

# NHS Teen LifeCheck Evaluation

## Executive Summary

### Background to the NHS Teen LifeCheck website

The pilot version of the NHS Teen LifeCheck (TLC) was an online health and wellbeing self-assessment tool for 11-14 year olds, developed by the Department of Health (DH). Its purpose was to help young people, particularly the most 'vulnerable', to assess their health and well-being. It aimed to provide information and advice about healthy lifestyles and signpost on to further sources of support and advice to encourage young people to make positive health changes. The pilot version of the TLC went live online in February 2007.

#### **Promotion of the pilot TLC**

The pilot TLC was tested over an eight month period to September 2007 in the four DH Teenage Health Demonstration Sites (THDS) which are spread across the country. The THDS had been set up just prior to the TLC launch to explore different approaches to enhancing services to promote the health and wellbeing of young people. The remit given to the THDS by the DH for the promotion of the pilot TLC was to aim for 100% awareness and 25% completion amongst 11-14 year olds, particularly the most 'vulnerable' groups.

Most of the TLC promotion work in the demonstration sites took place between May and August 2007. In one site the Healthy Schools team promoted the TLC almost exclusively in schools and pupil referral units. In contrast the other three sites used a more diverse range of community settings and promotion methods, though some adopted a more school-focussed approach towards the end of the eight month period.

#### **The evaluation of the pilot TLC and the promotion programme**

The evaluation was carried out by the Social Science Research Unit at the Institute of Education, University of London. Findings of the evaluation focus on: levels of awareness of and satisfaction with the pilot TLC amongst the target audience; its likely impact in relation to help-seeking behaviour; and effective methods of promoting the TLC. Data was collected from: young people through a school-based survey (n=2982) and focus groups (n=156); parents through focus groups (n=15); and professional stakeholders (n=33) through interviews. At the beginning of the focus groups participants were given the opportunity to look at the TLC.

# Key evaluation findings

## ***How aware were young people of the TLC and how many were completing it?***

A total of 8,716 young people aged 11-14 years accessed the TLC countrywide between February and July 2007. Just over 4000 of these indicated that they were from one of the four test sites. The survey found that just under a third of the young people participating reported having heard of the TLC. The majority (61%) who had heard of the TLC knew it was a website asking young people about their life. Levels of awareness appeared highest in specific vulnerable groups.

Eleven per cent of the survey participants had completed the TLC. Although 70% of young people said they did not need the TLC explained to them, full completion was significantly increased for those who did have it explained in advance. When young people were aware of the TLC, but had not fully used it, the main reasons given included lack of interest and computer problems.

The timing and type of promotion work carried out in the test sites is likely to have influenced these survey findings. At the start of the data collection some of the sites were in the very early stages of roll-out and minimal amounts of promotion work had been carried out in schools.

## ***What were levels of acceptability and satisfaction amongst young people? Did this vary across target groups?***

The majority of young people, including the most vulnerable, were positive about the concept of the TLC. Most found the site 'a little useful' with a quarter saying it was 'very useful'. Two thirds said they would recommend the site to a friend.

In focus groups the general view was that the issues that the TLC covered were relevant and that much of the TLC was clear and easy to use. However, young people did express dissatisfaction with some aspects of content and many aspects of design and provided recommendations on how this could be improved. In general, groups were comfortable with a target age range for the TLC of 11-16 years.

## ***How did parents and professional stakeholders view the TLC?***

Most parents viewed the TLC as a useful resource for young people and also for parents and said they would recommend it. However a minority of parents had serious reservations about its quality, suitability and usefulness.

Professionals, like young people, were positive about the concept of the TLC but felt the pilot version required significant improvement. The focus for professionals was more on change to content, rather than design.

## ***What is the potential impact of TLC on knowledge, attitudes and behaviour?***

Survey participants who had used the TLC said that it encouraged them on a range of positive health behaviours such as health eating and being more active. Most did not feel it encouraged them to use local health services, however. Young people and professionals were positive about the potential of the TLC to have impact on knowledge, attitudes and behaviour if it was improved and more widely used.

## ***How do young people and stakeholders feel the TLC can be best promoted?***

The survey clearly showed that levels of awareness and use of the TLC were highest where promotional activities and demonstration of the site took place in schools.

Young people, parents and professionals were happy with schools as a place to raise awareness but were clear that confidentiality must be assured wherever young people used the TLC. There were concerns that schools may not be able to offer the levels of privacy required. Professionals were concerned about resource implications for schools. Young people and professional stakeholders were enthusiastic about the range of potential promotional options that could be tried.

### **Conclusion**

The evaluation found that levels of awareness and use of the pilot version of the TLC were lower than desired in the four areas where it was tested. However this is likely to have been influenced by the timing and type of promotion work that had been carried out. Where intensive promotion had taken place in schools, levels of awareness and use of the tool were markedly increased.

Young people and other stakeholders were generally positive about the concept; most expressed the view that the TLC had the potential for impact on knowledge, attitudes and behaviour if its design and content were improved. Young people thought, subject to some changes being made, the TLC should become a permanent website.

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