

Real-life story - Maryum Ahmed

Maryum is considering a career in medicine and thought that becoming a youth health champion would be an interesting opportunity to learn about the field of health.

Maryum Ahmed

Youth health champion

Employer or university

Kelmscott School, Waltham Forest, London
Maryum Ahmed

If you are thinking of becoming a youth health champion then go for it!

How I got into the scheme

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Knowing that I have an interest in helping others and in becoming a doctor, my Head of Year invited me to apply for the role of youth health champion. I thought that this would help me to learn more about health, and that the accredited training and experience would also enhance my CV, GCSEs and UCAS points.

The school's youth health champion programme recruits Year 9 pupils towards the end of the summer term and provides them with the Royal Society of Public Health Level 2 certificated training. This means that when trained pupils start back to school in the autumn term (Year 10) they are ready to be youth health champions.

The training I had was made up of four study units: health improvement, researching health improvement facilities, delivering a health improvement message to a group of peers, and an optional unit on understanding emotional wellbeing. The training was very

interactive and although we did have to do some written work and present on a health topic to the other youth health champions it was fun.

What I do

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I am 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 about subjects such as stopping smoking, sexual health, healthy eating, and drug awareness. We also had the police come into school to run a session on personal safety and self-defence. Each class from Years 10 and 11 then visited the 'Carousel' for one lesson period.

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. Our role is to help our peers get the information or get the services they need, eg by handing out leaflets or helping people register for 'C' cards (a scheme enabling young people to get access to condoms). It's not our job to give direct health advice and we have regular support meetings and know that we can talk to our school-based facilitator if we have concerns about someone at risk. Anything we are told is confidential.

We work with our school nurse and know the local agencies who support young people so that we can put them in touch with the right person to help them.

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

The best bits and challenges

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I really enjoy all the different things we do especially helping people to get information or finding the services that they need. As I am beginning my GCSEs now I won't be able to be a YHC when I move into year 11, but I will be involved this summer in recruiting the next group.

Life outside school

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I enjoy sports at the weekends especially athletics and playing badminton. Last year I was in the local winning Hockey team but know that I need to concentrate my energies on my GCSEs now.

Career plans and top tips for others

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Being a YHC has given me more training and knowledge. I'd tell anyone thinking about this role to go for it because it's helped me to get skills in presenting and helping others. It will be something to put on my personal statement when I apply to university to show my interest, what I've learnt and done in the role, and my commitment – all of which will help me to stand out from others.

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