cigs with your dinner money you sell half to younger kids and make your money back so you can still get food" (Group 6)

"People use their dinner money to buy cigs but if they can't get served in shops they stand outside and ask people to go in for them" (Group 4)

All of the smokers were aware of the effects smoking can have however, most said there was little, if anything, that would encourage them to stop. The groups were divided on the effectiveness of adverts. The majority said they ignored the pictures on cigarette packets however, seeing them did make some feel guilty. Generally they thought that the most effective way of deterring potential smokers was to target children at a younger age using more graphic presentations. As the main reason behind ignoring the dangers of smoking was because it was "something that they would worry about when they were older", they felt that young people were likely to try smoking regardless of any attempts made to stop them.

"Who looks at the pictures on cig packets? People just ignore them so there's no point in them" (Group 2)

"You don't know what's true in the media, even different news programmes tell you different things about what's good and bad for you so in the end you don't believe anything" (Group 5)

"By year 7 kids have tried everything, they should be shown videos in primary school but they'd have to be scary because all of the pictures on cig packets don't bother most people" (Group 6)

"People think they are young so they can deal with the effects later, lessons on smoking scare you while you're there but they don't stop young people" (Group 1)

"If people want to smoke and drink they'll do it no matter what people say. When you're young you always do what you're told not to, you don't carry about what it's doing to you" (Group 4)

"My uncle died from lung cancer, it did make me think but in the end I smoked more because of the stress" (Group 5)

"The only thing that would make me stop is if I was pregnant, after 8 months not being able to smoke it'd be easy not to go back to doing it again" (Group 3)

4.1.3 Alcohol

Despite the majority of participants being under 18 only one did not drink alcohol due to a medical condition. On average participants began drinking socially at 14, however many drank with their families prior to this. Most regularly bought alcohol from local shops which they drank at friend's houses. Those who could not buy it for themselves would wait outside and ask people as they were going in. Although most said they were able to purchase alcohol in pubs and clubs they tended not to because of the cost. The amount and type of alcohol varied although the most popular tended to be lager and vodka. Although participants were asked to estimate how much they drank the majority were unable to, many said they continued drinking until they were too drunk to carry on or were sick.

"My mum gave me alcopops so I wouldn't be a lightweight and embarrass myself when I got older. She didn't want me to do daft things so she gave me it to make me more immune" (Group 3)

"I drink every night if I'm at my friends. We'll drink anything, normally we go through 3 big bottles of Lambrini. When I go out with my mum we share a bottle of wine, I'm hammered after about 4 glasses but sometimes have a few more afterwards" (Group 2)

"I drink as much as I can, it's more of a laugh when you get hammered." (Group 6)

"It depends how much money I've got. I don't go out because it's too expensive, I buy it from the shops. I normally get a litre bottle of vodka and 2 litres of cider and a few cans then me and my mates keep drinking until we fall asleep" (Group 3)

"I prefer to get drunk at my mates houses because when you get too drunk in pubs they stop serving you but at your mates you can carry on" (Group 5)

"if we don't get served we ask people outside shops to go in for us. We know who to ask, it's always the squaddies or the young lads that will go in and buy it for you. If you ask girls or old people they'll say no" (Group 7)

Within school, again it was considered accurate that girls drank more because they tend to have more sleepovers or have older boyfriends. The girls also said they drank alcohol in order to feel more confident. Female participants did tend to drink larger quantities; however boys reported drinking socially at a younger age.

"Girls know they can drink more because when they go out with a guy they know they can drink more and he'll look after them." (Group 1)

"Girls hang around with older crowds and if people offer you beer you can't be the only one not drinking" (Group 6)

"Lasses are worse when they're drunk. They drink so they're more confident and can pull but they just get really clingy or start crying. Boys just drink to have a laugh and enjoy themselves" (Group 5)

"I don't dance without a drink. I'll approach lads and ask them out but I wouldn't do it if I was sober" (Group 3)

"I got drunk all morning at my friends then went to school after lunch. I didn't get sent home because I don't think that the teachers noticed" (Group 4)

Although the participants thought that most young people will try alcohol, if shops, pubs and clubs enforced stricter rules regarding ID, they thought the number would decrease. A main problem which emerged from the group was that alcohol was associated with having a good time and therefore any warnings which were given were not going to be effective.

