



News Release

Young people and drugs - young people talk directly to government

As figures¹ are released showing that young people's drug use is falling, a group of young people working with the drug prevention charity Mentor UK send out a strong message to government about what is needed to maintain and improve on this reduction.

In a report published today young people working with Mentor UK raise serious concerns about their rights not being respected by schools and the police. They ask government to ensure that schools cease the use of sniffer dogs and random drug testing.

"Drug testing in schools is patronising, demoralising and it shows a lack of trust".
Young person aged 19.

The young people called for a drastic improvement in drug education. They want to be given simple, straight forward messages about the known risks associated with drug use and they want these to be delivered by skilled professionals who deliver a balanced message.

'I prefer it when they just tell it like it is' Young person aged 14.

Eric Carlin, Chief Executive of Mentor UK says:

"Drug prevention work such as this has been crucial in bringing about the recent reductions in drug misuse amongst young people. We're proud of what our young people have achieved in this project – they've had a big impact and that's been really empowering. But, the government need to invest resources in continuing to meaningfully engage young people in developing drug policy."

Over a two year period the project provided 60 diverse young people from around England and Wales with support and training to help them develop their ideas and communicate their views to policy makers. They've helped the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) develop the new 10 year Government drug strategy, met with Vernon Coaker the Drugs Minister and presented their unique perspective at the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

For a copy of the full project report go to: www.mentorfoundation.org/uk/youthinvolvement

¹ **Drug Use, Smoking and Drinking among young people in England 2007** (<http://www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/health-and-lifestyles-related-surveys/smoking-drinking-and-drug-use-among-young-people-in-england/drug-use-smoking-and-drinking-among-young-people-in-england-2007>) and **The British Crime Survey** (<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs08/hosb0708.pdf>).

For further details contact Susi Farnworth, Development Officer, Mentor UK, 020 7739 8494, susi.farnworth@mentoruk.org .

Notes to editors

1. Young people who participated in the project are available for interview. Case studies and photographs are also available. Please contact Susi Farnworth (details above).
2. Mentor UK is a registered UK charity (no:1112339) and company limited by guarantee (no:5609241) that works in conjunction with its partners in the International Mentor family. Our mission is identical: to focus on the prevention of drug misuse in our efforts to promote the health and wellbeing of children and young people and to reduce damage to their lives. Mentor aims to support the effective use of human, financial and intellectual resources to achieve its goals. www.mentorfoundation.org/uk