

# YMCA Norfolk: Schools Team

*A Case Study*

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## **A positive relationship: meeting the mental health needs of every young person**

*“...everybody needs at least one positive relationship for their mental health...” YoungMinds*

The period of adolescence through to young adulthood is of crucial importance to future health and development. It is a time when major decisions are taken, and patterns of behavior are formed about personal relationships, independent living, family and working life.

Unfortunately, children and young people are suffering during this crucial time because of a lack of individual care and positive, responsible, relationships.

A recent study<sup>1</sup> found that around 10 per cent of young people aged five to 15 in Great Britain have mental health problems. Due to higher risk factors – poverty, traumatic experience, a parent with mental health issues, drug or alcohol problems, or involvement in crime – means that this figure rose to as much as 25 per cent in deprived areas.

The Health Advisory Service’s 1995 report, *Together We Stand*, defines mental health in young people in terms of a number of factors:

- The ability to develop psychologically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually
- The ability to initiate, develop and sustain mutually satisfying personal relationships
- The ability to become aware of others and to empathise with them
- The ability to use psychological distress as a developmental process, so that it does not hinder or impair further development

The mental health problems most prevalent in young people today include depression, anxiety, behavioral disorders, deliberate self-harm, eating disorders, hyperactivity, substance misuse and suicide. The Department of Health estimates that between 10 and 20 per cent of children will require support and help for serious distress during their formative years.

YoungMinds, a national charity committed to improving the mental health of children and young people, attributes part of the increase in mental health and behavioral problems to the lack of a single positive relationship.

It asserts that this could be overcome through the involvement of a ‘key worker’ – someone to fulfill the role of a positive relationship, who may be able to help a young person develop his

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<sup>1</sup> Meltzer H, Gatward R, Goodman R and Ford, T. *The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents in Great Britain*. London: Office for National Statistics: HMSO; 2000

or her relationship with other significant adults, and support the parent in his or her relationship with the child.

### **YMCA Norfolk Schools Team**

YMCA Norfolk, through its Schools Team project, is offering young people across the county at least one positive relationship in their lives in the form of its schools pastoral care workers (PCWs).

As of May 2005 there were 33 staff working across 21 middle and secondary schools in Norwich, Great Yarmouth, and Thetford. At these schools, a YMCA PCW is on hand throughout the school day, and through after schools clubs and residentials, to offer personal support for people most at risk of developing mental health problems, and related antisocial/damaging behavior. But even more than this, YMCA Norfolk has a vision for young people to be given the opportunity to be the best that they can be in mind, body and spirit.

The Schools Team has the ability to offer what many teachers, parents and other significant adults struggle to provide – time. Time to spend listening to the young person, encouraging them to begin to face up to issues that stem from bullying, low self-esteem, substance misuse and trauma due to difficult family circumstances.

This case study examines the work of YMCA Norfolk's Schools Team, and details the support structure, training, monitoring and evaluation it provides so that its pastoral care workers can best serve the needs of vulnerable young people in schools.

## **What is the YMCA Norfolk Schools Team?**

The YMCA Norfolk Schools Team provides committed pastoral care workers in middle and high schools across Norfolk, in partnership with a range of funders and agencies. The schools project works with 11 to 19 year olds – up to age 16 its work is predominantly schools-based.

Working closely with school senior managements and year heads, YMCA senior management team, and educational needs coordinators, a PCW is often the first point of contact for a young person dealing with difficult personal issues – a non-authority figure offering support, discretion and direction.

The schools work and the PCWs are promoted as an essential part of the life of a school, complementing the work of statutory and voluntary agencies in the school and local community.

The YMCA Norfolk pastoral care staff have built a significant reputation in the county, a recent Ofsted report highlighted the added value of a pastoral care worker.

### **YMCA Norfolk overview**

In pursuing its Christian mission, YMCA Norfolk has developed a diverse range of programmes in the county, and continues to expand. It provides supported accommodation for 90 people in single study bedrooms and has a residential team that supports around 220 individuals, including a number of asylum seekers.