"Some places are strict with ID but everybody knows where you can go and get in fine. In Welly and Spiders you can get in easily when you're 15. To get in pubs and clubs girls wear low cut tops and if the bouncers a man they know they'll get in" (Group 1)

"13 year olds can go in shops and buy beer. As soon as girls start wearing make up shops think they must be old enough, especially when the owners aren't from England" (Group 3)

"No-one worries about what drink does to you. Nothing would work to stop people because drink is associated with a good time, like at meals and Christmas. No-one thinks about people fighting and stealing" (Group 6)

"We need to see someone who has been hurt before we will start to realise the dangers" (Group 7)

"People won't listen to anybody else so there's no point in trying" (Group 1)

"If they know they're not allowed to do something they'll think, well why can't I, and try it to find out" (Group 3)

4.1.4 Drugs

The majority of the participants had tried some form of drug, most commonly cannabis; however, few reported still using them. Female participants were more likely to try drugs. However participants did not believe that this was true within schools. Girls tended to think that there was some misunderstanding amongst those that had completed the survey within the schools as to what would be categorised as a drug. All participants were aware of where drugs could be easily accessed within schools. Boredom was the main reason for trying drugs, either boredom of having nothing to do or boredom of the effects which alcohol and smoking had.

"Girls are more level headed about that sort of stuff. They worry about getting respect from their friends and from drugs they won't get any. The girls in the survey probably didn't know what drugs are" (Group 2)

"Girls don't look right doing class A drugs, I think they just do the other stuff when they're with older boys because they see them having a good time and want that" (Group 6)

"Girls might try drugs once but it's the boys who carry on taking them" (Group 7)

"My friend bought £1000 worth of weed in school in a month. Him and his friends would get dinner money then take food from home as well so they could put their money together to buy it" (Group 1)

"Every street in Hull has a dealer down it, if you want drugs you can get them" (Group 3)

"I take resin every now and again. There's no reason why, I guess I'm just bored" (Group 2)

Although they did not consider cannabis to be harmful, most acknowledged the effects that other drugs could have and therefore did not use them. Drugs, excluding cannabis, were thought to be more damaging than smoking or alcohol, as one "bad" pill can cause instant death and affect your future. Those who did use other drugs did not consider them to be dangerous.

"It's better to try cannabis before you're 16 because you won't know any proper dealers so won't keep taking them and the police can't fine you" (Group 1)

"I'd never go stronger than weed. My friend started taking drugs in year 11 and by year 13 he had a heart attack from coke. The police have caught me smoking weed and given me a yellow ticket but if I was caught with anything else it'd effect my chances of getting jobs when I'm older" (Group 1)

"You can't die from pills, 3 people a year die from dehydration. In Hull you're okay because it's been cut that many times, its places like Ibiza where it's dangerous. If you're scared of pills they're more likely to hurt you" (Group 3)

"I used to try everything; I got them free from my brother so I thought why not? I did speed for 6 months but then it got boring" (Group 2)

Lack of education was considered to be a major cause of young people using drugs and again using shock tactics, such as graphic images and meeting people who had taken drugs, were thought to be the best solution. The media representations of cannabis were thought to contribute to people's acceptance, especially in programmes such as *Skins* and *Shameless* and the recent news reports about politicians' drug use.

"All MP's, even Obama, have tried drugs and most people will try something at some point in their lives. Everyone can't be arrested so they should be left to do it" (Group 1)

"Skins and Shameless promote drugs, everyone does them. When you watch American films everyone's always smoking weed so you think it's something that's normal" (Group 2)

"Films like Trainspotting put me off drugs but programmes now just show the good side" (Group 3)

"My dad's mate was a druggie and has no veins in his neck which put me off" (Group 4)

"They need to shock them when they start secondary school. They could show you what's happening inside of people's bodies after drugs because you don't get to see that you just see people having fun" (Group 5)

"People who have actually done drugs should go in schools and tell the kids stories that'd scare them" (Group 2)

"Even when people tell you about people who have had a bad trip, you hang around with older kids so you know loads of people who have had good ones" (Group 3)

"People don't realise how bad cannabis it because you it affects you in the long term. People are scared of class A drugs because you know the effects straight away" (Group 6)

The majority of participants regarded drugs as worse than both smoking and drinking because of the instant negative effects it can have on health. The only diversion from this was in Group 3 where the majority of participants viewed drinking as most damaging because of the way people behave when drunk. Their alternate view is possibly due to half of the group regularly taking class A, B and C drugs.

