Refugee children at school: good practices in mental health and social care


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Some Unit publications

Add £1.25 p/ly or order value in less than £20

Young People and Alcohol: Its use and abuse
A study of the ‘alcohol environment’ of 8,315 Year 8 and 10 pupils. In addition to baseline information about amounts, frequency, and types of drink consumed, the report examines alcohol-related domestic aggression and its relative family structure. £10.00

Young People in 2000
The lifestyles and behaviour of 42,073 young people between the ages of 10 and 15 years. £45.00

Young People in 1989
The lifestyles and behaviour of 36,855 young people between the ages of 10 and 15 years. £30.00

Young People in 1989 – and looking as far back as 1983
The lifestyles and behaviours of 15,221 young people aged 10-13 and 14-15 in 1989, and a ‘back-and-forth’ around 200,000 in the same age range that have been surveyed over the past 18 years. £25.00

Young People in 1997
The lifestyles and behaviours of 37,338 young people between the ages of 9 and 15 years. £15.00

Young People in 1996
The reasons for and weaknesses of 20,972 young people between the ages of 12 and 15 years. £13.00

Last Orders
A cross-curricular programme for secondary courses on alcohol education, in two volumes with photocopiable materials. £8.00

Cash and Curry
Young people’s reports on the carrying of offensive weapons and also some sound advice and other useful protection by themselves and friends. The title refers to an unresolved link between personal income and fear of being attacked. £3.00

Young People into the Nineties (1) Doctor and Dentist, (2) Health
The ‘survey of the decade’. A study of 125,933 young people’s opinions on the ages of 11-14. £14.00

Young People in 1998 revises further behaviour changes in the 1990s. £35.00 for both books.

Facts about Alcohol
A detailed study of the associations between and amongst dental health topics such as toothbrushing, denim wear and motivation for brushing teeth, and many other dimensions such as gender, region, family size, sports activity and self-esteem. £8.00

A avoid War?: Young people and mental health
A study of the worries and concerns that affect young teenagers in our society, based on data collected by the Unit between 1991 and 1997. £15.00

The Assessment of Health Needs at the Community Level
How health authorities can help schools to review the needs of their pupils. £2.50

Very Young People in 1983
A study of 15,929 pupils aged 9-14. Responses to the questions in the Primary Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire are presented in tabular form, together with commentary and a final commentary. £7.00

Young People in 1993-1
A study of 87,882 pupils aged 8-11. Responses to the questions in the Primary Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire are presented in tabular form, together with commentary. £7.00

Young People and Illegal Drugs into 2000
This report surveys all our drug data back to 1987 and suggests that young people’s correct with drugs may have peaked in 1989-90. £8.50

Young People and Illegal Drugs in 1990
This report contains the first information derived by the Unit on habitual use, and likely frequency of use, by young people in the 11-15 age range. £7.00

Schools Health Series
This set of five books, are selections taken from the successful ‘Preparing for Life after Secondary School’ series. They have been re-organised into easy to use Healthy School themes. The principal authors are experienced primary school teachers who have used SHSS material in their schools. They bring fresh insights into how health-related behaviour data can be used in primary schools. Each book has been produced for use by all member of the staff. Each book provides an overview, and suggests other support materials, and resources, and in some cases model letters. The complete series is as follows:

Schools Health Series

Safety

Drug Education

Emotional Health & Well being

Physical Activity

Healthy Eating

Each book is 64 pages and has A3 style spreads where teaching plans sit alongside the relevant resources. Each book can be purchased separately at £12.99 each. Complete set £64.75

Education and Health

Our Journal is aimed at primary and secondary teachers, health-care professionals, and other interested in the health development of young people. It contains articles on recent health education initiatives, relevant research, materials and strategies for schools, health-related behaviour data and reviews. It is now in its 12th year, during which time articles on a great range of topics have been included. An index is available from www.sheu.org.uk pubs/ehayclx.htm

Published four times per annum, the individual annual subscription for 2002 remains at £16. Including postage and packing. If you wish to purchase more than one copy are offered generous discounts.
out such preventive activities. The Dutch "Pharos Foundation" (recently renamed "Pharos Knowledge Centre for Refugees and Health") has been pioneering such interventions since the mid-nineties. Some details of their work are given below.

International exchange of expertise

School-based programmes aimed at helping young refugees and asylum-seekers are only one example of the many interventions that have been developed in the past two decades to further the mental and physical health of victims of political violence. Many of these practices adopt a 'clinical' focus and are designed around the psychiatric concept of 'post-traumatic stress disorder' (PTSD). Others, however, are directed at broader aspects of the difficulties facing this group and try to avoid 'medicalising' their problems.