YMCA Norfolk has a fulltime worker in Norwich Young Offenders Institute and a sports/corporate centre in Norwich. In 2006 YMCA Norfolk (formerly Norwich YMCA) will celebrate its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

## Schools Team: Partnerships and programmes

### Connexions

Connexions is a youth service providing advice, guidance and encouraging personal development services to young people aged 13 to 19. As part of its Connexions contract, YMCA Norfolk provides high schools with Connexions community personal advisors (PAs).

YMCA Norfolk works with Connexions Norfolk and has nine PAs in seven schools in Norwich, Great Yarmouth and Thetford.

Based in the schools and the community, the PAs offer a holistic programme for the students, providing one-to-one support for identified individuals, and young people who have referred themselves, or have been referred by partner agencies.

The YMCA team works with young people in Connexions tier one and two categories – those with the most complex needs and most at risk of disengaging from education, or needing support.

The support it offers includes:

- One-to-one mentoring, group or peer support and personal development activities
- Referral to specialists in and outside school
- Work with parents and carers
- Arranging additional support outside school and supporting the young people through this process

### *YMCA Schools Team projects*

It also offers various projects tailored to the needs of these young people, including Time To Decide. This programme offers support for young people as they move into training, education or employment – 60 young people each year take part in Time To Decide.

### *Personal Development Course*

The PAs also work with post-16 young people who are not in full time education, employment or training, but often these young people cannot access suitable training because they are not considered likely to complete the Entry to Employment (e2e) course.

In 2004 the guidelines for e2e changed so that young people must show evidence that they are likely to achieve an outcome if they take part in an e2e programme. This has left a number of vulnerable young people unable to take part – they need a more basic level course to bring them up to e2e standard.

YMCA Norfolk, through its post-16 work, is hoping to fill this gap by offering very basic personal development courses:

Core strands in YMCA Norfolk personal development courses:

- Health
- Housing
- Employment
- Benefits (employment, incapacity and so on)
- Literacy skills
- Motivation, self esteem and confidence

One of the most important results of the personal development course is to identify the most appropriate next step for a participant, which may be into a work placement, work experience or on to another training course. Participants in the course also develop essential social skills through group interaction.

### **Anti Bullying Roadshow**

Commissioned by YMCA Norfolk, this high profile programme is run alongside the core pastoral care work with the aim to get young people talking about bullying, to change attitudes, build confidence and create solutions to help tackle the issue of bullying.

The roadshow includes a performance of *Sticks 'n' Stones* by Red Balloon Theatre Company, a theatre in education offshoot of Saltmine – a Christian theatre group based in Dudley, West Midlands.

The high-impact roadshow offers a whole day of events for each school, a full programme raising the issue of bullying and emphasising its detrimental effect on the bullied, the bullies, and the whole school.

Alongside the performance from Red Balloon, the programme includes interactive workshops where the young people examine the themes surrounding bullying and vulnerability. Exploring the different forms of bullying, it highlights how bullying can be verbal, physical, and mental.

The roadshow demonstrates that bullying is not an acceptable part of every day life, and should not be. At the end of each roadshow the students are encouraged to sign up to a simple declaration: 'We want to be safe in school – we say no to bullying.'

#### *Aims of the roadshow*

In the vast majority of cases after the roadshow has visited the school, reported cases of bullying have significantly increased. YMCA Norfolk views this as a success because it

demonstrates that bullying has taken place unseen at a school and that, at last, the young people feel confident and empowered to come forward.

One of the goals of the roadshow is to encourage people who have bullied to come forward to seek help in overcoming this behaviour, this is a much less common occurrence but it does occasionally happen.

#### *Background and history of the Anti Bullying Roadshow*

The roadshow was created by Nick Jeffrey whilst in Bristol and developed by YMCA Norfolk and piloted in 10 schools in December 2001.

In September 2002, YMCA Norfolk commissioned Saltmine's Red Balloon theatre company to write a play, *Sticks 'n' Stones*. The play addresses some of the issues surrounding bullying faced by young people, teachers and parents through fun, comedy and interaction.

By 2003, with the support of the Children's Fund, the roadshow expanded into a multimedia presentation seen by more than 900 children under 13 throughout the county.