"Drugs do worse things to people; I've sat in a corner shaking because of them. It's stupid and expensive" (Group 2)

"Drugs today are full of battery acid so the effects on the body are worse. It doesn't just effect the person taking them either it effects the whole family" (Group 6)

"If I have MDMA I cry for days and with weed I get really paranoid. I've pawned all my jewellery for cannabis" (Group 3)

"Cigarettes is long term damage but I think drugs are worse because with some one bad one and it can kill you instantly" (Group 7)

"The more you take drugs the more you want. I know people who have died from drugs but no-one who has died from drinking or smoking" (Group 5)

"Drinking burns your insides and takes away your stomach lining" (Group 3)

"When people drink it makes them nasty. People act stupid and they don't know what they're doing" (Group 3)

4.2 School Reflector Groups

4.2.1 Diet and exercise

Most participants did not think that they ate a healthy diet due to the fact that 'they didn't like the taste of healthy food' or simply preferred unhealthy food as it was 'quick, easy and a lot tastier'. It was thought that as children became older their diet was worse due to time constraints and the amount of independence they were given.

"Whenever I have the money I buy chocolate, crisps and Dr. Pepper but then I worry that I'm going to get fat" (Group 9)

"I just don't eat enough. I don't get hungry. My parents do try and encourage me to eat, they make me shepherds pie and things but I don't eat a lot" (Group 8)

"McDonalds have a 99p menu so kids can afford to eat unhealthy food. There's a chippy across the road as well so most people go there for dinner" (Group 9)

"You eat worse food from after year 8 because you're allowed out at dinner. When you get to year 10 and 11 you're allowed out on a night so older kids just get takeaways and beer" (Group 9)

"You feel too much pressure in school and more pressure gets put on you with school work and choosing options. You get stressed out and eat unhealthy food because it makes you feel better" (Group 8)

It was perceived as "un-cool" to eat healthy food or to eat in school canteens. Children stated a preference for unhealthy menus which have recently been replaced according to the new government initiative. Since menus have changed children say they no longer eat at canteens but instead go to external outlets to purchase things such as chips and coke.

"When the diet sold chips and coke it was busier. Now people still get chips but they have to go out to get them" (Group 9)

"My lunch isn't healthy because I just go to the shop" (Group 8)

Some participants did express a concern about their weight. They considered this to be normal, as from the age of 13 hormones cause the body to change. Boys showed more concern because of their interests in sport whereas girls said their body issues stemmed from the media. All of the girls said that they took notice of what was printed in magazines such as Heat, for example Victoria Beckham and Cheryl Cole looking thin and the suggested diets girls should follow to look like them.

"I probably wouldn't worry about my weight if there was no media. My diet normally is to do with the people in the media" (Group 9)

"I have to think about what I eat because I play sport. If I want to be good at rugby I can't eat junk all of the time" (Group 9)

Boys tended to be slightly more active than girls as they enjoyed PE and the options they were given. Although most of the girls thought there was nothing that schools could do to change this, the choice of sports available was seen to contribute to their disinterest. Interest in sport and other activities was also thought to lessen as people get older due to people preferring to go out with friends or just 'hang out'.

"Girls can't be bothered, I don't see the point in running around on a field. I only like PE because we can just sit and watch the boys running round" (Group 9)

"Girls are so bitchy in PE, it's better when girls and boys are mixed. As soon as the groups are split up girls can only choose to do dodgeball and kick rounders every lessons" (Group 9)

"I prefer not to do PE because of the way I look in my PE kit in front of the boys and other girls" (Group 8)

4.2.2 Emotional Health

Participants thought that bullying could be caused for any reason; if you are too clever, if you are not clever enough, if you have glasses, have spots, are too fat, are too thin, if you are new. However, for girls weight emerged as the main reason for bullying. The girls who were bullied due to their weight agreed that it was the older girls that tended to bully the younger ones. Older girls were thought to smoke a lot and eat very little in order to stay thin to impress boys who were older than them.

