

Ten reasons to invest in young people's health

The UK has 11.7 million young people aged 10-24, making up 19% of the population.

AYPH believes it is important to invest in their health, because:

- 1 Adolescence is a critical time for health.**
The first signs of many serious longterm conditions emerge at this age. It is a time when risk-taking behaviours begin, including sexual activity, and when life-long health behaviours are set in place.
- 2 Adolescent health is not improving enough.**
There have been fewer health improvements or reductions in mortality amongst adolescents compared to other age groups. Accidents and suicide are the leading cause of death in this age group and are both preventable.
- 3 Young people are not getting the health services or information they require.** They are regular users of primary care, but the age group least satisfied with their consultations. They also get the shortest time with a GP. Services need to be designed and commissioned with young people involved from the outset.
- 4 Good sexual health services and testing are critical.** In 2015, 1.5 million chlamydia tests were carried out in England among 15 to 24 year olds, with over 129,000 diagnoses. This is a reduction in overall testing and diagnoses from 2014. Heterosexual under-25s are still the age group most affected by sexually transmitted infections.
- 5 Teenage pregnancy reduction must continue.** Under-18 conception rates for 2014 were the lowest ever recorded in England, at 22.8 per 1,000 females aged 15-17. This is a fall of 51% since 1998 as a result of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy. Work must continue in all local areas or rates will start to rise again.
- 6 Ignoring chronic adolescent disease costs money.** Longterm conditions in the 10-24 age can lead to emergency hospital admissions. Young people with Type 1 diabetes are up to five times more likely to be admitted to hospital as their peers.
- 7 Effects of poor healthcare in adolescence can last a lifetime.** One fifth of 11-15 year olds in the UK are obese. One third of 16-24 year olds smoke cigarettes regularly. These behaviours have longterm health impacts and costs to the NHS unless they are addressed.
- 8 Investing in adolescent wellbeing has benefits beyond health.** 24% of 15 year olds in England have experimented with illegal drugs and 69% have consumed alcohol. These actions impact on antisocial behaviour and crime levels and can also result in accidents and A&E attendance.
- 9 Mental health issues are diagnosed at this age.** Half of all psychiatric disorders start by age 14 and three quarters by age 24. Investment is needed in young people's mental health services which are over-stretched and have long waiting lists and high thresholds.
- 10 Research has brought new insights.** We know more about the development of the teenage brain and the importance of sleep. New insights bring new challenges and new reasons to invest in different aspects of young people's health.