Although it is heartening that so many initiatives have been developed, there are two snags. One is that it is hard to know which interventions are worth the effort. What are the criteria for 'good practice' in this area? Controlled clinical trials are often impractical or impossible, so how can we distinguish between interventions which really benefit the people they are suppose to help, and those which merely further the interests of the professionals and organizations carrying them out?

The second problem is that of 're-inventing the wheel'. In scores of different countries, efforts are being made to tackle the problems of refugees and asylum-seekers, but there is still very little international exchange of ideas and experiences. As a result, time may be wasted on developing approaches which have already been shown to be flawed, while promising innovations may be ignored simply because nobody has heard of them.

Research project

In an effort to get to grips with these two problems, a research project is currently being financed by the European Refugee Council to survey the innovations which have been developed in different countries and to consider how 'good practice' can be identified. The project leaders are Charles Watters (University of Kent at Canterbury) and David Inglesby (University of Utrecht, The Netherlands). Some 15 researchers in four countries are involved in this project, which is also investigating the practical problems that arise in 'transplanting' practices that have been developed and tested in one country, to another where they are relatively unknown of.

As part of this study, an attempt will be made to implement the Pharos approach in British schools.

Of course, there are important differences between the school systems and the asylum procedures in Britain and the Netherlands, and the researchers do not expect that existing Pharos programmes can be taken over in a ready-made form. At the time of writing, consultations are under way about the adaptations that may be necessary and the best way to get such projects up and running. The researchers are keen to hear from all those in the field of education and health, as well as refugees and asylum-seekers themselves, who have views on this initiative or would like to become involved.

The Pharos Programmes

A basic principle of the Dutch programmes is that giving attention to the children's problems and strengthening the support systems around them go hand in hand. The school has healing possibilities because it provides attention, structure and contact with peers, and can serve as a bridge to the new society and the future. Teachers are often willing to support children with social or emotional problems, in addition to carrying out their normal teaching programme.

Secondary schools

For refugee youth in secondary education, Pharos has developed the following programmes:

- The Refugee lesson (De Vluchtelingles)
  A series of eight 'lessons' focusing on the experiences refugee children have in common. The 'lessons' are conducted by a teacher, together with a mental health care professional, with a group of 8-12 children. Topics treated are:
  - Intro to the Netherlands
  - Where do I come from?
  - Who am I?
  - Important things and days
  - Friendship and being in love
  - Prospects for the future

- Refugee youth at school
  (Vluchtelingenjongeren op school)
  This is a training manual, accompanied by video tapes, for teachers and others involved with this group. The themes are:
  - Backgrounds of refugee youth
  - Coping with loss
  - Dealing with traumatised children
  - Preventative activities in the classroom

Further information

As part of the research project, described in this article, a manual (in English) has been written describing the Pharos approach and giving details of the programmes developed. This can be obtained at cost price by sending a cheque for £5 payable to the University of Kent, to the following address:

Dr. Charles Watters
Tizard Centre, University of Kent
Canterbury
Kent CT2 7DJ
E-mail: C.Watters@ukc.ac.uk
Tel: 01227 760000
Alternatively, the manual can be sent free of charge by e-mail as a Word file.

Further details of the Pharos Knowledge Centre can be obtained from Gordana Rodic,
International Affairs Staff,
e-mail: g.rodic@pharos.nl

Welcome to school (Welkom op school)

This is a series of 21 'lessons' emphasising non-verbal techniques such as drawing and drama. Themes include:
- Getting acquainted
- Where do I come from?
- My school
- Who are we
- Important days
- Living in the Netherlands
- Important people
- Friendship
- Being in love and marrying
- Leisure time
- Feeling excluded
- On the road to the future

Primary schools

The following activities have been developed for use in primary schools:

- F.C. the World (F.C. De Wereld)
  Like 'The refugee lesson', this programme consists of eight 'lessons', using a variety of verbal and non-verbal methods. During the programme, each child makes a book about him/herself.

  A small pilot study showed positive effects on the children taking part. Themes covered are:
  - Me
  - School
  - Where I Live
  - Family

The school as a healer
(De school als heerder)

This is a training course for teachers, supported by video material (cf. Refugee youth at school).

Just show who you are!
(Laat maar zien wie je bent!)

This programme uses mostly non-verbal methods such as play, dance, movement, and drawing. A training manual for the teachers has also been developed. Themes dealt with include:
- Safety
- Identity
- Making contact with others
- Self-reliance

Effectiveness of the projects

All these programmes have been carefully reviewed and adapted in the light of experience. Reactions of both staff and children are almost uniformly positive: evaluation studies have been carried out for some programmes, which indicate positive effects on several dimensions important for children's well-being (e.g. their sense of belonging and the number of health complaints they report). More detailed evaluation studies are currently under way.