In September 2004, the roadshow took place for the first time in a further education college, during induction week. A specially devised half hour programme was developed with the aim to inform students what to do if they are being bullied.

One of the rationales for expanding the roadshow for a post-16 audience is that violent behaviour that would previously be called bullying in younger years, if perpetrated by a 16 or 17 year old, is a criminal offence.

The anti bullying roadshow now tours annually for eight weeks across schools in Norfolk, and in 2005 it will embark on its first national tour. YMCA Norfolk owns the programme, and, in September 2005, YMCA Norfolk will take the Anti Bullying Roadshow on a national tour, working with 10 partner YMCAs in their local schools, as part of the wider programme to develop relationships with extended schools.

#### **Children Making the Transition**

This project, a partnership between YMCA Norfolk and the Children's Fund, involves two Transitional Support Workers based in Great Yarmouth and Thetford respectively.

It works in the following areas:

- Identifying, with the help of primary and middle schools, young people at risk of disaffection or exclusion when they transfer to high school
- Developing a support programme of one-to-one and small group sessions with the identified young people, devising individually tailored targets for each

- Establishing and maintaining a regular consultation with parents to maximise the effect of the programme
- Organising and running a summer holiday residentials for the young people to encourage better self esteem and improve communication and social interaction
- Work with other YMCA PCWs in monitoring and supporting the young people as they transfer to high school
- Providing continuous support for those at risk when they have started high school with attendance support and behaviour programmes
- To develop a website, along with other YMCA staff, for young people and a work pack for teachers

## Pastoral care workers

### Background

The schools team at YMCA Norfolk developed out of the pioneering work of the very first pastoral care worker, Gordon Bailey.

In the mid 1980s, he joined with an existing charity, Schools Outreach, a Christian organisation based in Bromsgrove, that had the necessary resources and infrastructure to oversee the recruitment, training, and employment of fulltime, school based pastoral care workers.

### *Pastoral care in Norfolk*

As the reputation of Schools Outreach and its pastoral care work grew, increasing numbers of schools across England requested a PCW. In 1990, a school in Norwich requested a PCW – the first to offer such a role in Norfolk.

The Norfolk programme developed and more PCWs were employed. When the number of PCWs reached four, YMCA Norfolk was brought in to offer additional support and supervision for the programme. In 1996, YMCA Norfolk took over the running of the schools team.

Current Senior Operations Manager, Nick Jeffery, has led the Schools Team since 2000. His background is in youth work, working in the voluntary and statutory sector for the education and welfare service in Bristol.

Nick first learned about the Norfolk work at schools conference where he met Steve Mawston – who then led the YMCA schools team. Realising he was performing a similar role in schools in Bristol, Nick decided to learn more about the YMCA's work in Norfolk, ultimately joining the team.

One of the areas that Nick was interested in expanding was assisting with the difficult transition that young people face when moving from middle to high school. He also helped to devise high profile anti bullying programmes in Bristol, which developed into the Anti Bullying Road show ([see Partnerships and Programmes, page 15](#)).

### *County-wide provision*

As its reputation grew, more and more schools in the locality requested a PCW from the YMCA. Finding it difficult to raise external donations to support its expansion, YMCA Norfolk pursued statutory funding which proved to be a more stable and sustainable source of revenue. Almost all of the support for its schools team now comes from statutory sources – including funding from Connexions, the Children's Fund, and individual schools.

When Nick joined, YMCA Norfolk had eight members of staff. This has grown to 33 staff working across 21 middle and high schools – and its programme is constantly expanding thanks to its ambition and the demands of the local education authorities.

It is now a countywide provider, operating across the whole of Norfolk, with a significant presence in Great Yarmouth, Thetford, Norwich, and a developing work in the King's Lynn area.

The experience of YMCA Norfolk is that once it has placed a PCW in a new area, the surrounding schools are quick to pick up on the benefits of the YMCA's pastoral care work. In the Great Yarmouth area, once PCWs were established in Caister and Gorleston, the neighbouring towns soon requested a schools worker of their own. Now the schools team has a presence in nearly the entire Great Yarmouth coastal strip, the work expanding through reputation and relationship.

