

Sexwize! All Year Round

Project History

2005

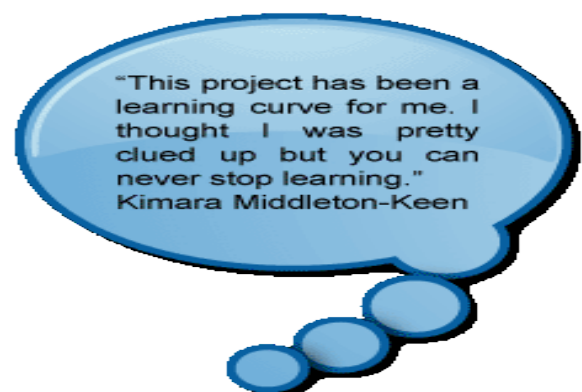
In Spring 2005, teachers from Framingham Earl High School in Norfolk visited Marula School in Selebi Phikwe, Botswana to see how young people there are dealing with HIV/Aids. Students from both schools worked on a short film called Learning From Botswana, comparing the initiatives taken in each school to increase awareness of sexual health issues.

Whilst making this video, the Norfolk students felt that many of their peers do not fully understand the risks posed by HIV/AIDS, as well as more common sexually transmitted infections. They successfully bid for a Big Lottery Grant to design and make this educational resource to help address this.

A core team of nine young people was formed: Jay Smart, Bekki Parfitt, Emma Mills, Kimara Middleton-Keen and Luke Kiekopf (formerly connected to Framingham Earl High School) and Polly Cook, Majeeda Goodhall, Lilly Macdonald and Theo Merz (from The Hewett School). The team then steered the project over its three-year term. They also devised, performed and shot much of the video drama work seen on the final DVD.

The young people were supported by filmmakers, animators, drama teachers and youth workers, who provided the skills needed to help them devise the supporting material: Martin Sercombe, Joc Mack, Britta Pollmuller, Jean Kiekopf, Tim Edwards and Lucy Enskat.

Creative work began in Autumn 2005, with a residential workshop on the North Norfolk coast. Over two days the team established the key themes the resource pack would explore. The main topics explored were the influences of peer pressure on decision making, the effects



of alcohol on behaviour, and signposting where people can go for sexual health advice. Some of the team learned video production skills, whilst the actors improvised a range of forum style theatre sketches on camera. Each of these depicted young people discussing everyday problems, making choices and considering outcomes.

2006

The core team met once a month to refine each of the drama sketches, and bring them up to professional standard. In between times, they met other young people in colleges, hostels and drop in centres around Norfolk. This created the opportunity to test out their ideas for peer led activities, inspired by the drama work. It also helped the team to get a sense of the existing knowledge of sexual health issues and what young people feel they need to know.

In the summer of 2006, two members of the core team met a group of sixth form animators from Paston College in North Walsham. They introduced the drama work in progress, and helped the students devise storyboards for short animations. Each animation was linked to a key theme in the pack, and designed to stimulate open discussion around the issues raised. As the ideas developed, so did a clearer picture of the final shape of the resource. The drama work helped to inspire the animations, which in turn suggested a framework for the workshop activities described in the calendar.

The students worked for five days on the project, and took their work from storyboards to production and editing in that time. They used digital drawing tablets, laptops and Toon Boom Studio software to produce their 2D drawn animations.

Originally, we aimed to work with one animation team. However, during recruitment, Notre Dame School also expressed a keen interest in being involved, so we scheduled a further week to support a team of seven Sixth Formers. This group devised further 2D animations, on the topics of peer group pressure and knowing if you can trust your partner.

We were invited to present the work in progress at the Extreme Conference in Norwich, on the



25th October. The team introduced the project to an enthusiastic gathering of young people from throughout the region, and screened a 10 minute excerpt of video material.



We decided to develop three topics more fully for the pack: ways to negotiate sensitive issues with one's partner, how to get sexual health advice, and what to do if diagnosed with an STI. A group of young women and mothers, based at GFS Platform in Great Yarmouth, agreed to help us do this part of the work. We arranged a series of weekly workshops throughout November and December, working with two groups. The first was a group of teens, aged 13 – 15, who were experiencing difficulties with mainstream education. Working with Drama Supporter, Lucy Enskat, they devised drama and puppet sketches on our selected themes. As with all the drama work, we began with warm up games, planned the issues to be raised in each sketch, then improvised the action on camera. Several of the young women were very shy about performing as actors on camera, but found it much easier to create a role as a sock puppet.



