

## Real-life story - Mingze Sun

Mingze, known as 'Mike', has found that being a youth health champion has given him greater personal confidence and understanding of wider health issues.

### Mingze Sun

#### Youth health champion

##### Employer or university

Kelmscott School, Waltham Forest, London

Mingze Sun

Being a youth health champion has given me the skills and confidence to present on health topics.

#### How I got into the scheme

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Towards the end of each summer term, my school recruits Year 9 pupils into its youth health champion programme, and my Head of Year invited me to apply to train. I completed the programme, and when I returned to school in the autumn term (in Year 10) I was ready to be a youth health champion (YHC).

The training I had was the Royal Society of Public Health Level 2 certificated training. It was made up of four study units: health improvement, researching health improvement facilities, delivering a health improvement message to a group of peers, and the optional unit on understanding emotional wellbeing.

The last unit – especially the information about the ‘Five Ways to Wellbeing’ – was really useful because exam stress can be a big issue for many. This year we are planning to do some sessions in school on the ‘Five Ways to Good Mental Health’ and on creating our own ‘Mindapples’ cards. This will form a visual display of ideas for good mental health.

Since the initial accredited training we have had more training on things like stopping smoking, sexual consent, sexual violence and drug awareness.

## **What I do**

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I am part of a rota of YHCs and we work in pairs to offer drop-in sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays at morning break-time. We might be helping people register for ‘C’ cards (a scheme enabling young people to get access to condoms) or telling them where to get professional help as it’s not our job to give direct health advice to individuals. We have regular support meetings and know we can talk to our school-based facilitator if we think that someone may be at risk or if something is of concern to us. Anything I am told remains confidential.

Things that get discussed at the drop-ins can be anything to do with health but often we get asked about smoking. As we are not professionals we can only give some brief information and leaflets but now I’m more experienced and confident in helping others I hope to be able to go on and do the recognised Stage 1 Stop Smoking Advisor training. The school is also hoping that through the programme, we will be able to distribute condoms through the ‘C’ card service which will make a difference to young people.

I went to the Fire Brigade annual conference where I learnt about fire risk and was able to experience what it’s like to wear a fire fighter’s suit – it’s very heavy! It was a really memorable event and one which gave me more knowledge about fire risks and fire safety.

I have been involved in organising events on health in the school, such as the ‘Carousel Day’ when we invited different agencies to put up health information stands on subjects such as stopping smoking, sexual health, healthy eating, drug awareness. The police also gave a session on personal safety and self-defence. Each class from Years 10 and 11 then visited the ‘Carousel’ for one lesson period.

We also do assemblies to other year groups, for example when we launched the YHC scheme, and make others aware of what we do. Some of us will also be presenting what we do to our school governors and we are planning a healthy eating session at one of our local primary schools.

## **The best bits and challenges**

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For me the best parts have been learning about health, working as a team with others to organise events, and gaining personal confidence. I've developed health presentation skills, planned campaigns and planned and delivered school assemblies on healthy eating and mental health. I've had the opportunity to meet and work with lots of different professional people and learn about what they do.

## **Life outside school**

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Outside school I play Badminton, swim and enjoy gymnastics.

## **Career plans and top tips for others**

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I don't really know what I want to do career-wise at present but this experience has introduced me to a variety of careers associated with health and health protection, so possibly something to do with health or social care. Being a YHC has really built my confidence and, because we did our training with those from other schools, it got me working with others I wouldn't otherwise have met. I'd say that being a YHC is really a great opportunity and will look good on your CV for college or university.

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