Even so, its presence across the county is still comparatively small (but expanding) – having a PCW in 15 of the 51 high schools in Norfolk.

### **What is a pastoral care worker?**

A PCW offers a broad-based support for children and young people in school, and out of school. They are a non-authority adult, there purely to provide for the needs of the young people – without being judgemental.

They are a role model, a significant person to help a student through a range of issues, and an essential support to assist the school to meet the needs of the young person, as they seek to achieve the best they can out of their life.

A PCW offers support focussing on the following areas:

- Bullying
- Self harm
- Behavioural management
- Family conflict
- Personal health
- Attendance, and the issues surrounding non-attendance
- Substance misuse, including alcohol, drug use, and the issues surrounding addiction and addictive behaviour
- Transitional issues, issues facing young people when they move from middle to high school, or to another area

The support that a YMCA PCW can offer is flexible, and, as they develop a relationship with a young person, they are able to offer care in and out of school, in the community and during leisure time. A PCW will usually be involved in extracurricular activities such as:

- Lunchtime and after school clubs
- Holiday activities and camps
- School trips

PCWs are employed full time at the school, or part time (if they work in two or more schools). Each has an office in the school and is known to staff and pupils by their first name. Their work is open and high profile so as to remove the stigma from approaching them.

#### *Referrals to a pastoral care worker*

Young people may self-refer to a PCW, but more often they are referred by a teacher, guardian, or through another agency. Once referred, the PCW explores the issues and needs alongside the young person, and helps them to move forward in an appropriate way.

A referred young person is given a set time for an appointment to see the PCW. If this is during a lesson, the teachers and other staff for the class are notified in advance that the young person will not attend. If a young person wishes to self refer, the initial appointment will take place during break or lunchtime. If the PCW believes the self-referred young person requires further support, he or she can make a request to see the young person officially during class time.

PCWs, when not working one-to-one, are encouraged to interact with the young people as much as possible – their offices providing a space for students to hang out during breaks. They will also devise ideas for clubs and societies to further engage the young people at the school.

YMCA Norfolk believes that by being visible, proactive and publicising its work in school – and the areas it works in – this will encourage the young people to approach a PCW with problems, rather than leaving it for others to identify.

#### *Confidentiality not secrecy*

Students who confide in a PCW are never offered secrecy, but are assured that whatever information they divulge will be treated with sensitivity and only passed on to other people or agencies that may be able to offer help.

Once individual issues are revealed a PCW will investigate the most appropriate next step, which may require the involvement of other agencies or professionals. The PCW will not 'offload' a young person to another agency, but will rather take a full part in the process,

working alongside the young person as they explore the issue with the third party. A PCW will remain as an essential continuity as the young person explores his or her needs through a number of different agencies.

The PCW is there to help the young person gain the confidence to keep going, empowering them to continue addressing their needs. They also provide vital background information to the external agencies during this process.

A PCW will seek to develop a good relationship with a young person's parents, further cementing their positive influence in a student's life. Often parents are not able to understand or do not have the perseverance to see such an involved process through – again this sometimes leaves the PCW as the only continuity throughout.

### **Why pastoral care workers?**

Time pressures on teachers are enormous. There is a huge gap between what support and services teachers would often like to provide and what they have the time to provide. This gap is widening, as teachers are increasingly required to complete reports and assessments (including Ofsted) leaving little or no time to offer one-to-one sessions.

The PCW, however – although part of the school team – has more of a free reign to offer individual support, and to identify which students require additional attention. A PCW has the time and opportunity to work one-to-one with the young people, or in groups during school, after school at clubs and social activities, and through residential.

Teachers are also responsible for a large number of students, whereas a PCW has the opportunity to be selective, working with young people who need additional support. The teaching profession is becoming more 'outcome oriented', but a PCW is under less pressure and can more freely offer time, encouragement and support. However, contracts set a PCW targets that they must reach, so a balance between having a free reign and meeting outcomes is needed.

### **Aim of YMCA Norfolk's pastoral care work**

YMCA Norfolk wants, through its PCWs and range of activities, to offer young people the opportunity to fulfil their potential in every area of their life – mind, body and spirit. They also aim to remove the barriers that hinder the young people achieving their potential.