The afternoon sessions were led by professional animator Karina Williams, who supported a group of young mothers. This group made short drawn animations on the theme of getting advice.



2007

The video work was edited, and authoring of the calendar style handbook began. In March, a draft version of the DVD and handbook was presented to the Sexual Health Resources and Information Group, based in Norwich. This group of health professionals was invited to look closely at the work in progress, and advise the team on inaccuracies or problem areas. This feedback informed the next set of revisions.

In April a further presentation was organised with a team of teachers and nurses from South Norfolk. At this session we focussed on the 'user friendliness' of the workshop descriptions and DVD supporting material. Following the advice provided at that session, the pack was redesigned to make it as easy as possible for school teachers and youth workers to photocopy and use in a classroom or club setting.



Three topics were identified as deserving further creative work: alcohol use and its impact on decision making, issues surrounding teenage pregnancy, and the risks associated with being on holiday.

In July, a small team of actors from Earlham High School in Norwich volunteered to look at how to plan for a holiday abroad, and staying safer at a resort. Several of the team from GFS Platform contributed At the Club, a sketch about the risks of clubbing.

A group from Dereham Sixth Form College had already worked on short drama sketches exploring attitudes to drinking. They agreed to develop these ideas to a higher technical standard, and produced the material for RU Boozewize? in October.

Meanwhile, a team of young people from City of Norwich School Association were completing a related project, funded independently. Entitled Sex, Drugs and Drum & Bass, the film looks at teenage pregnancy, and some of the difficult decisions teenagers face in their lives. They agreed to have their work included as part of the resource. Our team then devised forum theatre workshops, inspired by the film, to form The Next Big Thing pages.

In mid October, a group of teenagers from Framingham Earl High School presented an Inset workshop for teachers and youth workers to demonstrate the drama technique of hot seating. The group used the technique to explore issues surrounding teenage pregnancy.

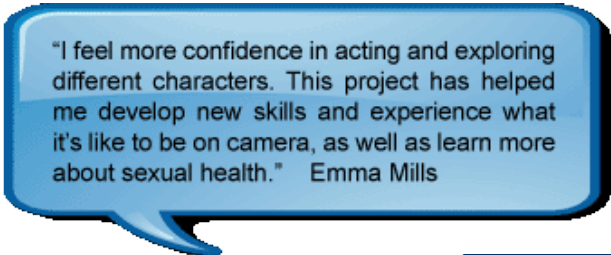
Copies of the pack and DVD were handed out to all participants, who were invited to use it with other young people, evaluate its effectiveness in the classroom and youth club, and feedback results. One teacher agreed to run the entire course outlined in the pack as a term long PHSE project.

2008

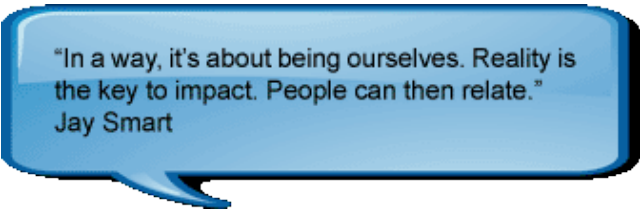
In Spring 2008, the feedback was assimilated into a final version of the pack for publication. The Heron Health Information Leaflet Scheme provided 1000 leaflets about sexual health resources in Norfolk, which have been packaged with the pack for distribution.

The pack was sent to all Norfolk and Suffolk secondary schools, Norfolk Childrens' Services and voluntary organisations involved in youth work and sexual health support.

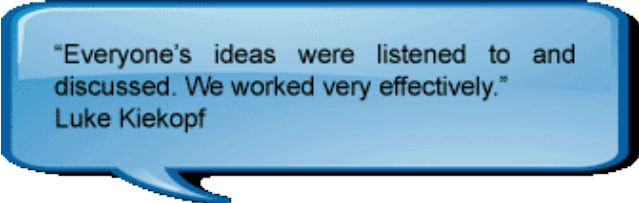
The project was launched on Monday 7th July at the Learning Resource Centre, Norwich School of Art and Design, Norwich.



"I feel more confidence in acting and exploring different characters. This project has helped me develop new skills and experience what it's like to be on camera, as well as learn more about sexual health." Emma Mills



"In a way, it's about being ourselves. Reality is the key to impact. People can then relate." Jay Smart



"Everyone's ideas were listened to and discussed. We worked very effectively." Luke Kiekopf