There was a mixed view of how happy and sad participants were, with sadness mainly being caused by personal problems. Year 10 was seen as the time when pupils began to be stressed because of the pressure of GCSE deadlines, coursework and exams. Girls were more likely to feel sad with boys saying that they felt happy either most or all of the time.

To tackle feelings of sadness and stress, boys tended to spend time alone whereas girls dealt with it by talking to friend, either in person or through social networking sites.

"I stay in my bedroom so that I'm out of the way and no-one can annoy me"
(Group 9)

"I go on messenger and speak to my friends that way they can't see me if I am upset" (Group 8)

4.2.3 Smoking

Despite all participants knowing people who smoked only 2 (1 girl and 1 boy) had tried smoking and neither had continued smoking. All participants were aware of the effects of smoking and most said this, along with the smell of smoke, was the main reason why they chose not to. Those whose parents and family members smoke said that seeing the effects which smoking had on them was a big deterrent and one had lost her father to lung cancer.

"My dad smokes and the state of his teeth puts me off. I don't want to end up like that, it kills you slowly" (Group 9)

"The smell of smoke makes me feel sick" (Group 9)

As with the older groups, girls were thought to smoke more to impress boys and lose weight. The groups also commented that the smokers were usually 'cool' and with boys 'some mates egg each other on and dare each other' meaning that friendship group was an important determinant on whether a young person smoked.

"In some groups everyone smokes so it depends who you hang around with. The most popular people go to parties where they drink, smoke and sleep around" (Group 9)

"Girls smoke to impress older boys and fit in with the in crowd and also to lose weight" (Group 8)

"More people in year 9 start smoking because they hang around with older kids and are influenced by them" (Group 9)

4.2.4 Alcohol

From both groups only one participant in year 8 had not tried alcohol because they thought it was un-cool and didn't like the taste. All of the children who did drink did so within a family environment, with the older participants also drinking socially. The younger girls were especially against drinking alcohol excessively because they had seen family members and celebrities ill from the effects of alcohol and 'making a fool out of themselves' after alcohol. Those who drank socially saw excessive drinking as acceptable and would regularly get drunk when at parties.

Year 9 was seen as the time when children really started to become involved in alcohol mainly due to the influence of older friends and family members. Being around older friends means that alcohol becomes accessible and parents have less knowledge of how much is being consumed.

"I always drink with my mum and dad because my auntie banned my cousin from drinking and he snuck out and got hammered. They think if I'm allowed a bit it will deter me from drinking too much" (Group 9)

"I drink every week usually. I normally have vodka or 5 or 6 cans of Stella so I sometimes feel drunk. I only ever drink when I'm with my dad" (Group 9)

"The media always show pictures of celebrities falling out of clubs drunk and looking a mess so that puts me off drinking" (Group 8)

"When I go to parties I get nervous and alcohol gives me confidence. I normally drink vodka straight and then double vodka and coke. I've been so drunk that I couldn't stand up but that hasn't put me off drinking" (Group 9)

"Once you have one drink you want another so you end up drinking it like pop" (Group 8)

4.2.5 Drugs

Only one of the participants had tried cannabis. All participants felt that the results from the survey were too high. However, many knew where they could go to get drugs if they did want them.

"I tried pot when I was 12 or 13 and now I have it every now and again with my friends. Its only boys who try it, never girls" (Group 9)

"I've been offered drugs in school and I know of a few kids who sell drugs in school" (Group 8)

All participants thought that taking drugs was worse than both smoking and drinking due to the effects that they can have on the body. At present schools were not thought to be doing enough to discourage pupils from drugs especially as pupils were not taught about them until year 9. Pupils thought a more effective system would be to show younger children the effects that drugs can have either by plays or a talk from someone who had actually used drugs and now regretted it.

"Drugs have more effects on the body. They're more dangerous because of the things that they make you do" (Group 9)

"You end up getting addicted to drugs and it puts you down" (Group 8)

"Drugs make people look bad, you can always tell people who have been on drugs because they look like smackheads" (Group 9)