While the emphasis – placed particularly by the schools – is in reductive work (reducing crime, exclusions, non-attendance and inappropriate behaviour) – the most innovative work of YMCA Norfolk is in prevention.

The ultimate aim of this prevention work is to bring about a change in the way that young people access its services, so that they increasingly come forward rather than be referred by an agency or individual. The schools team wants to be able to input into young peoples lives before they get involved in criminal activities, or begin to misuse substances or self-harm.

While the schools, and particularly the schools authorities, are looking for PCWs to deal with incidents of misbehaviour, the YMCA team is looking further to the source of the problem – what in their lives at home, in their social circle, or at school is causing them to react in a negative way.

#### *Working with the school*

YMCA Norfolk Schools Team also works hard to develop the culture of an individual school, particularly in the area of raising the profile of bullying, and emphasising that it is unacceptable. The culture that it seeks to develop is one where bullying is not tolerated, those who have been bullied feel confident to come forward, and where there is no shame in talking about the problem. While there is particular emphasis about openness regarding bullying, this is also true in all its areas of work.

In negotiating contracts with schools regarding its pastoral care work, YMCA Norfolk is adamant that it maintains a realistic client base for each of its workers, recognising that some young people need more time and encouragement.

Partnership with schools is also at the centre of YMCA Norfolk's vision for its pastoral care work. A PCW should be intrinsic to the life of a school, part of the wider team – the teaching and administration staff, classroom assistants, other agencies that work in the school, parents and – most importantly – the young people.

#### *Additional YMCA value*

One of the main reasons why the PCW is a YMCA employee and not directly a member of school staff is because of the additional services and projects that Norfolk and the YMCA Movement in England can offer.

YMCA has more flexibility in terms of funding and in the way that it operates, it also has the wider management network to offer, its 13 years of good practice, and the YMCA network can be called on for residentials, such as outdoor activities at YMCA Lakeside.

YMCA Norfolk also offers specialist activity programmes, such as its Anti Bullying Roadshow and personal development programmes ([see Partnerships and Programmes, page 14](#)). Schools are encouraged to take advantage of these unique programmes offered by the YMCA.

### **Pastoral care worker selection process**

People interested in becoming a PCW are invited to a selection day where both parties – YMCA Norfolk, and the prospective PCW – can explore whether this is the right step for the applicant. At the selection day applicants are introduced to YMCA Norfolk, its structure and ethos, take part in group activities, and have individual interview sessions.

Selected candidates are assigned to a shortlist for a school and invited to take part in a second interview. The second interview will usually involve the Senior Operations Manager, another member of the management staff of YMCA Norfolk, and representatives (usually the head and deputy head) from the prospective school – so that they are fully involved in the selection of a PCW.

If the school does not feel that the candidate is appropriate for its establishment, YMCA Norfolk will pass them on to an alternative school for approval, but usually the schools are impressed and want the candidate with which YMCA Norfolk matched them.

### **Pastoral care worker training programme**

Pastoral care workers must have highly developed interpersonal skills, and very strong recording skills as the role requires them to keep track of the development of a number of young people at a time and to be able to present their records for analysis.

PCWs are student-focussed and it is essential that a worker is aware of his or her place and role in the school and in the young person's life. They are not social workers, parents or teachers – although many of the PCWs employed by Norfolk do have these skills and qualifications.

When a care worker is recruited the first step is to identify, with the help of the worker, the areas of expertise and experience in which they are lacking. Previous work and life experience is assessed and these gaps identified.

From there a basic six-week training programme (which can be expanded to up to 10 weeks depending on the training needs) can be devised with special emphasis on the 'missing' skills. This programme is intended to offer 'foundational' elements, essential skills that a PCW will need in order to take up their post.

The course also acts as an induction to YMCA Norfolk, emphasising its protocols, standards and values, including that of the wider YMCA Movement.

Core PCW skills examined at training:

- Building relationships with young people
- How to assess a young person's needs
- Listening and communication skills

The course is classroom-based and is led by a trainer, although the trainees also learn from interactive sessions, including role-play, discussions and meeting with existing PCWs. During training it is hoped that a potential PCW will develop a good relationship with the other trainees and staff.

Practical experience is also an intrinsic part of the course, which often includes opportunities for shadowing an existing PCW. Trainees are encouraged to get involved in a live project or event, such as the Anti Bullying Roadshow, or a self-esteem project.

#### *Training assessment*

Trainees are required to keep a journal of the training experience, and they are expected to define a work project on which they will be assessed. This project will also form the focus of their first year as a PCW.

It is hoped that the six week training programme will leave a PCW fully equipped to commence work at their selected school, and easily form good relationships with the staff, pupils and parents. However, YMCA Norfolk recognise that the PCW will be constantly learning and building on the foundations throughout their time as a schools worker.

#### **First steps at a new school**

The first step for a PCW is to identify the needs of the young people at the school in which they are placed. The initial project a PCW develops will focus on addressing the main needs of young people at the school, informed by the help and support of the YMCA Norfolk team and the school.

The line manager for a particular PCW is heavily involved in this initial stage, negotiation and identifying the key targets for a particular school. Once these targets are agreed they are written up and future dates set for meeting each target.

#### **Assessing the impact of a pastoral care worker**

Schools often emphasise that they expect the PCW to assist in achieving targets related to academic achievement and attendance – the two major factors that schools are assessed on.

While YMCA Norfolk would assert that it is able to assist in helping young people with a far more extensive range of issues, it is aware that these two factors – academic achievement and attendance – will remain the areas in which the success of its schools team is judged on. It is also able to provide evidence that it can make a significant positive impact in these areas.

However, particularly in the case of increased attendance, improvements are often a by product of more significant developments in a young person's life; if they are more confident and have a higher self esteem, they are more likely to attend classes.

#### *Evidence-based approach*

Core to its vision for a professional standard of service in its schools project, YMCA Norfolk places a great emphasis on recording and analysing developing its work. It diligently records case histories, statistical information, and other data – an absolute necessity given the scale of the enterprise.

The department has 13 years of recorded evidence about the positive impact of its schools work, alongside stories of individuals who have benefited directly from pastoral care. YMCA Norfolk is keen to use this history of good practice as evidence to support other YMCAs who wish to expand into pastoral care schools work.

#### *Monitoring and assessment*

Every meeting between a PCW and a student is recorded so that each individual case can be closely monitored. This information also forms part of the analysis of the pastoral care work at the schools, which is examined in the following areas:

- Numbers – how many contacts a PCW has made
- Gender – checking how evenly spread is the contact of the PCW with males and females
- Issues – what particular problems (self esteem, bullying, substance misuse and so on) were identified and worked through with the young people
- Case histories – are recorded, highlighting the impact of the pastoral care and how a young person benefited from this work

PCWs who work for Connexions also record their contacts on the Connex system, which offers an additional analysis. Schools workers whose roles are partly supported through the Children's Fund also complete quarterly returns.

Alongside the paper and statistical recording, a PCW meets once every three weeks with his or her line manager to review the key targets, and examine the evidence recorded to match those targets.

In addition to a manager from YMCA Norfolk, each PCW also has a line manager at the school. This relationship is to ensure that the PCW is fully integrated into the school; the school manager also oversees his or her day-to-day activities.

The YMCA manager and the school manager also meet once every half term – without the PCW – to compare notes, report on the progress of the pastoral care work, and make changes to the programme accordingly. This constant assessment and interaction between the school, the PCW and YMCA Norfolk means that most problems can be identified early and resolved.

Every fortnight each PCW attends a team meeting at YMCA Norfolk (held on Wednesday afternoons). The entire schools staff gather for training, to share good practice, encourage each other, and there is an optional time for prayer and worship.

If a child protection issue or concern is encountered at school, a PCW is able to call on the support of a child protection officer at the school or at YMCA Norfolk.

Each year a conference is held for all staff and volunteers at YMCA Norfolk – usually two days away at a residential centre. This is an opportunity to reinforce the identity of the YMCA, offer training programmes, and also build the team through social interaction.

#### **Schools Team management staff**

- Hannah Deal, Youth Services Manager, who also manages the training programme
- Amanda Johnson, Children's Services Manager, who develops aspects of children's worker training and is the child protection officer for YMCA Norfolk
- Susie Knights, Projects and Administration Manager, who – alongside taking care of the contracts and accounts – line manages several of the programmes, including the Community Partnership Development programme
- Nick Jeffery, Senior Operations Manager, who oversees the programme and manages the management staff, alongside line managing a number of PCWs. The Senior Operations Manager's role is to maintain a strategic oversight, uphold standards, and to inform the work by monitoring government policy and its impact locally and nationally. Nick Jeffery sits on a number of local partnership boards, including the Children's Fund, Connexions, and Every Child Matters

## **Partnerships with other member YMCAs**

Having established a reputation as the leading provider of schools pastoral care workers in the Norfolk area, the schools team have begun to offer services to other YMCAs in England.

It has worked alongside Bury St Edmunds and Nottingham YMCAs, giving them support and training as they seek to expand their schools outreach work. They are also looking to develop further partnerships with YMCAs, including Southampton.

Dean Titterton, deputy CEO of Nottingham YMCA, visited Norfolk in 2003 to learn about its schools work. Nick and his team inspired Dean to recommend a pilot PCW in a school in Nottingham. YMCA Norfolk will offer continuing support and advice as the programme develops.

Norfolk have had a service level agreement with neighbouring Bury St Edmunds YMCA, assisting them in setting up contracts with schools and helping them to recruit PCWs, for whom they also offered training and continuing development support.

### **Partnership with YMCA England**

YMCA Norfolk has now formed a partnership with YMCA England, to develop a national model working with extended schools. This is a new and exciting development for YMCA Norfolk, with the aim to expand the work of the Schools Team in YMCAs across England.

### **European programme**

In August 2003, Nick and a team from YMCA Norfolk took part in the YMCA Europe Festival in Prague. Hosting a workshop about bullying, Nick was intrigued when a large number of people from YMCA Netherlands attended the session.

He was interested to learn that YMCA Netherlands had a well-established outdoor education programme for children, young adults, and young people who have offended.

Realising that there was a strong connection with the schools work carried out in Norfolk, YMCA Netherlands invited Nick to take part and speak at its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations in Holland. After this successful exchange, both parties recognised the relationship was beneficial and should continue.

After a successful application for funding from the European Union, plans were made to host a European schools conference. This took place in July 2004 at YMCA Norfolk and, alongside YMCA Netherlands, also in attendance was representatives from City of Dublin YMCA.

While still in its early stages, the establishment of a European network is a significant step in developing YMCA Norfolk's schools work, allowing a cross-fertilisation of ideas between the YMCAs involved. A further conference was held in March 2005 in Holland, at which representatives from the YMCAs in Germany, Sweden, Ireland and the Netherlands also attended. The next European schools conference will be held in Ireland.

While in Holland, Norfolk's schools team took with them the Anti Bullying Roadshow, which they presented in a school where the roadshow will have the same impact in Holland as it has in schools across England.

Bart Shaha, Secretary General of the World Alliance of YMCAs, also attended the schools conference in Holland. He realised that the pioneering work of YMCA Norfolk had applications worldwide and he and Nick discussed how its programmes and good practice could be shared with the YMCA Movement on a global scale.

## **Future plans**

### *Extended schools*

Working alongside the LEA, YMCA Norfolk is helping to develop an extended schools programme across Great Yarmouth, Thetford and Norwich.

### *Positive Activities for Young People*

In March 2005, YMCA Norfolk Schools Team launched a Positive Activities for Young People project, for which it recruited an additional four staff. This work will support a group of young people aged 11 to 16 who are at risk of committing crime, working with local schools and the community.

The project aims to channel young people's energies to positive activities so that they are less likely to commit crime or become involved in antisocial behaviour. Launching this project is another step toward YMCA Norfolk's aim of moving into preventive rather than reductive work.

## **Pastoral care in the community – YMCA Norfolk schools work in action**

*Interview with Sam Lee, pastoral care worker at Larkman Middle School, by Peter Shaw*

Sam Lee is a YMCA Norfolk Pastoral Care Worker in Larkman Middle School, Norwich, which shares a large site with Larkman First School and Earlham Nursery. As a middle school, Larkman provides schooling for years four to six (children aged seven to twelve). Situated on Clarkson Road, south of Dereham Road, it is a community school and most of its intake is from the neighbouring streets and from around Ranworth First School.

Sam works from a relatively spacious office in the heart of the school, where he conducts one-to-one sessions with the children, and offers various after school and break time activities.

Speaking to Sam, it is clear that he encapsulates two of the most important characteristics of a pastoral care worker. He is approachable and professional, equally enthusiastic talking about his relationship with the children as he is about the key targets he must perform to fulfil his role.

On the front page of his diary, Sam has recorded his mission statement: "...to live each day with integrity in thought, word and action – and do all I can to make a difference."

Sam begins by explaining the makeup of the area and divisions he encounters in the school: 'Larkman is situated in the middle of a council estate, as is another middle school across the road, Mill View. There is a longstanding divide between these two estates; People from Mill View and Larkman traditionally don't get on.

'But as schools we do a great deal of work together, with the hope that we can break down some of those barriers between the communities.

'Larkman is what people would describe as being in an "underprivileged" area, there are many families with single parents, divided by divorce or break-ups, or with lots of kids. But that said, there is a mix of lower and middle class families here.'

He eagerly describes his five key targets identified as priorities at Larkman: Working with children in crisis (family breakdowns); working with children at risk of exclusion; working with children who are called bullies; working to improve attendance; and encouraging children to come to residential.

'We decided to team up with Mill View for a residential, so that we can take children from both schools together and help break down the barriers. My target is to take 30 children away during the year – so far we've far exceeded that number.'

Sam sees his position at Larkman as far more than just an employee of the school. Rather he views himself as a role model for the children – encouraging them not just in word but also in action.

'When I am at the school – whether in my office, classroom, or the playground – the children are watching me. They are looking to see how I react to other staff, visitors and children – learning from how I conduct myself.

'This is how children learn from adults, observing how they deal with problems. And they are quick to pick things up and copy them.

'As I build respect and relationship with the children at Larkman, they will increasingly look to me to provide a model for how to live their lives. It's a big responsibility but if I can influence them in a positive way – by reacting with careful thought and kindness – I believe I can have a massive impact.'

But it is not just in the school grounds that he is able to make a difference. As he has become a familiar figure and a significant part of the children's lives, Sam has begun to develop good relationships with the staff and parents too.

Recently the head teacher learned that a parent of one of his pupils was concerned that her child was living in a dilapidated house – but that she didn't know how to go about making repairs or decorating. The head teacher sensitively suggested that she contacted Sam, knowing that he would be eager to lend a hand.

'I knew that if the children had decorated rooms, bedspreads and carpets it would make a huge difference – their whole sense of wellbeing would increase,' Sam explains.

Agreeing to help decorate during the Easter break, Sam was shocked at the appalling conditions this young family lived in: 'There were no carpets on any floors and hadn't been for many years. The walls were scribbled all over with crayons, the place stank, and there were needles scattered all over the garden – it was situated in an area with a big drugs problem.

'I was determined that, rather than sort the mess out and decorate on my own, I should do it alongside the family, so that they could learn basic DIY skills for next time.

'And next time wasn't far off – shortly after we'd cleaned the place up the family moved! But, when they came to decorate the new place, all I had to do was give them a lift to the shops to pick up supplies – they did the work themselves.

'Many of the problems I encounter with the children can be solved by simple, practical solutions. But the important thing is how you confront people with these issues.

'If I had approached the parent in that instance and said, You really need to sort your house out as it's damaging your child, I would only have caused a scene. There's no way she would have let me offer any help.'

Although employed by YMCA Norfolk and charged by the school to work for the benefit of the children at Larkman, it is clear that Sam sees his role far more widespread. He is a role model for the community and the children.

And if he can continue to live up to his mission statement "...to live each day with integrity in thought, word and action..." with the support of YMCA Norfolk, maybe he can play a significant role in uniting a divided community, and continue to make a real difference to the lives of the families and children at Larkman.